

Draft Illinois Adjustable Block Program Community Solar Brochure Text¹ (to be formatted)

(This paragraph will be appropriately placed during formatting, perhaps in a box or sidebar.) **Subscribing to a community solar project can be a significant financial commitment, so exercise the same caution you would when making other major consumer decisions. If possible, compare offers from different community solar providers. Also, make sure that you have read the entire contract and that you understand it before you sign it.**

What is the Adjustable Block Program?

The Adjustable Block Program (“ABP”) is a state-administered incentive program for new solar photovoltaic (“PV”) systems. It provides payments in exchange for 15 years of Renewable Energy Credits (“RECs”) generated by community solar projects and other PV systems.

The ABP provides various protections for solar consumers.

What is community solar?

Community solar is an arrangement where several customers subscribe to a single large PV system. By subscribing, individual customers, potentially including both residential and business customers, offset their own electricity use with a portion of the electricity generated by that community solar system. The project might be close to the customer or it might be many miles away, but it must be in the same utility service territory as the customer. Subscriptions may take different forms, as described below.

With community solar, your electricity use is offset by the electricity generated by a specific PV system, and your subscription is only with that PV system. In many cases, absent the support of its subscribers, that community solar system would never have been constructed—meaning that by subscribing to a community solar project, you are helping support the development of new solar energy generation in Illinois.

Community solar is not the same as an a “green” or “renewable” supply offer from an Alternative Retail Electric Supplier. While supply offers from Alternative Retail Electric Suppliers vary, the “green” component of that offer is generally satisfied through renewable energy credits (or “RECs”, as described below) acquired by your supplier from a renewable energy generator. Absent express contractual requirements in your “green” supply offer, those RECs may not be from solar generation or even from renewable energy generation located in Illinois and may be from energy generation developed many years ago.

What are RECs and why are they valuable?

Renewable Energy Credits (“RECs”) are created when solar panels generate electricity, but they are not the electricity itself. Instead, they represent the environmental value of the electricity generated from

¹ This brochure is designed primarily for customers of Ameren Illinois, Commonwealth Edison Company, and MidAmerican Energy Company. For consumers in electric cooperative, municipal utility, or Mt. Carmel Public Utility territories, some policies may vary. Please contact your utility to learn more details.

solar panels. RECs initially belong to the owner of the PV system. Whoever owns the RECs has the legal right to say they used that solar power. This allows utilities that are required to supply a certain amount of their power from renewable energy, including from solar panels, to meet that obligation through purchasing of RECs. RECs may also be valuable to businesses that want to be able to say that they use solar power.

If the community solar project that you subscribe to participates in the Adjustable Block Program, the RECs from the project will be transferred to an Illinois electric utility. You should not claim that you're using renewable electricity, but rather that by having a subscription to a community solar project you are contributing to the development of renewable solar power.

For more information on RECs, see this short video from the Center for Resource Solutions at <https://vimeo.com/113250210>.

What information will you receive before you sign a contract?

Before you sign a contract to subscribe to a community solar project, the community solar provider is required to provide you with a Standard Disclosure Form provided by the Adjustable Block Program. This form includes contact information for everyone who has a part in your solar contract, information about the community solar project itself, the application process, and a standardized estimate of how much money you may save. Review this form carefully.

When deciding to participate in community solar, what are your subscription options?

Subscriptions vary. In some cases, you might subscribe by paying upfront and buying an ownership share of particular panels in the array (and their associated electricity output), or a share of the energy that will be produced over time by the entire array. In other cases, you might pay a monthly subscription fee for as long as you participate in the project. As a further alternative, you might simply pay a set price for each kilowatt hour of electricity that the project actually generates. **Read your contract carefully**, and here are some things to think about when signing a community solar subscription contract:

- If you're paying upfront, how much is your upfront payment? Will you take out a loan to make the payment? What are the terms of the loan and how do those loan payments compare to reductions in your monthly electric bill?
- If you're paying a monthly subscription fee, how much is it? How does that payment compare to reductions in your monthly electric bill? In addition to your monthly payment, do you have to put any money down at the start?
- If you're making monthly payments, does your contract include an *escalation clause*, which increases the amount of the payments over time? If so, by how much does the payment increase?

If you sign up for community solar, what factors affect whether you save money?

You are **not** guaranteed to save money unless your contract explicitly includes a guarantee that you will save money. In most cases, the questions listed below will affect whether you save money, and if so, how much. Some of these questions you can answer for yourself, while others can be answered by the community solar provider or the sales agent.

- What per kilowatt-hour (kWh) rate are you paying for electricity without solar?

- The higher the rate you are paying for electricity before you go solar, the more money you can potentially save. The per kWh rate you pay may vary depending on whether you buy electricity from your utility or buy electricity from an Alternative Retail Electric Supplier.
- How much electricity will you receive from the community solar project? Is this the right amount, given how much electricity you use?
 - If your contract provides more electricity than you use over the course of a year, you may not necessarily receive credit for all of the electricity it generates.
- Will the retail price of electricity increase or decrease in coming years? By how much?
 - The more the retail price of electricity increases, the more money you can potentially save with solar. If the retail price of electricity decreases, participating in community solar may offer reduced savings or may not save you money at all.
- How likely are you to move out of the service territory of your utility before your community solar contract expires?
 - If you move within your utility service territory, you will be able to keep your community solar subscription. If you move out of your utility service territory, you might need to find someone else to take over your subscription, or you might need to pay a termination fee.

What is net metering and how do I enroll?

Net metering is the method for measuring the electricity a PV system produces and crediting you for that generation. It is available for both PV systems located at your home or business as well as for subscribers to community solar projects. As part of your subscription to a community solar project, you will be automatically enrolled in net metering. Your supplier will calculate your net metering credits based upon your supply rate and the generation from your share of the community solar project. You may want to review your electric bill to ensure the accuracy of those calculations. If you have questions about your community solar net metering credits or value, you should contact your electricity supplier. There may be a lag of a month or two before your net metering credits appear on your bill. If you change suppliers, you will be reenrolled in net metering with the new supplier.

Consumer rights

You have the right to maintain your subscription if you move to a different home or business location in the same utility service territory. You also have the right to assign or sell the subscription to another person within your original utility service territory, without having to pay a fee to the community solar provider.

In order for a community solar project to participate in the Adjustable Block Program, an Approved Vendor will apply to the Illinois Power Agency for the system to be part of the program. (The Approved Vendor will be identified on the Standard Disclosure Form you receive before you sign your contract and may not be your community solar provider.) If you sign up for a community solar subscription, you have a right to request information about this process, including the system's application status within the Program and how much the utilities are paying for the RECs from the system. Some of that information will be included on the Standard Disclosure Form.

The Approved Vendor must be responsive to any issues related to ensuring that the community solar system is generating electricity and RECs.

Complaint procedures

If you have complaints related to the system or about this sales process, first try to resolve the problem with your community solar provider or Approved Vendor. If you can't agree with the company about how to solve the problem, you may contact the Adjustable Block Program Administrator by emailing admin@illinoisabp.com or by calling (877) 783-1820. If you have been subject to fraudulent or deceptive sales practices, the Consumer Protection Division of the Illinois Attorney General's office may be able to help. Customers may contact the Illinois Attorney General's office by calling one of the following hotlines:

Chicago
800-386-5438
TTY: 800-964-3013

Springfield
800-243-0618
TTY: 877-844-5461

Carbondale
800-243-0607
TTY: 877-675-9339

Spanish Language: 1-866-310-8398

Program website for more information: www.illinoisabp.com

The Adjustable Block Program is administered by InClime, Inc. on behalf of the Illinois Power Agency.