

Program Year 2023-2024 REC Prices, Program Guidebook and Consumer Protection Handbook Released, Traditional Community Solar Score Update

April 21, 2023

Program News

- **Minimum Equity Standard (MES) Compliance Form Release** - As previously shared, the Agency launched Minimum Equity Standard (MES) for Illinois Shines on April 14, 2023. The launch included the publication of the Minimum Equity Standard [Compliance Plan submission form](#), and associated resources and support, including, updated instructional content at the Program website's [Equity Accountability System page](#), an [MES sample document](#) to preview the Compliance Plan submission form, a [Guide to the Equity Accountability System](#), [FAQs](#) on the Minimum Equity Standard, past Equity webinars recordings with supporting documents, MES Waiver Request and Rationale document, and MES-specific expanded office hours which will be held each Friday through May 26, 2023 (please see end of this announcement for details).
- **Traditional Community Solar Score Audit and Appeal Update** - In accordance with the [TCS scoring guidelines](#), the Program Administrator has scored all TCS projects submitted on November 1, 2022 that are Part I verified. The scores and a full announcement regarding the scoring process were posted on the Program website on the [Solar Project Categories page](#) under the Traditional Community Solar sub-section. A deadline of March 24, 2023 was provided for AVs to appeal decisions made by the Program Administrator on the scoring of their projects. The Agency is in communication with all entities that submitted an appeal and working towards determination as several remain outstanding. As previously shared, a full audit of scores continues, and the Program Administrator will publish updated scores after this audit is completed, if needed. An allowance for additional appeals after that process concludes will be made for any impacted AVs, if any additional errors are uncovered.

As previously shared, the Agency will utilize a random selection process to break ties between projects that received the same scores and where those scores would impact project selection, or waitlist placement. This process will occur after the appeal process is complete and all scores are confirmed, and currently, the Agency intends to hold the random selection reordering event in early May 2023, with further details to come after the TCS audit is completed.

- **REC Pricing Updates** - The Agency is conducting two processes to update REC prices for the Illinois Shines Program and the Illinois Solar for All Program:
 - **PY 2023-2024 REC Prices** - The Agency released updated REC prices that will be utilized in the 2023-24 Program in an [announcement](#) on April 17, 2023. **As a reminder, the updated REC prices will commence on June 1, 2023.** Updated (Section 1.I) and past (Appendix A) REC prices can be found in the updated Program Guidebook. The updated REC prices, a [rationale document](#) that explains the changes in pricing, as well as the full model used to produce these updated prices, have been published on the Program website's [Resources](#) page.
 - **Update to REC Pricing Model & REC Prices for Subsequent Years** - This second process consisted of request for comments which are currently being considered in a review of the REC pricing approaches for consideration of changes in methodology which would be included in the next Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan ("LTRRPP"). Results of this review of the pricing model will be released in the coming months.
- **Program Guidebook** - On April 17, 2023, the Agency [announced the publication](#) of an updated version of the [Program Guidebook](#). **The October 18, 2022 version will remain the effective version of the Guidebook until the new Program year commences on June 1, 2023. Compliance with all changes in the Program Year 2023-24 version of the Program Guidebook is required by June 1, 2023.** A [rationale document](#) that explains key changes incorporated as it relates to comments received on the Draft Guidebook has been published on the Program website's [Resources](#) page.

- **Consumer Protection Handbook, Contract Requirements, and Rationale Document** - Updated versions of the [Consumer Protection Handbook](#) and the [Distributed Generation](#) and [Community Solar](#) Contract Requirements were also published in an [announcement](#) by the Agency on April 17, 2023. **As a reminder, the July 14, 2022 versions of all three updated documents (CP Handbook, DG Contract Requirements, and CS Contract Requirements) will remain the effective versions of the documents until the new Program year commences on June 1, 2023. Compliance with all changes in the Program Year 2023-24 version of these documents is required by June 1, 2023.** Previous versions of all three documents and the published [rationale document](#) for the updated Consumer Protection Handbook can be found at the Program website's [Resources](#) page.

Ongoing Operations Updates

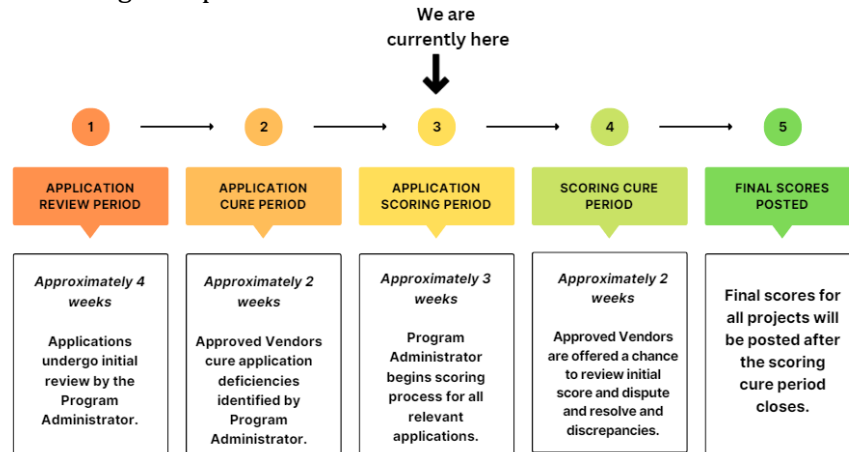
- **Schedule B Generation and Availability via Approved Vendor SharePoint Folders** - As the Program Administrator verifies Part II applications, Schedule Bs are being generated weekly and placed in Approved Vendor SharePoint folders. The Program Administrator will send AVs an email for each project that is verified, to include confirmation of verification status and date. **April 23, 2023** is the last valid Part II verification date for April to allow time to generate May REC invoices. Review of applications will continue throughout the last week of April with Part II verification dates finalized in May.
- **DF Leniency Period & SharePoint DF Workaround Process Update** - The Agency announces that the [Disclosure Form leniency process](#) will conclude with the commencement of the Program Year on June 1, 2023, at which time new DFs will be available in the Program portal, and the exception to the normal requirement that DFs must be signed *before* the customer contract will end. **Starting June 1, 2023, all customers must receive and sign a Disclosure Form before signing their installation or subscription contract.** The Program Administrator is currently preparing resources to support this transition and will soon release sample DFs, webinar dates, extended Office Hours, and more.

Along with the upcoming availability of an API to support Community Solar Disclosure Forms, forthcoming shortly, the Program Administrator apologizes for the challenges AVs have experienced due to the delays and bugs in portal dependability for DFs. The ability for AVs and Designees to utilize the SharePoint workaround will conclude on May 31, 2023. AVs were asked to conclude the upload executed DFs and submit DF data in the CSV file in SharePoint by April 17, 2023 but AVs and Designees may continue to use the SharePoint workaround process through May 31, 2023, if needed.

- **Portal Tips and Tools** - Below are tips to assist those submitting applications:
 - **Need Info Guidance** - As previously shared in the [Weekly Detail on Application Processing Progress](#) announcement on April 18, 2023, the Program Administrator is working to reduce *Need Info* requests and resulting delays. The announcement advised AVs of the most common errors or items that have resulted in Part I *Need Info* requests; AVs are invited to utilize Program Administrator support as needed. The guidance covered missing customer information, deficient demographic information, missing documentation, data discrepancies, incomplete DFs, and how to best respond to *Need Info* requests. The Program Administrator will continue training staff to avoid erroneous *Need Info* requests made to AVs and continues to email *Need Info* requests every Friday for both Part I and Part II applications.
 - **Part I Application, Section 2** - Section 2 of the Part I application, presents two unrelated questions that have caused some confusion for AVs, and which can ultimately result in incorrect REC pricing adjustments and the removal of a contract. The questions include “Have you already completed a Project Application on the same parcel of land?” (seeks to identify co-located but separate projects) and “Is this an expansion of an existing facility?” (seeks to identify when an existing system has panels added to it resulting in an expansion). Both questions cannot be marked “Yes”, and if they are, can result incorrect REC pricing for the new project or the expansion as co-locations and expansions receive different REC pricing than standard projects.

Application Processing Updates

- **Application Processing Tables** - The Program Administrator updates the application processing tables at [IllinoisABP.com/project-application-reports/](https://illinoisabp.com/project-application-reports/) on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. On April 17, 2023, the Program Administrator published its newest [Weekly Detail on Application Processing Progress announcement](#), including updated processing tables and staffing and portal improvements. For questions about specific project applications, please contact the Program Administrator at admin@illinoisabp.com.
- **Community-Driven Community Solar Application Review and Scoring Process** - Effective February 20, 2023, Community-Driven Community Solar entered the Scoring phase, which was originally expected to last for approximately three weeks, from February 20 – March 10, 2023; the scoring period is extended for additional time and is expected to last throughout the month of April. The Program Administrator will continue to share updates as we move through the process.



Ongoing Program Portal Updates

- Ongoing portal updates can be found at [IllinoisABP.com/portal-updates/](https://illinoisabp.com/portal-updates/), and a library of portal help guides can be found at [IllinoisABP.com/portal-help/](https://illinoisabp.com/portal-help/).

Updates on Portal Issues, Improvements, and Future Releases

- With user support, the Program Administrator continued a nightly, planned system maintenance window for the Program portal through March 23, 2023. As of **the week of April 3, 2023 and onward, the weeknight planned system maintenance window shifted to Tuesday and Thursday evenings, from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. CPT each night.** During these maintenance windows, the Portal is expected to be unavailable to users, which the Program Administrator and Agency hope will be minimally disruptive to Program participants. **Any users working in the portal should save their work prior to the 8:00 p.m. CPT start of the system maintenance window each day, as any unsaved information will be lost when the system is moved into maintenance mode.** In the event that portal restoration is unexpectedly incomplete as of 10:00 p.m. CPT on a given evening, an update notice will be sent to AVs and Designees.

| Development Focus | Details | Planned or Actual Delivery |
|--|---|---|
| Enhancements, Features and Bug Fixes | | |
| Disclosure Form Remediation | DF enhancements continue to be implemented, with information forthcoming on the impact to the DF Leniency Period that remains in effect until May 31, 2023. | Enhancements ongoing. The Program Administrator will resume providing more detailed and regular portal updates at the Program website the week of April 24, 2023. |
| Community Solar DF API | Beta testing will soon commence, which follows three working groups and a stakeholder review of the draft Developer's Guide. | QA testing is nearly complete and beta testing is now projected to begin the week of April 17 |
| Re-batching Functionality | On/off toggle, ability to create batches by project and by batch Screen, export Batch Shuffling and Batch Audit Log. | Now tentatively planned for Q3 2023 |
| Required Functionality | | |
| Program Year (PY) 2023-2024 Updated Disclosure Forms | Implementation of updated English and Spanish Disclosure Forms covering all DG and CS. | June 1, 2023 for Program Year opening |

Requirements and Reminders

- **Stakeholder Feedback** - This table outlines current and forthcoming proposals and feedback requests:

| Proposal or Feedback Topic | Request for Comment Released | Deadline for Comment | Details of Proposal/Feedback Request Available at: |
|--|------------------------------|---|--|
| Public Schools (Multiple topics, including anchor tenant requirement) | February 22, 2023 | March 3, 2023. Comments have been shared at Program website | https://illinoisabp.com/solar-project-categories/#public-schools Find rationale on decisions in the Guidebook Rationale document |
| REC Pricing Update for 2023-24 Program Year | March 1, 2023 | March 24, 2023. Comments have been shared at the Agency's website and are under review | https://illinoisabp.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-2024-ABP-REC-Prices-For-pub-17-April-2023.xlsx |
| New DG Disclosure Forms – Project Performance (“Efficiency”) Disclosures | March 2, 2023 | March 10, 2023. Comments have been shared at Program website and are under Agency review. | https://illinoisabp.com/consumer-protection/ |
| REC Price Modeling Update for Next Long-Term Plan | March 7, 2023 | April 4, 2023. Comments have been shared at the Agency's website and are under review. | Request for feedback here: https://illinoisabp.com/2023/03/07/independent-rec-pricing-review-request-for-written-comments/ |
| Program Guidebook updates for Program Year 2023-24 | March 14, 2023 | April 3, 2023. Comments have been shared on Program website | Final document: https://illinoisabp.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/PY2023-24-Program-Guidebook-FINAL-230417-1745.pdf Program Guidebook Rationale |
| Equity Eligible Contractor – Adjusting EEC Criteria | April 11, 2023 | May 5, 2023 | https://illinoisabp.com/equity-accountability-system/ |

- **Blanket Extension of Energization Deadline for All Illinois Shines Projects with Energization Deadlines Between April 14 – August 15, 2023** - Due to ongoing application processing delays related to Part II verification, the Agency [announced](#) on April 13, 2023 that they will be granting a blanket extension to all Illinois Shines projects with Energization deadlines between April 14 – August 15, 2023. The Program Administrator has already contacted AVs that have contracted projects with Energizations deadlines between these dates.
- **Eligibility Criteria for EEC and the EEC Category - Request for Feedback by May 5, 2023** - On April 11, 2023, the Agency released a [request for stakeholder feedback](#) on strategies to strengthen the criteria for qualifying as an Equity Eligible Contractor and for receiving incentives under the EEC block of capacity within the Program. This feedback will inform the IPA’s upcoming update to the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan. Please provide comments via email attachment to IPA.EnergyEquity@illinois.gov with the subject “[Responder’s Name] – Stakeholder Feedback on EEC Criteria” by May 5, 2023.
- **EEC Block Capacity – Long-Term Plan Reopening** - The Illinois Commerce Commission approved the request to re-open the 2022 Long-Term Plan in [Docket No. 22-0231](#), and stakeholders are invited to interact with the docket in accordance with the ICC’s rules of practice, with the following schedule in effect:
 - Objections to the Agency’s proposal – Due February 2, 2023
 - Responses to objections – Due February 16, 2023
 - Replies to responses – Due March 2, 2023
 - Proposed Order – Due March 29, 2023
 - Brief on Exceptions – Due April 7, 2023
 - Reply to Briefs on Exceptions – Due April 14, 2023
 - With the docket open, the Agency will seek to provide an update on the question of dealing with applications submitted on November 1, 2022, in EEC Group A once the above schedule has concluded; the Program Administrator may hold Group B applications for ICC approval if it appears possible that Commission action may impact Group B capacity.

- **3G Cell Pack Switch Out** - The IPA is aware that, as of about May 2022, inverters with communication modules using 3G cellular are no longer supported by internet service companies. These inverters will have to be upgraded with a 4G or 5G cellular module, Wi-Fi connection, or some other replacement communication protocol, though if the inverter has been operating normally, but just not auto reporting, most commonly-used inverters in the industry (excluding Micro-inverters) have an option to view their LMR (lifetime meter read) on their control panels. AVs are advised to request LMR from customers who may be experiencing this problem, then update production values using that data. If an inverter is not upgraded, the solar array's ability to auto-report production data will cease or has already ceased. Since some customers may not be aware that an inverter for their array may stop auto-reporting production data, many AVs have been notifying affected customers and assisting with inverter updates where needed. As a reminder, AVs are responsible for entering system production in the tracking registry where the system is registered. If the process in upgrading inverters has posed an issue in production data reporting, please contact your sector strategist to explain the barrier and the steps being taken to resolve the issue.
- **Program Administrator Office Hours** - AVs and Designees experiencing technical difficulties with use of the portal or in resolving other challenges are invited to utilize open Office Hours that the Program Administrator offers via Zoom, using a waiting room format to support meetings with individual AV or Designee teams for privacy. Upcoming Office Hours include the following dates and times with more dates expected to follow, using Join link: <https://energy-solution.zoom.us/j/95588710302Co>
 - Wednesday, April 26 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
 - Friday, April 28 - 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT for **MES Support**
 - Thursday, May 4 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
 - Friday, May 5 - 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT for **MES Support**
 - Wednesday, May 10 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT

REMINDER: All transition updates can be found on the [ABP Transition Hub webpage](#), and a new [Events & Engagement](#) page at the Program website provides a calendar of upcoming webinars, meetings, support, feedback requests, key dates, holidays, and more. Please visit [IllinoisABP.com/events-engagement/](https://illinoisabp.com/events-engagement/) for continuous updates.

CONTACT US: For portal, application, or Program-specific questions and inquiries, please contact admin@illinoisabp.com or call 877-783-1820.