

## Traditional Community Solar Audit Update, Preparing for the New Program Year, Annual Reports, DF Leniency Period Update

April 28, 2023

### Program News

- **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. The results of the audit are scheduled for publication Monday, May 1, 2023.

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 late May 2023, pending the Agency's ability to review submitted appeals from AVs with updated scores.

- **Preparing For the New Program Year** - June 1, 2023 will mark the opening of the 2023-2024 Illinois Shines Program year. Program year 2023-2024 will bring new block capacity across project categories and groups, new REC prices, updated contract requirements, an updated Program Guidebook, an updated Consumer Protection Handbook, new Disclosure Forms, the start of the first year of the Minimum Equity Standard requirements, and more. In support of stakeholders, the Agency and Program Administrator will host an upcoming webinar to familiarize participants with the new and updated materials and requirements. Please watch for more information. As a reminder, on [April 17, 2023](#) the Agency published an updated [Program Guidebook](#), [Consumer Protection Handbook](#), [Distributed Generation Contract Requirements](#), and [Community Solar Contract Requirements](#); these materials take effect on June 1, 2023. On [April 21, 2023](#), the Rationale documents for the updated materials were added to the Program website's [Resources](#) Page.
- **Annual Reports** - AVs participating in Illinois Shines are required to submit an Annual Report pertaining to the contracts and systems in its portfolio. In preparation for the upcoming Annual Report submission process in July, the Program Administrator will soon share information about the upcoming process for submission which will be introduced in the coming months. The Annual Report support materials will include information on: REC transfers, Bi-Annual reports, community solar subscriber records, SharePoint permissions confirmations, and a general annual report timeline. Similar to last year, the Annual Report will be handed via Microsoft Form and Microsoft SharePoint. An informational webinar will be held Tuesday, May 9, 2023 from 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. CPT via Zoom. Register at: [https://energy-solution.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_Q\\_pUZ8S8TpiTbChklIvehg](https://energy-solution.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Q_pUZ8S8TpiTbChklIvehg)

### Ongoing Operations Updates

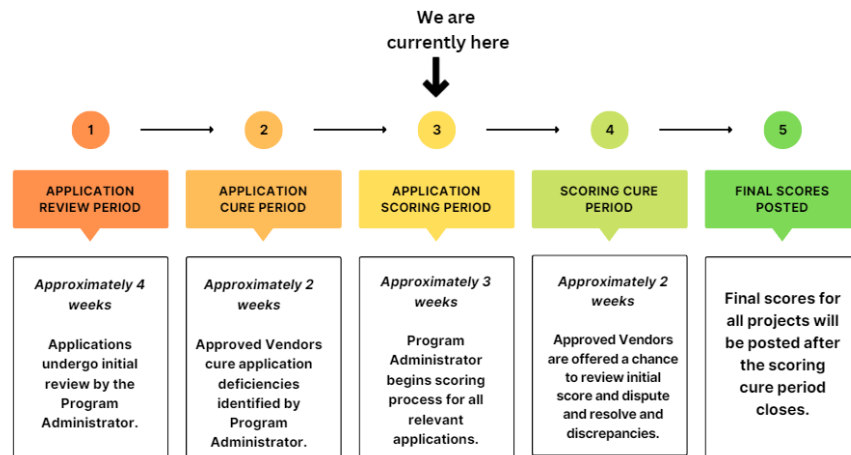
- **DF Leniency Period and SharePoint DF Workaround Process Update** - The transition to a new Program Administrator in July 2022 necessitated the development of a new Program portal. Due to challenges in portal functionality, the Agency announced on August 26, 2022 that it would grant leniency to the normal Program requirement that DFs must be signed before the installation/subscription contract. The Program has continued to operate with the leniency period in place but indicated that it would provide 2 weeks' notice before the requirement became effective again. **The leniency period will officially end on May 31, 2023; all contracts signed on or after June 1, 2023 are therefore subject to the Program requirement that a signed DF is required prior to the execution of the customer contract.**

In addition to the leniency period, and in recognition that the Program portal did not include an application processing interface (API) to support the upload of DFs, the Program Administrator has been providing a SharePoint “workaround” where AVs have been provided blank DFs with pre-associated DF ID numbers and logging the details of the form into a CSV upload template. With the forthcoming introduction of a Community Solar Disclosure Form API tool to be operational June 1, 2023 and the Community Solar Disclosure Form CSV upload functionality now available in the portal, the SharePoint workaround will no longer be available after May 31, 2023. All AVs using the workaround are asked to begin using the Community Solar Disclosure Form CSV portal upload functionality as soon as practicable, and no later than June 1, 2023. AVs will be able to upload any outstanding DFs generated through the CS DF workaround process into SharePoint no later than July 1, 2023.

- **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 guidance covered the most common errors or items that have resulted in *Need Info* requests including 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.
- **March REC Invoicing Opens May 1, 2023** - REC invoices and Quarterly Netting Statements will be made available for download from Approved Vendor SharePoint folders on the morning of May 1, 2023. Invoices must be submitted to the utility by May 10, 2023 to receive payment for the May invoice period. Any invoice amounts not submitted to the utility by May 10, 2023 will be carried forward and included in the next invoice period (August 2023).

### **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 24, 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](mailto: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 and extended through May. 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

- The planned system maintenance windows on **Tuesday and Thursday evenings (from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. CPT)** that were modified in April will extend through May. 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.
- An additional special software release will occur **May 31, 2023** from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. CPT in support of the 2023-2023 Program year opening.

Development Focus	Details	Planned or Actual Delivery
<b>Enhancements, Features and Bug Fixes</b>		
Disclosure Form Remediation	DF enhancements have been implemented, with information forthcoming on the impact to the DF Leniency Period that remains in effect until May 31, 2023.	The Program Administrator concluded fixes to the current DFs with details available at the <a href="#">portal updates at the Program website</a> with the April 13, 2023 software release.
Community Solar DF API	Beta Version 1.0 of the Community Solar Disclosure Form API was released on April 26, 2023. Edits to DFs fields and the API Developers Guide will be made in conjunction with the Program year 2023-2024 introduction of new DFs.	Beta testing was released on April 26, 2023, and the final version of the API is scheduled to be operational June 1, 2023
Re-batching Functionality	On/off toggle, ability to create batches by project and by batch Screen, export Batch Shuffling and Batch Audit Log.	Tentatively planned for Q3 2023.
<b>Required Functionality</b>		
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

- **Minimum Equity Standard (MES) Compliance Form Release** - As previously shared, the Agency launched the 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 webinars regarding compliance with equity requirements, 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). Following a dedicated two-hour Office Hours session on April 21, 2023, the Agency is developing additional FAQs to provide guidance to valuable questions asked by stakeholders.

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

Proposal or Feedback Topic and Link to Details	Request for Comment Released	Deadline for Comment	Results or Updates to Request
<a href="#">REC Pricing Update for 2023-24 Program Year</a>	March 1, 2023	March 24, 2023. Comments have been shared at the <a href="#">Agency's website</a> .	<a href="https://illinoisabp.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-2024-ABP-REC-Prices-For-pub-17-April-2023.xlsx">https://illinoisabp.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-2024-ABP-REC-Prices-For-pub-17-April-2023.xlsx</a>
<a href="#">REC Price Modeling Update for Next Long-Term Plan</a>	March 7, 2023	April 4, 2023. Comments have been shared at the <a href="#">Agency's website</a> .	<a href="#">Under</a> Agency review
Program Guidebook updates for Program Year 2023-24	March 14, 2023	April 3, 2023. <a href="#">Comments have been shared on Program website</a>	Final document: <a href="https://illinoisabp.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/PY2023-24-Program-Guidebook-FINAL-230417-1745.pdf">https://illinoisabp.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/PY2023-24-Program-Guidebook-FINAL-230417-1745.pdf</a>  <a href="#">Program Guidebook Rationale</a>
<a href="#">Equity Eligible Contractor – Adjusting EEC Criteria</a>	April 11, 2023	May 5, 2023	To be determined following close of feedback period.

- **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](mailto: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>
  - 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
  - Friday, May 12 - 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT for **MES Support**

**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](mailto:admin@illinoisabp.com) or call 877-783-1820.