

Group A Small DG in Soft Close, Preparing for the New Program Year, Annual Report Reminder

May 12, 2023

Program News

- **Group A Small DG Block Reaches Capacity, Soft Close Period Initiated** – The annual block of capacity for the Group A Small Distributed Generation block has been filled. The soft close period which allows the block to remain open for seven calendar days or when the next project application submitted to the block would exceed capacity by 10 megawatts began on May 9, 2023, and will extend until May 16, 2023 at 11:59 PM CPT. Any applications batched and submitted to the Program under Group A Small DG block after the soft close capacity is reached **OR** after May 16, 2023 at 11:59 PM CPT will be placed on a waitlist. More information on the soft close period as previously announced here: <https://illinoisabp.com/2023/05/09/group-a-small-distributed-generation-block-reaches-capacity-soft-close-period-initiated/>.
- **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. Following the appeal period, the Program Administrator and Agency undertook a full audit of scores, and [on May 3, 2023](#) shared the results of the audit and updated project scores. As outlined in the announcement, individual entities whose project scores have been directly affected will be contacted, and are provided two weeks to appeal and changes to scores; **appeals are due May 17, 2023, and IPA determination on submitted appeals will be finalized by May 26, 2023.**

Following the finalization of scores post-appeal determination, 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. 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. In support of stakeholders, the Agency and Program Administrator will host an upcoming webinar on **May 25, 2023 at 12:00p.m. - 1:00 p.m. CPT** to familiarize participants with the new and updated materials and requirements. Register link: https://energy-solution.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_aMXfBt3LQo-AgmVU7hOz2Q
- **New Disclosure Forms for Program Year 2023-2024** - The Illinois Shines program [announces the release](#) of new Distributed Generation and Community Solar Disclosure Forms, which will be available in the Illinois Shines Program portal and required for use by participating AVs and Designees beginning June 1, 2023, the commencement of the 2023-2024 Program year. Please note the following:
 - The temporary leniency period related to the timing of Disclosure Form signatures will end May 31, 2023
 - **Users that intend to utilize the community solar Disclosure Form API should reach out ASAP to admin@illinoisabp.com in order to join the API working group and to get involved in beta**

testing of the API. Participating in beta testing will allow for users to begin their programming process with the API.

- The SharePoint workaround process for the CSV upload of Disclosure Forms is being discontinued and may not be used after May 31, 2023.
- A stakeholder informational webinar will be held Thursday, **May 18, 2023 at 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.** CPT, to cover the new Disclosure Forms, the CSV upload tool, the Application Programming Interface (API), and “in flight” scenarios related to DFs started prior to June 1, 2023. **Register link:** https://energy-solution.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uEWL2gunSzC06rR02WpdxQ

For background and additional details on the launch of the new Disclosure Forms, please view the [May 5 announcement](#).

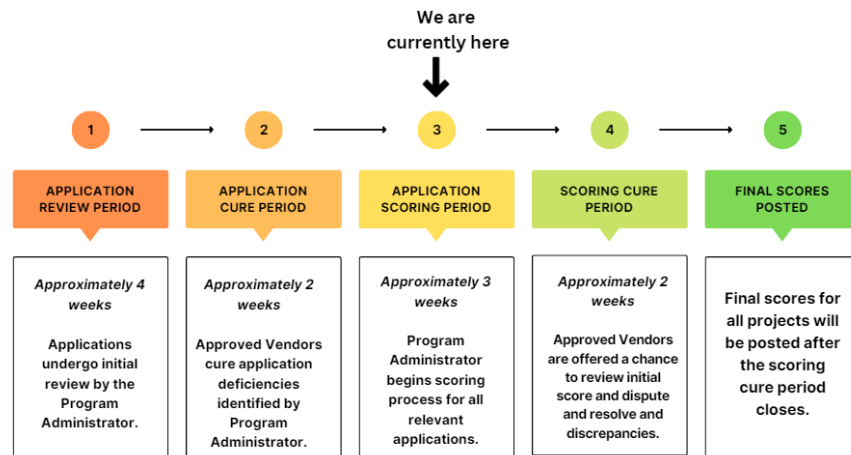
- **Annual Reports** - AVs participating in Illinois Shines are required to submit an Annual Report pertaining to the contracts and systems in their portfolio. On May 1, 2023, AVs received an email that gave an overview of the Annual Report process including the model, requirements, and a general timeline for important Annual Report dates. Community Solar AVs received an email that provided guidance on updating their Subscriber Workbook which included important reminders. An informational webinar was held Tuesday, May 9, 2023, and the [recording](#) and [presentation slides](#) have been uploaded to the [Program Year Updates page](#) on the website. **Annual Reports will open on July 1, 2023 and are due no later than July 17, 2023. Failure to submit an Annual Report is an Event of Default under the REC Contract and could impact an Approved Vendor’s standing in the Program.**
- **Enhancement to the Energy Workforce Equity Portal** - The Agency [announced](#) an enhancement to the [Energy Workforce Equity Portal](#) that launched in January. Equity Eligible Persons registering on the Portal may now opt out of sharing their contact information with companies using the Portal. This feature, requested by stakeholders, means that companies and their staff can verify workers’/employees’ eligibility as Equity Eligible persons without including their contract information in the list of EEPs which is visible to other employers. The IPA is committed to making the Energy Workforce Equity Portal a valuable tool for the participants in the clean energy economy and will continue to enhance and refine the Portal. Planned improvements include comprehensive listings of clean energy economy job training across Illinois, as well as other career development resources for job seekers. Please send comments or suggestions to IPA.EnergyEquity@illinois.gov.

Ongoing Operations Updates

- **Portal Tips and Tools** - Below are tips to assist those submitting applications:
 - **Need Info Guidance** – In the April 18, 2023 [Weekly Detail on Application Processing Progress](#) announcement the Agency shared guidance on *Need Info* requests. The guidance covered the most common errors or items that have resulted in *Need Info* requests. The Agency will continue to share tips to assist application submissions.

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 May 9, 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 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/, and a library of portal help guides can be found at 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)** 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 7:00 p.m. CPT to 8:00 a.m. CPT on June 1, 2023.** CPT in support of the 2023-2024 Program year opening.

Development Focus	Details	Planned or Actual Delivery
Enhancements, Features and Bug Fixes		
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 portal updates at the Program website 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.
Required Functionality		
Program year (PY) 2023-2024 Updated Disclosure Forms	Implementation of updated English and Spanish DFs 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
REC Pricing Update for 2023-24 Program Year	March 1, 2023	March 24, 2023. Comments have been shared at the Agency's website .	https://illinoisabp.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-2024-ABP-REC-Prices-For-pub-17-April-2023.xlsx
REC Price Modeling Update for Next Long-Term Plan	March 7, 2023	April 4, 2023. Comments have been shared at the Agency's website .	Under Agency review. To be included in Next Long-Term Plan
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. Comments will be shared on the Program website.	Under Agency review. To be included in Next Long-Term Plan

- **EEC Block Capacity – Long-Term Plan Reopening** – On May 9, 2023, the Agency made a compliance filing of a modified Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan to conform with the changes stated in the ICC’s Order on Reopening in [Docket No. 22-0231](#). The ICC’s Order modified the EEC category including changes to the EEC block size for the 2022-23 Program year, new EEC subcategories, and a developer cap. This modified Plan is now the [current approved Plan](#) can be found in the Program’s website [Resources page](#) in the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan section.
- **3G Cell Pack Switch Out** - In 2022 all major mobile carriers, including AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon, discontinued their 3G networks and switched to 5G networks. This switch has impacted solar system owners in the U.S. who installed 3G modems as a part of their solar array. As technology progresses over time, this can be foreseen to be an ongoing compliance issue within the Program for AVs. A 3G modem or “cell card”, is the hardware within a solar inverter that communicates with the internet to report production of a solar array. Production is required to be reported within the Program to remain compliant with the fifteen-year REC contract signed between an AV and the consumer. To address this issue, the Program Administrator requests AVs to capture their customers lifetime meter reads. Although communication may have been lost and not reported to the internet enabled inverter app, the data is still stored on the inverter itself. If the inverter has an interface screen, the consumer can report the lifetime meter read and then production values can be updated accordingly. For example, if an end use customer installed a SolarEdge inverter in October 2022, but no production had been reported through the SolarEdge app from December 2022 to May 2023, the AV could request the customer go to their inverter and read the total kwh’s that inverter has produced in its lifetime. This lifetime meter read would then be subtracted from the last known data retrieved in December 2022. This lifetime meter read would then be reported to the Program Administrator to ensure the solar array has met their REC requirements.

For further information on this topic, please visit your inverter manufacturer’s website. Many solar inverter manufacturers have service or support teams in place to request the replacement parts needed to address your customer’s concerns on getting their 3G cell cards switched to the 5G cell cards to ensure monitoring of their production continues. The Program Administrator acknowledges there could be delays in shipments of these parts as they are in high demand.

- **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, May 17 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
- Friday, May 19 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT for **MES Support**
- Wednesday, May 24 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
- Friday, May 26 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT for **MES Support**
- Friday, May 26 – 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. CPT for **Disclosure Form Support**
- Wednesday, May 31 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
- Additional office hours in support of Program year 2023-2024 launch will be published.

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/ for continuous updates.

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