

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

May 5, 2023

### Program News

- **Eligibility Criteria for EEC and the EEC Category - Request for Feedback Due Today, 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 participating in the EEC category in 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 **today, May 5, 2023.**
- **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 to familiarize participants with the new and updated materials and requirements. Please watch for more information.
- **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. In December 2022, the Agency and Program Administrators facilitated [a stakeholder feedback process](#) including the issuance of proposals, and the invitation for public comment in writing and at the Consumer Protection Working Group; a follow up proposal specific to a feature of new Distributed Generation Disclosure Forms occurred in March. The Agency carefully reviewed and considered the feedback before finalizing the new Disclosure Forms and published [a Rationale Document](#) explaining the major changes. A forthcoming announcement will include important information about:
  - Changes to the standard Disclosure Form including length, organization, and portal functionality
  - **The end of the temporary leniency period related to the timing of Disclosure Form signatures, effective May 31, 2023**

- The availability of a Community Solar Disclosure Form API, and information on a forthcoming DG API
- Discontinuation of the SharePoint workaround process for the CSV upload of Disclosure Forms
- Materials and support available to stakeholders to support transition to the improved Disclosure Forms and processes
- A stakeholder informational webinar to be held Thursday, May 18, 2023, to cover the new DFs, 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](https://energy-solution.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uEWL2gunSzC06rR02WpdxQ)
- **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 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).
- **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](mailto:IPA.EnergyEquity@illinois.gov).

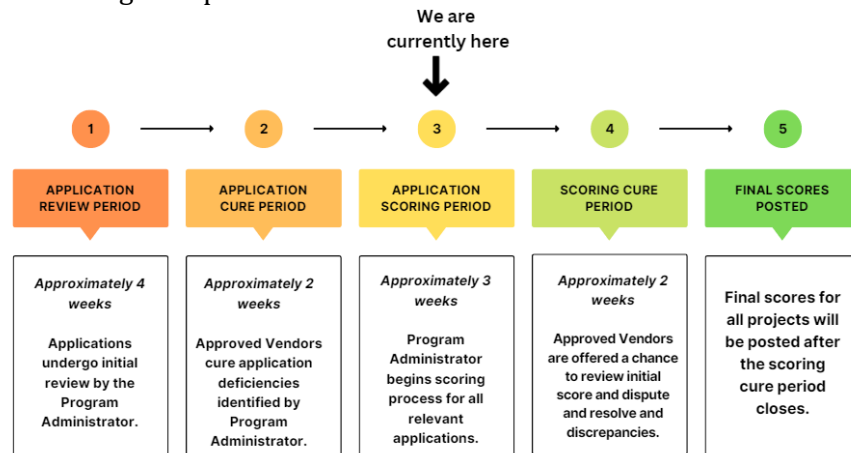
### Ongoing Operations Updates

- **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.
  - **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 in 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 Opened May 1, 2023** - REC invoices and Quarterly Netting Statements were made available for download from Approved Vendor SharePoint folders on the morning of May 1, 2023. Invoices must be submitted to the utility by Wednesday, **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 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)** 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> .	Under Agency review.
<a href="#">Program Guidebook updates for Program Year 2023-24</a>	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	<b>Today, May 5, 2023</b>	To be determined following close of feedback period.

- **EEC Block Capacity – Long-Term Plan Reopening** - On May 4, 2023, the Illinois Commerce Commission approved the modifications to the 2022 Long-Term Plan on reopening and has released its [Order on Reopening](#). The Agency will adjust the Plan language to conform the changes stated in the Final Order and make a compliance filing by May 9, 2023.
- **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, 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**
  - 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**

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.