

EXPANDED CONSUMER PROTECTION WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Friday, July 7, 2023

TOPIC 1	Customer Education
BACKGROUND	<p>As the new Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All Programs start the next program year, the Illinois Power Agency and Program Administrator would like input on consumer education media that market participants, governing agencies and consumer advocates believe would assist Illinois consumers in navigating the solar market and making decisions regarding participation in the Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All Programs. Currently, the Illinois Shines website contains a number of resources for consumers, including a Going Solar two-page guide, links to the Program Guidebook, Consumer Protection Handbook, Program brochures, the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan, links to governing law and rules, and a Consumer Protection Database with information on Approved Vendor and Designee complaints and disciplinary action. This information is located on the Illinoisshines.com “Resources” tab and the Consumer Complaint Center. The Illinois Solar for All Program website contains the Consumer Protection Handbook, Program Brochures, Complaint Database, and sample Disclosure forms on the Consumer Protection page.</p> <p>While the resources are available to answer many consumer questions, the Agency and the Program Administrator would like to ensure the information is provided, displayed and organized in the most user-friendly way.</p>
ISSUES/ QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS	<p><i>Discussion questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the key pieces of information consumers need to determine whether to participate in either the Illinois Shines or Illinois Solar for All Programs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Representation of current offers? ○ High level “how net metering works” information? ○ Detailed information on the application process? ○ More accessible information on Approved Vendors and Designees? ○ How could each website be organized in a way that is more consumer friendly and easier to navigate? ○ Would additional resources like informational videos, FAQs, language translation, or other types of media be more user friendly and provide consumers with information they need in a digestible way?
MEETING MINUTES	<p>Stakeholder feedback included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Suggested topics for consumer education included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information on net-metering, including how the utility distributed generation rebate offering affects a customer’s net metering value; ○ Information on the Program application process and timeline, including payment of REC incentives; ○ explanation of REC aggregators and other entities in the Program;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ description of customer obligations, including possible collateral requirements, contract length, and what customers should do if they plan to move; ○ better searchability on the Find an Approved Vendor List; ○ IPA-branded materials establishing the legitimacy of the Programs; and basic Solar 101 information on the Programs’ homepages. ○ The Program Administrator confirmed plans soon to release an updated website aimed at improving navigation and content and provided a link to the Disclosure Form “Deep Dive” documents on the Illinois Shines website, which includes information on net metering.
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TOPIC 2	Consumer Satisfaction Surveys
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BACKGROUND	The Illinois Power Agency has considered implementing consumer satisfaction surveys to determine how the Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All Programs are received by consumers, and seeks input from market participants, governing agencies and consumer advocates regarding the most useful way to design and administer such a survey.
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| ISSUES/
QUESTIONS TO
DISCUSS | <p><i>Discussion question:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>What elements of the Programs should be the focus of the surveys?</i> ○ <i>What level of customer participation in the surveys would be necessary to obtain useful, actionable results?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>This could include a sample group of customers who have heard about the program and don't participate along with customers who have participated.</i> ○ <i>Should the survey differ between Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All customers?</i> ○ <i>Should the survey differ between Community Solar and Distributed Generation across both Programs?</i> |
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| MEETING
MINUTES | <p>Stakeholder feedback included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual Approved Vendors and Designees on the call noted they were not conducting customer service feedback surveys. ● A recommendation that a customer satisfaction survey should come from the Illinois Power Agency; another suggestion was that Approved Vendors and Designees could a link to the Agency’s survey to their customers. ● A recommendation that surveys be tailored for Distributed Generation versus Community Solar customers, and Illinois Shines versus Illinois Solar for All customers. ● One participant worried that customers may use the survey to attribute blame for project delays to their Approved Vendor or Designee when the delay may have been caused by another entity. The participant recommended crafting the survey in a way that did not assume much (if any) customer understanding of Program requirements. ● Some stakeholders suggested that the survey should be anonymous with the option for customers to provide their name. |
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