

## New Program Website, CDCS Application Deadline, and Mentorship Program

August 4, 2023

### Program News

- **Illinois Shines Introduces New Program Website** - As previously [announced](#), the new [www.IllinoisShines.com](http://www.IllinoisShines.com) public website was launched July 27, 2023. The site combines, transforms, and expands information previously available at the Program's two public web sites into a single site for all users, and new information and features will be continually added. The new website does not impact the [Program portal](#). Among recent updates, the "Disciplinary Action Report" and "Consumer Protection Database" are now titled "[Program Violations Report](#)" and "[Consumer Complaints Report](#)" respectively, and both reports, which are also re-designed, are found in the [Consumer Protections page](#) on the website.
- **Mentorship Pilot Interest Form** - The Agency and Program Administrator will launch a Mentorship Pilot program in Fall 2023, with the goal of fostering relationships between market participants and empowering small businesses, Diverse Business Enterprises (DBEs), and Equity Eligible Contractors (EECs) with the tools and training to successfully participate in Illinois Shines. Entities interested in participating in the Mentorship Pilot are asked to complete a short form available at: <https://forms.office.com/r/dMTyxVyLji>.
- **Designee Management Plans** - Section X.B.1 of the Consumer Protection Handbook states that "[e]very Approved Vendor that works with or uses Designees is required to have and follow a Designee Management Plan as of September 1, 2023," and provides details on required plan components. With the September 1, 2023, deadline fast approaching, AVs are encouraged to reach out to the Program Administrator at [admin@IllinoisShines.com](mailto:admin@IllinoisShines.com) with any questions in meeting this Program requirement.
- **DG DF API Working Group - Call for Participation and Feedback** - The Agency and Program Administrator seek engagement from stakeholders regarding usage, functionality, and feedback on the development of a Distributed Generation Disclosure Form API (Application Program Interface) to be incorporated into the Program portal; a Community Solar DF API was recently added to the Program portal. AVs and Designees interested to participate in a Working Group guiding development on the new API functionality, scheduled to launch shortly, should email the Program Administrator at [admin@IllinoisShines.com](mailto:admin@IllinoisShines.com).
- **Illinois Power Agency Webinar: *Bring Solar to School: Benefits, Challenges, and Opportunities*** - Please join the Illinois Power Agency on Thursday, August 31 at 12:00 p.m. CST for the Power Hour Webinar, *Bring Solar to School—Benefits, Challenges, and Opportunities*. Speakers for the webinar include Audrey Steinbach, Senior Program Manager for Illinois Shines; Matt Seaton, Chief Financial Officer, Illinois State Board of Education; Gabriela Martin, Program Director (Energy), Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation; and Mia Korinke, Campaign Mobilization Director, Climate Jobs IL.

During the webinar, the speakers will highlight how public schools (K-12) can take advantage of state incentives to install solar. In addition, the speakers will discuss challenges that schools face to go solar, as well as highlight opportunities and best practices for solar adoption. Register Link:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlvcO-pqTsuE9VjgesFJ\\_eXbUmYfqi\\_V9fA#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlvcO-pqTsuE9VjgesFJ_eXbUmYfqi_V9fA#/registration).

- **Program Year 2023-2024 CDCS** - The CDCS application window for the 2023-2024 Program Year closes **August 30, 2023** (90 days after start of Program Year). Please see Section 5 of the Program Guidebook for more information. Applications will not be accepted after close of the application window until the next Program Year. Waitlisted projects from the 2022-2023 Program Year will receive 2023-2024 capacity. After capacity is awarded to those projects, there will be 8.5 MW of capacity available for Group A and 17.7 MW of capacity available for Group B projects submitted in the 2023-2024 Program Year. For a successful CDCS application submission, the Program Administrator team reminds AVs that:
  1. Appendix F of the Guidebook (page 126) outlines the Community-Driven Community Solar Scoring Criteria and the published guidance and rubric on the [CDCS webpage](#).

2. The goal of the selection criteria is to reward projects that provide direct and tangible connections and benefits to the communities in which CDCS projects serve. Please ensure that all connections and benefits are linked back to the community.
  3. For primary criterion B, please quantify all benefits over the 15 years of the REC contract and provide an explanation for the sources/assumptions included in the calculations. The benefits must also be clearly directed to the defined geographic community in which the project is located.
  4. For primary criteria C and D, please document all community involvement that occurred prior to application submission. Then also outline the planned community involvement that will occur throughout the future phases of the project. Details including the names of community members/organizations, the type & date(s) of involvement, and the cadence of past and future involvement will allow for more favorable scores.
  5. For secondary criterion H, please include items that have not already been addressed in the other scoring criteria.
- **Update on Certification of EECs** - The Equity Eligible Contractor category is intended to “advance[e] equity across Illinois by providing access to the clean energy economy for businesses and workers from communities that have been historically excluded from economic opportunities,” and that purpose is best served by ensuring a level playing field across Equity Eligible Persons (EEPs). The IPA has concluded that it does not further the objectives of the Equity Accountability System or the Equity Eligible Contractor category of Illinois Shines for an individual EEP to serve as the majority-owner for multiple Equity Eligible Contractors. EEPs that currently serve as the majority-owner of an Equity Eligible Contractor may not submit additional requests to certify Equity Eligible Contractors for which they serve as the majority-owner EEP. However, this policy does not apply to Single-Project AVs, as the Agency recognizes the important role Single-Project AVs can play in successful financing of projects and does not want to limit an EEP’s ability to employ business practices available to non-EEPs. The IPA will incorporate this approach into the Draft Long-Term Plan being published for public comment on August 15, 2023, but will also apply it immediately, so as to avoid having to revoke any Equity Eligible Contractors certifications that may otherwise be approved before consideration of the issue by the ICC. Stakeholders are welcome to provide feedback through comments on the Draft Long-Term Plan.
  - **EEC Developer Cap** - As noted in Section 7.4.6.3.7 of the [Modified 2022 Long-Term Plan](#), a 20% developer cap will be applied to the EEC category should that category become oversubscribed on Day 1 of the block opening. On Day 1 of category opening on June 1, 2023, the initial review of the applications batched and submitted did not immediately lead the Program Administrator to conclude that the developer cap was triggered.

After a full follow-up and review of the applications batched and submitted on June 1, 2023, the Program Administrator has determined that the EEC category was in fact oversubscribed on Day 1 of the Program Year, triggering the application of the developer cap for the 2023-2024 Program Year. Thus, any projects submitted by an AV that result in a cumulative allocation within the category that exceeds 36.088 MW (20% of the entire category capacity, across both Groups) will be waitlisted by the Program Administrator.

If an AV has a question about the amount of MW already submitted or how close they are to reaching the cap, please reach out to [EEC@IllinoisShines.com](mailto:EEC@IllinoisShines.com) for support.

- **Clarification on Advance of Capital Requests for EECs** - It has come to the Agency’s attention that there is a typographical error on page 97 of the Program Guidebook causing confusion around the availability of Advance of Capital for Equity Eligible Contractors. The Agency would like to clarify that Advance of Capital is only available for projects submitted to the EEC category and is not extended to projects submitted by EECs into other Program categories. A limited exception which allowed DG projects submitted by EECs to the Small or Large DG categories in the 2022-2023 Program Year has ended in accordance with the Commission’s approval of the [2022 Modified Long-Term Plan](#). The Agency apologizes for any confusion this has caused and a corrected version of the Program Guidebook has been posted on the Program website’s [Program Documents Page](#).
- **Consumer Protection Working Group** - The Agency and the Program Administrators for the Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All programs hosted the monthly Consumer Protection Working Group meeting today, August 4, 2023. The presentation and notes from the Working Group will be published on the Program’s [website](#). The Working Group meets the first Friday of each month, with the next meeting to be held Friday,

September 1, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. CST. If you are interested in participating in the group and future meetings, please submit the form at the [website](#).

- **August REC Invoicing Opens August 1, 2023** - REC invoices and Quarterly Netting Statements were made available for download from AV SharePoint folders August 1, 2023. Invoices must be submitted to the utility by **August 10, 2023** to receive payment for the August invoice period. Any invoice amounts not submitted to the utility by August 10, 2023 will be carried forward and included in the next invoice period (November 2023).
- **Long-Term Plan Update** - As previously [announced](#), the IPA issued the first two sets of requests for stakeholder feedback on various chapters of the Long-Term Plan (see Stakeholder Feedback chart below for chapter details). The Agency anticipates the next steps in this process with the following updated schedule:
  - Final Draft Release for stakeholder feedback - August 15, 2023
  - Stakeholder comments due to IPA - September 29, 2023
  - Filing with ICC - October 20, 2023
  - ICC Order Expected - February 19, 2024

### Application Processing Updates

- **Application Processing Tables** - The Program Administrator updates the application processing tables at [IllinoisShines.com/project-application-reports/](https://IllinoisShines.com/project-application-reports/) on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. For questions about specific project applications, please contact the Program Administrator at [admin@IllinoisShines.com](mailto:admin@IllinoisShines.com).
- **Traditional Community Solar Application Review and Scoring Process** - Applications submitted to date have been processed in the order they were submitted, and scores will be issued to AVs approximately two weeks after projects are reviewed. Projects in Group A that have scored a minimum of five points will be added to the waitlist in the order they were submitted. Projects in Group B that have scored a minimum of five points will be awarded capacity for the 2023-24 Program Year as long as capacity remains available. If a project does not receive a minimum score of five points, the application is not eligible to be waitlisted but can reapply to the Program at any time. A weekly waitlist publication for Group A is available at the [Block Capacity Dashboard](#).

### Ongoing Program Portal Updates

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

#### 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 August**. 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
<b>Enhancements, Features and Bug Fixes</b>		
<b>New Feature:</b> Copy a DF.	Feature gives AVs and Designees the ability to make a copy of DFs created after June 1, 2023. From the DF Dashboard (menu> Vendor/Designee> Disclosure Forms> View), the AV or Designee may select the ellipses menu (...) under the action column on the row of the record they would like to copy and then select the "Make a copy of form" option. The user will then be taken to the new form and allowed to make revisions/edits. Please note, this feature is not available for DFs created <b>before</b> June 1, 2023.	August 3, 2023
Shorten character lengths in Portal Form to create CS DFs.	Previously when too much data was entered in specific fields on CS DFs the layout of the PDF version of the DF was negatively affected. To preserve the designed PDF layout, field limits on CS DFs have been revised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The method and formula that will be used to determine the energy supply rate over the full term of the CS subscription" changed from 2000 characters to 500 characters.</li> </ul>	August 3, 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Provide details about dollar amount and the frequency or basis of guaranteed bill credits for subscription" changed from 200 characters to 40 characters.</li> <li>"Additional circumstances that allow for early termination other than moving outside your electric service utility territory" changed from 2000 characters to 120 characters.</li> <li>"Please explain advanced notice requirements" changed from 2000 characters to 120 characters.</li> <li>"Please explain how fee or penalty will be applied" changed from 2000 characters to 120 characters.</li> <li>Fee (Name) changed from 200 characters to 50 characters.</li> <li>Fee (When Application) changed from 200 characters to 75 characters.</li> </ul>	
Range Estimate added to DG PPA and Lease DFs.	Estimated Range for Value of Electricity Generated by your Project will now be displayed on DG Lease and DG PPA DFs. The range estimate will be based on the formula Total Years + Total Months / 12 *0.005.	August 3, 2023
Specific Legacy Part I Project Applications' Section 1 are unviewable.	Previously, there were a few specific Part I Project Applications imported from the legacy portal which did not properly display the Section 1 Project Location data on AVs' application view, and had the "Revisit" and "Close" buttons missing. This was preventing AVs from being able to submit their In Progress apps, and the hidden data could not be corrected by Application Processors. AVs will now be able to view and edit these applications' Part I Section 1 data and resubmit the Part I Applications.	August 3, 2023
Land use permit or waiver required for ground-mounted systems larger than 250 kW AC in Part I Applications.	The document upload section of Part I applications will now require attachment of a land use permit or waiver document for ground-mounted systems larger than 250 kW AC. This will streamline the application approval process by ensuring the supporting documentation necessary is supplied at initial submission.	August 3, 2023
DG DFs should always require Utility Fields.	Validation rules were updated on the DG DFs to ensure that (1) a value for Utility is always selected, and (2) that if Other is selected for a Rural Electric Cooperative or Municipal Utility, that the Utility Name is always required.	August 3, 2023
Label for "Utility Name" and "Utility Group" fields not always readable on DG DFs.	Previously depending on your screen resolution, it was not always possible to read the question preceding the fields for "Utility Name" and "Group" that are conditionally required when "Other" is selected for a Rural Electric Cooperative or Municipal Utility. These questions were shortened to accommodate the page layout and always be readable so users will know what is being asked for.	August 3, 2023

## Requirements and Reminders

- **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="#">Long-Term Plan: Chapter 3</a> : REC Portfolio/RPS Budget and Goals; <a href="#">Chapter 4</a> : REC Eligibility; <a href="#">Chapter 5</a> : Competitive Procurements; <a href="#">Chapter 6</a> : Self-Direct program; <a href="#">Chapter 9</a> : Consumer Protection	May 26, 2023	June 16, 2023. Comments have been shared at the <a href="#">Agency's website</a> .	Draft Plan to be released expected August 15, 2023. Stakeholder comments due to IPA - September 29, 2023.
<a href="#">Long-Term Plan: Chapter 7</a> : Illinois Shines; <a href="#">Chapter 8</a> : Illinois Solar For All; <a href="#">Chapter 10</a> : Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; <a href="#">REC Pricing Study by Sustainable Energy Advantage</a>	June 8, 2023	June 29, 2023 Comments have been shared at the <a href="#">Agency's website</a> .	Draft Plan to be released expected August 15, 2023. Stakeholder comments due to IPA - September 29, 2023.

- **Annual Reports** - Submission of Annual Reports, a Program requirement, was due July 17, 2023.
  - AVs will receive further confirmation of their submission's status by September 15, 2023. This may include requests for further clarification and documentation where data discrepancies are found. All discrepancies must be cured by October 13, 2023.
  - AVs who failed to respond when required, received a Notice of Potential Violation, with further disciplinary action defined.

- For any systems which have been delivering RECs for three full delivery years (First REC delivery on or prior to May 31, 2020), the Program Administrator will use the 2023 REC Annual Report data to calculate any potential collateral drawdowns and send the results to the contracting utility by November 15, 2023. The contracting utility will share the results with the AVs.
- Community Solar systems will additionally be assessed by the Community Solar Subscriber parameters, as outlined in the Program Guidebook, to calculate any potential collateral drawdowns. The Program Administrator will send the results to the contracting utility by November 15, 2023. The contracting utility will share the results with the AVs.
- Additional information on collateral drawdown evaluations can be found in the [Annual Reports Webinar](#), held May 9, 2023, and available at the [Program Year Webinars page](#).
- **IPA Issues Request for AVs and Installer Designees Interested in Serving Stranded Illinois Shines DG Customers** - As previously [announced](#), the Program continues to review submissions on a rolling basis for entities interested in serving stranded customers, with particular interest in identifying AVs and/or installer Designees willing to assist stranded customers with project maintenance/repair work. Please see the full [Request for AVs and Designees](#), including details regarding the opportunity to support stranded customers, eligibility requirements, and anticipated responsibilities.
- **Re-Submitting Disclosure Forms** - As a reminder, customers may not submit edits or re-submit DFs to the Program Administrator. AVs and Designees are asked to remind customers to direct DF questions to them. AVs and Designees must manage re-submissions of DF to the Program portal.
- **Program Administrator Office Hours** - Existing and prospective AVs and Designees who have Programmatic questions, project application inquiries, or are experiencing technical difficulties the portal or other Program or seek support in resolving other challenges are invited to attend open Office Hours offered by the Program Administrator via Zoom each week, using a waiting room format to support meetings with individual AV or Designee teams for privacy. Upcoming Office Hours and Join link: <https://energy-solution.zoom.us/j/95588710302Co>
  - Wednesday, August 9, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
  - Wednesday, August 16, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT

**REMINDER:** All Program updates can be found on the [Program Updates webpage](#), and a new [Vendor Forums & Key Dates](#) page at the Program website provides a calendar of upcoming webinars, meetings, support, feedback requests, key dates, holidays, and more. Please visit [IllinoisShines.com/vendor-forums-feedback/](https://IllinoisShines.com/vendor-forums-feedback/) for continuous updates.

**CONTACT US:** For portal, application, or Program-specific questions and inquiries, please contact [admin@IllinoisShines.com](mailto:admin@IllinoisShines.com) or call 877-783-1820.