

# Public Schools

## Project Category with Illinois Shines



### About the Illinois Shines Program

Illinois Shines is a state-administered incentive program to support the development of new solar projects. Through the Program, Illinois electric utilities provide payments to Approved Vendors in exchange for 15 or 20-years of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) generated by new solar projects. Approved Vendors are solar companies that are vetted and approved to participate in Illinois Shines.

The **Public Schools category** of the Program aims to increase the educational and financial impacts of solar projects in communities traditionally excluded from the energy sector by setting aside a carveout for Illinois public schools to participate in the Program.

Priority for participation in the Program is given to Tier 1 and Tier 2<sup>1</sup> schools, and schools located within Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs)<sup>2</sup>. This way, schools in need are able to have greater access to the Program.



### Why participate in Illinois Shines?

Benefits to schools that participate in Illinois Shines include:

- Depending on the school's current electricity rate and proper system sizing, a school may save on monthly electricity costs when the solar installation becomes its main electricity source
- Educational opportunities for students and the community to learn more about solar energy and the project installation process
- Incentive payments for renewable energy credits (RECs) that can help bring down the upfront cost of solar installation

### Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)

RECs represent the environmental attributes of the electricity generated from solar panels, but not the electricity itself. Whoever owns the RECs has the right to say they used that solar power. By participating in Illinois Shines, the RECs from your solar project will be transferred to an Illinois electric utility. The sale of your RECs will not affect your solar project's production or your ability to use the electricity generated by your solar project. Utilities purchase RECs to meet their obligation to supply a certain amount of power from renewable energy in order to meet Illinois' Renewable Portfolio Standard goals set by legislation.

<sup>1</sup> Tiers will be determined using the prior year results of the annual Evidence-Based Funding Distribution process conducted by the Illinois State Board of Education.

<sup>2</sup> The Illinois Power Agency designated these communities through a calculation utilizing the U.S. EPA tool EJ Screen and a demonstrated higher risk of exposure to pollution based on environmental and socioeconomic factors.

## Project Types & Application Process

### Project Types

Two types of projects can be submitted to the Public School category: Distributed Generation and Community Solar.

- **Distributed Generation** projects generate electricity that is used on-site. The project can be installed on a roof or built on the ground and must be located at the public school (or district) that the project is serving.
- **Community Solar** projects offer subscriptions to solar projects located anywhere within a customer's utility territory. The public school or school district at which the project is sited must be a majority (10-40%) subscriber to the community solar project.

The type of project that works best for your school will depend on the specific energy reduction and financial goals that the school intends to accomplish through the future solar project.

### Application Process

Projects participating in Illinois Shines will go through a two-part application process.

- For **Distributed Generation** projects, the process begins with the signing of a Disclosure Form and customer contract with your Approved Vendor. It's important to carefully review and understand these documents before you sign them. After the forms are signed the Approved Vendor completes and submits a Part I application, which must be approved before the project is awarded a confirmation of incentives through the Program.
- The process for **Community Solar** projects, begins with the Part I application submission after the project has been designed. Disclosure Forms are not required at the Part I application for this project type as these forms are for disclosure to the end use customer or subscribers to the project, not the owner or entity purchasing/financing the project.

After a Part I application is approved to receive incentives through the Program, a REC contract between the Approved Vendor and the utility will be generated and then executed by all parties — locking in the project's participation in the Illinois Shines program. REC contracts for public schools have a term of 20-years, delivering payments quarterly as the project produces energy. Please note, a school district must own the land the project is sited on for the entire lifetime of the REC Contract (20-years). Projects developed on land leased by a school/district are not permitted for submission to this category, unless a public school is located on the same parcel of leased land. After construction, through the Part II application, the REC contract will be updated to reflect the specifications of the finished project, and REC delivery to the utility will commence along with incentives payments back to the Approved Vendor as those RECs are delivered. Further information on Public School participation in Illinois Shines can be found in the [Program Guidebook](#).

### Additional Resources

Please find below links to additional resources that will help you as you navigate the Illinois Shines program.

- [Distributed Generation informational brochure](#)
- [Community Solar informational brochure](#)
- [Guide to Going Solar](#)

