

MES Mid-Year Report, Advance of Capital Feedback Due by November 14, 2023, Portal Upgrade to PVWatts API Version 8 Planned

November 10, 2023

Program News

- **Minimum Equity Standard (MES) Mid-Year Reports Due – December 31, 2023** - Mid-Year Reports to show progress toward meeting the [Minimum Equity Standard](#) for the 2023-24 Program Year are due December 31, 2023. Participating Approved Vendors and Designees should submit their Mid-Year Report for Program Administrator review by completing the form [found here](#). If your organization is struggling to meet the requirement, the Program Administrator will reach out after your submission is received to share additional resources and guidance.
- **Equity Eligible Contractor (EEC) Program News** - Recent EEC updates include the following:
 - **Advance of Capital Stakeholder Feedback Request** - A feature of the Equity Accountability System, as established by the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, is the ability of EECs to request an advance of a portion of REC Contract value prior to the associated project's energization. This capital advancement pre-energization is intended to serve EEC-certified businesses exhibiting true need and to support a more diverse AV pool. On [October 31, 2023](#), the IPA shared [this rubric](#) to evaluate requests for an advance of capital for projects receiving a REC contract in the EEC Category for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 Program Years, and invites stakeholder feedback. **Please provide comments via email attachment to IPA.EnergyEquity@illinois.gov with the subject "[Responder's Name] - Stakeholder Feedback on Advance of Capital Authorization Rubric" by **November 14, 2023**.**
 - The [EEC Project Category Hub](#) has previous updates listed on: [Equity Investment Eligible Community \(EIEC\) Map Updated](#), [Advance of Capital Authorizations Temporary Pause](#), [EEC Waitlists](#), and other recent updates.
- **Distributed Generation (DG) Program News** - Recent DG updates include the following:
 - **Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) Pricing in Disclosure Forms (DF) – Entry Clarification** - In the PPA Disclosure Form, AVs and Designees are required to enter the starting and ending price per kWh for the PPA. The fields specify that the prices are in dollars (\$). The Program Administrator has seen an increase in DFs generated with the price incorrectly entered – for example, if the price is 13 cents/kWh, it should be entered as .13 \$/kWh, and NOT as 13.00 \$/kWh. The Program Administrator encourages AVs and Designees with pending PPA applications to review their DFs to ensure these fields were appropriately completed. The Application Processing team will review DFs for this issue and will place incorrect DFs into *Needs Info* status. For any incorrectly completed DFs, the AV or Designee must generate and have the customer sign a new, corrected DF.
 - **DG Disclosure Form (DF) Application Programming Interface (API) Working Group** – The third session was held on November 7, 2023. A fourth and final session, including stakeholder support, will soon be scheduled. AVs and Designees interested in participating should email the Program Administrator at admin@IllinoisShines.com.
- **Designee Renewal Process** - Section 2.G of the [Program Guidebook](#) states that "Designees must renew their registration once a year. As part of this process, Designees will submit their training materials and certifications showing that their agents have been trained in accordance with Program requirements." Examples of applicable training materials include PowerPoints, handouts, and other resources shared with Designee agents for Program-related training. Designee renewals are due on **November 30, 2023**, for all Designees and

Nested Designees that registered in the Illinois Shines program before August 1, 2023. If a Designee or Nested Designee is no longer participating in Illinois Shines, it should use the renewal form to indicate this, and it will be removed from the Program. **It is the AV's responsibility to ensure that their Designees and Nested Designees are compliant with this Program requirement;** non-compliance may result in the Program Administrator requesting the AV provide its Designee Management Plan for Program Administrator review, and possible additional responses as set out in the Consumer Protection Program Violation Response Matrix located in Section X.D. of the [Consumer Protection Handbook](#). Any Designees and Nested Designees that do not renew their status will receive a Notice of Potential Violation and may be subject to disciplinary action. The application for Designee renewal can be found here: <https://forms.office.com/r/NJF18YrAnT>.

- **Community Solar Program News** - Recent CS Program updates include:
 - **Program Year 2023-24 Community-Driven Community Solar (CDCS) Scores Released** - The Program Administrator released scores on [Monday, October 30, 2023](#). These scores will be used to determine which projects will be selected for a REC contract once random selection (if needed) takes place. The scores and full announcement regarding the scoring process were posted on the Program website on the [CDCS Program Category Hub](#).

AVs have two weeks from October 30, 2023 to appeal project scoring. Submitted appeals must be received by the program Administrator at admin@IllinoisShines.com, **by 11:59 p.m. CPT on November 13, 2023**. As the determination of appeals may influence a project's final score, and thus possibly the final selection of projects, all appeals must be reviewed by the Agency within a distinct timeframe. The Agency intends to have all submitted appeals determined by November 29, 2023, subject to the quantity and substance of appeals submitted.

The Agency anticipates the next steps in this process with the following schedule in effect, pending prompt responses from AVs:

- October 30, 2023 – Release scores, begin two-week appeal period
 - **November 13, 2023** – Deadline for AVs to submit appeals to Program Administrator
 - November 29, 2023 – Appeal determinations released to AVs and any changes will be published to the website
 - December 6, 2023 – Random selection event for projects with tied scores (if necessary)
 - December 6, 2023 – Final scores published
- **180-Day Prioritization Window for Public Schools Subcategories Closes on November 28, 2023** - As stated in the [Program Guidebook](#) Section 1.D., Public Schools projects are allocated by Group, Tier, location, and project size. With separate allocations to Groups A and B, 70% of capacity will be allocated to schools categorized as Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools, or located within Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs), and 30% will be allocated to Tier 3 and Tier 4 schools not located within EJCs. The Guidebook includes a table with public school block sizes for the 2023-24 Program Year on page 13. If any of the allocations are not filled within the first 180 days of the Program Year, public school projects will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis regardless of Tier, EJC location, or project size. The 180-day prioritization window closes on **November 28**.
 - **Chicago Jobs Council Roundtable Session and Networking Event on November 20, 2023** – The Chicago Jobs Council is hosting a roundtable session and networking event that will focus on increasing EEC participation in the CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs Program. The hybrid event will be held on November 20, 2023, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. CPT. Interested stakeholders are asked to RSVP by November 15, 2023, and questions may be directed to Mimi Hutchinson at mimi@cjc.net or (312) 252-0460 x303. For details on the event and/or to RSVP visit <https://cjc.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/cjc/eventRegistration.jsp?event=5587&>.

- **Consumer Education and Protection**

- **DG Project Look Up Tool** - The Program website has restored a Project Look Up tool, enabling customers to view the status of DG projects submitted to the Program. The tool, which requires the entry of an Application ID, a Disclosure Form ID, or the customer email address, is available at the Program website's [Project Status page](#).
- **Consumer Satisfaction Survey** - As previewed during the [July 7, 2023, Consumer Protection Working Group](#), in the coming weeks, the Program Administrator will distribute its first Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The Program Administrator will issue this survey to a randomly selected group of Small Distributed Generation consumers whose projects were approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission in the past six months. The purpose of the survey is to better understand consumers' experience working with Illinois Shines participating entities and to help us improve consumer protections within the Program. Customers are not required to provide their name and are not asked to identify the AV or Designee with whom they contracted. If you receive questions from customers who receive the survey, please feel free to direct them to the Program Administrator.
- The Vendor-oriented [Consumer Protection Requirements and Resources Hub](#) contains important information and links, including information on Net Metering Credits and Vendor DF Resources. Recent updates include: [Reminder to Register Designees/Nested Designees, When Are Net Metering Waivers Applicable?](#), and [Disclosure Forms \(DFs\) - When New DFs are Needed, Signatory Requirement Exceptions, and Portal Inputs](#).

Ongoing Operations Updates

- **2023 Annual Report Collateral Drawdowns** - With the Annual Report cure period closed as of October 13, 2023, the Program Administrator has finalized Annual Report data, including REC delivery data. Over the coming weeks, the Program Administrator will calculate collateral Drawdowns using the three-year rolling average process. Systems with a Delivery Term start date of June 1, 2020 or prior will be included in the Drawdown calculations. The Delivery Term starts on the first day of the month following the delivery of the first REC. Once Drawdown calculations are complete, they will be provided to the contracting utilities by **November 15, 2023**, for review and communication to AVs. Further information about this process can be found in Section 6(d) of the [2019 REC Contract](#) (begins on page 8).
- **Re-Batching for ICC Meetings** - In advance of each submission of batches to the ICC for approval, AVs are provided the opportunity to withhold or re-batch projects. In the absence of any action by an AV, the Program Administrator will re-batch the projects at their discretion and submit eligible projects to the ICC.

It is extremely important that AVs review their re-batching files on SharePoint to indicate any re-batching preferences, but especially requests to withhold projects from submission. The Program Administrator alerts AVs by email when they have projects that are eligible for re-batching and planned to be submitted to the ICC in the next memo. Unfortunately, sometimes these communications are missed and projects are submitted to the ICC despite an AVs intent to hold a project back.

The Program Administrator requests that AVs who believe they may want to withhold or re-batch projects mark their calendars and review SharePoint folders for re-batching templates. This way, if any email alerts are missed, AVs are still aware of the dates that re-batching opens and can check if any projects are in the upcoming ICC submission. Below are re-batching windows for the rest of 2023 and for the first part of 2024:

Re-Batching Opens for AVs	Election Deadline – 12:00 CPT (Re-batching closes for AVs)	Trade Date (ICC Meeting Date)
11/13/2023	11/15/2023	11/30/2023
11/28/2023	11/30/2023	12/14/2023
12/14/2023	12/18/2023	1/3/2024
12/28/2023	1/2/2024	1/17/2024
1/12/2024	1/17/2024	1/31/2024
1/23/2024	1/25/2024	2/8/2024
1/31/2024	2/2/2024	2/20/2024
2/20/2024	2/22/2024	3/7/2024
3/5/2024	3/7/2024	3/21/2024

Application Processing Updates

- **Reminder that Project Submissions to Group A Still Encouraged** – Although both distributed generation blocks of annual capacity for Group A have been exhausted for this Program Year, AVs may still submit applications to reserve a place on the waitlist for the next Program Year for each Program category. AVs are encouraged to submit applications as they are ready instead of holding applications until June 2024. Applications on the waitlist will be processed in the order in which they were received once the new Program Year starts on June 1, 2024 when new Program capacity will be released.
- **Extended Part II Application Processing Times** - As [previously shared](#), the Program Administrator received an unusually high number of Small DG Part II applications in early October 2023. Due to recurring high volumes week over week, Part II application review time remains at approximately three and a half weeks, exceeding the typical target of two-week processing. The Program Administrator is committed to restoring review times to the typical timeframes that AVs, Designees, and underlying customers expect, and has shifted resources to the Part II processing team to address the queues and meet the expected processing target. Applications that are incomplete or contain discrepancies from Part I applications will take longer to process and will result in Need Info requests, which require complete and timely AV responses to verify the application. The Program Administrator is available to support AVs and Designees with application questions and appreciates the patience of stakeholders as we calibrate resources to meet application processing needs.
- **Application Processing Tables** - Application processing tables are maintained at IllinoisShines.com/project-application-reports/. These tables are updated daily. For questions about specific project applications, please contact the Program Administrator at admin@IllinoisShines.com.
- **Application Tips and Tricks** - Supplementing previous guidance, the Program Administrator seeks to continue supporting stakeholders in the avoidance of project applications entering *Need Info* status.
 - **Double Check Supporting Documents:** The Program has observed frequent uploading of incorrect supporting documents with project applications (e.g., plot maps for entirely different projects). The uploading of incorrect documentation triggers an application moving into *Need Info* status, and delays processing. Renaming files with new names, and double-checking files after uploading to confirm they correspond to the application are best practices.

Ongoing Program Portal Updates

- **Portal Upgrade to PVWatts API Version 8 Planned for December 12, 2023** - The Program portal currently uses [PVWatts](#) API version 6, to calculate REC values, which is due to be retired in early Jan 2024. A release currently scheduled for December 12, 2023, will upgrade the portal to PVWatts API version 8, which is the most current

version. PVWatts V8 also updates the weather data to 2020 TMY data from the NREL National Solar Radiation Database (NSRDB) for locations covered by the database.

- Ongoing portal updates, a Portal Development Roadmap, and a library of help guides can be found at IllinoisShines.com/portal-updates-help-guides/. **Beginning November 14, 2023, portal releases will take place on Tuesday nights.** Stakeholders can refer to the Portal Updates page to view the latest market facing enhancements.
- **Updates on Portal Issues, Improvements, and Future Releases** – The planned system maintenance windows on **Tuesday and Thursday evenings will be extended an additional hour (from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. CPT) through November.** 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 some cases, Portal availability may resume earlier than 11:00 p.m. CPT, though **AVs and Designees should plan on the full three hours.** In the event that portal restoration is unexpectedly incomplete as of 11:00 p.m. CPT on a given evening, an update notice will be sent to AVs and Designees.

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
Advance of Capital Evaluation Criteria	October 31, 2023	November 14, 2023	
Draft 2024 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan	August 15, 2023	September 29, 2023	The filed 2024 Long-Term Plan and Redline between the Draft 2024 Plan and Filed 2024 Plan, along with stakeholder comments for Chapter 7, 9, and 10 have been posted at the Program's website; all other comments have been shared at the Agency's website.

- **Long-Term Plan Update** - As announced on [October 23, 2023](#), the IPA filed the 2024 Long-Term Plan with the ICC on October 20, 2023. Stakeholders can engage with the filed 2024 Long-Term Plan in [Docket 23-0714](#) following the ICC's rules of practice. Please keep in mind that the filed 2024 Plan is not finalized upon filing and anything contained within the Plan should be considered preliminary. The Agency expects a final order from the ICC regarding any contested issues in the 2024 Long-Term Plan no later than February 20, 2024, which will contain the final determination on any contested issues. Then the Agency will publish a final 2024 Long-Term Plan in compliance with that final order, marking the conclusion of this process. Stakeholders can access the [filed 2024 Long-Term Plan](#) and [Redline between Draft 2024 Long-Term Plan and Filed 2024 Long-Term Plan](#) on the [Program Documents page](#) on the website.
- **November REC Invoicing Opened November 1, 2023** - REC invoices and Quarterly Netting Statements were made available for download from AV SharePoint folders on November 1, 2023. Invoices must be submitted to the utility **by today, November 10, 2023**, to receive payment for the November invoice period. Any invoice amounts not submitted to the utility by November 10, 2023, will be carried forward and included in the next invoice period (February 2023).
- **Energization Extensions** - To maximize the number of Energization extension requests processed before the Thanksgiving holiday, please submit any energization extension requests for November as early as possible. The Thanksgiving holiday will impact the number of days available to process extensions.

- **Part II Verification Cut Off for November** - To allow time for invoice calculation and generation, the last valid Part II Verification date for November will be November 24, 2023. Applications that are Part II verified on or before **November 24, 2023**, will be included in the December invoicing period. Application processing will continue throughout the last week of the month and any applications that are reviewed between November 25, 2023 and November 30, 2023, will be invoiced in January 2023.
- **Program Call Center Closed** –The Illinois Shines program call center will be closed:
 - In observance of Veterans Day - **Today, November 10, 2023**
 - In observance of Thanksgiving - November 24 – 25, 2023
- **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.
- **Program Administrator Office Hours** - Existing and prospective AVs and Designees who have Programmatic questions, project application inquiries, are experiencing technical difficulties with the Program portal, or seek support in resolving other challenges are invited to attend open Office Hours offered by the Program Administrator each week. These Zoom meetings use 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, November 15, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
 - Wednesday, November 22, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
 - Wednesday, November 29, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT

REMINDER: All Program updates can be found on the [Program Updates webpage](#), and a [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 or call 877-783-1820.