MES 2023-24 Year-End Webinar, Upcoming Portal Maintenance On March 4 & 7, Final IPA Policy Study

March 1, 2024

Next Week in Illinois Shines *(Program events & due dates found at the Vendor Forums & Key Dates webpage)*

- Events
  - March 4, 2024 - **Portal Maintenance** from 2:00 a.m. – 5:00 a.m. CPT
  - March 6, 2024 - **Minimum Equity Standard (MES) 2023-24 Year-End Report Webinar** at 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. CPT. Registration link here
  - March 7, 2024 - **Portal Maintenance** from 2:00 a.m. – 5:00 a.m. CPT
- Due Dates
  - March 5, 2024 – Re-batching opens for AVs
  - March 7, 2024– Re-batching closes for AVs at 12:00 p.m. CPT

Stakeholder Support

- **Program Administrator Office Hours** – March 6, 2024 - 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. CPT - Individual AV or Designee support for Program requirements, portal, application, or other questions. Zoom link: https://energy-solution.zoom.us/j/95588710302Co
- **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.
  - **Standing Order** - When filling out the Standing Order, it is important to remember that the application ID must be included in the notes field. Applications that do not have this step completed when registering a project with GATS/M-RETS is a common error that will result in a *Need Info* request and a delay in the application moving forward.

Program News – New or Updated Items *(All Program updates can be found on the Program Updates webpage)*

- **ICC Issues Final Order Approving the 2024 Long-Term Plan** - On February 20, 2024, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) issued a Final Order in which it approved the Administrative Law Judge's Proposed Order, with modifications, of the 2024 Long-Term Plan. The Final Order is available in Docket 23-0714. The Agency has 60 days to publish a final 2024 Long-Term Plan that conforms to the 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; a final version of the Plan will be added when it becomes available. A new Program Guidebook that outlines requirements for the 2024-25 Program Year will be released in late April.
- **Final Illinois Power Agency Policy Study To Be Published** - Following a request for public comment feedback on the draft Policy Study, including the publication of comments received, the Agency is finalizing the IPA Policy Study, which will be made available at its website at https://ipa.illinois.gov/ipa-policy-study.html.
- **Minimum Equity Standard (MES) 2023-24 Year-End Report Webinar** - On February 27, 2024 the Program published guidance on the MES Year-end Report. The MES Year-end Report is due July 15, 2024, following the close of this Program Year, and encompasses reporting related to participating entities' Illinois-based project workforce for the 2023-24 Program Year. The Program will hold an MES 2023-24 Year-end Report webinar on <mark>Wednesday, March 6, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. CPT</mark>. Registration link: https://energy-solution.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hGGe-H0hTCi698wS18wyzw#/registration

- **Upcoming Portal Maintenance on March 4 and March 7, 2024** - The portal will be unavailable due to scheduled system maintenance windows on <mark>Monday, March 4, 2024 from 2:00 a.m. – 5:00 a.m. CPT</mark> and <mark>Thursday, March 7, 2024 from 2:00 a.m. – 5:00 a.m. CPT</mark> during which the Portal is expected to be unavailable to users, which the Program hopes is minimally disruptive to Program participants. **Users working in the portal should save their work prior to the 2:00 a.m. CPT start of system maintenance window, as any unsaved information will be lost when the system is moved into maintenance mode.** The Portal availability may resume earlier than 5:00 a.m. CPT, though AVs and Designees should plan on the full three hours.
- **Resources for Equity Eligible Contractors and Small Businesses -** As previously shared, the Illinois Shines Mentorship Pilot concluded on December 18, 2023. Participants in the Mentorship Pilot, which began October 30, 2023, completed eight weekly sessions with the Program Administrator team during the pilot. The Program would like to congratulate those participants who completed the pilot, and to thank them for their engagement, participation, and feedback which will be used to strengthen Program support for participating entities. A [report](#) summarizing the inaugural Mentorship Program is now available.

    In addition, as previously shared, on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, ILSFA hosted a workshop to support small and emerging businesses. The workshop may be beneficial to businesses that participate in both Illinois Shines and ILSFA. Supplementing that support, the Program has published the first edition of its [Small and Emerging Business Guide](#).
- **ComEd Electric Choice ID Implementation and the CS March Quarterly Reporting Period Update** - The IPA is aware that the ComEd community solar subscription portal has been inaccessible since February 15, 2024. The IPA has been in contact with impacted AVs.
- **Consumer Protection Working Group** - The Agency and its Program Administrators for Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All hosted the March Consumer Protection Working Group meeting today, March 1, 2024. The presentation and notes from the Working Group will be published on the on the [Program website](#), where meeting agendas are also added. The Working Group meets the first Friday of each month, with the next meeting to be held on Friday, April 5, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. CPT. If you are interested in participating in the group and future meetings, please submit the [form](#) on the website.
- **Security Enhancement: Illinois Shines Portal Password Expiration – Updated Date** - To maintain security of the portal and its data, effective after the March 19 portal maintenance window, registered users will be required to update their password every 180 days. AVs and Designees can change their passwords at their convenience but will receive a reminder notice 10 days prior to expiration. If a registered user fails to change their password, their password will become expired, and users will need to request a new one before they can log in. To establish a new password for an expired account, select the "Forgot Password" link on the Portal login page and the system will send the user an email with a link and instructions for setting a new password. Steps to change your password before expiration:
    1. Login to the [Illinois Shines Portal](#).
    2. View your profile by selecting the *person* icon in the upper right corner next to your name.
    3. Scroll to the bottom of your profile and select the *Change Password* button.
    4. Enter your new password in both fields and select the *Change* button.
    5. Once back on your profile select *Save*.

Please Note: Passwords already over 180 days in age on <mark>March 19, 2024</mark>, when this update is released will be locked out and require use of the Forgot Password option. **The Program Administrator suggests registered users be proactive and update their password now.**

- **New to the Program Website** - The following key additions to www.IllinoisShines.com have been shared:
  - A new Mentorship Program page under the AV & Designee Resources menu bar
  - State Holidays have been linked to the Contact page
  - The Program Guidebook has been updated to correct typographical errors in the Organized Labor Union Minimum Equity Standard Waiver Request Form (Program Documents page)

<u>Program News – Previously Published Items</u> (*All Program updates can be found on the Program Updates webpage)*

- **General Program**
  - o **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. Please see the full Request for AVs and Designees, including details regarding the opportunity to support stranded customers, eligibility requirements, and anticipated responsibilities.
  - o **IPA Annual Report** - On February 15, 2024, the Illinois Power Agency released its Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report. Through intuitive charts and graphs, this report tells an interesting story of how the IPA is integrating and developing an equitable clean energy landscape in Illinois. Additionally, the report provides a sneak peek into the future by highlighting upcoming key initiatives for the Agency. This Annual Report period covers the State Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023) as well as subsequent events in the second half of calendar year 2023.
  - o **Illinois Shines Legacy Portal Retirement** - On June 30, 2024, the Program will be retiring the Illinois Shines legacy Portal administered by the prior Program Administrator, after which AVs and Designees will no longer be able to access it. **To minimize disruptions to AVs and Designees and ensure they have necessary portal data, the Program requests users who still access the legacy portal provide information on how they currently use the legacy Portal and how often it is accessed.** Approved Vendors and Designees who continue accessing the Illinois Shines legacy portal should provide this information to the Program Administrator at Admin@IllinoisShines.com.
  - o **Project Inspections to Resume March 1, 2024** - Inspections are critical to ensure Program requirements are met and that the system equipment described in the project's technical documentation of the Part II application, including site plans and photos, match what is installed on-site. The inspection process is designed to verify that installations meet the Program requirements outlined in the Program Guidebook. Illinois Shines project inspections will resume today, March 1, 2024, and a detailed announcement providing an overview of the inspection types, minor and material deficiencies, and the inspection results process will be provided to stakeholders.
  - o **Energy Workforce Equity Portal Participation Sees Continued Growth** - On February 23, 2024, the Agency published an announcement on the Energy Workforce Equity Portal. The Portal continues to serve as a valuable tool for job seekers to find out if they qualify as EEPs, register to be listed on the Portal, and view clean energy job postings from entities seeking to hire EEPs. Please see the announcement for additional information.

<u>Ongoing Operations Updates</u>

- **March REC Invoicing Opened March 1, 2024** - REC invoices and Quarterly Netting Statements were made available for download from AV SharePoint folders on March 1, 2024. Invoices must be submitted to the utility by March 10, 2024 to receive payment for the March invoice period. Any invoice amounts not submitted to the utility by March 10, 2024 will be carried forward and included in the next invoice period (June 2024).

- **Part II Verification Cut Off for March -** To allow time for invoice calculation and generation, the last valid Part II Verification date for March will be **March 25, 2024**. Applications that are Part II verified on or before March 25, 2024 will be included in the April invoicing period. Application processing will continue throughout the last week of the month and any applications that are reviewed between March 26, 2024 and March 31, 2024 will be invoiced in May 2024.
- **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.
    - <u>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.</u> 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 first half of 2024:

Re-Batching Opens for AVs	Election Deadline – 12:00 p.m. CPT (Re-batching closes for AVs)	Trade Date (ICC Meeting Date)
3/5/2024	3/7/2024	3/21/2024
3/19/2024	3/21/2024	4/4/2024
4/2/2024	4/4/2024	4/18/2024
4/16/2024	4/18/2024	5/2/2024
4/30/2024	5/2/2024	5/16/2024
5/13/2024	5/15/2024	5/30/2024
5/17/2024	5/21/2024	6/5/2024
6/3/2024	6/5/2024	6/20/2024
6/13/2024	6/17/2024	7/2/2024

<u>Application Processing Updates</u>

- **Extended Application Processing Times Resolved -** The Program Administrator has returned both Part I and Part II application processing times back to within the two-week expected turnaround time. As a reminder, AVs may still submit applications for closed blocks to be placed on a first-come-first-served waitlist. Waitlisted applications will not be verified until after the start of the new program year.
- **Application Processing Tables -** Application processing tables are maintained at IllinoisShines.com/project-application-reports/. These tables are typically updated daily, but the Program Administrator is currently experiencing technical issues and data on the Project Application Reports page and it may not be updated daily. Thank you for your patience as the Program Administrator works on a solution. For questions about specific project applications, please contact the Program Administrator at admin@IllinoisShines.com.

Ongoing Program Portal Updates

- Ongoing portal updates, a Portal Development Roadmap, and a library of help guides can be found at https://illinoisshines.com/portal-updates/. 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 –** Scheduled system maintenance windows continue on **Tuesday and Thursday evenings (from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. CPT),** during which times the Portal is expected to be unavailable to users, which the Program hopes is minimally disruptive to Program participants. **Users working in the portal should save their work prior to the 8:00 p.m. CPT start of system maintenance window, 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.**

Requirements and Reminders

- **Stakeholder Feedback -** This table outlines current and forthcoming proposals and feedback requests, which can also be found at the Program website:

Proposal or Feedback Topic and Link to Details	Request for Comment Released	Deadline for Comment	Results or Updates to Request
Draft Policy Study Open for Public Comment	January 22, 2024	February 26, 2024	Comments received are published here. The Agency is finalizing the IPA Policy Study, which will be made available at its website at https://ipa.illinois.gov/ipa-policy-study.html

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