

Draft Program Guidebook Released for Feedback – Comments Due March 27, Key Program Year 2024-25 Dates, MES Webinar and Resources

March 15, 2024

Coming up in Illinois Shines (Program events & due dates found at the [Vendor Forums & Key Dates webpage](#))

- **Events**
 - No events are scheduled for next week
- **Due Dates**
 - March 18, 2024 - Project inspections resume
 - March 19, 2024 - Portal update is released and users with passwords that are over 180 days in age will be locked out and require use of the Forgot Password option
 - March 19, 2024 - Re-batching opens for AVs
 - March 21, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. CPT - Re-batching closes for AVs
 - **Key Dates Relating to Program Year 2024-25 start commencing on June 3, 2024**
 - March 13, 2024 – Draft Program Guidebook released for stakeholder feedback
 - March 22, 2024 – Draft REC Contract released for stakeholder feedback
 - March 27, 2024 – Deadline for Program Guidebook stakeholder feedback
 - April 5, 2024 – Deadline for REC Contract stakeholder feedback
 - April 19, 2024 – Final Program Guidebook Final CP Handbook and Final Contract Requirements will be released
 - Mid-April, 2024 – MES 2024-25 Compliance Plans window opens
 - End of April, 2024 – Final REC Contract will be released
 - May 1, 2024 – MES Year-End Reports submission window opens
 - May 27 - June 2, 2024 – Program Year 2023-24 closes
 - June 3, 2024 – Program Year 2024-25 opens and MES Compliance Plans for Program Year 2024-25 are due
 - July 15, 2024 – MES Year-End Report for Program Year 2023-24 are due and REC Contract Annual Reports are due

Stakeholder Support

- **Program Administrator Office Hours** – March 20, 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.
 - **When to include an ‘Unavailability of Net Metering Acknowledgment Form’ or a ‘Net Metering Letter’:** A [Utility Net Metering Reference Table](#) available at the Program website lists each utility that has participated in the Program thus far and whether they a) provide 1:1 net metering and b) if net metering is provided and if the utility issues a Net Metering Letter.
 - The Utility Net Metering Reference Table should be referred to when submitting Part I to determine if an acknowledgement form is required.
 - If the utility does NOT provide 1:1 net metering or a materially similar program, the customer is required to sign a form that must be uploaded to the Part I application as an ‘Additional Document’. **If the signed form is not included, this will result in a *Need Info* request, causing delay in review and approval of the project application.**

- For more information on 1:1 net metering and other crediting approaches, please refer to the [November 11, 2022](#) Program Announcement and Section 16-107.5 of the [Public Utilities Act](#).
- The Utility Net Metering Reference Table should also be referenced when submitting a Part II application to determine if a 'Net Metering Letter' is required. If a utility offers net metering (or a material equivalent) AND provides a 'Net Metering Letter' (separate from the *Certificate of Completion/Permission to Operate*) confirming that net metering has been approved, then the 'Net Metering Letter' must be included with the application; **its absence will result in a Need Info request causing delay in review and project and approval of the project application.** Currently, the only utility company that does this is ComEd, but the information could be updated at any time and stakeholders should consult the most recent reference table.

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

- **Draft Program Guidebook Released for Feedback – Comments Due March 27, 2024** - On [March 13, 2024](#), the Program released the draft Program Guidebook for feedback. The announcement detailed next steps in the Program Guidebook comment and update process, including links to the [draft Program Guidebook](#) and a [redline comparison between current 2023-24 Program Guidebook and draft 2024-25 Program Guidebook](#), that outlined high level changes to the draft Program Guidebook. Comments are due on **March 27, 2024** and should be emailed to IPA.Solar@Illinois.gov with the subject line **"2024-25 Program Guidebook Feedback"**.
- **2024 REC Delivery Contracts** - The draft 2024 REC Delivery Contracts will be released for stakeholder feedback on March 22, 2024. After comment review, the final versions of the REC contracts are expected to be published on the Program website by the end of April 2024.
- **New to the Program Website** - The following key additions to www.IllinoisShines.com have been shared:
 - [Draft Program Guidebook](#) and [redline comparison between current 2023-24 Program Guidebook and draft 2024-25 Program Guidebook](#) ([Program Documents](#) page)
 - Updated [Portal Development Roadmap](#) ([Portal Updates](#) page)

Program News – Previously Published Items (All Program updates can be found on the [Program Updates webpage](#))

- **General Program**
 - **Minimum Equity Standard (MES) 2023-24 Year-End Report Webinar and Resources** - An informational webinar on the MES 2023-24 Year-End Report was held on March 6, 2024. The [recording](#) and [presentation slides](#) have been uploaded to the [Program Year Webinars](#) page on the website, and questions and answers from the webinar will soon be published. As a reminder, the Program published guidance on the MES Year-end Report on [February 27, 2024](#). 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. Stakeholders are encouraged to visit the program's Equity Accountability System page for MES resources and may request support from the Program Administrator by emailing MES@illinoisshines.com. FAQs related to the webinar will be released next week to ensure proper clarity is provided to Program participants on these important equity provisions.
 - **Project Inspections Resumption in March 2024** – On [March 6, 2024](#), the Program announced details on the resumption of project inspections starting on March 18, 2024. Inspections are critical to ensure Program requirements are met and that the installed system matches the equipment described in the Part II application, including site plans and photos. For assistance or questions relating to project inspections, contact the Inspection Team at inspections@illinoisshines.com.

- **Resources for EECs and Small Businesses** - The Program added a [Mentorship Program page](#) to the Program website, providing resources in support of AVs and Designees that are minority-owned, woman-owned, veteran-owned, disability-owned or small businesses, and EECs. The Mentorship Program page features a report summarizing the inaugural Illinois Shines Mentorship Program, FAQs from the Mentorship Program's eight sessions, and the first edition of the [Small and Emerging Business Guide](#) published for new businesses seeking information on getting started with Illinois Solar for All or Illinois Shines.
- **Final Illinois Power Agency Policy Study Published** – See [previous](#) announcement
- **Register for IPA Power Hour– Renewable Energy Projects Financing: Distributed Solar** – The Agency will host the March Power Hour on **March 29, 2024** at 12:00 p.m. CPT. Please visit this [link](#) to register for the event.
- **Consumer Education and Protection** – See full Consumer Education and Protection [hub on Program website](#)
 - **Annual Complaints Report Published** - On February 29, 2024, the Agency filed the [2023 Annual Complaints Report](#). Under the Long-Term Plan, the Agency is required to file this report annually with the Illinois Commerce Commission to document the frequency and nature of complaints related both to Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All. The report also includes details of enforcement actions taken by the respective Program Administrators related to such complaints. This year's report highlights both data surrounding complaints as well as certain trends related to complaints.

Ongoing Operations Updates

- **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.
 - **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 the next re-batching windows:

Re-Batching Opens for AVs	Election Deadline – 12:00 p.m. CPT (Re-batching closes for AVs)	Trade Date (ICC Meeting Date)
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
7/8/2024	7/10/2024	7/24/2024

Application Processing Updates

- **Application Processing Tables** - Application processing tables are maintained at [IllinoisShines.com/project-application-reports/](https://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.**

Development Focus	Details	Planned or Actual Delivery
Enhancement		
Disclosure Form CSVs - Portal Validation Fixes	This enhancement will update the Portals CSV Disclosure Form import validations to match the latest Disclosure Form CSV templates.	March 5, 2024

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 Program Guidebook	March 13, 2024	March 27, 2024	Comments should be emailed to IPA.Solar@Illinois.gov with the subject line "2024-25 Program Guidebook Feedback"
Draft Policy Study Open for Public Comment	January 22, 2024	February 26, 2024	Comments received are published here . On March 1, 2024 the Agency finalized the IPA Policy Study, which is available at https://ipa.illinois.gov/ipa-policy-study.html

- **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.
- **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.
- **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 **March 19, 2024**, 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.**
- **Illinois Shines Legacy Portal Retirement** – As [previously announced](#), on June 30, 2024 the Program will retired the Illinois Shines legacy Portal administered by the prior Program Administrator, after which AVs and Designees will no longer be able to access it. Please see the previous announcement for more details.

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