

Community-Driven Community Solar Application Window, Release of Traditional Community Solar Scores, IPA Publishes *Program Year 2023-24 End of Year Report*

August 9, 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**
 - August 10, 2024 – August REC Invoicing Deadline
 - August 15, 2024 – Election Deadline: Project Re-Batch or Withdrawal (for August 29 ICC meeting)
 - September 3, 2024 – CDCS Application Submission Deadline for Program Year 2024-25

Stakeholder Support

- **Program Administrator Office Hours** - August 14, 2024 from 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** - The Program Administrator publishes [Tips and Tricks](#) to help support stakeholders in avoiding project applications entering *Need Info* status and delaying their review and approval.
 - **Application Resources** - AVs who have questions or require clarification related to Part I or Part II applications are encouraged to seek assistance **before** submitting an application. The Program has several resources available to AVs who have questions including, reaching out their Sector Strategist, attending Office Hours, emailing admin@illinoisshines.com with questions, or consulting one of the [Program help guides](#), including the new [Distributed Generation Project Application Checklist](#).

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

- **Community Solar Program News** - See full [TCS](#) and [CDCS](#) hubs on Program website.
 - **Community-Driven Community Solar Application Deadline** - As outlined in Section 5 of the Program Guidebook, the application window for Community-Driven Community Solar (“CDCS”) applications closes 90 days after the start of the Program Year. With the Program Year commencing on June 3, 2024, the application submission deadline for Program Year 2024-25 CDCS projects is **September 3, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. CPT. Applications are not accepted after the close of the application window.** Additional information about the review and scoring and CDCS project applications will be published following the close of the application window.
 - **Community-Driven Community Solar – Local Subscriber Verification** - [As shared on August 5](#), all CDCS projects submitted during or after the 2022-23 Program Year will be evaluated against the scoring guidelines outlined in [Appendix F](#) of the Program Guidebook. At Part II application subscriber verification and intervals throughout the 15-year REC Contract, the Program Administrator will confirm that commitments to local subscribers have been maintained. The Program Administrator will verify that the local subscribers are subscribers in the same county where the project is located, or if that project’s county population is below 50,000, then also in adjacent counties. Please see [the full announcement](#) for additional details on the local subscriber verification process, including a table sharing county populations for purposes of the process.

- **Traditional Community Solar (TCS) Scoring Update** - Preliminary scores for all TCS projects submitted during the “first day” application window on June 3, 2024 were shared individually with each AV on July 19, 2024. In accordance with the TCS scoring guidelines previously published in both the 2024 Long-Term Plan (pg. 164) and the 2024-25 Program Guidebook (pg. 133), the Program Administrator has scored all TCS projects submitted on June 3, 2024, that completed application processing. These scores will be used to determine the waitlist order once random selection takes place and the 20% developer cap is applied. As shared on August 9, 2024, the scores have been posted on the Program website on the Traditional Community Solar page of the Project Category Hub. Please see the [full announcement](#) for additional details including the process by which Approved Vendors may appeal decisions made by the Program Administrator on the scoring of their projects.

Please see the current scoring schedule below.

- Application Review Period: Applications undergo initial review by Program Administrator – Approximately 4 weeks (*Complete*)
 - Application Cure Period: Approved Vendors cure deficiencies identified by Program Administrator – Approximately 2 weeks (*Complete*)
 - Application Scoring Period: Program Administrator begins scoring process for all relevant applications (those submitted without deficiencies and those that successfully cure deficiencies during the 2-week cure period) – Approximately 3 weeks (*Complete*)
 - Scoring Cure Period: AVs are offered a chance to review initial score and dispute and resolve any discrepancies – Approximately 2 weeks (*Complete*)
 - **Scores Published: AVs wishing to appeal their project score will have two weeks from the receipt of scores to submit an appeal to the Program Administrator (August 9 – 23)**
 - Random selection event to ordinarily rank projects with tied scores. The Agency expects that random selection of projects within tied score brackets will be necessary based on the current scoring, but this process cannot occur until the appeal process is complete and all scores are confirmed. The Agency intends to hold the random selection event on **September 10, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. CPT**. During this process, the 20% developer cap will be applied, and the project waitlist position will be determined. TCS Random Selection Event webinar registration link: https://energy-solution.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_wUfQciTZO_K9nTbTXOaxgQ
 - Final scores and project selection published
- **IPA Issues Illinois Shines Program Year 2023-24 End of Year Report** - On August 8, 2024, the Program announced the release of the [Program Year 2023-24 End of Year Report](#). The Report presents a detailed infographic which highlights data on some of the most significant and high-impact activities produced by the Program and its participating stakeholders, including dollar value in incentive payments invoiced to utilities for approved and Energized projects, number of project applications reviewed, number of applications ICC approved, and allocated capacity (in MW), for each of the Program’s six project categories, and number of homes and businesses to benefit from Community Solar projects approved in the Program Year, highlights pertaining to the Equity Accountability System, Consumer Protection activities, stakeholder participation, and support provided by the Program and its Program Administrator, among other information. The full report is available at the Program website at <https://illinoisshines.com/about/>.
 - **New to the Program Website** - The following key additions to www.IllinoisShines.com have been shared:
 - [Traditional Community Solar Scores for Program Year 2024-25 \(TCS Project Category Hub\)](#) page)
 - [Acceptable Formats for Part II CoC/PTO Documents \(Help Guides and Application Tips\)](#) page)
 - [Minimum Equity Standard Waiver Request](#) (Questions Template for Reference) ([EAS](#) page)
 - [Program Year 2023-24 End of Year Report \(About the Program\)](#) page)

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

- **ComEd CC&B Community Solar Billing UPDATE** - As many Illinois Shines participants are aware, ComEd has been experiencing significant delays in applying community solar bill credits to customers’ accounts. Last week, ComEd provided an update that all outstanding community solar bill credits will be included on

customers' bills for July. Many customers will see large amounts of credits added to their account at once; in many cases, the credits may be much more than the customer can use right away. ComEd will allow customers to request "refund checks" for their outstanding community solar credits. This will allow the customer to receive the value of the credits right away, rather than using the credits over subsequent months. Community solar providers may want to ensure that their customers, especially those who reach out with questions or concerns, are aware of this option. **The customer must affirmatively reach out to ComEd to request the refund check.**

Please also note that the Consumer Protection Handbook (Section VI.B.2) has specific requirements that apply when a community solar provider bills a customer for multiple billing cycles at once, including offering customers a no-penalty payment plan if the customer is billed for 3 or more billing cycles at once (or 2 or more billing cycles for ILSFA customers). Community solar providers should review these provisions and ensure they are complying with all applicable requirements.

- **Changes to Illinois Net Metering Bill Credits** - Illinois Shines prioritizes educating and informing customers about all aspects of their decision to go solar, including the significant financial commitment of solar installation. This includes Approved Vendors or their Designees providing customers with relevant information about net metering or other crediting approaches. Historically, Illinois utilities have been required to provide customer bill credits for excess energy produced by their residential or small commercial solar system at the full retail rate but under the state's [Climate and Equitable Jobs Act](#) ("CEJA"), net metering offerings will change to supply-only starting January 1, 2025. This means that for customers interconnecting renewable energy systems to the grid in ComEd, Ameren, or MidAmerican territories after December 31, 2024, full retail rate net metering will no longer be available. In simplest terms, customers will be credited for excess electricity that their solar project sends to the grid at their electricity supply rate. Though the law sets a deadline of December 31, 2024 for a solar system to be approved for interconnection, installed, and have received permission to operate from the utility, all required documentation must be received by the utility no later than 5 p.m. CPT on December 13, 2024 to be eligible to receive permission to operate by December 31, 2024. The Agency has created a [Frequently Asked Questions \("FAQs"\) document](#) to provide information to AVs/Designees and consumers about the changes, which can be found in the linked document and on the Program's website:
 - [FAQs Related to Changes in Net Metering in Illinois \(AVs and Designees\)](#) - July 26, 2024 on the [Net Metering Credits](#) page and Approved Vendor- and Designee-Facing FAQs on the [Vendor FAQs](#) page
 - Consumer-Facing FAQs on the [Consumer FAQs](#) page
- **Alert: Notification of Email Phishing Attempts Posing as Illinois Shines Program Administrator** - On July 29, the Program Administrator [alerted stakeholders](#) to phishing attempts sent via email to AVs and Designees urging vendors to take prompt action to "to confirm or update " information (including AV/Designee name, AV/Designee ID, email address, and other information drawn from the publicly available rosters of AVs, Designees, EECs, EEC Designees and EEC Subcontractors) by clicking a link in the email. **These emails have not been sent from the Program and are not legitimate requests for information. They should not be responded to, and recipients should not click the links in the message. If you clicked the link in the phishing email (or are unsure if you may have) and if you believe you subsequently shared Program portal credentials, please alert the Program Administrator and change your Program portal password immediately.** The Program thanks stakeholders for alerting the Program Administrator to these emails, and recommends individual recipients contact their company's system administrators to report the messages.
- **Minimum Equity Standard (MES) Waiver Score Threshold for AVs/Designees Not Employing Subcontractors** - The Equity Accountability System requires entities participating in Illinois Shines to meet the Minimum Equity Standard on an annual basis and to demonstrate their compliance. In rare cases, the Agency may grant a waiver from this requirement where the entity demonstrates significant efforts in outreach activities. Entities submitting MES Waiver requests must receive a minimum score of 20 points based on the scoring rubric; for AVs and Designees that do not employ subcontractors for Illinois Shines project work, the minimum required score to qualify for a Waiver is 16 points. This adjustment acknowledges that the waiver criteria regarding

direct outreach to Equity Eligible Contractors is not applicable to entities that do not employ subcontractors, thus removing the four points typically awarded for this activity in question 4.d of the scoring rubric.

- **MES Waiver Microsoft Form** - The Program has transitioned the MES waiver submission from a PDF template to a [fillable Microsoft Form](#) at the [Equity Accountability System](#) page. While the content of the waiver has not changed, the Microsoft Form is more efficient for the submitter to complete and assists the Program Administration team with more expedient data collection for review. **Supplemental documentation must still be submitted to mes@illinoisshines.com, with the subject line “*Company Name* MES Waiver Request”.** For stakeholder reference only, a [template of the questions](#) included in the MES Waiver Request form has been restored to the Program website.
- **Equity Eligible Contractor News** – see full [EEC hub](#) on Program website
 - **Program Year 2024-25 Mentorship Program** - Following the successful Mentorship Pilot Program in Program Year 2023-24, a second cohort of the eight-week training series will be held from January to March 2025. The [Mentorship Program](#) is open to EEC AVs and new AVs that are minority-owned, woman-owned, veteran-owned, disability-owned or considered a small business, and Designees, with the goal to help them learn about Program requirements and application procedures. Registration to participate in the 2024-2025 cohort will begin in November 2024. Please contact the EEC Sector Strategist at eec@illinoisshines.com if you have questions about the Mentorship Program.
- **General Program**
 - **Annual Reports - Next Steps** - AVs with an active REC Contract are required to submit an Annual Report pertaining to the contracts and systems in their portfolio during the Annual Report period. Annual Reports were due July 15. Submission of an Annual Report is a Program requirement, and failure to submit an Annual Report is an Event of Default under the REC Contract that puts both the Approved Vendor and its contracted projects in jeopardy of continued participation in the Program. The Annual Report Cure Period began on July 16, and the Program Administrator will contact AVs to cure any report discrepancies. Key dates relating to Annual Reports:
 - October 1, 2024 – Last day for Program to inform AVs of discrepancies on Annual Reports
 - October 14, 2024 – Annual Reports are finalized
 - November 15, 2024 – Program Administrator Drawdown calculations completeAnnual Report resources are available to AVs at the Program website’s [Help Guides and Application Tips and Frequently Asked Questions](#) pages.
 - **Clarification of “Interconnecting Utility” and “Contracting Utility”** - See [previous](#) announcement
 - **CEJA Workforce Development News** - See [previous](#) announcement
 - **Disclosure Form REC Incentive Calculator Adjustments** – See [previous](#) announcement
- **Minimum Equity Standard (“MES”) Reminders**
 - **2024-25 Program Year MES Compliance Plans and 2023-24 MES Year-End Reports Past Due** - The 2024-25 Program Year MES Compliance Plans were due June 3, 2024, and 2023-24 Program Year MES Year-End Reports were due July 15, 2024. **Any Compliance Plans or Year-End Reports that have not been submitted ARE OVERDUE** and participating entities who did not comply with these Program requirements may be subject to disciplinary action. The Program Administrator is currently working to review submitted Compliance Plans, and AVs and Designees can expect to be notified of the Pass/Fail result from their Compliance Plan within the next four to six weeks. Program Year 2023-24 Year-End Reports can be submitted via the online form here: <https://forms.office.com/r/FM6YbtEFWd>. Failure to submit an MES Year-End Report will result in escalation to the Program Administrator’s Consumer Protection Team consistent with Sections X.C-D of the Consumer Protection Handbook and may risk future good standing in the Program and result in disciplinary action. Resources on the MES and Equity Accountability System can be found here, <https://illinoisshines.com/equity-accountability-system/>, and stakeholders may contact the Program Administrator’s MES team at mes@illinoisshines.com for assistance.
 - **Community-Driven Community Solar (“CDCS”) – Part II Demonstration of Project Commitments and Permissible Changes** – See [previous](#) announcement

Ongoing Operations Updates

- **Re-Batching for ICC Meetings** – Due to an increase in late requests to withhold projects from submission to the ICC, the Program Administrator would like to remind AVs of the important information below.

In advance of each submission of batches to the ICC for approval, AVs are provided the opportunity to withhold or re-batch projects. AVs must indicate any requests to withdraw or withhold projects during the two day re-batching window. 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)
8/13/2024	8/15/2024	8/29/2024
8/26/2024	8/28/2024	9/12/2024
9/10/2024	9/12/2024	9/26/2024
9/24/2024	9/26/2024	10/10/2024
9/30/2024	10/2/2024	10/17/2024
10/15/2024	10/17/2024	10/31/2024
10/21/2024	10/23/2024	11/7/2024
11/1/2024	11/6/2024	11/21/2024

- **Part II Verification Cut Off for August** - To allow time for invoice calculation and generation, the last valid Part II Verification date for July will be **August 26, 2024**. Applications that are Part II verified on or before August 26, 2024 will be included in the September invoicing period. Application processing will continue throughout the last week of the month and any applications that are reviewed between August 27, 2024 and August 31, 2024 will be invoiced in October 2024.

Application Processing Updates

- **Application Processing Update** - The Program Administrator continues making substantial progress reviewing waitlist applications since the start of the 2024-25 Program Year. On June 3, the waitlist volume totaled 7,938 Small DG and 208 Large DG applications. Since June 3, over **5,650** Small DG Part I previously waitlisted applications have been reviewed and over **4,940** verified. The full queue of previously waitlisted Large DG Part I applications has been processed, and we are exceeding our expectation to process applications within two weeks of batch/paid submittals for the Large DG Part I category.

Currently the Program Administrator anticipates completing the review of all previously waitlisted DG applications by the second full week of August. The Program continues reviewing Small DG Part I applications from May. Once that very large batch has been processed, more visible application processing progress against previously waitlisted applications, including another large spike submitted just prior to the start of the

Program Year, will be evident. The Program Administrator expects to be within a two-week turnaround time for review of applications submitted in the 2024–25 Program Year at the end of September for all application categories. This forecast is subject to change, and updates will be provided in each weekly announcement until processing times are back within a normal range.

Ongoing Program Portal Updates

- The latest Portal updates and enhancements, a Portal Development Roadmap, and portal help guides can be found at <https://illinoisshines.com/portal-updates/>.
- **Portal Maintenance and 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 typically unavailable to users; the Program hopes these windows are 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		
Ability to Export report of Illinois Shines projects for Approved Vendors	This enhancement allows Approved Vendors to export their project data to a CSV file from the project application dashboard. The exported report will contain Part I and Part II data based on the filters applied in the dashboard. To use this feature, Approved Vendors should navigate to the Project Dashboard (Menu: Vendor -> Project Applications -> View) Apply any Search Filters they would like in the column headings, and then select the "Export Project Data" button at the top of the page.	August 6, 2024
Disclosure Form: Add REC Warning on Submission	This enhancement will add a warning message to all DG Disclosure Forms on submission when the Expected value of the REC incentive payments does not match the current Program Year's pricing. This warning message will allow users to proceed with warning that the Program Administrator may take a closer look at applications that don't match the current Program Year's pricing.	August 6, 2024

Requirements and Reminders

- **Stakeholder Feedback** - There are no current proposals and feedback requests, but forthcoming proposals and feedback requests will be shared here. Details on previous proposals and feedback requests can be found [at the Program website](#).
- **IPA Request for AVs and Installer Designees Interested To Serve Stranded Illinois Shines DG Customers** - As previously [announced](#), the Program seeks entities interested in serving stranded customers, and [updates the lists](#) of participating vendors on a rolling basis. The original announcements include details regarding the opportunity to support stranded customers, eligibility requirements, and anticipated responsibilities.

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