



2024 Illinois Shines Approved Vendor and Designee Program Satisfaction Survey Summary and Results

Public Release

January 2025



Summary of Findings

The Illinois Shines program deployed its second annual Program Satisfaction Survey of Approved Vendors and Designees to evaluate their satisfaction with the Program. With 194 responses (12% response rate), the overall customer satisfaction score for the Illinois Shines program was 67%, reflecting a 7% increase from the 2023 baseline. Additionally, all subcategories related to Program satisfaction showed improved scores. A significant portion of respondents (44%) reported that they have participated in the Illinois Shines program for over three years, and a large majority (63%) indicated that they only submit Distributed Generation projects to the Program. The top two areas for improvement are *Portal functionality*, with some noting that the Portal requires enhancements, either in general or in specific aspects, and *Program complexity*, with respondents expressing concerns that the Program has too many requirements or is difficult to navigate.

Purpose

The Illinois Shines Approved Vendor and Designee Program Satisfaction Survey is intended to obtain an understanding of the level of satisfaction experienced by Illinois Shines program participants. The survey will be released annually and each year, the Program Administrator will review, analyze, and report on survey results, and conduct a comparative analysis to the 2023 baseline survey.

The specific goals of this survey are to:

- Assess satisfaction scores for the Program year over year
- Identify areas for improvement and solicit ideas for Program improvements

Audience

All active Illinois Shines Approved Vendors and Designees in good standing were invited to complete the survey. The 2024 survey was distributed to 1,584 unique email addresses across 398 Approved Vendors and 607 Designees (Designees with multiple Designee IDs were counted as a single company). The individual response rate was 12% (194 responses) and 17% of invited companies (174 companies) submitted responses, with a relatively even distribution between Approved Vendors and Designees.

The survey announcement was sent to both primary contact and secondary contact (when available) emails for all Approved Vendors, and to the designated contact emails for all Designees. It is worth noting is that many email addresses are shared inboxes and the survey list included Designees that may have limited interaction with Illinois Shines, or who may have left the company.

Objective

An objective for the 2024-25 Program Year is to increase the Program satisfaction score to 65% or higher, compared to last year's satisfaction score of 60%. Additionally, we will track our progress by looking for increases in satisfaction scores for all survey questions.

Survey Logistics

The survey was launched on September 23, 2024 (Program Quarter 2). The Program Administrator decided to send the survey in Program Quarter 2 to allow Approved Vendors and Designees the opportunity to begin operating and forming opinions on any Program updates or changes that came into effect with the start of a new Program Year, including the publication of the 2024 Long-Term Plan.

The original survey completion deadline was October 11, 2024, but was extended to October 25, 2024, following a lower-than expected response rate, to encourage greater participation.

To promote the survey, the Program issued a standalone announcement, and sent weekly reminders via email and the weekly Program announcement while the survey was open. Additionally, a reminder banner was added on the Portal homepage, and sector strategists issued personal communications.

Results

The 2024 Approved Vendor and Designee survey resulted in an overall Program customer satisfaction score of 67%. This reflects a 7% increase compared to the 2023 baseline and successfully met the objective for the 2024-25 Program Year. In addition, there were improvements in every subcategory of the Illinois Shines program.

Recommended Improvements to Survey Administration

Due to the lower response rate than the 2023 survey, we will explore ways to improve our administration strategy for future surveys. Recommendations include:

- **Survey Design:** Shorten the survey, rephrase survey questions, and make the survey completely anonymous.
- **Timing:** Consider launching the survey at a different time of year, as this year's survey coincided with multiple requests for stakeholder feedback and the Approved Vendor Roundtables.
- **Channels:** Evaluate dissemination channels and identify potential improvements or alternative options including:
 - Prominently display the survey link on website pages;
 - Include the survey link in all sector strategist communications and 1:1 calls.

Next Steps

After publishing survey results to the market, the Approved Vendor and Designee feedback summarized in this report will be disseminated to appropriate Program teams. Team leads will be assigned to review the feedback, determine feasibility and scope of suggestions and requests, and outline next steps for addressing areas of dissatisfaction or improvement. Once the Program Administrator determines which solutions are within scope and feasible for Program Year 2024-25, we will present those findings to the IPA. The leadership team will continue to work with relevant Program teams to ensure progress on the action items and in implementing solutions to mitigate Program dissatisfaction.

In each subsequent year, the Program Administrator will review the survey, update it as needed and appropriate, deploy the survey, and compare response data with the baseline established in 2023.

The role of CSAT (Customer Satisfaction Score)

We used the Customer Satisfaction Score (“CSAT”) metric to demonstrate Approved Vendor and Designee satisfaction. CSAT is a metric that indicates how satisfied customers are with a company’s products or services. It is measured through customer feedback and expressed as a percentage (the higher the score, the more satisfied the respondent is).

All satisfaction-oriented questions in the survey prompted respondents to use the following scale:

1. Very unsatisfied
2. Unsatisfied
3. Neutral
4. Satisfied
5. Very satisfied

Using the two highest values on feedback surveys is the most accurate predictor of satisfaction. By utilizing the CSAT score, we can more accurately benchmark Approved Vendor and Designee Program Satisfaction year over year. We calculated the CSAT score using the responses of 4 (satisfied) and 5 (very satisfied), and the following formula:

(Number of satisfied customers (4 and 5) / Number of survey responses) x 100 = % of satisfied customers

Additional Notes on the Methodology Used in this Report

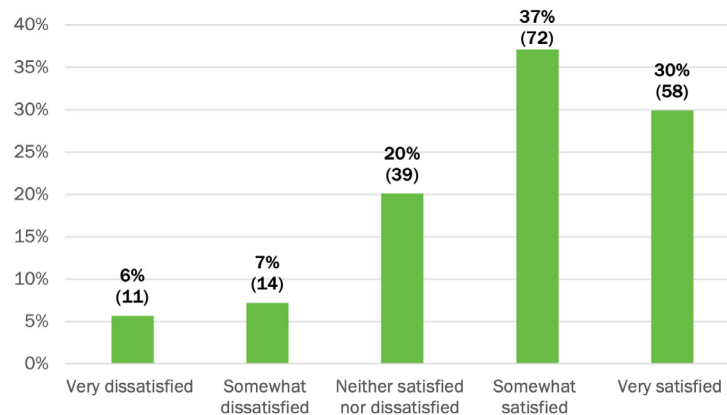
In 2023, we did not redact responses from respondents who answered multiple times. After reviewing redundant responses in the 2024 results, we concluded that they did not significantly impact the results. Therefore, we decided to maintain the consistent methodology established in the baseline year.

Section One: Approved Vendor and Designee Program Satisfaction Results

(Based on the responses of 194 program participants)

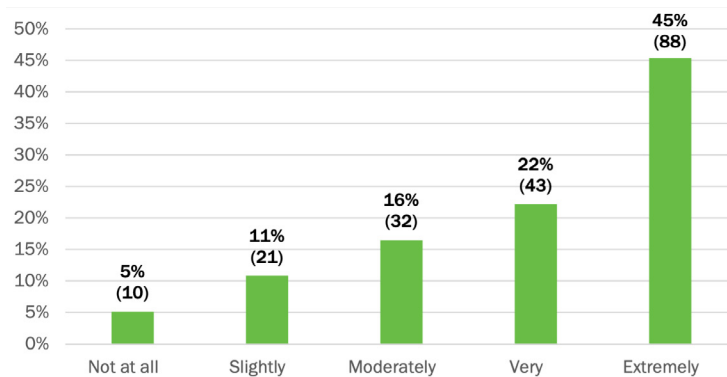
Illinois Shines Program Overall Satisfaction

CSAT Score: 67%
2023 CSAT Score: 60%
CSAT Score increase of 7%



How much does participating as an Illinois Shines program Approved Vendor or Designee positively impact your business?

CSAT Score: 68%
2023 CSAT Score: 66%
CSAT Score increase of 2%

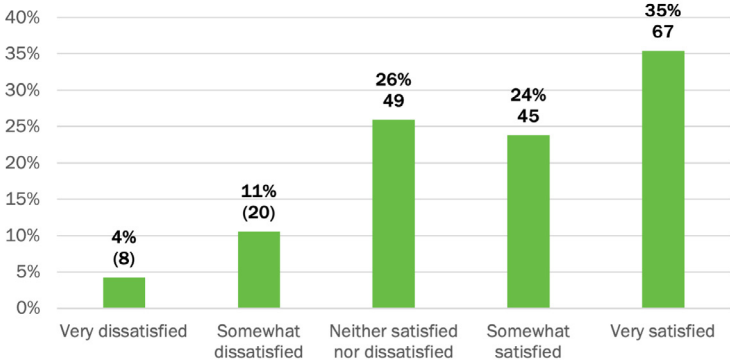


Thinking about your participation in Illinois Shines, how satisfied are you with the following?

(Note on methodology: When calculating CSAT scores, responses of “N/A” were omitted).

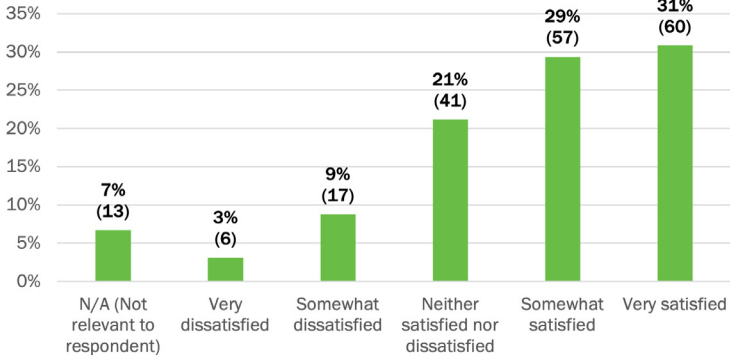
Satisfaction Level: AV/Designee Requirements

CSAT Score: 59%
2023 CSAT Score: 56%
CSAT Score increase of 3%



Satisfaction Level: Project Application Process

CSAT Score: 65%
2023 CSAT Score: 60%
CSAT Score increase of 5%

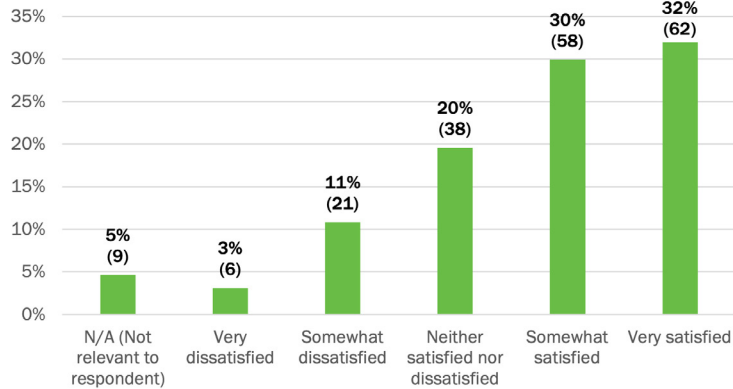


Satisfaction Level: Portal Functionality

CSAT Score: 65%

2023 CSAT Score: 60%

CSAT Score increase of 5%

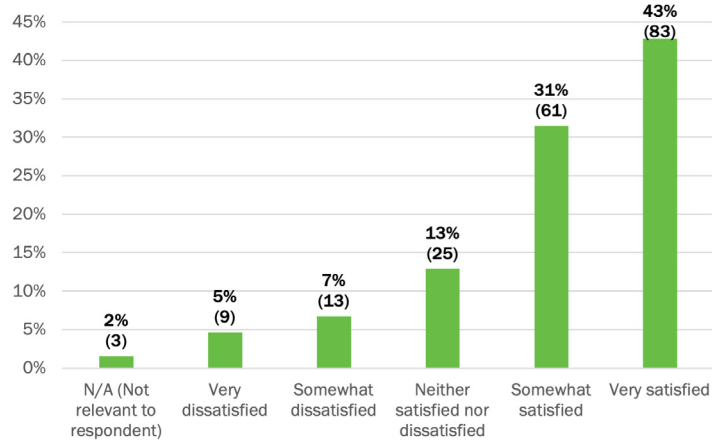


Satisfaction Level: Program Communications

CSAT Score: 75%

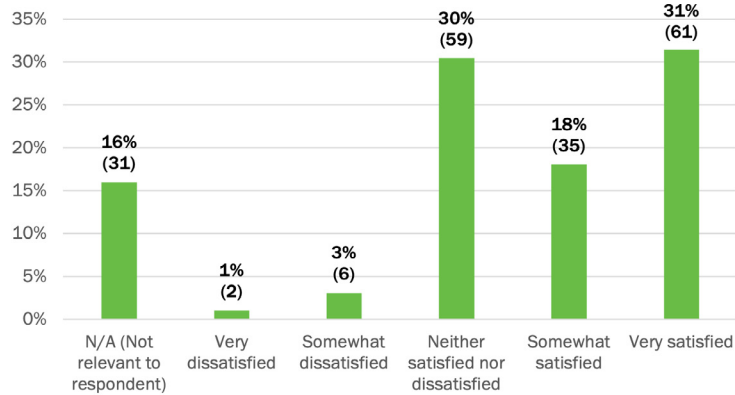
2023 CSAT Score: 64%

CSAT Score increase of 11%



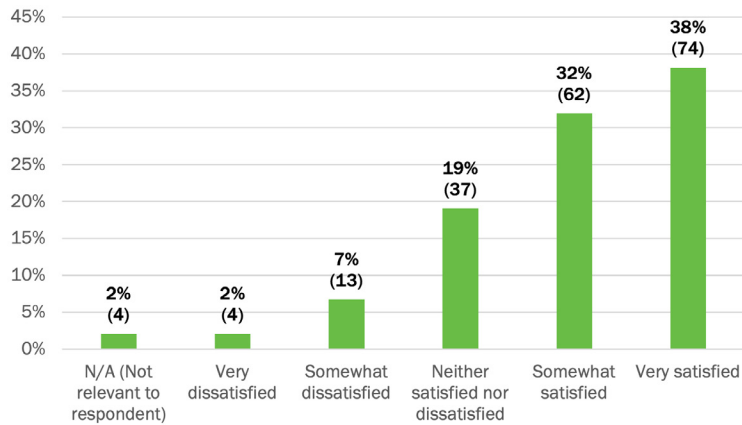
Satisfaction Level: Sector Strategist Support

CSAT Score: 59%
2023 CSAT Score: 55%
CSAT Score increase of 4%



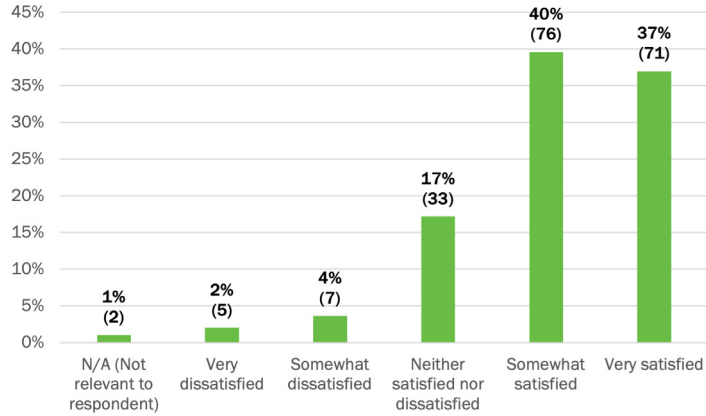
Satisfaction Level: Program Resources

CSAT Score: 72%
2023 CSAT Score: 66%
CSAT Score increase of 6%



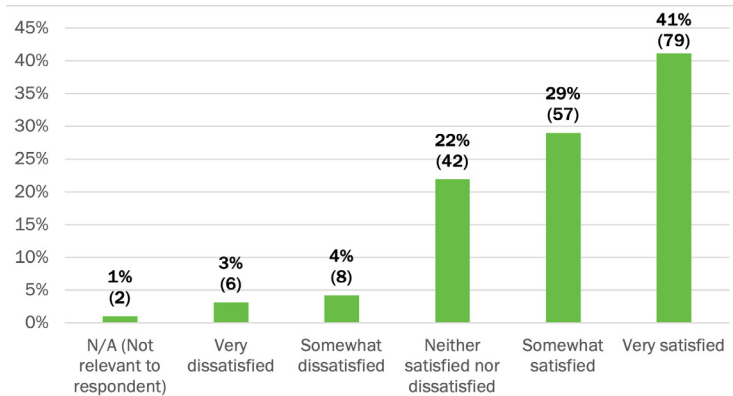
Satisfaction Level: Program Website

CSAT Score: 77%
2023 CSAT Score: 63%
CSAT Score increase of 14%



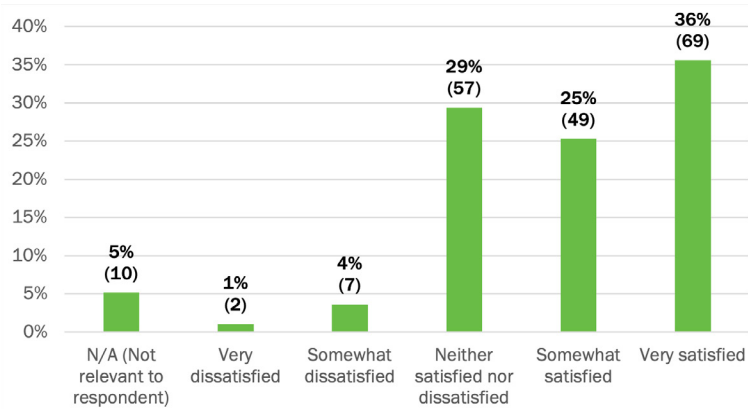
Satisfaction Level: Program Announcements

CSAT Score: 71%
2023 CSAT Score: 70%
CSAT Score increase of 1%



Satisfaction Level: Webinars

CSAT Score: 64%
2023 CSAT Score: 58%
CSAT Score increase of 6%



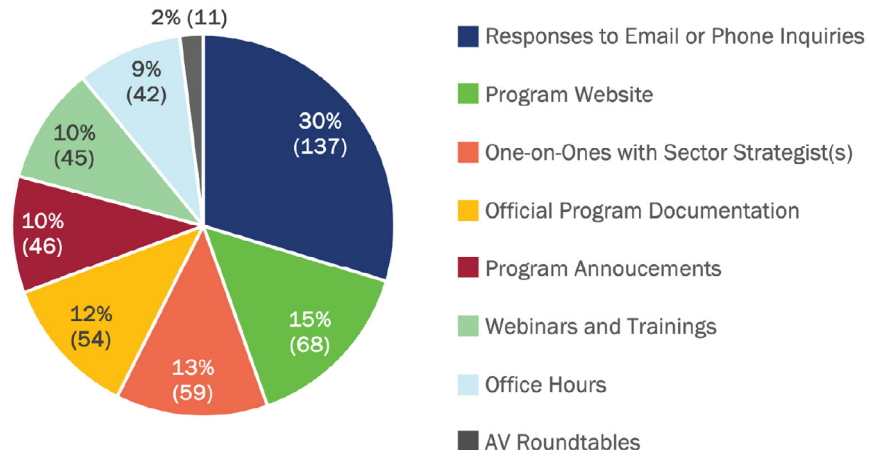
Average of all CSAT Scores: 68%
2023 Average CSAT Score: 61%
Average CSAT score increase of 7%

The Average of all CSAT scores factors all CSAT scores including the overall Program satisfaction CSAT score.

Responses have been normalized to create a summary table.

Most Effective Resources for Help

Respondents were asked: “Thinking of your experience with Illinois Shines program, which of the following do you find the most effective for answering your questions and/or providing you support?” Respondents were able to select up to 3 resources, and top results were 1) Responses to Email or Phone Inquiries, 2) Program Website, and 3) One-on-Ones with Sector Strategist(s)



Reasons for Dissatisfaction

If respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied in any category in response to the question, “Thinking about your participation in Illinois Shines, how satisfied are you with the following?” the survey prompted them to respond to the question, “If you answered ‘Very dissatisfied’ or ‘Dissatisfied’ in the question above, how can we improve the Program element(s)? Please expand on why you are dissatisfied below.”

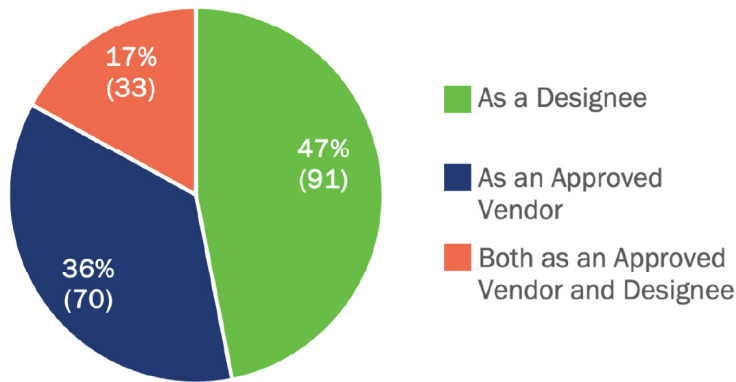
To provide a clear overview, we normalized these responses, taking into account instances where multiple areas of improvement were mentioned within a single response. We quantified how often each area of improvement was referenced, which is summarized in the Reasons for Dissatisfaction Feedback table below.



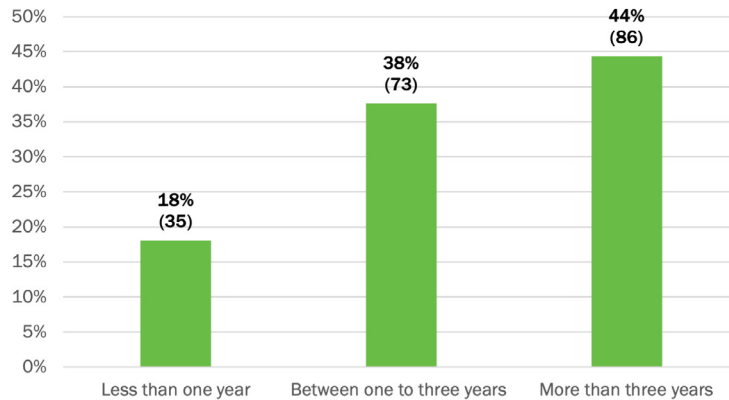
Section Two: Approved Vendor/Designee Respondent Information

(Based on the responses of 194 program participants)

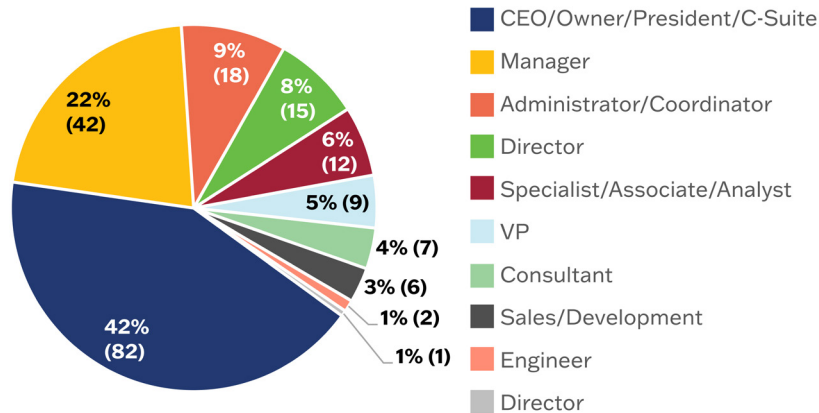
How do you most often participate in Illinois Shines?



How long have you participated in Illinois Shines?

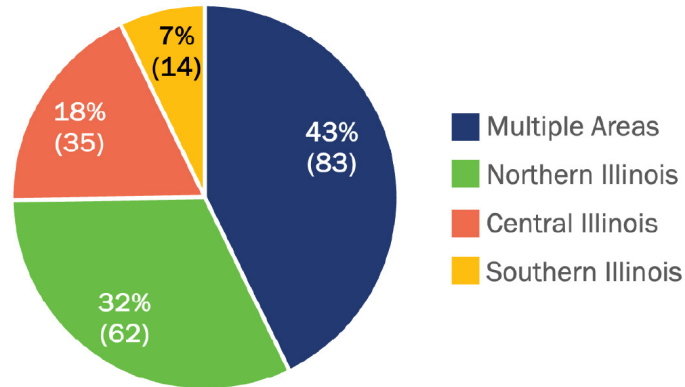


Respondent Role*

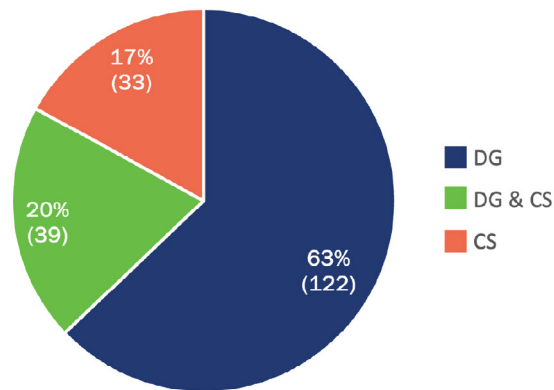


* Note on methodology: Roles have been normalized in the respondent pie chart. This response to the survey question was a free text field, so the responses ranged. Best judgment was used to normalize these responses.

Geographical Region Participation



Typical Project Type Participation**



** Note on methodology: Typical project type responses were normalized using the sector participation question. The question regarding sector participation allowed respondents to select up to six sectors. Responses were normalized to Distributed Generation (“DG”), Community Solar (“CS”), or Distributed Generation and Community Solar. Equity Eligible Contractors (“EEC”) can be DG or CS, but EEC was normalized to CS for this purpose due to the majority of EEC applications being CS. Public Schools can either be DG or CS, but for this purpose, it was normalized to DG due to the overwhelming proportion of Public School applications being DG. For example, if a respondent indicated that they participated in sectors Large DG, Public Schools, and Community-Driven Community Solar, that response was normalized to Distributed Generation and Community Solar.

Program Category Participation

Regarding Program category participation, respondents could select up to six sectors, which resulted in too many unique combinations of responses to meaningfully report in a visualization. In order to gauge levels of participation and report these responses, we counted the frequency of indicated participation in each sector and created a table to represent this data.

Program Category	Frequency of Sector Participation
Small Distributed Generation	130
Large Distributed Generation	99
Traditional Community Solar	57
Community-Driven Community Solar	30
Public Schools	27
Equity Eligible Contractor	21

Section Three: Cross Tabulation of Satisfaction Results

Cross tabulation compares the results for one or more variables with the results of another. Looking at the results using cross tabulation allows us to identify relationships between one or more categorical variables. For this survey, the cross tabulation results examine the relationship between overall Illinois Shines program satisfaction and the following participation factors:

- How respondents most often participate in Illinois Shines (As a Designee, as an Approved Vendor, both as an Approved Vendor and Designee)
- How long respondents have participated in Illinois Shines (Less than one year, between one to three years, or more than three years)
- How much participating as an Illinois Shines program Approved Vendor or Designee positively impacts business (very satisfied to very dissatisfied)

The cross-tabulation results can be found below.

Cross-Tabulation comparing program participation type and overall program satisfaction

		How satisfied are you with your experience in the Illinois Shines program overall?						
How do you most often participate in Illinois Shines?		Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	N/A (This topic does not apply to you)	Row total
As a Designee		24	25	22	9	4	7	91
Designee Row Percentage		26%	27%	24%	10%	4%	8%	-
As an Approved Vendor		27	24	9	8	1	1	70
Vendor Row Percentage		39%	34%	13%	11%	1%	1%	-
Both as an Approved Vendor and Designee		11	9	7	4	1	1	33
Vendor and Designee Row Percentage		33%	27%	21%	12%	3%	3%	-

Cross Tabulation comparing Program participation length and overall Program satisfaction

How long have you participated in Illinois Shines?	How satisfied are you with your experience in the Illinois Shines program overall?					Row total
	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	
Less than one year	10	9	9	4	3	35
<1 Year Row Percentage	29%	26%	26%	11%	9%	-
Between one to three years	28	22	16	4	3	73
1-3 Years Row Percentage	38%	30%	22%	5%	4%	-
More than three years	20	41	14	6	5	86
3+ Years Row Percentage	23%	48%	16%	7%	6%	-

Cross Tabulation comparing how much Illinois Shines positively impacts business and overall Program satisfaction

How much does participating as an Illinois Shines program Approved Vendor or Designee positively impact your business?	How satisfied are you with your experience in the Illinois Shines program overall?					
	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Row total
Extremely (5)	44	34	7	1	2	88
Extremely Percentage	50	39	8	1	2	-
Very (4)	9	19	6	5	4	43
Very Percentage	21	44	14	12	9	-
Moderately (3)	4	14	10	2	2	32
Moderately Percentage	13	44	31	6	6	-
Slightly (2)	0	5	10	5	1	21
Slightly Percentage	0	24	48	24	5	-
Not at all (1)	1	0	6	1	2	10
Not at all Percentage	10	0	60	10	20	-



Illinois Shines



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