

Illinois Shines Program Update 2025

from Energy Solutions

Energy Solutions rigorously approaches its responsibilities as the Illinois Shines Program Administrator to help realize Illinois' goals in building an equitable, clean energy future. This State of the Program update, which follows the most recent version published in [November 2024](#) and the [Program Year 2023–24 End of Year Report](#), includes important messages and updates regarding Program objectives, solutions achieved or in development, feedback from stakeholders, and updates on Program vision.

In Program Year 2024–25, the Program continues supporting stakeholders to develop new solar projects through Illinois Shines. Progress includes:

Project and Vendor Participation

Participation remains strong, with a high volume of project applications across categories, and increased enrollment of Approved Vendors, Designees, and EECs.

Equity and Consumer Protection Goals

Program Year 2024–25 includes Minimum Equity Standard progress, and successful completion of an expanded Mentorship Program.

Rigorous enforcement of Consumer Protection requirements, investigation and resolution of complaints, and development of new Consumer Protection initiatives continue.

Portal Development

Portal feature development and enhancements continue, including revised Disclosure Forms to support changes to Illinois Net Metering, buildout of Utility portal functionality, and more.

Stakeholder Forums and Feedback

Key stakeholder forums continue, including AV Roundtables, both AV/Designee and Customer Satisfaction surveys, stakeholder working groups, weekly office hours, 1:1 vendor appointments and stakeholder feedback processes. The Program continues industry and public presentations to increase awareness and share progress.

Support and Communication

The Program continues refining Contact Center support for stakeholders, and developing and updating help guides and resources, and remains responsive to legislative, trade group, and media inquiries and requests for information about Illinois Shines.

Needs/Requests, Solutions, and Continued Commitments

Energy Solutions prioritizes Program operational, strategic, and technical improvements, and in this update addresses the following areas:

Needs/Requests: Application Processing

Illinois Shines continues receiving steady volumes of project applications and allocating capacity across categories. The Program continues receiving applications with gaps or discrepancies, for which review and approval may be delayed by a *Need Info* request. Delays in batch payment fees have increased, in some cases resulting in Approved Vendor confusion about available capacity.

Solutions

- Following the removal of the delineation of Group A and Group B for the Distributed Generation categories this Program Year, the Program has seen the elimination of DG waitlists, even with strong application submission volumes through December 31, 2025, attributed to the January 2025 change to “supply rate only” Net Metering in Illinois for new customers. The Program has reminded the market about available DG project capacity and will implement updates to the Block Capacity Dashboard for greater clarity.
- Program Year 2024–25’s large volume of waitlisted Part I applications awaiting capacity was resolved earlier in the Program Year. By the end of September 2024, the Program was meeting expected application processing turnaround times in most categories, and by December 2024 all categories were brought within expected processing turnaround times, where they have remained. The Program forecasts application submissions to adjust application team resources as necessary, and analyzes processing data to identify process improvements and automation opportunities.
- To help stakeholders avoid common areas of confusion, omission, or error in project applications that can delay submission, review and approval, the Program provides *Application Tips and Tricks* in weekly Market Announcements and builds and updates help guides for stakeholder use. The Program shared an application checklist and help guide on common errors earlier this Program Year, and in March 2025 published updated Part I and Part II Application Guides, Batching, and Managing Disclosure Forms help guides.

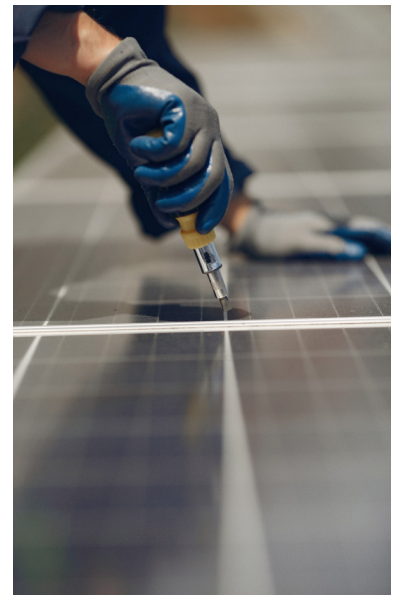


Needs/Requests: Consumer Support and Protection

The Program continues rigorous attention to consumer complaints against Approved Vendors and Designees, including investigation, and where necessary, takes disciplinary action. The Program has actively investigated, monitored, and resourced several complex situations related to Approved Vendor and Designee bankruptcies, cessation of operations, and/or failure to pass through incentives that have harmed Illinois Shines customers.

Solutions:

- The Program continues progress on three consumer protection initiatives outlined in the [2024 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan](#) (“Long-Term Plan”) designed to protect and support customers who may be harmed by participating Approved Vendors or their Designees, including an escrow process, a solar restitution program, and a REC “adder” for projects “unstranded.” Rollout of the Solar Restitution Program is anticipated in April 2025, and the Program Administrator expects to expand it to include different types of harm in the future. Details on all three initiatives can be found at the [Program website](#).
- On February 28, 2025, the Agency filed the [2024 Consumer Complaints & Disciplinary Actions Annual Report](#) with the Illinois Commerce Commission as required by the Long-Term Plan. The report documents the frequency and nature of complaints for Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All, and details response and enforcement actions taken by the respective Program Administrators. It also provides stranded customer data and updates on forthcoming Consumer Protection initiatives.
- The Program regularly updates both the [Program Violations Report](#) and the [Consumer Complaints Report](#) to support consumers in their review of participating Approved Vendors. In January 2025, the Program introduced graphical and informational enhancements to the [Consumer Complaints Report](#) to make the report more user-friendly.
- The Program continues growing the [Help for Stranded Customers](#) initiative to support customers whose Approved Vendor and/or Designee has gone out of business or ceased/limited operations, is unable to meet Program requirements, or is suspended due to disciplinary action and prohibited from advancing projects through the application process. In 2024, the Program Administrator began proactively informing potentially impacted customers when their solar company went out of business in case they needed assistance finding a new company to complete their project. The Program has assisted many of these customers to find new companies to continue their projects, and is working on new initiatives aimed at providing financial relief to eligible customers. Additionally, the Program Administrator implemented more consistent communication measures with entities assisting stranded customers to improve visibility of the status of their efforts to unstrand projects.
- In February 2025, the Program launched its second [Illinois Shines Customer Satisfaction Survey](#) to better understand consumers’ experience working with Illinois Shines participating entities and to help improve consumer protections within the Program following a 2024 pilot. The survey was distributed to nearly 23,000 Small DG Purchase, Lease, and PPA customers whose applications were Part II verified since December 1, 2023. Following data collection in March, a summary of results will be prepared.
- In March 2025, the Program launched a new [Homeowner Handout](#) series to support the Agency’s prioritization of consumer education. The new resources, beginning with [Selecting a Solar Company: Green and Red Flags](#), will cover a range of important topics facing consumers considering “going solar” and provide explanations, key terminology, best practices, and available Program support.





Needs/Requests: Contracts and Projects

The Program manages a high volume of REC Contracts, already totaling more than \$1 billion in REC Contract Values for Program Year 2024-25 to date through February. The 2024 Long-Term Plan required modifications to the existing REC Contracts for the Illinois Shines and ILSFA Programs including implementation of the consumer protection initiatives and approaches described in Chapter 9 of the Plan, including a REC adder for stranded projects and an escrow process.

Solutions:

- To increase efficiency and accuracy in Contracts management, the Program Administrator initiated updates and automations spanning the ICC memo submission process, Schedule B process, REC invoicing, subscriber data management and verification, bi-annual report, email templates and various QA processes. Efforts included building on existing on-platform data storage and developing scripts, and addition of controls across the unit's work.
- Following a December 2024 stakeholder feedback request, the Program launched the REC Contract Amendment process in March 2025, supporting the retroactive modification of contracts to implement changes necessitated by the Long-Term Plan, including 1) Update to the deadline for the submission of Annual Reports under the applicable Program; 2) Creation of an un-batching and re-batching process to facilitate assignment of projects; 3) Implementation of an escrow process; and 4) Provision of economic incentives for stranded customer projects. Contract amendments will also update the Exhibit A, Schedule A and Schedule B as applicable.
- Inspections are critical to ensure Program requirements are met, that the equipment described in the project documentation matches what is installed on-site, and that the project is on track to meet its Renewable Energy Credit (REC) delivery obligations. The Program resumed Project Inspections in Program Year 2023-24, and for Program Year 2024-25 to date, has conducted more than 200 project inspections, including 176 Small DG projects, 23 Large DG projects, and 10 CS projects, with a very low rate of infractions.

Needs/Requests: Sector Strategy

- Through a variety of feedback forums, the Program encourages, receives, and evaluates requests for portal features and functionality from participating AVs and Designees, and implements updates to accommodate changes required by the 2024 Long-Term Plan.

Solutions

- The Program Administrator's Sector Strategy team supports entities across all project categories through a variety of forums, and to date this Program Year has held nearly 300 1:1 meetings with AVs, fielded nearly 10,000 emails and phone calls, held 40 weekly office hours sessions, and made 100 post-session follow ups supporting vendors and their projects. In September, the team conducted the second annual [2024 Approved Vendor and Designee Program Satisfaction Survey](#), and between October and December, the team held AV Roundtables for each project category. The team also supports the Program's working groups and maintains active dialog with solar trade groups and community organizations. Feedback and insights from these channels are compiled for the benefit of the Agency.



- The team continues creating and updating vendor resources including [downloadable help guides](#), [online tools](#), [video walkthroughs](#), and [training sessions](#). The Program invites Illinois Shines participation from communities, Equity Eligible Persons, and prospective vendors through outreach and presentation activities, and support and presence at contractor clinics. To grow Public Schools participation, the Agency and Program continue education outreach via webinars, meetings, and conference presentations, and is developing public schools project workshops and case studies. The Program continues enrollment and support of Equity Eligible Contractors, EEC Designees, and the newly-established EEC Subcontractor category.
- The Agency and Program continue fulfillment of the Equity Accountability System.
 - In February 2025, the Agency published [Part II of the Equity Accountability System Assessment](#) following the August 2024 release of [Part I of its Equity Accountability System Assessment](#). The IPA-authored report assesses the effectiveness of statutory Equity Accountability System Assessment provisions in promoting equity across the clean energy economy. Illinois Shines continues successful implementation of the Minimum Equity Standard; it received 890 MES Year-End Reports for Program Year 2024-25, and in Program Year 2024-25, has received 1,108 MES Compliance Plans. The Program completed the Mid-Year Tracking Review in December 2024, including requiring Corrective Action Plans from entities failing to meet the Minimum Equity Standard. An upcoming webinar will support the Program Year 2024-25 MES Year-End Report process.
 - [The Illinois Shines 2024-25 Program Year Mentorship Program](#) was held from January to March 2025, following a successful Pilot Program last Program year. The Program accepted Mentorship Program applications from AVs and Designees who are EECs, minority-owned, woman-owned, veteran-owned, disability-owned or considered a small business to participate, as well as from experienced AVs willing to serve as mentors. During the eight-week Mentorship Program, mentees completed virtual training courses and participated in live, interactive sessions with experienced AV mentors and the Program Administrator's subject matter experts on critical program topics, and discussed lessons learned, advice, and best practices. The Mentorship Program included 49 participants, including 20 mentees, 16 mentors, and 13 subject matter experts, that culminated in an in-person graduation ceremony and networking event. The event included remarks from Illinois Power Agency Director Brian Granahan and presentation of certificates of completion. A 2024-25 Mentorship Program Final Report will be published.

Needs/Requests: Portal Functionality

- Through a variety of feedback forums, the Program encourages, receives, and evaluates requests for portal features and functionality from participating AVs and Designees, and to support requirements of the Long-Term Plan.

Solutions:

- Recent Program portal enhancements have supported changes to Disclosure Forms necessitated by updates to Illinois Net Metering, allowing the Program Administrator to update and correct application statuses and batch assignments, enhancing the Portal's Disclosure Form API, and implementing field validations and bug fixes to improve application submissions. A working group was convened to gather market input and feedback on a community solar subscriber management tool to allow vendors to view, create, edit, and terminate CS subscription records within the portal, and the Program Administrator is evaluating requirements. The Program website maintains a [portal updates blog](#) and [help guides](#).

Needs/Requests: Program Communications

- Illinois Shines attracts increasing participation and interest from consumers, community groups, solar vendors, legislators, media, and others interested in the Program’s progress toward the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). The Program works to identify new resources to share its successes, and to adequately educate consumers about going solar in Illinois.

Solutions:

- The Illinois Shines website is updated each week to accommodate a high volume of resources and information for stakeholders. Between January and March 2025, the Program undertook its largest website refresh since the site’s 2023 re-launch, to introduce a variety of user experience enhancements, new useability features, a Spanish language toggle, new and updated content, explainer graphics and animations, redesigned reports, navigational improvements, and more. A new resource, [Introduction to Illinois Shines: Solar Basics & More](#), provides information on solar basics, renewable energy credits, and Illinois Shines incentives, project types, financing options, the Program’s consumer protection support, and more for consumers considering “going solar” with Illinois Shines.
- In January 2025, the Program launched the [Illinois Shines Data Report](#). The new report, updated monthly, spotlights both Program Year To Date and Program Lifetime To Date data for key Illinois Shines Project, Participation, and Impact areas. The Data Report augments other Program data at the website including the [Block Capacity Dashboard](#), [Project Application Reports](#), the [Project Map tool](#), and the [End of Year and State of the Program reports](#), as well as the Illinois Power Agency’s [Clean Energy Dashboard](#).

Program Vision

Illinois Shines continues its progress in fulfilling the requirements of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act and supporting renewable energy development across Illinois toward achieving the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard targets. The Program continues to identify opportunities to further support participating stakeholders and invite new participation toward achieving Program goals, and to support both the growing popularity of solar in Illinois and the sector’s significant economic contribution. As it grows, Illinois Shines continues to prioritize new and improved initiatives, processes, and safety nets to help ensure successful experiences for customers, participating vendors, and other stakeholders. The Program also seeks to maintain and develop new opportunities to expand access to Illinois Shines across project categories, to drive workforce growth including the participation of Equity Eligible Persons, and to serve as a model for other solar incentive Programs.

The Program remains committed to providing educational resources and support for consumers, to meeting expectations for project application processing, portal development, the provision of necessary tools, resources, and reports to participations, and delivery of high-quality, responsive support and information to stakeholders.

Thank you for your support,

The Energy Solutions Team

