



Illinois Shines Program

Public Schools Outreach Action Plan

Program Year 2025-26

September 25, 2025



Program Year 2025-26

The Public Schools Outreach Plan for the Illinois Shines 2025-26 Program Year is being implemented to address known barriers experienced by schools and school districts when they consider a solar energy project. This plan includes a purpose statement, goals, expected end results, implementation strategies and a table of priority action items.

Purpose Statement

In 2021, the Illinois Power Agency (IPA) created a new Illinois Shines Program category for Illinois Public Schools. Since its creation, the category has underperformed, with fewer projects being submitted than anticipated. The IPA recognizes the multi-layered decision-making structure, complex budget considerations and tight timelines that public schools face when considering building enhancement projects like solar energy. For Program Year 2025-26, the IPA's Program Administrator for the Illinois Shines program, Energy Solutions, developed and will implement this outreach plan to assist school decision-makers in moving forward with submitting solar projects into the Illinois Shines program. Implementation strategies will include targeted relationship building with public school professionals, education association engagement, conference attendance, and one-on-one meetings with priority schools and districts.

Goals and End Results

The overall goal of this plan is to increase awareness and participation of the Illinois Shines program Public Schools category among K-12 schools, districts, community colleges and public institutions of higher education. The expected result will be increasing the number of projects submitted to the Public Schools category for Program Year 2025-26. The following is the list of goals and end results:

- Identify and hire a Public Schools strategist to focus on relationship building and support of potential and active participants.
- Increase participation in the Public Schools category by at least 7 projects for Program Year 2025-26.
- Increase Tier 1/Tier 2/EIEC-located school participation in the Illinois Shines Public Schools category to at least a total of eight project submissions.
- Develop and/or maintain at least 20 Program advisor relationships with public schools, Regional Education Offices (ROEs) or school districts
- Attend and present Program information to at least 12 education, district or administrative conferences, or other networking opportunities.
- Provide workshops to key stakeholders in at least 12 schools that have received a Carbon Free Assessment and have been identified as a strong candidate for solar energy adoption.
- Provide 1:1 support to stakeholders in project advancement in the Program.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies for reaching public schools include:

- **Support the goal** of increasing the Program Satisfaction Survey rating of 68% or higher by continuing to offer AV 1:1s.
- **Develop resolutions and report on progress** made in reducing known barriers to participation in the public schools category.
- **Monitor and report on the public schools** market including changes in the market, and any factors affecting public schools that may have an impact on the Illinois Shines program.
- **Collaborate with IPA** in building relationships, refining tactics and performing outreach with public schools' stakeholders.
- **Collaborate with Program Administrator sub teams** (Information Systems, Consumer Protection, Operations, Program Management/Regulatory and Marketing) to improve program efficiency and address concerns that may impact projects being submitted to the Public Schools category.
- **Conduct targeted outreach** to at least 25 Illinois public schools with completed utility-provided Carbon Free Assessments (CFAs) and that are in Equity Investment Eligible Communities (EIECs).
 - Conduct analysis to determine number of schools in EIECs with carbon free assessments.

Action Items Timeline

Aug – Sept 2025	Sept 2025	Oct – Dec 2025	Dec 2025	Nov 2025 – May 2026	Ongoing
Build relationships with public school administration professionals to request opportunities to build Program awareness	Initiate IPA-ES Working Group	Refine list of priority schools and work with school consultant to conduct outreach and secure presentation opportunities	Host Public Schools Roundtable	Provide presentations and 1:1 support to schools	Provide regular status reports on progress

Summary of 2025-26 Public Schools Sector Touchpoints

- AV 1:1 Meetings
- AV email and call communication
- Weekly Program office hours
- 2025 Public Schools Roundtable
- Presentations at education association conferences
- Host program awareness calls with Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools with Carbon Free Assessments
- CPS Healthy Green Schools outreach
- Digital marketing and social media campaign