



2025-26 Illinois Shines Approved Vendor and Designee Program Satisfaction Survey Results and Analysis

June 2026



Summary of Findings

The Illinois Shines program deployed its third annual Program Satisfaction Survey of Approved Vendors, Designees, and EECs to evaluate their satisfaction with the Program. With 203 responses (18.5% response rate), the overall customer satisfaction score for the Illinois Shines program was 72%, reflecting a 5% increase from the 2024 survey and a 12% increase from the 2023 baseline. While six scores for subcategories related to Program satisfaction decreased slightly (3% or less), the other four increased by three points to 7%.

Almost half (45%) of respondents reported that they have participated in the Illinois Shines program for over three years, with the most common sector being Distributed Generation (DG) at 61%. The number of EEC respondents increased from 9% claiming EEC status in 2024 to 33% this year. According to respondents, the top two program areas needing improvement are *Approved Vendor/Designee Requirements* and *Portal Functionality*, 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 capture the Illinois Shines program participants' level of satisfaction. The survey is released annually, and the Program Administrator reviews, analyzes and reports results each year.

The 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, Designees, and EECs in good standing were invited to participate. The 2025-26 survey was distributed to 1,092 unique email addresses across 380 Approved Vendors, 535 Designees, and 165 EECs (90 EEC AVs, 33 EEC Designees, 42 EEC subcontractors). The individual response rate was 18.5%, an increase over the 12% rate from the previous year. Multiple contacts from each entity were welcome to respond.

Objective

The objective for the 2025-26 Program Year survey was to increase the Program satisfaction score from last year's satisfaction score of 65%. The Program tracked progress by evaluating satisfaction scores for all survey questions.

Survey Logistics

The survey was launched on February 2, 2026 (Program Quarter 3). Deployment timing was chosen to ensure the survey did not overlap with other feedback requests such as the Roundtables and open comments for next year's Program Guidebook.

The original survey completion deadline was February 27, 2026, but was extended to March 6, 2026, 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. To increase participation, a reminder banner was added on the Portal homepage, and sector strategists issued personal communications.

Results

The 2025-26 Approved Vendor and Designee survey resulted in an overall Program customer satisfaction score of 72%. This reflects a 5% increase compared to the 2024-25 survey and successfully met the objective for the 2025-26 Program Year. In addition, there were improvements in four subcategories of the Illinois Shines program by 3 to 7%. Additional details regarding the specific improvements can be found in the detailed comparative analysis and results section of this report.

Recommended Improvements to Survey Administration

Key steps taken in PY 2025-26 more than doubled survey participation in the last week of this year's survey. Learning from the tactics implemented, and to increase participation in the first three weeks of survey deployment, it is recommended that these steps be replicated for the 2026-27 survey. These steps include:

- Conduct a strategist call campaign to their sector's most active AVs, Designees, and EECs.
- Have strategists mention the survey during support tasks.
- Post a banner on the website and portal.

Additional recommendations for improvements include:

- Include a callout with the survey link in email signatures for all general administrative email communications from strategists, contracts, and processing teams.
- Promote during AV Roundtables and other webinars happening close to or during survey deployment.

Next Steps

After publishing survey results to the market, the Approved Vendor and Designee feedback from this report will be summarized and 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 2026-27, 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 previous Program Year.

Detailed Comparative Analysis and Results

This section presents a detailed analysis of survey responses and results. It includes the distribution of responses, satisfaction scores for each question, and a comparison to the 2024-25 results.

Cross tabulations have been incorporated into the report for the second year, illustrating the relationships between two or more variables within the survey responses.

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 dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neutral
4. Satisfied
5. Very satisfied

For questions that were specific to the respondent’s role or length of participation, the option to choose “N/A” was included. “N/A” responses were omitted from CSAT calculations.

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 Methodology Used in this Report

In response to recommendations from last year, the survey was able to be completed anonymously. Only 41% of responses included identifying information, meaning duplicate responses from the same person or same entity could not be verified and removed. However, this step was not taken for last year’s survey, as results were not impacted by multiple submissions from any single entity.

Section One: Approved Vendor and Designee Program Satisfaction Results

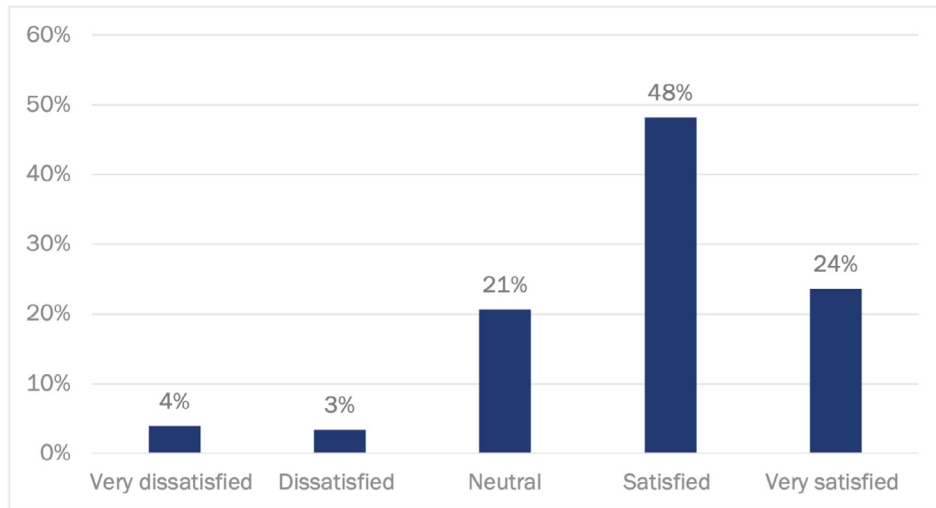
(Based on the responses of 203 program participants)

Illinois Shines Program Overall Satisfaction

CSAT Score: 72%

2024 CSAT Score: 67%

CSAT Score increase of 5%

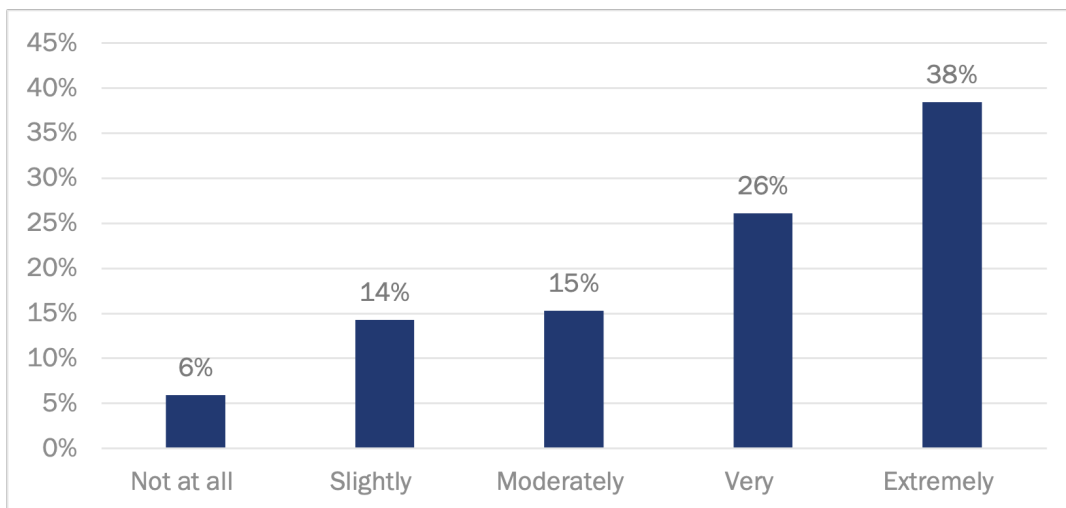


How much does participating as an Illinois Shines program Approved Vendor or Designee positively impact your business?

CSAT Score: 65%

2024 CSAT Score: 68%

CSAT Score decrease of 3%



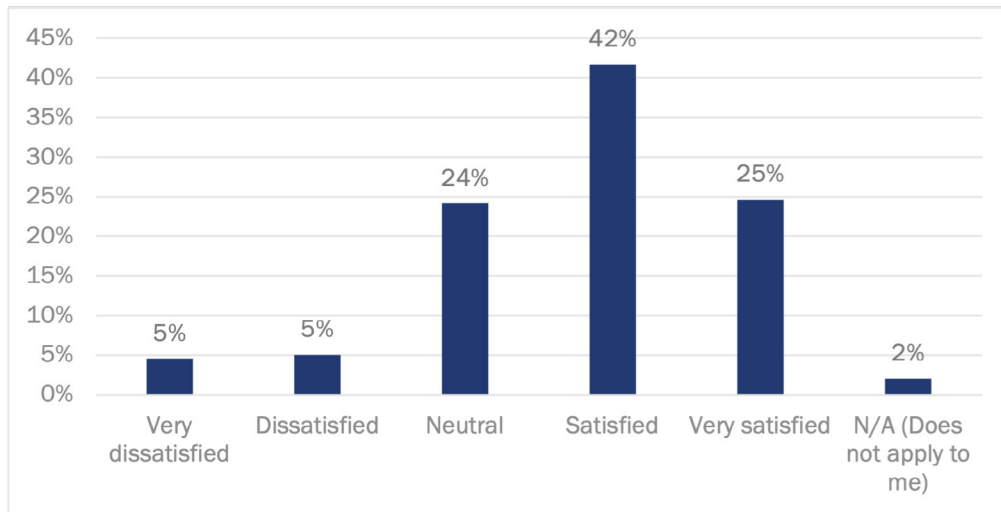
Thinking about your participation in Illinois Shines, how satisfied are you with the following?

Satisfaction Level: AV/Designee Requirements

CSAT Score: 66%

2024 CSAT Score: 59%

CSAT Score increase of 7%

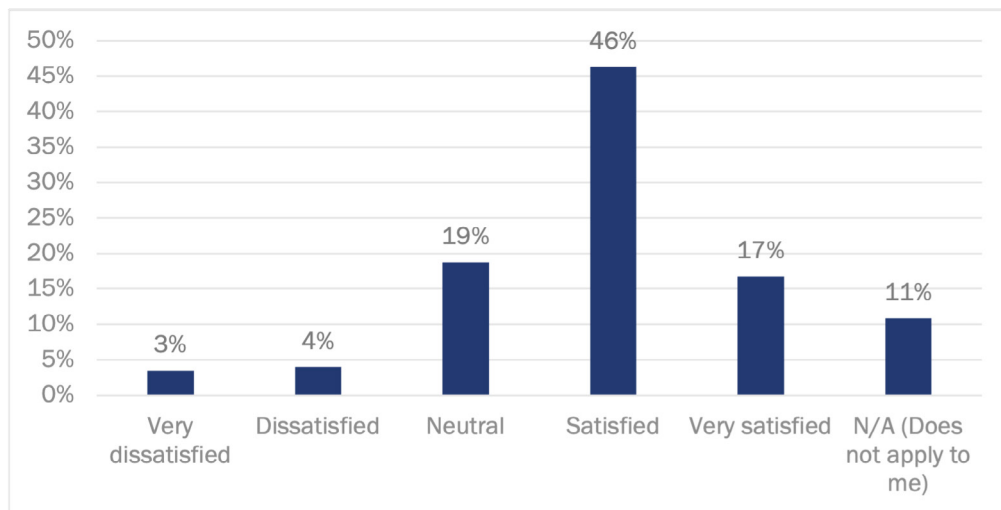


Satisfaction Level: Project Application Process

CSAT Score: 71%

2024 CSAT Score: 65%

CSAT Score increase of 5%

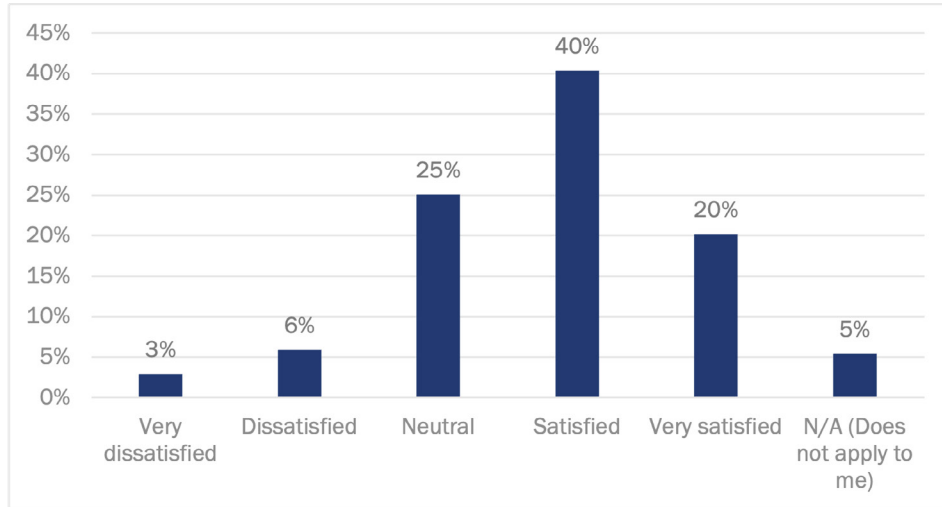


Satisfaction Level: Portal Functionality

CSAT Score: 65%

2024 CSAT Score: 65%

CSAT Score decrease of 1%

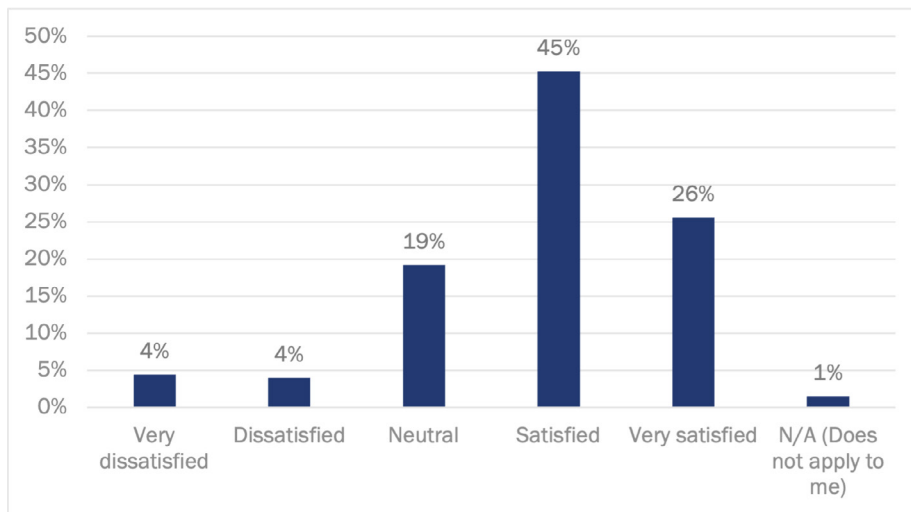


Satisfaction Level: Program Communications

CSAT Score: 72%

2024 CSAT Score: 75%

CSAT Score decrease of 3%

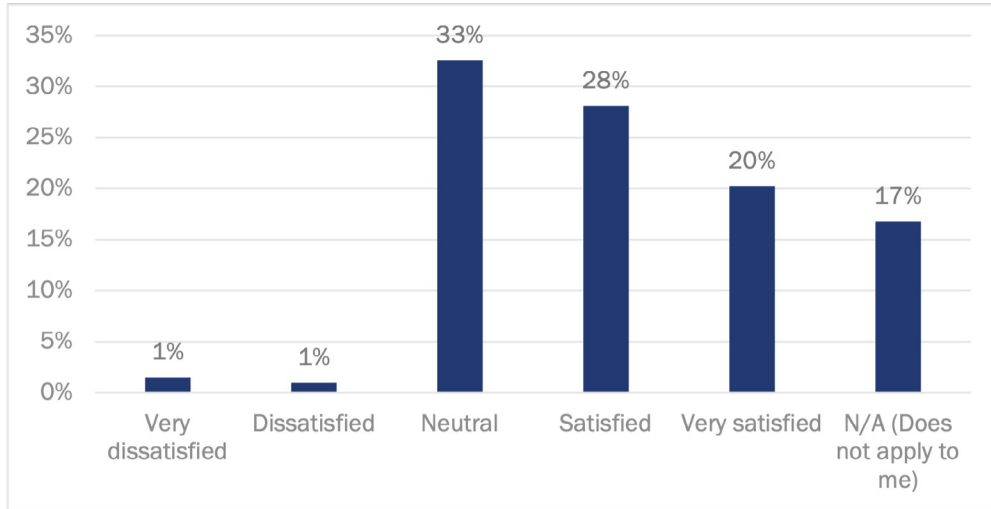


Satisfaction Level: Sector Strategist Support

CSAT Score: 58%

2024 CSAT Score: 59%

CSAT Score decrease of 1%

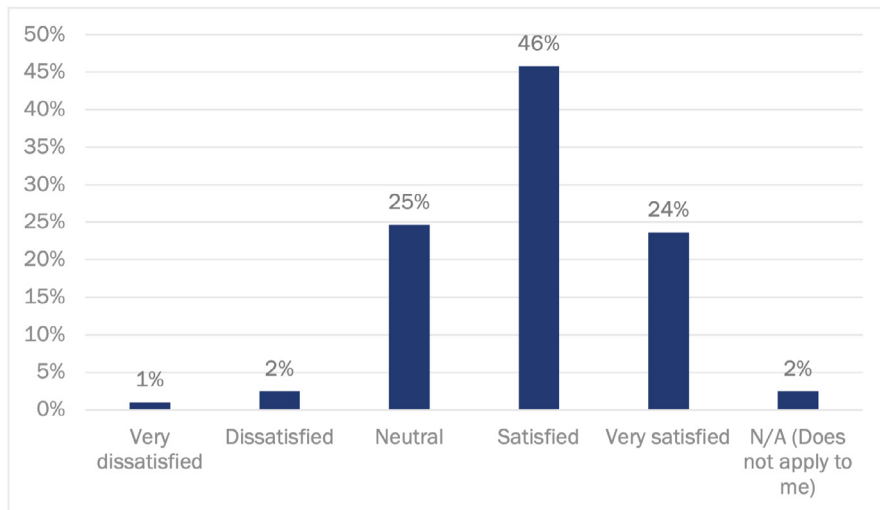


Satisfaction Level: Program Resources

CSAT Score: 71%

2024 CSAT Score: 72%

CSAT Score decrease of 1%

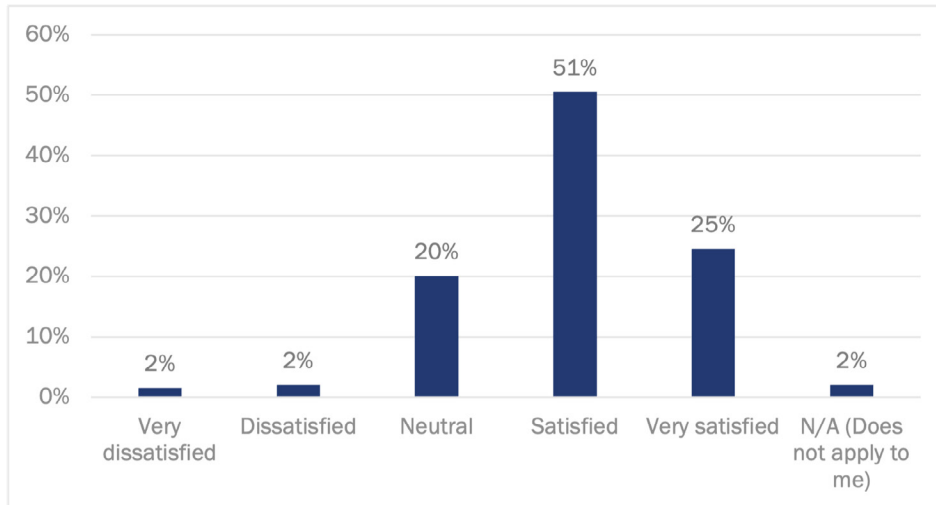


Satisfaction Level: Program Website

CSAT Score: 75%

2024 CSAT Score: 77%

CSAT Score decrease of 2%

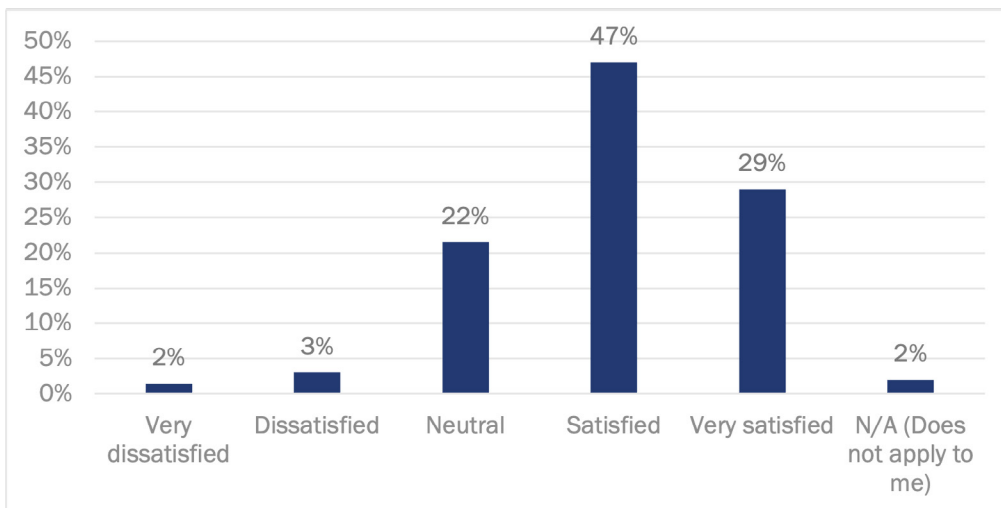


Satisfaction Level: Program Announcements

CSAT Score: 74%

2024 CSAT Score: 71%

CSAT Score increase of 3%

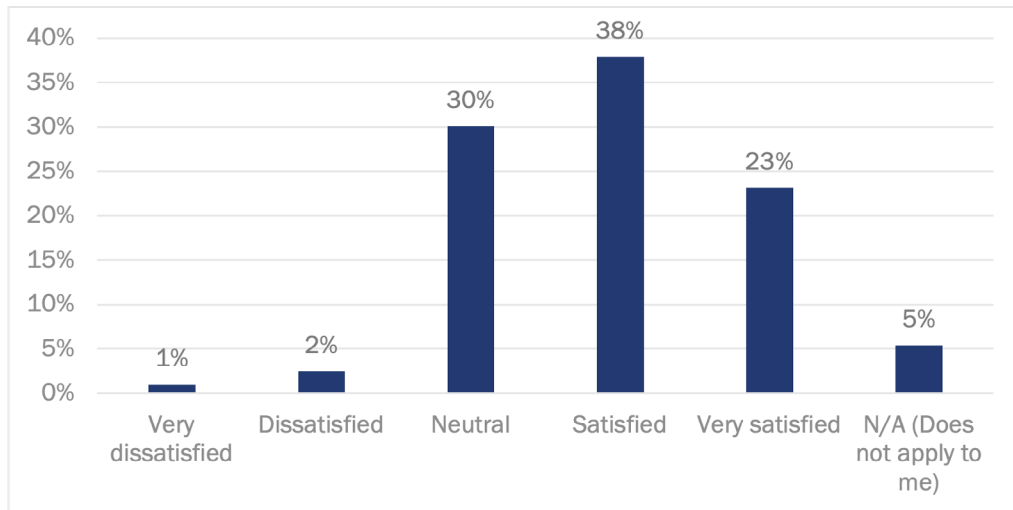


Satisfaction Level: Webinars

CSAT Score: 65%

2024 CSAT Score: 64%

CSAT Score increase of 1%



Average of all CSAT Scores: 68%

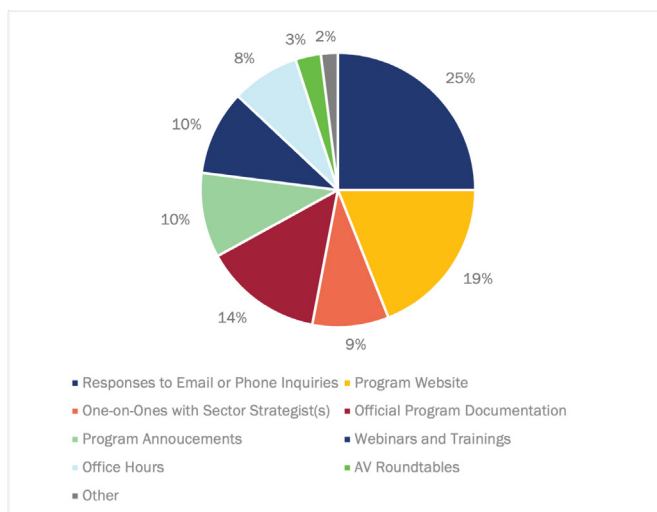
2024 CSAT Score: 68%

No change in average CSAT Score.

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

Most Effective Resources for Help

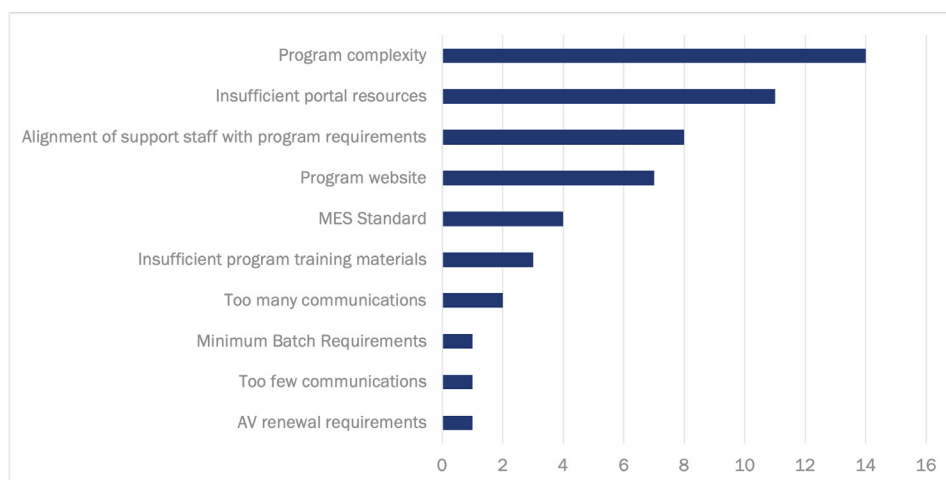
Respondents were asked: “Thinking of your experience with Illinois Shines Program, which of the following do you find the most effective for answering your questions and/or providing you support?” Respondents were able to select up to 3 resources, and top results were **1) Responses to Email or Phone Inquiries, 2) Program Website, and 3) Official Program Documentation (Program Guidebook, Consumer Protection Handbook, etc.)**. The top two results were the same as in 2024. One-on-ones dropped off as third on the list since 2024.



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, considering 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. A key outlining the specific areas of improvement is provided as well. Please reference the more extensive responses table to see each response and the reasons they were normalized in the Appendix.



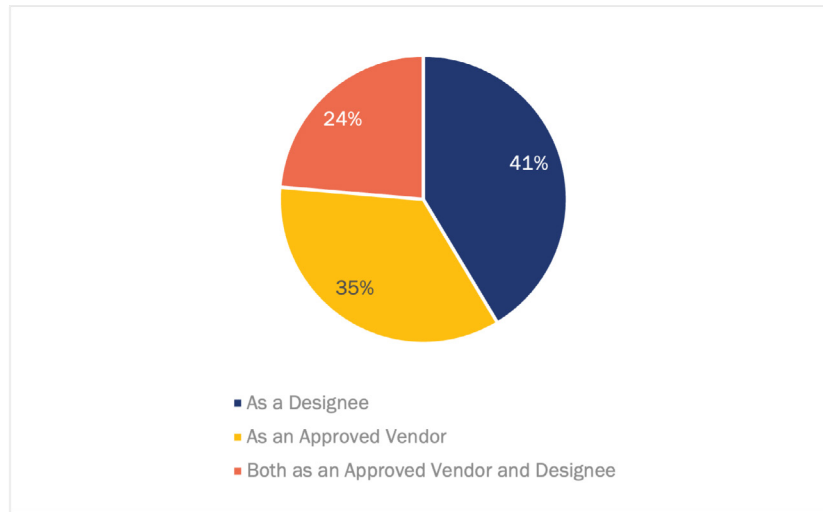
Dissatisfaction Reasons Key

Response	Meaning
Program complexity	Respondent mentioned that the program has too many requirements or is difficult to navigate.
Insufficient portal resources	Respondent mentioned issues utilizing or navigating the portal.
Alignment of support staff with program requirements and ability to communicate quickly	Respondent mentioned that phone or email support staff were not always knowledgeable about specific program questions and could not answer questions right away.
Program website	Respondent mentioned issues navigating the website.
MES Standard	Respondent mentioned dissatisfaction with the level of effort required to meet MES Standard.
Insufficient program training materials	Respondent mentioned that additional training materials would be helpful
AV requirements for out-of-state companies	Respondent mentioned dissatisfaction with Program requirements due to being located out-of-state.
Minimum batch requirement	Respondent mentioned that the minimum batch requirement incentivizes businesses with investors over emerging ones.
Too many communications	Respondent mentioned an overwhelming volume of communications from the Program Administrator.
Too few communications	Respondent mentioned being uninformed about trainings and events.
AV renewal requirements	Respondent mentioned issues meeting renewal requirements.

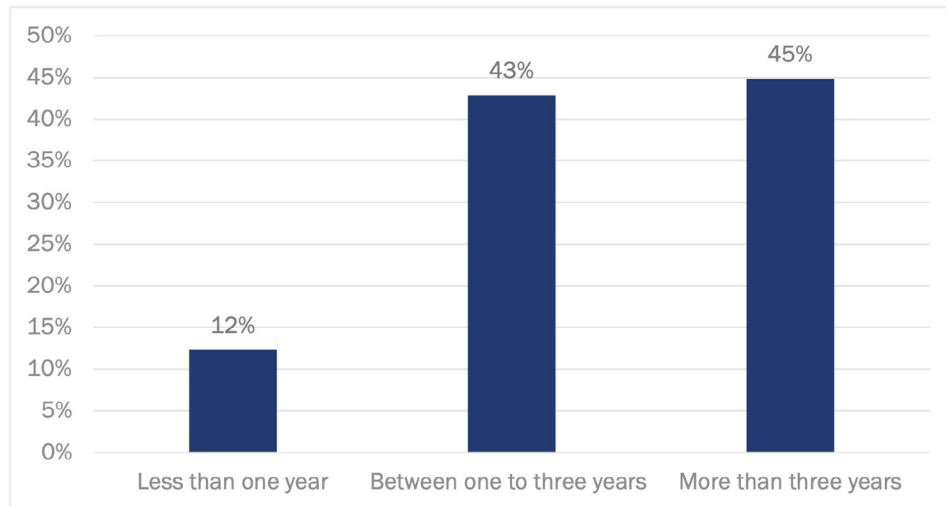
Section Two: Approved Vendor/Designee Respondent Information

(Based on the responses of 203 program participants)

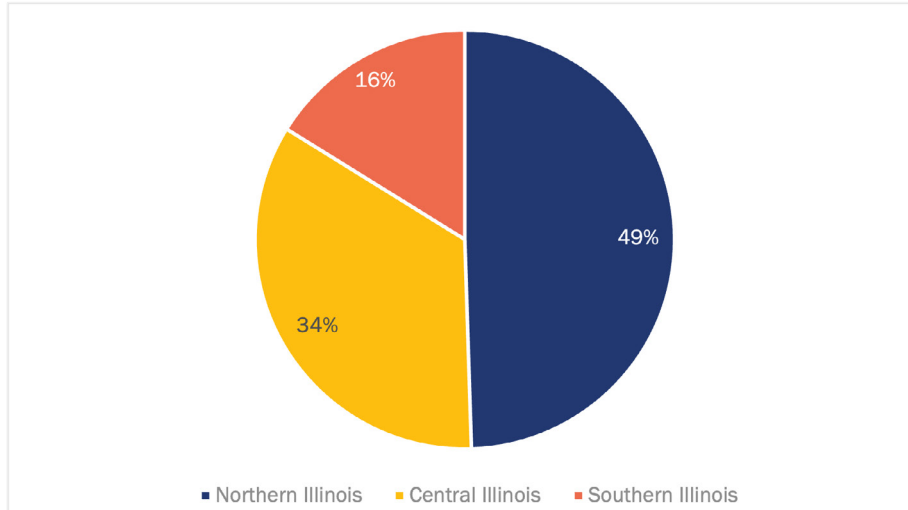
How do you most often participate in Illinois Shines?



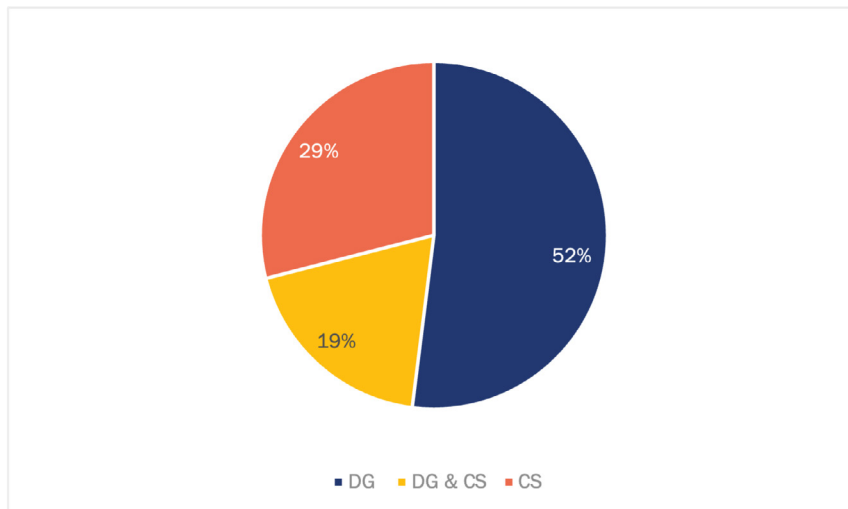
How long have you participated in Illinois Shines?



**In which geographical area(s) do you most often participate in Illinois Shines?
(Select all that apply)**



Typical Project Type Participation^{1,2}



1 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 because the majority of EEC applications are 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 the sectors Large DG, Public Schools, and Community-Driven Community Solar, that response was normalized to Distributed Generation and Community Solar.

2 35 answers were removed for not properly answering the question. SOP will be updated next year to better direct answers.

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. 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	125
Large Distributed Generation	83
Traditional Community Solar	82
Community-Driven Community Solar	30
Public Schools	20
Equity Eligible Contractor	32

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)

How satisfied are you with your experience in the Illinois Shines program overall?

How do you most often participate in Illinois Shines?	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Row Total
As a Designee	5	3	13	44	19	84
Designee Row Percentage	2%	1%	6%	22%	9%	41%
As an Approved Vendor	1	4	20	32	14	71
Vendor Row Percentage	0%	2%	10%	16%	7%	35%
Both as an Approved Vendor and Designee	2	0	9	22	15	48

How do you most often participate in Illinois Shines?	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Row Total
Vendor and Designee Row Percentage	1%	0%	4%	11%	7%	24%

How satisfied are you with your experience in the Illinois Shines program overall?

How long have you participated in Illinois Shines?	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Row Total
Less than one year	0	0	6	11	8	25
<1 Year Row Percentage	0%	0%	3%	5%	4%	12%
Between one to three years	4	1	21	36	25	87
1-3 Years Row Percentage	2%	0%	10%	18%	12%	43%
More than three years	4	6	15	51	15	91
3+ Years Row Percentage	2%	3%	7%	25%	7%	45%

How satisfied are you with your experience in the Illinois Shines program overall?

How much does participating as an Illinois Shines program Approved Vendor or Designee positively impact your business?	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Row Total
Extremely	1	0	4	42	31	78
Extremely percentage	0%	0%	2%	21%	15%	38%
Very (4)	0	3	12	26	12	53
Very percentage	0%	1%	6%	13%	6%	26%
Moderately (3)	0	2	9	18	2	31
Moderately percentage	0%	1%	4%	9%	1%	15%
Slightly (2)	3	2	12	9	3	29
Slightly percentage	1%	1%	6%	4%	1%	14%
Not at all (1)	4	0	5	3	0	12
Not at all percentage	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%	6%



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