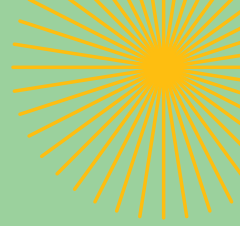


Public Schools Brochure



About the Illinois Shines Program

Illinois Shines is a state-administered solar program that provides incentives for the development of qualified solar projects through the purchase of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) by Illinois utilities. The incentives are paid to participating Approved Vendors and may be passed on to customers as savings.

The **Public Schools category** of the Program aims to increase the educational and financial impacts of solar projects in communities traditionally excluded from the clean energy sector by setting aside opportunities for Illinois public schools to participate in Illinois Shines.

For the first 180 days of each Program Year, capacity will be prioritized for projects constructed within identified Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs) and on land owned by Tier 1 and Tier 2 K-12 school districts. This provides greater access to the Program for schools in need.

Why participate in Illinois Shines?

Benefits to schools that participate in Illinois Shines include:

- Potential savings on monthly electricity costs when the solar installation becomes its main electricity source, depending on the school's current electricity rate and proper system sizing.
- Opportunities for students and community members to learn about renewable energy, solar technology, and the project installation process.
- Incentive payments for RECs that can help bring down the upfront cost of solar installation.
- Access to AVs that are vetted by the Illinois Shines team and monitored for program compliance.

Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)

RECs represent the environmental attributes of the electricity generated from solar panels, but not the electricity itself. By participating in Illinois Shines, the RECs from your solar project will be transferred to an Illinois electric utility. The sale of your RECs will not affect your solar project's production or your ability to use the electricity generated by it. Utilities purchase RECs to meet their obligation to meet Illinois' Renewable Portfolio Standards.

Project Types & Application Process

Project Types

Two types of projects can be submitted to the Public School category: Distributed Generation and Community Solar.

- **Distributed Generation** projects generate electricity that is used on-site. The project can be installed on a roof or built on the ground and must be located at the public school (or district) that the project is serving. The 15-year REC contract structure allows for a percentage of the REC value to be paid upon project energization, and the remaining REC value is paid quarterly over the next six years.

- **Community Solar** are large solar projects in the school's utility territory shared by multiple subscribers, who receive credits on their utility bills for their share of power generated. The public school or school district that owns the land where the project is sited must be a majority (10-40%) subscriber to the community solar project. Public Schools Community Solar projects will have a REC contract term of 20-years where the REC payments will be delivered quarterly as the project produces energy.

The type of project that works best for your school will depend on the specific energy reduction and financial goals that the school intends to accomplish. Regardless of project-type, the school or district must own the land the project is sited on for the entire lifetime of the REC Contract (15 or 20-years).^{*} Projects developed on land leased by a school/district are not permitted for submission to this category, unless a public school is located on the same parcel of leased land.

Application Process

Projects participating in Illinois Shines will go through a two-part application process.

Part I:

- For **Distributed Generation** projects, the process begins with the signing of a Disclosure Form and customer contract with your Approved Vendor. It's important to carefully review and understand these documents before you sign them. After the forms are signed the Approved Vendor completes and submits a Part I application.
- The process for **Community Solar** projects begins with the Part I application submission. Disclosure Forms are not required at the Part I application for this project type as these forms are for end-use customers or subscribers to the project, which are not acquired until the project is constructed.
- After a Part I application is approved, a REC contract between the Approved Vendor and the utility will be generated and then executed by all parties — locking in the project's participation in the Illinois Shines program.

Part II:

- After construction, Approved Vendors submit a Part II application, reflecting the specifications of the finished project. Once the Part II application is approved, the REC contract will be updated to reflect these updates and REC delivery to the utility will commence, along with incentives payments to the Approved Vendor as those RECs are delivered. Further information on Public School participation in Illinois Shines can be found at the [Solar for Schools page](#).

^{*} Please note: The REC contract structure changed for projects approved in the Program on or after June 1, 2026



Illinois Shines and the Illinois Power Agency are committed to the success of Public Schools.

Need support? A dedicated Public Schools Sector Strategist is ready to support prospective & current Public Schools. Contact the Public Schools Sector Strategist at schools@illinoisshines.com or the Program Administration team at admin@illinoisshines.com.