

ILLINOIS POWER AGENCY

Request for Proposals 26-RFP-01

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES - ILLINOIS SHINES AND ILLINOIS SOLAR FOR ALL PROGRAM
ADMINISTRATION

Responses to Offeror Questions

Batch 1¹

February 10, 2026

General Questions

	Question	Answer
1	Can we submit our own spreadsheet for the Table for 2.4 Proposed Staff?	Yes, Offerors may submit their own spreadsheet which expands upon Table 2.4; however, any expanded table must at a minimum contain the information and column arraignment as currently defined in Table 2.4. Any expansion or adjustment to Table 2.4 must be clearly explained, with any additional terms or definitions defined to eliminate confusion.
2	Is Section 2.3 accurate and the expectation is that ILSFA transition will begin in 2026 upon contract execution and Illinois Shines will transition in June of 2027?	<p>The expectation of the Agency is that both Illinois Shines and ILSFA will be fully transitioned to the joint Program Administrator by June 30, 2027. This transition ensures the joint Program Administrator is prepared to assume full program operational obligations at the commencement of the 2027-28 Program Year (June 2027 through May 2028). Further, the RFP (See Section 2.3.2) establishes that the portal shall be developed and operational for both ILSFA and Illinois Shines by January 1, 2027, with all underlying systems, databases, and tools stood up and fully functional by March 1, 2027 for both programs. This is to ensure adequate testing and cutover timing.</p> <p>It is expected that other processes and activities will be built throughout the transition year (from contract execution through June 2027), with the schedule for such activities (additional systems, processes, documents, procedures, etc.) informed by the proposal from the selected Offeror and further discussions during contract negotiations. It is possible that some program development activities progress throughout calendar year 2027; however, any such activities should be limited in scope and not infringe upon the operation of the programs (for example, this may include further development of SOPs, protocols and processes).</p>
3	The RFP covers administration for both Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA). While the Annual Evaluation Reports for ILSFA are readily available for review, a comparable standalone evaluation for Illinois Shines is not immediately apparent. Can the Agency please provide the most recent comprehensive program evaluation or performance audit for Illinois Shines?	The reference to a Program Evaluator is unique to the ILSFA Program – a similar review does not exist for the Illinois Shines program and therefore cannot be provided. The Program Year 2024-25 End of Year Report for Illinois Shines can be found here: https://illinoisshines.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025-End-of-Year-Report-v250722.pdf .

¹ If a submitted question does not appear in this batch of responses, it is slated for release by the Agency in Batch 2.

<p>4</p>	<p>Can the Agency clarify the expected frequency, format, and level of detail for reporting on application processing volumes, REC deliveries, consumer protection activities, and compliance outcomes throughout the contract term?</p>	<p>As both Illinois Shines and ILSFA are public facing programs, the Agency believes in strong communication to the public on program status, especially as it relates to application processing volumes and speed, and consumer complaints. Below is a breakdown of regular reporting that currently occurs related to each of the requested data points.</p> <p>APPLICATION PROCESSING VOLUMES & SPEEDS</p> <p><u>Public Reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illinois Shines Dashboard: https://illinoisshines.com/project-application-reports/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two main tables auto-updated daily ○ Linked application reports (Reports #1, #2, #3) at the bottom of webpage are updated on a twice-per-week basis • ILSFA Dashboard: https://www.illinoissfa.com/vendors/project-dashboard/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Updated on a weekly basis • More frequent communication to Approved Vendors might be needed during especially high-volume submission periods (e.g., the opening of the program year or during ILSFA rolling submission windows) to ensure that the market is well aware if review times have slowed. This can take the form of incorporation of processing progress into weekly announcements, or in the past has also included direct communications to Approved Vendors in the case of ILSFA. <p><u>Internal Reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly basis at a program update meeting • Ongoing project submission and review progress tracked in monthly KPI reports • Quarterly basis with program team and IPA leadership to review progress and performance since last quarter <p>REC DELIVERIES</p> <p><u>Public Reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REC deliveries from both programs are reported on publicly via the Agency’s publishing of its Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan every two years. While the Program Administrators are not required to draft the portion of the Long-Term Plan that reports on the progress toward this goal, they supply the data that the Agency relies on to draft this portion of the Plan. <p><u>Internal Reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per the REC Contracts, REC deliveries are assessed by the Program Administrator on an annual basis at the close of each Delivery Year/Program Year. Approved Vendors are required to submit an Annual Report which details REC deliveries on a project level basis. The Program Administrators must then review these reports and assess them for compliance with the REC Contract. REC delivery levels are then reported to the Agency and the contracting utilities. Throughout the Annual Report review process, the Agency, the Program Administrator, and the utilities are in constant communication regarding delivery levels and cures needed. <p>COMPLIANCE OUTCOMES</p> <p><u>Public Reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, the way that the Agency reports on compliance with controlling legislation for the two solar incentive programs is via the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan, which is updated every two years. Many data points for each program are reported on in this document, especially in Chapter 3 - REC Portfolio, RPS Goals, Targets, and Budgets. • ILSFA is subject to a required third-party Program Evaluation that currently occurs on an annual basis (and will be shifting to a biennial basis through the enactment of Public Act 104-0458). This requirement does not exist for Illinois Shines. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This evaluation is performed by an external contractor that the Agency hires (currently ILLUME Advising), but the Program Administrator must coordinate and cooperate with this evaluation. More information here: https://www.illinoissfa.com/vendor-evaluation-and-reports
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Along with this annual evaluation, briefer mid-year reports that focus on relevant topics from the previous evaluation will be produced by the Program Evaluator. ○ The 2023-24 Program Evaluation report and information found here: https://www.illinoisfa.com/announcements/2025/06/illume-advising-releases-the-2023-2024-program-year-annual-evaluation-report/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ILSFA also requires the Program Administrator to submit reports with Program status updates to the ICC on a regular basis. To date these are required to be quarterly reports, but Public Act 104-0458 allows the frequency for these reports to be reduced to at least annually. The Agency intends to move to a semi-annual cadence with a mid-year and year-end report. <p><u>Internal Reporting</u> As needed basis</p> <p>CONSUMER COMPLAINTS</p> <p><u>Public Reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Required to file report with Illinois Commerce Commission on an annual basis ● Regular complaints reporting via Program websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Illinois Shines Consumer Complaints Report is updated every two weeks, see this page for more information and more public reporting on this topic: https://illinoisshines.com/violations-report-cp-complaint-report/ ○ ILSFA Consumer Complaints Report is updated on an as-needed basis, due to the less frequent nature of complaints, see this page for more information and more public reporting on this topic: https://www.illinoisfa.com/consumer-protection-complaints/ <p><u>Internal Reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For Illinois Shines – Weekly basis at Agency-Administrator Consumer Protection team meeting ● For ILSFA – Every-other-week basis at Agency-Administrator Consumer Protection team meeting ● Quarterly basis at a meeting where program progress is reported to IPA leadership <p>OTHER</p> <p><u>Public Reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Illinois Shines Year End Report published once a year: https://illinoisshines.com/about/ ● Illinois Shines State of the Program published twice a year: https://illinoisshines.com/about/ ● Illinois Shines Approved Vendor and Designee Satisfaction Survey Report published once a year: https://illinoisshines.com/about/ ● Illinois Shines Data Report published monthly: https://illinoisshines.com/illinois-shines-data-report/ ● Minimum Equity Standard Year-End Report published once a year: https://illinoisshines.com/about/ ● ILSFA Annual Summary published on the ILSFA website once a year: https://www.illinoisfa.com/vendor-evaluation-and-reports ● ILSFA Small and Emerging Business Annual Report published once a year: https://www.illinoisfa.com/announcements/2025/08/explore-the-2024-2025-small-and-emerging-business-annual-report/
5	How does the Agency define success for the Program Administrator across key functional areas—application processing, consumer protection, compliance, and REC management—and are there specific service-level	As stated in the Request for Qualifications, “[s]uccessful administration of these Programs is based on the Program Administrator having the required core competency (and underlying technology solutions) to run high-volume incentive contract awards and community engagement programs. Effective administration is expected to include the ability to efficiently and accurately process applications, provide a sophisticated and well-developed approach to consumer protections, ensure critical equity and labor

	<p>expectations or performance targets the Agency will use to evaluate ongoing administration?</p>	<p>requirements are met, and adequately track, understand, and adjust to dynamic market conditions to progress the Programs and achieve specified goals.”</p> <p>The Agency tracks Program and Program Administrator performance goals across several metrics including, but not limited to, filling available block or sub-program capacity, engagement of new Approved Vendors and Designees (particularly EECs, MWBEs, and small and emerging businesses from across the state), robust participation in stakeholder feedback opportunities, management of customer complaints, and potential violations received and resolved.</p> <p>Program Administrator success indicators include, but are not limited to, timely and accurate project review and income verification, accuracy of contract documents and REC invoices, meeting deliverable deadlines, timely addressing and resolving complaints and consumer protection concerns, timely response to participant inquiries via email and voicemails and timely and accurate review of Approved Vendor, Designee, and Subcontractor registration and renewals.</p> <p>While more difficult to enumerate through quantifiable metrics, the Agency also considers the success of the Program Administrator in the context of its ability to provide informed and thoughtful collaborations, recommendations, and feedback in the improvement of the programs and decision making.</p> <p>Program and Program Administrator Performance Metrics and KPIs will be provided by the Joint Program Administrator to the Agency on a monthly or bi-weekly basis with certain projects and areas providing monthly metrics for reporting and informational purposes.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Regarding Section 2.2 – Services Required: “The ability to support new and emerging Agency initiatives, either resulting from new or expanded legislation directing Agency action, changes in Illinois policy, or Agency-driven initiatives (for example, changes under P.A. 104-0458, the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act, which contains provisions to update program requirements, develop a Geothermal Program, and develop a Storage for All Program in future program years).” In what capacity is the Joint Administrator expected to support the development of new programs? Would this be new programs within the ILSFA and Shines umbrellas? Does support include program design, implementation, and policy considerations?</p>	<p>The joint Program Administrator will be obligated to support the implementation of expanded roles and requirements to existing programs and may be required to support the development and implementation of new programs. With P.A. 104-0458 as an example, the new law requires the Agency to develop both a geothermal heating and hot water program and to consider the implementation of a Storage for All program. The joint Program Administrator will be expected to support the Agency’s development and implementation of these programs if and when approved by the ICC through a future Long-Term Plan. It is possible the new programs are aligned with or otherwise linked to existing programs – such as the Storage for All program as a subset of the Illinois Solar for All program – or they could be stand-alone initiatives – such as the geothermal program.</p> <p>Going forward, the Agency expects to engage the joint Program Administrator to provide insights and recommendations on prospective legislative initiatives that may impact existing programs or create new programs. If laws are passed requiring the creation of new or expanded programs, the Agency will work with the Joint Program Administrator to develop a scope of work, schedule, and budget and ultimately support the development and implementation of such activities.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Regarding Section 2.5 – Where Services Are to Be Performed: “Please include a description of the locations where services will be performed, including an estimate of what portion of the work will be conducted in Illinois.” Does IPA have a target allocation of services conducted directly in Illinois (i.e., percentage of staff working on the program who are based in Illinois)?</p>	<p>The Agency does not have a target percentage of employees or employee count that must be within the State of Illinois. More broadly, all work must be performed within the United States. There are various stakeholder outreach activities, including outreach to grassroots educators, small and emerging business, and community engagement activities that may be best performed by employees located within Illinois; however, the Agency has not specifically defined this as a mandate. Instead, Offerors may explain how employee location supports various work functions to facilitate the programs.</p>

8	<p>Regarding Section 2.6 – Question 1 (Offeror Experience): “The Agency endeavors to understand the Offeror’s experience and capacity to provide the Agency with the necessary confidence in the Offeror’s capabilities to ensure the Offeror’s teams are well positioned to drive success in the Programs.” Can the Agency provide greater detail on how it defines “success” in the Programs (e.g., increased customer volume, quicker processing times, reduced program attrition)?</p>	<p>Please refer to Question 5.</p>
9	<p>What is the process for requalification of subcontractors?</p>	<p>See the Agency’s response to Question 10 below.</p>
10	<p>What is the general process for the addition or the removal of a subcontractor that an Offeror included in their proposal?</p>	<p>Offerors are not bound to utilize subcontractors referenced in the response to 26-RFQ-01. However, if a subcontractor was used to demonstrate qualifications in response to 26-RFQ-01 and the Offeror determines that they will not utilize the subcontractor in their response to 26-RFP-01, the Offeror should contact the IPA prior to the submittal of the RFP response and provide information on any new subcontractor who will fill those qualifications. The IPA will promptly review and determine if the Offeror remains qualified to respond to the RFP.</p> <p>Once a contract is entered into with the selected Offeror, the process for adding, subtracting, or modifying of a BEP subcontractor is as follows:</p> <p>Please provide documentation and explanation to the IPA Contract Manager, and the BEP Liaison in advance of any changes. Please document the reason for the change and impact made to the contract’s BEP spend. Please include a plan to ensure the percentage of utilization is accounted for. The Agency must approve additions, subtractions, and modifications to BEP subcontractors. Should there be a lack of sufficient documentation, the Agency may deny the change. Once approved, the Agency will adjust changes made within the Supplier Diversity Management Portal (SDMP) and notify the Compliance Officer assigned to the Agency. The Commission for Equity and Inclusion’s Compliance Officer will ensure all necessary certification is held and either approve or deny the subcontractors within the Portal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any added subcontractor with a subcontract value over \$50,000 will be required to submit Attachments FF and GG for review by the IPA.
11	<p>Is it permissible to combine responses to Sections 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7 into a single document or should responses to these sections be submitted as separate documents?</p>	<p>The response to Section 2.7 should be a separate document from the responses to Sections 2.5 and 2.6. The response to Section 2.7 does not count against the 200 page limit.</p>

Attachments

	Question	Answer
12	<p>Is there a requirement for signature of Attachment DD, or is the expectation of the Agency that acknowledgement of attachment review is indicated on the Checklist?</p>	<p>Attachment DD does not include a signature section. For the purposes of the Attachment, acknowledgement as provided through the checklist is sufficient as part of the formal RFP submittal. To be clear, Attachment DD contains standard terms and conditions and will be referenced in the final MOU. Offerors can propose exceptions to the Standard Terms and Conditions in Attachment KK. Any proposed exceptions will be reviewed and are subject to negotiation with the Agency.</p>

13	Per Attachment EE Subcontractor Disclosures : "All subcontracts must include the Subcontractor Standard Certifications and the Disclosures and Conflicts of Interest, completed and signed by the subcontractor." The Attachment EE does not have a place for a signature, and we want to confirm which forms require subcontractor signature. We would like clarification on 2.7 Conflict of Interest Form, and Attachments EE, FF, & GG .	Attachment EE does not include a signature section. For the purposes of the Attachment, acknowledgement as provided through the checklist is sufficient as part of the formal RFP. Of note, subcontractors listed in Attachment EE with contracts in excess of \$50,000 must also complete and submit Attachments FF and GG, which do both include a signature section. Section 2.7 does not require a separate subcontractor signature.
14	For Step 2 of Attachment GG , both the ownership and distributive income instructions say to fill out percentage or dollar; can it be clarified that if we provide the percentage, do we also provide dollars?	<p>The vendor instructions indicate that if the vendor selected Option 1.A., 2.A., 2.B., 3.A., or 4.A. in Step 1 of Attachment GG, the vendor must provide the name and address of each individual and entity, along with either their percentage of ownership (if the ownership percentage exceeds 5%) or the dollar value of their ownership (if the dollar value for any individual exceeds \$106,447.20).</p> <p>The method of reporting depends on how ownership is structured. If ownership is defined in percentage terms rather than dollar amounts, percentages should be reported. If ownership is based on capital contributions without fixed ownership percentages, includes contractual interests, or is tied to value rather than equity shares, then ownership should be reported using dollar amounts.</p>
15	Are subcontractor references desired, or is the Agency requesting only four references for the offeror?	The Agency is requesting four (4) references to support the Offeror to this RFP only. The Agency reserves the right, upon review of the proposal, to request subcontractor references to provide additional clarity and information.

Program Management

	Question	Answer
16	The ILSFA Program Manual and illinoisfa.com detail different income verification processes. The Manual dictates the use of METHOD B: TAX TRANSCRIPT VERIFICATION followed by METHOD C: TAX RETURNS, PAY STUBS, BENEFITS AWARD LETTERS. The website lists Option 2: Income verification through a credit reporting agency followed by Option 3: Submitting an Income Affidavit. Which are the current and preferred methodologies for verifying participant income?	<p>First, it is important that Offerors understand the 2026 Long-Term Plan is expected to change some elements of income verification. Specifically, there will be changing requirements associated with customer self-attestation. For this reason, currently defined rules and requirements in ILSFA Program materials will be changed to reflect the new requirements.</p> <p>There may be current programmatic constraints in place that indicate a restriction to the means employed by the Agency and its Program Administrators today that are expected to be changed or updated to expand the means to verify customer income. It is the Agency’s expectation that the joint Program Administrator will offer all income verification methods outlined in the Agency’s Approved Vendor Manual to customers verifying income direction with the joint Program Administrator. It is paramount that customers be provided the greatest number of options available to simplify income verification and gain access to the programs.</p> <p>Importantly, the Agency expects the joint Program Administrator will have access to and manage customer Personally Identifiable Information (PII). For this reason, Offerors are instructed to consider such requirements in development of their technical solutions (e.g., portal development and submission processes), data management (e.g., storing PII in a safe and confidential manner), and developing access restriction protocols.</p>
17	Is the Administrator expected to have legal resources as part of their team	Yes. Question 6 of Section 2 Technical Proposal asks Offerors to describe their vision “for an improved experience for program participants across both programs, including but not limited to... making disciplinary determinations and drafting formal disciplinary

	<p>to support the consumer protection outcomes?</p>	<p>communications, including comprehensive research into the challenges to inform the determinations and responses, such as warning letters and suspension letters, supported by experienced legal staff.”</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>What specific responsibilities will the Administrator assume in coordinating with Illinois electric utilities, and are there defined protocols or service expectations for resolving contract, interconnection, or customer-related issues?</p>	<p>The primary function that the Program Administrator performs as it relates to coordination with Illinois electric utilities revolves around the REC Contract. The utilities are counter-parties to REC Contracts and serve as the Buyer of RECs. The Approved Vendors that participate in the programs are the Sellers of RECs. The Agency, and thus the Program Administrator by extension, act as facilitators and mediators of the contract. There are several different versions of the REC Contract, which can be found on each program's respective website.</p> <p>To manage issues and stay in good communication with the utilities, a weekly meeting is held between staff of both programs, and staff from all three Illinois utilities that act as Buyers under the REC Contract – Ameren Illinois, Commonwealth Edison, and MidAmerican Company. Currently, the Program Administrator for the Illinois Shines program is tasked with the management and facilitation of this meeting series including: setting the agenda, preparing the PowerPoint presented during the meeting, hosting the Zoom call on their account, active facilitation of the meeting, and note taking on meeting discussion. Much of the work that is performed with the utilities takes place via this meeting, and these issues are further resolved via email. The Agency expects this weekly meeting to continue with the new Program Administrator.</p> <p>Another work stream that is less frequent is the process for updating the REC Contract utilized in both programs. This usually occurs every two years, after the approval of a new iteration of the Agency’s Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan. The effort to develop a new contract takes several months, and the utilities are key stakeholders in this process as contractual counter-parties. Coordination with the utilities throughout the process is expected, but this process is primarily led by a different Agency contractor, the Planning and Procurement Consultant (currently NERA Economic Solutions).</p> <p>Other work streams could include but are not limited to: meetings with each individual utility related to their specific needs from the Program Administrator, answering one-off questions related to the contract, verification of community solar project subscription levels, Annual Reports of REC deliveries, creating IT solutions in the portal to support the utilities in their work as contracting counter-parties (e.g., creating a report that can be pulled on contract data), and of course the ongoing supplying of contract documents for execution to the utilities, which occurs about every two weeks.</p> <p><u>The Program Administrator does not work actively with the utilities on interconnection of projects or on handling utility customer complaints.</u></p>
<p>19</p>	<p>To help bidders calibrate staffing models, systems capacity, and transition planning, can the Agency share any baseline performance metrics for the current program administration—such as typical or target timeframes for key steps in the application lifecycle (e.g., Part I review, ‘Need Info’ resolution, Part II verification), and how those metrics vary during peak submission periods?</p> <p>Relatedly, does the Agency plan to provide historical application volume data—such as monthly submission trends over recent program years—to help bidders</p>	<p>Concerning the ILSFA Program, submission windows are generally the most ‘time-critical’. Please refer to the ILSFA calendar for details: https://www.illinoisfsfa.com/vendors/calendar/. Importantly, projects submitted to the program in the initial submission window must be reviewed and cured within the timeline provided, regardless of the volume of submissions. Additional detail on the initial submission window timeline can be found in the response to Question 22.</p> <p>Concerning the Illinois Shines Program, please refer to following public reports for statistics on project applications and approvals: https://illinoisshines.com/illinois-shines-data-report/ and https://illinoisshines.com/project-application-reports/</p>

	appropriately size surge capacity and operational resources?	
20	Does IPA expect the new Program Administrator to replace specific existing application processes or forms, or should proposers assume continuity with current application procedures, with targeted improvements to increase efficiency, usability, and performance?	An underlying expectation of the new Joint Program Administrator is that transition activities and ultimately program administration will ensure continuity from the current Program Administrators. As explained throughout the RFP, the Agency is specifically seeking programmatic efficiency improvements –program cost reductions, improvement to increase program participant engagement and participation, and an improved program participant experience. Taken collectively, the Agency would expect that existing forms and materials be used where appropriate to support program continuity and maintain operational efficiencies; however, if Offerors have recommendations to improve program operation, user experience, etc. they should be proposed while also addressing how continuity during transition will be maintained.
21	What percentage of site verifications are onsite versus desktop for Illinois Solar for All? How many site verifications (and what percentage of total projects) were completed for Illinois Solar for All in the current program term? What percentage of site verifications are onsite versus desktop for Illinois Shines? How many site verifications (and what percentage of total projects) were completed for Illinois Shines in the current program term?	<p>For Illinois Shines, inspections are conducted on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. At least one of each new Approved Vendor’s first five Part II applications to ensure compliance with Program Requirements and guidelines, regardless of project size. b. 1.5% of Part II verified Small Distributed Generation applications less than or equal to 25 kW c. 5% of Part II verified Large Distributed Generation applications greater than 25kW and up to 5,000 kW d. 25% of Part II Verified Community Solar applications e. Projects at the request of the IPA/Program Administrator Consumer Protection team f. As needed, projects that suffered irreparable damage and are rebuilt <p>For ILSFA, onsite inspections are conducted on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 100% of community solar installations b. For all other project types: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. 100% of an Approved Vendor’s first five installations ii. 30% of an Approved Vendor’s next 10 installations c. 20% of an Approved Vendor’s ongoing installations will be inspected until the Approved Vendor reaches 75 installations with the program, at which point, 5% of ongoing installations will be onsite d. Remedial inspections will be conducted as needed and can impact this schedule. e. At the discretion of the Program Administrator, 100% of projects utilizing Home Repairs and Upgrades Initiative funds will be inspected during the Part II submission. <p>Inspections are randomly selected and completed using one of three inspection types: On-site, Virtual, and Desktop. On-Site inspections are prioritized over Virtual Inspections. Virtual Inspections are utilized for cases of remote project locations or cases where On-Site is not feasible and will follow the same procedure as the On-Site inspection to the extent possible. Virtual inspections utilize video chat with the installer to walk through the installation components. Desktop inspections are utilized periodically as another layer of quality control to review Small DG projects with established Approved Vendors. Projects for which all the technical information submitted can be verified remotely will be eligible for desktop inspections.</p> <p>As of February 1, 2026 for the current 2025-26 Program Year in Illinois Shines, 256 Small Distributed Generation, 26 Large Distributed Generation, and 13 Community Solar projects have been inspected 100% on-site. Illinois Solar for All conducts desktop inspections on all Part II applications and 715 have been completed in the current Program Year. Additionally, the ILSFA Program Administrator has conducted nine inspections on Non-profit and Public Facility projects and 106 on Residential (Small) projects. 100% of inspections have been conducted virtually.</p>

<p>22</p>	<p>Publicly available materials for the Illinois Solar for All program describe application submission windows and review steps but do not clearly articulate typical timelines from application submission to approval. Please describe the timelines applicants and Approved Vendors should generally expect, including key review stages, decision points, and any factors that commonly affect the duration of the process. Where applicable, please identify which steps are within the Program Administrator’s control versus those subject to external review or fixed program requirements.</p>	<p>Before a Program Year opens, the Program Administrator will collaborate with the Agency to determine the ILSFA sub-program submission window calendar. Currently ILSFA staggers the submission windows of the Residential, Non-profit and Public Facility, and Community Solar sub-programs to spread out periods of high submission volumes for the benefit of both the Approved Vendors and Program Administrator.</p> <p>An initial submission will open, generally for about two weeks, during which time Approved Vendors have may batch and submit projects. After the initial submission window closes, the Program Administrator has four to six weeks (as defined in the published sub-program calendar) to complete initial review of all projects and notify Approved Vendors of any necessary deficiencies.</p> <p>For approximately another month, a Cure Period allows Approved Vendors to work with the Program Administrator to resolve any project deficiencies. Due to the limited time allowed, and because there is potential need for further follow up, this cure period is a more undefined back-and-forth that requires prompt review and processing of submitted materials.</p> <p>The total time from the initial submission window opening to the Cure Period ending is about three months total, during which time all projects submitted must be processed, regardless of submission volume.</p> <p>Once the Cure Period is complete, the Program Administrator evaluates whether there are sufficient eligible and complete project submissions to utilize the available funding. If there is additional funding available, all eligible submitted projects move forward for approval by the Illinois Commerce Commission, and the Program Administrator reopens the sub-program for rolling submissions that are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. If there are more projects than available funds in any carveout or unrestricted amount, the Project Selection Protocol is triggered.</p> <p>If Project Selection is triggered after the Cure Period, the Program Administrator takes about two weeks to evaluate each complete and eligible project submission for prioritization points, as established in the Project Selection Protocol’s scoring rubrics. After these scores are published, Approved Vendors have an opportunity to drop projects ahead of the Project Selection event, where the scored and ranked projects are selected through a process designed to fill sub-program carveouts and prioritize selection of projects with qualities that are most aligned to ILSFA goals. Random selection is conducted when there are multiple projects with the same score. The day following Project Selection, the final results and recording of the event are published, and the selected projects move forward to Illinois Commerce Commission Approval.</p> <p>The actual timelines for the sub-programs are established with consideration of anticipated participation, holidays, and the other sub-program timelines.</p>
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Transition

	Question	Answer
<p>23</p>	<p>What is the IPA’s preferred timing for transitioning the Portal for both programs? On page 20 of the RFP, it is mentioned that the portal should be fully operational and able to accept both Illinois Shines and ILSFA applications by January 1, 2027. On page 27, it is mentioned that “the Agency</p>	<p>See the response to Question 2.</p>

	<p>expects that program portals and all underlying systems, databases, and tools will be stood up and fully functional by March 1, 2027, with the Illinois Shines components of the portal stood up by January 1, 2027,” which implies that the ILSFA components of the portal could be stood up later, by June 30, 2027.</p>	
24	<p>During the transition phase, what level of operational overlap or coordination is anticipated with current Administrator, given that Offerors should not assume agreements remain in effect beyond June 2027?</p>	<p>It is the Agency’s expectation that current Program Administrators and the joint Program Administrator will collaborate throughout the transition period, ensuring no lapses in the programs and a smooth transition between Program Administrators. The Agency anticipates a strong project plan will be developed, detailing when elements of the program will be developed, stood up, and cut-over will occur. This plan will include details surrounding parallel running of systems to test the operational integrity of systems before full ‘go-live’. Further, the joint Program Administrator is expected to shadow current Program Administrator processes to the extent possible. The Agency will work to facilitate such interactions, including collaborative sessions to understand current program design. The details surrounding how this process will work is subject to the Offeror’s proposal, experience with the programs (in general), and the underlying systems and processes already in place. Rigor is expected throughout the process, most especially at the commencement of the transition to define the schedule and program management approach, and during system and operational stand-up and cut-over to ensure there are no failures or gaps leading to a program lapse.</p>
25	<p>Can the Agency clarify its expectations regarding operational overlap during transition. For example, whether a parallel-run period is anticipated for critical functions like application intake, contracting, invoicing, and consumer protection and how the Agency will assess readiness to fully transition responsibility?</p>	<p>The Agency expects processes and systems will be developed and able to support either operational overlap or parallel running. The RFP defines an expectation that the portal will be operational and ready for use by both programs by January 1, 2027, with the goal of the ILSFA transition completed first. This is specifically to provide time to stress-test and parallel run the portal and connected systems prior to the final full go-live completed by June 2027. Other technical systems, such as underlying infrastructure to manage, house and interrogate data and information – including historic data sets – must include an audit period to ensure data conversion from currently implemented systems to any newly developed systems by the joint Program Administrator are complete and accurate. The extent to which systems, processes, and related activities overlap or otherwise run in parallel with current Program Administrator activities will be subject to the proposal and planning by the awarded Offeror.</p>
26	<p>Regarding Section 2.3.2: “With the IL Shines Program potentially transitioning first and elements of the ILSFA Program transitioning with the IL Shines Program and others transitioning into and throughout 2027.” “The Agency intends to transition ILSFA first, with the Program Administrator assuming responsibility of ILSFA administration by January 2027.” Which program does IPA expect to transition first: Illinois Solar for All or Illinois Shines?</p>	<p>Please refer to Questions 2, 24, and 25.</p>
27	<p>Regarding Section 2.6 – Question 3: “While there may be some technical aspects of each program that require continued separation, for example the management and update of public facing websites (e.g., illinoisshines.com and</p>	<p>Please refer to Questions 2, 24, and 25.</p>

	<p>illinoissfa.com), the Agency expects that program portals and all underlying systems, databases, and tools will be stood up and fully functional by March 1, 2027, with the Illinois Shines components of the portal stood up by January 1, 2027.” When must the entire portal be completed? Does IPA anticipate having a portion of the functionality available ahead of full functionality for both programs?</p>	
<p>28</p>	<p>Assuming a transition from the incumbent Program Administrator, please describe the expected handover process for marketing, digital, and communications assets. Specifically, will the awardee be granted access to, or provided with, a comprehensive handover packet that includes email marketing data, access to current website analytics platforms (e.g., Google Analytics accounts and historical performance data), all original and approved marketing collateral, and ownership or licensing rights to website assets such as images, videos, and other media? In addition, please describe the expected handover process for program social media accounts, including administrative access, account ownership, and any known constraints or risks that may require the creation of new accounts or replacement of assets.</p>	<p>In general, the Agency expects to provide the Joint Program Administrator with access to key data and work products in use by the programs, including marketing materials, communications, and related information. To the extent information is available, this will include asset statistics (e.g., website analytics) and external communications (including the materials used to craft such communications and outreach). The process to facilitate the hand-over of materials between Approved Vendors during the transition has not yet been defined; however, the transfer of materials is expected to occur soon after contract execution with the Joint Program Administrator, following the development of a detailed project management plan by the Joint Program Administrator.</p>

Pricing

	<p>Question</p>	<p>Answer</p>
<p>29</p>	<p>To ensure accurate resourcing in our pricing proposal, can the IPA clarify if the application processing time metric includes the cure period for incomplete or complex income documentation? We want to understand if the IPA prioritizes speed to initial review or speed to final resolution for the non-standard applications?</p>	<p>Generally, the Agency prioritizes speed to the initial review, understanding that curing the information on an application is dependent on Approved Vendor’s timely and accurate response. It will be the responsibility of the joint Program Administrator to track and manage the progress of Approved Vendors curing deficiencies to ensure that project applications continue moving forward in the verification process.</p> <p>The general expectation for project review timelines is as follows:</p> <p>Illinois Shines: The Agency expects the Program Administrator to review all Part I small and large distributed generation applications within 10 business days (inclusive of the cure period). For community solar Part I applications, the Agency expects the Program Administrator to complete the review within 20 days from the date the batch payment is received (inclusive of the cure period). After review, the Agency expects the Program Administrator to verify Part I distributed generation applications within 20 business days from the date the Part I application review is finalized. Community solar</p>

		<p>application Part I verification timelines may vary depending on the amount of capacity available and/or waitlists.</p> <p>ILSFA: As also discussed in the responses to Questions 19 and 22, sub-program initial submission windows are generally the most ‘time-critical’. Please refer to the ILSFA calendar for current timing details: https://www.illinoisfa.com/vendors/calendar/. Importantly, projects submitted to the program in the initial submission window must be reviewed and cured within the established and published timeline, regardless of the volume of submissions. Rolling submission review goals echo the Illinois Shines review goals above.</p> <p>Both Programs: For Part II applications, the expectation is to review all small and large distributed generation applications within 10 business days and community solar applications within 20 days from the date the Part II application is submitted (inclusive of the cure period). After review, the expectation is to verify Part II distributed generation applications within 20 business days from the date the Part I application review is finalized. Community solar application Part II verification timelines may vary.</p>
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Equity & Labor

	Question	Answer
30	The RFP mentions the Minimum Equity Standard (MES). Can the Agency clarify if the evaluation of a bidder’s compliance plan will weigh demonstrated historical adherence to similar standards differently than prospective commitments to meet future standards?	<p>The Minimum Equity Standard is a requirement for participants (Approved Vendors and Designees) in the Programs. Offerors will be evaluated based upon their experience managing the application of similar processes and standards.</p> <p>To provide additional clarity, Diversity Equity and Inclusion standards are applied to Offerors seeking to become the joint Program Administrator as provided through Section I.17 of the RFP. This includes review of the Utilization Plan, including achievement of the 10% utilization goal as also defined in the same Section.</p>

Scoring

	Question	Answer
31	How will the potential interview be factored into the scoring?	Any interviews scheduled between the IPA and Offeror, following Offeror Proposal submission, will be used to inform and/or clarify Offeror responses to RFP questions, which without such clarifications may be unclear or require expansion. Interviews themselves are not scored.
32	Does the evaluation process award additional points to proposals that include enhanced rural outreach efforts alongside urban engagement strategies?	The evaluation process is established in Section I.15 of the RFP, including the elements of responsibility for which the Agency will evaluate proposals. Proposals will be scored based on the strength of addressing those elements. The Agency has not established any other criteria for which additional points would be awarded. Rural outreach efforts and urban engagement strategies would be considered within the established elements of responsibility.

Consumer Protection

	Question	Answer
33	Can the Agency clarify the extent to which the Administrator is expected to expand existing consumer protection initiatives (ex. escrow processes) beyond current program parameters, and what criteria would trigger such expansions?	<p>The joint Program Administrator is responsible for both implementing current Consumer Protection (“CP”) Handbook requirements and any additional CP elements as defined by the programs. New or expanded CP initiatives can originate out of a host of sources. Typically, significant changes like new initiatives are implemented through the development process of the biennial Long-Term Plan, but the cause of the changes can stem from new or emerging challenges realized during program operation that need improvements or clarity, through legislative efforts that result in a new law and mandate such changes, stakeholder feedback to improve program processes and protections, and so on.</p> <p>Currently, CP related changes can be identified in the filed 2026 Long-Term Plan (see the redline of the changes proposed in the 2026 Long-Term Plan, Chapter 9) and the subsequent litigated items found through ICC Docket No. 25-0945. Please note that the 2026 Long-Term Plan remains pending before the ICC. Additionally, the recent passage of the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act (“CRGA”) contains additional CP measures effective June 1, 2026.</p>

Systems & IT

	Question	Answer
34	Would IPA prefer to see new technology stacks alternative to Salesforce?	The Agency is seeking technical recommendations that provide the best-fit solution for the programs. The current technology solution for ILSFA, underpinned by a Salesforce-based system, is operationally sufficient. The Agency is not recommending or requiring the continued use of Salesforce or recommending its replacement. Instead, Offerors are encouraged to propose solutions that meet the specifications of the program, drive organization and operational efficiency, are able to be ‘easily’ updated or altered if system and/or program requirements change (i.e., built to enable updates if needed), retain operational rigors and controls, and provide a good user experience – either by the joint Program Administrator staff, the Agency staff, and/or program participants.
35	Are there website accessibility requirements for the Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All program websites to ensure access for individuals with disabilities, such as compliance with recognized standards (e.g., WCAG 2.1)? If so, should proposers describe their approach to meeting these accessibility requirements?	<p>All websites for the State of Illinois must follow the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA. The Illinois Department of Information Technology offers guidance at the following site: https://doit.illinois.gov/initiatives/accessibility/guides/web.html</p> <p>Standards for the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act may be found at: https://www.dhs.state.il.us/IITAA/IITAAStandards.html</p> <p>Question 3 of the Section 2 Technical Proposal asks Offerors: Please provide examples of relevant software development, describing how Offeror prioritized new features, user interface design, testing (including quality control and issues resolution), and accessibility.</p>

Communications & Outreach

	Question	Answer
36	How many grassroots education activities occur per year, and what types of activities are included?	<p>Grassroots education activities are coordinated and staffed by Grassroots Educators, as established in their subcontracts resulting from the Grassroots Education RFP process, administered by the Program Administrator. The next cohort of Grassroots Educators is anticipated to onboard in January 2027 following the RFP process.</p> <p>To support the Grassroots Educators, currently, the ILSFA Program Administrator hosts a two-day in-person onboarding workshop at the beginning of a grassroots educator cohort term and a virtual mid-year event. The Program Administrator meets with the Grassroots Educators monthly to hear campaign updates and troubleshoot challenges, rotating between one-on-one meetings with individual grassroots educators and “pods” of 3-4 Grassroots Educators. The Offerors may propose their own approach, though the Agency believes in providing strong support to help Grassroots Educators maximize the effectiveness of their campaigns and stay up-to-date on the latest Program news.</p>
37	Can you please provide a list of Community-Based Organizations that are working on these programs?	<p>The Agency interprets this question as requesting a list of the organizations the Program Administrator subcontracts with. Currently, the ILSFA Program Administrator subcontracts for Grassroots Education campaigns and referrals of LIHEAP customers. There are no Community-Based Organizations doing subcontracted work on Illinois Shines.</p> <p><i>For a list of current Grassroots Educators, please refer to the IPA’s ILSFA website: https://www.illinoisfa.com/grassroots-education/</i></p> <p>A list of LIHEAP organizations currently providing community solar referrals through the Connector is provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign County Regional Planning Commission • C.E.F.S. Economic Opportunity Corporation • Decatur-Macon County Opportunities Corporation • Embarras River Basin Agency • Kendall-Grundy Community Action Agency • Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency • Tri-County Opportunities Council • Western Illinois Regional Council

Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

	Question	Answer
38	Is there a list of qualified BEP contractors available to Offerors that can be reviewed to support the BEP commitments to be made in their proposal?	Please refer to the Supplier Diversity Portal located on the Commission for Equity and Inclusions website (https://cei.illinois.gov/).