



Q&A: EEC Status Boosts LiveWire Construction, Sets Stage for Future in Solar

Equity eligible contractors (“EECs”) are a vital part of the Illinois Power Agency’s (“IPA”) mission to expand access to the clean energy economy to all Illinoisians. The EEC category within Illinois Shines was developed to have a dedicated portion of projects submitted by Approved Vendors that are EECs. The Agency spoke with Shon Harris, President of EEC LiveWire Construction, to learn about his experience.



Shon Harris
LiveWire Construction
President

Can you tell us about LiveWire, its origins, and its current scope of work?

LiveWire is going on 20 years of business. I’m a 30-year electrician with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. I began as an apprentice and worked my way up to a commercial electrician, eventually founding LiveWire. Today, we have just under 200 electricians delivering both commercial and industrial electrical services, including design, installation, maintenance, and upgrades.

Crain’s Chicago Business recognized you as a Notable Black Leader in 2024, writing that LiveWire has “[broken] barriers for Black-owned businesses” within the renewable energy market. Can you speak to LiveWire’s experience as a Black-owned business in Illinois’ rapidly growing solar market?



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**– Shon Harris,
LiveWire Construction President**



When it comes to renewables, we had been chasing what we thought was a ghost. But once the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act passed, it changed the game. We were one of the first three EECs certified in Illinois Shines. When developers and larger contractors started to identify their partners, the phone started ringing off the hook. That was strange for us, because typically we’re an afterthought as a black contractor. Typically, we have to go in and advocate and pound the table and ensure that we’re getting opportunity. And this time, we were a forethought. Of course, we set the foundation by keeping the doors open and trying to continuously break down barriers, but CEJA assisted us with that in a major way. It took all the talent and the resources that we already had, and gave it a platform. It’s been a tremendous way for us to demonstrate, if given the opportunity, what black contractors can do.

With more than a dozen Community Solar projects under development through Illinois Shines and one project in the works through Illinois Solar for All, how has LiveWire's work in renewable energy grown since becoming an EEC?

It's taken us from being a subcontractor to being an Engineering, Procurement, and Construction contractor, where we're able to manage the entire project. We've also expanded from smaller rooftop projects to larger ground mount projects. We've historically worked in Chicago and Cook County on electrical projects, but community solar has helped give us the ability to break outside of Chicagoland and chase other opportunities.

The assistance of the IPA and the Illinois Shines program has really helped transition and build up our business. At this point, we have about 35 megawatts installed in the state that we're looking to continue to grow.

What is in the future for LiveWire?

Well, exciting news. We are looking at our first over 10-megawatt project, which is considered a utility-scale project. Moving forward, we want to be able to continue down this pathway, doing larger projects and growing our team. And where we can, we're hiring from the CEJA Workforce Hubs to get people into the ecosystem of solar. I'm also hoping we'll be able to highlight this project for other EECs: If we can do it, you can do it. There's also battery storage. After the passage of the Clean and Reliable Grid Act, we'll be able to put focus into battery storage projects, particularly with the EEC attachment. Lastly, we're excited to continue mentoring other contractors through the Joint EEC Parties, which is an organization we created after connecting with other EECs through the Agency's stakeholder feedback workshops. Those workshops helped us solidify our voice, and led to this organization that allows us to work and advocate together.

You're the president of the Joint EEC Parties, and you also started the Black Contractors, Owners and Executives business consortium, which promotes economic growth and advancement in Black communities.

I have a passion for unifying voices, especially those of vulnerable communities. It's something that I naturally lean towards to try to help grow someone else and grow myself at the same time. That's rewarding, and I definitely don't lose anything by helping anybody else in this Program, which is meant to raise the community and not just raise one contractor. It's about raising a community of contractors so that we can solve more problems and raise the economic opportunities in our community. That's where my passion is. And quite frankly, sometimes some healthy competition is good.



The LiveWire Energy Team working on a 7 MW solar project in McLean County, Illinois. Photo courtesy of LiveWire Construction.

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