

ENERGY STORAGE PROCUREMENTS & THE MINIMUM EQUITY STANDARD

August 2026 Procurement

The **Minimum Equity Standard** (MES) is a required percentage of a Seller's **project workforce** that must be comprised of **Equity Eligible Persons** (EEPs). For the August 2026 storage procurement, this percentage will be set at 10%. This means the project workforce for projects participating in the procurement is required to be comprised of at least 10% EEPs. The MES percentage will increase for projects participating in future procurements.



Who qualifies as an Equity Eligible Person?

To qualify as an EEP a person must meet 1 of the 4 criteria:

1. Graduates of, or current/former **participants in qualifying programs**: Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, Illinois Climate Works Preapprentice Program, Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program, or the Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program, and the Solar Pipeline Training Program and Multi-Cultural Job Training Program*
2. People who are graduates of or currently enrolled in **the foster care system**
3. People who were **formerly incarcerated**
4. People whose primary residence is in an **Equity Investment Eligible Community***

**EEPs that qualify based on residence or qualifying program participation are required to provide documentation to confirm eligibility.*



How is project workforce defined?

Project workforce means employees, contractors and their employees, and subcontractors and their employees whose job duties are directly required by or substantially related to the development, construction, and operation of the project. This includes both project installation workforce and workforce in administrative, sales, marketing, and technical roles where those workers' duties are directly related to the project. For workforce in administrative, sales, marketing and technical roles, this applies only if those workers are located in Illinois.



How To Comply with the Minimum Equity Standard

1. First, a Seller must provide an **initial Compliance Plan** within 30 days of the ICC Bid Approval Date that details the intent to comply with the Minimum Equity Standard. This First Compliance Plan will cover the first Delivery Year following contract execution.
2. Annually on December 1st until the project reaches its commercial operations date (COD), the Seller must provide a **Mid-Year Report** that details the progress made on the plans outlined in the Compliance Plan.
3. By July 15th of each delivery year, Seller shall submit a **MES Combined Compliance and Year-End Report (Combined Report)**. The submission shall include a backward-looking MES Year-End Report (for entities to demonstrate how they achieved MES compliance in the previous delivery year), as well as a forward-looking MES Compliance Plan (for entities to demonstrate how they will achieve MES compliance in the new delivery year).
4. Once the project reaches COD, the required compliance with MES is complete as MES compliance is only required during the construction phase of the project, not during the operations and maintenance phase. A **Combined Report** will still be required at the close of the year within which COD was reached.



Timeline for Compliance



Waiver from the Minimum Equity Standard

Requests for waivers from the Minimum Equity Standard may be submitted no later than project COD, for which approval shall be at the sole discretion of the IPA.

- **Waivers are only granted on rare occasion** and only when the Seller can prove that compliance with the MES was attempted. Waivers should not be counted on in place of compliance with this important equity requirement.
- **Waivers are granted for one year only.** If construction activities span multiple years, the Seller is expected to continue attempting to come into compliance with the MES in years following the granting of a waiver.

If you believe you qualify for a waiver from the MES please click here: <https://ipa.illinois.gov/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/minimum-equity-standard.html>



Consequences of Noncompliance with the Minimum Equity Standard

Under the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act, compliance with the MES is required for all projects that win contracts via IPA's energy storage procurements. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in **suspension from future IPA procurements.**



Using the Energy Equity Workforce Portal to Meet the Minimum Equity Standard

The **Energy Equity Workforce Portal** is an online resource designed to help connect clean energy companies with Equity Eligible Persons looking to work in the clean energy sector in Illinois. EEPs can use the Equity Portal to post their availability for employers and search for clean energy companies/job opportunities. Developers of clean energy can use the Portal to post clean energy jobs and to search for Equity Eligible Persons. Learn about everything this tool can do here: <https://energyequity.illinois.gov/>