

## Illinois Power Agency

### DEI Advisory Committee Meeting

September 2025

Facilitator: Kate Clifford and Tanvi Shah

Note-taker: Tanvi and Kate

Back up Note-taker: Catherine

Attendees:

- Ky Ajayi
- Lesley McCain
- David Husemoller
- Hector Trello
- Christina Castillo
- Chynna Hampton
- Shon Harris
- Jessica Wagner
- Denise Moore
- Marcus Jordan
- DEI Bureau

## Welcome

- Housekeeping
  - o Mind the mic
  - o Chat and tech support
- Review of Norms
- Review Agenda

## Introductions

- IPA Staff Introductions
  - o Name
  - o Pronouns

***What recent experiences or insights related to your work shines a light on the promise of equitable shifts happening in the clean energy sector?***

- It feels like the systems and teams are rowing in the same direction, there is greater clarity behind the scenes and that is helpful for our equitable focus on deliverables.
- It does feel like we've addressed a lot of the urgent items and that we can shift to forward thinking.
- Working with Utility Scale MES, it's been helpful to use Shines as a parallel to assist in streamlining the structures and processes with Utility Scale. There is an increased confidence behind the MES.
- Working with the Equity Portal and working closely with EEPs, we are able to see increase of access to who is applying to be an EEP via training programs, etc.

Introducing yourself and passing it along to others

- o Name
- o Pronouns
- o Organization

***What recent experiences or insights related to your work shines a light on the promise of equitable shifts happening in the clean energy sector?***

- Acknowledge we sit on stolen land, built with stolen labor. Feel like the light has dimmed a bit because of the House Reconciliation Bill. But that work continues in IL. Committed to the moving this work forward.
- Attended the ICC Energy Summit. Helpful to hear the needs of EEC and how we build equitable opportunities in the state. The whole state, including this group, are committed to advancing equity in the state. Solar businesses are committed to meeting equity requirements and providing opportunities to individuals to grow in the sector.
- Community colleges are a key partner in ensuring equitable skill building for workers.
- Working on the nonprofit side, we see it everyday. Provide contractors and individuals the skills and resources needed.
- Addressing gaps in the industry. Supporting contractors thrive in the sector.
- At the Aspen Ideas Conference, see the individuals nationwide push back on the cuts we are seeing the sector. Being inventive about how we problem solve around the issues.
- Attended the ICC Energy Summit to ensure the EEC voice was heard and equity was centered in the conversation. What would the implications of this work be for EECs?
- Conversation with IPA Director, Brian Granahan, was incredibly helpful. Hope to have more conversations in the future.
- Proverb of "teaching a man to fish" comes to mind.

## Updates from Bureau

- LTP Draft & Stakeholder Feedback
  - Draft plan published last month
  - Please provide written comments by Monday, September 29
- Racial Disparity Study
  - Kick-Off Meeting last month
  - Data Assessment meetings upcoming
- Southern IL Clean Energy Summit
  - A great event, lots of great feedback from the diverse audience (vendors, DCEO, NAACP, etc.)
  - Specific positive feedback on the data visibility that the IPA provides and how stakeholders are encouraged to contribute
  - Activating this conversation in Southern IL is always welcomed
- DEI Data Dashboard
  - The DEI Bureau is working on publishing a collective center to house MES data, demographic data, and internal IPA metrics correlating to DEI efforts for our stakeholders to use.
- BEP Efforts
  - The Agency is prioritizing development, standardization and management of the Agency's BEP process
  - This is the internal practice of ensuring the Agency procurements are prioritizing the diversification of contract awards to meet the State's 30% BEP Utilization goal, as we are able.
- Internal Equity-Centered Leadership Academy
  - Last February, we launched the Agency's first Alignment survey, where we assessed indicators of belonging, value, DEI practices, and Agency culture. From the survey, needs were identified to explicitly train staff on equity practices that will lead to greater psychological safety and well being.
  - The Equity-Centered learning series is in development, with aims to reach all staff of the Agency within the next calendar year, growing our own internal capacities of equitable leadership.
- Questions:
  - Who monitors the BEP Program? How are the waivers determined?
    - DEI Bureau is building out the tracking and monitoring process to check in on vendor expenditures quarterly. Any reduction of goals is determined through a structure process and will include reporting a goal reduction with CEI.
    - What outreach is being done with contractors? How do they track the outreach they have done with BEP vendors?

- This is expected to cultivate sustained diverse vendor relations. We'll be tracking for this.
- There is a mandatory documented Good Faith Effort in the Utilization plan by which any vendor is unable to dedicated 30% of the awarded contract to certified BEP Vendors has to demonstrate considerate efforts to ensure outreach and engagement was made.
- Suggestion to ensure that outreach is done to ensure entities are aware of opportunities before any reduction or waiver of BEP Utilization is granted. CTA's DBE Advisory Committee can serve as a good guide to this work.

## **Advisory Committee Discussion**

***What initiatives would drive support for small and emerging businesses that qualify as EECs and who we'd like to support through our programs?***

- Here's what's happening:
  - Working with Clean Energy Jobs & Justice Fund and DCEO
  - Illinois Shines Equity Training Series
  - Advance of Capital Resources

***What else should we be investigating?***

- Prioritize programs and resources that enable small businesses to enter and thrive in the energy efficiency sector rather than renewables, as it presents a more stable opportunity during uncertain periods for renewable energy projects.
- Partner with these business and resource them with tools that will help them to get ahead of the curve, empowering them to become leaders later. Expanding awareness for the existing supports available.
- Support small businesses in strategic planning, including succession and exit strategies, helping them to see future opportunities and providing tools that demonstrate clear return on investment.
- Develop mentorship initiatives that pair experienced professionals with emerging businesses, ensuring that mentors are financially compensated and that mentorship covers both regulatory and practical operational guidance, with a focus on how to build a sustaining solar business (not just how to navigate IPA Programs).
- Offer training and develop outlines that facilitate cultural change and foster inclusive practices, ensuring small businesses are equipped to integrate diverse talent and create supportive workplaces.

- Offer consistent, responsive communication channels and guidance to help small businesses navigate regulatory processes and program requirements, reducing confusion and burnout during times of industry change.
- Create financial mechanisms that directly assist with overhead expenses such as interconnection, engineering, and other project costs, incentivizing participation through measures like REC adders for mentorship involvement.
- Adjust programs to provide adequate compensation for both mentors and mentees, encouraging experienced contractors to partner with emerging businesses and share critical expertise without financial loss.
- IPA reminds the committee to please submit any feedback on the LTP through the written comment process.

### ***How do we create the pull for more EEPs into the clean energy economy?***

- Here's what's happening:
  - Outreach Efforts
  - Union Engagement

### ***What else should we be investigating?***

- Suggestions were made for forming strategic partnerships between major project developers and local educational institutions to create clear pathways for students and adults in pre-apprenticeship programs to see and access clean energy career opportunities from initial development to completion.
- There is a need to broaden training programs for EEPs to cover not just installation, but the full spectrum of skills and roles involved in the clean energy industry, enabling more versatile career paths and stronger long-term buy-in.
- Launching incubator and accelerator programs as quickly as possible to support EEP growth and provide practical vehicles for skills development and industry integration.
- Recognition that some unions lack experience in recruiting and training new EEPs, combined with a need to address manpower shortages through partnerships and intentional leadership interventions for expanding access and opportunity.

## **Topic Generation**

- Ran out of time in the meeting, will be assessed in the post-committee feedback form
- Happy 1 Year, IPA's DEI Advisory Committee!
  - Anyone else who should be in the conversation?
  - Please provide suggestions in follow-up survey.

## Closing

- Gratitude
- Feedback
- Next Steps: Agenda, attendee list, and meeting notes posted on the website.