

ILLINOIS COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION NETWORK

ENERGY PLANNING AND PROCUREMENT

May 9, 2023

Illinois Power Agency
105 W. Madison Street, Suite 1401
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: Request for Stakeholder Feedback on “Municipal Load Aggregation and Renewable Resource Development Report”

Illinois Power Agency;

Illinois Community Choice Aggregation Network (“ICCAN”) appreciates this opportunity to provide the Illinois Power Agency (“IPA”) with feedback on the “Report on Municipal Load Aggregation and Renewable Resource Development” (“Report”). ICCAN submits the following comments and recommendations to the IPA in furtherance of identifying pathways to accelerate progress towards Illinois’ renewable energy goals.

ICCAN is a certified Agent, Broker, Consultant with the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) and has served dozens of municipal aggregation programs in Illinois as well as advised policymakers and program managers on municipal aggregation issues in New York, Ohio, and Maryland. ICCAN also participates in LEAN Energy US, the national non-profit that provides information resources and market expertise to local governments, other non-profit organizations, advocacy groups and individuals seeking to establish or expand municipal aggregation opportunities. Lastly, ICCAN supports the Community Solar Clearinghouse Solution Program (“CS²”) through which Illinois municipalities can provide their residents with access to high-value community solar subscriptions on an opt-in basis. The CS² program serves over twenty separate communities in the ComEd and Ameren Illinois service regions and is sponsored by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus which represents the shared interests of 270 municipalities located in northeastern Illinois.

The question of how to use municipal aggregation to support the deployment of new renewable resources in Illinois arises in almost every conversation ICCAN has with municipalities – regardless of whether municipal aggregation is the immediate topic of discussion. This reflects the common desire of municipal leaders, staff, and residents to extend the functional benefits of municipal aggregation (e.g., purchasing volume, simplicity of consumer participation) towards a platform that can support local sustainability goals.

As noted in the Report, certain market- and policy-based impediments prevent municipal aggregation in Illinois from securing supply from utility-scale renewable resources in the same manner as

municipal aggregation programs in California. Despite these barriers, ICCAN and our municipal partners believe that there is an immediate opportunity to leverage municipal aggregation in Illinois in a manner that can support and accelerate deployment of community solar resources throughout Illinois to the benefit of all primary parties. Specifically, accepting the applicability of opt-out aggregation authority for all community solar options (e.g., Traditional Community Solar, Solar-for-All, and Community-Driven Community Solar) as opt-out aggregation program supply offerings would benefit all primary parties:

- Communities would be better able to demonstrate support for the development of additional renewable energy resources in Illinois (understanding that the RECs would be likely sold to the local utility as part of the ABP program).
- Consumers would experience more immediate access to cost-saving subscriptions and be less likely to be victimized by predatory door-to-door marketing campaigns from bad market actors.
- Community Solar Developers would be able to secure subscription commitments early in the development process thereby reducing uncertainty and project finance costs.

Key elements of providing community solar subscriptions as an opt-out municipal aggregation supply option include:

- Statutory and Regulatory Compliance
 - Compliance with all consumer protection requirements noted in the IPA ABP Guidebook including provision of the IPA Consumer Protection and Disclosure Forms.
 - Compliance with all opt-out notification rules required for municipal electricity supply programs.
 - Provision of all reporting documentation for subscriptions to the IPA.
- Consumer Protection
 - Requirement for guaranteed savings for participating consumers
 - No credit checks or minimum credit scores
 - No upfront or hidden monthly program costs to the subscribers to participate under the opt-out guaranteed savings community solar program.
 - Use of net crediting offered by the local utility.
 - No termination fees for subscribers.
- Program Flexibility.
 - Municipalities would have the option of combining community solar subscriptions along with traditional retail supply, or to offer community solar subscriptions as a free-standing option.

The concept of including community solar subscriptions as an energy supply option through opt-out municipal aggregation programs is consistent with the goals of the state's renewable energy policies and can be managed in a manner that aligns with current regulatory oversight.

As for consistency with other state policies, ICCAN notes that the Illinois Power Agency Act specifies that municipalities may "solicit bids and enter into service agreement to facilitate for those loads

the sale and purchase of electricity and related services and equipment” (20 ILCS 3855/1-92(a)). Additionally, ICCAN notes that opt-out aggregation authority is granted to local governments by voters through referendum. Taken together, these elements indicate that local governments have ample authority and responsibility to consider newly developed energy supply options such as community solar subscriptions.

ICCAN respectfully recommends that the IPA allow the development of opt-out community solar subscription programs that are consistent with state energy policy. In so doing, the IPA can expand and accelerate the deployment of additional renewable resources while protecting consumer interests.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards

Mark J. Pruitt
Principal, Illinois Community Choice Aggregation Network