

Promoting Equity in Illinois Power Agency Renewable Energy Programs



Illinois Power Agency Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement:

“The Illinois Power Agency recognizes and celebrates the uniqueness and dignity of all individuals, and is committed to understanding the personal, cultural, and historic aspects of identity.

The Agency continues to strive for creating a diversely positive, inclusive and equitable environment, to support and provide access to clean energy for all. The IPA is committed to fostering an environment for communities that have been excluded from economic opportunities with the energy sector.”

With the enactment of the Public Act 102-0662 (the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act or CEJA) in September 2021, Illinois has a new focus on ensuring equity that bring benefits of the clean energy economy to workforce across the state.

Some of the measures taken by the Illinois Power Agency to implement that focus and to prioritize equity include:

Equity Accountability System

- ❖ The IPA is developing and launching an Equity Accountability System to ensure that entities participating in the Agency’s solar incentive programs and renewable resources procurements are utilizing a more diverse set of contractors and workers. The Equity Accountability System will be launched mid-year 2023.
- ❖ The Agency will conduct outreach to educate entities on equity requirements for IPA programs and procurements.

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Adjustable Block Program Equity Eligible Contractor Block

CEJA creates a dedicated block of program capacity for projects within the Adjustable Block Program (also known as Illinois Shines) developed by Equity Eligible Contractors.

- ❖ In the Adjustable Block Program, payments for Renewable Energy Credits are normally only made after the project has been completed. However, for projects within the Equity Eligible Contractor block, the Approved Vendor can now request an advance on payments, which is intended to overcome barriers to access to capital.
- **Energy Workforce Equity Database**
 - ❖ The IPA will be developing an Energy Workforce Equity Database, an accessible online public facing tool to allow users to view participating suppliers, vendors, and subcontractors in the renewable energy industry.

Key Update:

- ❖ The Agency is developing a publicly accessible and searchable portal to help connects clean energy companies and Equity Eligible Persons. The portal will also provide information on workforce development program as they become available. The first phase of the portal is expected launch in late 2022.

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Key Concepts to Know:

- An Equity Eligible Person is an individual who has graduated from various job training programs, former member of the foster care system in Illinois, a formerly incarcerated person or someone who lives in an equity eligible investment community.
 - ❖ An Equity Eligible Investment Community is either an Environmental Justice community or a Restore, Reinvest, Renew community.
- An Equity Eligible Contractor is a business that is majority-owned by eligible persons, or a nonprofit or cooperative that is majority-governed by eligible persons or is a natural person that is an eligible person simply offering personal services as an independent contractor.

For more information, please visit the [Equity Eligible Contractor page on the Illinois Adjustable Block Program website \(illinoisabp.com\)](https://illinoisabp.com)

Racial Disparity Study

The IPA will be conducting a Racial Disparity Study to measure the presence and impact of discrimination on minority businesses and workers in Illinois' clean energy economy.

Key Update:

The Racial Disparity Study will review access, participation, and utilization of contractors with a special emphasis on minority owned business enterprises, and minority and disadvantaged workers. The Agency will conduct an analysis of the effectiveness of equity measures for increasing participation of Equity Eligible Persons and Equity Eligible Contractors. This study will be conducted within one year of awarding the first contracts subject to the Equity Accountability System. The study will also provide recommendations on how to adjust the equity accountability system to ensure it is meeting its goals. A tentative completion and publication date for the study is August 1, 2024.



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Outreach

The IPA's small and minority business outreach efforts are designed to develop and foster a culture that prioritizes advancing access to communities that have been excluded from economic opportunities within the solar energy sector. To meet this, the IPA will be conducting outreach targeted to minority business associations and other agencies to increase access to program education, recruitment, and relevant participation.