

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 brings 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 launched an Equity Accountability System ("EAS") in 2023. The EAS ensures 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 Agency conducts outreach to educate entities on equity requirements for IPA programs and procurements.

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Illinois Shines Equity Eligible Contractors Block

CEJA creates a dedicated block of program capacity for projects within the Illinois Shines Program developed by Equity Eligible Contractors.

- ❖ In the Illinois Shines 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 Portal**
 - ❖ On January 31, 2023, the IPA launched the Energy Workforce Equity Portal, an accessible, online, public-facing tool that connects clean energy companies participating in Illinois Shines and developers of utility-scale solar and wind projects with Equity Eligible Persons. Making these connections is a key aspect of ensuring that the clean energy industry in Illinois grows in an equitable manner. The portal is designed to:
 - Connect clean energy companies with Equity Eligible job seekers seeking employment in Illinois' clean energy sector.
 - Help individuals find out whether they qualify as Equity Eligible job seekers, connect with prospective employers, and find jobs.
 - Help clean energy companies post jobs and search for Equity Eligible job seekers.
 - Help Equity Eligible job seekers find information on workforce training programs and more.

To learn more, visit energyequity.illinois.gov

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Webpage

The IPA has created a webpage dedicated to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The page represents the Agency's commitment to DEI, which plays a central role in its mission to create an equitable, clean energy future in Illinois.

The page includes information on DEI targets and mandates for Illinois Shines, IPA outreach resources, and links to equity webinars.

To learn more, visit the [DEI page on the IPA website](#).

Key Concepts to Know:

- An Equity Eligible Person is an individual who has graduated from various job training programs, a 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 Shines website](#).

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.



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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.

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 goal, the IPA will be conducting outreach targeted toward minority business associations and other agencies to increase access to program education, recruitment, and relevant participation.

For outreach related questions, contact IPA DEI Outreach Associate Kina Askew at kina.j.askew@illinois.gov