



The Illinois Power Agency (“IPA”) is committed to robust consumer protections for customers participating in IPA-administered incentive programs, such as Illinois Shines (“ILShines”) and Illinois Solar for All (“ILSFA”). A strong and comprehensive approach to consumer protection:

Protects customers against misleading or unfair business practices
Helps residents and business make informed choices about whether and how to go solar
Builds trust in the programs and encourages positive customer experiences
Ensures that state-administered incentive funding only supports entities that are responsibly serving the public

Public Act 102-0662 (also known as the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act or CEJA) enacted on September 15, 2021, reinforces the importance of consumer protection and emphasizes the importance of building out a consumer protection team within the IPA to play an active role to build best practices to protect consumer interest in the growing solar industry in Illinois.

Registration

To register with ILShines and ILSFA, solar contractors and installers that submit project applications to the Programs must submit a detailed application to participate in the program, which will then be reviewed and approved by the Program Administrator. The approval process must be completed before any project applications can be submitted to the Program. Upon approval of the application, solar contractors and installers are vetted by the Program Administrators and, if approved, held to rigorous consumer protection standards. Subcontractors working with or on behalf of solar contractors and installers also have to register with the programs.

ILShines contractors and subcontractors, and ILSFA contractors and subcontractors, are listed on the relevant program website. This requirement further increases transparency and provides information that potential customers need to verify that a company contacting them is indeed registered with the programs.

As part of the application process, contractors interested in participating in IPA's solar programs must provide information on their organizational history, ownership structure, financial information, and regulatory

status in Illinois and other states, including current complaints and prior complaints within the past five years. Additionally, solar contractors must sign attestations that they understand and agree to the terms and conditions of the program they are registering with. This ensures that they are properly vetted before getting approved. Solar contractors must renew their approval every year.



To provide additional safeguard, solar contractors are responsible for ensuring that their subcontractors are registered with the programs. This includes making sure that subcontractors sign an attestation agreeing to abide by program terms and conditions. This provides additional information on participating entities, thus increasing transparency for the programs.

Specific to the ILSFA program, solar contractors must agree during registration to comply with the requirement that participants see no upfront costs and a minimum specified savings, where ongoing costs or fees to the participant do not exceed 50% of the value of energy produced by a participant's PV system, or in the case of community solar, a participant's share of the installed PV system. These additional consumer protection requirements ensure that Illinois consumers from low-income and environmental justice communities are seeing economic benefits from the program and are protected against misleading or unfair business practices.

Lastly, solar contractors that violate program requirements or continually provide negative experiences for Illinois consumers risk forfeiting the privilege of being supported through state-administered incentive funding.

Disclosure Forms and Contract Requirements

Solar contractors and subcontractors must provide a filled out standard Disclosure Form to each customer, and the customer must review and sign that form, before the customer signs a contract. Disclosure Forms are designed to provide consumers clear and consistent information about solar projects and transactions, including system equipment, size, cost, operations, warranties, and financing benefits.

Additionally, solar contractors and subcontractors must provide the customer with a program brochure prior to contract execution. These brochures, which are available in both English and Spanish, inform consumers of their rights, procedures for filing complaints, and other specific information related to incentive programs.



Consumer Complaint Database

To further ensure consumer protections and promote transparency in ILShines, the Program Administrator maintains a Consumer Complaint Database on the program website. The public database tracks consumer complaints associated with the program. The information in the Consumer Complaint Database is updated regularly and serves as a valuable tool for consumers to make informed decisions when selecting an solar contractor or subcontractor. In addition to maintaining a public database of consumer complaints, the Agency files a Complaints and Disciplinary Actions Report annually with the Illinois Commerce Commission. The report contains additional information regarding complaints received and any disciplinary actions taken by the ILShines Program Administrator over the course of the year.

Consumer Protection Handbook

The IPA has a strong set of consumer protections for both ILShines and ILSFA distributed generation and community solar programs. The IPA's Consumer Protection Handbook lays out marketing and other requirements for solar contractors and installers participating in both Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All. The Consumer Protection Handbook replaces and streamlines both the Distributed Generation and Community Solar Marketing Guidelines documents for both program with improved formatting and readability. Solar contractors and subcontractors must be in full compliance with the Consumer Protection Handbook.

Consumer Protection Expanded Working Group

The IPA's Consumer Protection Expanded Working Group engages a diverse set of stakeholders to create a more robust discussion of consumer protection issues. The scope of these discussions include both ILShines and ILSFA. The Working Group provides an opportunity for consumers, solar companies, community and nonprofit organizations, and other members of the public to directly provide their insight and perspectives to the Program Administrators for both Programs and the IPA. The feedback received from each session will help inform the Agency's strategies and decisions on a variety of consumer protection issues, including changes and updates to Program requirements and the development of consumer education materials and other resources.

Commitment to Education

The IPA is committed to consumer education and awareness. As a part of that ongoing commitment, the IPA has developed resources and education materials to make obtaining information on going solar as effortless and streamlined as possible.

In addition, ILSFA also works with grassroots educators in communities throughout Illinois conducting grassroots education efforts on the benefits and opportunities of ILSFA. These organizations are trusted members of their communities and utilize ILSFA grassroots education funding to drive program participation and ensure that the benefits of the Program reach low-income and environmental justice communities.

Ultimately, the IPA's efforts around consumer protection are not just built around protecting consumers and businesses from harmful business practices, but also around educating and empowering consumers to make well-informed decisions about going solar.

Information on consumer protections on the Illinois Solar for All website can be found [here](#).

Information on consumer protections on the Illinois Shines website (targeted for Illinois consumers) can be found [here](#).

Information on the Consumer Complaint Database (targeted for Illinois consumers) can be found [here](#).

Information on consumer protections on the Illinois Shines website (targeted for solar contractors and sub-contractors participating in the IPA's solar programs) can be found in the Program Guidebook found [here](#).