

Illinois Power Agency **POWER BRIEF**

July 2023

Volume IV

A monthly roundup of news and top highlights from the Illinois Power Agency

TOP INSIGHTS & HIGHLIGHTS

Illinois Power Agency's Commitment to Consumer Protection

The Illinois Power Agency is committed to consumer protection and works diligently to ensure positive experiences for Illinois residents and businesses interested in going solar.

As part of this commitment, the IPA has incorporated [comprehensive consumer protection requirements](#) into its solar programs.

Companies that submit applications for individual solar projects are vetted, and if approved, are held to rigorous consumer protection requirements related to marketing statements, sales practices, and contract terms. The IPA also takes proactive steps to monitor marketing statements and compliance with Program requirements, and thoroughly [investigates customer complaints](#). When companies are found to be non-compliant, the IPA takes swift action to [suspend offending companies from continued participation](#).



In the IPA's income-eligible Illinois Solar for All Program, participants see no upfront costs and are guaranteed a minimum specified savings of 50% of the value of energy produced by a participant's solar project. 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.

To help inform consumers and promote transparency, the IPA encourages customers to view the [full list of solar companies](#) approved to participate in the IPA's solar programs.

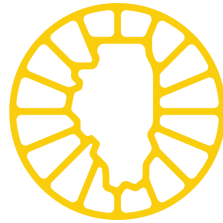
While the IPA's consumer protection efforts are built around protecting customers against harmful business practices, we are also constantly educating and empowering Illinois residents and businesses to make well informed decisions about going solar. The IllinoisShines.com website [outlines the basics of going solar](#), provides a glossary of key terminology, and features downloadable program brochures and timelines. Each potential customer must receive, review, and provide signature to a standardized disclosure form before a new project is accepted into the program.



Lastly, the IPA welcomes feedback and provides ongoing opportunities to hear from program participants and other stakeholders. Our Consumer Protection Working Group engages a diverse set of stakeholders for a robust discussion of consumer protection issues. The Working Group allows consumers, solar companies, community and nonprofit organizations, and other members of the public to directly provide their insight and perspectives that will help inform our strategies and decisions on a variety of consumer protection issues. To participate and receive information about the working group and future meetings, sign up using [this link](#).

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the IPA hosted a Power Hour Webinar on July 28 about Unpacking Community Solar Within Illinois Solar for All?



Illinois Solar for All

This webinar highlighted how CEJA has broadened the focus of ILSFA's community solar sub-program through community ownership and energy sovereignty. In addition, the webinar discussed the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Community Solar Partnership with the State of Illinois to design a portal connecting Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program participants with the ILSFA's community solar program. The speakers for the webinar included Jennifer Schmidt, Program Manager for Illinois Solar for All, Ariel Drehobl, Program Analyst, Workforce and Equitable Access Team at DOE, and Mindy Browning, Energy Assistance Coordinator at the Embarras River Basin Agency, Inc. in Greenup, Illinois.



To view the recording of the webinar, please click the video thumbnail above. For presentation slides and more, visit the [Events page](#) of the IPA website, under About IPA.

Upcoming Opportunities for Stakeholder Input



Much of the IPA's work is outlined through "procurement plans" published for public comment and then filed for approval with the Illinois Commerce Commission. This year, the IPA is statutorily required to publish drafts of two important procurement plans by August 15:

2024 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (or Long-Term Plan), which is developed and published every two-years. The Long-Term Plan details the goals and strategies for the IPA's renewable energy programs and procurements.

2024 Annual Electricity Procurement Plan, which is developed and published every year. The Electricity Procurement Plan provides a roadmap for the IPA's approach to meet the electricity supply needs of residential and small commercial customers taking fixed price service from Illinois electric utilities.

Any parties seeking to provide comment on the Agency's draft plans are encouraged to review these plans and submit written feedback. More information and guidance, including information on public hearings held in conjunction with these Plans and how to submit comments, will be available on the [announcements page](#) of the IPA website upon the plans' publishing on August 15.

Illinois Shines: Capacity Update – 2023-24 Program Year

The Illinois Shines 2023-24 Program Year, launched on June 1, provided new block capacity allocations to support the continued development of new rooftop ("distributed generation," or "DG") and community solar projects in Illinois.

Since the 2019 launch of the Illinois Shines program, block capacity allocations – the amount of new solar project capacity authorized for a program category's "block" – have been "load-weighted" and geographical. Projects located in the MISO portion of Illinois are in "Group A," while projects located in the PJM portion of Illinois are "Group B." As approximately 70% of the program budget (and approximately 70% of the electricity load available to be offset by new solar projects) is located in Group B, 70% of project capacity has been allocated to Group B.



However, in both this program year and prior program years, the IPA has seen proportionately more Large DG and Small DG project applications from Group A. The Group A Large DG category has already filled for the current program year, and the Group A Small DG category will likely fill in the months ahead. While this is arguably a good problem to have – excess program interest is preferable to a lack thereof – the IPA is considering strategies for ensuring that Group A has sufficient capacity to provide market opportunity for more of the program year. More detail on available program capacity can be found on the Illinois Shines [Block Capacity Dashboard](#).

Illinois Shines: Application Processing Update

The Illinois Shines Program continues to process a high volume of project applications. Project applications are submitted into the program by Approved Vendors (vetted solar companies directly participating in the Illinois Shines program) and follow a two-step application and verification process. Part I applications are submitted to secure a REC delivery contract, whereas Part II applications are submitted to demonstrate the system is fully installed and connected. Approval of a Part I application reserves a spot for a constituent's solar project to receive incentive funding through the Illinois Shines program. Approval of a Part II application authorizes disbursement of incentive funding to the Approved Vendor. Any pass-through payments to constituents are based on the terms of a constituent's individual Installation Contract with their Approved Vendor.

As of July 28, the processing queue has been reduced to 2,159 Part I project applications and 1,182 Part II project applications. The Illinois Shines Program Administrator has achieved a two-week-turnaround application review goal, and progress on application review [will continue to be updated three times per week.](#)

IN THE COMMUNITY

Community Outreach Events

(A walkthrough of the equity portal outreach events attended by the IPA in July)

- Community Resource Fair at Woodson Regional Library on July 5
- Coalition of African American Leaders (C.O.A.L) Employment & Resource Fair on July 10
- DCEO's Regional Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Workforce Networking Fair (Southside) on July 12
- Community Resource Fair at Woodson Regional Library on July 19
- Skills for Chicagoland's Future Summer Hiring Event on July 19
- Centers for New Horizon Job Fair on July 20
- MSETA's Taste of Solar on July 22
- Sustainable Energy Summit (Virtual) on July 25-26
- DCEO's Black Business Collective (Virtual) on July 26
- DCEO/OMEE's Latin@/e/x Economic Summit on July 27

DEI Trainings/Outreach Meetings

(Conducted trainings on equity portal, Illinois Solar for All [ILSFA] and Illinois Shines overview)

- Workforce Opportunities for CHA residents (The Chicago Housing Authority) on July 10
- Diversifying the Workforce in Clean Energy- Thee Perspective Consulting (Chicago Public School subcontractor) on July 10
- Collaborative Efforts in Solar Workforce- Southside Consulting (Workforce Training Contractor for the Chicago Urban League) on July 10
- Workforce Opportunities for Returning Residents (Safer Foundation) on July 13
- Renewable Energy Sector/Solar Jobs (Chicago Urban League) on July 17
- Business Enterprise Program x IPA's EEC Collaborative (State of Illinois Commission on Equity & Inclusion) on July 17
- Energy Equity Portal & Workforce Opportunities for EEPs (HIRE360) on July 25
- Sustainable Energy Summit (Virtual) on July 25-26



IPA DEI Outreach Associate **Kina Askew** talks about the Illinois Power Agency at a regional CEJA event on Chicago's Southside.

IPA Outreach Documents Now Available in Spanish

To help facilitate robust and meaningful participation of Equity Eligible Persons (EEPs) on renewable energy projects and to increase diversity in the clean energy space, the IPA has translated the following outreach documents into Spanish:



- [Equity Energy Workforce Portal Flyer](#)
- [Illinois Shines Postcard](#)
- [Illinois Solar for All Postcard](#)
- [Equity Eligible Persons \(EEP\) Postcard](#)

As part of the IPA's education and outreach efforts, the IPA recognizes the need for, and importance of, improving accessibility for EEPs who have limited English proficiency. By translating these outreach documents, the IPA hopes to reduce language access barriers for EEPs whose first language is Spanish.

Cross-Collaboration with Other State Agencies to Apply for Solar Funding for Low-Income Illinoisians

On June 28, the US EPA released the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund's (GGRF) Solar for All Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), which opens a [\\$7 billion grant competition to fund residential distributed solar programs to serve low-income and disadvantaged communities nationwide](#). Communities have until September 26 to apply for the grants, which will be available for amounts ranging from \$25 million to \$400 million.

On July 6, the Illinois Finance Authority hosted a Stakeholder Listening Session on the US EPA Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund's Solar for All competitive funding opportunity, with representatives from the IPA and Illinois Housing Development Authority also participating. In conjunction with the IPA, the Illinois Finance Authority is preparing an application seeking federal funding, and the IPA looks forward to continued interagency collaboration to help low-income and disadvantaged communities across Illinois access solar energy.

LOOKING AHEAD



DEI Outreach Calendar for August

- The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA)'s Workforce Opportunity Resource Center (WORC) Career Pathway Event on August 1
- Community Resource Fair at Woodson Regional Library on August 2 and on August 16
- Community Back to School Bash/Resource Fair on August 20
- CBOC Southside Hiring Event on August 31

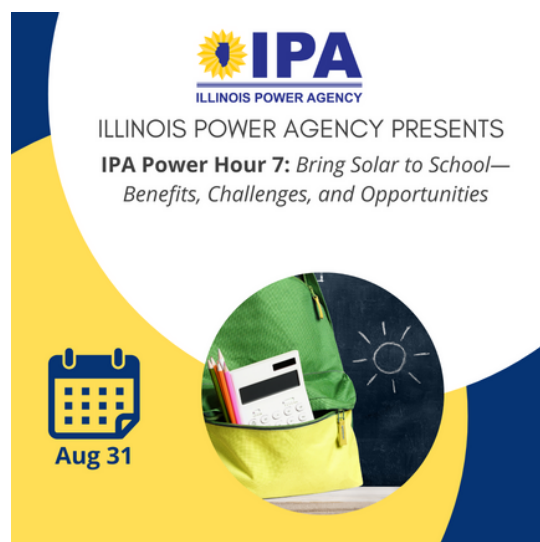
Upcoming Webinar

Power Hour 7: Bring Solar to School: Benefits, Challenges, and Opportunities

Date: August 31, 2023

Time: 12pm-1pm CT

[**REGISTER NOW**](#)



Please join the Illinois Power Agency on Thursday, August 31 at 12:00pm CT for IPA Power Hour 7: *Bring Solar to School—Benefits, Challenges, and Opportunities*.

Speakers for the webinar include Audrey Steinbach, Senior Program Manager for Illinois Shines; Matt Seaton, Chief Financial Officer, Illinois State Board of Education; Gabriela Martin, Program Director (Energy), Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation; and Mia Korinke, Campaign Mobilization Director, Climate Jobs IL.

During the webinar, speakers will highlight how public schools (K-12) can take advantage of state incentives to install solar. In addition, the speakers will discuss challenges that schools face to go solar, as well as highlight opportunities and best practices for solar adoption.

NEW STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

On July 17, Nicolet Joseph joined the IPA as Senior Accountant. In this role, Nicolet will reconcile accounts, prepare financial reports, and analyze transactions, among other duties. Nicolet previously worked as Controller at private accounting firm Danfoss. We're excited to welcome Nicolet to the Agency!



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

- [Consumer Protection Fact Sheet](#)
- [Equity Factsheet](#)
- [IPA Power Hour Webinar: Equitable Solar Workforce Development: Challenges and Opportunities](#)
- [Energy Workforce Equity Portal Flyer](#)
- [IPA Power Hour Webinar: The Impacts of Wind and Solar Projects to the Local Economy](#)

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