**CONSUMER COMPLAINTS** & DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS



Illinois Power Agency Adjustable Block Program Consumer Complaints & Disciplinary Actions Annual Report - 2021

February 25, 2022

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## **1. Introduction**

As part of its Consumer Protection provisions, Section 6.13.3 of the Illinois Power Agency's ("IPA" or "Agency") initial Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan ("Plan") approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission in Docket No. 17-0838 provides as follows:

"To the extent feasible, the Agency will work with its Program Administrator to maintain a public database of complaints (with any confidential or particularly sensitive information redacted from public entries). Approved Vendors found by the Agency to have violated consumer protection standards may be subject, at minimum, to suspension or revocation of their Approved Vendor status by the Agency, and if in violation of local, state, or federal law, also potential civil or criminal penalties from other relevant authorities. **The Agency will provide an annual written report to the Commission documenting the frequency and nature of complaints, and any enforcement actions taken.**"<sup>1</sup>

This annual Consumer Complaints and Disciplinary Actions Report has been prepared and submitted in compliance with this provision and a similar provision in the IPA's Revised Plan approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission in Docket No. 19-0995.<sup>2</sup> The Adjustable Block Program ("ABP") Administrator has been tracking consumer complaints since November 1, 2018—the date when the Adjustable Block Program began accepting Approved Vendor applications.

Since October 2019, the Adjustable Block Program and Illinois Shines websites have included an electronic form that consumers can use to submit written complaints to the Program Administrator regarding the actions of an Approved Vendor, Designee, or other solar company. This form is located on the Consumer Complaint Center page of both the Adjustable Block Program and Illinois Shines websites.<sup>3</sup> The Consumer Complaint Center on each site also includes information on how to file complaints with the Illinois Attorney General's Office and the Illinois Commerce Commission, which provides Program participants with additional avenues for a resolution to their complaint. The Program Administrator has also maintained a phone line and email address dedicated solely to Adjustable Block Program consumer complaints since October 2019.

In late 2020, the Program Administrator began requiring Designee registration for all companies that interact with customers in order to support submission of project applications to the Program or subscription of customers to a community solar project through the Program. This registration requirement provides the Program Administrator with contact information for all companies operating within the Program who have direct contact with customers. This allows the Program Administrator to communicate directly with Designees to resolve complaints against Designees, rather than only communicating with the customer's Approved Vendor regarding an issue related to a Designee. This approach often helps the Program Administrator investigate and resolve issues more quickly because Designees are often more familiar with the customer's concerns than the customer's Approved Vendor.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup><u>Initial Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan</u> (published August 6, 2018) at 128.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> <u>Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan Modifications to the Revised Plan Upon Reopening</u> (published June 7, 2021) at 169.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> On the ABP website here: <u>https://illinoisabp.com/complaint-center/</u> and on the Illinois Shines website here: <u>https://illinoisshines.com/consumer\_complaint\_center/</u>.

## Impact of Legislative Efforts and the Passage of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act

In 2020, the initial capacity for the Adjustable Block Program was exhausted. Capacity for Large Distributed Generation ("Large DG") installations (larger than 10 kilowatts (kW) AC and smaller than 2,000 kW AC), was exhausted in March of 2020. Capacity for Small Distributed Generation ("Small DG") installations (up to and including 10 kW AC) was exhausted in December of 2020.<sup>4</sup> After capacity to support new projects was exhausted, all new applications were added to Program waitlists, based on the project's size and location in Illinois.

Throughout 2021, the Program Administrator received 63 complaints related to concerns from customers that their application was placed on the Program's waitlist or would be placed on the waitlist once submitted. This was a new category of complaint that had not been received in prior years, as the Program had available capacity throughout 2019 and a portion of 2020.

On September 15, 2021, Governor Pritzker signed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (<u>Public Act 102-0662</u>). Public Act 102-0662 includes significant changes to the Adjustable Block Program, including allocating additional capacity to the Program. As a result of this legislation, the Program reopened on December 14, 2021. Public Act 102-0662 also includes increased consumer protection provisions. The IPA will comply with these provisions through an update of the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan that it will implement following the approval of that Plan by the Illinois Commerce Commission in July of 2022. As part of this process, the IPA plans to update various Program requirements and consumer protection documents and materials.

## Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic heavily impacted the solar industry nationally and related supply chain issues are still felt globally. The Program Administrator heard from numerous solar companies operating in the Program that they had seen reduced sales in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 and many companies reduced their staff as a result. The Program Administrator is also aware of several solar companies that filed for bankruptcy or otherwise ceased operations in Illinois in 2020 or 2021. During the investigation of consumer complaints and consumer protection issues in 2021, some solar companies stated that financial issues related to decreased business caused by COVID-19 were negatively impacting their operations, especially their response time to customer concerns. While the COVID-19 pandemic does not excuse a solar company's lack of communication with customers, its impacts (namely reduced staffing resources and supply chain functions) may have influenced the number of complaints the Program Administrator received in 2021 that were ultimately based on inadequate communication from Designees and Approved Vendors and/or delayed construction of projects.

## Consumer Education Improvements Introduced in 2021

In 2021, the Program Administrator made several updates to the <u>Illinois Adjustable Block Program</u> <u>website</u>, <u>Illinois Shines website</u>, and the <u>Program's Disclosure Forms</u> to improve the information available to Illinois consumers about the Program generally, as well as application-specific information.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Public Act 102-0662 changed the cutoff between Small and Large DG, and the maximum size for Large DG. Small DG is now defined as any project up to and including 25 kW, and Large DG is any project greater than 25 kW and up to 5 megawatts.

In March 2021, the Program Administrator released updated distributed generation Disclosure Forms to reflect that the Program had run out of available capacity and new applications were being added to a waitlist to ensure Program participants were aware of this change. This information was added to all four variations of the distributed generation Disclosure Forms: *Purchase, Lease, Power Purchase Agreement ("PPA"),* and *Systems above 25 kW.* The *Purchase* and *Systems above 25 kW* Disclosure Forms were also updated to include information on the timing of Renewable Energy Credit ("REC") payments to the customer's Approved Vendor. The timing of payments received by the Approved Vendor varies based on the size of the system. The timing of payments received by the Approved Vendor may impact the timeframe in which a customer will receive any payments due to them by their Approved Vendor, making it important information to clarify on the Disclosure Forms.

In April 2021, the Program Administrator added a project status lookup tool to both the Adjustable Block Program and the Illinois Shines websites.<sup>5</sup> This tool allows customers to look up the status of an application with either an Application ID number or a Disclosure Form ID number. This increased the transparency of the application process, which was previously only visible to Approved Vendors in the ABP portal. The project status lookup tool page also includes information about the application review process and the various steps in the verification process to help the consumer better understand the context of their application status. The project status lookup tool is valuable to customers who now no longer need to contact the Approved Vendor on the application or the Program Administrator to learn the status of an application. This lookup tool also allows Designees to look up the status of an application, without contacting the associated Approved Vendor, which could potentially improve Designees' response time to their customers questions about the application process.

In July 2021, the existing Complaint Database was converted into the Consumer Protection Database that lists entities that have been suspended by the Program Administrator, in addition to listing all complaints received by the Program Administrator. Previously, the Complaint Database only listed consumer complaints received by the Program Administrator and did not note suspensions. This update allows consumers to easily search a company name and immediately view all complaints received against that company, as well as view a short description of any suspensions. The Program's Disciplinary Action Report provides additional information on entities that are or were suspended from the Program.<sup>6</sup>

In August 2021, the Program Administrator established a *Best Practices for System Design and Evaluating Proposals* page on the Illinois Shines website.<sup>7</sup> The Program Administrator created this page to expand consumer education materials on the Illinois Shines website to include technical information about how solar systems are designed, especially how to recognize a poorly designed system. This page includes definitions and information about the tilt, azimuth, and orientation of solar systems and is tailored to the latitude and solar exposure of Illinois, making it a valuable resource for Illinois consumers looking to understand what an ideal solar system looks like in Illinois.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> On the ABP website: <u>https://illinoisabp.com/project-status/</u> and on the Illinois Shines website: <u>https://illinoisshines.com/project-status/</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> On the ABP website: <u>https://illinoisabp.com/disciplinary-actions-report/</u> and on the Illinois Shines website <u>https://illinoisshines.com/disciplinary-actions-report/</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> On the Illinois Sines website <u>https://illinoisshines.com/best-practices-for-system-design-and-evaluating-proposals/</u>

## 2. Scope of Report

This report is the third annual Consumer Complaint Report.<sup>8</sup> The scope of the 2021 report includes complaints received by the Program Administrator from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, and provides summarized data on these complaints in aggregate, as well as a narrative summary of a sampling of complaints. The sample complaints were selected based on how well they exemplified the category of complaint under which they fall. This report focuses only on complaints related to the Adjustable Block Program and does not include any complaints that may have been received by the Illinois Solar for All Program Administrator.<sup>9</sup>

The 2019 Consumer Complaints Report included a summary of each complaint that the Program Administrator received from the outset of the Program. Due to the increase in volume of complaints received in 2020, the 2020 Consumer Complaints Report included illustrative examples of complaints for each complaint category rather than including a summary of every complaint. The 2021 Consumer Complaint Report follows this format and again includes examples of all complaint categories received in 2021. The IPA strives to constantly improve and adjust Program operations to advance consumer protections, which may result in changes to the content or presentation of the annual Consumer Complaints Report in future years.

In the course of Program participation, Adjustable Block Program consumers receive materials particularly, the Program informational brochure and Disclosure Form — that provide information on how a complaint may be submitted. In some cases, complaints are first submitted to the Illinois Power Agency rather than to the Program Administrator. In other cases, complaints may be received by another entity (e.g., a solar company, the Office of the Attorney General, Citizens Utility Board, the Illinois Commerce Commission, local or municipal officials, or a state legislator); this report covers only those complaints received by the Program Administrator, whether directly or through referral from another entity. Consequently, the number of complaints received may not reflect the full universe of consumer complaints related to the Adjustable Block Program. The IPA encourages any entities receiving a complaint regarding the Adjustable Block Program to share the complaint with the Program Administrator. The IPA has established a monthly Illinois Solar Consumer Protections Working Group, which includes representatives from the IPA, the Adjustable Block Program Administrator, Elevate (the Illinois Solar for All Program Administrator), the Office of the Illinois Attorney General, the Illinois Commerce Commission, the Citizens Utility Board, and the Environmental Law and Policy Center, and is open to participation by other interested entities. Members of the Working Group share relevant information and complaints received with the Program Administrator during monthly meetings and keep lines of communication open on various complaints and notable bad actors.

The Program Administrator seeks to respond to and investigate all complaints as soon as possible upon receipt. After receiving a complaint from a consumer, the Program Administrator follows up

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See: <u>https://illinoisabp.com/annual-complaints-reports/</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> In 2021 the Illinois Solar for All ("ILSFA")Program received thirteen complaints. Seven complaints related to Approved Vendors providing inadequate or incorrect information such as including upfront costs in quotes, or incorrect income eligibility information and overall project timelines. Three complaints were due to Approved Vendors being unresponsive to inquiries. Two complaints were due to unwanted ILSFA mailers, however one of those complainants was not able to identify the sender. One complaint was provided by a stakeholder that submitted similar comments the previous year and those comments were addressed at that time.

with both the complainant and the Approved Vendor and/or Designee potentially involved to seek more information. The Program Administrator then attempts to work with the Approved Vendor and/or Designee to come to a suitable solution to the complainant's issue. The Program Administrator records all complaints received and documents steps taken toward resolution. In some cases, a complaint or the complainant's preferred resolution is outside the scope of the Program or the jurisdiction of the Program Administrator.<sup>10</sup> However, even when the Program Administrator takes reasonable steps to encourage the relevant Approved Vendor or Designee to resolve a complaint as completely and satisfactorily as possible.

In addition to the summary of complaints received, this report includes a summary of suspensions issued by the Program Administrator against Approved Vendors or Designees. In calendar year 2021, the Program Administrator issued 14 suspension; 12 of these stemmed from consumer complaints, one stemmed from violation of the IPA's emergency updates to the Program's marketing guidelines related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and one stemmed from violation of non-emergency provisions of the Program's marketing guidelines.<sup>11</sup>

## 3. Disciplinary Action Process

Upon a determination that Program requirements have been violated, the Program Administrator may take disciplinary actions against an Approved Vendor and/or Designee. While the IPA lacks plenary authority to restrict market activity generally, discipline may come from a suspension of the offending entity's ability to participate in transactions receiving funding through this state-administered incentive Program.

Should the Program Administrator suspect or determine that an Approved Vendor, Designee, or other entity working through the Program is not acting or has not acted in compliance with Program requirements, the Program Administrator will notify that entity through an e-mail that outlines the problematic behavior, explains how the behavior is non-compliant with Program requirements, and will request explanatory information and/or supporting documentation on the issue. After a review of any such response and further investigation into the facts and circumstances of a potential violation, the Program Administrator will determine what discipline, if any, should apply to that entity. A disciplinary action could take the form of a warning or a suspension from acting in the Program. A formal warning is communication via a letter that notifies Approved Vendors or Designees of behavior that violates Program requirements and/or is otherwise problematic and directs them to stop this behavior. If the Program Administrator determines a suspension, and steps to appeal the suspension. The Program Administrator communicates the opportunity to appeal, as well as the appeal deadline, to the offending entity. The Program Administrator will also communicate and provide a copy of any warning or suspension letter to the IPA.

An Approved Vendor or Designee may appeal a Program suspension to the IPA. To appeal to the IPA, the entity must provide a request for reconsideration of discipline in writing on company letterhead

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Complaints outside the scope of the Illinois Adjustable Block Program include, but are not limited to, property damage and contract disputes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Most recent update to COVID-19 Related Marketing Guidelines found here: <u>https://illinoisabp.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Updated-COVID-19-Marketing-Guidelines-2-SEP-2021.pdf</u>.

explaining its rationale for why it believes the Program Administrator's determination is in error, as well as sharing any supporting information, documents, or communications. The IPA may request additional information and materials from the entity, and/or have a discussion with the entity to learn more about the basis for its position.

The IPA attempts to issue final determinations on discipline, including a supporting rationale for its decision, as soon as practicable after the receipt of an appeal and review of relevant information.

## 4. Consumer Complaint Data Summary

This section of the report summarizes the complaints received by the Program Administrator in various displays of data.

In calendar year 2021, the Adjustable Block Program Administrator received a total of 164 complaints. This was an increase from the 77 complaints received in 2020 and the 28 complaints received in 2019. It is worth noting that a consumer's complaint may be associated with an application submitted during a prior year. While a complaint received in 2019 would have either been connected to an application submitted in 2019, or an application that had not yet been submitted, a complaint received in 2021 could be connected to an application submitted in 2019, 2020, or 2021, or connected to a not yet submitted application. As the Program continues to be established, the number of customers involved in the Program accumulates from year to year, creating a larger and larger pool of potential complainants.

## a. Complaints Received – By Entity Type

There are two entity types that participate in the Adjustable Block Program: Approved Vendors and their Designees. The data in this section of the report organizes complaints received against each entity type that participates in the Program.

- An *Approved Vendor* is an entity registered with the Program serving as the counterparty to Renewable Energy Credit ("REC") delivery contracts under the Program. Approved Vendors submit applications to the Program on behalf of their customers. Approved Vendors may be large national solar companies, smaller local installers, aggregators acting on behalf of other Program participants, or other entity types. As this entity is contractually responsible for the delivery of RECs under contracts stemming from the Program, these entities are first vetted through an application process.
- A *Designee* is an entity acting on behalf of an Approved Vendor in the Program (and thus are generally, although not exclusively, customer-facing sales, solicitation, or installation firms). All Designees must register with the Program. There are four different types of Designees, each reflecting a role Designees can fulfill for an Approved Vendor. A Designee must select at least one role and can register for more than one role to accurately reflect the Designee's role and relationship with the Approved Vendor. The four types of Designee roles in the ABP Portal are as follows:
  - *Disclosure Form Designee* An entity that is permitted to generate Distributed Generation and Community Solar Disclosure Forms on behalf of an Approved Vendor. Only Designees designated as Disclosure Form Designees by an Approved

Vendor can create and generate Disclosure Forms on behalf of that Approved Vendor;

- *Community Solar Subscriber Designee* An entity that manages the community solar subscription information for an Approved Vendor's community solar projects. Community Solar Subscriber Designees can only enter subscribers for Disclosure Forms that they have created; therefore, a Community Solar Subscriber Designee must also be registered with the Program as a Disclosure Form Designee;
- Marketing or Sales Designee An entity that acts as a marketing agent and/or customer acquisition agent on behalf of an Approved Vendor or Designee. This includes, among others, entities that engage in solicitations through any channel (inperson, telephone, etc.), as well as entities that perform online lead generation services; and
- *Installer Designee* An entity that installs systems on behalf of an Approved Vendor or Designee.

The following is a breakdown of the 164 complaints received in 2021 based on the Program participant:

- Complaints against Designees: 106
- Complaints against Approved Vendors: 56
- Complaints against entities not registered with the Program: 2



Figure 1: This chart shows the breakdown of entity type for all complaints received by the Program Administrator in 2021.

## **b.** Complaints Received – By Category of Complaint

The Program Administrator tracks the primary subject of each complaint and creates new complaint subjects when the Program Administrator observes new trends in complaints. The complaints received in 2021 fell into one of ten categories.

The subject matter of the complaints is summarized in the table below. Some complaints received in 2021 contained multiple complaint items. For example, a customer filing a complaint regarding their application being placed on the Program's waitlist may also have not received a response from their Approved Vendor or solar installer after attempting to contact the Program entity regarding these concerns. In cases where multiple categories apply to a single complaint, the Program Administrator identified the main issue of concern to the customer.

Complaint Type	Description	Number of Complaints
Customer application on waitlist	The customer is concerned that their ABP application was placed on the waitlist, or that their application had not yet been submitted, and once submitted, would be placed on the waitlist.	48
Mechanical or installation issue	The customer is concerned about an issue with a physical component of their system (i.e., panel, inverter, microinverter, etc.), or reports property damage as a result of the installation.	26
REC payment delay	The customer is concerned about a delay in receiving their expected payment from their Approved Vendor, after the Approved Vendor has already received incentive payment for their project.	19
Misleading marketing	The customer reports that they received misleading information related to expected savings after installing solar, expected impact of the federal tax credit, or expected amount of the Illinois Shines incentive paid to the customer by the Approved Vendor.	17
Installation contract terms	The customer is concerned about the terms of their installation contract, their financing agreement, etc.	16
Failure to respond to customer	The customer has not received an adequate response from their Designee or Approved Vendor to a customer question or concern.	12
System underperforming	The customer reports that their system is not producing the expected amount of energy, or that their electric bills are higher than expected after	12

	installing solar or signing up for community solar.	
Disclosure Form issues	The customer was not provided a Disclosure Form before signing an installation or community solar subscription agreement.	6
Miscellaneous	A complaint that does not fit any of the other categories on this list.	5
ABP application issues	The customer is concerned about errors their Approved Vendor made with their ABP application, or with a delay in the Approved Vendor submitting the application.	3
Total		164

*Figure 2: This table shows the number of complaints received by the Program Administrator for each category in 2021.* 



*Figure 3: This graph shows the number of complaints received by the Program Administrator for each category in 2021.* 

## c. Complaints Received - By Entity

Below is a list of all Approved Vendors, Designees, and other entities about which customers filed formal complaints with the Program Administrator in 2021, along with the number of complaints filed against these same entities in 2020 and 2019 for reference.

Company Name	2019	2020	2021	Total
Approved Vendor	10	41	52	103
Sunrun Installation Services Inc.	4	5	9	18
Vivint Solar Developer, LLC	1	2	12	15
WCP Solar Services, LLC	1	11	2	14
Carbon Solutions SREC LLC	2	6	3	11
SRECTrade, Inc.	-	1	8	9
Eco-Solar Solutions, LLC	-	2	5	7
Tesla, Inc.	-	1	6	7
Novel Energy Solutions, L.L.C.	-	6	-	6
Summit Solar Solutions, LLC	-	-	3	3
JD Pro Electric, Inc.	-	1	1	2
IL-Solar Incorporated	1	1	-	2
Clean Energy Design Group, Inc.	-	-	1	1
Promethean Solar LLC	-	-	1	1
Certasun LLC	-	1	-	1
Clearway Community Solar LLC	-	-	1	1
GRNE Solutions, LLC	-	1	-	1
Verde Solutions LLC	_	1	-	1
Enertech Global LLC	_	1	-	1
Harvest Solar, LLC	1	-	-	1
SUNPOWER CAPITAL SERVICES, LLC	-	1	-	1
Designee	16	33	89	138
Power Home Solar LLC	-	2	17	19
Palmetto Solar, LLC	2	4	12	18
Standard Eco LLC	1	8	7	16
Headline Solar LLC	-	-	12	12
Empire Solar Group, LLC	1	1	6	8
Iconic Energy LLC	4	-	3	7
Eco Management Systems Limited		1	4	5
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	-	3	4	4
Eagle Point Solar, LLC	-			
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Brio Energy LLC1-Solar Energy Solutions, LLC-1	Solarize South Carolina, LLC	-	-	1	1
Solar Energy Solutions, LLC-1-	Sunsource Homes Inc	-	-	1	1
	Brio Energy LLC	1	-	-	1
Total         28         77         164         260	Solar Energy Solutions, LLC	-	1	-	1
	Total	28	77	164	269

Figure 4: This table shows how many consumer complaints were filed against each company throughout the life of the Program. If a solar company or Program entity is not listed here, it means that the Program Administrator has never received a formal complaint against that company. Companies are organized in this table according to their role in the Program. "Non-Program Entity" is defined as an entity that is not registered as an Approved Vendor nor as a Designee with the Program.

\*Denotes a company that the Program Administrator was unable to locate in the Illinois Secretary of State business search.

#### **Complaints Received Against Approved Vendors**

In 2021, the Program Administrator received 56 complaints against companies serving as a customer's Approved Vendor. For some of these complaints, the Approved Vendor also serves as the customer's installation and sales company. For other complaints, the Approved Vendor only serves as the company that handles the submission of the customer's application to the Program. The below chart provides a list of all complaints received in 2021 against a customer's Approved Vendor.

Approved Vendor	Complaints Received Against Entity in 2021
Vivint Solar Developer, LLC	12
Sunrun Installation Services Inc.	9
SRECTrade, Inc.	8
Tesla, Inc.	6
Eco-Solar Solutions, LLC	5
Summit Solar Solutions, LLC	3
Carbon Solutions SREC, LLC	3
WCP Solar Services, LLC	2
Freedom Forever Illinois, LLC+	2
Windsoleil Incorporated <sup>+</sup>	2
Clean Energy Design Group, Inc.	1
Clearway Community Solar LLC	1
Jd Pro Electric, Inc.	1
Promethean Solar LLC	1
Total	56

Figure 5: This table shows the number of complaints received against Approved Vendors in 2021. If an Approved Vendor is not listed here, it means that the Program Administrator did not receive a formal complaint against that Approved Vendor in 2021.

+Denotes a company that operates in the ABP as both an Approved Vendor and a Designee. All complaints received against these entities in 2021 may not be displayed in this chart, as this chart only includes complaints against these companies for activities in their capacity as Approved Vendors.

## <u>Complaints Received Against Designees and Entities Not Registered with the ABP, Organized by</u> <u>Approved Vendor</u>

In 2021, the Program Administrator received 108 complaints against a company other than the customer's Approved Vendor. These include complaints against entities registered as Designees and sales companies and installation companies that had failed to register as Designees. Below is a list of all complaints received in 2021 against a company other than the customer's Approved Vendor. These complaints are organized by the customer's Approved Vendor, when applicable.

Company Name	Complaints
Approved Vendor: SRECTrade, Inc.	86
Power Home Solar LLC	17
Windsoleil Incorporated	14
Headline Solar LLC	12
Palmetto Solar, LLC	11
Standard Eco LLC	7
Eco Management Systems Limited	4

Iconic Energy LLC	3
Solar Ready Solutions, LLC	3
Modern Mill LLC	2
Solar SME, Inc.*	1
Sunsource Homes Inc	1
SunPro Solar	1
Bright Planet Solar, INC	1
Excel Home Solar Inc.	1
Clean Tech*	1
Cross Country Construction Inc.	1
Encor Solar LLC	1
Direct Solar of America*	1
Sigora Solar LLC	1
Kapital Electric Company	1
Smart Money Solar*	1
Approved Vendor: Carbon Solutions	17
SREC, LLC	
Empire Solar Group, LLC	6
CR Solar Limited Liability Company	3
SunAir Systems, LLC	2
Eagle Point Solar, LLC	1
Rethink Electric, LLC	1
Sun Badger Solar LLC	1
Solarize South Carolina, LLC	1
IM Sustainable LLC	1
Moxie Solar, Inc.	1
Approved Vendor: Sunrun	1
Installation Services, Inc.	
Freedom Forever Illinois, LLC	1
Approved Vendor: Balance Solar LLC	1
Encor Solar LLC	1
Approved Vendor: Sunnova Energy	1
Corporation	
Palmetto Solar, LLC	1
Approved Vendor: PlugPV Illinois LLC	1
Ourworldenergy Illinois, LLC	1
No Approved Vendor	2
Energy of Illinois, Inc. <sup>12</sup>	2
Total	108

Figure 6: This table shows the number of complaints received against Designees and companies not registered

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Energy of Illinois, Inc. is not registered with the ABP and is not associated with an Approved Vendor.

with the Program in 2021. If a Designee or company not registered with the Program is not listed here, it means that the Program Administrator did not receive a formal complaint against that company in 2021. \*Denotes a company that the Program Administrator was unable to locate in the Illinois Secretary of State business search.

### Share of Complaints Received Compared to Share of Applications Submitted by Corresponding Approved Vendor

Approved Vendors submit varying numbers of applications to the Program; some submit a single application to the Program while other Approved Vendors submit hundreds of applications. Some Approved Vendors serve as REC aggregators and submit applications from many different installation partners to the Program. Other Approved Vendors only submit applications for systems that they also sell and install. It is helpful to compare the total number of applications submitted to the number of complaints received against an Approved Vendor, to better understand factors that may affect why the Program Administrator receives more complaints associated with some Approved Vendors than others.

The chart below begins by presenting the number of complaints associated with Approved Vendor's Distributed Generation projects in 2021—this includes complaints directed against Approved Vendors, as well as complaints against Designees partnering with Approved Vendors on the sale or installation of solar PV systems participating in the Program. The chart also provides the number of Part I applications that the Approved Vendor submitted in 2021, and the total number of Part I applications that the Approved Vendor submitted since the Program began accepting applications. The chart shows the percentage of total complaints and total Part 1 applications each entity was responsible for in 2021—essentially, a rough estimate of the Approved Vendor's "market share" of projects and complaints.

Complaints Associated with Approved Vendor in 2021			Approved Vendor's Part I Application Data for Comparison			
Approved Vendor	Number	Percent of Total	Part I Applications Submitted by Entity in 2021	Share of total Part I Applications Submitted in 2021	Total Part I Applications Submitted by Entity through the end of 2021	Share of total Part I Applications Submitted through the end of 2021
SRECTrade, Inc.	93	57.8%	1,130	14.3%	4,898	14.0%
Carbon Solutions SREC, LLC	20	12.4%	939	11.9%	6,049	17.3%
Vivint Solar Developer, LLC	12	7.5%	153	1.9%	3,696	10.6%
Sunrun Installation Services Inc.	10	6.2%	3,869	48.9%	10,768	30.8%
Tesla, Inc.	6	3.7%	9	0.1%	603	1.7%
Eco-Solar Solutions, LLC	5	3.1%	0	0.0%	49	0.1%
Summit Solar Solutions, LLC	3	1.9%	32	0.4%	723	2.1%
Windsoleil Incorporated	2	1.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
WCP Solar Services, LLC	2	1.2%	0	0.0%	31	0.1%
Freedom Forever Illinois, LLC	2	1.2%	38	0.5%	164	0.5%
PlugPV Illinois LLC	1	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Clean Energy Design Group, Inc.	1	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Balance Solar LLC	1	0.6%	10	0.1%	24	0.1%
Jd Pro Electric, Inc	1	0.6%	9	0.1%	32	0.1%
Sunnova Energy Corporation	1	0.6%	0	0.0%	20	0.1%
Promethean Solar LLC	1	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Figure 7: This chart compares (a) the number and 'market share' of complaints associated with a given Approved Vendor's Distributed Generation projects to (b) the number and 'market share' of Part I Distributed Generation applications that the Approved Vendor submitted in 2021, and (c) the number and 'market share' of Part I Distributed Generation applications that the Approved Vendor submitted since the beginning of the Program. The chart does not list Approved Vendors with no complaints, and as a result the percentages for Part I applications do not total 100%. This chart does not include 2 complaints against Energy of Illinois, where the company failed to register as a Designee, resulting in these two complainants not being associated with an Approved Vendor. The chart is limited to complaints associated specifically with Distributed Generation applications (and does not include Community Solar) because the number of projects for which a Distributed Generation Part I application has been submitted more closely correlates with the number of customers / potential complainants.

## d. Complaints Received – By Complaint Status

Currently, the Program Administrator has four status categories for complaints. These status categories are:

- **Under Investigation** This status indicates a complaint that is actively being investigated by the Program Administrator as of the date of release of this Report. A complaint remains in this status until (a) it is resolved, (b) the Program Administrator determines that it is unable to reach a resolution between the parties, or (c) the complainant becomes unresponsive to the Program Administrator.
- **Resolved** This status indicates a complaint where the Program Administrator was able to help the customer reach a resolution with the company, where the customer is satisfied with the company's explanation for the issue, or where the Program Administrator is satisfied with the explanation given by the company.
- **Closed:** Closed complaints can be divided into two categories: "Closed" and "Closed Customer Non-responsive."
  - Closed This status indicates a complaint where, after multiple attempts by the Program Administrator to help resolve the customer's concerns, the company did not resolve the customer's concerns, or the Program Administrator and the customer were unable to receive a satisfactory explanation from the company regarding the customer's concerns. If the company violated Program requirements, the Program Administrator will consider disciplinary action.
  - **Closed Customer Non-responsive:** This status indicates a complaint where the customer did not provide all the information necessary for the Program Administrator to investigate the complaint, or where the customer did not respond to the Program Administrator's attempts to address their complaint. If the Program Administrator does not receive adequate documentation from the customer, the Program Administrator is unable to adequately work to resolve the complaint with the entity the complaint was filed against.
- **Reopened:** This status indicates a renewed complaint that had previously been marked as either resolved or closed by the Program Administrator. Reopened complaints are complaints where the customer contacts the Program Administrator stating that the same issue in their original complaint has reoccurred, or that a new similar issue has arisen.

Before listing a complaint as either "Resolved" or "Closed," the Program Administrator performs a full investigation of the complaint. This process includes working with the complainant to obtain any relevant documentation and information related to the complaint to determine the relevant facts. Complaints are marked as either "Resolved" or "Closed" only if the investigation of the complaint has reached an end point. This end point differs depending on the particular facts of the case. For example, the Program Administrator will only list a complaint as "Resolved" if the Program Administrator successfully facilitated an agreeable outcome for both parties, or where the Program Administrator is satisfied with the explanation given by the entity who is the subject of the complaint, even if the issues involved in the complaint do not violate specific Program requirements and may be considered by the Program Administrator as being outside the scope of the Program.

A complaint is marked as "Closed" for cases where after multiple attempts by the Program Administrator to help the parties reach a resolution, the customer's Approved Vendor or Designee did not offer the customer a satisfactory resolution and/or explanation for the issues in the customer's complaint. Once a complaint investigation is complete, the Program Administrator will determine whether a Program violation occurred based on the particular facts of the case. Based on these facts, the Program Administrator will determine whether disciplinary action, such as formal warning or suspension, is warranted based on the facts of the case. Additionally, if a company is not responsive to the Program Administrator during the investigation of the customer's complaint, the Program Administrator will determine whether disciplinary action is warranted – this disciplinary action may include shutting off a company's access to the ABP portal until the company responds to the Program Administrator's requests for information.

The Program Administrator strives to resolve each complaint submitted. However, some complaints received by the Program Administrator do not violate specific Program requirements, and therefore are considered outside the scope of the Program. There are instances when a customer voices valid concerns in a complaint but the issues do not constitute a violation of Program requirements. Primary examples include when a customer is concerned about damage to their property, or if a system is not functioning properly. When the Program Administrator receives a complaint from a customer that is considered outside the scope of the Program, the Program Administrator seeks to assist the customer in any way it can within the confines and scope of the Program. This response includes contacting the customer's Approved Vendor and/or Designee to facilitate a discussion between the two parties and obtaining a response from the Approved Vendor and/or Designee regarding the issue. The Program Administrator may also provide the customer with instructions on how to submit a complaint to the Illinois Commerce Commission and/or the Office of the Illinois Attorney General, depending on the particular facts involved. Regardless of whether or not complaints received are outside the jurisdiction and scope of the Program, the Program Administrator seeks to reach a satisfactory resolution for each complaint submitted.

The following is the status of the total complaints received by the Program Administrator from
January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, as of the release of this Report on February 25, 2022: <sup>13</sup>

Complaint Status	Number of Complaints
Resolved	116
Under Investigation	12
Closed	27
Closed – Customer Non-responsive	5
Reopened	4
Total	164

*Figure 8: This table shows the status of each complaint received in 2021.* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> All complaints received in 2019 and 2020 are either Resolved or Closed; no complaints received before 2021 remain under investigation.



Figure 9: This chart shows the complaint status for each complaint received in 2021.

## 5. Consumer Complaint Data Analysis

Since 2019, the Consumer Complaints Center on both the Illinois Shines and Illinois ABP websites and dedicated consumer complaint phone number and email address have been available to consumers. These resources create a more user-friendly experience for customers seeking to file a complaint.

## a. Complaints Received Compared to Total Applications Received

During calendar year 2021, the Program Administrator received 164 complaints, which is an increase from the 77 complaints received in 2020, and the 28 complaints received in 2019. While the number of complaints received by the Program has increased each year, the cumulative total applications received by the Program Administrator has also steadily increased since the Program initially opened to applications in 2019.

Approved Vendors submitted a total of 34,957 Distributed Generation Part I project applications since Program inception in January 2019 to December 31, 2021. This total number can be broken down in the following categories: 32,304 Small Distributed Generation Part I applications, and 2,653 Large Distributed Generation Part I applications.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> The data provided here shows the category of a project at the time that the project received allocated capacity. See footnote 4 for more information on how Public Act 102-0662 changed the cutoff between Large and Small DG.

At the end of 2021. there were 21,642 active community solar subscribers subscribed across 76 community solar applications. <sup>15</sup>



Figure 10: This graph shows the cumulative total number of Part I distributed generation applications submitted to the Program Administrator since the Program opened in 2019 through the end of 2021 and shows how the total base of Illinois consumers with distributed generation applications in the ABP has grown over time.

Figure 10 above shows that the total number of customers in Illinois with Distributed Generation Part I applications has increased over time since the Program's opening in January 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> During calendar year 2021, the Program Administrator received only one complaint relating to a Community Solar subscription.



*Figure 11: This graph shows the number of complaints received each month since March 2019, when the Program Administrator received the first complaint in the Program.* 

Figure 11 shows that the number of complaints received each month follows an increasing trend line. Customers may file a complaint at any time, and there are no requirements that a customer file a complaint within a certain timeframe after their application is submitted. Therefore, as the total number of customers with applications has increased over time (see Figure 10), the total number of potential complainants has also increased.

Many consumers who submitted complaints during 2021 have a Part I application that was submitted during 2020 or 2019.



Figure 12: This graph shows—for complaints submitted in 2021—when the Part I application for the underlying project was submitted to the Program. It includes bars to indicate complaints submitted by customers who have an application in progress, as well as customers who do not have an application ("no application"). "No application" includes customers who decided not to participate in the Program or canceled their solar contract as well as customers who have not yet signed a Disclosure Form, and therefore do not yet have an application started. Complaints can be submitted to the Program Administrator at any point, including before an associated application is submitted to the Program, which explains the 2022 data point in this graph as well as the "In progress" data points. This chart does not include the one community solar complaint received by the Program Administrator in 2021, as community solar subscribers do not have individual applications.

Figure 12 shows that of the 163 complaints received in 2021 relating to Distributed Generation projects, 65 were submitted by customers who had a Part I application submitted in a previous year, including 16 that had Part I applications submitted in 2019, up to two years before the customer filed a complaint in 2021. Complaints received long after the relevant Part I application was submitted can either relate to issues with the system that have appeared several months to several years after the installation, or to issues receiving an incentive payment from the customer's Approved Vendor.

Figure 12 also shows that 32 customers that submitted complaints in 2021 did not yet have a submitted Part I application: as of the publishing of this report, 25 customers have applications in progress, and seven do not have an application started. Complaints that are received before a customer's Part I application is submitted can relate to any issue, including installation issues or responsiveness issues. However, ten of the 32 complaints received where the customer had no submitted Part I application were related to concerns about a delay in that application being submitted or a delay in the customer receiving incentive payment from the Approved Vendor. The 32 complaints received in 2021 from customers who do not have a submitted Part I application demonstrates that while the total number of Part I applications received is a good proxy for total customer base, it does not represent the full universe of potential complainants.

## b. Program Entities with Multiple Complaints, Few Complaints, or No Complaints

The majority of companies participating in the Program as Approved Vendors or Designees did not have any customers file formal complaints in 2021.



Figure 13: This chart shows all active Distributed Generation Approved Vendors, and the number of complaints filed against each Approved Vendor. An active Distributed Generation Approved Vendor is defined as an Approved Vendor that secured a customer signature on at least one Distributed Generation Disclosure Form in 2021. There were 71 active Distributed Generation Approved Vendors in 2021. This chart does not include two Distributed Generation Approved Vendors that were not active in 2021, but that had a customer file a complaint against them, nor does it include the one Community Solar Approved Vendor with a complaint filed against it in 2021.

Figure 13 shows that 84% of Distributed Generation Approved Vendors active in 2021 did not have a complaint filed against them. An active Distributed Generation Approved Vendor is defined as an Approved Vendor that secured a customer signature on at least one Distributed Generation Disclosure Form in 2021. Three percent of Approved Vendors active in 2021 only had one complaint filed against them, which does not necessarily indicate a widespread issue within the company. Only 13% of Approved Vendors active in 2021 had more than one complaint filed against them. Most notably, only 7% of Approved Vendors had more than five complaints filed against them.



Figure 14: This chart shows all active Disclosure Form Designees, and the number of complaints received against each Disclosure Form Designee. An active Disclosure Form Designee is defined as a Disclosure Form Designee that secured a customer signature on at least one Disclosure Form in 2021. There were 224 active Disclosure Form Designees in 2021. This chart does not include seven Designees that had complaints filed against them in 2021 that were either registered in roles other than Disclosure Form Designee, or were inactive Disclosure Form Designees. These seven Designees had a total of eight complaints filed against them.

Figure 14 shows that 89% of Disclosure Form Designees active in 2021 did not have a formal complaint filed against them. An active Disclosure Form Designee is defined as a Disclosure Form Designee that secured a customer signature on at least one Disclosure Form in 2021. Six percent of Designees active in 2021 only had one complaint filed against them, which does not necessarily indicate a widespread issue within the company. Only 5% of Designees active in 2021 had more than one complaint filed against them.

It is a positive sign that as the Program has expanded in size, in terms of applications, customer base, and entities participating in the Program, the share of Approved Vendors and Designees with complaints filed against them is relatively small. This likely indicates that while there are consumer protection issues and customer service issues within the market, these issues are not widespread across all entities participating in the Program.



Figure 15: This chart shows the share of complaints against the five Approved Vendors with the most complaints in 2021. The five Approved Vendors receiving the most complaints each had five or more complaints in 2021. This chart only shows the 56 complaints filed against Approved Vendors in 2021.

Figure 15 shows that 71% of all complaints filed against Approved Vendors were filed against the five Approved Vendors with the most complaints in 2021. Complaints against all other Approved Vendors made up only 29% of complaints filed against Approved Vendors in 2021.



Figure 16: This chart shows the market share of complaints against the five Designees with the most complaints in 2021. Customers made seven or more complaints in 2021 about each of the five designees with the most complaints. This chart only shows the 106 complaints filed against Designees in 2021.

Figure 16 shows that 58% of all complaints filed against Designees were filed against the five Designees with the most complaints in 2021. Complaints against all other Designees made up 42% of complaints filed against Designees in 2021.

Together, Figures 15 and 16 show that a small number of companies were responsible for the majority of complaints received by the Program Administrator.

In this way the Adjustable Block Program market appears to be different from the Alternative Retail Electric Suppliers ("ARES") market, where the majority of active ARES have complaints. In the sixmonth period from June 2021 to November 2021, 44 of the 69 active ARES had at least one complaint lodged against them, representing 64% of all ARES. By contrast, only 25% of Approved Vendors active in 2021 had complaints in the 12 months of 2021, and only 17% of Designees active in 2021 had complaints in 2021.<sup>16</sup>

When the Program Administrator observes a pattern of consumer protection or customer service issues from an Approved Vendor or Designee, the Program Administrator works with the company to resolve the issues. If the issues are not resolved promptly, the Program Administrator evaluates whether disciplinary action is warranted. See Section 7 of this report for a full list of all suspensions issued in 2021.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> See <u>https://perma.cc/NN32-H283</u> for a permalink to the June to November 2021 ARES complaint data, and the <u>Plug In</u> <u>Illinois</u> website for more information on ARES or for updated complaint data. Note that the Illinois Commerce Commission may track or count complaints differently than the Program Administrator.

## c. Trends in 2021 Complaints Received

The Program Administrator identified several patterns among the complaints received:

- There were 48 complaints where the primary issue related to concerns that Designees, Approved Vendors, or unregistered companies failed to inform customers that their application to the Program was on or would end up on the Program's waitlist, and 15 complaints where this was a secondary concern;<sup>17</sup>
- There were 26 complaints where the primary issue related to failed mechanical components or issues with installation; and
- There were 19 complaints where the primary issue related to delays in a customer receiving their expected portion of the REC payment from their Approved Vendor.

In many cases, during the investigation of complaints, the Program Administrator determined that the entity receiving the complaint had violated Program requirements or acted in a manner that did not support the best interests of consumers. After concluding complaint investigations:

- There were 52 total complaints made against entities that were subsequently suspended by the Program Administrator from participating in the Adjustable Block Program, based on information discovered during the investigation of consumer complaints;<sup>18</sup>
- There were 51 total complaints made against entities who subsequently received a warning letter from the Program Administrator regarding non-compliant behavior, or behavior that while not explicitly non-compliant, did not support the best interests of customers.<sup>19</sup>

### Most Notable Trend - Waitlist Complaints

The Program Administrator received a total of 63 complaints in 2021 where the customer expressed concern about their application being placed on the waitlist. This includes both complaints where this was the customer's primary concern (in 48 cases) and where this was a secondary concern for the customer (in 15 cases). This amounts to 38% of complaints received in 2021 and was a new category of complaints that did not exist in previous years.

Many of the customers who filed complaints related to being on the Program's waitlist were not aware that their application was not submitted before the Program's capacity for projects was exhausted, and did not realize this until the customer called the Program Administrator to inquire about the status of their application. This demonstrates that several Designees and Approved Vendors failed to sufficiently communicate with customers regarding the status of the Program overall and/or the status of the customer's individual application within the context of the Program. This failure to communicate the status of Program capacity to customers appears to be partially responsible for the increase in complaints received in 2021, compared to calendar year 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> In December 2020, funding for Distributed Generation projects was exhausted. Applications submitted after funding was exhausted were added to the Program's waitlists. On September 15, 2021, Public Act 102-0662 was enacted. This Act includes significant changes to the Adjustable Block Program, including the opening of new blocks of Program capacity within 90 days (by December 14, 2021). On December 14, 2021, previously waitlisted applications began moving through the application review steps.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> See Section 7 of this report titled "Disciplinary Actions Summaries."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> While some of these entities' behavior violated Program requirements, the Program Administrator determined that the violations did not merit a suspension.

Whenever a customer filed a complaint about being on the waitlist, the Program Administrator asked open ended questions to understand what the customer was originally told about the Program in general, and about their application to the Program specifically. If the Program Administrator determined that the customer had been misled about the availability of Program capacity, the Program Administrator would notify the customer's Approved Vendor, Designee, and other involved company if applicable, and encourage the company responsible for the misleading information to reach a resolution with the customer. Of the 63 complaints that involved issues related to an application being placed on the waitlist, seven remain open (either under investigation or reopened), and 56 are not currently under investigation by the Program Administrator. Of these 56 complaints, 50 are resolved and six are closed, including one complaint that was closed due to non-responsiveness from the customer.

After <u>Public Act 102-0662</u> took effect on September 15, 2021, the Program Administrator communicated with all customers who had filed complaints regarding their application's placement on the waitlist, informed these customers that additional Program capacity would become available on December 14, 2021, and that their application would begin moving through the application review process at that time.

## Other Trends - Installation Issues and Delayed Payments

The next two significant categories of complaints concern (a) failed mechanical components or issues with a customer's project installation and (b) delays in the customer receiving their expected portion of the REC payment from their Approved Vendor. Typically, customers do not contact the Program Administrator regarding a mechanical issue, installation issue, or delay in receiving payment from their Approved Vendor unless the customer was not able to receive a response from their solar installer or Approved Vendor regarding the issue. Thus, these two subsequent trends also demonstrate that many complaints stem from inadequate communication from Designees, Approved Vendors, and in some cases, solar companies unregistered with the Program, with their customers. In some cases, while investigating these complaints, the Program Administrator learned that the company was short-staffed due to financial issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic or had even gone out of business.

### More Complaints Lodged Against Designees than Approved Vendors

In 2020, 40 of 77 complaints received were filed against Approved Vendors, representing approximately 52% of all complaints received, while complaints against Designees (33 received) represented only approximately 43% of complaints received. In 2021, there were more complaints received against Designees than against Approved Vendors. Complaints against Designees represented approximately 65% of complaints received, while complaints against Approved Vendors only represented 34% of complaints received.<sup>20</sup> There are likely two explanations for this trend.

First, in cases where there is both an Approved Vendor and a Designee working on a customer's installation and application to the Program, the customer typically interfaces more with the Designee (which is often times the installer and/or sales company) than with their Approved Vendor. Many complaints received in 2021 stemmed from inadequate communication to customers regarding the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Complaints against entities not registered with the Program represented the final 1% of complaints received in 2021.

status of the Program. This may explain why a greater portion of complaints received in 2021 were lodged against Designees, as compared to 2020.

Second, the requirement that Designees must register with the Program was put in place in late 2020. This has allowed the Program Administrator to more accurately track when a complaint is lodged against a Designee, rather than against the customer's Approved Vendor, leading more complaints to be listed against Designees, compared to previous years before Designee registration was a Program requirement.

## 6. Complaint Examples by Category of Complaint

The complaints received by the Program Administrator in 2021 fall into ten categories: nine categories that describe the complaint type, and a miscellaneous category for complaints that do not represent a trend in complaints received, and therefore do not fall into one of the other nine categories. This section contains a summary of a representative complaint for each of the categories of complaints received by the Program Administrator in 2021, excluding the miscellaneous category.

## i. Customer Application on Waitlist

Complaint date: February 2021
Complainant Type: Small Distributed Generation Customer
Type of ABP Entity: Designee
<b>Complaint Summary:</b> The customer's solar photovoltaic ("PV") system was installed in September
2020, but the Designee did not give the customer the contract necessary to have an application
submitted to the ABP until February 2021. When the customer filed the complaint, the customer's
application had not yet been submitted to the ABP. As a result of this delay, the customer's
application was added to the ABP waitlist. At the time of complaint, there was no way to know when
or if the application would be selected from the waitlist.
Program Administrator Response: The Program Administrator notified the Designee and
Approved Vendor of the complaint. The Program Administrator monitored the complaint to ensure
that it was resolved, and to ensure that the customer's application was submitted to the Program.
ABP Entity Response: The Designee acknowledged responsibility for the customer's application
being added to the waitlist. The Designee offered to pay the customer's monthly solar loan payments
until the customer moves off the waitlist, or until the Designee has paid the customer the full
estimated REC payment amount listed on the customer's Disclosure Form.

### ii. Mechanical or Installation Issue

### Complaint date: April 2021

**Complainant Type:** Large Distributed Generation Customer

#### Type of ABP Entity: Approved Vendor

**Complaint Summary:** The customer had experienced multiple issues with installation, including hiring separate contractors to complete work that was the Approved Vendor's responsibility. The customer did not receive an adequate response from the Approved Vendor regarding this issue. Note: The customer's installation company was also their Approved Vendor.

**Program Administrator Response:** The Program Administrator contacted the Approved Vendor and required that the Approved Vendor provide a response to the customer's installation concerns. The Program Administrator set a new deadline for the Approved Vendor when they missed the

original deadline. The Program Administrator confirmed that the complaint had been resolved with the customer.

**ABP Entity Response:** The Approved Vendor contacted the customer and reached an agreement with the customer regarding the outside contractors that the customer hired and paid.

#### iii. REC Payment Delay

**Complaint date:** January 2021

**Complainant Type:** Small Distributed Generation Customer

#### Type of ABP Entity: Designee

**Complaint Summary:** The customer's solar PV system was installed in November 2019, and at the time of the complaint the customer had not received REC payment from their Approved Vendor. The customer contacted the Program Administrator to ask about the status of their application.

**Program Administrator Response:** The Program Administrator notified the Designee and Approved Vendor of the complaint. The Program Administrator provided the customer with information on the status of their application and informed the customer that their Designee was not registered with the ABP at the time their sale took place, which was partially responsible for the delay in submitting their application. The Program Administrator followed up with the customer after resolving the complaint to notify them that their application had been approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission, and that their application was progressing through the necessary steps.

**ABP Entity Response:** The Designee's Approved Vendor responded on behalf of the Designee. The Approved Vendor informed the Program Administrator that the Designee was not registered with the Approved Vendor at the time the sale took place. The Approved Vendor also stated that they were working with the Designee to submit their customers' project applications to the ABP.

#### iv. Misleading Marketing

**Complaint date:** March 2021

Complainant Type: Small Distributed Generation Customer

Type of ABP Entity: Approved Vendor

**Complaint Summary:** The customer received incorrect information orally from their sales representative about their solar lease contract. At the time of complaint, the customer was under the impression that their solar lease was free and that they did not owe the solar company monthly lease payments.

**Program Administrator Response:** The Program Administrator provided the customer with a copy of their Disclosure Form and summarized key points of the Disclosure Form, including the amount of the monthly lease payments listed by the Approved Vendor. The Program Administrator notified the Approved Vendor of the complaint. The Program Administrator required that the Approved Vendor remind all sales representatives of the ABP Distributed Generation Marketing Guidelines, specifically the portion that prohibits sales representatives from saying a solar PV system is free unless the customer will never be responsible for any payments connected to the solar PV system.

**ABP Entity Response:** The Approved Vendor provided documentation of the email sent to all sales representatives reminding the sales representatives of the importance of the ABP Distributed Generation Marketing Guidelines.

#### v. Installation Contract Terms

#### **Complaint date:** July 2021

**Complainant Type:** Small Distributed Generation Customer

Type of ABP Entity: Approved Vendor

**Complaint Summary:** During the design phase of the customer's system, the electric utility rejected the design of the solar PV system. The customer wanted to cancel the installation and was concerned that the Approved Vendor quoted them a high cancellation fee. The customer stated that they did not

receive an adequate response from the Approved Vendor about this issue. Note: The company that sold the customer the system was also the customer's Approved Vendor.

**Program Administrator Response:** The Program Administrator contacted the Approved Vendor and required that the Approved Vendor provide a response to the customer's concerns. The Program Administrator confirmed that the complaint had been resolved with the customer.

**ABP Entity Response:** The Approved Vendor contacted the customer and reached an agreement regarding cancellation of the contract.

#### vi. Failure to Respond to Customer

Complaint date: June 2021

Complainant Type: Small Distributed Generation Customer

Type of ABP Entity: Designee

**Complaint Summary:** The customer had not received a response from the Designee to questions about the status of their application to the Illinois ABP.

**Program Administrator Response:** The Program Administrator contacted the Designee and required that the Designee provide a response to the customer's concerns. The Program Administrator set new deadlines for the Designee when they missed the original deadlines. The Program Administrator confirmed that the customer's application materials were submitted to the customer's Approved Vendor.

**ABP Entity Response:** The Designee submitted all necessary application materials to the customer's Approved Vendor and provided the customer with updates about the status of their application.

#### vii. System Underperforming

**Complaint date:** March 2021

**Complainant Type:** Small Distributed Generation Customer

Type of ABP Entity: Designee

**Complaint Summary:** The customer was concerned that there was an issue with their solar PV system after receiving higher than expected electric utility bills.

**Program Administrator Response:** The Program Administrator notified the Designee and Approved Vendor of the complaint. The Program Administrator monitored the complaint to ensure that it was resolved. When the customer had further questions about their utility bills, the Program Administrator sent the customer resources, including their electric utility's webpage with information about net metering. Net metering is the utility program where customers can receive bill credits for excess solar electricity generation.

**ABP Entity Response:** The Designee contacted the customer and explained that the solar PV system was producing as expected, and that the electric utility bills may be higher due to increased electric usage. The Designee also informed the customer that there was an issue with the inverter for one month and paid the customer the amount of one monthly loan payment to address the reduced production that month.

#### viii. Disclosure Form Issues

#### Complaint date: March 2021

Complainant Type: Small Distributed Generation Customer

#### Type of ABP Entity: Designee

**Complaint Summary:** The customer contacted the Program Administrator because their Designee did not give them a copy of the Illinois Shines Brochure or provide them with a Disclosure Form before they signed their installation contract. On the same day that they signed their installation contract, the Designee also had the customer sign a contract with their Approved Vendor that detailed the application process to the ABP, showing that the Designee intended to apply the customer to the ABP.

**Program Administrator Response:** The Program Administrator contacted the Designee and required that they provide the customer with a Disclosure Form. The Program Administrator conducted an investigation to determine if this had happened to other customers of the Designee. After determining that additional customers had also not received their Disclosure Form before signing installation agreements, the Program Administrator suspended the Designee. The Program Administrator followed up the customer to inform the customer that their application was successfully added to the Program's waitlist.

**ABP Entity Response:** The Designee provided the customer with a Disclosure Form and the Illinois Shines Brochure and addressed the customer's questions.

#### ix. ABP Application Issues

**Complaint date:** July 2021

**Complainant Type:** Small Distributed Generation Customer

Type of ABP Entity: Designee

**Complaint Summary:** The solar proposal given to the customer by the Designee showed a notably higher expected payment that the customer would receive from their Approved Vendor by participating in the ABP than the customer ultimately received.

**Program Administrator Response:** The Program Administrator contacted the Designee and required that the Designee provide a response to the customer's concerns regarding the payment amount from their Approved Vendor. The Program Administrator set new deadlines for the Designee when they missed multiple deadlines. The Program Administrator notified the Designee that including misleading information about the payment a customer will receive from their Approved Vendor violates the Program's Marketing Guidelines. The Program Administrator provided the customer with information on how to contact an attorney, as the issue involved a dispute between two parties.

**ABP Entity Response:** The Designee contacted the customer and explained that their subcontracted salesperson had made an error in the proposal. The Designee did not offer the customer further resolution for the error.

## 7. Suspension Summaries

The Program Administrator issued 14 suspensions against 13 entities from January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021. Twelve of the suspensions related to issues first brought to the Program Administrator's attention through consumer complaints. In each of these instances, after receiving a consumer complaint that included potential violations of Program requirements, the Program Administrator thoroughly investigated the actions of the company and confirmed the company was not in compliance with Program requirements. One suspension was the result of violation of the Illinois Power Agency's emergency updates to the Program's marketing guidelines because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The remaining suspension was the result of violation of non-emergency provisions of the Illinois Adjustable Block Program marketing guidelines.

Below is a summary of the fourteen suspensions issued by the Program Administrator from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, along with information regarding any appeal decisions made by the IPA<sup>21</sup>:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> This information is up-to-date as of the publication of this report, but as this information changes periodically, the most up-to-date disciplinary action information can be found here: <u>https://illinoisabp.com/disciplinary-actions-report/</u>

ABP Entity Name: Eco-Solar Solutions, LLC ("Eco-Solar Solutions")

Type of ABP Entity: Approved Vendor

**Reason for Suspension**: Eco-Solar Solutions repeatedly failed to communicate with the Program Administrator during its investigation of consumer complaints, failed to respond to Eco-Solar Solutions' own customers who contacted Eco-Solar Solutions, and failed to address these communication failures after receiving a warning letter from the Program Administrator on 10/23/20.

Suspension status: Suspension complete; Approved Vendor status restored<sup>22</sup>

<b>Suspension Details</b>			
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length
01/22/21	01/22/21	04/22/21	3 months

Appeal Details			
Submitted	<b>Receipt Date</b>	Status	Determination
			Date
No	N/A	N/A	N/A

## Appeal Determination: N/A

ABP Entity Name: WCP Solar Services, LLC ("WCP Solar")<sup>23</sup>

Type of ABP Entity: Approved Vendor

**Reason for Suspension**: WCP Solar repeatedly failed to satisfactorily communicate with the Program Administrator, failed to respond to WCP's own customers who contacted WCP Solar, and failed to disclose fees charged by WCP Solar on a customer's ABP Disclosure Form as required by the Program.

**Reason for First Extension:** WCP Solar failed to meet re-entry requirements set forth by the Program Administrator.

**Reason for Second Extension:** WCP Solar failed to meet re-entry requirements set forth by the Program Administrator.

**Reason for Third Extension:** WCP Solar failed to meet re-entry requirements set forth by the Program Administrator.

**Reason for Fourth Extension:** WCP Solar failed to meet re-entry requirements set forth by the Program Administrator

**Reason for Fifth Extension:** WCP Solar failed to meet re-entry requirements set forth by the Program Administrator

Suspension status: Suspended

Suspension Details – Initial suspension			
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length
11/13/2020	11/13/2020	02/13/2021	3 months

### **Suspension Details – First Extension**

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Eco-Solar Solutions was suspended a second time in 2021, see page 41.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> While the original suspension related to WCP Solar's ongoing disciplinary issues took effect in 2020, this suspension was extended throughout 2021, and lead to ongoing consumer protections issues.

Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length
02/9/2021	02/13/2021	05/13/2021	3 months

Suspension Details -	- Second Extension		
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length
05/12/2021	05/13/2021	07/13/2021	2 months

Suspension Details -	- Third Extension		
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length
07/09/2021	07/13/2021	09/13/2021	2 months

**Appeal Determination:** N/A; WCP Solar did not appeal their initial suspension, first extension, second extension, or third extension.

Suspension Details -	- Fourth Extension		
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length
09/10/2021	09/13/2021	11/13/2021	2 months

Appeal Details			
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination
			Date
Yes	10/11/2021	Denied	12/08/2021

**Appeal Determination**: After appealing their suspension, WCP Solar's appeal was denied by the IPA.

Suspension Details -	- Fifth Extension		
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length
11/12/2021	11/13/2021	N/A	Indefinite

<b>Appeal Details</b>			
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination
	_		Date
No	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Appeal Determination**: N/A

**ABP Entity Name**: Vir Solar LLC ("Vir Solar")

Type of ABP Entity: Designee

**Reason for Suspension**: Vir Solar performed door-to-door marketing and violated the emergency amendment to the ABP Distributed Generation Marketing Guidelines updated on October 7, 2020, prohibiting such solicitations during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. **Suspension status**: Suspended

<b>Suspension Details</b>				
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length	

04/20/2021 04/20/2021	10/20/2021*	6 months	
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Appeal Details			
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination
			Date
No	N/A	N/A	N/A

\*Vir Solar informed the Program Administrator on November 15, 2021, that Vir Solar does not intend to submit re-entry materials or reenter the ABP.

### **ABP Entity Name**: Phenomenal Power, LLC ("Phenomenal Power")

**Type of ABP Entity**: Third-party marketing/sales firm

**Reason for Suspension**: Phenomenal Power failed to satisfactorily work with its third-party installation partner to submit customer projects to the ABP, failed to provide truthful and accurate information to its customers and failed to register as a Designee with the Program. Phenomenal Power was unresponsive to a customer after the customer filed a complaint and was unresponsive to the Program Administrator during the investigation of the customer's complaint. Additionally, Phenomenal Power failed to comply with ABP Distributed Generation Marketing Guidelines. **Suspension status**: Suspended

Suspension Details			
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length
06/01/2021	06/01/2021	12/01/2021*	6 months

Appeal Details			
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination
			Date
No	N/A	N/A	N/A

#### Appeal Determination: N/A

\*As of the date this report was published, Phenomenal Power has not submitted required re-entry materials, and the suspension remains in effect.

### ABP Entity Name: Entron Holding, Inc D/B/A Enerpower ("Entron")

#### Type of ABP Entity: Third-party marketing/sales firm

**Reason for Suspension:** Entron failed to satisfactorily work with its third-party installation partner and third-party sales partner to apply customer projects to the ABP. In addition, Entron failed to provide truthful and accurate information to customers and failed to comply with ABP Distributed Generation Marketing Guidelines.

Suspension status: Suspended

Suspension Details				
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length	
06/01/2021	06/01/2021	09/01/2021*	3 months	

Appeal Details				
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination	
			Date	
No	N/A	N/A	N/A	

\*As of the date this report was published, Entron has not submitted required re-entry materials, and the suspension remains in effect.

## ABP Entity Name: Kapital Electric Company, LLC ("Kapital Electric")

Type of ABP Entity: Designee

**Reason for Suspension**: Kapital Electric failed to satisfactorily submit application materials to its Approved Vendor for projects that it developed with third party partners. Kapital Electric failed to respond to a customer after the customer filed a complaint and was unresponsive to the Program Administrator during the Program Administrator's investigation of the customer's complaint. **Suspension status**: Suspension complete; Designee status restored

Suspension Details			
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length
06/01/2021	06/01/2021	09/01/2021	3 months

Appeal Details				
Submitted	<b>Receipt Date</b>	Status	Determination	
			Date	
Yes	06/11/2021	Denied but	7/12/2021	
		shortened		
		suspension term		

**Appeal Determination**: Upon appeal, the IPA determined that because Kapital Electric acted in good faith in its attempts to resolve the customer complaint, worked towards a resolution with the Program Administrator and has ceased working with the third-party partners involved in the initial complaint, the IPA shortened Kapital Electric's suspension term to end on July 12, 2021.

ABP Entity Name: Sigora Solar, LLC ("Sigora Solar")

Type of ABP Entity: Approved Vendor & Designee

**Reason for Suspension**: Sigora Solar failed to provide truthful and accurate information to a customer. Sigora Solar failed to comply with ABP requirements regarding timely and accurate presentation of ABP Disclosure Forms to multiple customers and delayed submission of these completed ABP Disclosure Forms to the Program.

Suspension status: Suspended

Suspension Details				
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length	
06/09/2021	06/09/2021	9/09/2021*	3 months	

Appeal Details				
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination	
			Date	
No	N/A	N/A	N/A	

\*As of the date this report was published, Sigora Solar has not submitted required re-entry materials, and the suspension remains in effect.

## **ABP Entity Name**: Power Home Solar, LLC ("Power Home Solar")

Type of ABP Entity: Approved Vendor & Designee

**Reason for Suspension**: Power Home Solar was suspended for multiple Program violations, including multiple instances of Power Home Solar representatives providing misleading and inaccurate information to its customers during the sales process, repeatedly failing to follow Program requirements with respect to ABP Disclosure Forms thus causing a number of customers to be added to the ABP waitlist, and failing to provide satisfactory responses to the Program Administrator during the investigation of multiple consumer complaints. **Suspension status**: Suspended

Suspension Details				
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length	
07/15/2021	07/15/2021	01/15/2022*	6 months	

Appeal Details				
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination	
			Date	
Yes	08/06/2021	Denied	09/27/2021	

**Appeal Determination**: The IPA denied Power Home Solar's appeal.

\*As of the date this report was published, Power Home Solar has not submitted required re-entry materials, and the suspension remains in effect.

**ABP Entity Name**: Solarize South Carolina, LLC ("Solarize South Carolina")

**Type of ABP Entity**: Third-party marketing/sales firm

**Reason for Suspension**: Solarize South Carolina failed to register as a Designee with the Program and failed to respond to the Program Administrator's inquiries regarding a consumer complaint. **Suspension status**: Suspended

Suspension Details				
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length	
07/15/2021	07/15/2021	01/15/2022*	6 months	

<b>Appeal Details</b>			
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination
			Date

No	N/A	N/A	N/A
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\*As of the date this report was published, Solarize South Carolina has not submitted required reentry materials, and the suspension remains in effect.

### ABP Entity Name: Eco-Energy Solutions, Inc. ("Eco-Energy Solutions")

Type of ABP Entity: Third-party marketing/sales firm

**Reason for Suspension**: Eco-Energy Solutions was suspended for multiple reasons including violating the Program's Distributed Generation Marketing Guidelines, failing to register as a Designee, and failing to respond to the Program Administrator. **Suspension status**: Suspended

Suspension Details				
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length	
08/09/2021	08/09/2021	11/09/2021*	3 months	

Appeal Details			
Submitted	<b>Receipt Date</b>	Status	Determination
			Date
No	N/A	N/A	N/A

#### **Appeal Determination**: N/A

\*As of the date this report was published, Eco-Energy Solutions has not submitted required re-entry materials, and the suspension remains in effect.

ABP Entity Name: Headline Solar, LLC ("Headline Solar")

08/12/2021

#### Type of ABP Entity: Approved Vendor, Designee

**Reason for Suspension**: Headline Solar was suspended for multiple reasons, including failure to provide customers with timely and accurate Disclosure Forms causing a number of Headline Solar customers to be added to the ABP waitlist, failure to provide truthful and accurate information to customers during its sales processes, and repeated lack of timely responses to the Program Administrator's inquiries regarding complaints made by Headline Solar customers. **Suspension status**: Suspension complete; Approved Vendor and Designee status restored

<b>Suspension Details</b>			
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length

11/12/2021\*

3 months

Appeal Details				
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination Date	
No	N/A	N/A	N/A	

#### Appeal Determination: N/A

08/12/2021

\*Headline Solar met re-entry requirements on 12/6/2021 and the Program Administrator lifted their suspension the same day.

#### **ABP Entity Name**: Empire Solar Group, LLC ("Empire Solar") **Type of ABP Entity**: Approved Vendor, Designee

**Reason for Suspension**: Empire Solar was suspended for failure to inform the Program Administrator that Empire Solar has filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 7 of the United States Bankruptcy Code and thereby violated Program requirements applicable to Approved Vendors in the Program. Empire Solar also violated Program requirements by repeatedly failing to respond to the Program Administrator during its investigation of a customer complaint. **Suspension status**: Suspended

Suspension Details				
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length	
11/19/2021	11/19/2021	N/A	Indefinite	

Appeal Details			
Submitted	<b>Receipt Date</b>	Status	Determination
			Date
No	N/A	N/A	N/A

### Appeal Determination: N/A

## ABP Entity Name: Standard Eco, LLC ("Standard Eco")

### Type of ABP Entity: Designee

**Reason for Suspension**: Standard Eco was suspended for multiple instances of Standard Eco representatives providing misleading information to customers during the sales process, creating unnecessary delays in application submission, causing applications to be placed on the Program waitlist after customers were told they would receive Program incentives, and failing to provide satisfactory responses to both customers and the Program Administrator regarding consumer complaints.

#### Suspension status: Suspended

Suspension Details				
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length	
11/29/2021	11/29/2021	05/29/2022	6 months	

Appeal Details			
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination
			Date
No	N/A	N/A	N/A

### Appeal Determination: N/A

## ABP Entity Name: Eco-Solar Solutions, LLC ("Eco-Solar")

Type of ABP Entity: Approved Vendor

**Reason for Suspension**: Eco-Solar was suspended for several reasons, including misleading its customers with respect to Program incentive funding, non-responsiveness to customer complaints, and non-responsiveness to the Program Administrator regarding project applications, causing harm to its customers.

Suspension status: Suspended

Suspension Details				
Issue Date	Start Date	End Date	Length	
12/22/2021	12/22/2021	06/22/2022	6 months	

Appeal Details			
Submitted	Receipt Date	Status	Determination
			Date
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

### Appeal Determination: N/A