



# **Illinois Shines/Adjustable Block Program Equity Accountability System Informational Webinar**

**October 4, 2022**

# Today's Presenters



**Sharon Johnson**  
**IPA**  
Diversity, Equity, and  
Inclusion Manager



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**IPA**  
Associate Legal Counsel



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Strategy Team Manager

# Webinar Goals

Introduce the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals and requirements introduced by the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act and the 2022 Long-Term Plan, including the Equity Accountability System

Share how the Equity Accountability System applies to AVs and Designees, including the Equity Eligible Contractor category and Minimum Equity Standards

- Understand the Minimum Equity Standards and forthcoming system
- Understand qualifications to become an Equity Eligible Contractor, and how to apply for certification

Meet the Program Administrator's Sector Strategists and team members who can support AVs and Designees in this area

Provide a forum for questions and feedback from the Program Administrator and IPA





# Agenda

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- Webinar Goals
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Adjustable Block Program
  - Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) and Equity Framework
  - The ABP and the Equity Accountability System
  - Equity Accountability System (EAS) Overview
  - Monitoring, Reporting, Facilitation, Studies
- Minimum Equity Standards
- Equity Eligible Contractor (EEC) Category
- Support and Questions

A photograph of three diverse professionals in an office. A woman in the foreground, wearing a blue blazer over a yellow top, is smiling broadly at the camera while typing on a laptop. Behind her, another woman is looking at a computer screen. To the left, a man in a light blue shirt is partially visible, also looking towards the right. The office environment includes computer monitors, a desk with a small potted plant, and a blurred background.

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Adjustable Block Program**

# CEJA Diversity and Equity Framework

The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (Public Act 102-0662) amended the Illinois Power Agency Act to expand the "priority access to the clean energy economy for business and workers from communities that have been excluded from economic opportunities in the energy sector, have been subject to disproportionate levels of pollution, and have disproportionately experienced negative public health outcomes."

The diversity and equity framework, as passed in CEJA, includes the following Four Pillars:

- 1. Creation of an Equity Accountability System (EAS), including minimum equity standards applicable to all renewable energy procurements.**
2. Assessment of and attempt to ameliorate existing racial discrimination or disparities in access to and rates of participation in the clean energy economy.
3. Direction for IPA to "collect data from program applicants in order to track and improve equitable distribution of benefits across Illinois communities for all procurements the Agency Conducts."
4. Establishment of an Energy Workforce Equity Database, including a public-facing online tool, to facilitate engagement of equity eligible contractors and persons on clean energy projects.

# The ABP and the Equity Accountability System

To advance the objective to expand priority access to the clean energy economy, the Act directs the Agency to establish an **Equity Accountability System (EAS)**, which shall include:

1. **Minimum Equity Standards (MES)** applicable to all applicants to the Agency's Adjustable Block Program and competitive procurements
2. The **Equity Eligible Contractor** category within the Program





# Reporting and Assessment of the EAS

The Act further establishes several monitoring, reporting, and facilitation requirements to support the assessment of the Equity Accountability System. The Act directs the Agency to include the following in each revision to the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan:

1. Current number of Equity Eligible Contractors certified by the Agency.
2. A mechanism for measuring and reporting project workforce profiles at the Approved Vendor or Designee level.
3. Training, guidance, and other support for Approved Vendors, Designees, Equity Eligible Contractors, and other stakeholders for meeting the requirements of the EEC category within the Adjustable Block Program and the minimum equity standards laid out in this section.
4. A process for certifying Equity Eligible Contractors and persons (please see Chapter 7 for more details).
5. A waiver application process for rare cases of inability to meet the minimum equity standard.



A photograph of a person with their back to the camera, carrying a young child on their shoulders. They are standing in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. The background is a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The person is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt, and the child is wearing a striped shirt and tan overalls. The text "Minimum Equity Standards" is overlaid in a bold, blue font on a semi-transparent white rectangular background.

# Minimum Equity Standards

# Minimum Equity Standards

All applications for delivery contracts in the Adjustable Block Program shall comply with specific minimum equity commitments. This establishes that minimum percentages of project workforces on participating projects for each party participating in a procurement consist of equity eligible persons.

## Beginning in Program Year 2023-2024

- At least 10% of project workforce for each entity must be comprised of Equity Eligible Persons (EEPs)

## By 2030

- At least 30% of the project workforce for each entity participating in a procurement program is comprised of EEPs

Note: The IPA shall propose annual increases to the minimum percentage developed with stakeholder input. In determining these increases, the Agency has the discretion to establish different minimum equity standards for different types of procurements and different regions of the State if the Agency finds that doing so will further the purposes of the applicable subsection.

# Who are Equity Eligible Persons and Contractors?

**Equity Eligible Persons** can be:

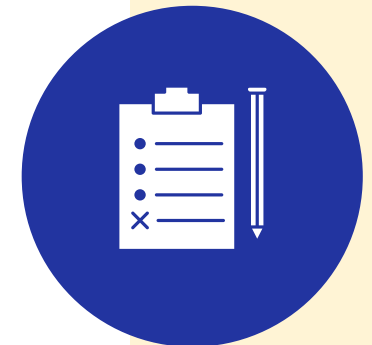
1. Graduates or current or former participants in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, Illinois Climate Works Preapprentice Program, Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program, or the Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program, and the solar training pipeline and multicultural jobs program
2. Persons who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system
3. Persons who were formerly incarcerated
4. Persons whose primary residence is in an equity eligible investment community

**Equity Eligible Contractor:** A business that is majority-owned by eligible persons, or a nonprofit or cooperative that is majority-governed by eligible persons, or is a natural person that is an eligible person offering personal services as an independent contractor.

# Minimum Equity Standards — Compliance Plans

## All Non-EEC Approved Vendors and Designees must:

- Comply with Minimum Equity Standards
- File an annual Minimum Equity Standard Compliance Plan
  - First Compliance Plans must be filed by June 1, 2023
  - AVs must amend and/or correct Compliance Plans after review from IPA (within 14 days)
  - AVs may seek a waiver IF unable to fulfill minimum equity standards for given delivery year.
    - More on the waiver process will be shared in the next webinar.





# Compliance Plan Requirements

Compliance plans must include the following items:

- i. A statement of intent to comply with equity accountability standards for the applicable delivery year and to hire a diverse project workforce including Equity Eligible Persons and Equity Eligible Contractors. This will include a narrative description of how the applicant will meet these commitments.
- ii. Projected number of workers and the demographic breakdown by race, gender, and participation in job training or workforce development programs, or other means of compliance with the standard for equity eligible persons.
- iii. Plans for the use of Equity Eligible Contractors, if applicable.
- iv. Applicant classification (i.e., Minority-owned, Woman-owned, Disabled-owned, Veteran-owned, Small Business, etc.), if applicable.
- v. Communication plan for local outreach to increase the utilization of Equity Eligible Persons and Equity Eligible Contractors.
- vi. Status of any corrective actions or adjustments from prior year Compliance Plans.
- vii. Approved Vendors in the Adjustable Block Program do not need to report on data regarding their Designees but shall report which Designees they worked with in the delivery year to allow the Agency to correlate activities and compliance. This is not meant to relieve Approved Vendors of responsibility to comply with the Equity Accountability Standard, but rather to ensure that efforts are not double counted.

# Compliance Plan Assessment

Compliance Plans will be evaluated on the following scale:

1) Needs Development (a rating of 1)

- The plan will not be accepted without updating of or inclusion of requirements that need resolution or are missing. AVs will need to review, correct and/or include missing compliance items in order for the Compliance Plan to be approved. Indicates risk of non-compliance.

2) Accepted (a rating of 2)

- The plan will be accepted. Indicates that all compliance requirements are in place for Compliance Plan approval.

3) Exceeds Requirements (a rating of 3)

- The Compliance Plan will be approved. Indicates that the entity has committed in their written plan to take internal, periodic checks before the mid-year confirmation of progress to evaluate continued effectiveness or risk of the plan and will go beyond the minimum equity standards by 50% (e.g., if the standard for a delivery year is 10%, they commit to achieving 15%). This will include noting best practices and/or areas of adjustment.

# Program Recruitment and Engagement

AVs and Designees should engage eligible persons, where applicable, by exploring the following avenues:

- Educational workshops for local eligible workforce
- Job-shadowing through DCEO workforce hubs
- Energy Workforce Equity Database
- Job fairs
- Accessing untapped local labor pools (i.e. trade schools, community colleges)
- Developing training programs addressing life skills and financial management
- Special funding for dislocated workers and/or training for project work
- Connecting with community-based organizations for wrap around services (i.e. childcare, transportation, mentoring)
- Supporting persons or entities who apply for workforce programs or assistance related to clean energy



# Equity Eligible Contractor Category



# Equity Eligible Contractors — Overview

The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act established a project category for Equity Eligible Contractors, whereby at least 10% of the capacity of the Adjustable Block Program shall be reserved for projects submitted by applicants that are EEC certified. Approved Vendors that wish to submit projects into the Equity Eligible Contractor category must first apply to be certified as an EEC.

An Approved Vendor can qualify for an EEC certification if owners, partners, or proprietors meet the EEC eligibility; similarly, if the AV is organized as a non-profit, the applicant will be asked to provide the board membership of the non-profit and designate which board members meet the EEC eligibility criteria.



# Equity Eligible Contractors — Definitions

An approved vendor can qualify for an EEC certification if majority-owners or majority-governors have status under at least one of the following four categories:

1. Persons who graduated from or are current or former participants in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, Illinois Climate Works Preapprentice Program, Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program, or the Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program, and the solar training pipeline and multicultural jobs program
2. Persons who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system
3. Persons who were formerly incarcerated
4. Persons whose primary residence is in an equity eligible investment community

# Equity Eligible Contractors — Block Category

The EEC Block is a designated capacity block available for DG and CS projects submitted by EECs. The Program Year 2022-2023 EEC Block Capacity is 144.63 MW

- EEC certified AVs are **NOT** limited to EEC Block
- EECs may apply for Advance of Capital up to 50% of contract value after contract execution in this block
- Projects qualify if submitted by an AV designated as an EEC
- AV may not reassign to another AV not designated as EEC for at least six years

A photograph of two people working together at a desk. One person is typing on a laptop, while the other is looking on. The desk is cluttered with various items including a notebook, pens, and a small potted plant. A semi-transparent white box with the text 'Support & Questions' is overlaid on the image.

# Support & Questions



# Program Support And Sector Strategists

The Energy Solutions team model represents an expansion of support to stakeholders, and with it, more staff resources for Approved Vendors, their Designees, customers and others, including updated resources and an expanded team, including Sector Strategists.

- Sector Strategists work closely with AVs and Designees to provide support and resources to understand and adhere to Program rules, to provide or facilitate technical support, to provide sector-specific insights and resources, to increase the participation of EECs and AV success within the Equity Accountability System, and more.



# Sector Strategist Support

Energy Solutions’ efforts as Program Administrator include the addition of Sector Strategists to support stakeholders and Program success.

**Strategists will be available across each of the six sectors**

<b>Small DG</b> <a href="mailto:smallDG@illinoisabp.com">smallDG@illinoisabp.com</a>	<b>Large DG</b> <a href="mailto:largeDG@illinoisabp.com">largeDG@illinoisabp.com</a>	<b>Community Solar</b> <a href="mailto:communitysolar@illinoisabp.com">communitysolar@illinoisabp.com</a>
<b>Community-Driven Community Solar</b> <a href="mailto:communitysolar@illinoisabp.com">communitysolar@illinoisabp.com</a>	<b>Public Schools</b> <a href="mailto:schools@illinoisabp.com">schools@illinoisabp.com</a>	<b>Equity Eligible Contractors</b> <a href="mailto:EEC@illinoisabp.com">EEC@illinoisabp.com</a>

General and ongoing technical support can always be accessed by emailing [admin@illinoisabp.com](mailto:admin@illinoisabp.com))

# What is next?

## Webinars and Informational Meetings

### Sept 2022-Jan 2023 — Educational Outreach

- EAS Overview Webinar #1 – Today, Oct. 4, 2022
- EAS Overview Webinar #2 – TBA in first half of November
- Further details on Compliance Plans, Waivers, and more

### January-March 2023 — Compliance Plan Training & Workshops

Distribution of application materials and training for applicants

### Q2 2023 Compliance Plan Initial Application Submissions

Applicants can begin submitting Compliance Plans prior to the June 1, 2023 launch of the EAS requirements

## Collateral & Updated Content

- Updated website content
- Guide to the Equity Accountability System
- Spanish-language materials

# Attestation Information

Please fill out the Attendance Attestation form by scanning the QR code below or following the link posted in the meeting chat.

For later viewers, the link and QR code will be posted on the program website at <https://illinoisabp.com/equity-accountability-system/>.

<https://bit.ly/EASAttest>





**Thank you!**

