



Illinois Shines and the Adjustable Block Program are administered by Energy Solutions on behalf of the Illinois Power Agency, an independent state government agency.

## Illinois Shines Community Solar

### What is Illinois Shines?

Illinois Shines is the brand name of the Adjustable Block Program, a state-administered program that creates incentives for the development of new solar photovoltaic (“PV”) projects. To help with that development, Community Solar projects that participate in the program receive payments in exchange for 15 years of Renewable Energy Credits (“RECs”) generated by the project.

Participating in Illinois Shines is the same thing as participating in the Adjustable Block Program.

### What is community solar?

Community solar is an arrangement under which many customers subscribe to a single, large PV project. By subscribing, individual customers offset their own electricity use with a portion of the electricity generated by the community solar project. The project might be located near the customer or many miles away, but it must be in the same utility service territory as the customer. Community solar may be a good option for customers who don’t own their homes or who would prefer not to install solar panels at their homes.

Absent the support of subscribers, many community solar projects would never have been constructed—meaning that by subscribing to a community solar project, you are helping support the development of new solar energy generation in Illinois.

A subscription to a community solar project allows you to receive credit on your electric bill for the energy produced by that project. Through net metering, your electric bill will be credited for the community solar project’s energy production, although you may have to pay separately for your subscription.



© Lucia Bourgeois, CC BY 4.0.

Community solar is not the same as “green” or “renewable” supply offers from an Alternative Retail Electric Supplier. Unlike community solar projects participating in Illinois Shines, those offers may rely on renewable energy projects outside Illinois and/or projects that were developed many years ago.

### What is net metering and how do I enroll?<sup>2</sup>

Net metering measures the electricity a PV project produces and credits you for it on your electric bill. It is available both for customers who have PV projects located at their homes or businesses and for subscribers to community solar projects.

Energy use is offset at a customer’s energy supply rate, which your electricity supplier can inform you of. By subscribing to a community solar project, you will be automatically enrolled in net metering by the community solar provider. Some community solar providers may require you to choose a specific electricity supply option as a condition for enrollment.

If your subscription does not allow changing suppliers, and you subse-

quently change suppliers you may jeopardize your community solar subscription and may have to pay termination fees. Your electricity supplier (which can be either your utility or an alternative supplier) will calculate your net metering credits based upon your energy supply rate and the generation from your share of the community solar project.

You should review your electric bill to ensure the accuracy of those calculations. If you have questions about your community solar net metering credits or value, you should contact your electricity supplier. There may be a lag of a month or two before your net metering credits appear on your bill. Your subscription credits may not constitute your required payments for electric service from your utility. In addition to the subscription payments paid to the subscription provider, you will be billed for electricity distribution and related services.

### What information will you receive before you sign a contract?

Along with this brochure, your subscription provider is required

**When you subscribe to a community solar project, you are making a financial commitment: so exercise the same caution you would when making other decisions. If possible, compare offers from different community solar providers. Also, make sure to read and understand your entire subscription contract before signing it.**

to provide you with an Illinois Shines Standard Disclosure Form. It includes contact information for everyone who has a part in your solar contract and information about your community solar subscription. Review this form carefully to ensure that it is consistent with the subscription offer before signing.

### When deciding to participate in community solar, what are your subscription options?

Subscriptions vary. **Read your contract carefully to make sure you know what you will be paying and when.**

When deciding on the best option for you, consider:

- **If you're paying a monthly subscription fee, how much is that fee?** How does that fee compare to projected reductions in your monthly electric bill from net metering? Do you have to put money down at the start?
- **If you're making monthly payments, does your contract include an escalation clause that increases the amount of payments over time?** If so, by how much do payments increase?
- **If you're paying a fixed rate for each kilowatt-hour generated by the community solar project, how does that rate compare to your existing rate from your electric supplier?** You will receive net metering credits at your existing supply rate—so, assuming no other costs, a per-kilowatt-hour subscription cost that is lower than your supply rate may save you money.
- **Does your subscription require you to sign up to receive electricity from a specific electric supplier or utility default service?** If so, what rate will you be charged for electricity under that supply option?

### If you sign up for community solar, what factors affect whether you save money?

You are not guaranteed to save money unless your contract includes

an explicit savings guarantee. The questions below will affect whether you save money. You can answer some questions yourself, while others can be answered by the subscription provider or the sales agent.

- **What is the estimated monthly cost of your community solar subscription?** Are there also upfront fees? Does the cost change over time?
- **How much do you currently pay per kilowatt-hour for your electricity supply?** By subscribing to a community solar project, you will receive a credit for your share of that project's output on the supply portion of your electric bill (not the distribution portion of your bill).
- **Will you save more through net metering bill credits than you will pay in subscription fees?** Compare the size of your subscription and your electricity supply rate (which may change over time) to the cost of your subscription to determine if your bill credits will exceed your subscription cost. Does the subscription contain extra fees that could reduce savings or cause you to pay more than if you did not subscribe?
- **How much electricity will you receive from the community solar project? Is this the right amount, given how much electricity you use?** If your subscription provides more electricity than you use over the course of a year, you may not receive credit for all the electricity generated.
- **How likely are you to move out of the service territory of your utility before your community solar contract expires?** If you move within your utility service territory, you will be able



Illinois Shines/Adjustable Block Program is administered by InClime, Inc. on behalf of the Illinois Power Agency, an independent state government agency.

to keep your community solar subscription. If you move out of that territory, you may need to find someone else to take over your subscription, or you may need to pay a termination fee.

### Consumer rights

You have the right to maintain your subscription if you move to a different home or business location in the same utility service territory. You also have rights to assign or sell the subscription to another customer within your original utility service territory without having to pay a fee to the subscription provider. Some restrictions apply.

Every community solar project participating in Illinois Shines involves an Approved Vendor that has been approved by the Illinois Power Agency. Your community solar subscription provider is identified on your disclosure form. Your subscription provider may or may not be your Approved Vendor. Your subscription provider must respond to issues related to your subscription.

### Complaint procedures

If you have a problem related to the project or the sales process, **first try to resolve it with your community solar subscription provider or the Approved Vendor** (these may or may not be the same entity).

If you can't agree about how to solve the problem, **you may contact the Illinois Shines/Adjustable Block Program Administrator** by emailing [admin@illinoisshines.com](mailto:admin@illinoisshines.com) or by calling (877) 783-1820.

If you have been subject to fraudulent or deceptive sales practices, the Illinois Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division may be able to help. Customers can contact it at:

**Chicago**  
800-386-5438 | TTY: 800-964-3013

**Springfield**  
800-243-0618 | TTY: 877-844-5461

**Carbondale**  
800-243-0607 | TTY: 877-675-9339

**Spanish Language**  
866-310-8398

**For more information, go to [www.illinoisshines.com](http://www.illinoisshines.com)**

For income-eligible households, the Illinois Solar For All program may be an option. Learn more at [IllinoisSFA.com](http://IllinoisSFA.com).

1 RECs represent the environmental value of the electricity generated from solar panels, but not the electricity itself. Utilities must acquire RECs to meet their obligation to supply a certain amount of power from renewable energy. The RECs from your community solar project will be transferred to an Illinois electric utility. For more information on RECs, see a video at <https://vimeo.com/113250210>.

2 This brochure is designed primarily for customers of Ameren Illinois Company, Commonwealth Edison Company, and MidAmerican Energy Company. For consumers in electric cooperative, municipal utility, or Mt. Carmel Public Utility territories, net metering policies may vary. Contact those utilities for details.