

MES Compliance Form Release, Program Brand Refresh Rollout Begins, Application Processing Update

April 14, 2023

Program News

- **Minimum Equity Standard (MES) Compliance Form Release** - As shared earlier today, the Agency launched Minimum Equity Standard (MES) for Illinois Shines today, including the publication of the Minimum Equity Standard [Compliance Plan submission form](#), and associated resources and support, including, updated instructional content at the Program website's [Equity Accountability System page](#), an [MES sample document](#) to preview the Compliance Plan submission form, a [Guide to the Equity Accountability System](#), [FAQs](#) on the Minimum Equity Standard, and direct support from Sector Strategists including forthcoming expanded office hours (please see end of this announcement for details). Three Equity Accountability System webinars have been held this Program year, and webinar recordings, presentation slides, and Q&A documents can be found at the Equity Accountability System page of the Program website, along with the final MES Waiver Request and the MES Waiver Rationale document.
- **Program Brand Refresh Rollout** - The Agency [announced earlier today](#) that has begun the rollout of the refreshed branding of the Illinois Shines Program. A centerpiece of this brand refresh effort will include combining the Program's two current public-facing websites into a single, all-inclusive website to better share Program information. The new website will be hosted at www.IllinoisShines.com, and will be released in advance of the 2023-2024 Program year which commences on June 1, 2023. All currently available resources on the www.IllinoisABP.com website will be available on the new website, and links will automatically redirect to provide a seamless experience to users. Additional enhancements and resources for consumers and Program participants alike will continue to be added to the website following its release.

This new website release will only impact the external, public-facing portion of the Program website and will not impact the Program portal where applications are submitted. Users can expect a cosmetic update to the external site that will re-organize resources for both consumers and Program participants, providing for an improved user experience, as well as provide better access to information that relates to each of the six Program categories with distinct Program category hubs for category-specific resources and news. As the release of this website update approaches, the Program Administrator will keep stakeholders informed so that changes are not abrupt. At this time, no disruptions are anticipated. The Program Administrator acknowledges that currently there is an application backlog is actively being worked down. Stakeholders can be assured that this brand refresh work is not taking away from any other vital responsibilities as it relates to application processing or other Program Administration work. The Program Administrator appreciates the continued patience and feedback of stakeholders as we aggressively work to improve operations and meet expectations.

- **Traditional Community Solar Score Audit and Appeal Update** - In accordance with the [TCS scoring guidelines](#), the Program Administrator has scored all TCS projects submitted on November 1, 2022 that are Part I verified. These scores will be used to determine which projects will be selected for a REC contract once random selection (if needed) takes place and the 20% developer cap is applied. The scores and a full announcement regarding the scoring process were posted on the Program website on the [Solar Project Categories page](#) under the Traditional Community Solar sub-section. A deadline of March 24, 2023 was provided for Approved Vendors to appeal decisions made by the Program Administrator on the scoring of their projects. As the determination of appeals may influence a project's final score, and thus possibly the final selection of projects, all appeals must be reviewed by the Agency within a distinct timeframe. The Agency intends to have all submitted appeals determined by April 21, 2023, subject to the quantity and substance of appeals submitted. As previously shared, a full audit of scores continues, and the Program Administrator will publish updated scores after this audit is

completed, if needed. An allowance for additional appeals after that process concludes will be made for any impacted Approved Vendors, if any additional errors are uncovered.

As previously shared, the Agency will utilize a random selection process to break ties between projects that received the same scores and where those scores would impact project selection, or waitlist placement. This process will occur after the appeal process is complete and all scores are confirmed, and currently, the Agency intends to hold the random selection reordering event in early May 2023, with further details to come.

- **REC Pricing Updates** - The Agency is conducting two processes to update REC prices for the Illinois Shines Program and the Illinois Solar for All Program:
 - **Proposed 2023-2024 REC Prices** - The Agency expects to release updated REC prices on Monday, April 17, 2023 along with the updated Program Guidebook for the 2023-24 Program year.
 - **Update to REC Pricing Model & REC Prices for Subsequent Years** - This second process is a review of the REC pricing approaches for consideration of changes in methodology to be included in the next Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (“LTRRPP”). Comments on this process have been received by the Agency and are currently under review for inclusion in the next update of the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan.
- **Eligibility Criteria for EEC and the EEC Category - Request for Feedback by May 5, 2023** - On April 11, 2023, the Agency released a request for stakeholder feedback on strategies to strengthen the criteria for qualifying as an Equity Eligible Contractor and for receiving incentives under the EEC block of capacity within the Program. This feedback will inform the IPA’s upcoming update to the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan. Please provide comments via email attachment to IPA.EnergyEquity@illinois.gov with the subject “[Responder’s Name] – Stakeholder Feedback on EEC Criteria” by May 5, 2023.

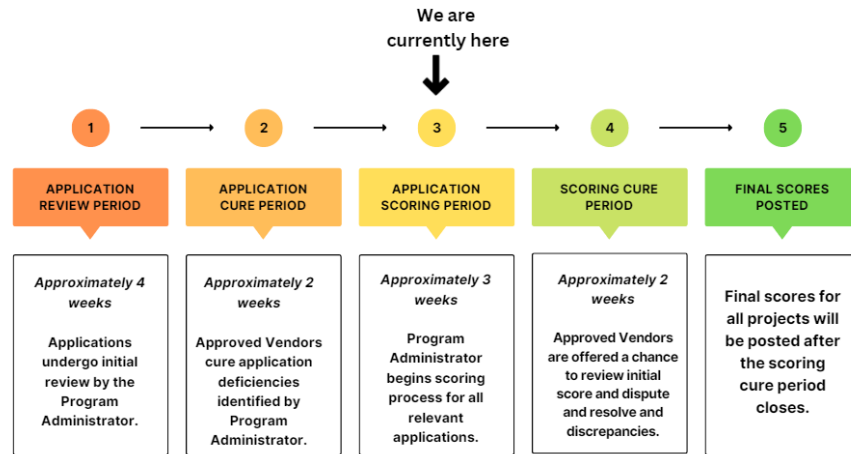
Ongoing Operations Updates

- **Schedule B Generation and Availability via Approved Vendor SharePoint Folders** - As the Program Administrator verifies Part II applications, Schedule Bs are being generated weekly and placed in Approved Vendor SharePoint folders. The Program Administrator will send Approved Vendors an email for each project that is verified, to include confirmation of verification status and date. April 23, 2023 is the last valid Part II verification date for April to allow time to generate May REC invoices. Review of applications will continue throughout the last week of April with Part II verification dates finalized in May.
- **Confirm Contact Information** - The Program Administrator uses the primary email on file for many day-to-day email confirmation messages (such as invoicing, application verification confirmation emails, batch submission and approval etc.), and will utilize this primary email address communications regarding upcoming Annual Report requirements. The Program Administrator encourages Approved Vendors to contact us at admin@illinoisabp.com to confirm and/or provide the primary email addresses to use for such program communications.
- **Upcoming Need Info Reference Tool** - The Program Administrator has identified that an appreciable percentage of project applications result in *Need Info* requests. To assist AVs in limiting the frequency of *Need Info* requests and facilitate faster project review and approval, the Program Administrator will soon publish resources to support project application submissions and the goal of reducing *Need Info* instances, as well as guidance on how to respond to a *Need Info* request to ensure applications are addressed in the order in which they were received, and applications will be Verified more expediently.

Application Processing Updates

- **Application Processing Tables** - The Program Administrator is updating the application processing table at IllinoisABP.com/project-application-reports/ on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. On Friday, April 7, 2023, the PA introduced an additional data table breaking out application processing by project category, application type, and the week’s totals of Applications Reviewed, Applications Verified, and Applications in *Need Info*. On April 10, 2023, the Program Administrator published its newest [Weekly Detail on Application Processing Progress announcement](#), including updated processing tables and staffing and portal improvements. For questions about specific project applications, please contact the PA at admin@illinoisabp.com.

- Community-Driven Community Solar Application Review and Scoring Process** - Effective February 20, 2023, Community-Driven Community Solar entered the Scoring phase, which was originally expected to last for approximately three weeks, from February 20 – March 10, 2023; the scoring period is extended for additional time and is expected to last throughout the month of April. The Program Administrator will continue to share updates as we move through the process.



Ongoing Program Portal Updates

- Ongoing portal updates can be found at IllinoisABP.com/portal-updates/, and a library of portal help guides can be found at IllinoisABP.com/portal-help/.

Updates on Portal Issues, Improvements, and Future Releases

- With user support, the PA continued a nightly, planned system maintenance window for the Program portal through March 23, 2023. As of **the week of April 3, 2023 and onward, the weeknight planned system maintenance window shifted to Tuesday and Thursday evenings, from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. CPT each night**. During these maintenance windows, the Portal is expected to be unavailable to users, which the PA and Agency hope will be minimally disruptive to Program participants. **Any users working in the portal should save their work prior to the 8:00 p.m. CPT start of the system maintenance window each day, as any unsaved information will be lost when the system is moved into maintenance mode**. In the event that portal restoration is unexpectedly incomplete as of 10:00 p.m. CPT on a given evening, an update notice will be sent to Approved Vendors and Designees.

Development Focus	Details	Planned or Actual Delivery
Enhancements, Features and Bug Fixes		
Disclosure Form Remediation	DF enhancements continue to be implemented, with information forthcoming on the impact to the DF Leniency Period that remains in effect.	Enhancements ongoing
Community Solar DF API	Beta testing will soon commence, which follows three working groups and a stakeholder review of the draft Developer’s Guide.	QA testing is nearly complete and beta testing is now projected to begin the week of April 17
Part I and Part II Applications	A software update on April 6, 2023 included updates to data objects to facilitate Part II application review, and temporarily prevented the ability for a subset of Part II applications to be submitted; specifically, AVs attempting to submit Part II applications which follow Part I applications that were submitted in the legacy portal via the prior PA were unable to complete Part II submission. There was no impact to application data. As of April 13, 2023, the ability to submit these Part II applications has been restored.	Thursday, April 13, 2023
Re-batching Functionality	On/off toggle, ability to create batches by project and by batch Screen, export Batch Shuffling and Batch Audit Log	Now tentatively planned for Q3 2023
Required Functionality		
Program Year (PY) 2023-2024 Updated Disclosure Forms	Implementation of updated English and Spanish Disclosure Forms covering all DG and CS	June 1, 2023 for Program Year opening

Requirements and Reminders

- **Stakeholder Feedback** - This table outlines current and forthcoming proposals and feedback requests:

Proposal or Feedback Topic	Request for Comment Released	Deadline for Comment	Details of Proposal/Feedback Request Available at:
Public Schools (Multiple topics, including anchor tenant requirement)	February 22, 2023	March 3, 2023. Comments have been shared at Program website	https://illinoisabp.com/solar-project-categories/#public-schools
REC Pricing Update for 2023-24 Program Year	March 1, 2023	March 24, 2023. Comments have been shared at the Agency's website and are under review	Final REC prices expected release on Monday, April 17
New DG Disclosure Forms – Project Performance (“Efficiency”) Disclosures	March 2, 2023	March 10, 2023. Comments have been shared at Program website and are under Agency review.	https://illinoisabp.com/consumer-protection/
REC Price Modeling Update for Next Long-Term Plan	March 7, 2023	April 4, 2023. Comments have been shared at the Agency's website and are under review.	Request for feedback here: https://illinoisabp.com/2023/03/07/independent-rec-pricing-review-request-for-written-comments/
Program Guidebook updates for Program Year 2023-24	March 14, 2023	April 3, 2023. Comments have been shared on Program website	https://illinoisabp.com/program-resources/ Final Guidebook for 2023-24 Program year to be released Monday, April 17
Equity Eligible Contractor – Adjusting EEC Criteria	April 11, 2023	May 5, 2023	https://illinoisabp.com/equity-accountability-system/

- **EEC Block Capacity – Long-Term Plan Reopening** - The Illinois Commerce Commission approved the request to re-open the 2022 Long-Term Plan in [Docket No. 22-0231](#), and stakeholders are invited to interact with the docket in accordance with the ICC’s rules of practice, with the following schedule in effect:
 - Objections to the Agency’s proposal – Due February 2, 2023
 - Responses to objections – Due February 16, 2023
 - Replies to responses – Due March 2, 2023
 - Proposed Order – Due March 29, 2023
 - Brief on Exceptions – Due April 7, 2023
 - Reply to Briefs on Exceptions – Due April 14, 2023
 - With the docket open, the Agency will seek to provide an update on the question of dealing with applications submitted on November 1, 2022, in EEC Group A once the above schedule has concluded; the Program Administrator may hold Group B applications for ICC approval if it appears possible that Commission action may impact Group B capacity.
- **3G Cell Pack Switch Out** - The IPA is aware that, as of about May 2022, inverters with communication modules using 3G cellular are no longer supported by internet service companies. These inverters will have to be upgraded with a 4G or 5G cellular module, Wi-Fi connection, or some other replacement communication protocol, though if the inverter has been operating normally, but just not auto reporting, most commonly-used inverters in the industry (excluding Micro-inverters) have an option to view their LMR (lifetime meter read) on their control panels. AVs are advised to request LMR from customers who may be experiencing this problem, then update production values using that data. If an inverter is not upgraded, the solar array’s ability to auto-report production data will cease or has already ceased. Since some customers may not be aware that an inverter for their array may stop auto-reporting production data, many AVs have been notifying affected customers and assisting with inverter updates where needed. As a reminder, AVs are responsible for entering system production in the tracking registry where the system is registered. If the process in upgrading inverters

has posed an issue in production data reporting, please contact your sector strategist to explain the barrier and the steps being taken to resolve the issue.

- **Program Administrator Office Hours** - AVs and Designees experiencing technical difficulties with use of the portal or in resolving other challenges are invited to utilize open Office Hours that the PA offers via Zoom, using a waiting room format to support meetings with individual AV or Designee teams for privacy. Upcoming Office Hours include the following dates and times with more dates expected to follow, using Join link: <https://energy-solution.zoom.us/j/95588710302Co>
 - Wednesday, April 19 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
 - Friday, April 21, 2023 – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT for **MES support**
 - Wednesday, April 26 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT
 - Thursday, May 4 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CPT

REMINDER: All transition updates can be found on the [ABP Transition Hub webpage](#), and a new [Events & Engagement](#) page at the Program website provides a calendar of upcoming webinars, meetings, support, feedback requests, key dates, holidays, and more. Please visit [IllinoisABP.com/events-engagement/](https://illinoisabp.com/events-engagement/) for continuous updates.

CONTACT US: For portal, application, or Program-specific questions and inquiries, please contact admin@illinoisabp.com or call 877-783-1820.