



Illinois Power Agency
105 W Madison Street, Suite 1401
Chicago, IL 60602

ILLINOIS POWER AGENCY

Illinois Solar for All Evaluation Request for Stakeholder Feedback

July 1, 2022

Background

The Illinois Power Agency (“IPA” or “Agency”) is seeking stakeholder input and feedback on the scope of the evaluation of the Illinois Solar for All Program (“ILSFA”). Section 1-56(b)(6) of the Illinois Power Agency Act states in part:

At least every 2 years, the Agency shall select an independent evaluator to review and report on the Illinois Solar for All Program and the performance of the third-party program administrator of the Illinois Solar for All Program. The evaluation shall be based on objective criteria developed through a stakeholder process. The process shall include feedback and participation from Illinois Solar for All Program stakeholders, including participants and organizations in environmental justice and historically underserved communities. The report shall include a summary of the evaluation of the Illinois Solar for All Program based on the stakeholder developed objective criteria.

The Final Report from the first evaluation of Illinois Solar for All was released in October 2021 and the next evaluation report shall be completed by summer 2023. Specific topics on which the Agency is seeking input from stakeholders include additional “objective criteria,” design of the evaluation plan, and other considerations about the evaluation of Illinois Solar for All. This input will be incorporated into the upcoming Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposals to select an independent evaluator.¹

The first evaluation had two phases. The Phase I Evaluation Report, released in October 2019, focused on the stakeholder outreach process, development of program guidelines, initial Approved Vendor registration and project applications, and the development of Grassroots Education efforts. Phase II Evaluation Reports were completed in 2020 and 2021, which detailed the first two years of ILSFA and provided recommendations for program improvement. The Illinois Solar for All Evaluation Summary Report provided a succinct overview of program design, metrics, and recommendations found in the Phase I and Phase II evaluation reports.

The Illinois Solar for All Evaluation Reports can be found at <https://www.illinoissfa.com/evaluation/>

Responses to this Request for Stakeholder Feedback are due to the IPA by July 22, 2022. Email written responses to IPA.Solar@illinois.gov with the subject “Responder’s Name – Response to Illinois Solar for All Evaluation Feedback Request.”

The IPA will publish responses on the websites of both the [Illinois Solar for All Program](#) and the [Illinois Power Agency](#). Should a commenter seek to designate any portion of its response as confidential and proprietary, that commenter should provide both public and redacted versions of its comments.

¹ This selection process is expressly exempted from the Illinois Procurement Code. 20 ILCS 3855/1-56(f)
Telephone: 312-793-0263 . Fax: 312-814-0926 . www.illinois.gov/ipa

Independent of that designation, if the Agency or the Program Administrator determines that a response contains confidential information that should not be disclosed, the IPA reserves the right to provide its own redactions.

The Agency will also host an Illinois Solar for All Evaluation Stakeholder Feedback Session on Friday, July 8, 2022, from 12pm-1pm CT. This is an additional opportunity for Illinois Solar for All Program stakeholders, including participants and organizations in environmental justice and historically underserved communities, to offer input on the criteria used for the next evaluation of the program.

The feedback session will be conducted virtually over Zoom and attendees must register for the session. A recording of the session will be available on the IPA website.

Illinois Solar for All Evaluation Stakeholder Feedback Session

Friday, July 8, 2022 12pm-1pm CT

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Proposed Approach

The Agency believes the Program evaluation reports should be tools not just for the presentation of metrics, but as comprehensive snapshots and analyses of a program that strives to ensure equitable access to the benefits of Illinois' growing solar market. State income-eligible solar programs nationwide are improving, and the evaluation of the Program should also analyze the Program in comparison to other state low- and moderate-income solar programs nationwide.

Within the two program years of the evaluation scope, the Agency proposes to structure the evaluation scope to provide two comprehensive annual reports, each covering a program year, to include metrics, analysis, and program improvement recommendations, along with an accompanying summary report that condenses key metrics and recommendations. Additionally, briefer focused reports on specific Program topics would be released mid-year to provide targeted pertinent analysis to the agency, stakeholders, and the public. For example: an initial focused report may report on 1-4 unit distributed generation efforts in ILSFA, describing the history of sub-program participation, descriptions of current efforts to improve participation, and an analysis of similar programs offered in other states that can inform program improvements.

The Agency proposes inclusion of the elements outlined in Appendix A in the comprehensive annual reports. Stakeholder feedback on additional elements for inclusion in ILSFA evaluation is welcomed.

Stakeholder Feedback Questions

1. Does the proposed evaluation plan of developing one or two brief, focused mid-year reports, with a comprehensive year-end report and summary sufficiently balance the need to fully evaluate the program and the need to provide time in between evaluations to implement recommendations and assess results?

- a. Considering the mid-year reports would be limited four maximum topics in 1-2 reports per year, what topics would stakeholders like to see addressed in the focused mid-year report(s)?
2. What metrics and indicators should be evaluated to assess the Program's incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusion?
3. The ILSFA evaluation reports should be useful and accessible to stakeholders with a variety of interests and perspectives of ILSFA. What audiences will use these evaluation reports? What particular information would be useful for them, and in what format(s)?
4. Given that data available for Adjustable Block Program (ABP) projects would not include demographic information of project hosts, is there analysis of ILSFA system metrics against ABP system metrics that would be useful for stakeholders?
5. What additional objective criteria should be evaluated?

Next Steps

Stakeholder feedback on these topics will be considered while developing guidelines for the Illinois Solar for All evaluation reports to be included in the upcoming RFQ/RFP process.

Appendix A

The Agency proposes inclusion of the following elements in the comprehensive annual reports. Stakeholder feedback on additional elements for inclusion in ILSFA evaluation is welcomed.

Per Section 1-56(b)(6) of the IPA Act, the evaluation must evaluate the following:

- Number of projects installed
- Total installed capacity in kilowatts
- Average cost per kilowatt of installed capacity
- Number of jobs or job opportunities created
- Economic, social, and environmental benefits created
- Total administrative costs

In addition, the IPA proposes to further analyze the metrics above by the following factors:

- By sub-program (residential distributed generation, Non-profit/Public Facilities, Community Solar)
- For DG and Community Solar, by owners and renters
- By business model (e.g., purchase, lease, power purchase agreement)
- By geographic regions including, but not limited to Environmental Justice communities, Low-income communities, rural, suburban, and urban areas
- Other socioeconomic or demographic characteristics proposed by the Evaluator and/or stakeholders

Economic, social, and environmental benefits should be considered by evaluating:

- Impact of the solar installation or community solar subscription on the energy costs of participants
- Impact of factors outside of Illinois on the program (e.g., supply chain disruptions, tariffs, reduction of federal tax credits)
- Correlation between locations of installations and where job trainees live
- Percent of domestically produced panels
- Non-energy benefits including impact on community awareness or other measures for well-being
- Impact on reliability of the electric distribution system
- CO₂ reductions
- Energy and emissions equivalencies (e.g., homes powered, fossil fuel displacement equivalencies)
- Other environmental benefits proposed by the evaluator and/or stakeholders

Job and job opportunities created should be further evaluated by:

- Construction/installation jobs created
- Jobs created in other parts of the solar workforce (e.g., sales, system design, general construction/trades)

- Permanent versus temporary jobs created
- Percent of installation hours by qualified job trainees
- Supply chain jobs created
- Induced jobs created
- Average wages/salaries
- Effectiveness of coordination of job training providers and Approved Vendors/installers

In addition to the statutorily required metrics, the evaluation should also consider the following:

- Performance Metrics
 - Incentive dollars awarded
 - All-in average cost per kilowatt-hour of expected production
 - Housing stock issues that prevented participation in the Distributed Generation Program
 - Rate of projects that are not completed (and contributing factors)
 - Complaints/participant satisfaction with Approved Vendors
 - Average savings by business model types
- Evaluation of Program Administrator's performance
 - Overall assessment of how the Program Administrator is managing of day-to-day program processes
 - Analysis of how the Program Administrator has
 - The success of outreach undertaken by the Program Administrator, including engagement with community groups and stakeholders through both stakeholder sessions and comments received
 - Program Administrator's work with Approved Vendors to educate them on criteria and measurements of success as well as how the Program Administrator worked with struggling or non-compliant Approve Vendors to inform and support their path back to compliance
 - Surveys of Approved Vendors regarding their experience with the Program Administrator
 - Effectiveness of grassroots education campaigns and impact on increased uptake of solar projects
 - Coordination efforts undertaken by the Program Administrator to connect people with both job training and solar opportunities

Other topics the Agency intends to include in the evaluation plan:

- 1-4 unit distributed generation participation (including barriers for Approved Vendors and participants)
- Analysis of program incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Income distribution of ILSFA participations within the 80% AMI standard.
- Actual savings achieved compared to expected savings.
- Income verification method use
- Impact of ILSFA job training requirements
- Grassroots education outcomes

- Analysis of new energy sovereignty incentive implementation
- Analysis of ILSFA in the context of other state income-eligible solar programs for best practices and program improvements