



04.07.2023

# Request for Proposals

**Illinois Solar for All:  
Residential Solar Pilot**

Proposals are due Friday, April 21, 2023, by 5:00 p.m. CT  
Submit proposals through [Response Form](#)

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# Introduction and Overview of Illinois Solar for All Residential Solar Pilot

## About this Request for Proposals (RFP)

As the Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) Program Administrator, Elevate Energy (“Elevate” or “Program Administrator”) requests proposals from eligible and qualified firms (“Offerors”) to serve as designated Approved Vendors in the Illinois Solar for All: Residential Solar Pilot (the Pilot).<sup>1</sup> The Pilot aims to increase participation in the Illinois Solar for All: Residential Solar (Small) sub-program and support small and emerging businesses. Selected Offerors will serve as the Approved Vendor for Residential Solar installations in one of three specified communities in accordance with their approved response to this RFP and ILSFA program requirements. Participation by selected Offerors will only result in opportunities to submit projects to receive REC contracts and will not involve the payment of any additional compensation by the Illinois Power Agency (“Agency”) or Program Administrator.

Offerors must indicate which one of the three designated Pilot communities the Offeror would prefer to serve in if selected. If an Offeror seeks to be considered for more than one Pilot community, the Offeror must submit a separate proposal to this RFP for each community. For clarity, participation will not require exclusivity. Offerors may continue working in other communities outside of the Pilot or serve customers within the Pilot community, even if those projects do not qualify for the Pilot. Proposals must highlight the Offeror’s plan and capacity to complete its commitment to the community.

More detailed information can be found in the [Residential Solar Pilot Overview section](#) of this RFP.

## Proposal Submission Process and Instructions

Offerors should follow the instructions and must respond to each prompt, providing the necessary details for each, in the Proposal Content section of [this response form](#).

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<sup>1</sup> The ILSFA Residential Solar Pilot is the external branding for the Program Delivery Pilot as outlined in section 8.5.3.4. of the 2022 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (the “2022 Long-Term Plan”).

Proposals that do not include all information specified in this RFP will be considered non-responsive.

### **SUBMITTING QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RFP**

Offerors may submit questions or clarification requests regarding this RFP to [info@IllinoisSFA.com](mailto:info@IllinoisSFA.com) no later than 11:59 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Friday, April 14, 2023. Responses (with the corresponding questions and clarification requests) will be posted to the ILSFA website and emailed to the ILSFA stakeholder list. The Program Administrator will host a webinar on April 12, 2023 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. CT to review this RFP and answer questions. The webinar will be recorded and posted to the ILSFA website.

### **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION PROCESS**

All proposals must be submitted electronically through [this response form](#) no later than **Friday, April 21, 2023, 5:00 p.m. CT.**

The timeline for this RFP and the Pilot is as follows:

<b>Timeline Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Response to Comments Posted	February 24, 2023
Final Proposal Published	February 24, 2023
Communities Announced	March 10, 2023
Residential Solar Pilot RFP Released	April 7, 2023
Residential Solar Pilot RFP Webinar	April 12, 2023, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. CT
Offerors' Question Period Closes	April 14, 2023, 11:59 p.m. CT
Residential Solar Pilot RFP Proposals Due	April 21, 2023, 5:00 p.m. CT
Approved Vendors Selected and Announced	May 9, 2023
Marketing and Outreach Campaigns	May 15 through October 31, 2023
Participant List to Approved Vendors	Ongoing
Participant Signup Period	June 1 through October 31, 2023
Site Assessments Provided to Participants	June 1 through December 8, 2023
Deadline for Participants' Signed Contracts	November 17, 2023
Installations Begin	After first participant contract signature
Deadline for Completed Installations	June 30, 2024

## Residential Solar Pilot Overview

The 2022 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (the “2022 Long-Term Plan” or the “Plan”) establishes the Residential Solar Pilot (referred to as the “Program Delivery Pilot” in the Plan) to address the ongoing underutilization of the Illinois Solar for All: Residential Solar (Small) sub-program. Prospective participants and Approved Vendors have reported several barriers to participation in this sub-program, including unfamiliarity with solar power, distrust in marketers, language barriers, and a complex administrative process. The Residential Solar Pilot is designed to reduce these barriers and to test a more vertically-integrated model for facilitating uptake of Residential Solar in 1-4 unit residential buildings.

The Residential Solar Pilot will take place in three selected communities:

- West Garfield Park, Chicago
- Waukegan
- Carbondale-Marion Micropolitan Area (Jackson, Williamson, and Johnson counties)

The Pilot aims to improve participation in the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program while supporting small and emerging businesses. The 2022 Long-Term Plan set a goal of prioritizing the involvement of small and emerging businesses to encourage business development, particularly for those located in income-eligible and environmental justice communities; therefore, the Program Administrator will prioritize the selection of businesses that qualify as both small and emerging, as defined below, to participate in this Pilot (2022 Long-Term Plan, Section 8.2.3 and 8.5). Approved Vendors selected through this RFP will serve customers in one of the three communities through Program Year 6 (the 2023–2024 program year).

The key component of the Residential Solar Pilot is the increased role of the Program Administrator in finding income-eligible households to participate. The Program Administrator will manage marketing, public outreach, participant interactions, income verification, and an initial site suitability assessment for the Pilot. The Program Administrator will develop and implement a marketing and outreach plan and connect with Grassroots Educators, local groups, and other relevant community organizations to engage them to assist in outreach as part of the customer acquisition efforts. This outreach will include up to four community informational sessions during the customer sign-up period, from June 1 through October 31, 2023, where the selected Offeror will be invited to answer questions from homeowners. This is the only outreach activity expected of the selected Offeror and is important to begin building trust between the homeowner and the selected Offeror.

Concurrently with this outreach, the Program Administrator will connect with interested customers to complete income verification and the initial site suitability assessment. Once these steps are complete, the Program Administrator will alert the selected Offeror of a pipeline of new projects and initiate the customer relationship with the Offeror. The Program Administrator will follow the above customer acquisition process during the customer sign-up period to provide the selected Offerors with an ongoing pipeline of customers. The Program Administrator will assist and support the customer and the selected Offerors throughout the entire project application process.

The selected Offerors will receive a pipeline of customers from the Program Administrator which are income verified and pass an initial site suitability assessment during the customer sign-up period from June 1 through October 31, 2023. Once the selected Offerors have their pipeline of projects and have connected with customers, they will proceed with the final site assessment, design the solar system, and develop and then present the disclosure form and customer contract to the homeowner. In the event the household is found ineligible for Residential Solar, the selected Offeror must notify the Program Administrator of the ineligibility and the customer of their options to participate in either Community Solar (by providing the ILSFA Community Solar brochure) or, if potentially eligible, the Pilot Program on Home Repairs and Upgrades<sup>2</sup> with ILSFA. Selected Offerors will be responsible for the following:

- Attend up to four, hour-long community information sessions facilitated by the Program Administrator between June 1 and October 31, 2023
- Communicate with the Program Administrator on an as-needed basis (likely weekly or bimonthly)
- Using the pipeline of projects from the Program Administrator, conduct the final site assessment<sup>3</sup>
- Complete the solar system design
- Communicate detailed information about the system design, costs, and savings to the customer (via the disclosure form)
- Provide the customer with a contract for signature
- Complete the Part I and Part II applications
- Obtain all necessary permits
- Install the solar projects
- Complete the interconnection agreement
- Complete final inspections

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<sup>2</sup> The Pilot Program on Home Repairs and Upgrades is a separate ILSFA Pilot that will provide additional incentives for eligible electrical and roof repairs necessary for solar installations on households eligible for the Residential (Small) sub-program. This separate Pilot is described in Section 8.5.3.3 of the 2022 Long-Term Plan.

<sup>3</sup> Provide the customer with necessary resources for Community Solar or the Home Repairs and Upgrades Pilot in the event the household is found ineligible.

- Act as the sellers under the applicable renewable energy credit (REC) contracts

The Pilot will be limited to ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) projects and will be subject to all the normal income-eligibility and consumer protection requirements of the ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) sub-program. Following stakeholder feedback, the Program Administrator and the Agency recognize that while the Program Administrator is taking on some of the soft costs from the Approved Vendor participating in the Pilot, the bulk of the development costs remain with the Approved Vendor. Because of this, the REC price will be adjusted to an 80% increase for projects in the West Garfield Park, Chicago community and the Waukegan community, and a 95% increase for projects in the Carbondale-Marion Micropolitan Area. This change reflects the shift of customer acquisition efforts from the Approved Vendor to the Program Administrator.

This Pilot will operate within the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program, receiving part of that annual budget. The Pilot has a goal of 50 to 100 total solar installations within each of the three communities. An Offeror may surpass this goal if it has the capacity to support more than 100 installations and if the Residential Solar (Small) annual budget allows.

## Eligibility and Request for Proposals

### Offeror's Eligibility

At a minimum, Offerors must be Approved Vendors through the Illinois Shines program before the Pilot starts. Offerors that are not ILSFA Approved Vendors at the time they submit their RFP response will be expected to register and meet ILSFA requirements should they be approved to provide services in the Pilot. (See Section 3 of the [Approved Vendor Manual](#) for requirements.) The Program Administrator reserves the right to remove any non-ILSFA Approved Vendor from the Pilot and select a different Offeror if the selected Offeror does not complete the ILSFA Approved Vendor registration process before the Pilot launches.

Proof of Distributed Generation Installer Certification from the Illinois Commerce Commission, in the form of a Commission order granting the certification, must be submitted by the Offeror for itself or for its proposed subcontractor(s)/designee installer(s).

## Residential Solar Pilot Proposal Content

### OFFEROR'S BACKGROUND AND CAPACITY

1. Select the community in which the Offeror proposes to serve as the designated Approved Vendor for the Residential Solar Pilot. Offerors may choose only one community per proposal submitted: (Not scored)

West Garfield Park, Chicago     Waukegan, IL     Carbondale-Marion Micropolitan Area

2. The Agency will use the federal SBA definition of “small,” based on annual revenues within the appropriate [NAICS category](#), to prioritize “small” businesses during evaluation of RFP responses. The Agency defines “emerging business” as a business that has been authorized to do business in any U.S. state for less than three years and will use this definition to prioritize “emerging” businesses during evaluation of RFP responses. If the Offeror is affiliated with another company or companies, each affiliated company must also provide documentation showing that it meets these definitions of small and emerging to be considered for priority under the Pilot.

Does Offeror qualify as a small and emerging business or use subcontractors that qualify as small and emerging businesses as described in Section 8.2.3 of the 2022 Long-Term Plan? (No points are given, but priority is given over other Offerors as specified in the RFP Evaluation Process section below.)

3. Is Offeror a certified minority-owned business enterprise (MBE) and/or women-owned business enterprise (WBE) (“M/WBE”), or will Offeror work with M/WBE subcontractors? For the purposes of this Pilot, the definition of a M/WBE in the ILSFA Approved Vendor Questionnaire will be relied on. Specifically, an MBE is a business that is at least 51 percent owned by one or more minorities. A minority is defined as a person who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States and is African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, or Native American, as well as other groups found to be disadvantaged pursuant to Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act federal statute. A WBE is a business that is at least 51 percent owned by a woman or women who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States.

Also, the M/WBE certifications accepted by ILSFA are listed in the [ILSFA Approved Vendor Questionnaire](#), and any of these certifications will suffice to prove that a business is M/WBE certified. This certification may include municipal, county, state, or other public or non-public third-party certifying bodies approved by ComEd/Exelon and Ameren Illinois, including but not limited to the National Minority Supplier Development Council and its regional affiliates and the Women’s Business Enterprise National Council and its



regional affiliates, the City of Chicago, and the Illinois Department of Central Management Services.

Select “Yes” if you are already registered as a M/WBE with the ILSFA program. Select “Other” if the Offeror is certified as a M/WBE but not yet registered through ILSFA. If you select “Other”, the Program Administrator will be in touch following your submission to discuss the completion of the [ILSFA Approved Vendor Questionnaire](#). (15 points if Yes/Other)

4. Provide details of the Offeror's size, history, and names and roles of key personnel. Describe the Offeror's plan to develop, design, and install residential solar electric systems (including type of design software used and design approach, understanding of inspection and permitting fees and requirements in the relevant local jurisdictions). (Up to 15 points)
5. Describe whether Offeror has the capacity and available resources to complete 50 to 100 projects in the community during the Pilot timeline. For capacity, please estimate the maximum number of projects you are capable of completing as part of this Pilot. (Up to 15 points)
6. Transparency about potential subcontractors working on this Pilot, and how Offeror will ensure oversight of its subcontractors, is important to ensure high quality installations by qualified subcontractors. Will Offeror provide installation services directly? If not, explain Offeror’s experience using subcontractors to complete solar installations. Please provide the name of the subcontractor(s), their contribution to the project, and provide background information on size, experience, management, licensing, and subcontracting agreement. (Not scored)

## **COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND READINESS**

7. It is necessary for customers to have frequent communication with the Offeror and for the Offeror to provide clear timelines to customers. Describe Offeror's plan to communicate with customers throughout the installation process. (Up to 10 points)
8. According to Census data, demographics in the three Pilot communities are as follows:
  - [West Garfield Park, Chicago](#)
    - 92.4% Black (Non-Hispanic)
    - 3.5% Hispanic or Latino
    - 2.8% White (Non-Hispanic)
    - 1.3% Other/Multiple Races (Non-Hispanic)

- [Waukegan](#)
  - 53.4% Hispanic or Latino
  - 18.8% Black (Non-Hispanic)
  - 18.6% White (Non-Hispanic)
  - 12.6% Two or More Races
  - 6.6% Asian American
- [Carbondale-Marion Micropolitan Area](#)
  - 81.4% White (Non-Hispanic)
  - 8.9% Black (Non-Hispanic)
  - 4% Two or more Races
  - 3.8% Hispanic or Latino
  - 1.4% Asian American

Does Offeror’s staff reflect the demographics of the community that Offeror would like to serve in the Pilot? Does Offeror employ “equity eligible persons” as defined in Section 10.1.1. of [the 2022 Long-Term Plan](#)? Please provide a description of the Offerors’ demographics and “equity eligible” employees. (Up to 12.5 points)

9. What commitments has Offeror made to serving income-eligible and environmental justice communities in Illinois (or elsewhere)? (Up to 12.5 points)

## COMPANY OFFER

10. How will offers to potential customers be structured? For example, direct sale of the system to participants, a system lease to participants, a power purchase agreement, or other? (Not scored)
11. For each type of structure identified in response to question 10, please provide a sample customer contract that is clear and tailored for use with the Pilot, including, but not limited to compliance with the requirements set forth in the Agency’s [Consumer Protection Handbook](#) and the [ILSFA Contract Requirements](#), and that includes a description of your terms of payment, process, and timeline, from initial application to final energization. Please attach this document in the survey. (Up to 12.5 points)
12. What is the anticipated level of participant savings for solar projects offered by Offeror? What are the anticipated costs to the customer? (Up to 10 points)
13. It is important for the selected Offeror to address complaints raised by a customer during this Pilot. Explain your Offeror’s complaint management and response plan. (Up to 7.5 points)

## JOB TRAINEE HIRING PLAN

14. Describe your plan to hire job trainees from a qualified job training program in accordance with Section 8.9.1. of the 2022 Long-Term Plan and the ILSFA [Approved Vendor Manual](#). (Up to 5 points)
  
15. Does Offeror currently have on-staff graduates from [qualified job training programs](#)? (Not scored)

# RFP Evaluation Process

## Proposal Scoring and Evaluation

Offerors’ proposals will be scored according to the scale shown below:

Category	Total Section Score
Offeror’s Background and Capacity	30
Community Commitment and Readiness	35
Company Offer	30
Job Trainee Hiring Plan	5
<b>Total Possible Points</b>	<b>100</b>

Proposals will be reviewed and scored by an evaluation committee made up of members of the Agency and Program Administrator. Considering the goals set forth in the 2022 Long-Term Plan, the Program Administrator and the Agency will first score proposals from entities that have shown that they qualify as small and emerging businesses.<sup>4</sup> As noted above, if the Offeror is affiliated of with another company or companies, each affiliated company must also show that it meets the definitions of small and emerging to be considered for priority under the Pilot. “Affiliated” means with respect to any entity, any other entity that, directly, or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with each other or a third entity. “Control” means the possession, directly or indirectly, of the power to direct the management and policies of an entity, whether through the ownership of voting securities, by contract, or otherwise.

To be selected, small and emerging businesses must receive a minimum score of 70 points. If no Offerors qualifying as small and emerging businesses meet the minimum

<sup>4</sup> See 2022 Long-Term Plan, Sections 8.2.3 and 8.5.

score for any one of the three designated Pilot communities, only then will other Offerors' proposals be scored for that community, also requiring a minimum score of 70 points.

If there is a designated Pilot community for which no Offeror obtains a score of at least 70 points, the Agency and Program Administrator reserve the right to modify this RFP to ensure the Pilot can be implemented in the community. To do this, the Agency and Program Administrator may allow Offerors to supplement their proposals and extend the deadline for selecting an Approved Vendor for the community, temporarily decline to select an Approved Vendor for the community and issue a new RFP focused solely on the community, or pursue any other options to further reduce barriers to participation in the community as determined by the Agency in accordance with the 2022 Long-Term Plan.

The Agency also seeks to increase the number of M/WBE Approved Vendors participating in ILSFA (2022 Long-Term Plan, Section 8.9). To support the goal of increasing the number of M/WBE Approved Vendors participating in ILSFA, Offerors certified as an M/WBE should identify their certification in their response to receive additional points.

Offerors will be notified whether they have been selected to participate in the proposal in accordance with the RFP schedule above.

## RFP Terms

**CAPITALIZED TERMS:** Capitalized terms used, but not defined, in this RFP have the meaning ascribed to them in the 2022 Long-Term Plan.

**GOVERNING LAW AND FORUM:** Illinois law and rule govern this RFP. Offerors must bring any action relating to this solicitation in the appropriate court in Illinois and may only do so after timely submission of a protest conforming to the Protest Process.

**PROTEST PROCESS:** Any person may submit a protest relating to the notice of this RFP, the terms of this RFP, and any decision to reject a late offer. An Offeror (i.e., a person who submitted an offer to the Program Administrator in response to this RFP) may protest the rejection of its offer or an award to another Offeror. Any protest must be received via email sent to the Agency at [IPA.Solar@illinois.gov](mailto:IPA.Solar@illinois.gov) by close of business no later than ten (10) calendar days after the protesting party knows or should have known of the facts giving rise to the protest to ensure consideration. Any notice published to the Agency or ILSFA website establishes the "known or should have known" date for the subject matter of the notice. In addition, protests relating to the notice or

terms of this RFP must be received within fourteen (14) calendar days after release of this RFP.

Protest submissions must be concise and logically arranged; provide a statement of reasons for the protest specifically identifying any allegedly material violation of the IPA Act, another relevant Illinois law, or the terms of this RFP; and include any supporting facts, arguments, evidence, and documents. Protests that do not establish legally sufficient grounds for protest—that is, a material violation of the IPA Act, other relevant Illinois law, or the terms of this RFP— or that do not include supporting evidence will be denied. Note that this RFP is not subject to the Illinois Procurement Code, and protests based solely on rules applicable under that Code will not be considered.

Within one (1) business day of receiving the protest submission, the Agency will assign a staff member that was not involved in drafting this RFP or evaluating offers to review the protest submission and this RFP. If the protest relates to a rejection of an offer, the staff member will also review all relevant offers submitted in response to this RFP and any other relevant information such as evaluation materials. That staff member will make a recommendation to the Agency’s Director within seven (7) calendar days of being assigned to review the protest. The Director will make the final decision as to the determination of the protest within three (3) calendar days. The Agency will resolve the protest by means of a written determination. In determining the appropriate determination, the Director shall consider whether the protestor established sufficient grounds for protest; the seriousness of the procurement deficiency, if any; the degree of prejudice to other parties or to the integrity of the competitive procurement system; the good faith of the parties; the urgency of the procurement; and the impact of the recommendation on the Agency’s mission.

**PUBLIC RECORDS AND REQUESTS FOR CONFIDENTIAL TREATMENT:**

Proposals become the property of the Agency. Proposals, including late submissions, will not be returned. All proposals will be open to the public under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) (5 ILCS 140) and other applicable laws and rules, unless Offeror requests in its proposal that the Agency treat certain information as confidential. A request for confidential treatment will not supersede the Agency’s legal obligations under FOIA. The Agency will not honor requests to keep entire offers confidential. Offerors must show the specific grounds in FOIA or other law or rule that support confidential treatment. Regardless, the Agency will disclose the successful Offeror’s name, the substance of the offer, and the price upon final contract award. If Offeror requests confidential treatment, Offeror must submit one additional copy of the proposal with proposed confidential information redacted. This redacted copy must describe the general nature of the material removed and shall retain as much of the proposal as possible. In a separate attachment, Offeror shall supply a listing of the provisions identified by section number for which it seeks confidential treatment and

identify the statutory basis under Illinois law and include a detailed justification for exempting the information from public disclosure. Offeror will hold harmless and indemnify the Agency for all costs or damages associated with the Agency defending Offeror's request for confidential treatment. Offeror agrees the Agency may copy the proposal to facilitate evaluation, or to respond to requests for public records. Offeror warrants that such copying will not violate the rights of any third party.

**RESERVATIONS:** Offeror must read and understand this RFP and tailor its proposal to ensure compliance. The Agency and Program Administrator reserve the right to amend this RFP, reject any or all proposals, and waive minor defects. The Agency and/or Program Administrator may request a clarification, inspect Offeror's work, interview staff, request a presentation, or otherwise verify the contents of the proposal, including information about subcontractors and suppliers. The Agency and/or Program Administrator will make all decisions on compliance, evaluation, and terms and conditions, and shall make decisions in the best interests of the Agency and in accordance with rules and other applicable state and federal statutes and regulations. This competitive process may require that Offeror provide additional information and otherwise cooperate with the Agency and/or Program Administrator. If Offeror does not comply with requests for information and cooperate, Agency and/or Program Administrator may reject its proposal as non-responsive to this RFP. Submitting a proposal does not entitle Offeror to participation in the Pilot. Posting Offeror's name in any notice does not entitle Offeror to participate in the Pilot. Neither Program Administrator nor the Agency is responsible for, and will not pay any costs associated with, the preparation and/or submission of any proposal.

**AWARD:** Neither Program Administrator nor the Agency is obligated to award participation in the Pilot to any Offeror pursuant to this RFP. The Offeror's participation in this Pilot will only lead to potential REC contracts with each installation and will not involve the payment of any additional compensation by the Agency or Program Administrator. The Agency and Program Administrator cannot guarantee any minimum number of REC contracts that may result from participation in this Pilot.