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Response to Comments for the Proposed Low-Income Community Solar Disclosure Form

Overview

The Program Administrator and the Illinois Power Agency (the “Program Team”) published a draft Low-Income Community Solar Disclosure Form on November 1, 2019, with a request for public comments due no later than November 15, 2019 at 5:00 PM. Comments were received from five parties during this time. These submitted comments [can be found here](#).

These comments were considered by the Program Team, with most of the comments adopted and integrated into a revised disclosure form, published together with this Response to Comments document. A summary of these comments and the Program Team’s rationale for adopting or not adopting specific recommendations is detailed below.

It should be noted that a significant portion of the comments and recommendations are specific language changes to published text in the disclosure document. It would be cumbersome to list all the language-specific changes and Program Team responses to each in this document. Most of these recommendations were adopted. As such, a redlined version of the draft becomes less helpful because so many language changes were made. However, a clean and redline version are being published to provide details for those interested in reviewing the specific changes.

Consistency of Terms

It was noted by several commenters that the language used throughout the disclosure used terms inconsistently, potentially creating confusion for user. For example, some terms were incorrectly used interchangeably or not were not well defined. For example:

- The inconsistent use of the terms “contract” and “agreement”
- Lack of clarity over the terms “approved vendor,” “community solar provider,” “subscriber manager” or “project owner”
- Inconsistent use of the terms “net metering” and “bill crediting,” as well as “bill credits” and “energy value.”

The Program Team agrees that these inconsistencies can create confusion or potentially hinder participation. These noted inconsistencies were specifically addressed, as were others, and efforts made to better clarify terms as they are introduced in the document.

Clarification of Terms

- It was pointed out that the term Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) was not fully defined or may be misleading. This term was replaced with “Per Kilowatt Hour Rate” wherever applicable.
- Certain terms were emphasized by using bolded text; i.e. document types, references to entities, etc.
- The Net Metering section was re-worded to more clearly emphasize bill crediting, distinguish the roles of each stakeholder (utility, electricity supplier and Community Solar Provider), and the billing process.
- Clarification was added for how and when utility bills are used to calculate the net metering/bill crediting rate.
- The clarifier “estimated” was added to the financial section to describe energy production and savings.
- Where “energy value” was used to reference the method for calculating savings, clarification was added describing value derived specifically from bill credits.
- Clarification was added stating that new subscribers receiving transferred subscriptions may need to be income verified.

Financial Option for Savings Tied-to-Rate

A fourth subscription contract option was added that specifically refers to agreements that tie a set savings percent to the customer’s per-kilowatt-hour rate. This option will be indicated in the disclosure in the Financial Summary section. Specific definitions for each option have been added. Clarification for how savings are calculated for this method (either manually or via the automated disclosure portal) will be added to the Vendor Manual and included in any subsequent Approved Vendor training.

Comments Relating to Process

- An Income Verification section was added which includes fields indicating 1) whether the subscriber is income-eligible or not, and 2) documentation provided to verify income.
- Comments were submitted by several commenters requesting that the document have the ability to delete sections or questions not relevant to a specific subscriber. For the sections on Costs and Fees, it was determined that stating these as not applicable would have more value than deleting these fields. Clarification on how better to understand when a field is or isn’t applicable was added. Otherwise, the Program Team will strive to

build an automated process that eliminates non-relevant fields for the final printed PDF or will add clarifications when they are not applicable.

- Fields that capture the Subscriber’s utility and electricity supplier have been added.
- It was suggested that the Program Team conduct a workshop to solicit feedback on the Low-income Community Solar disclosure form. The Program Team believes that the issues submitted in comments were clearly presented, that most recommendations were adopted, and all issues of concern raised by commenters have been resolved.
- One commenter suggested that several fields could not be definitely known and were not necessary in this disclosure (energy escalation, net metering rate, etc.). It is our view that these comments reflect a gap in understanding of the established processes, requirements and automated systems rather than needed changes to the Disclosure.
- It was requested that subscriber email addresses not be required. While the Program Team agrees that this may be problematic, it was decided to not require a subscriber email but instead require a phone number.
- It was requested that the ILSFA community solar disclosure form be consistent with the Adjustable Block Program/Illinois Shines community solar disclosure. The Program Team submits that this disclosure was largely modeled using the ABP/IS disclosure. However, further alignment is not possible because the program requirements are significantly different.