

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS: RESIDENTIAL SOLAR PILOT

02.02.2023

The Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) Program Administrator and the Illinois Power Agency (the Agency) (collectively, the Program Team) are requesting stakeholder comments on the Residential Solar Pilot.

BACKGROUND: The Residential Solar (Small) sub-program, which supports residential distributed generation projects for single and small multifamily (2-4 unit) homes, has not yet had participation levels sufficient to fully utilize its annual budget. Reported barriers impacting prospective participants and Approved Vendors include participant unfamiliarity with solar power, distrust in marketers, language barriers, and a complex administrative process. Under the title “Program Delivery Pilot,” Section 8.5.3.4 of the Agency’s 2022 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (the 2022 Long-Term Plan) outlined a pilot initiative for a more consolidated model where the ILSFA Program Administrator would assume the majority of participant interaction and public outreach functions to address low participation in the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program. The Program Administrator is proposing to implement this “Residential Solar Pilot”, which is designed to reduce these barriers while increasing participation in the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program for 1-4 unit homes.

The Program Team is seeking feedback on the questions below. Commenters need not respond to every question and may provide feedback on other elements of the proposal. Comments are welcome from both stakeholders in ILSFA as well as from other interested parties.

Please note that comments will be made public and published on the ILSFA website (IllinoisSFA.com). However, should a commenter seek to designate any portion of their response as confidential, that commenter should provide both public and redacted versions of the comment. Independent of that designation, if the Program Team determines that a response contains confidential information that should not be disclosed, it reserves the right to provide its own redactions.

The draft Residential Solar Pilot proposal is posted at IllinoisSFA.com/Announcements.

Responses are due by Friday, March 3, 2023 and should be sent to the Program Administrator at comments@IllinoisSFA.com.

Questions for Stakeholder Feedback

1. The pilot design includes changes to the program delivery and the interaction of the Program Administrator and the Approved Vendors in the community areas. Those roles are proposed as follows:

ILSFA Program Administrator	Approved Vendor
Marketing and outreach	Provide and obtain signatures for disclosure form/participant contract
Participant recruitment	Some outreach and solar education
Income verification	Final site assessment and solar project design
Initial site suitability assessment	Part I application
Facilitate additional coordination with job training and placement programs and incorporation of energy efficiency measures	Part II application
	Installation (using job trainees)

Should any of the described roles for the ILSFA Program Administrator remain with the Approved Vendor? Are there any other duties that should move to the Program Administrator that aren't specified here? What other program design aspects are missing that may improve the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program within ILSFA?

2. The Agency will adjust the Renewable Energy Credit (REC) price to recognize the lower cost to Approved Vendors resulting from the Program Administrator taking on many of the participant acquisition responsibilities. The current REC Pricing Model includes a 100% increase in development costs and fees for Residential Solar (Small) projects in ILSFA compared to the Adjustable Block Program. Given the proposed program design, how should the prices be adjusted (for example, reducing the adjustment from 100% to 50%)?

3. The following table represents the proposed criteria to guide how the Program Team will select community areas for participating in the Residential Solar Pilot.

Category	Category Description	Total Section Score
Housing Demographics	Percent of households in the community: under 80% AMI, occupied by owner, and 1-4 unit homes	35
Eligibility by Community Type	Percent of community's census tracts designated: environmental justice, income eligible, or R3	20
Community Experience with and Visibility of Energy Projects	The number of: dropped ILSFA projects, household participation in energy efficiency, energized or approved Adjustable Block Program residential projects, energized or approved Illinois Solar for All: Residential Solar or Nonprofit and Public Facilities projects	20
Total Possible Score		75
Unscored Category	Category Description	
Community, Resident, and/or Organization Support	Whether the community has: a Grassroots Educator focusing on the area, residents or local organizations who have advocated for renewable energy or efficiency initiatives, a Community Action Agency with the capacity to help promote the pilot, updated policies to further develop the local solar market, an Approved Vendor already working in the area	N/A

Are there any additional community selection criteria to consider, as a category or as a subcategory? Are there any criteria that should be adjusted or removed from consideration?

- The following table lists prospective communities for consideration that meet the proposed criteria for selection in the pilot.

The Program Team began broadly looking at communities that are income-eligible, environmental justice communities, have a Grassroots Educator working in the area, or have some familiarity with the ILSFA program. From that list of communities, the Program Team developed additional criteria to help select a community that will work best with the program goals of increasing program participation and reaching areas underserved by Residential Solar (Small). The Program Team will select from the communities listed below, or from additional communities proposed by stakeholders, using the criteria listed above.

Chicago Neighborhood	Suburban Community	Down-state County Area
Riverdale	Joliet	Marion County
Garfield Park (East and West)	Aurora	McLean County
Lawndale (North and South)	Waukegan	Williamson County
Auburn Gresham	Elgin	Peoria County
Washington Heights	Cicero	St. Clair County
Kenwood	Berwyn	Jackson County
Roseland		Effingham County

Are there any communities that should be added or removed from the current list? If so, why?

- The 2022 Long-Term Plan refers to the third selected community area as “a down-state community” (Section 8.5.3.4). The ILSFA Program Administrator has identified this as a county area in Central or Southern Illinois that has data at the county level.

Is county the correct geographic area that should define “down-state community” or should the Program Team consider multiple counties or regions?

6. The following table represents the proposed scoring criteria for Approved Vendor RFP submissions.

Category	Category Description	Total Section Score
Company Background and Capacity	Regions the proposing firm can and would like to work in; the firm's history, experience, and capacity for projects; the firm's capacity to complete work within the timeline	30
Commitment to the Community and Participants	Community involvement and experience in the community, particularly experience working with income-eligible and/or environmental justice communities; ability to provide support and resources for ineligible participants; commitment to following consumer protection handbook and examples of customer service	30
Company Offer	Offer type; providing a sample participant contract; listing expected participant savings and costs	20
Plan to Work with the ILSFA Program Administrator	Giving example of current data tracking capabilities and systems used; plan for maintaining communications with the Program Administrator and participants; description of plan for managing and responding to participant complaints	15
Plan to Employ Job Trainees	Description of plan to find, hire, and employ job trainees from a qualified job training program	5
Total Possible Points		100

Are there any criteria that should be added, adjusted, or removed from consideration in the Approved Vendor RFP?