



~~04.26.2023<sup>1</sup>~~

# ~~ILSFA Residential Solar Pilot~~

PROJECT

08.02.2024

# Bright Neighborhoods Initiative Program Design

PROGRAM YEAR 2024-2025

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<sup>1</sup>This document has been updated to align with the Request for Proposals issued on Friday, April 7, 2023.

# Program Overview

~~The 2022 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (the 2022 Long-Term Plan) outlines the “Program Delivery Pilot.”~~ The 2024 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (the 2024 Long-Term Plan) outlines the Residential Solar Pilot, publicly marketed as the Illinois Solar for All: Bright Neighborhoods initiative, to address the Illinois Solar for All: Residential Solar (Small) sub-program not yet reaching a level of participation that utilizes the full annual budget. Prospective participants and Approved Vendors have reported several barriers to ~~their participation~~ participating in Residential Solar. Reported barriers impacting prospective participants and Approved Vendors include participant unfamiliarity with solar power, distrust in marketers, language barriers, and a complex administrative process. The Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) Program Administrator ~~proposes~~ launched the first year of this “Residential Solar Pilot,” ~~”~~ ” ~~from the IPA’s 2022 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (the 2022 Long-Term Plan),~~ designed to reduce these barriers and to facilitate more uptake of Residential Solar in 1–4 unit homes.

~~The following stakeholder feedback, the Illinois Power Agency (the Agency) and the Program Administrator released the final Residential Solar Pilot will take place in three selected communities, selecting~~ Design on March 6, 2023. On March 10, 2023, the Agency and the Program Administrator announced the three selected communities for the Residential Solar Pilot. The Program Administrator selected Approved Vendors for participation in the ~~pilot~~ Pilot through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process ~~to serve each of the three areas. To evaluate the program delivery changes, this pilot is expected to run through Program Year 6 (the 2023~~ and announced the selected vendors on July 27, 2023. The Pilot was launched on August 1, 2023, for the 2023-2024 program year) ~~and intended to test and evaluate ways to improve participation levels.~~

The Program Administrator ~~will assume~~ assumed the majority of the initial participant interactions ~~and,~~ and public outreach ~~for the pilot,~~ and ~~then marketing for the initiative, and~~ the selected Approved ~~Vendor(s) will install~~ Vendors installed the solar projects and ~~acted~~ acted as the sellers for the Renewable Energy Credit (REC) contracts. ~~Following stakeholder feedback, the Illinois Power Agency (the Agency) and the Program Administrator will make the final decision on the pilot design and selected regions. On March 10, 2023, the Agency and the Program Administrator announced the three selected communities for the Residential Solar Pilot.~~



The ~~pilot will be~~initiative is limited to ~~ILSFA~~-Residential Solar (Small) projects generating RECs and ~~will follow~~follows the same income-eligibility and consumer protection requirements of the ~~ILSFA~~-Residential Solar (Small) sub-program. The Agency ~~will adjust~~adjusted the REC price to recognize the lower cost to Approved Vendors resulting from the Program Administrator taking on many of the upfront responsibilities ~~but will gather stakeholder feedback before making this decision.~~

To evaluate the program delivery changes, this initiative is expected to run for two years, from the 2023-2024 program year through the 2024-2025 program year, and is intended to test and evaluate ways to improve participation levels for Residential Solar. The Program Administrator has released a report evaluating the key findings from the 2023-2024 year of the initiative. Using the key findings of this report, the Program Administrator requested stakeholder feedback on the recommended updates to the design to be implemented during the 2024-2025 program year. These updates are reflected in this updated design document, providing a high-level outline of how the program will operate in its second year.

Following the 2024 Long-Term Plan, at the conclusion of the 2024-2025 program year, “a report will be published that summarizes metrics of the households served and provide an analysis of lessons learned that could improve the participant acquisition processes, including the participant income verification process, that could be applied to the Program more widely.” (Section 8.5.3.4)

## Overview of ILSFA Projects (Program Years 1-46)

As of July 2024, there are 8569 Approved Vendors registered with ILSFA. Of all Approved Vendors, 2633 have energized and/or approved projects across the sub-programs for Program Years 1-4-6 (2018-2024). Of those 2633 Approved Vendors, 713 are identified as a Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) and have had 1221 total Illinois Solar for All: Community Solar and ~~Nonprofit~~Illinois Solar for All: Non-Profit and Public Facilities projects approved.

### RESIDENTIAL SOLAR (SMALL)

From the 2018-2019 program year to the 2023-2024 program year, participation in the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program has grown but has yet to reach participation levels so that available budgets are exhausted. Additionally, participation by Approved Vendors in this sub-program remains low, with a few making up the majority of completed 222 projects to date.

Six Approved Vendors completed 1,475 1-4 unit Residential Solar (Small) projects between Program Years 1-4-6. Some of the most active Approved Vendors are no longer participating in the program, including Sunrun, which is on pause, and GRNE-Nelnet LLC, which has pulled out from the program (and has generally discontinued serving all residential participants to focus on commercial installations).

### ILSFA APPROVED AND/OR ENERGIZED RESIDENTIAL SOLAR (SMALL) PROJECTS BY REGIONS (PROGRAM YEARS 1-46)

Illinois Region	Number of Projects Approved and/or Energized
Cook	144881
Northeast	53389
Northwest	21156
East Central	433
West Central	013
Southern	03

**APPROVED VENDORS WITH ILSFA APPROVED AND/OR ENERGIZED RESIDENTIAL SOLAR (SMALL) PROJECTS (PROGRAM YEARS 1-~~4~~6)**

Approved Vendor	Number of Projects Approved and/or Energized
Sunrun Installation Services Inc.	<del>183</del> <u>1299</u>
GRNE <del>Solutions</del> - Nelnet, LLC	<del>30</del> <u>139</u>
<del>Xolar Renewable Energy, LLC</del>	<del>16</del>
<del>Unity Solar Group LLC</del>	<del>12</del>
Certasun LLC	<del>8</del>
<del>Total</del> <u>Windfree, Win + Solar Energy Design Company</u>	<del>22</del> <u>21</u>

**ILSFA APPROVED AND/OR ENERGIZED RESIDENTIAL SOLAR (SMALL) PROJECTS BY UTILITY TERRITORY (PROGRAM YEARS 1-~~4~~6)**

Utility Territory	Number of Projects Approved and/or Energized
ComEd	<del>218</del> <u>1395</u>
Ameren	<del>375</del>
MidAmerican	<del>12</del>
<del>Total</del> <u>Municipal Utility in MISO</u>	<del>22</del> <u>21</u>
<u>Municipal Utility in PJM</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Rural electric coop in MISO</u>	<u>1</u>

The average system capacity of all completed Residential Solar (Small) projects across Program Years 2-~~4~~6<sup>2</sup> is ~~5.977~~1.128 kW (AC). System sizes range between 1.92 kW (AC) to ~~14.8824~~4.48 kW (AC).

~~During ILSFA Program Years 1-4, there were 222 Approved and/or Energized Residential Solar (Small) projects completed by three Approved Vendors. As of January 19, 2023, of the Program Year 5 submission window, there are 66 Residential Solar (Small) projects~~

<sup>2</sup> No Residential Solar (Small) projects were completed in Project Year 1.



~~submitted between three Approved Vendors. Thirty-seven projects have been submitted by Xolar Renewable Energy, four projects by GRNE Solutions LLC and 25 projects by Sunrun Installation Services Inc.~~

## ~~Residential Pilot Program Timeline~~

## Bright Neighborhoods 2024-2025 Program Year Timeline

The Program Administrator and the Agency will follow this timeline to prepare and launch the Bright Neighborhoods initiative in Program Year 7 (2024-2025).

<u>Timeline Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
<del>Proposal</del> <u>Updated Design</u> Out for Comment	<del>February 2, 2023</del> <u>June 26, 2024</u>
<del>Proposal</del> <u>Design</u> Webinar	<del>February 8, 2023</del> <u>July 2, 2024</u>
<del>Proposal</del> <u>Design</u> Comments Due	<del>February 15, 2023</del> <u>July 10, 2024</u>
<del>Final Design and</del> Response to Comments <del>Posted</del> <u>Released</u>	<del>February 24, 2023</del> <u>August 2, 2024</u>
<del>Final Proposal Published</del>	<del>February 24, 2023</del>
<del>Communities Announced</del>	<del>March 10, 2023</del>
<del>Approved Vendor RFP Released</del>	<del>April 7, 2023</del> <u>August 13, 2024</u>
<del>Approved Vendor RFP Proposals Due</del>	<del>April 21, 2023</del> <u>September 16, 2024</u>
<del>Approved Vendors Selected and Announced</del>	<del>May 9, 2023</del> <u>October 7, 2024</u>
<del>Outreach and</del> Marketing <del>and Outreach Campaigns</del>	<del>June through November 2023</del> <u>September 17, 2024 – April 30</u>
<del>Participant List to Approved Vendors</del>	<del>Ongoing</del>
<del>Participant</del> <u>Interest</u> Signup Period	<del>June through October 2023</del> <u>September 17, 2024 – April 30</u>
<del>Site Assessments Provided to Participants</del>	<del>June through December 8, 2023</del>
<del>Deadline for Participants' Signed Contracts</del>	<del>November 17, 2023</del>
<del>Installations Begin</del>	<del>After first participant contract</del>
<del>Goal for Installations Completed</del>	<del>June 2024</del>

## Methodology for Selection of Communities

### Bright Neighborhoods Goals

During the Bright Neighborhoods 2023-2024 program year, 113 prospective participants across the community areas expressed interest in participating by filling out an intake form. Of those, 16 completed the income verification process and were referred to the selected Approved Vendors. Of these 16, five were dropped for needed home repairs, six were referred to community solar, three were unresponsive to the Approved Vendor follow-ups, one was no longer interested, and one is with their Approved Vendor to develop a potential project.

In the initiative's first year, the design included an ambitious goal of achieving 50-100 installations in each community area. The lack in achieving our installation goal is not from lack of effort, but rather an indication of persistent challenges to overcoming the identified barriers. Because of these challenges, the Program Administrator has redefined our definition of success, following stakeholder feedback, to engaging a number of prospective participants that would provide a data set substantial enough to evaluate the effectiveness of the participant engagement tactics being tested in this initiative. The Program Administrator has defined this data set by setting goals for the number of intake forms, the number of participant referrals, and the number of projects installed.

The process for prospective participants in ILSFA first requires awareness of the program and its benefits to reach an outcome of an installation. Awareness is an important stage of solar adoption that should be tracked to evaluate the effectiveness of tactics used to increase interest and participation in the program. Awareness will continue to be tracked and evaluated through website visits, event attendees, and impressions from digital media efforts in the initiative's second year. This goal will assess our effectiveness in increasing overall trust and interest in solar and the opportunities for savings available through ILSFA. The Program Administrator expects to reach this new goal using updated outreach tactics, which include an application of the learnings from the first year on how each community responds to different outreach strategies. The Program Administrator has set a goal of 100-200 intake forms in each community area to assess how these tactics increase awareness.

The Program Administrator will pair this awareness goal with a new goal for the number of participant referrals to the Approved Vendor in each community. The first year of the initiative saw 16 referrals, but was unable to complete the installation largely due to site suitability issues. Adding a goal for a number of referrals across communities will help us evaluate outreach and marketing acquisition tactics used to achieve the purpose of this

initiative in assessing best practices for community engagement to reach increased program participation. Following stakeholder feedback, the Program Administrator has set a goal for the number of participant referrals to selected Approved Vendors as 30-50 in each community.

Although there was success in awareness in the first year of the initiative, there were challenges to reaching the initial installation goal. The barriers this initiative is meant to address, such as mistrust in marketers, lack of solar education, or deferred maintenance for home repairs, have proved to be deep and more difficult to overcome than expected. Because of this, adjusting the goal for a total number of installations in each community will help set expectations for what we hope to achieve in this program year while also considering the importance of the new awareness goal and recognizing the barriers to reaching an installation even after a participant referral. Following stakeholder feedback, the Program Administrator has set a new goal of 20-25 installations in each community.

Additionally, the Program Administrator will track new subscriptions to Community Solar projects from residents within neighboring communities to gauge the success of generating community education and interest that increases participation in ILSFA beyond the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program. To track these subscriptions from potential spillover effects of Bright Neighborhoods marketing and outreach tactics, the Program Administrator will track subscriptions in neighboring communities that share a border with the initiative communities and have a high percentage of income-eligible residents. These communities are listed below:

<u>*With the update of WGP to most West Side neighborhoods of Chicago</u>	<u>Waukegan</u>	<u>Carbondale-Marion Micropolitan Area</u>
<u>Cicero</u>	<u>North Chicago</u>	<u>Randolph County</u>
<u>Garfield Ridge-Chicago</u>	<u>Park City</u>	<u>Perry County</u>
<u>Archer Heights-Chicago</u>	<u>Beach Park</u>	<u>Franklin County</u>
<u>Brighton Park-Chicago</u>	<u>Zion</u>	<u>Saline County</u>
<u>McKinley Park-Chicago</u>		<u>Pope County</u>



<a href="#">Bridgeport-Chicago</a>		<a href="#">Massac County</a>
<a href="#">New City-Chicago</a>		<a href="#">Pulaski County</a>
<a href="#">Belmont Cragin-Chicago</a>		<a href="#">Union County</a>
<a href="#">Hermosa-Chicago</a>		

## Selected Communities

The 2022 Long-Term Plan ~~specifiesspecified that~~ the ~~pilot will~~initiative should represent “one of the 77 community areas of Chicago, a suburban community, and a down-state community.” ~~The ILSFA~~Following stakeholder feedback in 2023, the Program Administrator and the Illinois Power Agency ~~are proposing that~~updated these ~~areas be defined~~definitions as one Chicago community area, a Cook County or Collar County suburban municipality<sup>3</sup>, and a Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical area<sup>4</sup> outside ~~of~~ the ComEd utility territory. To select each community, the Program Administrator ~~proposes used~~ the following criteria as guidance but ~~is also~~ solicitingsolicited additional suggestions from stakeholders on criteria to use for community selection. Additionally, stakeholders ~~may were allowed to~~ submit suggestions for a community not listed that may fit the program using the following proposed criteria.

The ~~proposed~~-criteria used for community selection ~~are were~~ as follows.

Category	Category Description	Total Section Score
<b>Housing Demographics</b>	Percent of households in the community: under 80% AMI, occupied by owner, and 1-4 unit homes	35
<b>Eligibility by Community Type</b>	Percent of community’s census tracts designated: environmental justice, income eligible, or R3	20

<sup>3</sup> A collar county is a term to reference the five counties of Illinois that border Cook County.

<sup>4</sup> Areas defined by the Census Bureau: [17 Illinois 2020 \(census.gov\)](#)

<b>Community Experience with and Visibility of Energy Projects</b>	The number of: dropped ILSFA projects, household participation in energy efficiency, energized or approved Adjustable Block Program residential projects, energized or approved ILSFA Residential Solar (Large) or <del>Nonprofit</del> <u>Non-Profit</u> and Public Facilities projects; The absence of completed ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) projects in the community	30
<b>Total Possible Score</b>		75
<b>Unscored Category</b>	<b>Category Description</b>	
<b>Community, Resident, and/or Organization Support</b>	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 <del>pilot</del> <u>initiative</u> , updated policies to further develop the local solar market, or an Approved Vendor already working in the area; proximity to a CEJA workforce hub; distance from a retired coal--fired power plant/mine	N/A

On March 10, 2023, the Program Administrator and the Agency announced the three selected communities for ~~the Residential Solar Pilot~~Bright Neighborhoods. Those communities were: West Garfield Park-Chicago, Waukegan, and the Carbondale-Marion Micropolitan Statistical Area.

~~Residential Pilot~~Following stakeholder feedback, the Program Administrator will maintain the Waukegan and the Carbondale-Marion Micropolitan Statistical Area community areas and expand the West Garfield Park community for the 2024-2025 program year. To increase learning from the Chicago community area and address barriers to reaching the target population in West Garfield Park, the Program Administrator has expanded the West Garfield Park community to encompass the City of Chicago West-Side region, with a few exclusions. This expansion includes the following neighborhoods: Humboldt Park, Austin, West and East Garfield Park, and North and South Lawndale neighborhoods.

## Bright Neighborhoods Program Roles

The Program Administrator currently operates in an administrative role to verify that solar projects meet program requirements and to ensure consumer ~~protections~~protection and the delivery of RECs, as proposed. The Approved Vendor currently assumes the role of participant acquisition, public outreach, and income verification. The following table shows how this ~~pilot will change~~initiative changes the task allocation between the Program Administrator and the Approved Vendor.

<del>ILSFA</del> Program Administrator	Approved Vendor
Marketing and outreach	Provide and obtain signatures for disclosure form/participant contract
Participant recruitment	Some outreach and solar education <u>at Program Administrator hosted events</u>
Income verification <u>(including enhanced site pre-screening questions)</u>	<del>Final site</del> <u>Site</u> assessment and solar project design
<del>Initial site suitability assessment</del> <u>Support participants during the participant journey and installation process with the Approved Vendor when necessary</u>	Part I application
Facilitate additional coordination with job training and placement programs and incorporation of energy efficiency measures	Part II application
	Installation ( <del>using</del> <u>including use of</u> job trainees)

## Role of the Program Administrator

This ~~pilot project will consolidate the~~initiative consolidates participant interaction, public outreach, marketing, and income verification with the Program Administrator (rather than with the Approved Vendor) to reduce the ~~costs incurred by the~~ Approved

~~Vendor~~Vendor's costs and ~~to~~ foster increased participant education and support. The Program Administrator will continue to provide support and guidance to ~~both~~ the ~~customer~~participant and the Approved Vendor throughout the ~~entire~~ project application process, following the Illinois Commerce Commission's Final Order approving the 2022 Long-Term Plan.

In preparation for the re-launch of the initiative, the Program Administrator will focus on identifying and establishing partnerships in the expanded West Garfield Park community area and working with the established partners in Waukegan and the Carbondale-Marion area to create unique outreach plans and event calendars. These prospective partners include houses of worship, school districts, Community Action Agencies, and strengthening relationships with local elected officials. To address language barriers in Waukegan, the Program Administrator will work to establish relationships with local Hispanic groups. These partnerships will create the foundation for outreach and support for building awareness in the program by promoting events and the program through their social networks, hosting events, or connecting the Program Administrator with other community contacts.

Once community partners are established, the Program Administrator will work with them to create unique outreach plans that may include house parties (a small gathering at a community resident's home or a local nonprofit, with an installed residential solar project), tabling at community-hosted events, hosting coffee chats or focus groups to learn directly from residents and community stakeholders and hosting educational workshops. This mix of events will increase the presence of ILSFA representatives and partners promoting the initiative to spread the Bright Neighborhoods and Illinois Solar for All names.

Finally, the Program Administrator acknowledges the significance of providing the "concierge" service to prospective participants to support them through their participant journey. They will evaluate the follow-up process to identify any changes that can be made to better engage and encourage enrollment after the intake form, such as hosting a monthly virtual Q&A to engage with prospective participants who hear about the program through a social platform but are interested in talking with a representative "face-to-face."

### SITE PRESCREENING UPDATES

The Program Administrator has removed the Site Pre-Screening survey used in the first year of the initiative from the participant journey. During the initiative's first year, many participants dropped off in the participant journey at this stage. This survey was

intended to evaluate ways to streamline referrals to the Approved Vendor by identifying potential home suitability issues earlier in the process. Most of the participants sent to the Approved Vendor were unable to proceed in the process because of roof suitability issues or inadequate production from shading. The Program Administrator will instead add the enhanced questions from the Site Pre-Screening survey to the income eligibility intake form to gather the participant's understanding of their home's electrical, roof, and structural health to then communicate that with the Approved Vendor. The Program Administrator will work with the selected Vendors to finalize these questions.

### INCOME VERIFICATION UPDATE

For the 2024-2025 program year, the Program Administrator will add self-attestation as an income verification option for participants participating under this initiative, following the Illinois Commerce Commission's Final Order approving the 2024 Long-Term Plan. This will allow participants living within HUD Qualified Census Tracts to sign an affidavit confirming they make less than 80% of the Area Median Income to verify income (Section 8.10.3.2). The implementation of the self-attestation under this Initiative will be evaluated by the Agency to determine its effectiveness and to provide recommendations on further incorporation of the self-attestation.

## Approved Vendor Role and Requirements

~~The Approved Vendor will be responsible for doing~~The participating Approved Vendors will again be selected through a competitive RFP process. Improving participation and capacity and supporting small and emerging businesses are important goals of this initiative, which will be reflected in the RFP scoring. The 2024 Long-Term Plan prioritizes the involvement of "Small and <sup>5</sup>(SBE) vendors to encourage business development, particularly for those located in income-eligible and environmental justice communities (Section 8.2.3). Therefore, the Program Administrator will again prioritize the selection of businesses that qualify as both small and emerging to participate in this initiative (2024 Long-Term Plan, Section 8.2.3 and 8.5.3.4).

Considering these priorities, the Program Administrator and the Agency will first score proposals from eligible entities as "Small and Emerging." These vendors will need a minimum score of 70 points to be selected. If there is no proposal submitted by a vendor eligible as "Small and Emerging" that meets the minimum score, only then will the Program Team begin to score proposals that are not eligible under either definition.

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<sup>5</sup> The Agency will use the federal SBA definition of "small," based on annual revenues within the appropriate NAICS category: <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-guide/size-standards>

The Program Administrator will release a revised RFP for the 2024-2025 program year to select new participating Approved Vendors and has received stakeholder feedback on factors to prioritize on Approved Vendor scoring and selection. For example, the first year of the initiative encountered barriers to participation because of the need for home repairs in a significant number of the homes of interested participants. Additionally, the selected small and emerging businesses were unable to support those projects because of the financial burdens associated with participating in the Home Repairs and Upgrades Initiative—namely, the requirement for Approved Vendors to cover repair costs until REC payments are made. Following stakeholder feedback, the Program Administrator will also prioritize scoring of proposals where the Vendor is willing to participate in the Home Repairs and Upgrades initiative. In this case, they are not required to be both eligible as “Small and Emerging” and a participant in the Home Repairs and Upgrades initiative. A proposal may also include mentorship where the Approved Vendor works with a “Small and Emerging” designee to achieve the prioritization, with the Approved Vendor financially supporting the participation in the Home Repairs and Upgrades initiative.

The selected Approved Vendors will be responsible for a full site assessment and solar project design. Based on the system design and the offer, the Approved Vendor will ~~be responsible for completing and obtaining~~ complete and obtain signatures for the disclosure form and participant contract. The Approved Vendor is also responsible for submitting Part I and Part II applications of the ILSFA project process.

As a selected Approved Vendor, the solar company will have a short-term ~~partnership~~ understanding with the Program Administrator to complete residential solar projects in accordance with their response to the RFP, their participant contract, and ILSFA program requirements.

~~The Approved Vendors will be selected through a competitive RFP process. Improving participation and capacity along with supporting small and emerging businesses are important goals of this pilot. The 2022 Long Term Plan set a goal of prioritizing the involvement of “Small and Emerging”<sup>6</sup> vendors to encourage business development, particularly for those located in income eligible and environmental justice communities (Section 8.2.3). Therefore, the Program Administrator will prioritize selection of businesses that qualify as both small and emerging to participate in this Pilot (2022 Long Term Plan, Section 8.2.3 and 8.5).~~

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<sup>6</sup>The Agency will use the federal SBA definition of “small,” based on annual revenues within the appropriate NAICS category: <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-guide/size-standards>

~~Considering these priorities, and to the extent permissible under relevant state law, the Program Administrator and the Agency will first score proposals from entities that are eligible as “Small and Emerging.” These vendors will need a minimum score of 70 points to be selected. If there is no proposal submitted by a vendor eligible as “Small and Emerging” that meets the minimum score, only then will the Program Team begin to score proposals that are not eligible under either definition.~~

In the event that the Program Administrator identifies more residents to participate in the pilot initiative than a selected Approved Vendor indicated they had the capacity to complete in their RFP response, the Program Administrator reserves the right to call upon a vendor that applied but was not selected to complete that portion of projects. If this situation arises, the Program Administrator will call upon the next highest-scoring vendor ~~that serves~~ servicing that geography to step in and complete those additional identified solar projects. The Program Administrator reserves these rights to reduce the number of stranded participants.

Similarly, in the event that a potential participant requires home repairs prior to a solar installation and the Approved Vendors indicate they are not able to participate in the Home Repairs and Upgrades initiative, the Program Administrator reserves the right to provide the names of other Approved Vendors that are currently participating in the Home Repairs and Upgrades initiative to the potential participant.

The Agency also recognizes the importance of Minority/Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) participating as ILSFA Approved Vendors and will continue to work with the Program Administrator to increase the number of MWBE Approved Vendors participating in ILSFA projects (~~2022~~2024 Long-Term Plan, Section 8.9). To support the goal of increasing the number of MWBE Approved Vendors participating in ILSFA, Approved Vendors certified as ~~an~~-MWBE should identify their certification in their RFP response to receive additional points.

~~The proposed eligibility and criteria for the RFP are listed below.~~

## **APPROVED VENDOR ELIGIBILITY**

At a minimum, the solar company must be an Approved Vendor through the Adjustable Block Illinois Shines Program. Applicants ~~that~~who are not Approved Vendors at the time of their RFP response submission ~~will be expected to~~must register and meet ILSFA requirements ~~should~~if they ~~be approved~~are selected to ~~provide services~~participate in the ~~pilot.~~ (See initiative (see Section 3 of the Approved Vendor Manual for requirements-)).

Proof of Distributed Generation Installer Certification from the Illinois Commerce Commission, in the form of the Commission’s order in the certification docket granting the company’s certification, must be submitted by the applicant for their solar company or for their proposed sub-contraction/designee installersubcontractor/Designee.

The eligibility and criteria for the 2023-2024 program year RFP are listed below. The RFP eligibility and criteria for the 2024-2025 program year will be released with the updated request in the summer of 2024.

**2023 - 2024 PROGRAM YEAR SELECTION CRITERIA**

Category	Category Description	Total Section Score
<b>Offeror Background and Capacity</b>	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	45
<b>Community Commitment and Readiness</b>	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; building trust with the community; plan to continue work in the community following the <u>pilot initiative</u>	35
<b>Company Offer</b>	Offer type; providing a sample participant contract; listing	30





	expected participant savings and costs	
<b>Plan to Employ Job Trainees</b>	Description of <u>a</u> plan to find, hire, and employ job trainees from a qualified job training program	5
<b>Total Possible Points</b>		115

### RENEWABLE ENERGY CREDITS

The Renewable Energy Credit Agreement (REC contract) is between the Approved Vendor and the utility counterparty or the Agency. The REC contract is executed once between counterparties and establishes the agreed-upon framework for contracting and delivering RECs across multiple contracts and projects. ~~The Agency will update REC prices for this program based on stakeholder feedback.~~

### REC Price

The REC prices have been adjusted for the initiative to account for the shift of the soft costs and participant acquisition away from the Approved Vendor to the Program Administrator. The REC prices for Bright Neighborhoods in the 2024-2025 program year can be found in the table below.

<u>Project Size</u>	<u>Group A</u>	<u>Group B</u>
<u>0 - 10 kW</u>	<u>\$177.01</u>	<u>\$167.90</u>
<u>10 - 25 kW</u>	<u>\$146.70</u>	<u>\$144.01</u>
<u>25 - 100 kW</u>	<u>\$118.44</u>	<u>\$118.73</u>

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~~ Illinois Shines Program. Following stakeholder ~~comment~~ comments before the 2023-2024 program year, the Program Team ~~will adjust~~ adjusted the REC price for the central and southern ~~Pilot~~ Initiative community area to a 95% increase. The Program Team ~~will adjust~~ adjusted the REC price for the Chicago community area and the Cook County or Collar ~~county~~ County suburban municipality to an 80% increase.

## Role of Grassroots Educators

The success of this ~~pilot~~ initiative hinges on participant awareness of the ~~pilot~~ initiative offer and their trust in the program. ~~Grassroots Educators, as~~ As trusted community resources, Grassroots Educators can provide crucial resident engagement to help the ~~pilot~~ initiative succeed.

All Grassroots Educators operating within the selected ~~pilot~~ initiative communities can share information on the ~~pilot~~ initiative with prospective participants and can help participants ~~to~~ navigate the ~~pilot~~ initiative as a part of their outreach work under their current contracts. Another critical role Grassroots Educators can play in the ~~pilot~~ initiative under their current contracts is to convey participant concerns and complaints to the Program Administrator, a function of Grassroots Educators that is especially necessary with new Approved Vendors and offers.

~~As a part of this proposal, the Program Administrator recommends adding~~ The 2023-2024 program year initiative design added a new focus area centered on ~~pilot~~ initiative geographies and demographics ~~to~~ in the ~~next~~ Grassroots Education RFP to support the ~~initiative's~~ success ~~of the pilot.~~

~~Home Repairs. For the 2024-2025 program year, the Program Administrator will coordinate with the educators in the newest cohort that serve in the initiative community areas to consider supporting the initiative by focusing their events or activities in the Bright Neighborhood areas and Upgrades Pilot~~ potentially including messaging about Bright Neighborhoods at their events or their campaign activities.

## Home Repairs and Upgrades Initiative

The ~~2022~~ 2024 Long-Term Plan outlines the Home Repairs and Upgrades ~~Pilot~~ initiative to address the need for home repairs and electrical upgrades among many participants eligible for Residential Solar (Small) installations through ILSFA. The Agency recognizes that income-eligible residents are more likely to face this high cost of repairs, creating a barrier to participation. The Home Repairs and Upgrades ~~Pilot will provide~~ initiative



~~provides~~ incentives to complete the necessary upgrades to install solar projects on homes ~~that are~~ eligible for the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program. ~~The Program Administrator will release a plan for that pilot~~This initiative was launched in the coming monthsJuly 2023.

During the 2023-2024 program year, Bright Neighborhoods encountered a number of participants requiring home repairs and/or upgrades before pursuing a solar installation. To support these projects, Bright Neighborhoods consistently collaborated with the Home Repairs and Upgrades initiative. Because the selected Approved Vendors for Bright Neighborhoods declined to participate in the Home Repairs and Upgrades Initiative, support for these projects focused on identifying external funding programs available in the Bright Neighborhoods community areas.

The Home Repairs and Upgrades ~~Pilot~~initiative will continue to be available ~~for use to~~prospective participants within ~~the Residential Solar Pilot~~Bright Neighborhoods in the 2024-2025 program year, dependent upon the applications for funds across the ~~ILSFA Residential Solar programs~~sub-program and the capacity of the Home Repairs and Upgrades ~~Pilot~~Initiative. As discussed above, the Program Administrator will modify the RFP for Bright Neighborhoods to ideally increase the likelihood that participants in Bright Neighborhoods will also be able to receive the benefits of participation in the Home Repairs and Upgrades initiative.

## Funding and Budget

This ~~pilot~~initiative will function under the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program, ~~receiving and receive~~ part of that annual budget. ~~Program Year 5~~The 2024-2025 program year has allocated \$~~27,377,726~~30,146,606.40 to the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program.

~~The Program Administrator suggests setting an estimated goal of 50 to 100 total solar installations within each of the three community geographies.~~