

# Advisory Committee Meeting Transcript

November 12, 2024, 8:05PM

## Welcome and Introductions



**Jennifer Brown** 0:13

Alright, alright, now we are recording, and we can go ahead and get started again. Welcome.

We are going to open up with an opportunity for roundtable introductions.

Some folks have may not have been at the most recent meeting and we want to see who's in the room.

We're just going to do a quick ice breaker and then review our agenda.

So let's go ahead and do some introductions.

I'll start with the Elevate team, Encolor, IPA and then we can have all of our advisory members, to introduce themselves.

So I'll start and again my name is Jennifer Brown.

I am a senior manager with the ILSFA team.

My title is senior manager of strategic partnerships, but I oversee a couple initiatives of the program and as well the advisory committee. So, I will popcorn it over.

To Amy on our team.



**Amy Jewel** 1:36

Good afternoon, everybody. For those who don't know me, my name is Amy Jewel and I'm the vice president of programs at Elevate.

Excited to be with you here today.

I help oversee our work on ILSFA.

With that, I will send it over to Chanel.



**ChaNell Marshall** 1:56

I'm Chanel Marshall.

I am vice president of program support and engagement at Elevate and my role in this work is to provide oversight to our diversity, racial equity and inclusion work within the ills for scope.

I'll pass it over to Larry.



**Lawrence Kotewa** 2:17

Hi, I'm Larry Kotewa, the chief engineer here at elevate and I've basically been doing a lot of the technical.

Resource for ILSFA.

So Jennifer, back to you.



**Jennifer Brown** 2:41

Wonderful. And I'm going to popcorn it over to Patrice.



**Patrice McFarlin** 2:47

A good afternoon, everyone.

I am Patrice McFarlin and happy to be joining the Elevate team to work with the advisory Committee.

Jenn, I just want to make sure I see that we have a transcription.

Do we also have the recording as well?



**ChaNell Marshall** 3:11

Yes, it does look like the recording is going.



**Patrice McFarlin** 3:12

Yes. OK, OK, alright. OK.



**Jennifer Brown** 3:13

Yeah, the recording is on.



**Patrice McFarlin** 3:15

Excellent. OK.

Well, with that, do you want me to go ahead and popcorn it to the committee?



**Jennifer Brown** 3:21

The IPA.



**Patrice McFarlin** 3:23

IPA OK.

All right, I'll turn it over to Jen S.



**Jennifer Brown** 3:24

Yes.



**Schmidt, Jennifer M.** 3:28

Hi, my name is Jennifer Schmidt.

I'm the senior program manager of Illinois Solar for All at the IPA, and so I am the primary staff person at the IPA that's responsible for the program and I will pass it to David, who is on my team.



**Dworkin, David** 3:49

This David Dworkin.

I work for the Illinois Power Agency.

I'm a program associate and I assist in all aspects of the program, so I'm really excited to be here and hear from you all.



**Schmidt, Jennifer M.** 4:06

I think that's it for the IPA today.



**Jennifer Brown** 4:10

Wonderful. Thank you, Jen.

Alright, so committee members.

Laurie, I see you just came on camera.

So how about we start with you?



**Laurie Fields (she/her)** 4:27

OK.

I am Laurie fields.

I am way down South in Harrisburg, Marion area.

So about not quite as far SE as you can get in Illinois, but pretty close.

And I'm a pastor of a small congregation that's just installed solar, and I also.

Teach GED classes at Southeastern Illinois College.



**Jennifer Brown** 4:54

Thanks Laurie.

Senora, would you mind going next?



**Senora Colbert** 5:03

Absolutely. Oh, good afternoon all. And I'm glad to be able to attend this meeting. I made it to this one.

My name is Sonora Colbert and I am a recipient of Illinois solar for all.

I've had solar panels on the roof of my home since 2019 and it has been definitely a blessing.

It's just been absolutely wonderful.

No bill, I have a credit every month and I'm just looking forward to participating in this group meeting. If we can get better and get the word out to everyone else about how great solar is.



**Jennifer Brown** 5:42

Awesome. Thank you, Senora.



**Jennifer Brown** 5:43

Thank you so much for sharing.



**Jennifer Brown** 5:45

Miss Vee, would you mind going next?

No, I think you are on mute.



**Vee Likes (Guest)** 5:56

Hello everyone. And hopefully you're having some joy in your day.

Today I'm Vee Likes.

I'm with Kenwood Oakland community organization.

We're called Koco.

We're one of the grant recipients for the Illinois Solar for all grassroots education programs and with deep regrets, though I have to jump off by 2:45. But I'm pleased to be here now.

I can't see who to pop it off to Miss Jennifer, so if you could help me.



**Jennifer Brown** 6:28

Sure, happy to.

I think we have Elise.

Would be next.

Elise, if you're talking, you are on mute.



**Christianson, Elise** 6:51

Got it.

My name is Elise Christensen.

I work for NRE renewable energy and we are an approved vendor and installer specifically in Illinois, but also throughout the country.



**Jennifer Brown** 7:05

Thank you, Elise.

Lisa, would you introduce yourself?

Lisa, if you're talking, we can't hear you.

We'll pop over to Megan, and then we'll come back to you, Lisa.



**Allen, Megan** 7:40

Yep. Hi. Megan Allen. I work for Ameren as a power supply specialist and I work on the solar for all program and adjustable block program as well.



**Jennifer Brown** 7:53

Awesome. Thank you, Megan.

Lisa, are you in a position to introduce yourself?

Maybe not OK.

We'll just jump on forward.

I know that Lisa works for Safer Foundation and she does a lot of job placement I believe also.

Will pop over to back to our slides and our agenda.

Before I move forward, did I miss anyone?

Let me make sure I didn't miss anyone.

Christopher Bell?

**BC** **Bell, Christopher** 8:43

Hi, my name's Christopher Bell.

I work for Ameren on the power supply team and I also work with the adjustable block program and solar for all of well.

 **Jennifer Brown** 8:52

Great. Awesome. Thank you, Chris.

All right guys.

## Meeting Agenda and Housekeeping

### **Jennifer Brown**

So our agenda covers just a few housekeeping rules that I'll go over next? We're going to talk about the advisory committee's purpose and goals.

We'll also share with you some updates from our last meeting.

We'll talk about the committee structure.

We'll go through some ILSFA updates.

And then we'll dig right into our topic, which is environmental justice community prioritization in the project selection.

It will end off with a couple questions that you'll have an opportunity to share your opinions and your thoughts on.

And then we'll close out with our next steps. So that is how we will move through today's agenda.

So just a couple housekeeping. These are standard things.

I probably don't even need to share it. You already know, of course.

Just keep yourself muted. If I find that someone unmutes themselves on accident, don't be offended, I'll just go ahead and mute you.

You of course can raise your hand, or you can parking lot your question, as we're going through, I know when we get to the topic, you may have some questions. So it might be easier for you to just parking lot your question.

But we're perfectly fine if you raise your hand using the icon to ask during that time Regarding the topics.

There the topics that are discussed at this meeting are meant to spur discussion.

We definitely want to explore the ideas and we want to be able to advise the Agency on the updates of the ILSFA program and our goal to increase program participation across Illinois. That's the goal overall.

## **Advisory Committee Goal and Purpose**

So we're going to talk about the purpose.

And we're always going to do this just to remind you why we're here.

Our goal is to foster meaningful and informed conversation between our program stakeholders as well as the agency.

Our second goal is to provide education and information regarding participation in the program.

We're also here to encourage your feedback.

Stakeholder feedback as well as public feedback.

And then the last is to develop and propose incremental improvements.

The ultimate decisions on implementing changes for the ILSFA program still remain with the IPA.

And so our goal here is to stay focused on that purpose.

And the objective is just simply so that we can meet and discuss and explore the ideas, but also to advise the IPA on any updates that that need to happen within the ILSFA program and of course like I said earlier, our goal is to increase participation across the state of Illinois in the ILSFA program.

So I'm going to pop the slides with the microphone over to my colleague Patrice, as she's going to give you some updates from our last meeting.

## **Updates from our last Meeting**

**Patrice McFarlin** 12:32

PM

Thanks so much, Jen.

So as you likely can tell from the past few meetings, we are really making a concerted effort and a focus on what we can do in order to make sure that we have a robust committee that can meet the goals that Jennifer just outlined.

So during the last meeting, we continued to talk about.

Specific topics to really support that goal.

The first of that was around subcommittee work.

So we're sure that many of you, when you were on boarding and becoming members of the committee were assigned to or participated in some subcommittees. So we wanted to bring forth a conversation with the committee to understand the feelings on subcommittee work and the advantages or.

Perhaps disadvantages of continuing or not continuing.

To hold subcommittees.

So within the group that was there on the meeting last time.

There was a consensus that based on the size of the group, that we may not have enough participation to really justify a separate committee meeting so there may be more benefit in us looking at how we can utilize this time that we have together quarterly to.

Be more effective in terms of subcommittee work. We're going to continue.

To refine our approach to subcommittees.

Another major topic was around meeting cadence and we wanted to understand if the committee was interested in meeting more frequently or continuing to meet on the quarterly cadence and what we heard from participants in the last meeting was that there is an interest in maintaining the quarterly schedule.

But extending them from the 60 minutes to the 90 minutes, which is where you see today's meeting has been.

Expanded to 90 minutes to allow us again for more time to talk through topics, understand any questions that you may have and then really encourage some effective dialogue between all of the parties that are here on the call.

What we're going to do continuing forward for future meetings is continue to provide updates from the previous meeting.

On the agenda, for the subsequent meeting.

So if you miss a meeting, you could be easily caught up to what was happening.

This is one of the things.

That we've heard from the committee.

So hoping that these two things as well as the other things that we'll talk about today really move us forward again to increase in the dialogue that we have on these calls.



**Jennifer Brown** 15:28

And one other thing that I just wanted to add to updates from last month is we shared with you that we would be meeting with each committee member on a one-



on-one basis and we are so pleased that we were able to get those.

One-on-one meetings started, so if you have not responded already with a date that is available and within your schedule please do so.

We are having robust conversations with members and.

Are looking forward to speaking with the remainder of the committee as well.

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 16:11

So when we think about.

The committee and making it robust, we acknowledge that there are going to be very important components.

One is really working on getting recommendations from the committee.

We are going to continue to talk through with you all as well as with the Elevate and the IPA teams on the best way to really develop a feedback loop to receive recommendations.

At the committee level, it is going to be important that when we're receiving these recommendations that we are also being mindful of the timelines for which these recommendations will need to be made so that they can be implemented according to the appropriate program cycle for the program, meaning that.

If we understand that feedback needs to be submitted or provided.

To elevate or the IPA by a certain date, we back into those dates to make sure that we bring forth those.

Topics and those conversation areas to the committee within enough time that we can discuss, formulate feedback and then provided to Elevate and the IPA in a timely manner.

So really looking at how we can make sure that we're choreographing that much more intentionally.

So we know that at this point there is.

Availability for committee members to provide feedback in a one-on-one.

So if there anyone here on the call that at this time that if you wanted to provide feedback for the advisory committee but does not know of the process for that?

OK not hearing anything, but will we will make sure that we do provide access to the form so that you can have it top of mind in order to provide your individual feedback that may occur for this meeting. So Vee we know that you've got to hop off so that would be a great opportunity if you wanted to use that form to provide any feedback.

So I will pause here and see.

What do you think we could do to encourage feedback from the committee, and are there any specific strategies that you guys have used in other meetings that you think would be fitting for the advisory committee?

Love to hear from you guys here.

Laurie, are you with us?

Does anything come up for you when you think about the best way for us to work together to get feedback from the committee?

**LF** **Laurie Fields (she/her)** 19:08

I think 1 suggestion I have is if there's any way for us to get information in advance of the discussion so we can read things. I know a lot of times it's hard for me to come up with good feedback when I'm just hearing something and just respond.

Right away, if I have it a couple days in advance that I can read it and think about it, that can be helpful. And I know sometimes with the timing of things that's not as easy to do as it might sound like, but.

That's one suggestion.

I've also been on other committees where when we're looking for feedback on things everyone has gotten e-mail two or three days after with a link to a very brief survey just to say, have you thought of anything else that you want to share and what that might be?

Something that's not, you know, again not in our face to face conversation, but another way that to kind of capture those thoughts that come in afterwards.

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 20:14

OK, that is helpful.

So the pre read or agenda about 5 days in advance. Does that feel good or appropriate for the committee?

Any thoughts there?

**LF** **Laurie Fields (she/her)** 20:29

I'll say for me it does.

I apologize the last week or two has been crazy and anything that you have sent for this meeting, I have been woefully unprepared for.

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 20:33  
OK.

**LF Laurie Fields (she/her)** 20:37  
But yes, generally that is fine.

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 20:40  
All right, awesome.

Thanks so much, Lori.

Anything from anybody else?

OK.

Super helpful feedback. So we're going to ask for you to kind of continue to think through that and some things may come up for you as we go through the meeting today.

We are also looking at committee engagement, really understanding why committee members are participating so that we can make sure that this is a mutually beneficial experience for everyone that's involved.

So as Jen talked about, we have scheduled committee meetings one-on-one.

With each member and have gotten those going. We are really hoping to get 100% participation from those meetings because the real benefit and the richness of the advisory committee is in the unique perspective that we all collectively bring to the table.

So it.

Is critically important for us to hear all voices so that we can really understand the best way to move forward, again to meet the primary.

Objective of getting feedback and producing a better program.

So we really want this to be an opportunity for you to provide some input on your participation and how we can bolster things to make them better for you.

As a means to that, we are also looking at scheduling some in person time, bringing us all together to talk through what are some things that we maybe need a bit more time.

How can we work together?

There's really just some benefit sometimes from getting some brains in the room, working in person.

So we are expecting to host our 4th committee meeting for the program year seven and anticipating that that meeting is going to be in person in May 2025.

We're still working out the fine details, but do understand that we are considering the location to make sure that it is reasonable for the highest level of participation.

And then also thinking about the best use of that time.

What are the topics and things that will be most enriching for coming to an in person event?

So we'll continue to talk about these things, but wanted to really just highlight for you guys some of the key areas that we're focusing on to create a better, stronger, more robust and impactful advisory committee.

I'll pause there and open the floor and see if there are any initial questions before we move on with the.

Presentation.

I'm hearing none.

**VL** **Vee Likes (Guest)** 23:34

Actually, I might have something quick way, forgive me.

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 23:36

OK.

**VL** **Vee Likes (Guest)** 23:39

Patrice, thank you for the information.

Who at the end of the day, who are the broader audience that will be sharing this information with?

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 23:53

I'm sorry, vee.

**VL** **Vee Likes (Guest)** 23:55

Oh, sorry. Can you hear me now?

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 23:56

So I heard some of that, but you broke up just a bit for me. Sorry about that.

**VL Vee Likes (Guest)** 24:00

OK, I'm in a wonderfully shared space right now.

So I was asking who is the intended target audience to what we're doing and sharing of what the outcome or impact of this Advisory Council is?

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 24:20

That's a great question.

So I would say that the audience would ultimately be the program administrator, which is Elevate and IPA. That's the audience.

So the idea is that we are going to be working collectively to unify all of the voices of the committee, to then present the recommendations and thoughts and ideas, to Elevate and the IPA, and that's where we're working on.

And the feedback loop so that when those ideas and recommendations are presented, to Elevate and to IPA, there is a return and a loop back on some of those suggestions that were made. Does that answer your question for you?

**VL Vee Likes (Guest)** 25:08

Yes it does Patrice thank you.

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 25:11

Thank you.

**Jennifer Brown** 25:18

While we're pausing here for thoughts and questions.

Having an in person meeting was something that we talked about probably at the beginning of the program year or actually at the end of last program year. And I just wanted to hear any thoughts from the committee members on any feelings.

Yeah or nay. Happy or sad?

Any thoughts at all that you may have about our proposed idea of having an in person meeting?

**VL Vee Likes (Guest)** 26:03

I'm good with it.

I think relationship building certainly strengthens our ability to facilitate our relationship building amongst one another.



**Jennifer Brown** 26:21

Thank you for sharing Miss Vee.  
Anybody else?



**BL Brackett, Lisa** 26:25

I do think that sometimes the engagement is higher when you're in person.  
I think we tend to multitask when we're on calls on zoom, or teams.



**Jennifer Brown** 26:35

For sure.  
You're absolutely right.



**LF Laurie Fields (she/her)** 26:41

I'll say and I know I mentioned this when we talked about it before.  
Just to be sure about location and time and such. For those of us who are on the far reaches of the earth, so to speak, as far as the state goes. But, I would appreciate an in-person meeting.



**Jennifer Brown** 26:58

Thank you.



**LF Laurie Fields (she/her)** 27:01

I'll also say the sooner I know the dates, the better I know. May is a very busy month with graduations and all sorts of other things so.  
The sooner you know I have a date on my calendar, the better chance that I can block out the time to be there.



**Jennifer Brown** 27:18

Very good point, Laurie.  
Thank you so much for sharing and we are very cognizant of the fact that you're so far in the state as well as just everybody is kind of all throughout the state.  
So we're we are taking all of those things into consideration, but thank you for

sharing that.

We're definitely going to work through those.

The exact date and get that to you guys very, very soon.

Any other thoughts?

Alright, hearing none, I think we can move right on through our agenda.

So I'll provide a couple updates on the program.

Always like to share with you the updates from the pilots.

Our home repairs pilot now has five projects that have been submitted.

For part one and they are in part one approval.

We also have the bright neighborhoods residential pilot.

That pilot has already chosen for the West Chicago area and the Austin area.

That RFP went out just before our last meeting, and so an AV has been chosen for that. And currently we have just closed the window for the RFP for the Waukegan and the Carbondale Marion area or southern.

Illinois area that closed on the on November 4th and we are in the selection process now and will be making that announcement in early December.

So we're very, very excited about that.

With regard to the Grassroots education initiative we have, our GEs are fully deployed.

Miss Vee is one of our GEs as well, and they're deployed.

They are spreading the word.

About solar in our communities and we have 10 GEs that are in the program this year that are sprinkled throughout the state.

So just a couple updates there.

 **Laurie Fields (she/her)** 29:43

The question is that 10 individual people or is that 10 organizations?

 **Jennifer Brown** 29:49

Ten organizations.

 **Laurie Fields (she/her)** 29:51

Thank you.



**Jennifer Brown** 29:52

Yes, ma'am.

All right.

And I'll ask Amy if she'll pop off of mute just to begin to share this particular sub program update as well as share some background information that we want you to understand before we start our dialogue about our topic today.

## Sub-Program Updates

**Amy Jewel** 30:17



Thank you, Jennifer.

So yeah, just a quick update on where we are and this is mostly a look at projects and budgets for each of the sub programs.

So for residential solar, our budget for this program year starts June 1st. So we're about 5 1/2 months into this program year.

So for residential solar, as you can see, the budget is right around 60 million.

We put these slides together a week and 1/2 or so ago, so the numbers are a teensy bit outdated.

But we're right around 75.

Residential projects submitted and the budget for those submitted projects is around two and a half million now.

I think those numbers have gradually climbed a little bit higher.

We're a little bit over 3 million. As I mentioned, we put the slides together a little bit over a week to go a week ago.

So those numbers will keep going up.

Throughout the program year for Community solar, that window opened and closed.

In this fall, and so we received the total budget.

There is just over \$37,000,000 projects were received for community solar.

Those projects tend to be quite large in scale, and the total incentive value for those six projects was just over 39 million.

We're still just analyzing all and looking at all of those projects to see.

What can move forward and determine if project selection is needed and then for non-profit and public facilities, that window also opened and closed.



And then reopen so we have a budget of just over 17.6 million.

We received 19 projects submitted totaling a little almost \$8 million. So we did not yet meet the full budget for that sub program.

So the window reopened and basically will be open until that full budget is spent for this program year.

So off to a great start.

For all the sub programs and we'll share more updates as we.

As we move through the program year.

Any questions on that data?

Anything in the chat?

## **Topic Background Information**

So with that, we are going to move, move forward and share our main topic for today. And so before we get into the main topic and some discussion questions, we have a bit of background that we wanted to share and I think this was also covered in some of.

The pre reading if you were able to take a look at that, but I will I will go through some of this background just to give you.

Context of what we're going to be discussing today.

What we are going to be discussing is how projects are prioritized in project selection. But before we go into that topic, we're going to share a little bit more about EJ or environmental justice communities.

So as many of you know, in ILSFA there is a goal that at least 25% of funds for each sub program is allocated to projects located in environmental justice or we call them EJ communities.

Now, so that's a goal in in the actual legislation that that ended up creating that. Program however.

The legislation, or the statute did not define how do you determine what is an environmental justice community?

So IPA and stakeholders worked together back in 2018-2019 to develop a way to define and map EJ communities throughout the state.

It's a methodology that was created at the time based on some existing tools that were available at the time one of the best practice tools out there was out of California called CalEnviroScreen, but uses data from the EPA, federal tool EJScreen.

And there is a map on the ILSFA website that shows all the environmental justice communities that are designated using this methodology. So next slide.

The EJ Community map that I just mentioned is on the ILSFA website and that's updated currently every five years. The last update was spring of 2023.

It's a little over a year and a half ago.

Now.

The project Selection protocol is the item we're going to be discussing a little bit in more detail today.

And there's a link to that protocol here.

Basically what this is a process that is followed if the total incentives of project applications exceed the budget for each sub program.

So it is sub program by sub program.

So for example, if your budget for community solar is 30 million a year and you open the window then close the window.

Let's say you get project applications that equal 40 million.

You would then need to likely go through this project selection process protocol process to determine which projects are going to move forward and receive the funding. The rest of the projects then would go on a wait list.

If you open the window for the sub program, let's go back to the same example.

Community solar. Let's say your budget is 30 million for the year. You open and close the window. Let's say you only receive project applications that total up to 20 million.

In that situation, you're below the budget and you would not need to use this protocol.

So historically.

This protocol has only been required for two sub programs, community solar sub program and non profit and public facility sub program.

Historically, that could always change in the future, but those are the two sub programs where the applications and the incentives, the Recs, the budget added up across all the applications has exceeded the budget for that year.

Next slide please.

So a little bit more about the project selection protocol.

Again, it's used to select projects if the total incentives exceed the available funding for that sub program for that program year.

So it does reset every year.

Historically, again only required for those two sub programs I mentioned.

So for reference, again, here's another example. The 2024 to 25 non profit and public facilities sub program budget is a little bit over 17 million in this year we did not receive that amount of applications.

And so project selection was not required.

So what happens is we open the window, we receive applications and we close the window.

We look at what was received and if the applications don't exceed that budget, we reopen the window.

Everything is accepted as long as the application is complete and it meets all the requirements and then we've received rolling applications after that until the budget is met.

So in that program year.

The project selection protocol is not needed.

Projects are received and then generally accepted again as long as they meet the program requirements. Until the budget's met.

Again, same example with the Community solar. This year's budget is 37.09 million.

We're currently, as I mentioned, reviewing the applications that were received to determine if project selection is needed or not this year.

So that's a little bit about project selection.

And when it's used in different situations.

A little bit more background again on environmental justice communities. As I mentioned, the map was updated in spring of 2023.

That update required taking updated data from sources like the US Census as well as that federal tool I mentioned EJ screen.

It applied the same methodology that was used in the past, but it updated the map using new updated data.

When this map update happened, several communities, mostly in central and southern Illinois but also some in Northern Illinois as well, no longer were designated as EJ Communities.

So what that means is, before the map was updated in the old map, based on the older data set, there were certain communities that were designated as EJ Communities. But after the new analysis was complete and the update was done, they were no longer.

Designated as EJ communities.

So what's the impact of this is that?

Some projects in these areas may face challenges securing funding.

Again, historically.

With project selection, where that comes into play mostly is with the community solar sub program and the nonprofit and public Facilities Sub program.

Examples of this.

These data changes, Champaign and Vermillion counties. There was a decrease in particulate matter in cancer rates, so there's many different inputs that go into the analysis to determine which communities are designated as EJ communities, EJ communities.

So particulate matter and cancer rates are two of those inputs where data is brought in, and if there's a decrease in some of those environmental indicators, that could lead a community to no longer be designated as an EJ community and then some other counties listed here, Madison Marion. Peoria and St. Clair counties there was a decrease in population with linguistic isolation.

That's another indicator that's used.

In the analysis and in the methodology there.

It creates that map of EJ communities.

So those were some places where the data had changed.

And where some of the EJ communities were no longer on the map or designated as such on the map.

So for environmental justice, and this is something we would love to circle back with this advisory committee on this topic in the future.

So the team, the program administrator and IPA are looking at new tools and methodologies.

And looking at alternatives for identifying EJ communities, the methodology that that's currently in place was developed several years ago and there are new tools and best practices available.

So we're looking at that.

And to look at should the methodology for designating EJ Communities change in the future the goal of this change would be to incorporate updated data sets, methodologies and best practices to improve.

The process of designating communities as environmental justice areas so we do plan to do some analysis and then provide some ideas for stakeholder feedback.

Roughly Q1 or possibly early Q2 2025, hopefully.

Be on the lookout for that.

That analysis has started and is in process.

So an update on that.

But getting back to our main topic today.

There are some proposed changes in project selection that have to do with the geographic diversity score.

I'm actually going to turn it over to Larry to share some information on these slides, but at a high level, I can share that in the project selection process, there is a regional environmental justice score that comes into play.

Historically, this score is based on the density of environmental justice areas.

Different regions of the state because of that, and because there are, there's a higher density of environmental justice areas in Northern Illinois, specifically in Cook County and Northeast Illinois due to high EJ community prevalence in those areas.

As a result, the regional EJ score has favored projects in those areas, mostly in northeastern Illinois.

So with this proposed change, the goal is to promote more balanced solar project distribution across Illinois.

Looking more at increasing distribution across central and southern Illinois.

So at a high level, the recommended change is to replace what's now called a regional environmental justice score, with the geographic diversity score.

What this would do is provide a higher preference for regions with fewer projects that have been installed in the past previous year.

So we'd look at by region, how many solar projects have been installed.

And for those regions that have had fewer or perhaps even no projects installed in the previous year, those regions are going to get higher preference when we go to this project selection process.

And so another thing I should mention, the project selection process does have a few different stages and so this would mainly affect prioritization, stage one and stage two and only for community solar and non profit public facilities.

So this change would not affect anything relating to residential projects.

Can you go to the next slide?

So what is a geographic diversity score?

Basically, regions will be ranked based on the dollar amount of all years previous rec incentives or you know the budget for the what they're receiving from the ILSPA program with the highest score being awarded to regions with the lowest number of incentives.

So if you haven't had any projects or very few projects, you're going to get a higher score, which means you're going to get more priority.

When we go through the project selection process.

The other side of that coin is that the regions that have had the most amount of rec incentives awarded in the previous year will receive a lower score and lower priority.

So the goal of this would be to help prioritize again the areas that haven't had as much participation in the previous year.

Move to the next slide.

So this is our first discussion question before I go there, I want to see if there's questions. And I also want to turn it over first of all, before there's questions, I want to turn it over to Lary, one of our experts on project selection to see if.

There's anything else regarding the protocol?

That we should be sharing or explaining here.



**Lawrence Kotewa** 45:13

You know, just a little more on the history of.

Geographic scoring.

When we started doing.

Project selection. There was a geographic score based on.

ComEd or Ameren utility.

So there were points.

Given to try to address making sure that.

After the first couple of stages that everything wasn't going to one utility region or the other.

That wasn't really doing much, and that was then changed to what's the current EJ score?

And that ended up being a combination of the.

Environmental propensity.

So the larger communities that had a larger group of environmental justice end up getting a higher score than others, and that's what when we looked at, it's only been in place for three years and.

There's only been one community solar project selection.

The scores were always pushing things towards the Cook County and Northern Illinois region, and so it didn't seem to be.

Doing much of anything for environmental justice.

Kind of spreading it out.

It's been looked at, going back to a geographic score, but in this case now, not just using it an either or ComEd or Ameren, since the state has the five regions.

We're now putting projects into those.

Regions.

And as it was said, calculating the total dollar amount of all prior years incentives in the regions with the lowest amount of incentives get the highest scores.

And now when we're talking about scores, this is in project selection.

You get points for.

Being in an environmental justice community.

Points for being in a low income community. There's points for being a MWBE AV, there's points for.

Size and so this is just one of the pieces that would be adding to points that projects could get.

If project selection was required.

We're looking at this as environmental justice is still a significant part of project selection in two ways. One.

Still, a project would get.

Classified as to whether they're in an environmental justice community or not, and that gets them points. And then two, the 25% carve out for environmental justice communities is still there.

So environmental justice is still a significant part of project selection and we're just replacing the EJ score side with.

This.

Geographic diversity score.

Hoping to provide a little more incentive.

For.

Projects being proposed in areas that have not received a lot of projects as of yet.



**Amy Jewel** 49:45

Thank you so much, Larry.

That's super helpful.

And you reminded me that when we created the EJ regional score was also a stakeholder process where we sent out questions about.

Different ways to weight the AJ area and the density of those areas.

So that's how we came up with the regional EJ score, but good to know that the diversity score was there in the, excuse me, the geographic diversity score was there in the past.

So this is kind of revisiting that, but an improvement potentially to it.

That was a lot of info, so I want to see if there's questions.

Any clarifications we can provide?

Anything like that before we go to the discussion questions.

I don't see any questions.

Feel free to drop them in the chat.

Or raise your hands or come off mute if you do think of some questions around all the background info, but I believe at this point, Patrice, we're going to go into the discussion questions.

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 51:05

So also want to pause here and see.

Jen S if there was anything that you wanted to offer in terms of context before we jumped into discussion.

**SM** **Schmidt, Jennifer M.** 51:19

I think it's been covered.

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 51:20

OK.

Excellent. So for the committee, this concept, is it a concept that you all are familiar with?

With the background information had you been aware of prior to?

I just want to get an early sense before the guided questions of just familiarity in general.

With the prioritization with project selection.

Anyone is definitely more than welcome to Pop Off Mute.

**LF** **Laurie Fields (she/her)** 51:58

Aware of it?

Mostly because I looked at submitting a project so.

I have other comments, but I'll wait so.



**PM Patrice McFarlin** 52:11

Alright, alright, just will popcorn it here with a few people.

What about Chris Bell?

Just want to get some early thoughts or feelings on that. The topic and your familiarity with it.

**BC Bell, Christopher** 52:30

I apologize.

Could you repeat that question one more time?

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 52:33

I just want to get a sense of your familiarity with the topic with prioritization in the background that Amy and Larry were able to share.

Was this kind of maybe your first time, or were you generally aware of the topic?

**BC Bell, Christopher** 52:50

For me this is kind of my first introduction to it.

## Discussion Questions

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 52:55

Super helpful. All right. Thank you.

OK, we are going to go forth into our first question and really looking for you guys to kind of think through.

What we talked about and really what it would look like in an application, do we really think that this tool would get us to the ultimate goal of increasing EJ?

So first question is, are there any other methodologies or considerations?

That you could think of that could be used in the project selection protocol to better prioritize projects in geographical areas where ILSFA has been underserved in the past.

Do we think that there is any other methodology or something that we should consider?

**LF** **Laurie Fields (she/her)** 53:53

And again, as someone coming from the tiny counties population wise in downstate, I think it's important that we look not just at the number of indicators, but at the density compared to population and how that that falls.

I know there's a lot of communities down here that if you look at raw numbers, there may not be as much, but if you look at where the population lives and the number of people living in the region, it's a lot denser.

Than just the raw numbers would indicate, and so when we look just at raw numbers, we are disadvantaging smaller communities.

I hope that makes sense. What I'm trying to say.

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 54:35

It does

**LF** **Laurie Fields (she/her)** 54:36

If not, I'll keep talking, but I'll stop now.

 **Jennifer Brown** 54:40

That makes sense, Lori.

Thank you for sharing.

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 54:48

So, Senora, you shared at the top of the meeting how beneficial solar has been for you?

So when you think about it from a resident's perspective, you know that we're going to be applying this approach to really prioritize and apply points for communities that maybe haven't been served in the past from a residence perspective.

Do you think that that is going to help us reach our goal of reaching more underserved?

Or is there any a way that you think that we could tweak it?

What are your initial thoughts?

**SC** **Senora Colbert** 55:26

Well, I have many but could share my thoughts.

You know, it was a big concern to me.

How I first of all, I educated myself about solar to volunteering with people for community recovery.

So that's how I found out about the program years ago and I did some research, you know, like I said, of course I became, you know, a benefactors of the program, which I think is excellent.

So #1, like she lives downstate.

Southern Illinois. I went to Siu Carbondale. But you know the information is not really being put out there and that's why I wanted to join on the committee so that I can share my life experience also too for my education, training and development point of view.

To the community at large, so a prime example. In the beginning there were a lot of education for Illinois solar for all but however.

It fell through because I even had solar meetings at my home.

You know to educate.

The community and then it just didn't.

There was no follow up after that. You know the people that wanted to participate in the program, that was considered in an EJ community.

There were, you know, drawbacks mainly at that time. It was because they had maybe trees in you know the yard that they couldn't get the sunlight or roof problems. And then it was supposed to be.

Some grant money coming from another program to resolve that issue.

But that never transpired, and so just across the board and then me being on other meetings with solar, you know what?

We can, you know, provide better education and communication throughout so that you know, we can get our message across, you know, to everyone. So that would be my thoughts right now.

PM

**Patrice McFarlin** 57:22

OK.

So, but what I'm hearing you say, Senora, is even if we are implementing this new strategy, it'll still be important for us to be mindful about the education and really that customer experience, even if we're focusing on these EJ communities.

Am I hearing you right.

**SC Senora Colbert** 57:45

You know, you know, yeah, absolutely.

It's just to educate them, you know, follow through, you know, on it, it should be maybe to see if the if the information that we're doing all this due diligence and hard work is it being received because a lot of people.

Are still unknowledgeable about Illinois solar for all that, when I mention it, they don't have a clue of what I'm talking about.

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 58:12

Awesome.

**SC Senora Colbert** 58:13

Does it make sense?

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 58:15

It does make sense. Using education to make sure that people are aware of the program and the benefits.

**SC Senora Colbert** 58:16

OK, OK.

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 58:24

Definitely heard that loud and clear.

**SC Senora Colbert** 58:26

OK.

Thank you.

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 58:31

All right, I'm opening up the floor.

Any other programs or projects or any other methodologies that you can think of?

That we could use to prioritize projects.

So moving on to, Laurie, yes.

 **Laurie Fields (she/her)** 58:52

Question.

Does the screening tool and I apologize.

Like I said, I didn't have a chance to review this as much as I wanted to.

Does the screening tool in terms of the process include looking at past things like coal mines and such?

Is that part of the screening already? I think it is, but I'm just not remembering.

Because I thought you know, originally part of the program was supposed to be helping with.

At least as I understood, it's supposed to be helping also with economic recovery for communities that depended upon coal and things like that.

And maybe I'm thinking of something else.

But anyway.

It seems like you know where I live in coal country.

And you know, Carbondale Carbon is in the name for a reason and.

Anyway.

I'm not remembering how that is prioritized, and I think that's something also that we just should make sure it's is happening.

 **Amy Jewel** 59:55

Yeah. Thank you.

That's a great question. I think for the environmental justice mapping methodology, there's a lot of indicators that go into that, but I don't know if it includes regions next to coal mines or regions that include former or current coal mine.

So that is definitely something we could look at as we look to potentially update the EJ mapping methodology.

In terms of the prioritization in the project selection protocol, I don't believe that is a factor that's looked at.

But Larry, please correct me if I'm wrong.

 **Lawrence Kotewa** 1:00:33

No, that's correct.

At this point, it would only be.

Covered in.

An EJ designation if that's a part of.  
The that process and I'm not sure between the.  
EPA tools and the California tools.  
How the coal aspect is woven in there.



**Amy Jewel** 1:01:06

Off the top of my head.

I know there's a lot of different environmental indicators that go into the analysis to designate EJ communities things like leading to air quality or.

Different forms of potential pollution, but.

Being in theory, if you're next to you have a coal mine in your community, that is something that would.

Negatively impact your air quality, so you would then be designated an EJ community.

However, in practice, that's all you know.

It depends on the quality of the data as well as you know how long ago that mine might have been operating.

So long story short, I think that is something we could look at to make sure or just take a look and see are the communities next to mines, mostly designated as EJ communities or not.

And see.

See if that might change going forward under different methodologies as well.



**Patrice McFarlin** 1:02:13

OK. Is that good for you, Lori?



**Laurie Fields (she/her)** 1:02:17

Yes, thank you.



**Patrice McFarlin** 1:02:18

Excellent.

So our next question is wanting to just understand your thoughts.

You share just a bit, Lori and Senora, but looking here from the rest of the group on any thoughts on the proposed shift from the EJ score to the geographic diversity score?

And really, do we see that as a tool that will move us more toward?

The proportional distribution.

Project solar projects across Illinois, so we definitely understand considering population and population density.

As an important input, but any other considerations?

Do we think that this is moving the needle to get more access to solar?

I am going to call out from here. Megan do you? Did you have any initial thoughts?

**AM** **Allen, Megan** 1:03:26

I did not have any initial thoughts.

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 1:03:30

Hey.

Go ahead, Lori.

**LF** **Laurie Fields (she/her)** 1:03:34

I keep turning my camera on and off. I think that this would be helpful.

I know.

And just as Full disclosure, my husband is one of is actually the only grassroots educator down in southern Illinois.

So I also hear about the program from that perspective.

There are a lot of people down here in southern Illinois who do not believe that their projects will ever get approved.

Because of the way things have been waiting and I understand that that's not intentional necessarily, but it's been.

In fact, I know one vendor who was an approved vendor who stopped.

Who dropped the program from what they do because they couldn't get projects approved.

And they've been doing solar for over a decade.

This is not someone new who didn't know what they were doing in the field.

This is someone who has been around was one of the first companies to do solar down here and that's all they do.

So.

There at least, has been the perception that.

The funds are not going to come down here and so I think anything we can do to

publicize that, yes, we are making an effort to make sure that things are equitably distributed.

Throughout, the state is going to be helpful to get people down here to actually go through the process of trying project because there's very much as a sense that, Oh yeah, sounds nice on paper, but that that it's really it's benefiting Chicago and that's it. I mean I.

Had people say that to me, almost in those exact words so.

 **Patrice McFarlin** 1:05:09

That's good. That's exactly what we want.

Laurie, is you to bring that lived experience and what you're hearing to the group so that's super rich for the discussion.

Anybody else have anything or any thoughts that they want to share on the topic for today?

 **Senora Colbert** 1:05:34

This is Senora and I just would like to add to what she just discusses that too.

It was Sunrun that did these solar panels for me, but the program was still in existence. You know, Solar Illinois solar for course. But there was a problem with finding a vendor to support the program.

Can you explain why?

How did this happen?

Kept telling me there were no vendors.

 **Jennifer Brown** 1:06:03

OK, Senora. I'm going to try to ask some clarifying questions. Just so we make sure we understand your question.

 **Senora Colbert** 1:06:03

For this.

 **Jennifer Brown** 1:06:16

Sunrun installed for you for your home, but your question is why do we not have vendors?



AV approved vendors.

Now, is that what your question is?

**SC Senora Colbert** 1:06:30

No, I was really just a piggybacking.

On what Miss Fields just stated is that there were approved vendors.

 **Jennifer Brown** 1:06:34

OK.

**SC Senora Colbert** 1:06:36

So let me make myself clear .

I really don't know what the real answer is. If they were not getting the projects or what, but I was just told that they were seeking out vendors and so, you know, it was a vendor problem in in order to complete the program.

In this geographical area.

So that is I.

Guess that is a statement with a question.

So we can.

You know we can research and get back with me later about that. But that's what I was told. And so therefore, you know, the people that were anticipating.

To, you know, get benefits from the Illinois solar for all.

They couldn't because there was no vendor available per say to provide the services.

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 1:07:31

OK.

So what we're hearing you say, Senora, is that there are populations that are interested in participating.

They just don't have the vendors in the area to support.

Is that correct?

All right.

So when we're thinking about this tool, if we're going to prioritize these communities working to make sure that we also have the vendors and those same communities to actually support the installation.

That would.

That's. Am I right hearing you?

 **Senora Colbert** 1:08:01

Yes, exactly.

 **Patrice McFarlin** 1:08:03

OK. Amy, I see you nodding.

So I think there was a copy there, but anything you wanted to add on to that point for today?



**Amy Jewel** 1:08:16

No, I think you know in some geographic areas, we have had a low number of vendors participating, particularly on the residential program sub program side. So we are actively working to try and recruit more vendors so they will become more active and we hope to continue to grow that and have a rich pool of vendors serving all portions, all regions of the state.

And so.

I know that there's been a shortage in the past.

Currently we have I believe 4 active vendors serving different portions of the state, which is great news.

There are some big vendors and who have decided to no longer participate in ILSFA for various reasons.

Some of those have to do with broader financial trends in the solar market, where some of those companies are finding that they want.

And this is particularly for the residential solar sub program.

For some of those, vendors are finding they'd rather participate.

More on the community solar side, or maybe nonprofit and public facilities.

But they're pulling out from the residential sub program. So, we have seen that and acknowledge that that is true where we have had shortages in the past, but the program administrator is working to try and recruit more vendors to make sure for all the sub programs, there's vendors available to serve the potential participants.

So it's a work in progress. It'll take time.

To continue building that pool of vendors.

But you know, hopefully we'll continue to see good results there.

**PM Patrice McFarlin** 1:10:04

Anyone else want to offer some thoughts?

OK, alright. Going once going twice. Looks like everyone is still on mute, but again. We do offer and ask you all to be able to chew on this a little bit more if you need to talk with your internal teams and think through how this would impact you and your work. Definitely are welcome and open to providing any written feedback. Post meeting.

With that Jen, I think that we can move forward with our close for the meeting for today.

## Closing Remarks

 **Jennifer Brown** 1:10:55

Absolutely. Just want to again, thank you so much for sharing all of your thoughts. I just want to reiterate that your feedback matters.

And so we're so delighted to have had.

So many of our committee members to attend today, we know that a couple of them had to jump off of today's call a little early, but thank you so much to those of you that were able to stay all the way to the end as far as next.

Steps you will receive an e-mail.

That will not only include.

A link to be able to go to straight to the ILSFA website that will have the recording the transcripts that will be available within about one week, but you will also have an opportunity to share any additional thoughts that you have via a document that we will.

Send you.

And so maybe you'll have an opportunity to just think back on today's topic.

And think back on some of the questions and any thoughts that you may have at a later time also for those that are not in attendance today that are going to listen to the replay, you can provide your feedback as well using that feedback loop. So that will.

Be in your inbox and.

Lastly, I just wanted to share that our next quarterly meeting will be February 18th. And so today we're meeting on the second Tuesday, but.

Our next meeting will be on the third Tuesday and we're going to kind of stick with the third Tuesday as an option for our future meetings.

So again, the meetings will be 90 minutes, so if you can allot that into your schedule from 2:00 to 3:30 is where we will stay on the agenda and I will send out a calendar invite for February 18th for that time frame.

So you can go ahead and mark that on your calendar as well.

So that is about all that we have for you today.

What additional questions might you have for us?

Any closing thoughts from anyone of our team members, Larry, any closing thoughts?

IPA. Any closing thoughts?



**Lawrence Kotewa** 1:13:39

Not here.



**Schmidt, Jennifer M.** 1:13:41

Nothing for me.



**Laurie Fields (she/her)** 1:13:44

Are we going to be at some point discussing the self designation process for EJ communities or is that something we could or I can talk with you about it on Thursday. We're talking on Thursday one-on-one, so that might be better. Now that I think about it.



**Jennifer Brown** 1:14:02

No problem, no problem.

Yeah, that, that's definitely Laurie, if that is an area that we want to discuss, we can certainly look into.

Whether or not that's something we can add to our agenda for future meetings.

Alright, well it looks like we can give you back 10 minutes of your schedule and your afternoon.

Thank you so much again to all of our advisory committee members, we truly appreciate you being a part of the committee and providing your feedback today.

Thank you so much for your time and we will see you again on February 18th.

Have a good evening.

**SC** **Senora Colbert** 1:14:48  
Thank you.

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 1:14:49  
Thanks everyone.

**PM** **Patrice McFarlin** 1:14:50  
Have a good one.

**SC** **Senora Colbert** 1:14:51  
Thank you.

□ **Jennifer Brown** stopped transcription