

Environmental Justice Community Self-Designation Helpful Tips

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This document serves to supplement the Environmental Justice Community Self-Designation Process document and is based on feedback from applicants who have gone through the process as well as the Environmental Justice Community Self-Designation Committee, which reviews designation requests. View the [English Self-Designation Process document](#) and the [Spanish Self-Designation Process document](#).

The principle of environmental justice requires that no segment of the population, regardless of race, national origin, age, or income, should bear disproportionately high or adverse effects of environmental pollution. Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) provides special consideration to Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs) by setting a goal that at least 25% of program funds be allocated to projects located in or serving EJCs. 25% of census block groups in Illinois were designated EJCs based on localized environmental and socioeconomic factors. The Environmental Justice Self-Designation Process was developed to provide an opportunity for non-designated communities to apply for consideration by submitting evidence not represented by the data used in determining the ILSFA EJCs.

Areas of Environmental Justice Characteristics

There are four environmental justice categories that receive a score from the committee: Exposure Indicators, Environmental Effects Indicators, Sensitive Population Indicators, and Socioeconomic Factor Indicators. The score awarded will reflect the extent of the burden experienced by the community.

Regarding Exposure Indicators, the level of burden will be deemed higher if supporting documents indicate that the exposure level is greater than deemed safe. If multiple types of pollution are present, consider providing supporting documentation for all (most) and not just the most publicized one.

Regarding Environmental Effects Indicators, the level of burden will be deemed higher if supporting documents indicate that proximity to environmental hazards is close. When noting the location of environmental hazards, consider also highlighting how the close proximity impacts vulnerable communities.

Regarding Sensitive Population Indicators, the level of burden will be deemed higher if supporting documents indicate that the number, or percentage, of at-risk community members is high. Age and health weigh heavily on this indicator. Explaining why the sensitivity of the community renders it more susceptible to compromised environmental conditions is helpful.

Regarding Socioeconomic Factor Indicators, the level of burden will be deemed higher if supporting documents indicate that the number, or percentage, of at-risk community members is high. Quality of housing stock, median income of residents, and average education level of residents can weigh heavily on this indicator. Describing how socioeconomic issues place the community at a higher risk of environmental burden is helpful.

Please remember there are **four** areas. It is recommended that all four indicators are addressed in the proposal. Many times, proposals focus on just one of the indicators. Getting a high score for just one indicator might not be enough to reach the threshold.

Please be sure to include **how the community is impacted** by any environmental issues addressed in the proposal. Many times, proposals explain the issue in great detail, but not how the issue impacts the community.

Keep in mind the weighting of the areas. While it is important to address all areas, it is helpful to remember some areas have more possible points than others.

Basic Information

- Naming the community helps to confirm the proposal is for an area as opposed to one possible installation location. Some proposals name a specific building as the community; however, the designation process aims to designate a community and not just one location within that community.
- When considering geographic limits of the proposed area, it is helpful to use street names in the description, rather than naming a town/city whose boundaries may not be easily determined by the community.
- Including a map highlighting the boundaries is also helpful. If the area shares a boundary with an existing EJC, highlighting the proposed community and the existing EJC ensures this is clear to the committee.
- The proximity points are only applicable to areas that share a boundary with an existing EJC. While there may be connections between a nearby EJC and the community seeking self-designation, the proximity points will not be awarded unless there is a shared boundary between the two. For instance, two communities located within the same political or school district that do not share a border would not be eligible for proximity points.

Qualitative and Quantitative Support

Please keep in mind several factors (17 variables – see the EJ Process document for more details) have already been accounted for through the initial EJ analysis. It is, therefore, important not to simply reiterate information that has already been reviewed. View the [data and results of the initial analysis](#) and an explanation of the calculations. Consider what factors may already be represented in the data and what recent developments might not have existed when the analysis was conducted in 2023.¹ Consider issues that are not widely known or previously documented and how those issues have impacted the community.

- If a multi-page document or website is provided as support, it is important to direct the committee's attention to the pertinent information. For example, links to very long documents or websites should direct the committee to review particular pages or where and what to look for on the website.
- Clearly labeled files (file names) tying documents to write-ups will help the committee know which document corresponds to which issue.
- Pictures and videos can support proposals.

¹ Per the 2024 [Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan](#), this analysis will be conducted every 5 years.