ILSFA Random Selection Guidance Document

This draft guidance document outlines the proposed protocol for how project applications will be randomly selected, should random selection be necessary. Comments on this document will be accepted at comments@illinoissfa.com until Friday, August 9, 2019 at 5:00 PM CDT.

Random Selection Overview

As noted in the Project Selection Protocol, qualifying project applications within a sub-program will be scored and ranked from most to least points. For each stage of the protocol, projects will then be selected in rank order until the relevant budget is filled. Random selection will only be necessary if there are multiple projects in the same score group (e.g., three projects have a score of six) and accepting all of those projects would surpass the available budget. Then, instead of selecting all projects in that score group, individual projects will be randomly selected by the Program Administrator from that score group (using the project application numbers) until the appropriate incentive level has been reached. Random selection has the potential to be used at multiple points in the process; for example, it can be used during both the Environmental Justice Communities Selection and the Low-Income Communities Selection. Documentation, including seed value, will be provided for each random selection.

The random selection of projects is conducted by a script written in the Python programming language. The script ingests the list of qualified projects sorted by assigned project number in ascending order. Next, the random.choice() function is executed with the input list as its argument. Finally, the value returned by this function is the name of our selected project. The script and input tables (lists of qualified projects for each random selection) will be made available upon request.

The seed value for this randomization is provided by the microsecond value of the computing system time at the time of script execution, and the seed value used for selection will be stored for replication purposes. When the seed value is retrieved, it is then transformed by application of the Mersenne Twister, which uses the seed value as an input to two one-way functions to generate a new output. That output is then used to retrieve the corresponding item from our list of qualifying projects. This method is the same randomization algorithm used by many other software systems including PHP, R, Ruby, Stata, and Microsoft Excel.

For the 2018-2019 Project Selection, the random selections for the Low-Income Community Solar sub-program and/or Non-Profit/Public Facilities sub-program, if necessary, will be generated on Wednesday, August 21, 2019 at 10:00 AM CDT at the office of the ILSFA Program Administrator, Elevate Energy, in Chicago. The announcement will be made on Thursday, August 15, 2019 as to whether random selection will be necessary for any of the sub-programs. Initial project scores and proposed contract values will be posted on the program website, as well as e-mailed directly to Approved Vendors, on Monday, August 19, 2019 at 10:00 AM CDT. Approved Vendors have until 12:00 PM CDT on Tuesday, August 20, 2019 to review project scores. Additionally, Approved Vendors will have until that time to withdraw projects from the random selection process.

Interested parties are invited to attend and observe the generation of randomization time seeds on Wednesday, August 21, 2019 (please write to info@IllinoisSFA.com if you plan to attend), and the Program Administrator will make the time seeds available upon request.