



Illinois Solar for All
A STATE PROGRAM

Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting

February 17, 2026

Jennifer W. Brown, Associate Director, Illinois Solar for All

Patrice McFarlin, Principal, Encolor

Agenda

- Housekeeping and Ground Rules
- Introductions and Icebreakers
- Last Meeting Recap and Advisory Committee Updates
- Topic 1: ILSFA Grassroots Education
- Topic 2: Participant Referral Process
- Closing/Next Steps



Housekeeping and Ground Rules

- **Be kind and use mute.**
 - Please put yourself on mute while presentations are taking place.
- **Raise your hand or put your question in the chat.**
 - Use the “raise your hand” icon to indicate you have a question or share your question in the chat. We will address all questions.
- **Be present.**
 - Please be on camera and focus on this meeting only.



Introductions and Icebreakers

Patrice McFarlin, Principal, Encolor



Last Meeting Recap and Advisory Committee Updates

Patrice McFarlin, Principal, Encolor



Last Meeting Recap

- **November 2025 Advisory Committee Meeting Attendance:**
 - Fourteen members attended
 - Six online
 - Eight in-person
- **November 2025 Advisory Committee Meeting Topics:**
 - Topic 1: Illinois Solar for All Approved Vendor Manual
 - Topic 2: Illume Special Topic Report
 - Topic 3: Illinois Solar for All: Residential Solar (Small) Sub-Program Messaging for Outreach and Community Engagement
 - Topic 4: Illinois Solar for All: Residential Solar (Small) Sub-Program Results



Advisory Committee Update: Governing Docs Ad Hoc Committee

- **Governing Documents Review Areas**

- Meeting Attendance and Organizational Representation
- Role Definitions & Membership Categories
- Use of AI Note-Takers in Meetings
- Participation Standards- All Committee Members
- Terms of Service

- **Timeline**

- Kick off meeting: 1/14/2026
- Draft 1: 3/13/2026
- Review Meeting: week of 3/23/2026
- IPA Feedback: 4/24/2026
- Final Draft: 5/8/2026



Topic 1: Illinois Solar for All Grassroots Education

Kasia Machaj, Senior Associate III, and Clio Lyons, Senior Associate, Illinois Solar for All



Illinois Solar for All Long-Term Plan and Grassroots Education

- “[t]he Agency (IPA) shall direct **up to 5% of the funds available under the Illinois Solar for All Program to community-based groups and other qualifying organizations to assist in community-driven education efforts** related to the Illinois Solar for All Program.”
- Authorized grassroots education activities include **“general energy education, job training program outreach efforts,”** and **“other activities deemed to be qualified by the Agency,”** but **“shall not be used to support the marketing by solar project development firms and organizations,** unless such education provides equal opportunities for all applicable firms and organizations.”
- To help ensure that environmental justice communities are made aware of opportunities for participation in ILSFA, **grassroots education funding will be prioritized towards Environmental Justice Communities to help meet this goal.**

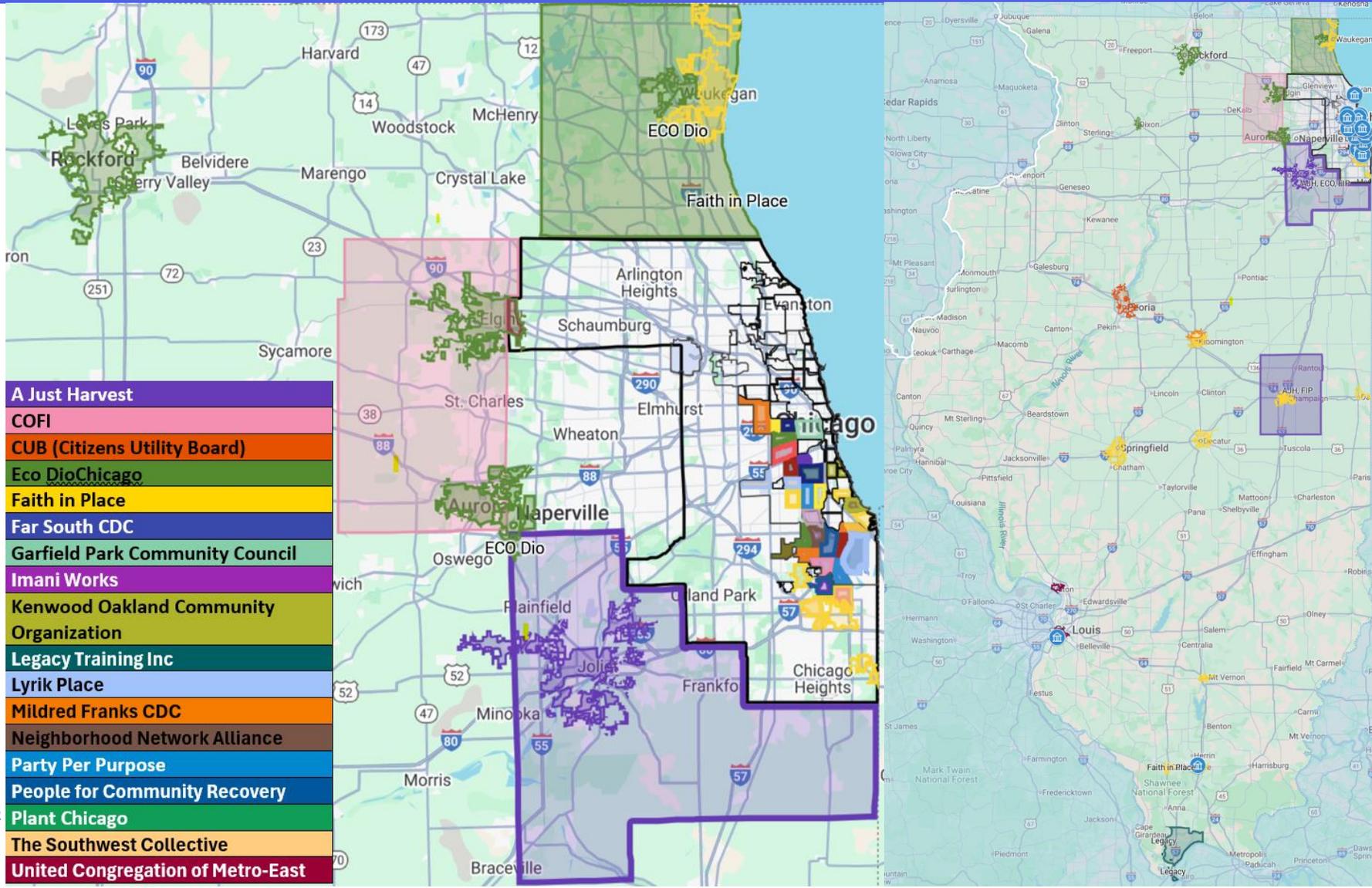


What is an Illinois Solar for All Grassroots Educator?

- **A Grassroots Educator is a non-profit community-based organization that partners with the ILSFA program to promote energy equity and promote the growth of solar power for income-eligible households in some of our most vulnerable communities across Illinois, such as Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs).**
 - Grassroots Educators are trusted voices in their respective communities and conduct outreach to educate residents about the benefits of going solar.
- **After a competitive Request for Proposals bid in February 2025, Illinois Solar for All entered the 2025-2026 program year with 18 Grassroots Educators in July 2025.**
 - Nine returning Grassroots Educators are from the 2024-2025 program year.
 - Nine new Grassroots Educators/returning Grassroots Educators from previous program years.
- Visit the [Grassroots Education page](#) for more information about the current Grassroots Educators.



2025-2026 Grassroots Education Campaign Geographies



Historical Context Behind Illinois Solar for All Grassroots Educators

- Grassroots Educators conduct engagement activities as outlined in Statements of Work in their subcontractor agreements with ILSFA. These are referred to as their "campaigns".
- Grassroots Educators are tasked with spreading awareness about all ILSFA sub-programs.
- Historically, Grassroots Education campaigns has been focused on the Illinois Solar for All: Residential Solar (Small) sub-program (single family homes and 1–4-unit buildings) and the Illinois Solar for All: Community Solar sub-program.
 - Connecting homeowners to on-site solar.
 - Connecting homeowners and renters to community solar projects in their utility areas.



Grassroots Education Engagement Campaign Activities

- **Some of those Grassroots Education engagement activities may include a combination of any of the following:**
 - Community Meetings and Rallies
 - Lunch and Learns, Trainings, and Workshops
 - Canvassing
 - One-on-one Meetings
 - House Parties and Open Houses
 - Networking Events
 - Tabling
 - Focus Groups



2025-2026 Grassroots Education Landscape

- Due to increased participation in Residential Solar (Small) sub-program, the focus for Grassroots Education campaigns shifted in the 2025-2026 program year.
- The ILSFA Program Administrator provided the Grassroots Educators with updated messaging during their orientation in August 2025:
 - In July 2025, the ILSFA program reached a historic milestone! The Residential Solar (Small) sub-program reached its budget for the first time in the history of ILSFA, and the waitlist is full.
- On March 2, 2026, a new rolling submission window will open for the remaining budget funds in the Residential Solar (Large) sub-program, which can be used to fund either Residential Solar (Small) or Residential Solar (Large) projects.
- On May 29, 2026, the 2025-2026 program year will end, and any remaining waitlisted 2025-2026 projects must be resubmitted for consideration in the following 2026-2027 program year. **Waitlists do not rollover.**



2025-2026 Grassroots Education Landscape, cont'd.

- Although the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program's budget was met in July 2025, Grassroots Educators were instructed to continue connecting homeowners who were interested in on-site solar with Approved Vendors to determine if their homes were eligible when more funds became available.
 - Grassroots Educators were instructed to set realistic expectations for timeframes due to the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program's fully allocated budget and to continue directing interested participants to Approved Vendors.
 - This ensured participants began the income verification process and were added to the Approved Vendor's pipeline when additional funding became available.
 - Available Community Solar openings were limited.
- **The ILSFA Program Administrator continues to work with Grassroots Educators to keep them up-to-date with the latest changes within the program.**



Upcoming 2026-2027 Program Year

- Due to increased interest and participation within the overall ILSFA program, as well as the full utilization of the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program's budget for the 2025-2026 program year, the ILSFA Program Administrator anticipates similar budget utilization in the 2026-2027 program year.
- As a result, the ILSFA Program Administrator anticipates that the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program's budget for projects will quickly be fully allocated once the submission window opens for 2026-2027 Residential Solar (Small) projects.
- These anticipations will influence how the Grassroots Educators engage with their communities and their campaigns.



Grassroots Education: Small Group Discussion

1. Considering the Long-Term Plan's purpose for Grassroots Education, increased demand for the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program, and capacity constraints within the Community Solar sub-program, what opportunities exist to expand the role and impact of Grassroots Educators in the field?
2. How else can Grassroots Educators be strategically utilized to support program objectives?
3. What type of non-educational activities or services can be performed by Grassroots Educators to support the program?



Grassroots Education: Small Group Discussion, cont'd.

4. What additional tools can we equip Grassroots Educators to help them be more effective in the field?
5. During periods when there are no active solar offers to connect households to, how can Grassroots Educators maintain momentum and continue to support the goals of the program?
6. Is the current list of activity types still relevant and inclusive of community needs? Are there additional activities that should be considered, or activities that should be removed from the list?



Topic 2: Participant Referral Process/Participant Pipeline

Alexandria Cedergren, Senior Associate III, Illinois Solar for All



Participant Referral Process: Background

- The participant referral process was created in 2021 to address barriers to participation in the Residential Solar (Small) sub-program by facilitating a direct connection between an income-eligible participant and Approved Vendors.
- The referral process considers geography, availability of Approved Vendors with a standard Residential Solar (Small) offer serving single-family homes in a potential participant's area.

Goals of the Referral Process:

1. Increase participation in Residential Solar (Small) sub-program
2. Reduce barriers to finding an Approved Vendor
3. Lower soft costs and simplify sales procedures



Participant Referral Process: 2026 Long-Term Plan Updates

- Since its implementation, the participant referral process has seen little success, as it only directed potential participants to active Approved Vendors with standard offers.
- The program has also continued to encounter barriers at the income verification stage, while the speed of connection between an Approved Vendor and program participants is an ongoing issue even after verification.
- To further support interested participants in the ILSFA program and ease participant acquisition costs for Approved Vendors, the IPA proposed in the filed 2026 Long Term Plan **to expand the current participant referral process** through a participant pipeline for the Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar sub-programs, with the intent to have an ILSFA program-maintained list of income-eligible participants.



Participant Referral Process: Current Process

1. Approved Vendors with standard offers agree to participate in the referral process.
2. Participants complete income verification through the ILSFA website and opt into the referral process on the webform.
3. Once verified as eligible, participants receive their eligibility letter outlining they should expect to hear from an Approved Vendor within one week.
4. Once participants are verified as income-eligible, their basic information and household site information (i.e., breaker or fuse box, roof age) is added to a shared excel document and the Approved Vendors are notified of the new referrals.
5. The Approved Vendors must reach out to new referral participants within five days and should conduct no more than 4 follow-ups with the participant.



Participant Referral Process: Challenges

There are two major challenges the ILSFA Program Administrator experienced with the current model:

1. Previously, there were only **two** Approved Vendors with standard offers accepting participant referrals.
2. Approved Vendors had slow or low responsiveness to participants. Approved Vendors either never reached out to an eligible participant or never called back on a set follow-up to the participant.



Participant Referral Process: Discussion

1. Prior to this meeting, were you aware of the participant referral process?
2. What barriers should be considered and addressed for Approved Vendors participating in the participant referral process?
3. How do we create a process that is beneficial enough to motivate Approved Vendors to utilize the ILSFA program's referral list instead of keeping their own lists?
4. How do we manage a program-level waitlist and project-level waitlist to reduce extended waiting periods for the household?



Participant Referral Process: Discussion, cont'd.

5. As noted in the challenges, how do we enforce the five-day response requirement for Approved Vendors? What are the consequences if they don't comply?
6. To implement the participant referral process in a neutral fashion and to better direct referrals, should we let the customer decide on the types of offers they are willing to accept?
7. How should inactive or stalled participants be managed within the participant referral process pipeline?



Q&A



Next Steps

- **Follow-Up Communication:**
 - Within two weeks of this meeting, we will send out an email that contains a link to the ILSFA website, where you will find the meeting recording, agenda, deck, and transcripts.
 - The email will also include a document if you'd like to provide additional feedback and/or follow-up questions.
- **Next Meeting:**
 - Our next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, May 19, 2026**, and will be **virtual**.

**Don't miss a single update!
Scan the QR Code to sign up for all
ILSFA announcements.**



Thank you for your time!



ILLINOIS SOLAR FOR ALL