



# Illinois Solar for All

Program Year 2024-2025  
Annual Evaluation Report

June 15, 2026

# Acknowledgments

E Source Companies (E Source) is a forward-thinking consulting company at the rare intersection of insight and execution. The Company uses cutting edge research strategies to help build a resilient energy ecosystem to enrich lives, improve global health, and ensure a more secure and sustainable future.

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## PREPARED FOR:

Illinois Power Agency  
180 N Wabash Ave, Suite 500  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

## PREPARED BY:

E Source Companies  
1321 Upland Drive, Suite 3413  
Houston, TX 77043

## IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

Verdant Associates, LLC  
Industrial Economics, Inc.  
Ewald and Wasserman Research Consultants, LLC

## CONTACT:

Mallika Jayaraman  
mallika\_jayaraman@esource.com  
(720) 819-5630

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# Executive Summary

**The Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) program is designed to expand access to solar energy for income-eligible households and communities.** This evaluation covers **program year 2024-2025 (PY24-25)**, which took place from June 1, 2024, to May 31, 2025. ILSFA is implemented by the Illinois Power Agency (IPA) and administered by Elevate.

In PY24-25, ILSFA generated a variety of impacts. Based on modeled estimates, the evaluation team estimates that the program:

- Added **29.5 MWh of solar energy** to the electric grid per year.
- Delivered **\$116 million in lifetime net bill savings** for participating households and organizations.
- Avoided 58.2 million pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, 29.7 thousand pound of NO<sub>x</sub> emissions, and 33.6 thousand pounds of SO<sub>2</sub> emissions – **the equivalent of taking 3,871 cars off the road.**
- Boosted Illinois' economy, by adding **\$63 million in GDP** and the equivalent of **310 new full-time jobs.**
- Delivered solar benefits to **environmental justice communities, income eligible communities, and communities throughout the state.**

The evaluation team examined and modeled impacts based on projects approved during PY24-25 or projects energized through the end of PY24-25, depending on the type of impact.



**When looking at program impacts, we use the following terms:**

- **PY24-25 approved projects:** Awarded funding in PY24-25 but may not be fully constructed or energized by program year-end. Approved projects represent projected impacts.
- **PY24-25 energized projects:** Fully constructed, connected to the grid, and delivering benefits, representing modeled actual impacts for projects energized by May 31, 2025. The energized project count includes projects that have been approved and energized in prior program years. For energized projects, we model **one-time impacts** (e.g., construction costs) and **ongoing impacts** (e.g., bill savings), specifying them in each impact section.

Projects may be approved and reach energized status by the end of the program year, meaning they will be counted in both categories.



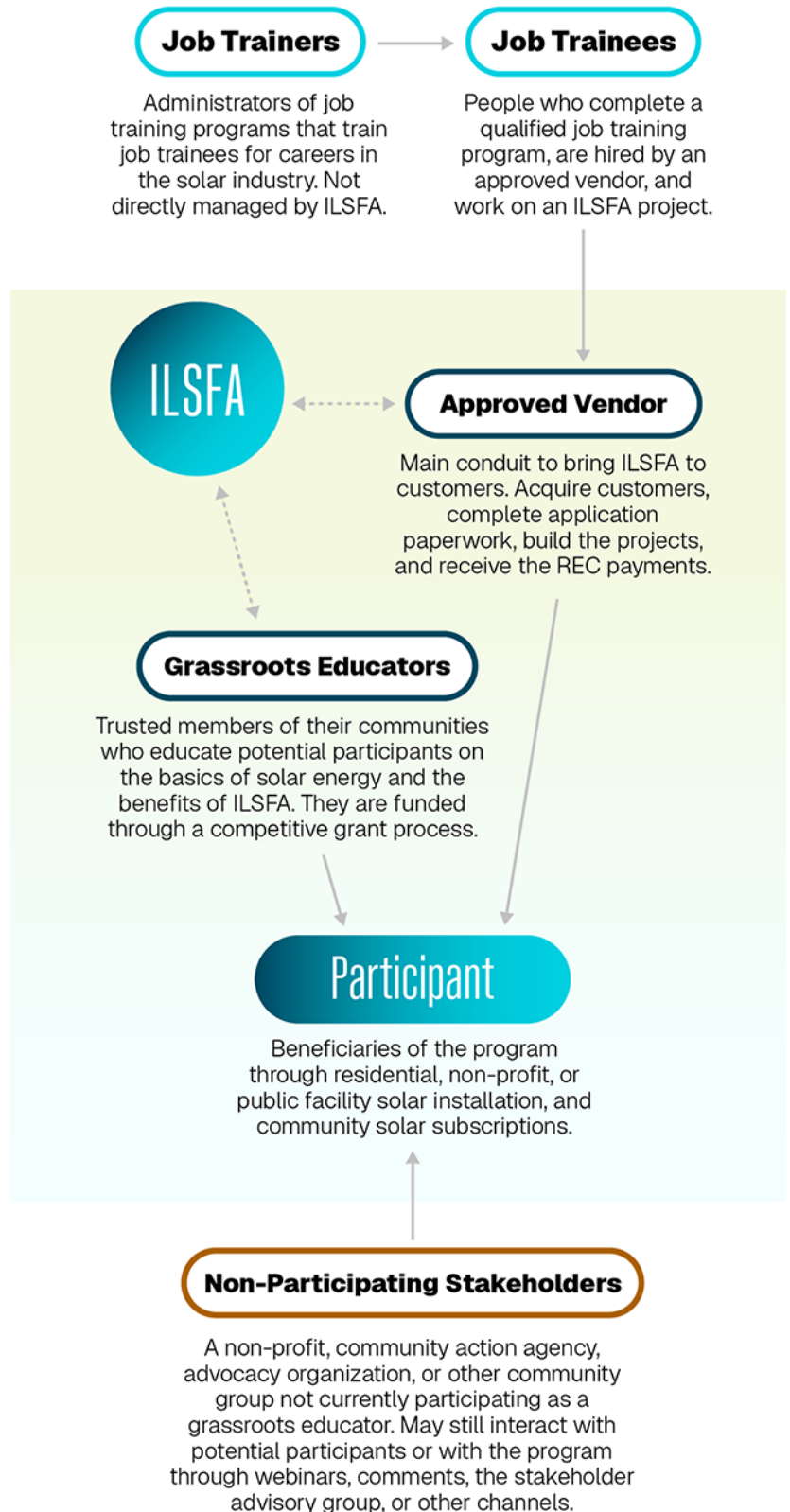
**The evaluation also includes a process assessment in PY24-25, which aims to understand the experiences of those involved in the program and assess the performance of the program administrator, Elevate.**

In the figure on the right, we show the various actors involved with ILSFA who directly benefit from the program, as well as entities that facilitate participation. For the PY24-25 evaluation report, we collected feedback from all groups except job training administrators, who we will speak to as part of the PY25-26 evaluation.

Overall, participation in ILSFA entered a period of growth in PY24-25, particularly in the Residential (Small) and Community Solar subprograms. Other programs had participation patterns consistent with earlier program years.

Across PY24-25, participants, approved vendors (AVs), and Grassroots Educators consistently identified a need for clearer, more accessible information about basic solar concepts and how the ILSFA program works, as well as additional support throughout the participation process. Participants generally reported strong benefits after installation—particularly bill savings—but faced challenges earlier in the process, including difficulty finding an approved vendor and navigating installation process for on-site solar. AVs reported struggling with documentation requirements and the AV portal

Key recommendations include expanding shared solar education resources, improving transparency around vendor availability and program timelines, streamlining documentation and portal functionality, strengthening coordination among AVs, Grassroots Educators and the program, and creating more structured participant support (such as a customer concierge or reaching out at project milestones). Together, these findings point to opportunities to improve program accessibility, efficiency, and trust while building on strong participation trends and post-solar installation benefits.



# Program Trends

PY21-22 through PY24-25

June 1, 2021 – May 31, 2025

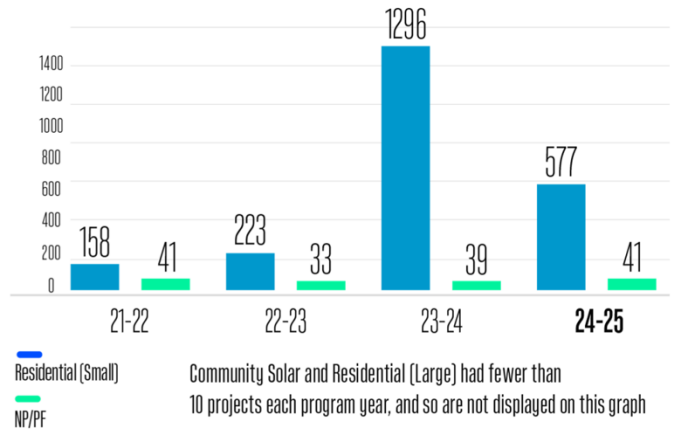


Most projects in ILSFA are part of the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram. In PY24-25, fewer Residential Solar (Small) projects were awarded funds than in the prior program year, although it was more projects than in PY21-22 or PY22-23. Other subprograms saw a similar number of projects to prior years.

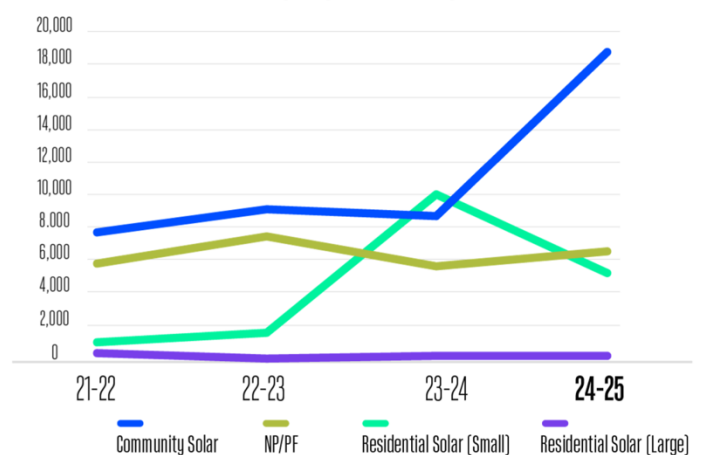


The Community Solar subprogram has the largest average project size across ILSFA and accounts for the most new solar capacity approved through the program. Across the full program, the amount of new solar capacity approved grew each year.

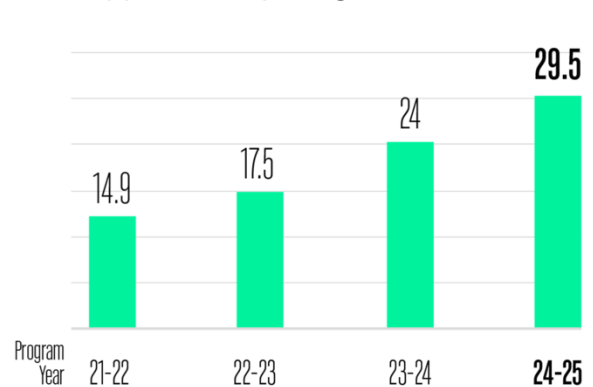
## Approved Projects by Subprogram



## Approved Capacity by Subprogram (in kW)



## Total Approved Capacity (in MW)



# Electricity Impacts

- **Approved Projects** (PY24-25)
- **Energized Projects** (PY18-19 through PY24-25)

To assess electric energy impacts, our team looked at both PY24-25 approved projects and PY24-25 energized projects. We summarize the number of PY24-25 approved projects and their average capacity below. Average project cost includes PY24-25 energized projects only as project costs are not always collected before a system has been energized.

## Distributed Generation

### 1-4 Units



Number of Approved Projects: **577**

Total Approved PV Capacity (kW<sub>AC</sub>): **5,018.0**

Average Energized Project Cost per kW<sub>AC</sub>: **\$3,285**

### 5+ Units



Number of Approved Projects: **2**

Total Approved PV Capacity (kW<sub>AC</sub>): **200.0**

Average Energized Project Cost per kW<sub>AC</sub>: **\$3,334**

### Non-Profit /Public Facilities



Number of Approved Projects: **41**

Total Approved PV Capacity (kW<sub>AC</sub>): **6,321.1**

Average Energized Project Cost per kW<sub>AC</sub>: **\$3,045**

## Community Solar



Number of Approved Projects: **6**

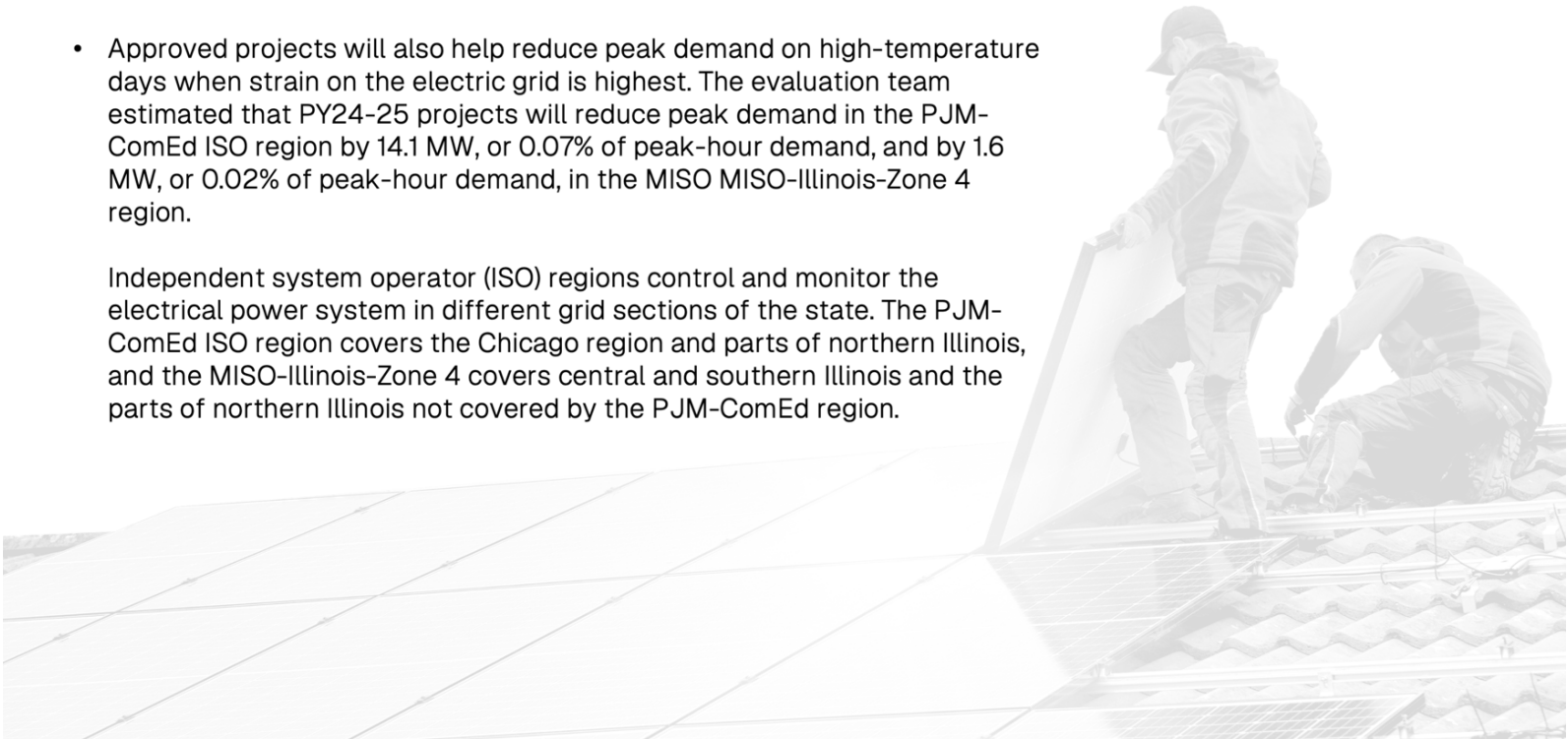
Total Approved PV Capacity (kW<sub>AC</sub>): **17,965.0**

Average Energized Project Cost per kW<sub>AC</sub>: **\$3,289**

## Key Findings

- PY24-25 approved projects are expected to generate 29.5 MW of solar energy per year.
- Approved projects will also help reduce peak demand on high-temperature days when strain on the electric grid is highest. The evaluation team estimated that PY24-25 projects will reduce peak demand in the PJM-ComEd ISO region by 14.1 MW, or 0.07% of peak-hour demand, and by 1.6 MW, or 0.02% of peak-hour demand, in the MISO MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 region.

Independent system operator (ISO) regions control and monitor the electrical power system in different grid sections of the state. The PJM-ComEd ISO region covers the Chicago region and parts of northern Illinois, and the MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 covers central and southern Illinois and the parts of northern Illinois not covered by the PJM-ComEd region.



# Bill Impacts • Energized Projects (PY18-19 through PY24-25)

To assess bill impacts, our team looked at PY24-25 energized projects, which includes all projects energized from the inception of ILSFA through the end of PY24-25. Since bill impacts occur once projects are energized and continue over the life of the solar array, looking at energized projects is aligned with the timing when participants see bill impacts. The program also does not collect final project cost data until solar arrays are constructed, meaning the data needed to calculate bill impacts is more complete for energized projects.

## Distributed Generation



**1-4 Units**

Number of Energized Projects: **1,494**  
Average Net Monthly Estimated Bill Savings per Customer: **\$128.07**  
Bill savings per kW capacity: **\$19.71**  
Average Net Monthly Savings (% of Pre-Solar Utility Bill): **91%**



**5+ Units**

Number of Energized Projects: **4**  
Average Net Monthly Estimated Bill Savings per Customer: **\$76.91**  
Bill savings per kW capacity: **\$17.96**  
Average Net Monthly Savings (% of Pre-Solar Utility Bill): **79%**



**Non-Profit /Public Facilities**

Number of Energized Projects: **118**  
Average Net Monthly Estimated Bill Savings per Customer: **\$1,751.18**  
Bill savings per kW capacity: **\$17.10**  
Average Net Monthly Savings (% of Pre-Solar Utility Bill): **57%**

## Community Solar



Number of Energized Projects: **14**

Average Net Monthly Estimated Bill Savings per Customer: **\$40.62**

Bill savings per kW capacity: **\$11.03**

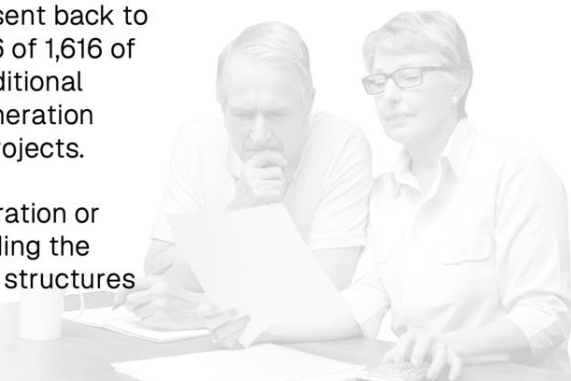
Average Net Monthly Savings (% of Pre-Solar Utility Bill): **32%**

## Key Findings

- Energized projects are estimated to deliver lifetime net bill savings of \$116 million in net present value (NPV).
- Distributed generation customers continue to see higher bill savings than Community Solar customers, based on how Community Solar customers receive credit for energy on their bill - for the supply portion of electricity cost and not on the distribution or taxes/fees portion of electricity bills.

Beginning January 1, 2025, due to a change in Illinois net metering rules, distributed generation customers will receive fewer benefits for excess electricity sent back to the grid compared to prior years. This new net metering rate affected 66 of 1,616 of energized distributed generation projects in PY24-25 and will affect additional projects in future program years. Despite these changes, distributed generation projects are still likely to see higher bill savings than community solar projects.

ILSFA does not define how customers are credited for Distributed Generation or Community Solar on their bills. Rather, Illinois law determines this, including the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA). These findings reflect the billing structures in effect during the PY24-25 timeframe.



# Environmental Impacts

• **Estimated First-Year Avoided Emissions for Approved Projects (PY24-25)**

To assess environmental impacts, our team looked at both PY24-25 approved and PY24-25 energized projects. We calculated environmental impacts based on the energy impacts—in other words, we assume the energy generated by the solar arrays offsets displaces energy that would otherwise be produced by other types of power plants connected to the electric grid. Therefore, our team looks at the same set of projects for environmental impacts as for energy impacts. We show impacts for approved projects below and include results for energized impacts in the detailed findings section of the report.

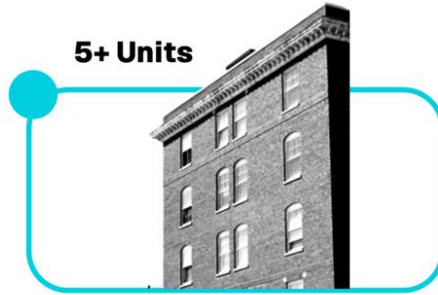
## Distributed Generation

### 1-4 Units



Number of Approved Projects: **577**  
CO<sub>2</sub>e lbs: **9,581,830**  
NO<sub>x</sub> lbs: **5,027**  
SO<sub>2</sub> lbs: **5,705**

### 5+ Units



Number of Approved Projects: **2**  
CO<sub>2</sub>e lbs: **300,180**  
NO<sub>x</sub> lbs: **137**  
SO<sub>2</sub> lbs: **154**

### Non-Profit /Public Facilities



Number of Approved Projects: **41**  
CO<sub>2</sub>e lbs: **13,770,752**  
NO<sub>x</sub> lbs: **8,694**  
SO<sub>2</sub> lbs: **10,005**

## Community Solar



Number of Approved Projects: **6**    CO<sub>2</sub>e lbs: **34,546,228**    NO<sub>x</sub> lbs: **15,805**    SO<sub>2</sub> lbs: **17,720**

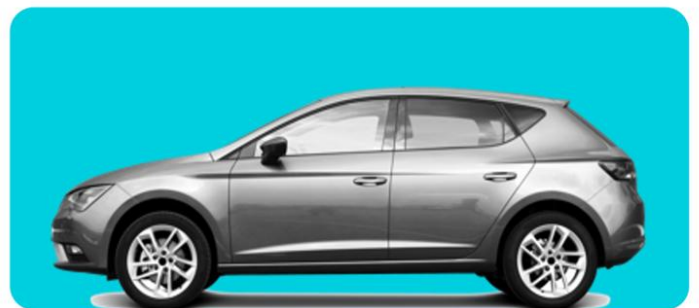
## Key Findings

- First-year avoided emissions of PY24-25 approved projects are estimated to be equal to 58.2 million pounds CO<sub>2</sub>e, 29.7 thousand pound of NO<sub>x</sub>, and 33.6 thousand pounds of SO<sub>2</sub>.
- Total lifetime avoided emissions are estimated to be equal to 340 million pounds CO<sub>2</sub>e, 363 thousand pounds of NO<sub>x</sub>, and 411 thousand pounds of SO<sub>2</sub>.
- First-year avoided emissions of approved projects are equivalent to:

6,271 Homes Powered for a Year



3,871 Cars Taken Off the Road for a Year



# Workforce and Economic Impacts

• New PY24-25 Energized Projects

To assess workforce and economic impacts, our team looked at modeled impacts for new projects energized in PY24-25. For this analysis, we looked only at new energized projects, excluding projects energized in prior program years. Since economic impacts occur at a single time when a solar array is constructed, we look at actual impacts to the economy (GDP, jobs created in Illinois, and employee compensation) occurring as a result of this construction.

## Distributed Generation

### 1-4 Units



Number of New Energized Projects: **1,360**

Employee Compensation: **\$13,680,000**

GDP Impacts: **\$46,330,000**

### 5+ Units

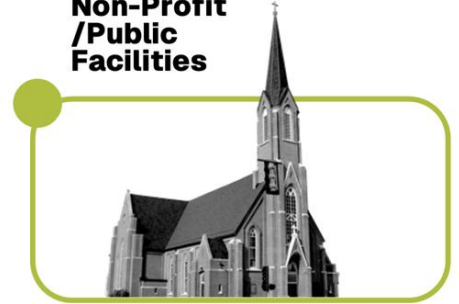


Number of New Energized Projects: **1**

Employee Compensation: **\$390,000**

GDP Impacts: **\$1,320,000**

### Non-Profit /Public Facilities



Number of New Energized Projects: **29**

Employee Compensation: **\$5,990,000**

GDP Impacts: **\$20,270,000**

## Community Solar



Number of New Energized Projects: **3**

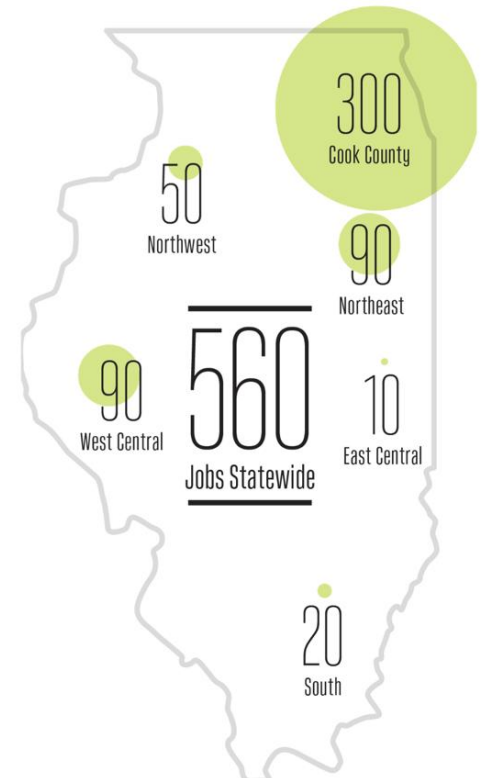
Employee Compensation: **\$12,850,000**

GDP Impacts: **\$43,540,000**

## Key Findings

- New PY24-25 energized projects contributed over \$111 million in modeled GDP impacts of which more than \$90 million came from investments in Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar projects.
- ILSFA investments supported \$33 million in employee compensation statewide, creating demand for the equivalent of 560 full-time equivalent jobs.
- ILSFA bill savings generated approximately \$4 million in increased household disposable income which, based on modeled results and participants surveys, will support households in paying for housing, healthcare, retail, grocery, and transportation-related expenses.
- New program activity generated \$5 million in federal, state, and local taxes. More than 40% of this was driven by employee compensation, signaling meaningful income growth among workers. State and local taxes, while smaller, were driven primarily by production and import taxes, suggesting direct benefits flowing into municipal programs serving program communities.

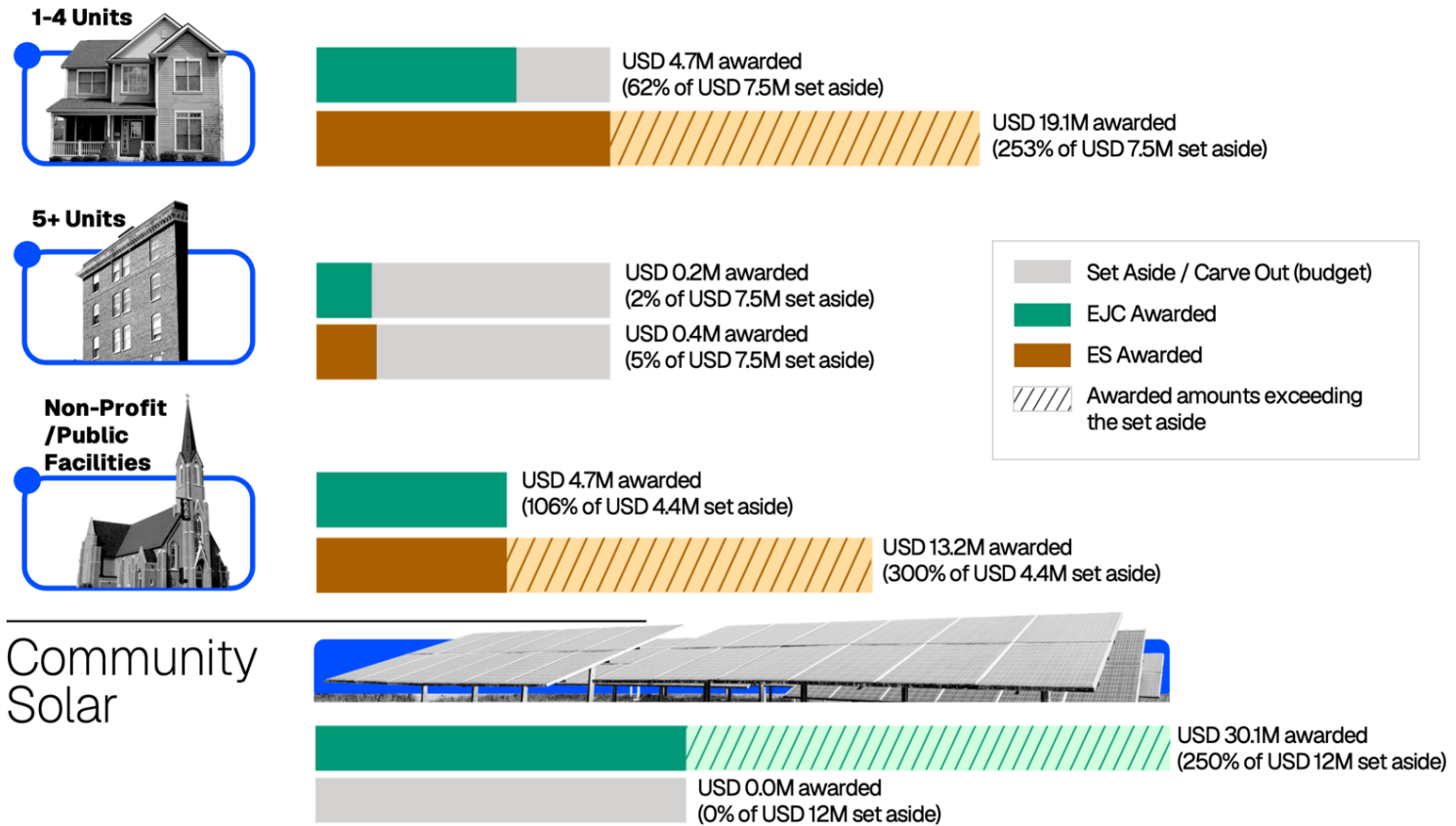
## Demand for New Jobs in Illinois



# Social Impacts • Approved Projects (PY24-25)

On an annual basis, 25% of subprogram funds are set aside for Environmental Justice Community (EJC) and 25% of subprogram funds are set aside for Energy Sovereignty (ES) projects. Therefore, the team assessed the social impacts for PY24-25 approved projects.

## Distributed Generation



## Key Findings

- Non-Profit/Public Facilities (NP/PF) and Community Solar awarded their full EJC budget carveout, while Residential Solar did not. This is because Residential Solar (Small) and Residential Solar (Large) did not achieve sufficient participation to award all EJC funds.

**Recommendation:** Investigate ways to increase the number of EJC-sited projects submitted to Residential Solar, considering the specific motivations and barriers for participants in each subprogram (Residential Solar (Small) and Residential Solar (Large)). Boosting participation in Residential Solar (Large) may enable program administrators to award a higher portion of funds to projects in EJCs.

- Residential Solar and NP/PF showed strong Energy Sovereignty (ES) performance, while Community Solar awarded no incentives to ES projects. Residential Solar met the ES carve-out for the first time, directing 32% of its total budget to ES projects. NP/PF also exceeded the carve-out, awarding 75% of its budget to ES projects.

**Recommendation:** Examine the practices of the two AVs driving the majority of Residential Solar (Small) ES activity. Understanding what these AVs are doing differently in terms of outreach, financing, customer education, or project design may provide actionable insights for expanding ES participation more broadly across the subprogram.

- Most AVs travelled 30 miles or more from their headquarters to complete projects, demonstrating a broad willingness to serve communities across Illinois. However, vendor coverage was uneven: activity tended to cluster around the utility service areas where AVs are headquartered, and southeastern Illinois remained largely unserved, potentially limiting program accessibility in that region.

**Recommendation:** Collect standardized AV service area information when they sign up (e.g., maximum travel distance, counties served, willingness to travel downstate, and constraints such as overnight travel) and refresh it annually to improve project-to-AV matching and identify geographic coverage gaps.

# Process Evaluation Findings

The following is a summary of abbreviated key findings and recommendations from our process evaluation.

## Administrative Spending

Program administrative costs comprised 11% of the total program budget

### Program Administrative Costs | Program Year 2024-2025 (June 1, 2024 – May 30, 2025)

Category	Entity	Total Spend
Program Implementation	IPA	\$586,854
Program Administration	Elevate	\$11,889,765
Evaluation	E Source	\$1,005,288
Grassroots Educators	All PY24-25 Grassroots Educators	\$589,649 <sup>a</sup>
Clean Energy Connector	LIHEAP Administering Agencies	\$1,080 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Total Administrative Costs</b>		<b>\$14,072,635</b>

<sup>a</sup> These costs are aligned with the fiscal year, spanning July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

<sup>b</sup> These costs were incurred January – June, 2025

The PY24-25 evaluation is based on a review of tracking data, program materials, and data collection from program stakeholders who we collected input from as part of the PY24-25 evaluation.

The team developed recommendations to address program barriers ranging from process improvements that the IPA or Elevate can implement directly to those requiring collaboration with Grassroots Educators or AVs. Some recommendations may require the IPA to form new partnerships or pursue a major design change or program expansion, and a few of these might require changes to legislation.

Recommendations were categorized into four categories (below) to distinguish near-term actions from longer-term efforts. We also indicate where additional research may be required to get more information.



**Process Improvement**



**Partnership**



**Program Design Expansion or Change**



**Future Research**

# Overall Program Participation & Benefits

Program  
Overall

**Program Success:** There was a large increase in Residential Solar (Small) projects in the second half of PY24-25.

Program  
Overall

**Overall Challenge:** Participants, AVs, and Grassroots Educators wanted additional resources on basic solar concepts and how the ILSFA program works. Grassroots Educators also wanted more peer-to-peer learning opportunities.



**Recommendation:** Consider compiling a library of solar education resources for AVs and Grassroots Educators for them to share with potential participants.



**Recommendation:** Consider creating a “customer concierge” team at Elevate that AVs and Grassroots Educators can refer customers through for more technical questions about the program and throughout the participation process.



**Recommendation:** Collaborate with AVs and Grassroots Educators to understand most-needed resources to help potential participants understand the program participation process.



**Recommendation:** Consider an ILSFA solar mentorship program, similar to the one offered through Illinois Shines.

*“It would be good if IPA streamlined some of the basics about solar, because we end up needing to become solar experts, which is not our expertise. And having to go back to Elevate about solar questions, it takes time and we lose the excitement of people in the meantime.”*

– Grassroots Educator

*“Mini classes should be set up for those that are interested or are scheduled for solar panel installation. They can be provided with information on the process and the stages of each process.”*

– Residential Solar (Small) Participant



# Participation Process

## Project Acquisition & Initiation

**Participant Success:** Word-of-mouth and direct AV outreach remain leading sources of awareness across subprograms. Within the Community Solar subprogram, utility websites were a common source of awareness.

**Participant Challenge:** Participants still report one of their top concerns when deciding to enroll is thinking that the program is a scam.

**Grassroots Educator Challenge:** Grassroots Educators also report that when they told participants about the program, some thought it was too good to be true.



**Recommendation:** Consider setting up a program ambassador program, where previous participants receive an incentive or reward (e.g. gift cards, food vouchers) for helping to promote the program.



**Recommendation:** Partner with local and state government officials or local newspapers to help establish the legitimacy of ILSFA.



**Recommendation:** Utility partnerships may also be a fruitful avenue for promoting the program.

*“Hearing testimonies and word of mouth from people who participated and share their experiences, an actual example of how people have benefited from the program, helps a lot.”*

– Grassroots Educator

## Project Acquisition & Initiation

**Participant Challenge:** Despite the increase in Residential Solar (Small) submissions among AVs, participants still noted that finding an AV was a challenge within the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, similar to previous program years.



**Recommendation:** Include a last-updated date next to the “Accepting New Participants” status, so those interested in participation can see when the program confirmed the status with the vendor.



**Recommendation:** Consider adding additional information to the “Find a Solar Company” page, including geographic areas served by the vendor, business models that vendors support, and customer reviews, as well as translating the page into Spanish.

*“Finding an approved vendor was impossible. I gave up for a few months and tried again and luckily found one that at least answered.”*

– Residential Solar (Small) Participant



## Documentation

**Participant Success:** For those who successfully complete the ILSFA participation process, income verification does not seem to be a barrier.

**Grassroots Educator & AV Challenge:** Grassroots Educators and AVs say income verification can be challenging for people who are interested in ILSFA, but do not successfully participate. Elevate also identified income verification as a major drop-off point for participation in the Bright Neighborhoods pilot. Elevate is conducting additional research on how to improve the income verification process for participants.



**Recommendation:** Implement the income verification process improvements identified through Elevate's research and monitor success.



**Recommendation:** Track income-verification completion rates and drop-off points systematically across subprograms.



**Future Program Design Note:** As part of program updates for PY26-27, ILSFA will include a self-attestation income verification option for customers in Income-Eligible Communities for the Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar subprograms.

*"It's really paperwork heavy program. Takes a lot to get people to signed up. It would be nice to have things streamlined."*

– Grassroots Educator

## Installation

**Participant Challenge:** The installation process for onsite solar within the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram is challenging for some participants and they want more support. NP/PF participants wanted more resources to understand how to operate solar post-installation.



**Recommendation:** Consider reaching out via phone or email to Residential Solar (Small) and NP/PF participants at set milestones in the participation process, referring them to support resources and answering any questions they may have.



**Recommendation:** Consider creating a "customer concierge" team at Elevate that can answer questions throughout and after the ILSFA participation process.

## Post-Installation

**Participant Success:** In general, Community Solar participants did not report issues with understanding their bills after enrolling.

**Participant Challenge:** Some Residential Solar (Small) customers reported their bills were more difficult to understand.



**Recommendation:** Consider creating education materials to support participants in understanding their bills after solar is installed.

## Post-Installation

**Participant Success:** Participants reported their bills were lower after installing solar, leading to reduced stress and opportunities to put savings towards other bills and living expenses.

*"I'm on a fixed income and disabled, so it helps with everything in my monthly expenses."*

– Residential Solar (Small) Participant

# Vendor Experience

## Program Documentation

**AV Challenge:** AVs continue to find program documentation and the AV portal the most difficult parts of the program to navigate. These challenges were reported both by new and established AVs. The number of AVs reporting difficulty with program documentation has decreased since PY23-24.



**Recommendation:** Collaborate with AVs to fix recurring portal issues, including documents or forms not saving properly, the lack of a designated location for AVs to upload general project files requested by the program, and difficulty navigating system design or shading sections.



**Recommendation:** Add structured opportunities for AV feedback to inform process improvements to the AV portal and program documentation.



**Recommendation:** Reassess and streamline documentation requirements to reduce redundancy across program stages, focusing on minimizing repeated information requests, through consolidating submissions or auto-populating already provided information.

*“The paperwork needed after the first initial batch is difficult to manage for all vendors and it seems to prevent many from participation.”*

– Approved Vendor

*“The portal is very confusing and difficult to navigate/work in.”*

– Approved Vendor

## Job Training

**AV Success:** Most AVs found ILSFA job training requirements easy to meet.

**AV Challenge:** Those who faced challenges cited limited trainee availability and the eligibility period after completing their job training program that trainees are eligible to fulfill program requirements.



**Recommendation:** Create more opportunities for AVs to connect with recent graduates of job training programs, including networking events, career fairs, or matching sessions across the state.



**Recommendation:** Consider developing a centralized job board or placement platform that allows AVs to post openings and job trainees to share availability, skills, and certifications.



**Recommendation:** Consider making more information available for AVs, such as regularly updated information about job training programs, including current program start and end dates, the number of trainees enrolled, and indicators of trainee progress.



**Future Program Design Note:** As part of program updates for PY26-27, ILSFA will extend the job trainee eligibility period to 5 years. AVs will also have the option to meet workforce development requirements by meeting Minimum Equity Standards (MES) instead of job training requirements.

# Introduction

## ILSFA Program Overview

Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) is a statewide program established in 2017 designed to expand access to solar energy for income-eligible households and communities.

ILSFA was created through revisions to Section 1-56(b) of the Illinois Power Agency (IPA) Act contained in the Future Energy Jobs Act (also known as FEJA or Public Act 99-0906) to “include incentives for low-income distributed generation and community solar projects.” The program objectives are to: “bring photovoltaics to low-income communities in this State in a manner that maximizes the development of new photovoltaic generating facilities, to create a long-term, low-income solar marketplace throughout this State, to integrate, through interaction with stakeholders, with existing energy efficiency initiatives, and to minimize administrative costs.”

In September 2021, the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (also known as CEJA or Public Act 102-0662) took effect, increasing available funding, and prioritizing expanding participation to areas of Illinois previously underserved by the program, increasing development by small and emerging businesses, and encouraging the development of projects promoting energy sovereignty. Under CEJA, ILSFA includes the following sub-programs:

- Low-Income Single-Family and Small Multifamily Solar (1-4 units), referred to in this report as the **Residential Solar (Small)** subprogram.
- Low-Income Community Solar, referred to in this report as **Community Solar** subprogram.
- Incentives for non-profits and public facilities, referred to in this report as the **Non-Profit/Public Facilities (NP/PF)** subprogram.

### Key terms used in the ILSFA program:

**Environmental Justice Community (EJC):** A community area that has historically been affected by environmental health hazards and/or has been left out of dialogues that have direct impact on the quality of life of the community due to potential environmental and public health effects.

**Income-Eligible:** Households whose income does not exceed 80% of the area median income (AMI).

**Photovoltaic (PV):** A renewable electricity generation technology that provides electricity by converting photons from sunlight into electrical potential.

**Renewable Energy Credit (REC):** The environmental value of energy generated by renewable sources, including solar. A REC is issued when one megawatt-hour of electricity from a renewable energy source is added to the electrical grid.

**Energy Sovereignty:** A solar contract where an eligible low-income household or community organization owns, or is on a clear path to owning, a majority or full share of a PV facility or holding membership in a cooperative that owns it. Beginning in PY22-23, projects submitted to ILSFA could apply for energy sovereignty status.

- Low-income large multifamily solar (5+ units), referred to in this report as the **Residential Solar (Large)** subprogram.

Within each subprogram, 25% of the budget is reserved for projects in Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs) and 25% of the budget is reserved for Energy Sovereignty projects. If not awarded, Energy Sovereignty funds are released six months after the program application deadline, and EJC funds are held for the entire program year. Any unused budget is rolled over to the following year.

Our evaluation covers program year 2024-2025 (PY24-25) of the ILSFA program, which ran from June 1, 2024, to May 31, 2025.

## Changes to the Program

During the PY24-25 program year, several program design and state and federal policy updates shaped ILSFA's implementation. These changes impacted how many projects the program was able to fund, program accessibility, and participant benefits. The most significant changes are described below:

- **Updates to Illinois net metering rates:** Under the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), Illinois transitioned from full retail-rate net metering to supply-only net metering as of January 1, 2025. For systems interconnected in ComEd, Ameren Illinois, or MidAmerican territories after December 31, 2024, excess solar generation is now credited at the supply rate, resulting in lower bill credits for participants. In response, the program updated its participant disclosure forms, so individuals could better understand the financial impact of this change on their expected solar savings.
- **Expansion of the Community Solar subprogram budget:** The Community Solar subprogram received an additional \$11,000,000 in budget as a result of federal funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF).<sup>1</sup>
- **Launch of the National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP)+ Energy Connector pilot:**<sup>2</sup> PY24-25 marked the first year of the NCSP+ Energy Connector, which connected Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) recipients to Community Solar subscriptions.

The pilot faced early challenges due to a mismatch between subscription availability and household enrollment timing, prompting the IPA to improve coordination with Community Solar project vendors. Additionally, IPA implemented a separate online form alongside the Connector to capture ILSFA-specific household and income information not collected

<sup>1</sup> On August 7, 2025, the Illinois Finance Authority received a notice that the GGRF award had been terminated by U.S. EPA. On October 16, 2025, the State of Illinois, along with other grant recipient states, filed suits against the U.S. EPA challenging the grant termination; the Agency will monitor this litigation and update any budgets for ILSFA subprograms accordingly.

<sup>2</sup> The NCSP+ Energy Connector Platform was developed by the US Department of Energy in partnership with the National Laboratory of the Rockies.

within the platform, replacing the Customer Consent and Verification Form typically completed and signed by customers. As of March 2026, 86 households have successfully subscribed through the Connector, representing 28% of the 302 households uploaded to the platform.

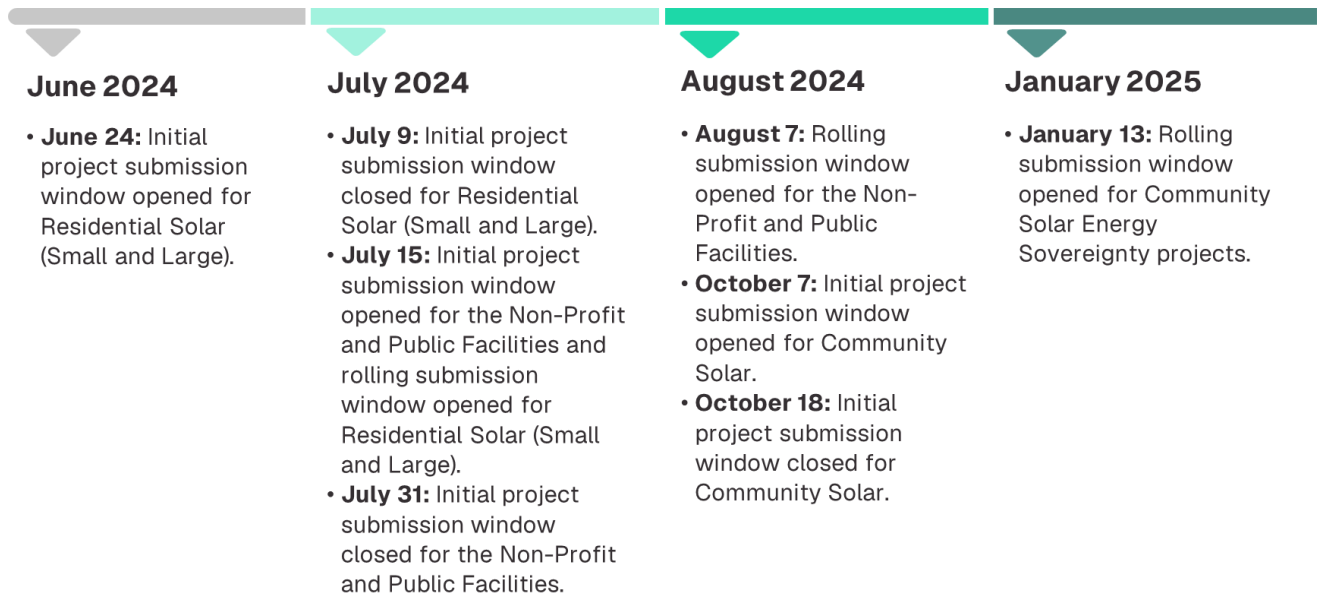
## Program Year 2024 – 2025 Summary

PY24-25 featured three separate initial project submission windows: 1) for the Residential Solar (Small and Large) subprograms, 2) for the NP/PF subprograms, and 3) for the Community Solar subprogram. Each submission window remained open for two to three weeks. Since project funds were not fully awarded for Residential Solar (Small and Large) and NP/PF during the initial submission window, the program opened rolling submission windows for these subprograms, which remained open for the rest of the program year. Additionally, the program administrator opened a rolling submission window specifically for Energy Sovereignty projects in the Community Solar subprogram in January 2025.

Figure 1 summarizes key dates in the PY24-25 timeline.

Figure 1. Key Dates in PY24-25

# PY 2024-2025 Timeline



Source: Illinois Solar for All 2024-2025 Program Year Calendar. [Calendar for 2024-2025 Program Year Announced - Illinois Solar for All](#). Accessed April 1, 2026.

Table 1 below, shows a breakdown of the overall budget for the ILSFA PY24-25 subprograms, as well as the total number of approved projects, their system capacity, and their total incentive value. None of the subprograms awarded all funds available, so ILSFA rolled remaining funds to PY25-26. The NP/PF subprogram used the greatest portion of its overall budget, approving 41

projects, while Residential Solar (Large) used the smallest portion of its overall budget, approving only two projects.

Table 1. ILSFA PY2024-2025 Budget and Approved Projects by Subprogram

Subprogram	Budget	Total Approved Projects	Total System Capacity (MW) <sup>b</sup>	Total Approved Project Incentive Value	Percent of Budget Awarded as Incentives
Residential Solar (Small)	\$30,146,606 <sup>a</sup>	577	5.018	\$21,567,364	72%
Residential Solar (Large)	\$30,146,606 <sup>a</sup>	2	0.200	\$389,798	1%
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	\$17,617,773	41	6.321	\$15,982,593	91%
Community Solar	\$48,092,555 <sup>b</sup>	6	11.539	\$36,987,766	77%
Total PY2024-2025	\$126,003,541	626	17.965	\$74,927,520	59%

<sup>a</sup> The budgets for the Residential Solar (Small) and Residential Solar (Large) subprograms were held separately for the first nine months of the program year, then combined.

<sup>b</sup> This budget includes federal funding awarded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) to expand the Community Solar subprogram budget. [IPA Announces Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Solar for All Funding to Expand ILSFA Community Solar - Illinois Solar for All](#)

**Sources:** Illinois Solar for All Releases the 2024-2025 Program Year Sub-Program Budgets. [Illinois Solar for All Releases the 2024-2025 Program Year Sub-Program Budgets - Illinois Solar for All](#). Accessed March 18, 2026; Program Year 2024-2025 Tracking Data

# Evaluation Objectives and Approach

## Program Year 2024-2025 Evaluation Approach

The PY24-25 evaluation included an impact and process evaluation. The evaluation team assessed program performance against required metrics (based on objective criteria developed in consultation with stakeholders), reviewed the program administrator's (Elevate's) performance, and collected feedback from program stakeholders. The stakeholder objective criteria are as follows:

- Number of projects installed
- Total installed capacity in kilowatts
- Average cost per kilowatt of installed capacity
- Number of jobs or job opportunities created
- Economic, social, and environmental benefits created
- Total administrative costs

Assessments included in the PY24-25 evaluation are as follows:

**Impact assessment:** The impact assessment models and quantifies program participation, costs, and impacts. In PY24-25, the team evaluated the following impacts:

- 1. Energy impacts:** Evaluated added capacity, energy produced, and peak demand offset by projects installed through the program.
- 2. Bill impacts:** Evaluating participants' annual and lifetime bill savings in dollars.
- 3. Environmental impacts:** Evaluating pollution reduction, including CO<sub>2</sub>e, NO<sub>x</sub>, and SO<sub>2</sub>, resulting from energy generated by ILSFA projects offsetting energy from the electric grid.
- 4. Social impacts:** Evaluating the geographic distribution of projects, demographics of program participants, business characteristics of participating vendors, and benefits communities receive from ILSFA.
- 5. Workforce and economic impacts:** Evaluating workforce and economic impacts, including but not limited to, total GDP impacts, employment demand created, tax impacts, and impact of solar tariffs.

**Process assessment:** The process assessment evaluated program operations and processes through research with program actors and participants. The research team assessed the performance of Elevate as the program administrator, the experiences of various parties who help implement or interact with the Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) program, and the experiences of those who participate in and benefit from the program.

Our evaluation consisted of primary data collection activities, program materials review, and tracking data review, which then supported our program impact and process evaluation. The

program tracking data includes information about participants and projects in the ILSFA program and is maintained by the ILSFA implementer, Elevate, in a Salesforce database. More information about the tracking data can be found in *Appendix A. Methodologies*

Table 2, below, presents the primary and secondary data sources that supported our analyses.

Table 2. PY24-25 Data Collection Activities and Sources

Data Source	Target Completes	Actual Completes	Objective	Analysis Supported
1.a. Program Materials	NA	NA	Understand ILSFA goals, design, and any recent program changes affecting research activities.	All assessments
1.b. Program Tracking Data	NA	NA	Evaluate data availability and quality for completing the evaluation.	All assessments
1.c. Program Administrator Interviews (IPA and Elevate)	Census – 11 staff	10 staff	Understand program design changes, delivery, and implementation successes and challenges.	Process evaluation
1.d. Participant Surveys and Interviews	Varied			
Residential Solar (Small)	140 participants (70 energized, 70 approved/under construction)	109 participants (89 energized, 21 approved/under construction)	Explore the participant experience including awareness, motivations, questions or concerns about ILSFA, the income verification and installation processes, and post-installation benefits and experience.	Process evaluation, bill impact analysis
Residential Solar (Large)	Census – 1 participant	0 participants		
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	8-10 participants	8 participants		
Community Solar	70 subscribers	28 subscribers		
1.e. Approved Vendor Surveys	Census – 19 Approved Vendors	8 Approved Vendors		

Data Source	Target Completes	Actual Completes	Objective	Analysis Supported
1.f. Grassroots Educator Listening Sessions	Census – 19 organizations	14 organizations	Learn about grassroots educators’ outreach and education strategies, their experience with ILSFA’s program support, their understanding of participants’ experiences, and their feedback on how to remove barriers to participation.	Process evaluation
1.g. Trainee Surveys	Census – 135 trainees	8 trainees	Understand job trainees’ experience with their job training program, their experience with ILSFA projects and their AV, and their career post-training.	Process evaluation

We provide more detail on the methodologies for these activities in *Appendix A. Methodologies*. Furthermore, we provide objectives, approach, and any limitations or considerations for the impact and processes analyses in the Detailed Findings chapter with any additional details included in *Appendix A. Methodologies*. For activities supporting the process evaluation, we report both cross-cutting findings and those from individual data collection activities.

## Participatory Evaluation

To ensure the evaluation addressed the priorities and concerns of those most affected by ILSFA, the evaluation team engaged stakeholders through multiple channels:

- **Stakeholder Input Sessions:** Two open sessions were held via Zoom on October 29 and 30, 2025, allowing all interested parties to share their top priorities and concerns related to the Illinois Solar for All program.
- **Advisory Committee Meeting:** The team also attended the November 4, 2025 meeting of the ILSFA Advisory Committee, a mix of program stakeholders convened by Elevate for ongoing program input.
- **Ongoing feedback:** The evaluation team accepts comments about the ILSFA evaluation on an ongoing basis through an email inbox: [ILSFAEvaluation@esource.com](mailto:ILSFAEvaluation@esource.com) and through a form on the ILSFA website.<sup>3,4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <https://forms.office.com/r/Cp8x9imzg6>

<sup>4</sup> The feedback email address was previously [ILSFAEvaluation@illumeadvising.com](mailto:ILSFAEvaluation@illumeadvising.com). The evaluation team updated the feedback email address to [ILSFAEvaluation@esource.com](mailto:ILSFAEvaluation@esource.com) on April 6, 2026 as part of a planned email system transition.

The evaluation team tracked feedback received and used it to inform the evaluation’s focus and methodology. Below, we summarize the comments we received during PY24-25 and how they were addressed.

Table 3. How the Evaluation Team Incorporated Stakeholder Feedback

Comment Theme	Summary of Comment	Comment Source	How Comment Was Addressed
Impact of Federal Policy Changes	Stakeholders raised concerns about the impacts of uncertainty in federal grants, tax credits, and broader solar funding streams on ILSFA participation and workforce stability.	Listening Sessions	The evaluation team is monitoring the impact of federal policy changes through program administrator interviews and the jobs and economic impact analysis. We are also considering a special topic report on this topic. ILSFA is adjusting REC prices to account for the discontinuation of the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) in PY26-27.
State-Level Policy Developments	Stakeholders expressed interest in tracking state policy changes and implications for ILSFA.	Listening Sessions	The evaluation team explored the impacts of net metering changes in Illinois in PY24-25 through the program administrator interviews, bill impact analysis, and jobs and economic impact analysis sections. For the next evaluation, we will monitor the impact of recent Illinois policy developments (e.g., the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act or “CRGA” and low-income discount rates) on the program.
Program Awareness and Outreach	Stakeholders wanted to understand adoption by community type (urban vs. downstate) and housing type (single-family vs. multifamily)	Listening Sessions	The evaluation team addressed participation patterns in the social impact analysis.
	Stakeholders worried that awareness among income-eligible residents remains low and that the program needs greater exposure.	Listening Sessions	The evaluation team reviewed program outreach and marketing strategies in program administrator interviews and as part of the materials review. The team also assessed participant sources of awareness to understand the effectiveness of different marketing channels. These findings are included in the Process Evaluation section.

Comment Theme	Summary of Comment	Comment Source	How Comment Was Addressed
Market Evolution and Consumer Messaging Improvements	Stakeholders were optimistic about increased interest in solar. They attributed this to improved outreach and education standards, which are based on ILSFA consumer protection requirements. This included clearer messaging about incentives (moving away from “solar is free”), logistics clarity, and targeted outreach to seniors.	Listening Sessions	The evaluation team discussed consumer protections and outreach and marketing during the program administrator interviews. Findings from the interviews are included in the Process Evaluation section.
Local Zoning Pushback	Stakeholders described growing county-level opposition to solar (especially ground-mounted solar on farmland).	Listening Sessions	The evaluation team incorporated questions to better understand rural messaging strategies and any community concerns with solar into the Grassroots Educators listening sessions. The team is also considering a special topic report on barriers to participation in central and southern Illinois.
Community Messaging	Stakeholders emphasized the need for strategies to help rural communities coexist with solar development.	Listening Sessions	The team included questions in the AV survey about project timelines and main reasons for delays. These findings and summarized in the Process Evaluation section.
Transmission Access	Stakeholders raised ongoing concerns that transmission and interconnection constraints continue to delay projects.	Listening Sessions	The evaluation team asked out workforce development requirements in the program administrator interviews and the AV surveys. These findings are summarized in the Process Evaluation section. In PY26-27, the program is introducing an option to comply with the Minimum Equity Standard, currently used within Illinois Shines, or the existing ILSFA workforce requirements, offering more flexibility for vendors. The evaluation team monitor the impact of these changes through ongoing AV surveys.
Education and Workforce Development	Stakeholders were interested in collaborating with institutions to train a future solar workforce. They suggested revisiting trainee eligibility requirements to ensure program accessibility.	Listening Sessions	The program team shared existing public resources during the stakeholder input session (e.g., project
Transparency Tools and Resources	Stakeholders requested tools, like an interactive map and listing of completed projects to	Listening Sessions	The program team shared existing public resources during the stakeholder input session (e.g., project

Comment Theme	Summary of Comment	Comment Source	How Comment Was Addressed
	improve transparency and participant connection.		map/resource library and relevant program reporting links).
Vendor Support	Stakeholders continued to raise the need for funding and support to help AVs expand ILSFA participation and requested more multilingual program information (especially in Spanish) and clearer English materials.	Listening Sessions	The evaluation team included questions about financing and additional support in the AV survey. The team also explored language accessibility of program materials with Grassroots Educators. These results are summarized in the Process Evaluation section.
NP/PF Positive Feedback	Stakeholders shared positive feedback on NP/PF implementation, citing strong support and responsiveness from Elevate and other program partners.	Listening Sessions	No action needed
Critical Service Provider (CSP) eligibility criteria	Stakeholders suggested reviewing CSP criteria due to concern that some qualifying entities are excluded. They shared an example: a water treatment plant not eligible due to the surrounding land-use context.	Listening Sessions	The evaluation team included this issue in the materials review and incorporated follow-up questions into the program administrator interview guide. The CSP definition will be updated as part of the PY26-27 to include CSPs in census blocks adjacent to EJs.
Special topic report ideas	Advisory Committee attendees suggested special topic report topics: federal policy impacts; participant drop-off/non-participation (e.g., structural barriers and clearer disengagement reasons); and challenges with the Bright Neighborhoods Pilot.	Advisory Committee	The evaluation team maintains a list of special report topics proposed by stakeholders and includes this list in discussions with the IPA when selecting special topic report topics.
	A stakeholder suggested a special topic analysis using the ILSFA complaint database to identify trends in AV complaints.	Online Form	Where possible, these topics are also explored within the annual report.
Home Repairs and Upgrades Pilot Funding	Advisory Committee participants asked how the Home Repairs and Upgrades pilot interacts with other funding sources (e.g., local roof	Advisory Committee	The evaluation team reviews performance of the Home Repairs and Upgrades pilot as part of the annual report and includes questions about this pilot in the program administrator

Comment Theme	Summary of Comment	Comment Source	How Comment Was Addressed
	<p>repair programs/Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). They raised concerns about waitlists and balancing solar installation goals with structural barriers.</p>		<p>interviews. These findings are included in the Process Evaluation section.</p>
<p>Bright Neighborhoods Pilot</p>	<p>Advisory Committee members requested clarity on the initiative and described barriers (e.g., older homes, tree coverage, local building restrictions, Community Solar as a better fit in some areas, ground- vs roof-mount depending on AV offerings).</p>	<p>Advisory Committee</p>	<p>During the session, the IPA clarified that the pilot ended after two years due to limited participation and impact. The evaluation team explored the performance of the Bright Neighborhoods pilot through the program administrator interviews and materials review. These findings are summarized in the Process Evaluation section.</p>

# Detailed Findings

This section summarizes detailed findings from the energy impacts, bill impacts, environmental impacts, jobs and economic impacts, social impacts, and process analyses. Based on the type of impact, our team summarizes the impact for approved projects, energized projects, or newly energized projects. These terms are defined below:

## Key terms used to describe program impacts:

**PY24-25 approved projects:** Projects that applied for the ILSFA program between June 1, 2024 and May 31, 2025 and were selected to receive incentives (including all subsequent project stages).

**PY24-25 energized projects:** Projects that applied for the ILSFA program between the PY18-19 and PY24-25 program years (June 1, 2018 – May 31, 2025) and received Part II approval by May 31, 2025.

**New PY24-25 energized projects:** Projects that applied for the ILSFA program between the first and current program year (June 1, 2018 – May 31, 2025) and received Part II approval between June 1, 2024, and May 31, 2025. This category excludes projects energized in prior program years.

We also detail which set of projects we assess for each impact type:

- **Energy and Environmental Impacts:** We report impacts for PY24-25 approved projects and PY24-25 energized projects.
- **Bill Impacts:** We report impacts for PY24-25 energized projects only
- **Jobs and Economic Impacts:** We show impacts separately for projects energized in previous program year (PY18-19 through PY23-24) and new PY24-25 energized projects.

In PY24-25, 108 projects fell into both the PY24-25 approved and PY24-25 energized project analysis categories: 106 Residential Solar (Small) projects and two Non-Profit/Public Facilities (NP/PF) projects.

# Electricity Impacts

The evaluation team estimated the electricity savings and coincident demand savings of PY24-25 approved projects and PY24-25 energized projects. These values represent the electricity generated by the solar systems installed through ILSFA. The research questions addressed by the electricity impact analysis are outlined in Table 4, below.

Table 4. Electricity Impact Analysis Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Project Summary	What is the total number of approved and energized projects?
	What is the total capacity (kW <sub>AC</sub> ) of approved and energized projects?
	What is the average system cost per kW <sub>AC</sub> of project capacity (approved and energized)?
Electricity Savings	How much electricity would be produced in a typical meteorological year (TMY) from approved and energized projects? <sup>5</sup>
	How much electricity would be produced by energized projects based on observed weather data between June 1, 2024 and May 31, 2025?
Demand Savings	How much peak load would be reduced by the electricity generated by energized projects in PY24-25?

Below, we summarize our key findings from this analysis.

## Key Findings

### FINDING 1

**In PY24-25, ILSFA approved 626 projects (Part I approval) totaling 29.5 MW in new solar capacity across the four subprograms.** The PY24-25 approved projects included 577 Residential Solar (Small) projects, two Residential Solar (Large) projects, 41 Non-Profit/Public Facilities (NP/PF) projects, and six Community Solar projects. In PY24-25, 108 approved projects reached Part II approval, meaning they are also counted as PY24-25 energized projects. The remaining PY24-25 projects remain under development and will be energized in subsequent years. Total project capacity increased considerably in PY24-25, with a 25% increase from PY23-24. This was driven by substantial increase in the capacity of approved Community Solar projects (8.40 MW in PY23-24 from four projects and 17.97 MW in PY24-25 from six projects).

<sup>5</sup> Typical meteorological year weather and solar radiation data is a widely used type of data that represents median weather conditions over a multiyear historical period.

**FINDING 2**

**1,630 projects with 48.6 MW in solar capacity achieved Part II approval (“energized” status) by the end of PY24-25 on May 31, 2025.** This included four projects in the Residential Solar (Large) subprogram, 1,494 projects in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, 118 projects in the NP/PF subprogram, and 14 projects in the Community Solar subprogram. Energized Residential Solar (Small) projects added 9.8 MW of capacity in PY24-25 (from 1,360 projects), bringing the total Residential Solar (Small) Energized capacity to 10.6 MW, up from 0.8 MW through PY23-24.

**FINDING 3**

**The estimated system peak hour demand impacts of PY24-25 energized projects were 14.1 MW (PJM-ComEd, 4:00–5:00 p.m.) and 1.6 MW (MISO-Illinois-Zone 4, 6:00–7:00 p.m.),** or 0.07% and 0.02% of the peak load in each region, respectively. While the peak hours of both independent system operator (ISO) regions occurred on the same day (August 27, 2024), each ISO region reached its maximum demand during a different hour of the day. Reducing load on the electrical grid during these times allows utilities to avoid purchasing high-cost wholesale electricity.

## Project Summary

The PY24-25 approved project capacity is approximately 29.5 MW, with 39% of capacity coming from Distributed Generation projects and 61% from Community Solar. There are notable differences in project sizes across the two groups: Community Solar projects are larger by design to serve many households. Among PY24-25 approved projects, Community Solar projects, on average, have roughly 344 times the capacity of Residential Solar (Small). Among Distributed Generation projects, the average size of NP/PF approved projects is approximately 18 times that of Residential Solar (Small) projects.

Table 5 summarizes program participation by displaying the number of projects, total capacity (kW<sub>AC</sub>), and average capacity per project for PY24-25 approved projects. The evaluation team calculated these metrics using program tracking data.

Table 5. Total and Average Capacity of PY24-25 Approved Projects

	Project Type	Number of Projects	Total PV Capacity (kW <sub>AC</sub> )	Average PV Capacity Per Project (kW <sub>AC</sub> )
<b>Distributed Generation</b>	Residential Solar (Small)	577	5,018.0	8.7
	Residential Solar (Large)	2	200.0	100.0
	Non-Profit/ Public Facilities	41	6,321.1	154.2
	<b>Total</b>	620	11,539.1	--

Project Type		Number of Projects	Total PV Capacity (kW <sub>AC</sub> )	Average PV Capacity Per Project (kW <sub>AC</sub> )
Community Solar	Total	6	17,965.0	2,994.2
	<b>All Approved Projects</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>29,504.1</b>	--

Table 6 presents the total number of approved projects and capacity each year from PY21-22 through PY24-25. Total project capacity increased significantly in PY24-25, with a 25% increase from PY23-24. This was driven by substantial increase in the capacity of approved Community Solar projects (8.40 MW in PY23-24 from four projects and 17.97 MW in PY24-25 from six projects).

Table 6. Total and Average Capacity of **PY21-22 through PY24-25 Approved** Projects—All Subprogram Totals

Metric	PY21-22 (PY4)	PY22-23 (PY5)	PY23-24 (PY6)	PY24-25 (PY7)
Number of Approved Projects	207	261	1,340	626
Total PV Capacity (kW <sub>AC</sub> )	14,351.8	17,452.5	23,696.0	29,504.1

Table 7 summarizes PY24-25 energized projects by number of projects, total capacity (kW<sub>AC</sub>), average capacity per project, and average project cost per kilowatt of system size. There are 108 projects that fall into both the PY24-25 approved and PY24-25 energized project analysis categories (106 Residential Solar (Small) projects and two NP/PF projects).

Table 7. Total Capacity and Average Project Costs of **PY24-25 Energized** Projects

Project Type		Number Of Projects	Total PV Capacity (kW <sub>AC</sub> )	Average PV Capacity Per Project (kW <sub>AC</sub> )	Average Project Cost Per kW <sub>AC</sub>
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Small)	1,494	10,623.0	7.1	\$3,285
	Residential Solar (Large)	4	2,561.6	640.4	\$3,334
	Non-Profit/ Public Facilities	118	16,200.1	137.3	\$3,045
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,616</b>	<b>29,384.7</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>

Project Type		Number Of Projects	Total PV Capacity (kW <sub>AC</sub> )	Average PV Capacity Per Project (kW <sub>AC</sub> )	Average Project Cost Per kW <sub>AC</sub>
Community Solar	Total	14	19,168.3	1,369.2	\$3,289
<b>All Energized Projects</b>		<b>1,630</b>	<b>48,553.0</b>	--	--

Table 8 below shows a four-year comparison of average nominal project costs, not accounting for inflation. The average energized project cost across all subprograms increased over the period spanning PY21-22 through PY24-25, for all subprograms except Residential Solar (Small).

Cost trends in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram are consistent with national trends in residential solar costs, as documented by recent research from Lawrence Berkeley National Lab (LBNL) which shows continued installed price declines across small residential systems through 2024.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, 91% of Residential Solar (Small) projects newly energized in PY24-25 were physically completed in prior years but did not complete Part II approval until PY24-25. Because the costs associated with these projects reflect an earlier period, they may contribute to the lower average nominal costs observed for Residential Solar (Small) in PY24-25. Average costs per kW<sub>AC</sub> are similar across project types, reflecting that economies of scale for larger systems (e.g., Community Solar, Residential Solar (Large), and NP/PF) are likely offset by greater engineering, interconnection, and permitting complexity.

Table 8. Average Project Cost per kW<sub>AC</sub> of **PY21-22 through PY24-25 Energized** Projects by Subprogram

Subprogram	PY21-22 (PY4)	PY22-23 (PY5)	PY23-24 (PY6)	PY24-25 (PY7)
Residential Solar (Small)	\$3,521	\$3,377	\$3,434	\$3,285
Residential Solar (Large)	\$2,368	\$2,908	\$2,929	\$3,334
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	\$3,114	\$2,936	\$2,950	\$3,045
Community Solar	\$3,405	\$2,667	\$2,882	\$3,289

<sup>6</sup> Tracking the Sun: Pricing and Design Trends for Distributed Photovoltaic Systems in the United States, 2025 Edition, Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, October 2025 (<https://emp.lbl.gov/sites/default/files/2025-10/Distributed%20Solar%20%26%20Storage-2025%20Data%20Update.pdf>)

# Electric Energy Savings

This section presents estimated first-year and lifetime electric energy savings by project type. Electric energy savings for photovoltaic (PV) systems are the kilowatt-hours (kWh) generated by the PV systems installed through ILSFA.

We used two different weather data types to estimate PV generation: typical meteorological year (TMY) and actual meteorological year (AMY). TMY data represents typical weather conditions assembled from historical observations and is not tied to any specific calendar year. AMY data represents actual weather conditions experienced from June 1, 2024 through May 31, 2025.

The TMY and AMY weather datasets support two types of energy savings metrics:

- “*First-year*” metrics are estimated using TMY-based PV simulation outputs and assume like-new PV system conditions (no degradation). We estimated first-year energy savings for both **approved** and **energized** projects, with first-year energy savings for approved projects shown in the main report and first-year energy savings energized savings show in the appendix.
- “*One-year*” metrics (new method for PY24-25 evaluation) are estimated using AMY-based PV simulations for energized projects only. One-year impacts incorporate age-based system degradation of 0.5% per year based on each project’s invoice issued date, providing an estimate that better reflects the actual PV production of **energized** systems during PY24-25.

Table 9, below, presents the first-year estimated electrical generation by project type for PY24-25 approved projects. The table also includes the average first-year estimated energy savings per project and an estimated capacity factor. The total first-year energy savings from PY24-25 approved projects is 49.8 GWh. About 38% of the savings come from Distributed Generation projects and 62% come from Community Solar projects.

Overall estimated first-year capacity factors are in line with PV production expectations for fixed and tracking systems, respectively. Capacity factor is a metric of system utilization and is defined as the amount of energy generated during a given period divided by the amount of energy that would have been generated during that period assuming continuous output at the rated system size. Because PV systems do not generate electricity at night and daytime output varies with weather, annual capacity factors are expected to be approximately those presented in the table.

Table 9. **PY24-25** Approved Projects First-Year Estimated Electric Energy Savings

Project Type		Estimated First-Year Electric Energy Savings (MWh)	Number Of Projects	Average Annual Estimated Electric Energy Savings Per Project (MWh)	Average Estimated Annual Capacity Factor (AC)
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Small)	8,093.0	577	14.0	20.1%

Project Type		Estimated First-Year Electric Energy Savings (MWh)	Number Of Projects	Average Annual Estimated Electric Energy Savings Per Project (MWh)	Average Estimated Annual Capacity Factor (AC)
	Residential Solar (Large)	269.1	2	134.5	18.3%
	Non-Profit/Public Facilities	10,498.1	41	256.1	15.5%
	Total	18,860.2	620	--	--
Community Solar	Total	30,965.0	6	5160.8	18.3%
<b>All Approved Projects</b>		<b>49,825.2</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>

Table 10 below presents a four-year review of first-year estimated electric energy savings for **approved** projects. Total approved project first-year estimated electric energy savings increased year-over-year by 22% to 23% in PY22-23, PY23-24, and PY24-25.

In PY22-23 and PY23-24, the largest growth in energy savings occurred within the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram with 65% year-over-year growth in PY22-23 and 542% year-over-year growth in PY23-24. In PY24-25, growth was driven by 93% year-over-year increase in estimated electric energy savings from Community Solar projects, reflecting the larger average system size of Community Solar projects newly energized in PY24-25.

Table 10. Approved Projects First-Year Estimated Electric Energy Savings (MWh) from **PY21-22 through PY24-25**

Subprogram	PY21-22 (PY4)	PY22-23 (PY5)	PY23-24 (PY6)	PY24-25 (PY7)
Residential Solar (Small)	1,429.9	2,364.6	15,186.4	8,093.0
Residential Solar (Large)	539.5	NA	326.3	269.1
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	9,366.3	11,331.8	8,921.3	10,498.1
Community Solar	15,855.2	19,364.0	16,020.0	30,965.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,191.0</b>	<b>33,060.3</b>	<b>40,454.0</b>	<b>49,825.2</b>

Table 11, below, presents the one-year estimated electrical generation by project type for PY24-25 **energized** projects. These results reflect PV simulations based on actual weather that occurred during the PY24-25 time period and incorporates assumed PV degradation of 0.5%/year from the invoice issued date of each project.

They reflect a more refined estimate of PV generation from energized projects within the PY24-25 time period than the TMY-based estimates presented above.<sup>7</sup> Total one-year energy savings from PY24-25 Energized projects is 83.3 GWh. About 58% of the savings come from Distributed Generation projects and 42% are attributable to Community Solar projects.

Table 11. **PY24-25** Energized Projects One-Year Estimated Electric Energy Savings

Project Type		Estimated One-Year Electric Energy Savings (MWh)	Number Of Projects	Average Annual Estimated Electric Energy Savings Per Project (MWh)	Average Estimated Annual Capacity Factor (AC)
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Small)	17,820.8	1,494	11.9	19.3%
	Residential Solar (Large)	4,519.9	4	1,130.0	19.1%
	Non-Profit/Public Facilities	25,978.7	118	220.2	18.9%
	Total	48,319.3	1,616	--	--
Community Solar	Total	34,984.3	14	2,498.9	20.9%
All Energized Projects		83,303.6	1,630	--	--

The analysis presented here assumes that participants do not change their electric consumption. However, if participants do increase their electricity consumption after PV systems installation, there will be a reduction in electric energy savings impacts (along with environmental and billing savings impacts) relative to the assumption of no change in participant electric energy consumption. For reference, in 2022, the evaluation team analyzed household energy consumption outside of Illinois and found that many households increased their energy consumption following the installation of solar.<sup>8</sup>

It is also important to note that the energy savings presented here are based on simulated PV generation. If metered PV production data were available, more accurate estimates of energy savings would be possible.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> A similar table detailing the first-year energy savings for Energized PY24-25 projects can be found in *Appendix A. Methodologies* for comparison to earlier evaluation years.

<sup>8</sup> [https://verdantassoc.com/wp-content/uploads/IEPEC-2022\\_Residential-Solar-Consumption.pdf](https://verdantassoc.com/wp-content/uploads/IEPEC-2022_Residential-Solar-Consumption.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> This information is not available for evaluation unless benefitting customer signs a release form of their data. For this reason, the data was not available for this evaluation. The evaluation team investigated whether annual REC reporting

## Demand Savings

Our team assessed demand savings to understand how the ILSFA program mitigates overall strain on the electric grid. Peak demand refers to a period when the strain on the grid is at its highest due to the demand for energy usage at that time. Peak coincident demand savings measure the amount of that demand that is offset by solar energy generated from systems installed through ILSFA.

By generating electricity during system peak hours, ILSFA projects allow the electric utility to avoid the purchase of high-cost wholesale energy. At the same time, the electric utility reduces its transmission and distribution losses during hours of high system congestion.

The evaluation team estimated demand savings for two conditions: (1) the single hour of the year when grid loads reached their maximum value and (2) the savings coincident with the grid's top 100 peak hours.

## Peak Hour Impacts

The evaluation team estimated impacts on PJM-ComEd and MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 annual system peaks using simulated PV generation values. PJM-ComEd and MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 are the two ISO regions in Illinois. ISO regions are different sections of the electric grid that control and monitor the operation of the electrical power system in that portion of the state. The PJM-ComEd ISO region covers the Chicago region and parts of northern Illinois, and the MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 region covers central and southern Illinois as well as the parts of northern Illinois not covered by the PJM-ComEd region.

Table 12, below, shows peak hour impacts by ISO region for PY24-25 approved and energized projects. The annual peak for both ISO regions between June 1, 2024, and May 31, 2025 occurred on August 27, 2024, a day when high temperatures in the Chicago area approached 100°F. The PJM-ComEd peak occurred during the hour between 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., while the MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 peak occurred later, between 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. It is important to note that these are not the hours when ILSFA PV systems typically reach their highest output; it is typically during the middle of the day when irradiance peaks.

The estimated peak hour impacts for PY24-25 energized projects are equivalent to 0.07% of the PJM-ComEd peak load and 0.02% of the MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 peak load. The estimated peak hour capacity factors for the MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 region are lower than those for the PJM-ComEd region because of the different timing of system peaks. The MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 peak occurred two hours later when solar radiation levels were lower than they had been two hours prior.

data could be used as a proxy for annual generation in the PY5 and PY6 evaluations. Due to possible misalignment of REC reporting and REC production this source of PV generation data was deemed unsuitable for impacts evaluation purposes.

Table 12. Estimated Peak Hour Generation for **PY24-25 Energized** Projects

Iso Region	Number Of Projects	Estimated Peak Hour Generation (MW)	Estimated Peak Hour Capacity Factor
PJM-ComEd	1,523	14.1	47.5%
MISO-Illinois-Zone 4	107	1.6	8.1%

## Top 100 Peak Hours

The estimated PJM-ComEd and MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 peak hour coincident generation is a snapshot of the program's beneficial impacts. Table 13, below, shows the average estimated generation coincident with PJM-ComEd and MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 2024 top 100 hours, alongside estimated capacity factors during the top 100 hours for PY24-25 approved and energized projects. Looking at the top 100 hours of generation shows how the program benefits the grid over a longer period of time.

Table 13. Estimated Average Generation Coincident with Top 100 Hours for **PY24-25 Energized** Projects

Region	Number Of Projects	Estimated Average Top 100 Hours Generation (MW)	Estimated Top 100 Hours Capacity Factor
PJM-ComEd	1,523	14.6	48.7%
MISO-Illinois-Zone 4	107	5.4	28.1%

# Bill Impacts

The evaluation team estimated two metrics to assess impacts to participant bills because of their participation in Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA): first-year electric bill savings and lifetime electric bill savings compared to participant costs. Table 14 shows the research questions addressed by the bill impacts analysis.

Table 14. Bill Impact Analysis Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Bill Impacts	<p>How much in bill savings can participants expect due to the energy produced by ILSFA projects?</p> <p>How do bill reductions compare to the participant’s cost to acquire solar (represented as the ratio of lifetime costs to lifetime bill savings)?</p>

The evaluation team calculated bill savings from energized projects by estimating the difference between a participant’s electric bills with and without photovoltaic (PV) benefits. See *Appendix A. Methodologies* for additional details about the bill calculation methodology. For the lifetime view, we compared bill savings and the participants’ costs to acquire solar PV (e.g., system costs, debt service payment, lease/PPA payments) over the 20-year estimated life of the system.

Below, we summarize our key findings from this analysis.

## Key Findings

### FINDING 1

On average, participants’ first-year net utility bill savings (bill savings minus participant PV costs) are 32% to 91% percent of their total electric utility bills (assuming no PV). Savings vary by subprogram: The average per-participant monthly net savings are \$128 for Residential Solar (Small) and \$77 for Residential Solar (Large) participants. Non-Profit/Public Facilities (NP/PF) participants save an estimated average of \$1,751 per month on their electricity costs. As in prior years, Community Solar participants were at the lower end of the range of net savings (\$41) because Community Solar participants receive credits for reduced supply charges but not the delivery or taxes/fees portion of the bill.

### FINDING 2

PV systems interconnected in Illinois on or after January 1, 2025, are subject to new net metering offerings which only credit supply charges, and not delivery charges or taxes/fees as they have in the past. The evaluation team modeled that sixty-six of the 1,616 PY24-25 energized Distributed Generation projects (63 Residential Solar (Small) and 3 NP/PF) would take service under the new net metering, based on project energization dates.

Projects under the net metering rate realized \$105 and \$1,271 for Residential Solar (Small) and NP/PF projects, respectively in first-year average bill savings (compared to \$131 and \$2,226 for older energized Residential Solar (Small) and NP/PF projects).

### FINDING 3

The evaluation team estimated the total net present value (NPV) of lifetime net savings of energized projects at \$116 million per year.

## First-Year Electric Bill Savings

All projects generate positive electric bill savings for participants. NP/PF projects have the largest average monthly gross savings before accounting for PV system costs (\$2,201), reflecting larger PV system sizes. After accounting for PV costs paid to vendors, net savings percentages range from 91% for Residential Solar (Small) to 32% for Community Solar participants.

Table 15, below, shows the average first-year electric bill savings per participant by project type for PY24-25 energized projects, distinguishing between utility electric bill savings and net savings after accounting for costs of PV paid to vendors by participants. We express the results in terms of monthly averages across the year and calculate the net savings percentage with respect to the participant's total electric bill without PV. Note that this net savings percent metric is different than the savings percentage calculated for program savings requirements. The program savings requirement percent measures the ratio of the participant's net bill savings (bill savings they realize through the program minus costs paid to the vendor) over the bill savings they realize through the program. Participants cannot pay more than 50% of the value of bill savings in costs to the vendor. By contrast, the net savings percentage used in this report calculates the ratio of modeled bill savings to the participant (bill savings realized through the program minus costs paid to the vendor) over their total pre-installation electricity bill, including costs due to delivery and taxes and fees. Table 15 also shows the average first-year electric utility bill savings per kW<sub>AC</sub> of installed capacity. This metric allows for a standardized comparison of bill savings across sub-programs (accounting for variations in system size). Community solar projects deliver lower electric utility bill savings per kW<sub>AC</sub> of capacity than the other sub-programs because bill credits are limited to the supply portion of electricity costs only and do not include the distribution or taxes/fees portion of electricity bills.

PY24-25 separately models participant bill savings under the original net energy metering (NEM) tariff and those subject to the updated NEM tariff that took effect after January 1, 2025. Under the original NEM tariff, energy exported to the grid by an ILSFA participant's PV system is credited at the full retail electricity rate, including supply, transmission, and distribution charges. Under the updated NEM tariff, export credits are limited to supply and transmission charges only, excluding distribution charges, fees, and taxes. This change in tariff policy affects the estimated bill savings for distributed generation projects with system energization dates on or after January 1, 2025. Sixty-six of the 1,616 PY24-25 Energized Distributed Generation projects (63 Residential Solar (Small) and 3 NP/PF) were modeled to take service under the new net metering.

First-year average bill savings under the new net metering were \$105 and \$1,271 for Residential Solar (Small) and Non-profit/Public projects, respectively (compared to \$131 and \$2,226 for older Energized Distributed Generation projects).

Project size strongly influences bill savings; the largest projects produce the greatest electric bill savings. Other factors affecting electric bill savings include capacity factor, utility electricity prices, and net metering tariff (retail vs. supply-only). For all Community Solar projects, bill credits are limited to the supply portion of electricity costs only and do not include the distribution or taxes/fees portion of electricity bills. As a result of this limitation, Community Solar projects have the lowest average net savings percentage (31.9%).

Table 15. First-Year Estimated Average Monthly Electric Bill Savings per Participant for **PY24-25 Energized Projects**

Project Type	Number Of Projects	Utility Monthly Electric Bill Savings	PV Costs	Net Savings	Average Net Savings Percentage	Utility Monthly Electric Bill Savings per kW <sub>AC</sub>	
Residential Solar (Small)	1,494	\$129.74	\$1.67	\$128.07	91.0%	\$19.71	
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Large)	4	\$84.70	\$7.79	\$76.91	79.0%	\$17.96
	Non-Profit /Public Facilities	118	\$2,201.25	\$450.08	\$1,751.18	56.5%	\$17.10
Community Solar	14	\$57.69	\$17.07	\$40.62	31.9%	\$11.03	

Table 16 below shows the first year estimated average utility monthly electric bill savings for the past four program years. The year-over-year growth in the bill savings for the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram is largely driven by increasing electricity prices over time. The NP/PF subprogram’s bill savings are driven both by increasing electricity prices and a wider variation (relative to residential projects) in electricity consumption at NP/PF sites prior to installing solar. The average bill savings of Community Solar projects is affected by the total number of subscribers; systems of the same size that serve more customers provide lower bill savings to each individual customer.

Table 16. **PY21-22 through PY24-25 Energized** Projects First-Year Estimated Average Utility Monthly Electric Bill Savings by Subprogram

Program	PY21-22 (PY4)	PY22-23 (PY5)	PY23-24 (PY6)	PY24-25 (PY7)
Residential Solar (Small)	\$86.19	\$97.69	\$111.90	\$129.74
Residential Solar (Large)	\$58.10	\$58.49	\$65.69	\$84.70
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	\$1,525.15	\$2,050.35	\$2,194.52	\$2,201.25
Community Solar	\$41.52	\$91.28	\$60.79	\$57.69

## Lifetime Electric Bill Savings Compared to Participants’ Costs

Overall, PY24-25 energized projects generate substantial lifetime electric bill savings relative to participant costs. Residential Solar (Small) projects show the highest net benefit, largely driven by the majority of participants having \$0 payment terms.

Table 17, below, shows the NPV of lifetime electric bill savings and participants’ costs by project type with net savings calculated as the difference between the two. The costs represent a participant’s payment (total, per month, or per kWh) under their purchase agreement, lease agreement, power purchase agreement (PPA), or subscriber agreement over the duration of their contract. The table also includes a ratio of the lifetime participant costs (in NPV) to lifetime participant bill savings (in NPV).<sup>10</sup> The results are based on the assumption of a 0.5%/yr PV performance degradation rate.<sup>11</sup> The PV performance degradation rate is an assumption, representing that the performance of solar panels will decline over time due to factors such as panel cleanliness, maintenance, and general wear and tear.

We estimate the total NPV of lifetime utility electric bill savings of energized projects to be \$136.7 million and the NPV of lifetime participant PV costs to be \$20.4 million. Overall, this results in a ratio of costs to electric bill savings of 0.15, indicating that the lifetime bill savings are nearly seven times greater than the lifetime participant costs.

Community Solar projects had the highest participant PV cost-to-utility-electric-bill-savings ratio at 0.36. While Community Solar projects tend to have relatively high-capacity factors, electric utilities calculate bill credits based only on the supply portion of the electric utility bill.

<sup>10</sup> Note that this ratio of cost to bill savings is calculated over the 20-year estimated lifetime of the system. This metric is different than the savings percentage calculated for program eligibility, which is estimated over the customer’s contract term.

<sup>11</sup> IPA uses an annual degradation rate of 0.5% for the purposes of program planning.

All else equal, this will tend to make costs larger in proportion to benefits when comparing to older distributed generation projects where participants received credits for supply, transmission, and distribution charges.

Residential Solar (Small and Large) projects had the lowest participant PV cost-to-utility-bill-savings ratio at 0.01. Lower cost-to-utility-bill-savings ratios indicate higher net savings, all else equal.

These projects had the lowest ratio because most (94%) of these projects had \$0 payment terms under their purchase agreement, lease agreement, power purchase agreement, or subscriber agreement, meaning they had no up-front costs or monthly fees.

Table 17. Net Present Value of Utility Electric Bill Savings and PV Costs of **PY24-25 Energized** Projects by Type

Project Type	Project Type	Number Of Projects	NPV Lifetime Utility Electric Bill Savings	NPV Lifetime Participant PV Costs	NPV Lifetime Net Savings	NPV Participant Cost Per Utility Electric Bill Savings Ratio	Number Of Projects With \$0 Payments
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Small)	1,494	\$39,253,231	\$230,963	\$39,022,268	0.01	1,404
	Residential Solar (Large)	4	\$9,050,341	\$126,322	\$8,924,019	0.01	2
	Non-Profit /Public Facilities	118	\$49,226,178	\$5,879,770	\$43,346,407	0.12	12
	Total	1,616	\$97,529,750	\$6,237,055	\$91,292,695	0.06	1,418
Community Solar	Total	14	\$39,177,843	\$14,198,995	\$24,978,848	0.36	6
All Energized Projects		1,630	\$136,707,593	\$20,436,050	\$116,271,542	0.15	1,424

\*The customer payment terms were not available for one NP/PF project since the approved vendor (AV) and the customer were the same entity. However, since the total renewable energy credit (REC) incentives for this project were greater than the total project cost, the customer cost for this project is modeled as a \$0 payment.

There are three ownership models (Lease, PPA, and Purchase) within ILSFA. All of these generate positive lifetime net savings for all participants, demonstrating how the range of financing options available through the program can accommodate varying participant needs and circumstances.

For Residential Solar (Small and Large) projects, lease and PPAs show the lowest cost-to-savings ratios, driven largely by a high proportion of participants with \$0 payment terms. NP/PF projects show higher cost-to-savings ratios across all ownership types, reflecting greater upfront or ongoing PV costs relative to Residential Solar (Small and Large).

**Ownership models in the ILSFA program:**

**Lease:** Participants lease the project. The project is on the participant’s property but owned by someone else.

**Power Purchase Agreement (PPA):** Participants purchase electricity generated by the solar project through a PPA. The project is on the participant’s property but is owned by someone else.

**Purchase:** Participants purchase the solar project outright. The participant may take out a loan to finance the purchase.

We show the NPV of utility bill savings and participants’ PV costs by sector and ownership type in Table 18, below, for Distributed Generation projects, assuming a PV performance degradation rate of 0.5%/yr. For Residential Solar (Small and Large) projects, the leased projects had the lowest cost to savings ratio (0.004). This is because 95% of these projects had \$0 payments on their contract terms. Similarly, Residential Solar (Small and Large) subprogram PPA projects have a large proportion of projects with \$0 payments (84%), with a very low cost to savings ratio of 0.01. The NP/PF projects with a lease/PPA payment structure had a much lower proportion of projects with \$0 payments (three PPA projects and one lease project). The savings ratios for NP/PF are all less than or equal to 0.15.

Table 18. Net Present Value of Electric Bill Savings and Cost by Sector and Ownership Type of PY24-25 Energized Distributed Generation Projects

Sector	Ownership Type	Number Of Projects	NPV Lifetime Utility Electric Bill Savings	NPV Lifetime Participant PV Costs	NPV Lifetime Net Savings	NPV Participant Cost Per Utility Electric Bill Savings Ratio	Number Of Projects With \$0 Payments
Residential Solar (Small and Large)	Lease	1,419	\$37,404,839	\$145,773	\$37,259,066	0.004	1,347
	PPA	62	\$8,784,282	\$46,290	\$8,737,992	0.005	52
	Purchase	17	\$2,114,452	\$165,222	\$1,949,230	0.078	7
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	Lease	25	\$9,198,973	\$1,414,980	\$7,783,992	0.154	1
	PPA	80	\$33,097,519	\$4,109,168	\$28,988,351	0.124	3
	Purchase	13	\$6,929,685	\$355,622	\$6,574,064	0.051	8

# Environmental Impacts

The evaluation team estimated the environmental impacts of PY24-25 approved projects and energized projects. We calculated the emission impacts as the difference between the emissions generated by the program photovoltaic (PV) systems and baseline emissions that would have occurred in the absence of the Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) program. The results presented here are based on the modeled electricity impacts, as described in the methodologies appendix (*Appendix A. Methodologies*).

Table 19 lists the research questions addressed by the environmental impact analysis.

Table 19. Environmental Impact Analysis Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Environmental Impacts	What are the first-year (approved projects), one-year (energized projects), and lifetime reduction of emissions associated with approved and energized ILSFA projects?

Below, we summarize our key findings from this analysis.

## Key Findings

### FINDING 1

The evaluation team estimates the first-year avoided emissions of PY24-25 approved projects to be equal to 58.2 million pounds CO<sub>2</sub>e, 29.7 thousand pounds of NO<sub>x</sub>, and 33.6 thousand pounds of SO<sub>2</sub>. Assuming a 0.5%/yr PV performance degradation rate and a 3% (real) discount rate, we estimate the total lifetime avoided emissions to be equal to 340 million pounds CO<sub>2</sub>e, 363 thousand pounds of NO<sub>x</sub>, and 411 thousand pounds of SO<sub>2</sub>.

### FINDING 2

The evaluation team estimates the one-year avoided emissions of PY24-25 energized projects to be equal to 98.6 million pounds CO<sub>2</sub>e, 55 thousand pounds of NO<sub>x</sub>, and 63 thousand pounds of SO<sub>2</sub>. Assuming a 0.5%/yr PV performance degradation rate and 3% (real) discount rate, we estimate total lifetime avoided emissions to be equal to 795 million pounds CO<sub>2</sub>e, 724 thousand pounds of NO<sub>x</sub>, and 832 thousand pounds of SO<sub>2</sub>.

## First-Year and Lifetime Avoided Emissions

We estimated avoided emissions using the National Laboratory of the Rockies (NLR) Cambium dataset of marginal CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions rates and marginal CO<sub>2</sub>e, NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> emissions rates from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) AVOIDed Emissions and geneRation Tool (AVERT).<sup>12,13</sup> We calculated emissions impacts as the product of marginal emissions rates and estimated PV generation.<sup>14</sup> Our estimates of environmental impacts would be more accurate if metered PV production data were available.

For PY24-25 approved projects, we estimated first-year avoided CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions of 58.2 million pounds, which corresponds to an average rate of 1,168 pounds CO<sub>2</sub>e per MWh (energy production from Table 9). We estimated reductions of NO<sub>x</sub> emissions (29.7 thousand pounds) and SO<sub>2</sub> emissions (33.6 thousand pounds). Table 20 shows the distribution of estimated emissions impacts by project type.

Table 20. PY24-25 Approved Projects Estimated First-Year Avoided Emissions

Project Type		First Year Estimated Avoided LBs Of CO <sub>2</sub> e	First Year Estimated Avoided LBs Of NO <sub>x</sub>	First Year Estimated Avoided LBs Of SO <sub>2</sub>
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Small)	9,581,830	5,027	5,705
	Residential Solar (Large)	300,180	137	154
	Non-Profit/ Public Facilities	13,770,752	8,694	10,005
	Total	23,652,762	13,858	15,864
Community Solar	Total	34,546,228	15,805	17,720
All Approved Projects		58,198,990	29,663	33,584

For PY24-25 energized projects, we estimate that one-year operations reduce CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions by 98.6 million pounds, NO<sub>x</sub> emissions by 55 thousand pounds, and SO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 63 thousand pounds. Table 21 shows the distribution of estimated emissions impacts by energized project type. Average NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions rates are 0.66 lbs/MWh and 0.75 lbs/MWh, respectively (calculated using the energy production values in Table 11).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nlr.gov/analysis/standard-scenarios.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/avert>

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix A. Methodologies: Environmental Impact Analysis for a detailed description of the updated evaluation methodology for PY24-25.

Table 21. **PY24-25 Energized** Projects Estimated One-Year Avoided Emissions

Project Type		One Year Estimated Avoided LBs Of CO <sub>2</sub> e	One Year Estimated Avoided LBs Of NO <sub>x</sub>	One Year Estimated Avoided LBs Of SO <sub>2</sub>
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Small)	18,981,237	8,816	9,898
	Residential Solar (Large)	4,722,282	2,160	2,422
	Non-Profit/ Public Facilities	32,298,886	19,300	22,125
	Total	56,002,406	30,276	34,446
Community Solar	Total	42,577,749	24,706	28,262
All Energized Projects		98,580,155	54,982	62,708

For PY24-25 approved projects, Table 22 shows the lifetime emissions impacts estimates by project type using PV degradation rates of 0.50%/yr. We used a discount rate of 3% (real) to calculate these values. These projects are estimated to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions by 340 million pounds, NO<sub>x</sub> emissions by 363 thousand pounds, and SO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 411 thousand pounds.

Table 22. **PY24-25 Approved** Projects Estimated Lifetime Avoided Emissions

Project Type		Lifetime Estimated Avoided LBs Of CO <sub>2</sub> e	Lifetime Estimated Avoided LBs Of NO <sub>x</sub>	Lifetime Estimated Avoided LBs Of SO <sub>2</sub>
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Small)	55,551,942	61,548	69,853
	Residential Solar (Large)	1,820,657	1,682	1,885
	Non-Profit/ Public Facilities	73,502,380	106,453	122,509
	Total	130,874,980	169,683	194,248
Community Solar	Total	209,626,364	193,526	216,972
All Approved Projects		340,501,343	363,208	411,219

For PY24-25 energized projects, Table 23 shows the estimated lifetime emissions impacts by project type. Energized projects are estimated to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions by 795 million pounds, NO<sub>x</sub> emissions by 724 thousand pounds, and SO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 832 thousand pounds.

Table 23. PY24-25 Energized Projects Estimated Lifetime Avoided Emissions

Project Type		Lifetime Estimated Avoided LBs Of CO <sub>2</sub> e	Lifetime Estimated Avoided LBs Of NO <sub>x</sub>	Lifetime Estimated Avoided LBs Of SO <sub>2</sub>
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Small)	153,702,489	114,762	129,355
	Residential Solar (Large)	48,771,709	30,853	36,220
	Non-Profit/Public Facilities	250,009,002	253,010	291,766
	Total	452,483,200	398,625	457,341
Community Solar	Total	342,515,824	325,977	374,819
All Energized Projects		794,999,024	724,602	832,161

## Impact Equivalencies

To help understand the magnitude of the energy and environmental estimated impacts, the evaluation team calculated estimates of equivalent actions that would reduce the same amount of energy or CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as the ILSFA PV project impacts. Table 24 shows these impact equivalents.

Table 24. Estimated Impact Equivalents for PY24-25 Approved (First-Year Impacts) and Energized (One-Year Impacts) Projects

Equivalent Impact	PY24-25 Approved Projects	PY24-25 Energized Projects
Number of homes powered for a year	6,271	10,163
Number of cars taken off the road for a year	3,871	6,558

The average annual amount of electricity sold to residential customers in Illinois was 7,945 kWh in 2024.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the first-year energy savings from PY24-25 approved projects is equivalent to the energy consumption of 6,271 homes. The one-year energy savings of PY24-25 energized projects is equivalent to the energy consumption of 10,163 homes.

The reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from program projects can also be considered in terms of the number of cars taken off the road. The EPA estimates that the average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per vehicle per mile in 2025 was 506 grams.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Illinois Commerce Commission Comparison of Electric Sales Statistics for 2024 and 2023

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Transportation and Air Quality, personal communication, Jan. 15, 2025: <https://www.bts.gov/content/estimated-national-average-vehicle-emissions-rates-vehicle-vehicle-type-using-gasoline-and>

The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that the average annual miles driven per driver is 13,476 miles.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the average vehicle emits 6,818,856 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, or 15,033 pounds. The first-year estimated CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions reductions of PY24-25 approved projects is equivalent to taking 3,871 cars off the road. The one-year estimated CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions reductions of energized projects is equivalent to taking 6,558 cars off the road.

A four-year comparison of approved project first-year impact equivalencies is found in Table 25, below. As the first-year energy savings estimates of approved projects increase year-over-year, so do the impact equivalents.

Table 25. Estimated Approved Projects First-Year Impact Equivalents from **PY21-22 through PY24-25**

Equivalent Impact	PY21-22 (PY4)	PY22-23 (PY5)	PY23-24 (PY6)	PY24-25 (PY7)
Number of homes powered for a year	3,285	4,315	5,280	6,271
Number of cars taken off the road for a year	2,704	3,496	3,428	3,871

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/onh00/bar8.htm>

# Workforce and Economic Impacts

This section considers the impact of Illinois Solar for All's (ILSFA) implementation on the Illinois workforce, as well as other economic impacts.

As program participants gain access to new solar power under ILSFA, the awarded funds go to support a variety of activities. These activities include site inspections and planning for installation, purchase of solar panels, purchase of other necessary construction materials, and installation of the panels. Additionally, program participants benefit from on-bill energy cost savings once the new solar systems are energized. While some of the economic impacts created by ILSFA's activities are unlikely to create significant economic impacts within Illinois (such as the manufacturing of solar panels, which largely takes place overseas), other impacts, such as the sourcing of construction materials and installation activities, will take place locally and have an impact on the local economy.

Below, we summarize our key findings from this analysis.

## Key Findings

### FINDING 1

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The modeled GDP impact of new projects energized in PY24-25 was \$111 million, driven largely by a significant uptick in Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar investment, which together accounted for \$90 million in GDP impacts. In addition to the GDP contributions, project spending generated an estimated demand for 560 full-time equivalent jobs across Illinois, including 300 in Cook County and 90 in West Central Illinois.

### FINDING 2

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ILSFA investments directly supported \$33 million in employee compensation statewide in PY2024-2025. Approximately 60% of total project costs went toward in-state labor, with direct compensation totaling \$19 million and additional indirect and induced compensation of \$7 million and \$8 million, respectively. The remaining 40% of project costs also went towards materials and hardware, permitting, and other administrative costs.

### FINDING 3

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Program participants in the Residential Solar (Small), Residential Solar (Large), and Community Solar subprograms received approximately \$4 million in increased household disposable income from energy bill savings in PY24-25. This new spending was concentrated in essential needs such as housing, healthcare, retail, groceries, and transportation, consistent with qualitative feedback from program participants.

## FINDING 4

New program activity generated notable tax revenues across federal, state, and local levels. Federal tax impacts were the largest, with direct federal taxes totaling approximately \$5 million, more than 40% of which came from employee compensation (Social Security) taxes — signaling meaningful income growth among workers. State and local taxes, while smaller, were driven primarily by production and import taxes, suggesting direct benefits flowing into municipal programs serving program communities.

## Detailed Results

We assessed the high-level economic contributions of two key features of the ILSFA program: near-term investments constructing and installing new solar infrastructure, and ongoing energy bill savings following program participants' resulting access to affordable solar power. To measure the economic effects of these two aspects of the program, we addressed the research questions summarized in Table 26.

Table 26. Workforce and Economic Impacts Research Questions

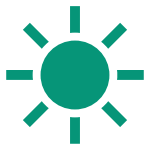
Category	Primary Research Questions
Near-Term Employment Impacts	How is near-term employment affected by spending on ILSFA projects?
New Employee Income	What portion of ILSFA's investments directly or indirectly become local employee wages?
Contribution to GDP	What is the total amount of additional value added to in-state GDP?
New Household Savings Spending Patterns	Where in the economy do households spend their on-bill savings?
Impacts on Taxes	What are the changes in collected taxes resulting from program spending?

This analysis employs the IMpact analysis for PLANning (IMPLAN) input/output economic model, using ILSFA program data inputs (including program costs and on-bill savings) to estimate the workforce and economic impacts described above. IMPLAN approximates a multisectoral cash flow model of the economy with the ability to disaggregate by geography (state, county, etc.). Essentially, the model tracks dollars as they are spent in one economic sector (e.g., hospitals) and in turn generates additional spending in other related sectors (e.g., healthcare supplies).

For this analysis, we use IMPLAN to identify the effects of new spending in the Illinois solar industry and the subsequent ripple effects throughout the state's economy. For each dollar of new program spending, IMPLAN estimates new demand for employment, new employee compensation, impacts on taxes, and other changes across sectors.

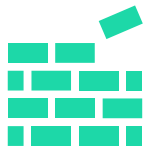
To calculate these impacts, we classified new program spending into three categories—hardware, labor, and soft costs—based on an average cost breakdown for residential and commercial solar installations developed by the National Laboratory of the Rockies (NLR).<sup>18</sup>

Where possible, we show metrics disaggregated by ILSFA program region.<sup>19</sup> For this analysis, IMPLAN is configured to accept new investments aligned with the ILSFA program regions while accounting for the fact that new spending in one region will also cause spillover impacts in nearby regions within Illinois. For example, a project in the East Central region may rely on some labor or materials from the adjacent West Central region. The impact of the portion of ILSFA investments that “leak” out of the state (e.g., the purchase of equipment from Indiana) is not captured in this analysis. IMPLAN estimates both total dollar impacts and the specific dollar impacts related to employment, and differentiates three categories of economic impact: direct, indirect, and induced effects. These differentiate the ways an investment (i.e., an ILSFA project) can affect the local economy and are defined as follows:



#### Direct Effects

Equal to the initial investment (dollars spent on hardware and soft costs) and the demand for employment (labor) that is a direct result of program-funded activities and investment dollars including, for example, the installation of new solar arrays.



#### Indirect Effects

Employment and dollars that are generated within the state by changes in supply chain demand due to the product, such as the purchase of tools, materials, and other inputs that are necessary for completing the construction of ILSFA projects and are produced or provided by companies located in Illinois.



#### Induced Effects

Changes in expenditure driven by newly earned income following new employment in the direct and indirect sectors or by household savings resulting from lower energy costs. For example, a new employee in the solar installation field might spend part of their pay on a haircut or at a restaurant, contributing to demand for employment and products in those sectors.

<sup>18</sup> National Laboratory of the Rockies. "Solar Installed System Cost Analysis." *NLR Solar Market Research & Analysis*, 28 Jan. 2026, [www.nlr.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-installed-system-cost](http://www.nlr.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-installed-system-cost).

<sup>19</sup> There are six program regions: Cook County, Northeast, Northwest, East Central, West Central, and South.

The following sections outline the results of this IMPLAN analysis broken out based on the two high-level economic contributions of ILSFA: the near-term activities associated with solar installation, and the longer-term changes in household spending resulting from ongoing energy bill savings.

## Total Near-Term Impacts

**Near-term definition:** Impacts that occur within a year of spending. Since near-term economic impacts largely occur during project construction, these results reflect the fully realized economic and workforce impacts of ILSFA project construction.

**Projects included in core analysis:** Projects newly energized in PY2024-2025, herein referred to as new PY24-25 energized projects. These projects may have applied for the program in any year from PY18-19 (PY1) to PY23-24 (PY6) but received Part II approval during PY24-25 (PY7 or June 1, 2024, to May 31, 2025), meaning projects were fully constructed, connected to the grid, and had received renewable energy credit (REC) payout from the program.

**Impacts included:** Total near-term impacts are calculated by adding the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Solar projects in PY24-25 resulted in substantial GDP and employee compensation impacts resulting from ILSFA spending of \$111 million and \$33 million, respectively. These impacts were driven primarily by spending on Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar projects. Table 27 details modeled GDP and employee compensation impacts by project type for direct, indirect, and induced impacts for newly energized projects in PY24-25. The table breaks these estimates by project type and impact type. Because near term impacts reflect installation and construction activities, levels of modeled economic impact roughly correspond to the number of projects and magnitude of direct project costs associated with each program region.

Table 27. Modeled GDP and Employee Compensation Impacts by Subprogram for **New PY24-25 Energized Projects**

Impact Type	Project Type	Employee Compensation	GDP Impacts
Direct	Residential Solar (Small)	\$7,720,000	\$26,190,000
	Distributed Generation Residential Solar (Large)	\$220,000	\$740,000
	Non-Profit/ Public Facilities	\$3,380,000	\$11,460,000
	Community Solar	\$7,260,000	\$24,610,000
Indirect	Distributed Generation Residential Solar (Small)	\$2,820,000	\$9,910,000

Impact Type	Project Type	Employee Compensation	GDP Impacts
	Residential Solar (Large)	\$80,000	\$280,000
	Non-Profit/ Public Facilities	\$1,230,000	\$4,340,000
	Community Solar	\$2,650,000	\$9,310,000
Induced	Distributed Generation		
	Residential Solar (Small)	\$3,130,000	\$10,230,000
	Residential Solar (Large)	\$90,000	\$290,000
	Non-Profit/ Public Facilities	\$1,370,000	\$4,470,000
	Community Solar	\$2,950,000	\$9,610,000
Total			
	Distributed Generation		
	Residential Solar (Small)	\$13,680,000	\$46,330,000
	Residential Solar (Large)	\$390,000	\$1,320,000
	Non-Profit/ Public Facilities	\$5,990,000	\$20,270,000
	Community Solar	\$12,850,000	\$43,540,000
	<b>Statewide Total</b>	<b>\$32,910,000</b>	<b>\$111,460,000</b>

In PY24-25, more than half (\$41 million) of the program spending on new energized projects occurred in Cook County, as many Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar projects were energized in Cook County accounting for \$18 million and \$20 million in ILSFA program spending, respectively. An \$8 million Community Solar project energized in West Central Illinois boosted the economic impacts in this region. Table 28, below, compares the total investments in energized ILSFA projects from PY18-19 to PY23-24 with investments in projects newly energized in PY24-25 by County.

Table 28. **New Energized** Projects and Project Spending by Region

Region	Projects Energized in Previous Years	Project Spending in Previous Years	Projects Newly Energized in PY24-25	Project Spending in PY24-25
Cook	108	\$14,662,809	851	\$40,874,237
East Central	22	\$12,357,679	15	\$1,894,702

Region	Projects Energized in Previous Years	Project Spending in Previous Years	Projects Newly Energized in PY24-25	Project Spending in PY24-25
West Central	21	\$15,407,194	16	\$11,561,363
Northeast	55	\$19,265,229	376	\$9,772,754
Northwest	21	\$14,720,672	130	\$6,088,158
South	10	\$2,979,269	5	\$3,280,194
Total	237	\$79,392,852	1393	\$73,471,408

Figure 2 and Figure 3, below, compare the total employment impacts and the employee compensation for new PY24-25 energized projects and previously energized projects. Consistent with project spending, the highest economic impacts occurred in the Northeast, West Central and Cook County regions. Note, however, that employment and spending impacts may be distributed unevenly across regions of the state, as spending concentrated in one region does not necessarily produce proportional employment, indirect, or induced impacts in that same region.

For example, an installation in one region may require material and labor from a different part of the state, in which case indirect or induced GDP impacts of the project spending would accrue to a different region of the state.

Figure 2. Total Modeled Employment Impacts of **New Energized** Projects Across Project Years

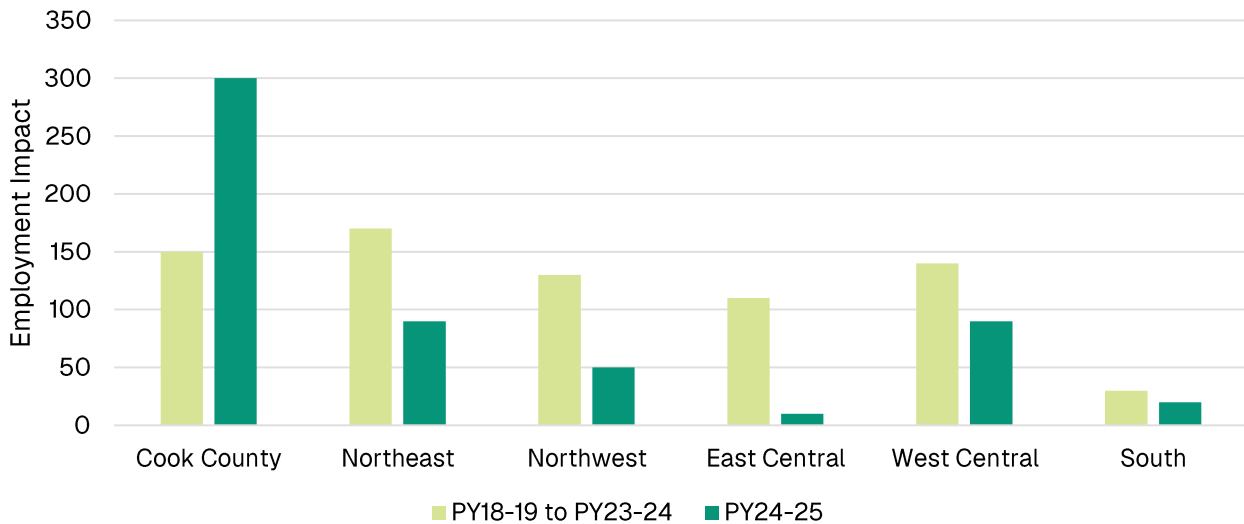
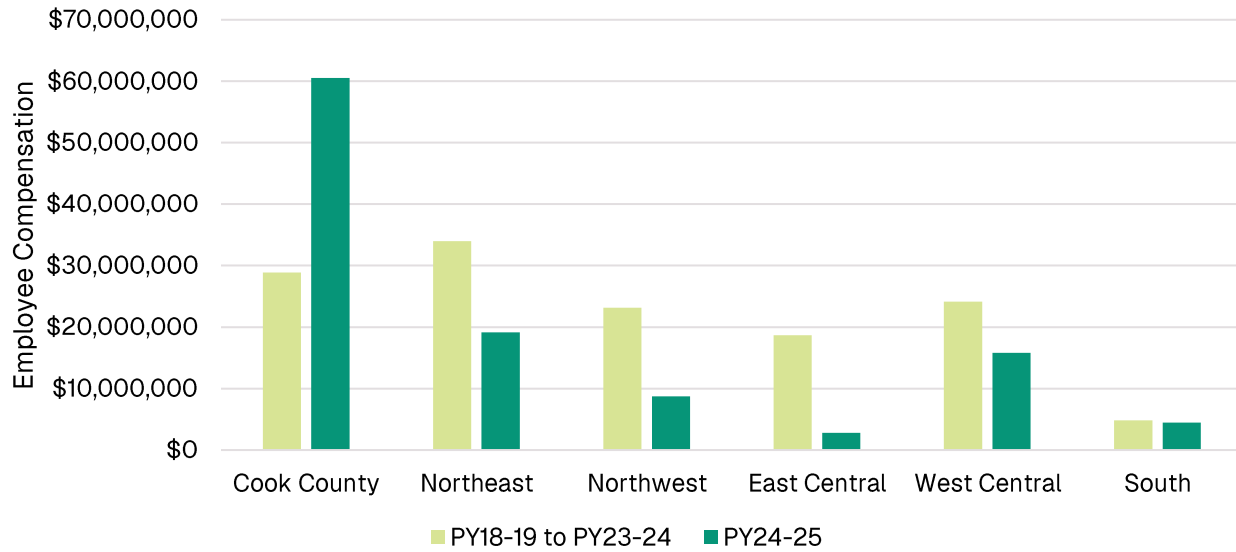


Figure 3. Total Modeled Employee Compensation from **New Energized** Projects Across Project Years

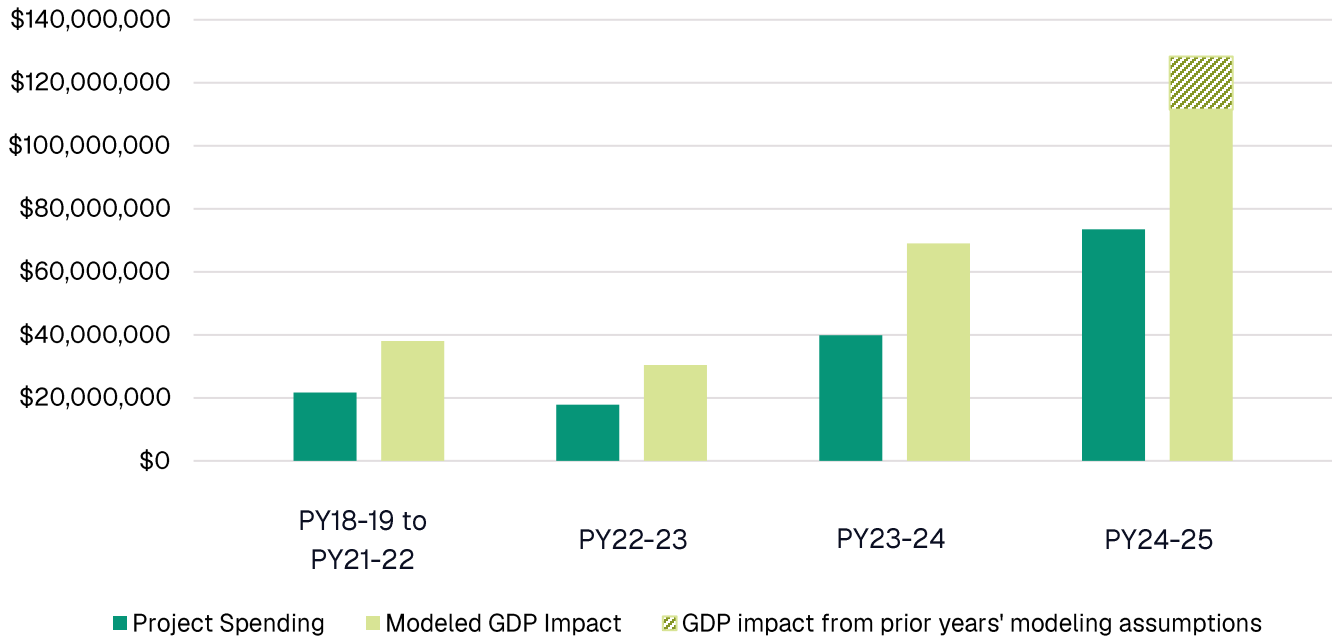


Since the start of the program, ILSFA projects have had a modeled GDP impact of around \$249 million resulting from direct investments of more than \$153 million.

Figure 4 shows the growth in project spending and modeled GDP impacts by project year. Spending and GDP impacts increased year over year, corresponding to an increase in the number of projects across program years.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Note: The evaluation team updated the PY24-25 methodology to account from spending that occurs out of state, resulting in a slightly lower estimate of economic impacts.

Figure 4. Project Spending and Modeled GDP Impacts (in 2025 dollars) by Project Year for **New Energized Projects**<sup>21</sup>



## Direct Impacts

Direct impacts include those resulting from the actual installation of solar panels and any related development activities. Table 29 details the impact from direct effects for each of the ILSFA regions. The impacts measured are changes to:

- **Total employee compensation:** measures wages earned by employees in jobs created by direct impact (installation of solar panels and any related development activities).
- **Impacts on GDP:** quantifies new industry spending across activities related to solar installation.

Across the ILSFA projects newly energized in PY24-25, the model estimates that approximately 60% of the total project costs went to hiring in-state labor related to project installations. The other 40% of project costs went towards materials and hardware, permitting, and other administrative costs. The highest employee compensation and GDP impacts occur in the Cook County, the Northeast, and West Central regions, which aligns with the high concentration of project spending in those regions.

<sup>21</sup> For consistency with prior years' analyses, Figure 4 also shows the striped section of the bar for PY24-25 which reflects the modeling assumptions used in prior years' analyses. For PY24-25, we updated the modeling methodology to account for the split of program costs by labor, hardware, and soft costs which yielded a slightly lower estimate of total GDP impacts reflected by the solid light green portion. This lower estimate accounts for spending that occurs out of state, such as for hardware purchases and changes to supply chains for solar equipment in recent years. These estimates are based on data from the following source: "Solar Installed System Cost Analysis." National Laboratory of the Rockies, 28 Jan. 2026, [www.nlr.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-installed-system-cost](http://www.nlr.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-installed-system-cost).

Table 29. Incremental Modeled Direct Impacts of **New PY24-25 Energized** Projects by Program Region

Region	Modeled Employee Compensation	Direct Project Cost Impacts to GDP
Cook County	\$10,530,000	\$34,860,000
Northeast	\$2,590,000	\$8,210,000
Northwest	\$1,510,000	\$5,240,000
East Central	\$460,000	\$1,680,000
West Central	\$2,750,000	\$10,110,000
South	\$740,000	\$2,920,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$18,580,000</b>	<b>\$63,020,000</b>

### Indirect Impacts

As seen below in Table 30, indirect impacts (i.e., the supply-chain “ripple effects” of purchasing supplies and services in Illinois to support project construction) have smaller increases to employment demand, wages, and GDP than the direct impacts shown in the previous section. These effects come from more subtle changes in demand for tools, materials, and other inputs needed to construct new solar installations, and they are separate from (and can be added to) the direct effects. In the context of indirect impacts, GDP contributions can be interpreted as additional upstream supply chain spending to support direct installation activities. Cook County has the highest portion of indirect impacts to GDP and employee compensation, which aligns with the high concentration of program spending in this region. However, unlike the direct impacts, the Northeast region has higher GDP and employee compensation impacts than the West Central region. This may reflect Cook County’s reliance on the Northeast region for supply chain inputs which boost indirect impacts in this region.

Table 30. Incremental Modeled Indirect Impacts of **New PY24-25 Energized** Projects by Program Region

Region	Modeled Employee Compensation	Indirect Project Cost Impacts to GDP
Cook County	\$3,910,000	\$12,320,000
Northeast	\$1,460,000	\$5,410,000
Northwest	\$480,000	\$1,880,000
East Central	\$130,000	\$560,000
West Central	\$670,000	\$2,890,000

Region	Modeled Employee Compensation	Indirect Project Cost Impacts to GDP
South	\$140,000	\$780,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,790,000</b>	<b>\$23,840,000</b>

## Induced Impacts

Induced impacts represent the smallest set of impacts in dollar value, but these impacts often represent a notable economic impact on the communities served by the ILSFA program. This is because they reflect local economic impacts of money spent by those employed in constructing ILSFA projects. Table 31 below, shows these induced impacts, which occur in a broad range of industries where wages are spent, including housing, retail, and healthcare, and they reflect the increased demand for jobs (e.g., employees in retail or services) as well as the demand for products and services themselves (e.g., food and medicine).

As with the indirect impacts, the induced impacts are concentrated in Cook County, the Northeast, and the West Central regions. For the most part, induced spending stays within the region where the project’s spending occurred. However, Cook County attracts some additional consumer spending which bleeds into the surrounding Northeast region, which can be explained by a higher population and higher prices for goods and services purchased in these regions. This is consistent with the results seen in prior program years.

Table 31. Incremental Modeled Induced Impacts of **New PY24-25 Energized** Projects by Program Region

Region	Total Modeled Employee Compensation	One-Time Induced Impacts to GDP
Cook County	\$4,490,000	\$13,360,000
Northeast	\$1,590,000	\$5,500,000
Northwest	\$440,000	\$1,630,000
East Central	\$140,000	\$550,000
West Central	\$700,000	\$2,790,000
South	\$180,000	\$760,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,540,000</b>	<b>\$24,590,000</b>

## Incremental Modeled Employment Impacts

Total employment impact approximates the total demand for employees in Illinois in PY24-25 from program-funded activities. The employment impact metric is not a rigid count of annual full-time employees. Rather, it reflects the total demand for full-time equivalent employment across the entire year, including temporary demand for a portion of the year. For example, demand for ten workers for six months would be captured as a total employment impact of five.

**Key terms used to describe employment impacts:**

**Direct Employment Impacts:** Specific to the demand for jobs that facilitate the construction of solar projects from the ILSFA program in PY24-25.

**Indirect Employment Impacts:** Estimate of the demand for jobs that enable the purchasing of supplies (including distributors and manufacturers in the region) and services that enabled construction.

**Induced Employment Impacts:** Demand for employment in other sectors of the economy that benefit from increased spending due to economic activity from direct and indirect impacts.

Table 32 below shows the modeled employment impacts for each program region. The greatest employment impact was in Cook County where a high level of investment in new Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar projects created a high demand for workers. Additionally, the West Central region had a somewhat high demand for labor from Community Solar installations.

Table 32. Incremental Modeled Employment Impacts in Illinois of **New PY24-25 Energized** Projects by Program Region

Region	Direct Employment Impact	Indirect Employment Impact	Induced Employment Impact	Total
Cook County	180	50	70	300
Northeast	40	20	30	90
Northwest	30	10	10	50
East Central	10	<10	<10	10
West Central	60	10	20	90
South	20	<10	<10	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>560</b>

Note: In the above table, "<10" approximates any single digit estimates for employment impacts. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

## Tax Impacts

This section also includes a tax impact modeling analysis to estimate the effects of ILSFA on specific groups of taxpayers at the federal, state, and local levels. Potential tax impacts may include:

- Federal and state employment and income taxes on wage earners
- Local property taxes
- State sales taxes and some local assessments

- Federal and income taxes on corporations

**Key terms used to describe tax impacts:**

**Employee Compensation:** Social security taxes paid by employees.

**Enterprise (Corporations):** Taxes paid by corporations.

**Households:** Personal income taxes paid by households with various annual income levels.

**Tax on Production and Imports:** A range of various taxes such as excise taxes, import duties, property taxes, and sales taxes that may be paid by individuals or larger entities depending on the situation.

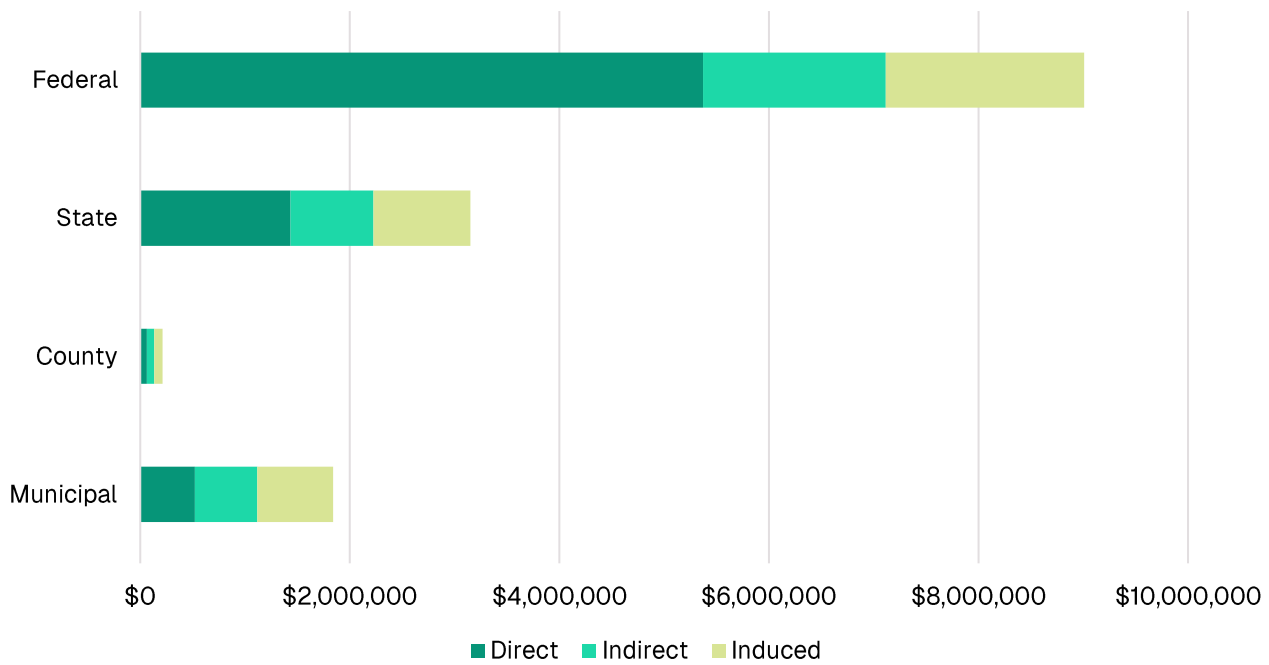
PY24-25 project spending generated an estimated \$14 million in tax revenue for federal, state, and local tax authorities. Federal taxes on employee compensation comprised the largest portion of tax impacts. Note that federal tax impacts do not include potential tax savings due to the solar investment tax credit (Solar ITC).

This analysis quantifies taxes paid by households and corporations due to changes in labor and purchases associated with ILSFA spending; the taxes that are generated by these activities provide revenue for the government to redistribute to public resources. Most tax impacts for corporations come from paying taxes on buying materials for construction and employing additional workers. For households, impacts result from additional income from project spending, whether that be employment on an ILSFA job site or increased tips for service staff at a restaurant frequented by construction workers.

Because ILSFA directly affects regional employment, household spending, and can have longer-term impacts on property values, related tax impacts can be complex. New program activity (e.g., purchasing supplies, employing workers) results in additional taxes paid by companies including employment, sales, and corporate income taxes. However, new taxes paid to municipalities or counties could directly benefit program participants through the funding of public programs serving individuals living in that community. The overall benefits of the tax impacts are overlapping and might cancel out in some cases.

Figure 5 shows the breakdown of direct, indirect, and induced tax paid to federal, state, and local (including county and municipal) taxes.

Figure 5. Modeled Direct, Indirect, Induced Tax Impacts of New PY24-25 Energized Projects <sup>a</sup>

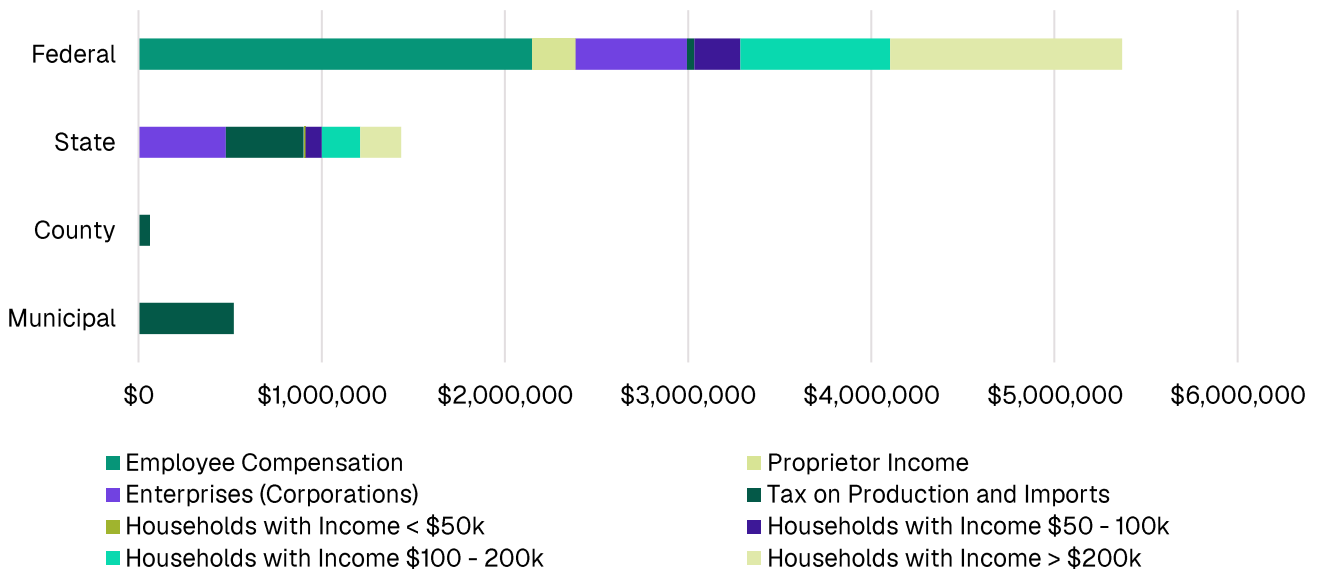


<sup>a</sup> Note: Direct tax impacts are those resulting directly from project spending, indirect effects come from economic activity related to inputs or supplies for projects, and induced effects are the result of money that flows from project spending into other parts of the economy.

Figure 6, below, shows the distribution of how direct tax effects flow from various taxpayers to federal, state, municipal and county governments. The taxpayer categories are typically separated by the payer and the type of tax paid.

Approximately 40% of the modeled federal tax impacts come from employee compensation taxes, which are paid by employees toward social security. An increase in social security taxes implies an increase in income overall, which illustrates the positive impacts of ILSFA. Production and import taxes make up a very small portion of federal tax impacts but are larger contributors for state and municipal impacts. This signals that direct production expenses are most likely to benefit taxpayers directly by way of municipal programs that benefit their constituents.

Figure 6. Modeled Direct Tax Impacts of New PY24-25 Energized Projects by Source



Direct project spending results in economic activity, such as demand for labor and materials, which impacts firms and individuals in segments of the economy not directly participating in ILSFA. These modeled economic ripple effects result in tax revenues for actors not participating in ILSFA. Notably, the state and federal tax impacts personal income taxes for households in higher income brackets than ILSFA program participants, reflecting tax impacts on higher paid workers at firms that construct and maintain the projects. For a more detailed breakdown of tax impacts, please refer to the Process Evaluation section.

## Ongoing Impacts from Household Energy Bill Savings

In addition to one-time impacts from direct investments in solar installations, ILSFA also supports access to ongoing energy bill savings for program participants. Once new solar installations are energized, program participants will pay less for electricity compared to their bills without solar power, assuming there are no changes in their usage habits. These on-bill savings (see Bill Impacts section) effectively operate as new disposable household income, which households may then go out and spend, resulting in additional induced impacts.

Because induced impacts accrue annually for all program participants, they increase in magnitude as ILSFA approves more projects and these projects are energized. However, rising energy costs may offset some of the savings reported in this analysis: participant bills may rise compared to prior years, and while solar helps mitigate those increases, households may have less disposable income than they would have had absent rising energy costs. Additionally, changes to net metering policies in Illinois mean that utility customers who begin net metering after January 1, 2025 will receive bill credits for excess energy sent back to the grid for supply costs only, rather than the full electric retail rate.

Households receiving supply-only net metering will see lower savings than households receiving full retail net metering, although they will still save compared to a household without solar. Together these factors may reduce the magnitude of ILSFA bill savings compared to prior program years.<sup>22</sup>

For this section, we use IMPLAN to assess household spending from bill impacts for all PY24-25 energized projects, which includes all projects energized since the start of the program, regardless of the year they were energized in. This is consistent with the set of projects examined in the Bill Impacts section. This analysis limits its assessment of ongoing impacts to those associated with household energy bill savings from the Residential Solar (Small), Residential Solar (Large), and Community Solar subprograms. NP/PF participants accrue bill savings as a result of their participation but spending patterns in these cases are likely to reflect the specialized operating budgets of those organizations and are not captured here. To the extent that these entities are funded by taxpayer resources, these savings may represent a more effective distribution of public funds within local communities.

We estimate that Residential Solar (Small), Residential Solar (Large), and Community Solar subprogram participants have received approximately \$3.8 million in household savings in PY24-25 due to bill savings from energized ILSFA projects (see Bill Impacts section). IMPLAN identifies the sectors where households are likely to spend these savings, or the induced economic activity of savings from energized projects. This method specifically models spending patterns of Illinois households with incomes of less than \$70,000 since most ILSFA participants fall into this bracket. As discussed above, induced effects from project spending tend to occur in the same region in which the project's spending occurred. Similarly, increased disposable income from bill savings benefits the communities where ILSFA participants live.

Table 33 below presents induced household spending by category from first-year bill savings on all PY24-25 energized projects by modeling bill savings as additional household income. The model estimates housing and healthcare to be the largest single sectors for new induced activity following new household spending under ILSFA. Spending patterns from bill savings in PY24-25 are like those in PY23-24. These categories represent basic needs, which program participants are eager to address. Similarly, retail shopping, groceries, debt service, transportation, and other utilities make up the next-largest share of sectoral spending, focusing on lifestyle fundamentals.

Insurance and non-cash savings also represent a choice option for which households can use this new discretionary income. The "Other" category captures a wide range of additional activities with small overall impacts, including business development, legal services, entertainment, and home investments. Notably, the total modeled impact from bill savings spending is slightly higher than it was in PY23-24.

We compared our modeled results of where participants are likely to spend the money saved on bills to the feedback we received in participant surveys for PY24-25.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on electricity costs for ILSFA participants see Appendix A. Bill Impact Analysis.

While it is difficult to make exact comparisons between modeled and collected data, survey participants expressed reduced anxiety surrounding energy bills overall, which ties into having the ability to allocate money previously dedicated to energy bills to other essentials. Additional feedback from participants on this can be found in the Process Evaluation section.

Table 33. Induced Impacts of Household Bill Savings by Category

Category	Induced Spending
Housing	\$790,000
Healthcare	\$670,000
Other	\$650,000
Retail Shopping	\$520,000
Groceries & Dining	\$380,000
Transportation	\$340,000
Debt Service	\$330,000
Utilities	\$290,000
Insurance	\$150,000
Non-Cash Savings & Investments	\$140,000
Business Expenses	\$40,000

## Solar Module Cost Impacts

During PY24-25, several trade actions and policy changes affected the cost of solar modules. These actions and policies are expected to continue to drive up future solar installation costs. Many of these changes were enacted to promote US-based solar manufacturing capacity, which increased by 37% between 2024 and 2025.<sup>23</sup> However, tariffs on imported modules created high demand for a limited supply of domestic panels, driving up prices until domestic production catches up to demand and offers competitive pricing.

The first of these trade actions stemmed from a 2023 US Department of Commerce investigation into whether solar modules and components from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam were actually manufactured in those countries, or if they were simply being routed through them to avoid the duties imposed on Chinese-made solar products in 2022.<sup>24</sup>

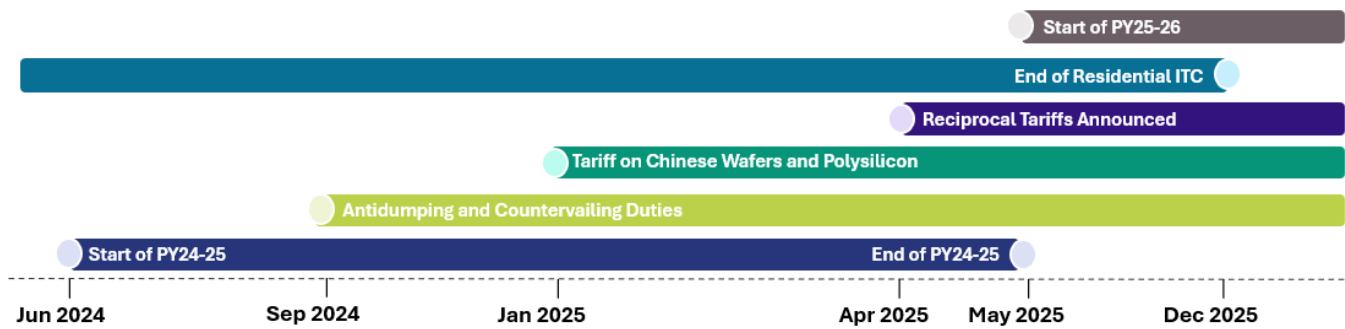
<sup>23</sup> DiGangi, Diana. "US Has Onshored Full Solar Supply Chain: SEIA." *Utility Dive*, 30 Oct. 2025, [www.utilitydive.com/news/onshored-solar-supply-chain-manufacturing-ingot-wafer-corning-trump/804300/](https://www.utilitydive.com/news/onshored-solar-supply-chain-manufacturing-ingot-wafer-corning-trump/804300/).

<sup>24</sup> Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration. "Antidumping and Countervailing Duty Orders on Crystalline Silicon Photovoltaic Cells, Whether or Not Assembled Into Modules, From the People's Republic of China: Final Scope Determination and Final Affirmative Determinations of Circumvention With Respect to Cambodia, Malaysia,

This investigation led to an extension of the existing anti-dumping and countervailing duties placed on China to Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam as well. This action slowed imports of panels from these countries between September 2024 and June 2025.

A tariff increase announced in 2024 that increased tariffs to 50% on solar wafers and polysilicon inputs from China starting in 2025.<sup>25</sup> These measures were taken to reduce competition to US-based solar manufacturers. However, due to the lack of manufacturing infrastructure in the US, this contributed to higher solar panel prices in the short run. Finally in April 2025, “reciprocal tariffs” were placed on many countries including China, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, which added on to the previously enacted tariffs.<sup>26</sup> Together, these actions created uncertainty and upward pressure on the prices of solar panels.<sup>27</sup> Figure 7 shows a timeline of when each of these actions took place between June 2024 and December 2025.

Figure 7. Timeline of Tariffs



Beyond tariffs, the scheduled termination of the residential Investment Tax Credit (ITC) at the end of 2025 has also contributed to market uncertainty. Although this phase out occurred after PY24-25, anticipation of the ITC's expiration encouraged more people to install solar power before the end of 2025 and increased short-term demand, which in some cases contributed to localized increases in labor and supply costs. Industry experts expect the price of solar installation to increase in 2026 and beyond as the solar market adjusts to the new market conditions without the ITC.

Thailand, and Vietnam." *Federal Register*, vol. 88, no. 162, 23 Aug. 2023. Document No. 2023-18161, [www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/08/23/2023-18161/antidumping-and-countervailing-duty-orders-on-crystalline-silicon-photovoltaic-cells-whether-or-not](http://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/08/23/2023-18161/antidumping-and-countervailing-duty-orders-on-crystalline-silicon-photovoltaic-cells-whether-or-not).

<sup>25</sup> "USTR Increases Tariffs Under Section 301 on Tungsten Products, Wafers, and Polysilicon, Concluding the Statutory Four-Year Review." *Office of the United States Trade Representative*, 11 Dec. 2024, [ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2024/december/ustr-increases-tariffs-under-section-301-tungsten-products-wafers-and-polysilicon-concluding](https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2024/december/ustr-increases-tariffs-under-section-301-tungsten-products-wafers-and-polysilicon-concluding)

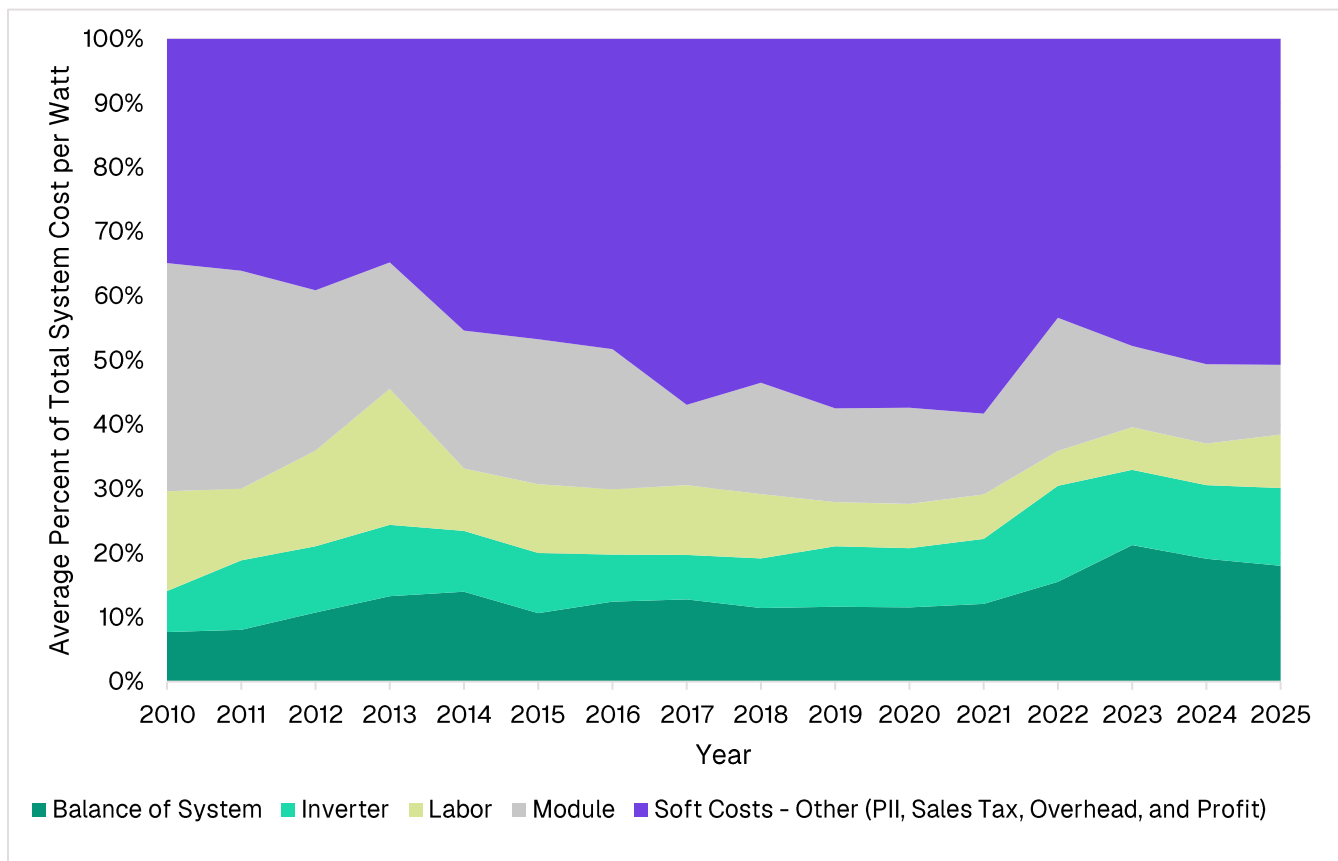
<sup>26</sup> Norman, Will. "Trump Tariffs Hit Southeast Asian Solar Supply." *PV Tech*, 3 Apr. 2025, [www.pv-tech.org/trump-tariffs-hit-southeast-asian-solar-supply/](https://www.pv-tech.org/trump-tariffs-hit-southeast-asian-solar-supply/).

<sup>27</sup> Pickerel, Kelly. "Trade Court Orders Retroactive Duties on Solar Panels Imported Back in 2022." *Solar Power World*, 2 Sept. 2025, [www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2025/09/trade-court-orders-retroactive-duties-on-solar-panels-imported-back-in-2022/](https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2025/09/trade-court-orders-retroactive-duties-on-solar-panels-imported-back-in-2022/).

Furthermore, the higher costs are expected to significantly increase payback periods, or the period of time it takes for bill savings to exceed the expense of installation. EnergySage estimates an increase in payback periods in Illinois of 1.7 years on average without the ITC.<sup>28</sup> To offset some of these impacts, the IPA has adjusted REC prices for PY26-27 to account for the phase out of the ITC.

As the US continues to try to bolster domestic manufacturing of solar panels, the composition of solar installation costs are likely to shift over time. Figure 8 shows the average percentage of total system installation cost per Watt spent on different aspects of solar projects over time. Hardware costs (module, inverter, and balance of system) have gotten relatively less expensive over time; however, the push for domestic manufacturing starting in 2022, created upward pressure on the cost of hardware which may continue to rise. Soft costs such as those for administrative labor, permitting, and taxes continue to make up the largest share of total installation costs.

Figure 8 System Installation Cost Breakdown by Year<sup>29</sup>

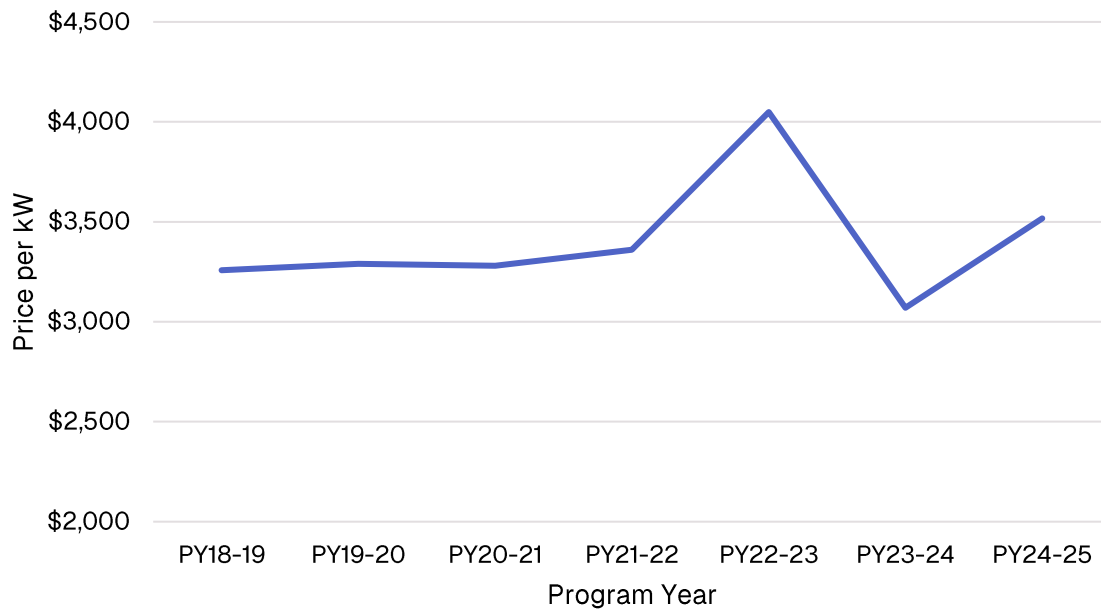


<sup>28</sup> McDevitt, Casey. "Solar Payback Periods Will Extend 43% Longer without the ITC." *EnergySage*, edited by Alix Langone, 7 Jul. 2025, [www.energysage.com/blog/solar-payback-period-without-itc/](http://www.energysage.com/blog/solar-payback-period-without-itc/).

<sup>29</sup> National Laboratory of the Rockies. "Solar Installed System Cost Analysis." *NLR Solar Market Research & Analysis*, 28 Jan. 2026, [www.nlr.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-installed-system-cost](http://www.nlr.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-installed-system-cost).

The cost impacts discussed in this section are reflected directly in trends in the cost per kW installed for ILSFA programs over time. Figure 9 shows the increases in project costs per kW over time. The extension to the ITC instituted by the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022 was instrumental in bringing solar panel costs down after 2020. However, tariff-related pressure and the phase out of the ITC have driven costs up again slightly in recent years and are expected to continue to do so.<sup>30</sup>

Figure 9 ILSFA Project Price per kW by Program Year



<sup>30</sup> Kennedy, Ryan. "U.S. Solar Module Prices Face Upward Pressure as Trade Risks and FEOC Rules Dominate Q1 2026." *pV magazine USA*, 3 Apr. 2026, [pv-magazine-usa.com/2026/04/03/u-s-solar-module-prices-face-upward-pressure-as-trade-risks-and-feoc-rules-dominate-q1-2026/](https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2026/04/03/u-s-solar-module-prices-face-upward-pressure-as-trade-risks-and-feoc-rules-dominate-q1-2026/).

# Social Impacts

This section presents findings from the social impacts analysis in program year 2024-2025 (PY24-25).

The social impact analysis assesses community-level benefits of ILSFA, as well as how the program is doing at awarding its 25% budget carveouts for Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs) and for Energy Sovereignty projects. Specifically, we highlight findings in the following key areas:

- How ILSFA projects and incentives are distributed throughout Illinois, including in EJCs, income-eligible (IE) communities, and utility service territories.
- Energy sovereignty outcomes, including the number of Energy Sovereignty projects and the value of incentives awarded to these projects.
- Where AVs are located, what parts of the state they reach, and participation among Minority and Women-Owned Businesses (MWBs) and Small and Emerging Businesses (SEBs).
- The demographics of program participants compared to Illinois demographics.

Below, we share key findings from this analysis:

## Key Findings

### FINDING 1

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Subprograms varied in how much of the EJC carveout they awarded in PY24-25. Non-Profit/Public Facilities (NP/PF) and Community Solar fully awarded their carveouts, Residential Solar (Small) awarded 61% of its carveout, and Residential Solar (Large) awarded 2% of its carveout. Lower overall participation within Residential Solar (Small) and Residential Solar (Large) accounted for lower use of EJC funds. When considering approved project funds only Residential Solar (Small) awarded 22% of funds to EJC projects and Residential Solar (Large) awarded 44% of funds to EJC projects, close to or exceeding the 25% benchmark.

The portion of Community Solar funds awarded to EJC projects increased notably from the prior year, from 0% in PY23-24 to 81% in PY24-25. The Community Solar subprogram awards a limited number of projects each year, so year-over-year fluctuations should be interpreted with caution. Across all program years, 50% of Community Solar projects are sited in EJCs and 43% of subscribers are located in EJCs, indicating that this subprogram is successfully reaching EJCs over time.

#### **Program Recommendation:**

- Identify motivations and barriers for EJC participation in the Residential Solar (Small) and Residential Solar (Large) subprograms to inform targeted outreach and program design adjustments.

In particular, Residential Solar (Large) awards a limited portion of its budget each year, so strategies for this subprogram may consider how to increase overall subprogram participation. Further details specific barriers for each subprogram are in the Process Evaluation section below.

- Because Community Solar delivers some benefits where subscribers live rather than where projects are sited, continue monitoring EJC participation at both the project and subscriber levels to capture a more complete picture of community benefits over time.

## FINDING 2

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In PY24-25, both Residential Solar (Small and Large) and NP/PF fully awarded their Energy Sovereignty carveouts, while Community Solar awarded no incentives to Energy Sovereignty projects. Both the Residential Solar and NP/PF subprograms saw a substantial increase in Energy Sovereignty projects in PY24-25 compared to the prior year, with the Residential Solar program fully awarding its Energy Sovereignty carveout for the first time since Energy Sovereignty was introduced.

In contrast, Community Solar awarded no incentives to Energy Sovereignty projects, a decline from the prior year when the subprogram had met the carveout. The Community Solar subprogram awards a small number of projects each year, so fluctuations in participation should be interpreted with caution. The upcoming Energy Sovereignty special topic report will include additional exploration of these trends.

### **Program Recommendations:**

- Examine the practices of the two AVs driving the majority of Residential Solar Energy Sovereignty activity. These AVs also drove the majority of Residential Solar activity overall. Understanding what these vendors are doing differently in terms of outreach, financing, customer education, or project design may provide actionable insights for expanding Energy Sovereignty participation to more AVs across the subprogram.
- Analyze the drivers behind the decline in Community Solar Energy Sovereignty participation in more detail. While the change in the number of approved projects is small, since Community Solar typically approves a few large projects, it may be helpful to understand potential drivers of this change, including project pipeline, financing barriers, siting constraints, or vendor capacity. This could provide insight into whether this trend will continue and how to support Community Solar Energy Sovereignty projects going forward.

## FINDING 3

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In PY24-25, most AVs served customers well beyond their immediate headquarters location, indicating broad geographic reach across Illinois. The median distance AVs travelled was 30 miles, but travel patterns were not uniform across the state. For instance, many AVs primarily stayed within the utility service area where they are headquartered. Despite this apparent willingness to travel, no AVs travelled to the southeastern portion of Illinois in PY24-25.

This may reflect a lower demand for projects in these areas, fewer AVs willing to travel to this part of the state, or a combination of both. In any case, this reflects prior participant and Grassroots Educator feedback that AV availability may be more limited in some parts of the state, potentially impacting program accessibility.

**Program Recommendations:**

- Collect information on AV service areas when AVs enroll (e.g., maximum travel distance, counties served, willingness to travel downstate, and constraints such as overnight travel) to identify any geographic gaps in AV coverage. Refresh this information annually and include it on the “Find a Solar Company” tool on the ILSFA website to improve participants’ and Grassroots Educators’ ability to find AVs in their area.
- Consider tools like targeted incentives, partnerships, or lead generation to encourage solar installers to operate in more rural or downstate areas.
- Recruit and support AVs headquartered in underserved or less-represented regions of the state to improve program accessibility in areas with limited vendor presence.

**FINDING 4**

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Demographic analysis indicates that ILSFA reached a greater portion of renters and Black or African American communities than the statewide population. However, participation among Hispanic or Latino households remains low relative to the statewide population and has declined compared to prior years. These findings should be interpreted cautiously due to missing demographic data, variations in the time periods for which the data were collected across subprograms, and comparison to the statewide population, rather than the income-eligible population specifically.

The Community Solar subprogram appeared to play a central role in expanding access for renters, with a higher portion of renters participating in this subprogram compared to Residential Solar (Small) and the overall statewide population. This pattern aligns with Community Solar’s design, which removes barriers renters would face to installing on-site solar, including homeownership, rooftop control, and split landlord and tenant incentives.

**Program Recommendations:**

- Given the decline in Hispanic or Latino participation compared to earlier program years, strengthen language-accessible and culturally responsive outreach. Expanding multilingual materials and deepening engagement through Grassroots Educators could help improve awareness and enrollment among these communities.
- As an income-eligible program that relies on the collection of sensitive household information, reinforce assurances related to data privacy and security. Clearly communicating data protection practices could help address trust-related concerns that may act as barriers to participation.

- Because demographic data is not currently available for the NP/PF subprogram, the program could consider options for collecting comparable information (where feasible) to better understand participation patterns and equity outcomes across all subprograms. This could include voluntary, high-level information about organizational mission, service populations, and service geographies rather than individual-level demographic data, allowing for improved equity assessment without placing undue burden on participating organizations.

## Background

Key terms used to describe social impacts:

**Environmental Justice Community (EJC):** Term used by the ILSFA program to describe areas that stand to benefit greatly from access to solar energy.

**Energy Sovereignty:** Eligible low-income household or community organization having or being on a defined path to majority or full ownership of the photovoltaic (PV) generating facility or, in the case of a cooperative or community ownership model, a share or membership in the entity that owns the PV generating facility. The goal of Energy Sovereignty is to promote community wealth through solar ownership.

Building on the prior two evaluations, the PY24-25 evaluation assesses distribution of projects across the state and in key communities, assesses the prevalence of Energy Sovereignty projects within each subprogram, provides insights into participant demographics, and details participant-reported benefits of solar beyond bill impacts. In addition, the PY24-25 evaluation introduces new areas of analysis aligned with additional equity-related metrics ILSFA is considering monitoring over time, primarily related to AV participation and reach. Table 34 summarizes the categories and the primary research questions that supported the PY24-25 social impacts analysis.

Table 34. Social Impacts Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Distribution of benefits across communities	What portion of program projects and program funding are awarded in ILSFA Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs)?
	What portion of program projects and program funding are awarded in different utility service territories?
	What portion of program projects and program funding are awarded in income-eligible communities?
	How are AVs distributed across Illinois? What is their presence in IE, EJCs, and rural communities?
Distribution of benefits within communities	What are the demographic characteristics of the participants in the program?
	Is the program having challenges in reaching demographic subgroups?
	What percentage of AVs are MWBEs and SEBs?

Category	Primary Research Questions
Energy Sovereignty	<p>What is the success of the program in allocating Energy Sovereignty reserved funds?</p> <hr/> <p>Are there differences between subprograms?</p>
Participant Benefits	<p>In what ways do participants report benefiting from the program?</p> <hr/> <p>What are other benefits for participants and communities?</p>

## Geographic Distribution

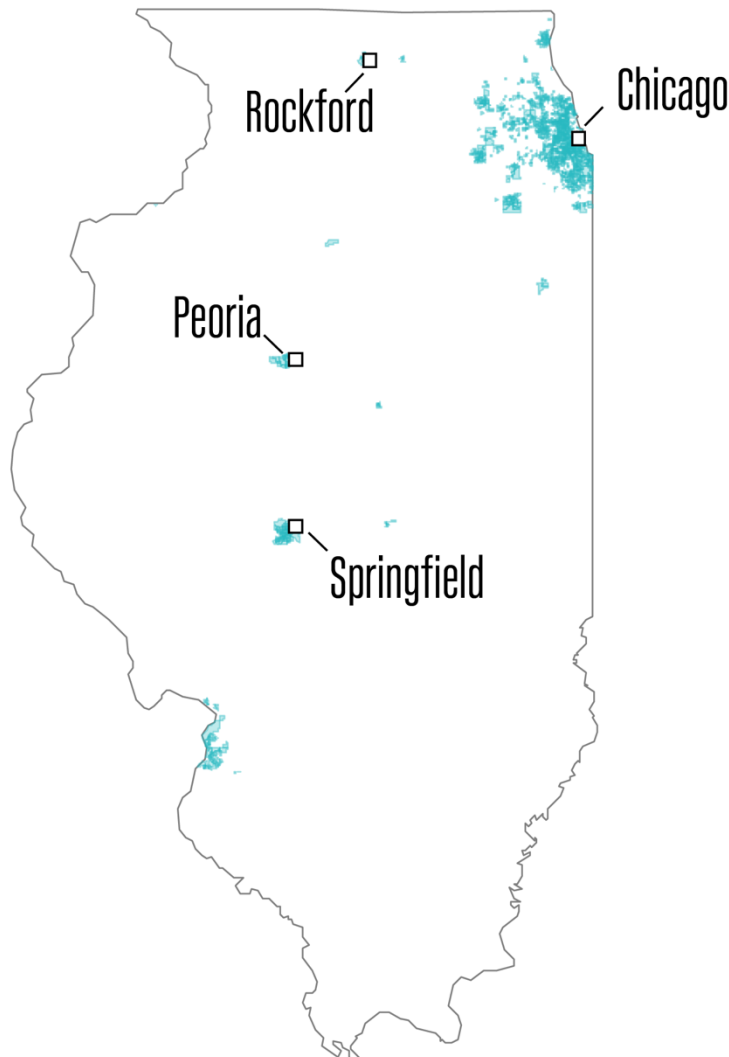
The geographic analysis examines how the ILSFA program reaches different communities across Illinois. The evaluation team analyzed the portion of projects and incentives located within EJC, income-qualified census tracts, and the different utility service territories.

## Environmental Justice Communities

EJCs are areas that disproportionately bear the burden of environmental hazards associated with long-term negative health effects. ILSFA identifies these areas using a scoring system that incorporates multiple indicators, including exposure (pollution), environmental effects, sensitive populations (based on age or health), and socioeconomic factors.

This scoring system ranks census block groups based on these indicators and designates the 25% with the highest scores as EJCs. In addition to this ranking process, communities may also apply for self-designation, demonstrating that they meet or closely approximate the EJC criteria used in the scoring system. For the PY24-25 evaluation, 2,470 block groups received the EJC designation through the ranking system, and 180 through self-designation. Figure 10 illustrates the distribution of these communities.

Figure 10. PY24-25 ILSFA EJC



The ILSFA program includes specific targets and requirements related to EJCs. The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) requires the program to reserve 25% of each subprogram’s budget for projects located within EJC for the full program year. If the program does not distribute all the reserved funds in a given year, the unused funds roll over to the following program year’s budget. In addition to these carveouts, ILSFA also incorporates EJCs into its project selection framework, awarding EJCs higher scores in the ranking for funding. ILSFA uses the project selection process to prioritize program funding when the number of projects submitted to the program exceeds the available incentive budget.

In PY24-25, EJC carveout performance varied by subprogram, with NP/PF and Community Solar awarding their full carveouts and Residential Solar falling short. NP/PF and Community Solar allocated 26% and 62%, respectively, of their overall subprogram budgets to projects in EJCs, while Residential Solar allocated only 8%.

In addition to looking at the portion of funds allocated to EJCs relative to the overall subprogram budget, the evaluation team analyzed the portion of approved incentives awarded to EJCs to understand how each subprogram performs relative to the 25% EJC target, absent broader participation trends. Table 35 shows the total PY24-25 budget by subprogram, EJC carveouts, incentives awarded to all approved projects, and the share of approved project incentives awarded to projects within EJCs.

Table 35. Subprogram Carveouts and Incentives Awarded to **PY24-25 Approved** Projects Sited in EJCs

Subprogram	Subprogram Budget	25% Budget Carve Out For EJCs	Total Approved Project Incentives Awarded	Approved Project Incentives Awarded To Projects In EJCs	Percent Of Approved Project Incentives Awarded To EJCs
Residential Solar	\$60,293,213*	\$15,073,303	\$21,957,162	\$4,829,275	22%
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	\$17,617,773	\$4,404,443	\$15,982,593	\$4,661,484	29%
Community Solar	\$48,092,555	\$12,023,139	\$36,987,766	\$30,051,181	81%

\* The budgets for the Residential Solar (Small) and Residential Solar (Large) subprograms were held separately for the first six months of the program year, then combined. This table shows them combined. The carveouts for EJC projects are held separately for the entire program year.

EJC participation shifted considerably across subprograms from PY23-24 to PY24-25, with Community Solar showing the largest increase and Residential Solar declining. Community Solar went from no EJC-sited projects in PY23-24 to 67% of projects and 81% of approved incentive dollars directed to EJCs in PY24-25. Community Solar approves a small number of large projects each program year, so percent changes in participation should be interpreted cautiously. In contrast, NP/PF increased its share of projects in EJCs but saw a slight decline in the share of incentives awarded to EJCs, though it remained above the 25% benchmark. Meanwhile, Residential Solar experienced declines in both the share of projects and incentive dollars associated with EJCs, with decreases driven largely by the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram. Table 36 shows these year-over-year changes.

Table 36. Percentage of **Approved** Projects in ILSFA EJCs (Percentage of **Approved** Project Incentive Values Awarded in EJCs Over Total **Approved** Project Incentive Values)

Subprogram	PY23-24	PY24-25	PY23-24-PY24-25 Difference (Percentage Points)
Residential Solar	38% (34%)	24% (22%)	-14 (-12)

Subprogram	PY23-24	PY24-25	PY23-24-PY24-25 Difference (Percentage Points)
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	38% (35%)	49% (29%)	+11 (-6)
Community Solar	0% (0%)	67% (81%)	+67 (+81)

For Community Solar, subscriber location reveals impacts to EJCs that are not captured by project location alone. Because subscribers may enroll in projects located outside their immediate communities, a Community Solar project may be outside an EJC while an important share of its subscribers reside in one, or vice versa. This distinction matters because some impacts, such as job creation and local economic activity, are tied to project location, while other benefits, including bill savings, are realized where subscribers live.

Across all energized Community Solar projects to date, a substantial share of both projects and subscribers are associated with EJCs. Among energized projects since the program's inception, 15 of 30 Community Solar projects (50%) are located in EJCs, and 43% of ILSFA's 2,959 subscribers reside in these areas.<sup>31</sup> These findings indicate that, taken all ILSFA projects together, Community Solar has exceeded the 25% benchmark in terms of both the share of energized projects and the share of subscribers associated with EJCs.

## Utility Service Territories

The evaluation team examines the number of projects within and outside ComEd's service territory as a proxy for understanding how well ILSFA is reaching central and downstate communities. Program stakeholders raised concerns about lower rates of participation in central and southern Illinois in prior evaluation years, and therefore the evaluation team has monitored how the geographic distribution of projects has evolved over time.

In PY24-25, Residential Solar (Small) project distribution across utility service territories was more aligned with the portion of the state's population living in each service territory. ComEd's service territory serves about 70% of Illinois's population and accounted for 77% of all approved Residential Solar (Small), down from 93% in PY23-24. As explored in more detail in the Process Evaluation section, this trend may be driven by an increase in the number of AVs participating in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram or increased vendor recruitment in central and southern Illinois. The program also had a larger cohort of Grassroots Educators who were more widely distributed throughout the state. In contrast, the Community Solar and NP/PF subprograms became more concentrated within ComEd's service territory in PY24-25. All Community Solar projects (100%) and 44% of NP/PF projects were located within ComEd's territory, accounting for 100% and 28% of approved project incentives, respectively.

<sup>31</sup> This analysis considers subscribers enrolled from PY18-19 (PY1) through PY24-25 in projects approved through PY21-22 and energized in subsequent program years. No projects approved after PY21-22 were accepting subscribers during PY24-25.

Note that both these subprograms award funds to fewer, larger projects, as compared to the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, so may see larger year over year variance in where projects are located.

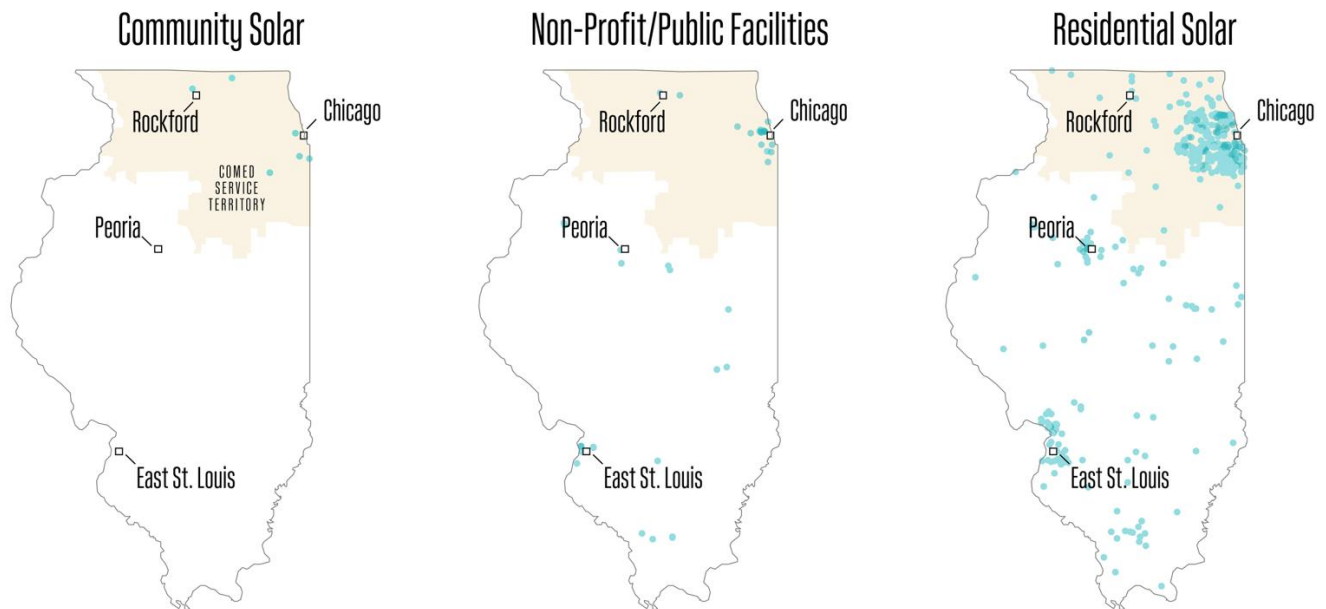
Table 37. Percentage of **Approved** Projects (Percentage of **Approved** Project Incentives Awarded) in the ComEd Service Territory

Subprogram	PY23-24	PY24-25	PY23-24-PY24-25 Difference (Percentage Points)
Residential Solar*	95% (93%)	77% (75%)	-18 (-18)
Non-Profit/Public Facilities*	30% (16%)	44% (28%)	+14 (+12)
Community Solar*	50% (33%)	100% (100%)	+50 (+77)

\*Numbers in parenthesis represent the percentage of approved project incentives awarded to projects in ComEd Service Territory.

Figure 11, below, illustrates the spatial distribution of projects across subprograms. The highlighted region is ComEd's service area, while the majority of the remaining state falls under Ameren's service territory. Dots on the map represent projects. Darker clusters of points represent areas of higher project density.

Figure 11. Distribution of PY24-25 Approved Projects Across Service Territories by Subprogram



## Income-Eligible Communities

Since PY21-22, all subprograms have consistently exceeded the 25% target for directing incentives to IE Communities, a pattern that continued in PY24-25. In PY24-25, the share of Residential Solar projects located in IE Communities declined slightly relative to PY23-24, but the share of approved project incentives awarded to these communities increased. At the same time, both the number of projects and the share of incentives awarded to IE Communities increased for the NP/PF and Community Solar subprograms relative to PY23-24, indicating continued or growing engagement with these communities (Table 38).

Table 38. **Approved** Projects (% of Approved Project Incentives Awarded) in Income-Eligible Communities

Subprogram	PY23-24	PY24-25
Residential Solar*	40% (36%)	39% (38%)
Non-Profit/Public Facilities*	90% (87%)	98% (98%)
Community Solar*	50% (34%)	83% (93%)

\*Numbers in parentheses represent the percentage of approved project incentives awarded.

## Program Reach and Community Impact

### Energy Sovereignty

In PY24-25, the NP/PF and Residential Solar subprograms fully awarded their Energy Sovereignty carveouts, but the Community Solar subprogram did not. Looking at Residential Solar (Small) alone, the subprogram exceeded its Energy Sovereignty carveout, while Residential Solar (Large) lagged primarily due to overall low participation; both Residential Solar (Large) approved projects were Energy Sovereignty projects. Looking at approved incentives, only Residential Solar and NP/PF awarded an even higher portion of incentives to Energy Sovereignty, pointing to the high uptake of this offering in PY24-25. Table 39 shows the total PY24-25 budget by subprogram, the portion of the budget set aside for Energy Sovereignty projects, the incentives awarded to all approved projects, and the approved project incentives awarded to Energy Sovereignty projects.

Table 39. Subprogram Carve Outs and Incentives Awarded to Energy Sovereignty **PY24-25**  
**Approved Projects**

Subprogram	Subprogram Budget	25% Budget Carve Out for Energy Sovereignty	Total Approved Project Incentives Awarded	Approved Project Incentives Awarded to Energy Sovereignty	Percent of Approved Project Incentives Awarded Energy Sovereignty
Residential Solar	\$60,293,213*	\$15,073,303	\$21,957,162	\$19,479,006	89%
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	\$17,617,773	\$4,404,443	\$15,982,593	\$13,219,041	83%
Community Solar	\$48,092,555	\$12,023,139	\$36,987,766	\$0	0%

\* The budgets for the Residential Solar (Small) and Residential Solar (Large) subprograms were held separately for the first six months of the program year, then combined. This table shows them combined.

In PY24-25, Residential Solar showed the most dramatic shift in Energy Sovereignty participation, while NP/PF maintained strong performance and Community Solar dropped to zero. Residential Solar awarded 32% of its total budget to Energy Sovereignty projects, surpassing the 25% carveout for the first time. Moreover, among the funds actually distributed, 89% went to Energy Sovereignty projects, representing a substantial increase compared to prior program years. Table 40 compares the share of approved projects and approved project incentives associated with Energy Sovereignty across PY23-24 and PY24-25.

Table 40. Percentage of Energy Sovereignty **Approved** Projects (% of Approved Project Incentives Awarded)

Subprogram	PY23-24	PY24-25	Difference (Percentage Points)
Residential Solar*	2% (4%)	89% (89%)	+87 (+85)
Non-Profit/Public Facilities*	62% (68%)	83% (83%)	+21 (+15)
Community Solar*	25% (58%)	0% (0%)	-25 (-58)

\* Numbers in parentheses represent the percentage of approved project incentives awarded.

Energy Sovereignty project activity was driven by a subset of vendors. Across subprograms, 14 of the 25 AVs submitted approved Energy Sovereignty projects, and within Residential Solar, nine of 25 AVs submitted approved Energy Sovereignty projects. Of those nine, two accounted for the majority of Residential Solar Energy Sovereignty projects, representing approximately 51% and 30% of approved Energy Sovereignty projects, respectively.

This is consistent with the broader pattern of Residential Solar (Small) project volume being driven by a small number of high-volume vendors, discussed further in the Process Evaluation section.

## Approved Vendors

In PY24-25, ILSFA began exploring metrics to monitor equitable implementation of the program over time. While development of these metrics is ongoing, this section provides initial findings related to 1) the geographic distribution of projects, identified as a priority for the program through the Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA) and CEJA legislation, and 2) participation in the program by MWBE and SEB vendors, identified as a priority through CEJA and the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act (CRGA) legislation.

Although AV headquarters location does not necessarily impact their ability to reach different communities of interest to ILSFA, it provides a proxy measure for where vendors are located and how far they travel to access project sites. Our analysis found that the presence of AV headquarters within EJCs and within IE Communities did not correspond with their ability to serve these project areas, with AVs travelling to these communities to complete projects. There was some relationship between the utility service territory where AVs' headquarters were located and the portion of projects they completed in that service territory. These trends are explored in more detail below. Table 41 provides a high-level overview of where AV headquarters are located and how this corresponds to project locations. Two AVs that were headquartered outside Illinois or neighboring states were excluded from this analysis.

Table 41. PY24-25 AV Headquarters and Project Presence by Key Geographies (% of AVs) (n=25)

Geographic Indicator	AVs With Headquarters in the Area	AVs With Projects in the Area
Environmental Justice Communities	0 (0%)	14 (56%)
ComEd Service Territory	12 (48%)	16 (64%)
Income-Eligible Communities	12 (48%)	22 (88%)

**Environmental Justice Communities:** Although there were no AV headquarters located in EJCs, most AVs completed projects in these communities. Fourteen of the 25 AVs (56%) had at least one project sited in an EJC, and among those AVs, an average of 59% of their project portfolios were located in EJC areas during PY24-25.

**Income-Eligible Communities:** The vast majority of AVs served Income-Eligible (IE) Communities through their project activity, regardless of where they were headquartered. Twenty-two of the 25 AVs (88%) had at least one project located in an IE Community, and among those AVs, an average of 69% of their project portfolios were located within IE Communities. Twelve of the 25 vendors (48%) were also headquartered in an IE Community.

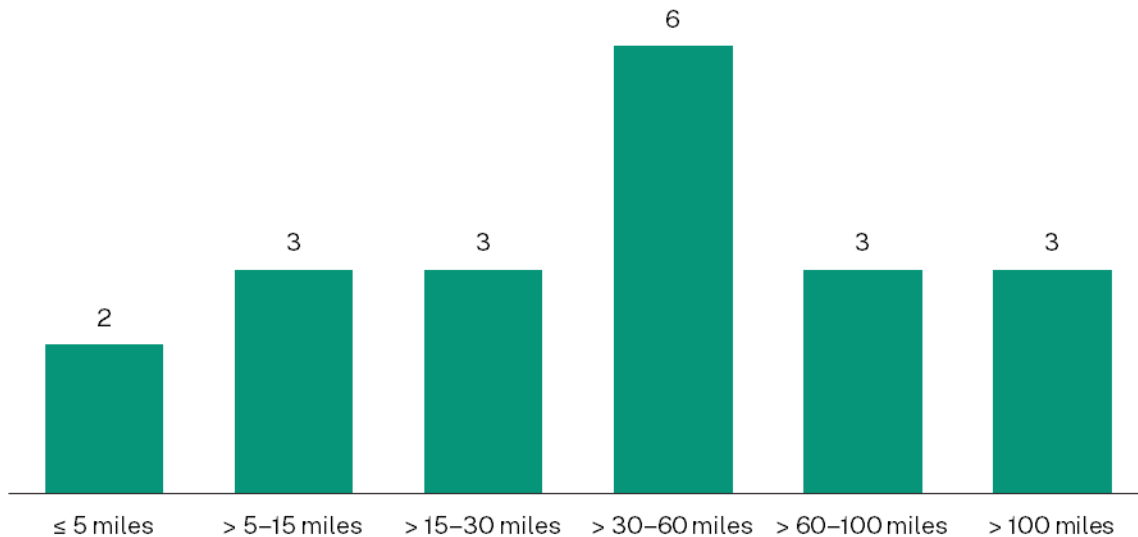
**Utility Service Territories:** AV project activity shows a notable geographic concentration, with many vendors serving either exclusively within ComEd's territory or primarily outside of it, with little overlap.

Ten of the 25 AVs (40%) operated exclusively within ComEd’s service area, six (24%) of whom had projects both inside and outside ComEd territory, and nine (36%) with no projects in ComEd territory at all. Among those 15 AVs operating outside ComEd territory, an average of 79% of their project portfolios were located outside ComEd’s service territory. The ten AVs operating exclusively within ComEd territory were either headquartered there or had headquarters outside Illinois. These findings suggest a correlation between vendor headquarters location and the parts of the state they serve.

**Operating Beyond Headquarters**

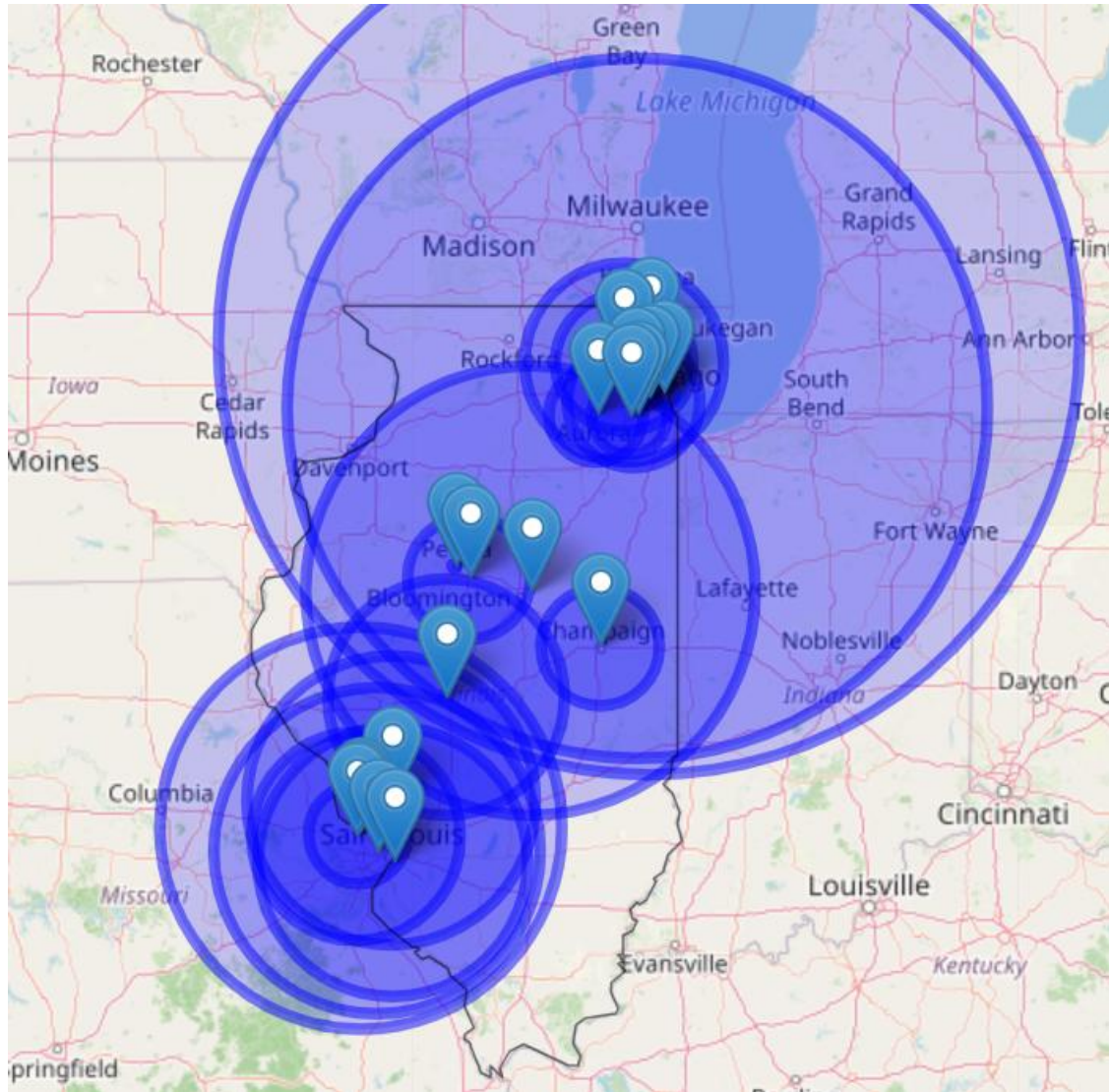
Most AVs travelled beyond their headquarters locations to complete projects across Illinois, though travel patterns varied considerably. The majority of distributed generation AVs (12 of 20) had a median project distance of 30 miles or more, indicating that many vendors routinely travel beyond their immediate surrounding areas to serve customers across the state. As shown in Figure 12, the median travel distances varied widely across vendors, which could suggest the existence of multiple AV operating models, ranging from geographically concentrated service territories to broader, more regionally oriented approaches. Notably, the two AVs with the largest number of projects during PY24-25 fell within the 5-15 mile and 15-30 mile median distance ranges, suggesting that higher project volumes are not necessarily associated with greater geographic reach.

Figure 12. Median Distance Between Approved Vendor Headquarters and Distributed Generation Project Locations (PY24-25) (n=20)



Despite this broader willingness to travel, no AVs completed projects in southeastern Illinois in PY24-25, pointing to a potential gap in geographic coverage in that part of the state (Figure 13). This pattern does not necessarily indicate unwillingness or inability among AVs to serve these areas; it may instead reflect limited project demand or a lack of ILSFA-eligible projects in those regions during PY24-25. However, this pattern is consistent with prior participant, Grassroots Educator, and stakeholder feedback that it is more difficult to find an ILSFA AV in these regions.

Figure 13. Geographic Reach of Approved Vendors Based on Maximum Project Travel Distance



### Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises and Small Business Enterprises

In PY24-25, four of the 25 AVs (16%) were Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs). Two additional AVs were inconsistently identified as MWBEs across data sources and were therefore excluded from this count.

Six of 25 (24%) participating AVs self-identified as small and emerging businesses (SEBs), based on data from Elevate on businesses that attended program-supported SEBs events and business meetings. The program does not track formal small-business designations for AVs, though it plans to implement one in PY26-27. This designation will allow SEBs to access financial and competitive benefits to help overcome barriers these organizations faced historically to participating in the program.

## Community and Participant Social Benefits

Solar power can yield benefits beyond direct bill and energy savings. Across subprograms, findings indicate that while financial savings are one of the main benefits of participating in ILSFA, participants consistently report experiencing additional benefits that contribute to overall well-being and satisfaction with program participation.

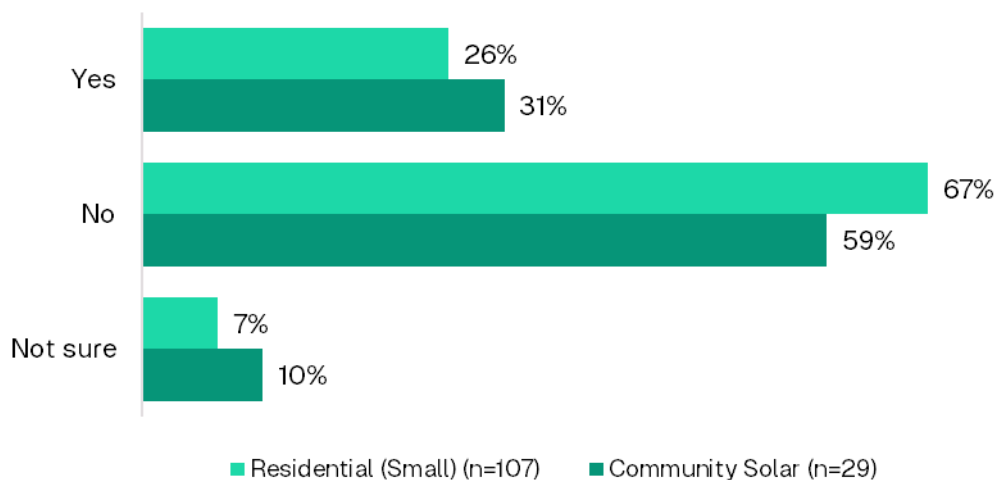
These include a stronger sense of alignment with environmental values and reduced stress or anxiety related to household or organizational energy expenses. Importantly, even when respondents described savings as modest, they often characterized them as meaningful, helping offset other essential costs or easing financial pressure. See the Process Evaluation section for more details

This section details two categories of additional benefits, beyond the primary financial outcomes: (1) energy-saving equipment purchases outside of ILSFA, and (2) self-reported non-bill benefits, including comfort, reduced worry, perceived ease of maintenance, and a sense of contributing to their local community. NP/PF interviews further suggest that solar benefits can extend to organizational outcomes, such as mission alignment, credibility, visibility, and educational or workforce-development opportunities.

### Energy-Saving Equipment and Appliance Purchases

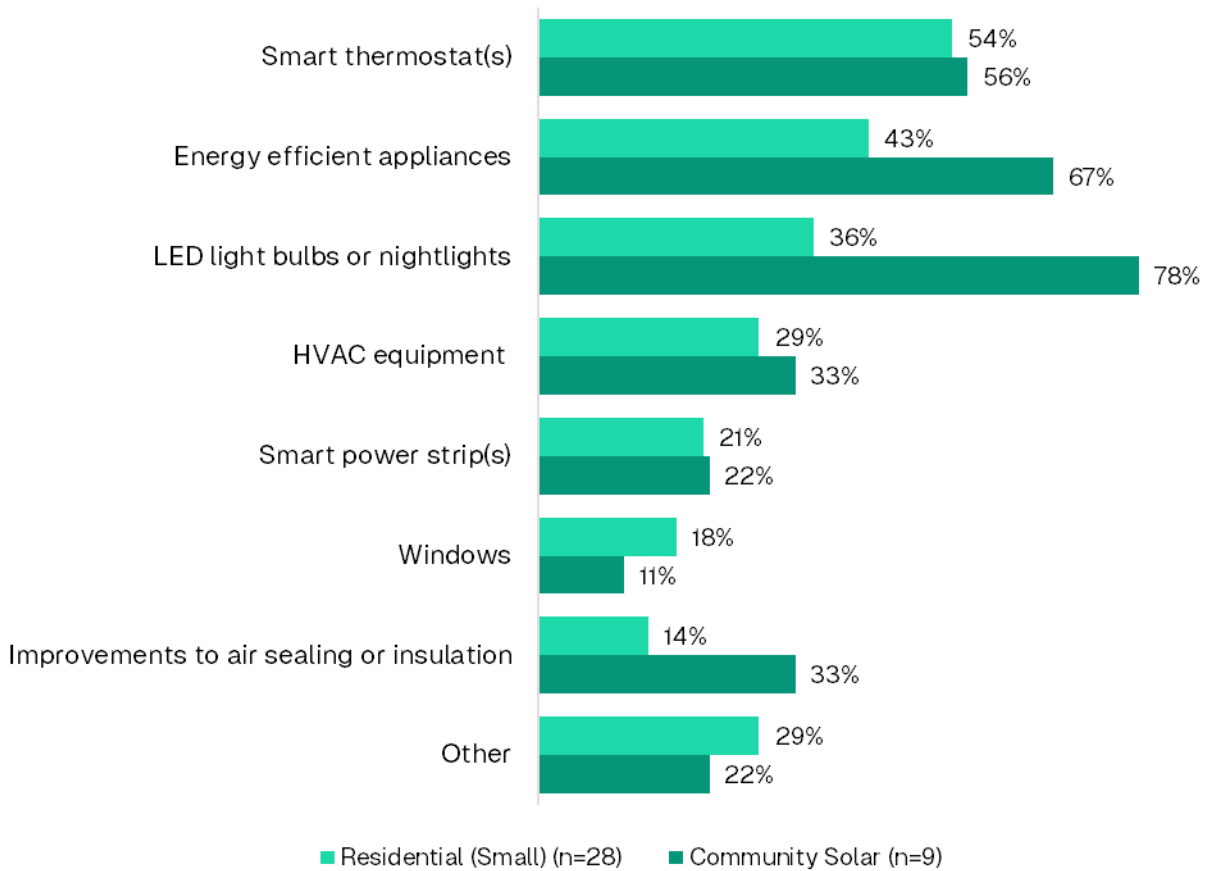
Roughly one-quarter to one-third of participants purchased energy-saving equipment outside of ILSFA, with Community Solar subscribers doing so at a slightly higher rate than Residential Solar (Small) participants (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Energy-Saving Purchases Reported by ILSFA Participants by Subprogram



Among respondents who reported making purchases, LED light bulbs or nightlights, energy-efficient appliances, and smart thermostats were the most commonly acquired items across both subprograms. Community Solar subscribers most commonly purchased LED lighting (78%), while smart thermostats were the top item among Residential Solar (Small) participants (54%) (Figure 15). The evaluation did not assess whether ILSFA participation directly influenced these decisions.

Figure 15. Types of Energy Saving Equipment Purchased by Subprogram



**Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar: Other Self-Reported Benefits**

Beyond equipment purchases, a subset of Residential Solar (Small) participants described additional non-bill benefits. These benefits were most often related to comfort (n=3), building protection (n=3), and community contribution (n=1). Related to building protection, participants specifically mentioned reduced heat gain during summer, improved thermal performance, roof protection, insulation effects, and minimal maintenance requirements. One respondent also expressed excitement that their solar array could help support the resilience of the electric grid.

Among Community Solar participants, one respondent highlighted improved home comfort as an additional benefit.

**NP/PF: Organizational and Community-Level Benefits**

NP/PF participants also reported meaningful benefits beyond bill savings, spanning financial flexibility, organizational credibility, community visibility, and educational opportunities. First, several participants explained that solar supported mission-aligned resource use by freeing up operating funds that could be redirected to repairs, programs, or other priorities, and improvements to asset value and financial flexibility. The quotes below have been lightly edited for clarity and brevity.

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*We were able to do other things with the savings. Money that we would have paid in utility bills, we can put toward other stuff such as repairing things around the building, which helps us further our initiatives. – NP/PF participant*

*The recent appraisal that we got for our building was \$800,000 as opposed to \$300,000 before the solar panels and other improvements. – NP/PF participant*

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Second, solar also strengthened organizational credibility with boards, donors, and the public, and in some cases supported fundraising:

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*When a donor comes in, having solar sends a really good message. – NP/PF participant*

*Solar helps with fundraising and raising trust. – NP/PF participant*

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Third, participants described increased community visibility and pride, with solar installations generating interest and attention:

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*Our students are very proud of the solar panels. It's something that gets people's attention. – NP/PF participant*

*We did a lot of tours of the building and presentations about the solar installation with the community. There was a lot of fascination from the community.. – NP/PF participant*

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Finally, several NP/PF participants, particularly those at youth-serving organizations, emphasized solar's role as an educational and workforce-development asset, including one participant who also conducts solar job training:

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*We wanted to educate our students about solar, so we have a screen mounted outside the entrance that shows students how much electricity the array is generating. – NP/PF participant*

*We just completed a class of 13-15 youth that graduated from the solar training program. – NP/PF participant*

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Taken together, the feedback from Residential Solar (Small), Community Solar, and NP/PF respondents indicates that solar installation confers a variety of benefits beyond utility bill savings.

## Demographics Analysis

Demographic analysis suggests that ILSFA is reaching some historically underserved populations, when comparing ILSFA participant demographics to those of the overall Illinois population. Participation patterns vary by subprogram, and this analysis should be interpreted cautiously based on the data limitations explained below.

The analysis draws on Customer Certification Forms for Residential Solar (Small) projects demographic data from Community Solar subscribers. Several important caveats apply:

- ILSFA has not established explicit demographic participation targets, and this analysis is intended to describe the characteristics of current participants rather than assess performance against predefined benchmarks.
- Race and ethnicity data carry notable gaps: 36% of Residential Solar (Small) participants did not provide race or ethnicity information (24% explicitly declined; 76% had no recorded response), compared to 13% of Community Solar participants subscribers (11% preferred not to answer; 2% had missing data). These differences in response rates should be considered when comparing demographic patterns across subprograms.
- Demographic comparisons use the overall Illinois population as a benchmark, which includes all income levels and may not fully reflect the income-eligible population ILSFA is designed to serve.
- Comparisons between Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar should be made with caution: Residential Solar (Small) data reflect only PY24-25 participants, while Community Solar data spans PY18-19 through PY24-25. Differences in enrollment timing may influence observed demographic patterns across subprograms.

Table 42 describes the demographic characteristics of Illinois compared to those who participate in each ILSFA subprogram. Bolded values indicate instances where there is a higher portion of ILSFA participants within a subprogram population compared to the general Illinois population.

Table 42. Demographic Characteristics of Residential Solar (Small) Participants (PY24-25 Approved Projects) and Community Solar Subscribers (PY18-19 to PY24-25 Energized Projects)

Demographic Category	Illinois Population* (%)	Residential Solar (Small) (%)	Community Solar Subscribers (%)
Households with Seniors	32	30	<b>37</b>
Households with Children Under 6	5	<b>22</b>	<b>7</b>
Rent	32	4	<b>68</b>
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
Black or African American	14	<b>30</b>	<b>57</b>
Hispanic or Latino	18	5	10
Asian	6	<b>10</b>	1
Native American/Native Hawaiian†	0.1	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.5</b>

\* Census Data, 2024: ACS 1-Year Estimates; Race/Ethnicity from 2020 Decennial Census, using *Hispanic or Latino*, and *Population of one race for Not Hispanic or Latino*

† Includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander.

**Household Characteristics.** Community Solar serves renter households at substantially higher rates than both the statewide average and Residential Solar (Small).

Approximately 68% of Community solar subscribers reported renting their homes, compared with 32% statewide and only 4% among Residential Solar (Small) participants. This pattern is consistent with Community Solar's design, which allows participation without homeownership or rooftop control. Households with seniors were also prevalent among Community Solar subscribers (37%) than among Residential Solar (Small) participants (30%).

**Race and Ethnicity.** ILSFA demonstrates relatively strong reach among Black or African American households but seems to be less effective in reaching Hispanic or Latino communities. Black or African American participants were represented at higher rates among Community Solar subscribers (57%) and Residential Solar (Small) participants (30%) than in the overall Illinois population (14%). In contrast, Hispanic or Latino participation was less represented in the Residential Solar (Small) (5%) and Community Solar (10%) subprograms, compared to 18% statewide. While these findings require cautious interpretation, they point to a potential opportunity for the program to expand outreach, enrollment, and language accessibility for Hispanic and Latino communities. Further research into community perceptions of ILSFA could also help determine whether trust poses a particular barrier for these groups.

**Data Availability Across Subprograms.** Demographic data is unavailable for Residential Solar (Large) because Customer Certification forms are only required for Residential Solar (Small) income verification. Residential Solar (Large) relies primarily on Affordable Housing documentation (HUD) or Rent Rolls. ILSFA could consider collecting demographic information about Residential Solar (Large) building tenants to better understand populations served across subprograms.

Importantly, the program administrator should consider the potential impact of collecting this information on the participation process overall, given that Residential Solar (Large) participation is already limited and faces a number of barriers. The program could also consider collecting information from NP/PF participants to better understand the communities they serve, such as high-level information on organizational mission, service populations, and service geographies, again with the aim of minimizing the burden of data collection.

# Process Evaluation

The process evaluation examines how Elevate, the program administrator, has run the Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) program. We also reviewed the experiences of those who participate in the program or help deliver its benefits. ILSFA brings together a diverse group of actors and stakeholders, each playing a unique role. The arrows show how program actors interact with the program and each other.

For PY24-25, we collected insights from all program actors, except job trainers who we will interview as part of the PY25-26 evaluation.

In the sections that follow, we summarize what we learned from these data collection efforts. First, we review the goals and performance of the program in PY24-25. Next, we highlight key findings and recommendations and finally provide detailed results across research activities.

## PY24-25 Overall Goals and Performance

As in prior years, one of the main ways ILSFA measures its success by how effectively it allocates each subprogram’s budget. Table 43 summarizes the portion of incentives allocated by subprogram.

Figure 16. Program Actors in the ILSFA Program

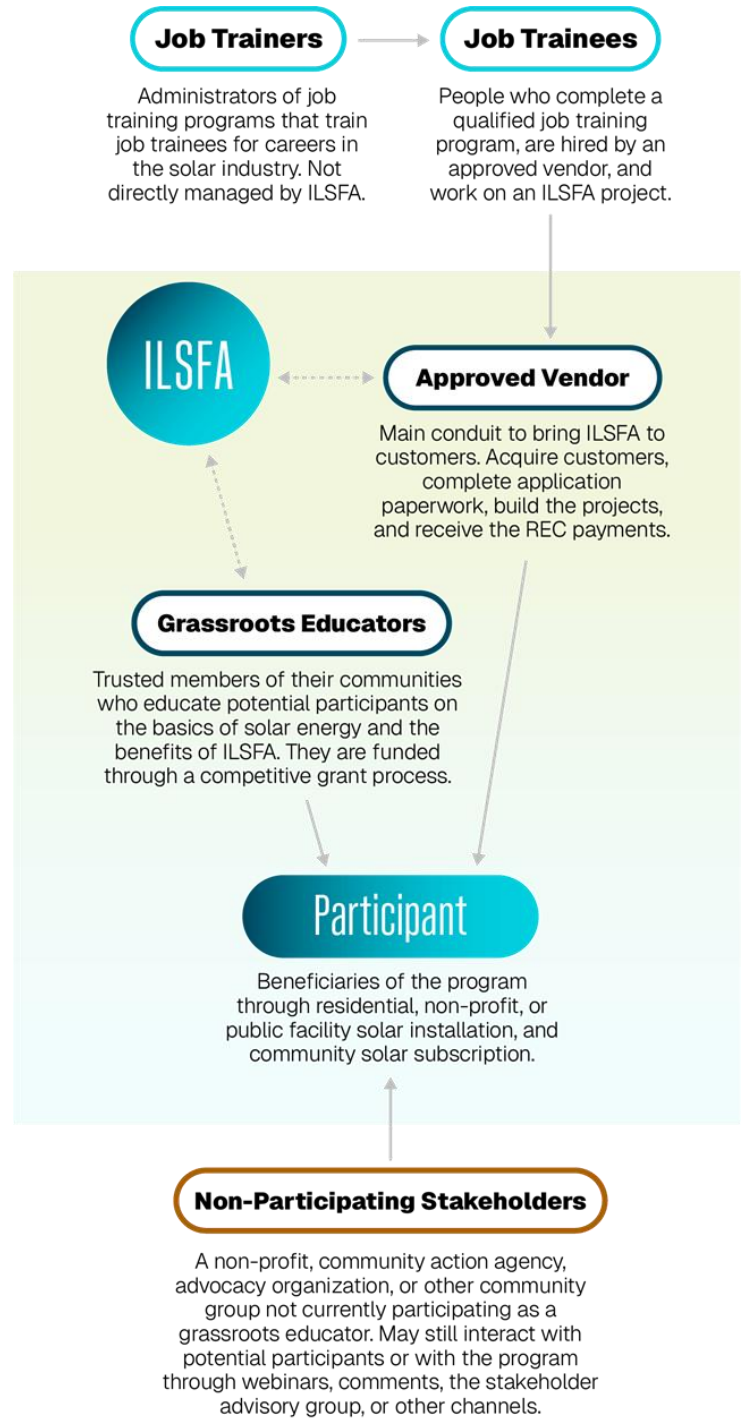


Table 43. ILSFA PY2024-2025 Budget and Approved Projects by Subprogram

Subprogram	Budget	Total Approved Project Incentive Value	Percent of Budget Awarded as Incentives
Residential Solar (Small)	\$30,146,606 <sup>a</sup>	\$21,567,364	72%
Residential Solar (Large)	\$30,146,606 <sup>a</sup>	\$389,798	1%
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	\$17,617,773	\$15,982,593	91%
Community Solar	\$48,092,555 <sup>b</sup>	\$36,987,766	77%
Total PY2024-2025	\$126,003,541	\$74,927,520	59%

<sup>a</sup> The budgets for the Residential Solar (Small) and Residential Solar (Large) subprograms were held separately for the first nine months of the program year, then combined.

<sup>b</sup> This budget includes federal funding awarded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) to expand the Community Solar subprogram budget. [IPA Announces Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Solar for All Funding to Expand ILSFA Community Solar - Illinois Solar for All](#)

**Sources:** Illinois Solar for All Releases the 2024-2025 Program Year Sub-Program Budgets. [Illinois Solar for All Releases the 2024-2025 Program Year Sub-Program Budgets - Illinois Solar for All](#). Accessed March 18, 2026; Program Year 2024-2025 Tracking Data

Among all subprograms, the Non-Profit/Public Facilities (NP/PF) category used the highest share of its budget, while Residential Solar (Large) allocated the least. Both Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar awarded roughly three-quarters of their available incentives.

A notable trend in PY24-25 was the sharp increase in Residential Solar (Small) project volume, which began late in the program year (February-May, 2025) and continued into the summer of 2025. As a result, the Residential Solar (Small) budgets for PY25-26 was fully allocated during the initial submission window in summer 2025—an outcome not seen in previous years. Performance in other subprograms remained stable, with participation trends generally similar to prior program years. Further analysis of participation drivers in each subprogram can be found in the Detailed Findings section.

## Other program goals and metrics

In addition to subprogram budget allocation, the Illinois Power Agency (IPA) tracks a range of metrics related to Elevate’s performance as the program administrator and overall program delivery. Generally, tracked metrics focus on the following areas:

- Number of applications received and processed
- Number of active AVs and whether they are in good standing with the program
- Grassroots educator outreach events and total attendees
- Engagement with Elevate marketing, outreach initiatives, and call center
- Pilot referrals and participation numbers
- Stakeholder engagement activities
- Job training program engagement

During the first five months of PY24-25, Elevate provided monthly reports to the IPA summarizing risks or challenges across these areas and how these would be addressed. Throughout this period, Elevate identified 1-3 risks per month across 43 metrics. In the latter half of the program year, the focus of monthly reporting shifted to emphasize activity and participation trends in each delivery area. Notably, these reports indicated that program activity corresponded closely with participation trends, with more activity in months with greater participation.

The evaluation team reviewed all monthly reports as part of this process evaluation. However, these reports did not directly inform key findings or recommendations, as no persistent risks or challenges were evident in the reports. The IPA should continue to track performance of the program administrator on a monthly basis.

During PY24-25, the IPA also explored the possibility of establishing metrics to monitor how equitably ILSFA is being implemented. The IPA is continuing to investigate specific equity metrics to track progress in this area. The evaluation team will continue to monitor developments in the establishment of equity metrics and incorporate them into future evaluations as they become available.

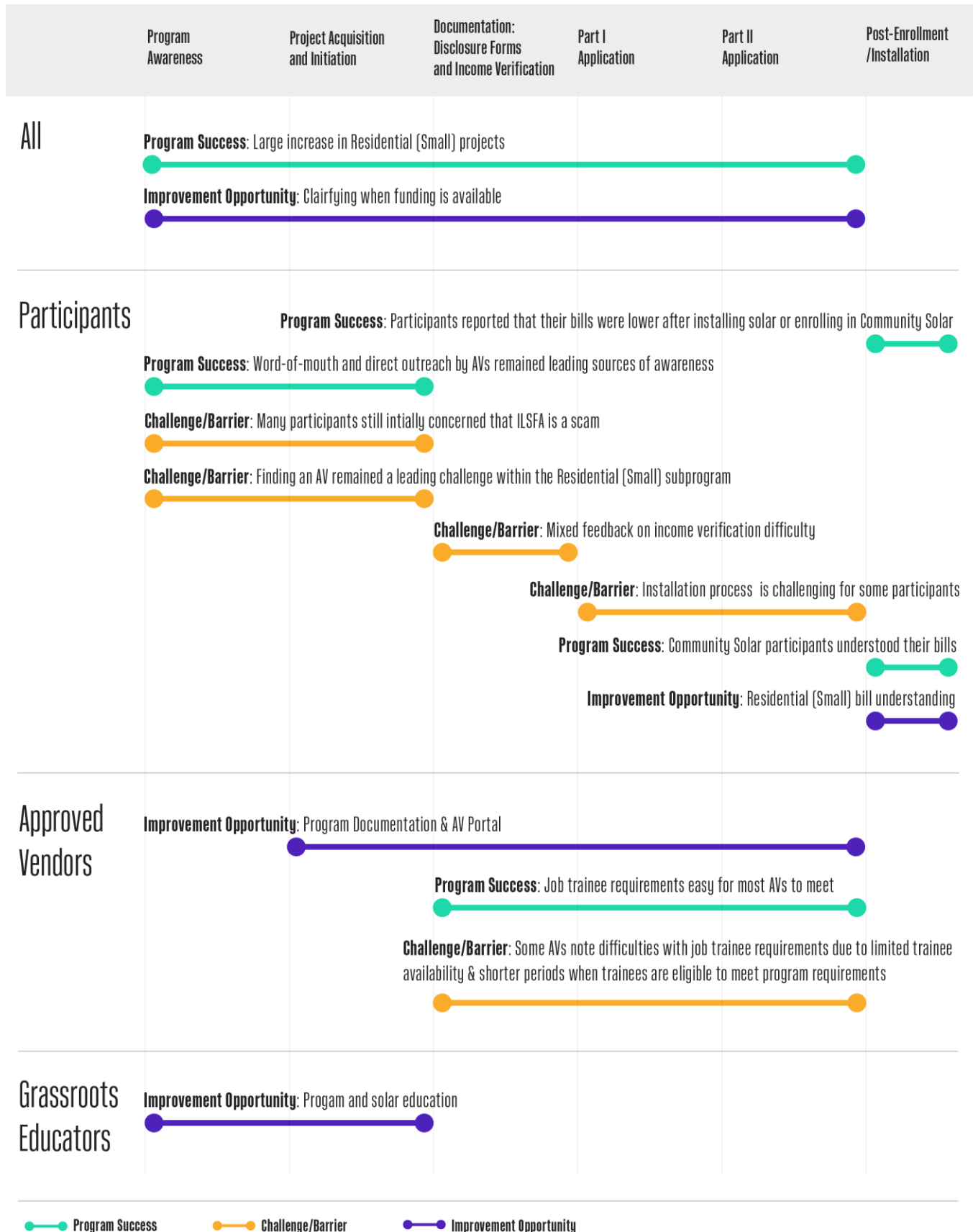
## Key Findings and Recommendations

This section outlines the successes, challenges, barriers, and opportunities for improvement identified within the program. These findings are based on PY24-25 primary data collection and offer targeted insights across key ILSFA program actors.

Figure 17 presents an overview of key findings, illustrating which program participants are affected and at which point during the project lifecycle these impacts occur. For ease of understanding, findings organized into the following categories:

- **Program Success:** Areas where the program is achieving its intended goals.
- **Improvement Opportunity:** Areas where the program has made improvements, but there are opportunities for additional enhancement.
- **Challenges:** Issues that hinder participation and achievement of program goals, requiring more concerted effort or collaboration to address.

Figure 17. Key Findings Map



## Overall Program Participation and Benefits

### FINDING 1

GE | AV

**The number of Residential Solar (Small) projects submitted to the program increased dramatically in the second half of PY24-25. The subprogram did not use all its funds by the end of the program year, so unused funds were carried forward to the following year.**

The number of projects submitted to the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram increased beginning in February 2025 and remained high for the remainder of the program year. There was some Residential Solar (Small) budget remaining at the end of the program year, which was carried forward to the next program year.

There are several hypotheses around what drove the increase of projects in this subprogram, including:

- Uncertainty around federal incentives leading AVs to increasingly turn to state and local incentives
- The number of vendors submitting projects to the program increased, possibly driven by more support for small and emerging businesses within ILSFA, more outreach to vendors in central and southern IL, or the exit of a large AV from the Residential Solar (Small) market
- More effort invested in outreach in PY24-25 by certain AVs in the program

The evaluation was not able to identify a conclusive reason for the increase in project volume. In addition to the increase in Residential Solar (Small) participation, the Home Repairs pilot fully allocated its budget. The Community Solar subprogram approved six new projects, but none were energized in PY24-25.

### FINDING 2

PARTICIPANT

**Overall, participants reported that their bills were lower after installing solar, leading to reduced stress and anxiety and opportunities to put savings towards other bills and living expenses.**

Across ILSFA, 77% in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, 83% in the Community Solar subprogram, and all NP/PF interviewees reported lower electric bills after installing solar. Within Residential Solar (Small), while 66% reported savings more than anticipated, 28% said savings were less than anticipated, which may reflect the shift to supply-only net metering, which impacted 66 projects in PY24-25, or rising electric costs, which may increase the overall amount of bills prior to solar savings. Within Community Solar, only two respondents reported savings were less than expected, with 42% saying savings were over \$80 a month. One NP/PF respondent noted that it is possible that program savings were tempered by the rise in electric costs.

Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar survey respondents described the lower stress and anxiety they are experiencing as a result of their solar panels or subscription savings.

These bill savings have allowed participants to put more money towards other bills, savings, living expenses like groceries and medical bills, and paying off debt.

## Outreach and Education

### FINDING 3

### PARTICIPANT | AV | GE

**Word-of-mouth and direct AV outreach remain leading sources of awareness across subprograms. Participants still report one of their top concerns when deciding to enroll is thinking that the program is a scam.**

In addition to word-of-mouth and AV outreach, Residential Solar (Small) participants learned about ILSFA from social media and new Community Solar subscribers mentioned the ComEd website. Few participants mentioned Grassroots Educators as a source of awareness about the program, with only 7% each of Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar participants and no NP/PF participants saying they learned about the program through a community organization.

Over half of Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar customers indicated they were initially concerned that the program was a scam. A few NP/PF participants also shared this concern but were connected to prior NP/PF participant by their AV or a Grassroots Educator, which helped convince them of the program's legitimacy.

AVs and Grassroots Educators also noted that when they told participants about the program, some participants thought it was too good to be true.

#### Program Recommendations:

- Given that word-of-mouth is a common source of outreach, consider setting up a program ambassador program, where previous participants receive some kind of incentive or reward (e.g., gift cards, food vouchers) for helping to promote the program. Program ambassadors could work in conjunction with Grassroots Educators to raise awareness in specific communities.
- Some respondents suggested partnering with local state and government officials or local newspapers to help establish the legitimacy of ILSFA.
- Given the number of Community Solar respondents who learned about ILSFA through the ComEd website, utility partnerships may also be a fruitful avenue for promoting the program.

### FINDING 4

### PARTICIPANT | GE | AV

**Participants, AVs, and Grassroots Educators wanted additional resources on basic solar concepts and how the ILSFA program works. Grassroots Educators also wanted more peer-to-peer learning opportunities.**

Some AVs and Grassroots Educators, especially newer ones, want more resources to educate participants on ILSFA and basic solar concepts due to the program's complexity and steep learning curve.

Some Grassroots Educators also wanted more opportunities for peer-to-peer learning to better understand the program, while others preferred to refer technical questions from participants to Elevate. Grassroots Educators noted that when they referred questions to Elevate, they wanted assurance of a timely response for participants. This concern was raised due to Grassroots Educators' experiences of lengthy response times from Elevate on complex questions.

Most Residential Solar (Small) (87%) and Community Solar (83%) participants had questions or concerns when first learning about ILSFA, indicating a need for additional education and guidance. NP/PF participants wanted more information specifically on different ownership and leasing models for and associated costs and benefits, including for Energy Sovereignty projects. NP/PF respondents also relied on AVs for support educating other project stakeholders, including church congregations and non-profit boards about what the program would entail.

### **Program Recommendations:**

- Collaborate with AVs and Grassroots Educators to understand most-needed resources to help potential participants understand the program participation process. Work with the program administrator to develop these.
- For the NP/PF subprogram, consider developing specific resources around the different types of ownership and leasing models and associated costs and benefits.
- Consider compiling a library of solar education resources for AVs and Grassroots Educators for them to share with potential participants.
- Consider creating a “customer concierge” team at Elevate that AVs and Grassroots Educators can refer customers through for more technical questions about the program and throughout the participation process.

Consider an ILSFA solar mentorship program, similar to the one offered through Illinois Shines. This program provides AVs who enroll with trainings and presentations covering program processes and requirements. It also facilitates connections with other stakeholders. ILSFA could consider offering a similar service to both ILSFA AVs and Grassroots Educators.

## **Participation Process**

### **FINDING 5**

### **PARTICIPANT | AV | GE**

#### **Finding an AV was a notable challenge within the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, similar to previous program years.**

Just over 20% of Residential Solar (Small) participants said their experience finding a vendor was somewhat or very difficult and an additional 13% said it was neither easy nor difficult. Common challenges participants faced included out-of-date or missing information on the “Find a Solar Company” tool on the ILSFA website, including whether vendors were accepting new projects, which parts of the state vendors served, and links to vendor reviews and testimonials.

AVs and Grassroots Educators similarly wanted additional support connecting participants to AVs. AVs wanted more support with participant outreach and education, and Grassroots Educators wanted to network with AVs active in their area to facilitate connections between AVs and participants. Grassroots Educators also noted it would be helpful to have the “Find a Solar Company” page available in Spanish.

### **Program Recommendations:**

- Include a date next to the “Accepting New Participants” status, so those interested in participation can see when the program confirmed the status with the vendor.
- Consider adding additional information to the “Find a Solar Company” page, including geographic areas served by the vendor, customer reviews, and what types of ownership or leasing models the AV supports, as well as translating the page into Spanish.

## **FINDING 6**

## **PARTICIPANT | GE | AV | ELEVATE**

**Income verification does not seem to be a barrier for those who successfully complete the program participation process. However, some Grassroots Educators and AVs say this step is challenging for participants and Elevate identified this as a major drop-off point for participation in the Bright Neighborhoods pilot.**

Most participants in the Residential Solar (Small) (78%) and Community Solar (73%) subprograms said ILSFA’s income verification process was similar to or easier than other income verification processes they had completed. However, some AVs and Grassroots Educators say this step remains challenging for participants. Grassroots Educators noted, in particular, that some participants are wary about sharing their personal information in the current political climate.

The income verification step emerged as a major drop-off point within the Bright Neighborhoods pilot, with only 26% of participants who submitted eligible intake forms making it past this step in the participation process. While self-attestation of income was an option for Bright Neighborhoods, only six of seventeen participants who completed income verification used this option.

Following the conclusion of the Bright Neighborhoods pilot, Elevate did further research on the income verification process with nonparticipants. This research recommended improving the online income verification form, allowing self-attestation, improving information about the income verification process included on the ILSFA website, better coordination with the IPA on referrals, and providing real-time one-on-one support.

### **Program Recommendations:**

- Implement the income verification process improvements identified through Elevate’s research and monitor success.
- Track income-verification completion rates and drop-off points systematically across subprograms.

- **Future program design note:** As part of program updates for PY26-27, ILSFA will include a self-attestation income verification option for customers in Income-Eligible Communities, as defined by the program.

## FINDING 7

## PARTICIPANT

**The installation process for onsite solar within the Residential Solar (Small) and NP/PF is challenging for some participants and they want more support. NP/PF participants also wanted more resources to understand how to operate solar post-installation.**

Thirty nine percent of Residential Solar (Small) respondents needed to make upgrades or fix issues prior to installing solar, and 10 respondents received funds through the program.

Twenty two percent of respondents said they had issues during the installation process, primarily with scheduling, delays, specific issues they had with their installer, and damage to their home or property. Seventeen percent of respondents said they wanted more support working with their AV, although very few reached out to the program for support.

Within the NP/PF subprogram, installation was smooth overall, although a few participants mentioned interconnection delays, and one participant wished the AV had communicated the timeline more clearly to them. One NP/PF participant also wanted clear direction on what to do with the panels post-installation, including a better understanding of how they worked.

### Program Recommendations:

- Consider reaching out via phone or email to Residential Solar (Small) and NP/PF participants at set milestones in the participation process, referring them to support resources and answering any questions they may have.
- Consider creating a “customer concierge” team at Elevate that can answer questions throughout and after the ILSFA participation process.

## Post-installation Bill Savings

## FINDING 8

## PARTICIPANT

**In general, Community Solar participants did not report issues with understanding their bills after enrolling. Some Residential Solar (Small) customers reported their bills were more difficult to understand.**

Overall, 83% of Community Solar participants reported no issues with billing and 83% said it was somewhat or very easy to see the impact of solar on their bill. Many participants said receiving one bill instead of two was helpful in understanding their bills. About half of participants said they saw solar bill credits within one to two months of enrolling in the program, although around a quarter said it took more than two months for credits to show up.

Residential Solar (Small) participants reported slightly higher difficulty with their bills, and just 57% reported their bills were *somewhat* or *very easy* to understand. When probed, survey respondents were confused by the amount of information provided and wanted help understanding energy usage and panel production.

**Program Recommendation:**

- Consider creating education materials to support participants in understanding their bills after solar is installed. Materials could include boxes highlighting where new line-items or credits may have appeared and explaining to customers what these line items mean.

**Approved Vendor Experience****FINDING 9****AV**

**AVs continue to find program documentation and the AV portal the most difficult parts of the program to navigate, although the number of AVs reporting difficulty with program documentation has decreased since PY23-24.**

In PY24-25, four of eight AVs reported challenges with program documentation, a modest improvement from the nine of ten AVs who reported challenges in PY23-24. Despite this, both Part I and Part II submissions remained difficult for new and established AVs, due to the amount of documentation required and difficulties uploading the documentation to the AV portal.

When asked for specific feedback on the portal, AVs said the portal was unintuitive, complex, and difficult to navigate. They noted some specific issues with forms and documents not saving properly, redundant fields, and the portal crashing. Despite these challenges, many AVs said they found program documentation and training resources to be helpful.

**Program Recommendation:**

- Collaborate with AVs to fix recurring portal issues, including documents or forms not saving properly, the lack of a designated location for AVs to upload general project files requested by the program, and difficulty navigating system design or shading sections.
- Add structured opportunities for AV feedback to inform process improvements to the AV portal and program documentation. These may include a ticket system to report issues or questions, short surveys, usability testing, or targeted discussions specifically focused on documentation and portal navigation challenges.
- Reassess and streamline documentation requirements to reduce redundancy across program stages, focusing on minimizing repeated information requests, through consolidating submissions or auto-populating already provided information.

**FINDING 10****AV | JOB TRAINEES**

**Most AVs found ILSFA job training requirements easy to meet. Those who faced challenges noted limited trainee availability and faced challenges with the length of eligibility period after completing their job training program that trainees are eligible to fulfill program requirements.**

In general, AVs found job training requirements easy to fulfill. When asked about specific challenges, AVs cited the limited number of available trainees and the length of time after completing their program where trainees are eligible to fulfill job training requirements.

The small number of job trainees who completed the survey indicated that they primarily found their jobs through their job training programs. AVs wanted to strengthen direct matching with trainees through job training programs and requested more up-to-date information on training programs, including a list of active programs, locations, and start and end dates.

For trainees who were hired, AVs indicated they wanted to have trainees with more on-the-job training. Trainees likewise wanted more on-the-job training.

### **Program Recommendation:**

- Create more opportunities for AVs to connect with recent graduates of job training programs, including networking events, career fairs, or matching sessions. Hold these events throughout the state so AVs outside the Chicago region can connect with trainees.
- Consider developing a centralized job board or placement platform that allows AVs to post openings and job trainees to share availability, skills, and certifications.
- Consider making more information available for AVs, such as regularly updated information about job training programs, including current program start and end dates, the number of trainees enrolled, and indicators of trainee progress.
- **Future program design note:** As part of program updates for PY26-27, ILSFA will extend the job trainee eligibility period to 5 years. AVs will also have the option to meet workforce development requirements by meeting Minimum Equity Standards (MES) instead of job training requirements. This standard establishes a minimum percentage of the project workforce for ILSFA projects that consist of either Equity Eligible Persons (EEPs) or Equity Eligible Contractors (EECs).

These terms are defined under the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act (CRGA), signed into law in January 2026, and are aimed at creating opportunities in the workforce for those who may otherwise face discrimination.

## Detailed Findings

This section summarizes key program changes in PY24-25, subprogram performance, trends in vendor participation, and pilot performance. The evaluation team based these findings on a review of program documentation, tracking data, interviews with IPA and Elevate staff, and interviews with AVs, Grassroots Educators, job trainees, and participants.

## Program Changes

Each year, the IPA makes updates to ILSFA to improve program design and effectiveness.

These updates are based on a variety of factors, including updates to the Long-Term Renewable Resource Procurement Plan, which occur biennially, changes to state and federal legislation, ongoing feedback from stakeholders, program evaluation findings, and day-to-day program operation and performance. The IPA and Elevate communicate these changes to program stakeholders through the ILSFA website, through published program materials, and through other regular meetings, such as AV office hours or grassroots educator check ins.

## Policy Updates

In PY24-25, two changes to state and federal policy impacted ILSFA.

First, Illinois changed its net metering policy under CEJA beginning January 1, 2025. Under the new rules, customers who register for net metering on or after this date will receive credits for excess electricity sent back to the grid on the supply portion of their bill only. Previously, net metering customers received credit for excess electricity for the full retail rate, encompassing both supply and delivery charges. Those who registered for net metering on or before December 31, 2024 will continue to receive the full net-metering rate. In response to this change, Elevate updated disclosure forms so customers can better understand their estimated bill savings under the new net metering rules.

At the federal level, the IPA in collaboration with the Illinois Finance Authority, applied for and was awarded funding through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Solar for All program. The IPA received a portion of this funding and used it to expand the ILSFA Community Solar subprogram budget for PY24-25.

## Program Design Updates, Successes, and Challenges

During PY24-25, ILSFA also made updates to several aspects of ILSFA program design intended to improve consumer protections, support vendor participation, and clarify workforce requirements. These changes included:

**Consumer Protections:** ILSFA strengthened consumer protection standards by updating marketing and outreach requirements to prohibiting misleading claims related to participant eligibility, projected savings, or Environmental Justice designation. Elevate also created a dedicated consumer protections team to oversee compliance across the program, rather than making this an additional responsibility for staff managing daily program operations. Program staff viewed this structural change as a clear improvement, as it enabled faster responses to consumer protection complaints and violations. However, staff also noted initial challenges with responsiveness in early PY24-25, limiting the team's effectiveness during this period.

**Participating AVs:** The number of AVs participating in ILSFA increased substantially during PY24-25, including several vendors submitting projects for the first time. In response, Elevate expanded its AV management team to support new vendors and manage the increased volume of Residential Solar (Small) projects. Elevate staff reported that this expansion improved vendor support and helped streamline the processing of REC incentive payments.

**Marketing and Outreach:** In PY24-25, the IPA expanded its marketing and outreach strategy by launching social media channels on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. IPA staff emphasized that these channels help establish program legitimacy, which remains an important factor in building trust among potential participants. Program data show steady growth in social media engagement following the launch of these channels, with 238 new followers across all channels by June 2025. The program also evaluated paid advertising to promote the new channels but later discontinued these efforts due to budget constraints. The IPA also published a participant testimonial during PY24-25, which was well received and used by Grassroots Educators for outreach.

**Job training:** ILSFA clarified workforce and job training requirements related to job trainee eligibility, so that existing employees do not qualify as job trainees. Under the updated requirements, AVs must attest that they hired trainees after training program completion.

## Subprogram performance

This section summarizes performance across ILSFA subprograms in PY24–25 and highlights the key factors that shaped participation and outcomes. Overall, most subprograms performed consistently with prior years, while Residential Solar (Small) experienced a notable increase in activity.

### Residential Solar (Small)

Residential Solar (Small) activity increased sharply beginning in February 2025 and remained elevated through the end of the program year in May 2025. While the total volume of projects was lower in PY24-25 than the previous program year, submissions remained high through the end of PY24-25 and extended into the summer of 2025, which included the project submission window for the PY25-26. This led to Residential Solar (Small) funds being fully awarded during the initial PY25-26 submission window, which had not happened in prior program years (Table 44).

Table 44. Comparison of Residential Solar (Small) Participation in PY22-23 through PY24-25

Metric	PY22-23	PY23-24	PY24-25	PY25-26 <sup>a</sup>
Total budget	\$27,337,726	\$34,616,535	\$30,146,606	\$34,484,963
Total approved projects	223	1296	577	945
Total approved project incentive value	\$5,237,815	\$31,992,496	\$21,567,364	\$39,190,000
% budget awarded to approve projects	19%	92%	72%	114% <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>PY25-26 values are pulled from the ILSFA project dashboard and have not been verified by the evaluation team

<sup>b</sup>The Residential Solar (Small and Large) subprogram budgets are combined after the first nine months of the program year. The additional budget for incentives came from the combined budget.

In prior two program years, a single vendor submitted a backlog of projects to the program, accounting for most Residential Solar (Small) submissions. In PY24-25, several new vendors entered the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, driving the increase in Residential Solar (Small) project volume. Program staff reported that the surge in submissions was unexpected and that staff had to shift focus in late PY24-25 to manage the application volume.

The evaluation explored several possible drivers of the increase in Residential Solar (Small) projects. Program staff identified uncertainties around state and federal funding as a potential contributing factor. At the federal level, developers were uncertain about the future of tariffs and the Investment Tax Credit (ITC). At the state level, the shift to supply-only net metering decreased credits customers received for excess solar generation. Program staff hypothesized that these uncertainties motivated developers to pursue funding through ILSFA, which offers higher REC incentives than Illinois' market rate solar program, Illinois Shines.

The exit of a large solar developer from the U.S. residential market may also have contributed to shifting market dynamics. This AV submitted 95% of projects in the prior program year, but only one project in PY24-25. At the same time, the number of AVs with approved projects to ILSFA increased from six in the prior program year to 14 in PY24-25. Despite this, approved projects were still concentrated among two vendors who submitted 70% of approved projects in PY24-25. In the AV survey, these two vendors indicated they submitted more Residential Solar (Small) projects than in prior years. When asked why, both AVs said they had done more outreach than in prior years. One also said they had improved internal processes, while the other pointed to greater capital investment.

Taken together, these findings indicate that increased Residential Solar (Small) activity stemmed primarily from expansion by a few high-volume vendors, rather than from broad participation by many smaller firms.

The Residential Solar (Small) subprogram also saw a sharp increase in Energy Sovereignty projects, with 512 submissions compared to prior years. Staff attributed this increase to greater vendor familiarity with the offering, the \$10 per REC incentive adder, and limited downsides for vendors. However, staff expressed uncertainty about whether there are greater participant-level benefits under this model. The evaluation team will explore participant benefits in more detail in a forthcoming Energy Sovereignty special topic report.

## Residential Solar (Large)

Residential Solar (Large) participation remained limited in PY24-25, with two approved projects and 1% of the budget allocated, consistent with prior years. Elevate and IPA staff attributed low participation to persistent structural barriers.

Specifically, many multifamily buildings are master-metered and cannot easily pass solar savings to individual tenants. As of PY26-27, master-metered buildings will have two options for participation in ILSFA: they can either use technology to allow energy from a distributed energy system to be shared among multiple units in the building, or master-metered buildings may serve as an anchor tenant in the Community Solar subprogram, helping to address one barrier these buildings face to participating in ILSFA.

Additionally, multifamily buildings, particularly high-rises, may have limited roof space, limiting the size of the solar array that can be installed and the savings that can be divided among tenants. Finally, administrative and financial burdens may prevent property owners from participating, specifically demonstrating enough units meet income requirements to qualify for ILSFA. Split incentives between property owners and tenants may also limit how motivated property owners are to navigate the program.

## Non-Profit/Public Facilities

The NP/PF subprogram performed consistently with prior years, approving 41 projects and allocating 91% of its incentive budget. While demand remained strong, staff noted that supply-only net metering may have reduced project attractiveness for some participants.

Similar to the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, the number of NP/PF Energy Sovereignty projects increased from 22 in PY23-24 to 34 in PY24-25, likely reflecting increased vendor familiarity and acceptance of this program model. However, NP/PF participants raised questions about Energy Sovereignty ownership models and long-term operations and maintenance responsibilities. The evaluation team will explore participant benefits in more detail in a forthcoming Energy Sovereignty special topic report.

## Community Solar

Community Solar subprogram performance remained steady in PY24-25, with six approved projects and 77% budget utilization. Three projects approved in PY21-22 became energized in PY24-25, reflecting the longer project lifecycles for Community Solar projects, due to their larger size and more extensive permitting requirements. These projects are also more likely to experience delays due to interconnection. Most subscribers for new energized projects were recruited prior to energization in PY23-24. Therefore, the only subscribers surveyed for the PY24-25 evaluation were those resulting from turnover in subscribers on existing projects.

## Vendor Participation

Vendor participation reached its highest level to date in PY24-25 with 25 unique AVs submitting projects – more than in any prior program year (Table 45). This increase was most pronounced in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, which accounts for the largest share of ILSFA projects. The NP/PF subprogram also saw more participating vendors than in any prior program year.

PY24-25 also marked a notable influx of new vendors, with 17 AV submitting projects for the first time. To support this growth, Elevate expanded its AV management team to focus on onboarding new vendors, assisting with the application process and AV portal, and helping vendors understand best practices for aligning marketing and outreach with consumer protection standards.

Table 45. Number of AVs with Approved Projects PY18-19 through PY24-25

Program Year	Unique Number of Approved Vendors with Approved Projects		
	Residential Solar - Large and Small	Non-Profit/Public Facilities	Community Solar
Program Year 18-19 (PY1)	0	3	3
Program Year 19-20 (PY2)	2	10	6
Program Year 20-21 (PY3)	3	6	2
Program Year 21-22 (PY4)	4	10	5
Program Year 22-23 (PY5)	3	6	2
Program Year 23-24 (PY6)	6	5	3
Program Year 24-25 (PY7)	14	11	5

Elevate staff attributed increased vendor participation in part to a stronger focus on outreach to small and emerging businesses. Staff estimated that these efforts engaged approximately 75 businesses beginning in PY24-25 and extended into the following program year. Elevate also held more vendor outreach events in Peoria and Springfield, attracting strong vendor interest in these regions.

Despite these efforts, staff noted that many of the new PY24-25 vendors were medium-sized firms. Small vendors continued to face barriers to participation, particularly challenges securing upfront capital to finance projects before REC payments and limited staff capacity to manage program paperwork. Beginning in PY26-27, ILSFA plans to introduce a verified Small and Emerging Business (SEB) designation. The designation will provide SEBs with targeted program benefits, including earlier access to submission windows and priority consideration during project selection.

As noted in the Residential Solar (Small) section above, PY24-25 also marked a shift away from project submissions being dominated by a single large vendor, who accounted for 65%-95% of project submissions in prior years and only submitted one project in PY24-25. Despite this, two vendors still drove almost three-quarters of submissions, indicating ILSFA activity is still dominated by just a few vendors.

## Pilot Initiatives

The following section summarizes the performance of the three ILSFA pilot initiatives active during PY24-25: Home Repairs and Upgrades, Bright Neighborhoods, and the NCSP+ Energy Connector.

### Home Repairs and Upgrades

The Home Repairs and Upgrades pilot expanded substantially in its second year, increasing from 14 projects in PY23-24 to 206 projects in PY24-25, and fully expending its budget.

Program staff attributed this growth to program design changes that reduced financial and administrative barriers for vendors. These changes included:

- A new \$450 administrative fee paid to AVs for each completed project
- Higher cost caps for eligible repairs, including electrical repairs and upgrades (increased from \$4,000 to \$6,550) and roof repairs (increased from \$10,000 to \$14,000).
- Reduced documentation requirements, including written proof of attempts to secure external repair funding.

The pilot funded projects on a first-come first-served basis regardless of repair size. Elevate maintained a waitlist for approximately 30 projects that did not receive funding in PY24-25 and encouraged them to reapply in the following program year.

Program staff noted that while the pilot was successful overall, it also faced a few implementation challenges. First, some vendors reported repair cost exceed program cost caps, particularly for later roof repairs. Repair costs also varied widely across homes, ranging from as little as \$1,000 to close to \$14,000. While Elevate communicated to vendors that the pilot would not be able to help with all home repairs, some AVs expressed frustration with funding constraints and requested clearer insight into how funds were prioritized.

## Bright Neighborhoods Pilot

PY24-25 marked the second and final year of the Bright Neighborhoods pilot, which ended after continued low installation rates. The pilot supported eight total installations in PY24-25, with four completed by Bright Neighborhoods AVs and four completed by AVs not participating with the pilot. Although the pilot ended, it generated some lessons learned for future outreach and program design. These lessons included: 1) intake form with pre-screening surveys helped Elevate connect applicants with the best ILSFA offering for their home's characteristics, and 2) income verification emerged as a major drop-off point for prospective participants.

During PY24-25, Elevate received 169 intake forms through the Bright Neighborhoods pilot. Of these, only 65 participants were initially eligible for Bright Neighborhoods criteria. Ineligible homes were largely outside of Bright Neighborhood communities (n=77), better suited for the Community Solar subprogram based on shading or building type (n=36), or ineligible for ILSFA (n=9). Of the 65 eligible participants, only 17 completed the income verification process, reflecting a significant participation barrier. While the program introduced a self-attestation option for income verification in PY24-25 to address this barrier, only five participants used it.

The remaining eight nonparticipants dropped out after they were referred to an AV. Program staff cited AVs being unable to serve certain building or roof types and customers wanting to shop around for an AV as the reasons for dropping out at the final stage.

## NCSP+ Energy Connector

PY24-25 marked the first year of implementation for the NCSP+ Energy Connector, a platform which links LIHEAP recipients to available Community Solar subscriptions. Limited availability of Community Solar subscriptions emerged as the primary challenge for the Connector.

Staff described a “chicken-and-egg” dynamic: limited subscriptions reduced incentives for agencies to upload households, while outdated household data limited the Connector’s usefulness when subscriptions became available. This issue became particularly apparent when a Community Solar project sought to enroll subscribers during peak LIHEAP enrollment season. There were not enough households uploaded to the Connector to meet subscriber demand, and LIHEAP agency staff were too busy at the time to upload additional households.

In response, the IPA adjusted its approach during PY24-25 to proactively reach out to Community Solar projects to determine when they would be enrolling subscribers, so that the IPA could give LIHEAP agencies better insight into when they should upload households. The IPA also replaced a paper-based income verification process with an online option, allowing for more efficient corrections to applications.

As of March 2026, 28% of 302 households uploaded into the Connector had successfully subscribed to Community Solar. Many households declined participation (42%), remained unmatched (61%), or were on a waitlist (3%), underscoring the mismatch between household demand for subscriptions and subscription supply.

## Program Actor Findings

This section summarizes findings from surveys, interviews, and listening sessions conducted with key program actors during PY24-25. These actors include AVs, Job Trainees, Grassroots Educators, and participants in the Residential Solar (Small), Community Solar, and NP/PF subprograms. The evaluation team was unable to reach the sole Residential Solar (Large) participant during the data collection period.

### Approved Vendor Survey

Key terms used to describe Approved Vendors:

**Installer:** Vendors that handle designing and installing solar photovoltaic systems for homes and businesses.

**Aggregator:** Vendors that facilitate their company’s participation in ILSFA and Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) delivery/contracts for entities they represent.

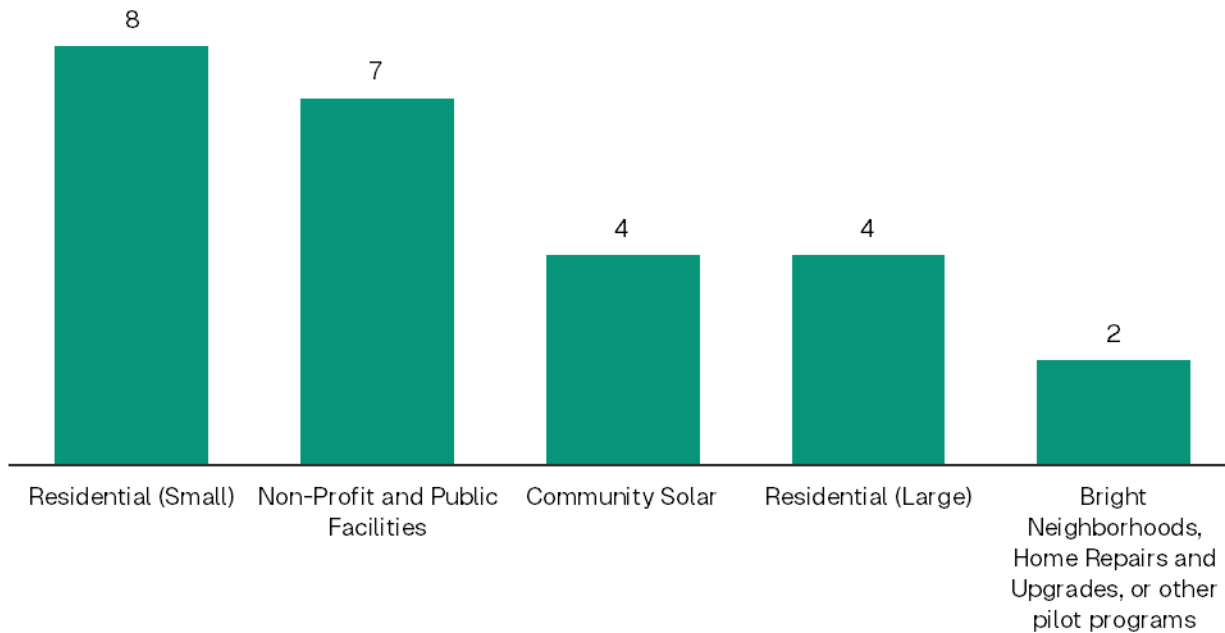
**Designee:** Vendors that provide services within ILSFA on behalf of an Approved Vendor and interact with the end-use customer.

**Subcontractor:** Vendors that perform work under an Approved Vendor’s direction.

The evaluation team collected feedback from eight of the 19 AVs participating in PY24-25. Responding vendors held a mix of roles within ILSFA, including aggregators, installers, designees, and subcontractors. Four respondents held multiple roles, and four respondents held a single role within the program.

AVs also ranged in their prior experience with ILSFA, with five AVs who began participating in PY22-23 or earlier and three AVs new to the program in PY24-25. AVs were generally smaller businesses, with half of the respondents having fewer than 20 employees. Generally, AVs participated in more than one subprogram, and a few AVs had experience with ILSFA pilots. (Figure 18)

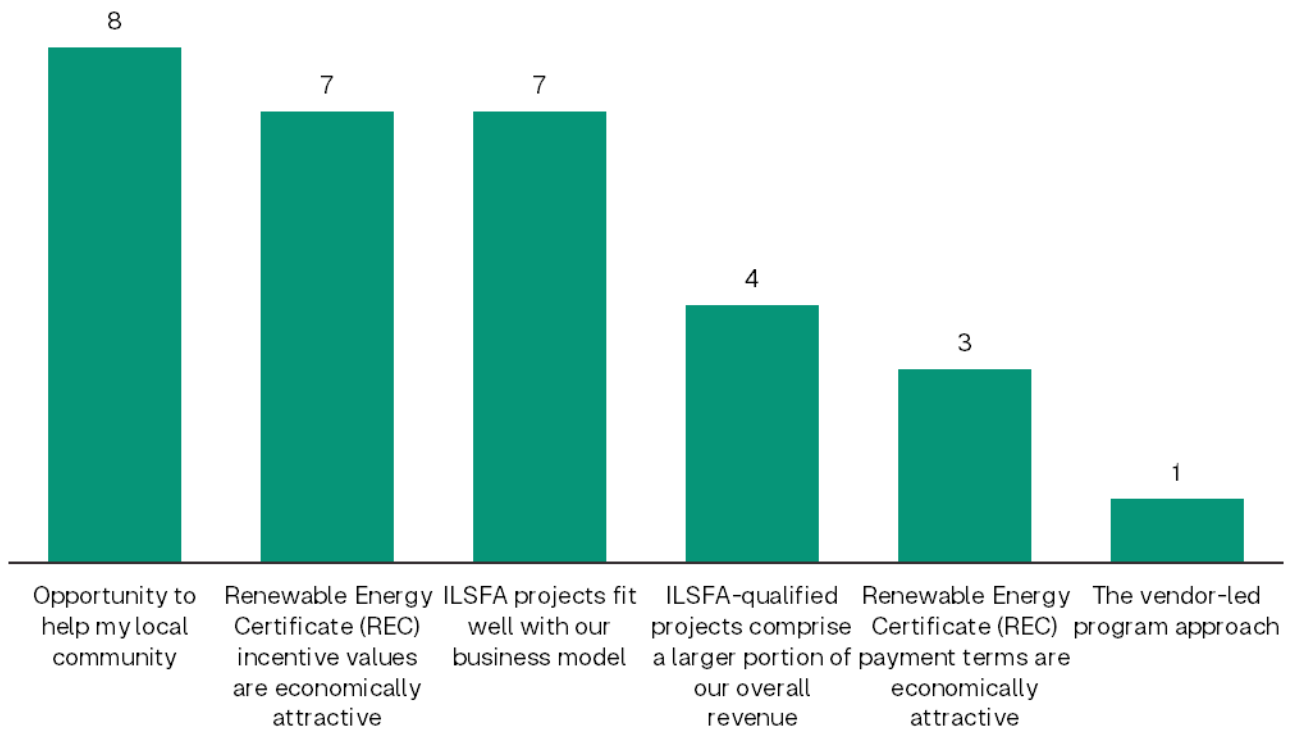
Figure 18. Subprograms that AVs Participate In (n=8)



### Participation Drivers

All AVs (n=8) surveyed reported the opportunity to support their local community, alignment with their business model (n=7), and REC incentives being economically attractive (n=7) as motivators for participating in ILSFA (Figure 19). This finding mirrors the PY23-24 evaluation cycle when vendors reported similar motivations for ILSFA participation.

Figure 19. Motivations for AVs to Participate in ILSFA (n=8)



AVs varied in how they learned about the program, with three AVs reported learning about the program through Elevate, three through the IPA, three through other solar developers, and one respondent being unsure how they first heard about the program.

### Project Documentation

While fewer vendors reported documentation challenges than in prior years, paperwork and AV portal-related issues remained a barrier for some AV.

In PY24-25, four of eight AVs reported that submitting project documentation was either “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult,” saying they faced challenges with both Part I and Part II submissions. This was a lower portion of AVs reporting difficulties than in the prior evaluation cycle, where nine out of ten respondents indicated that the process was at least “somewhat difficult.” Both new and experienced vendors reported these challenges, indicating that program documentation is a barrier regardless of tenure in the program.

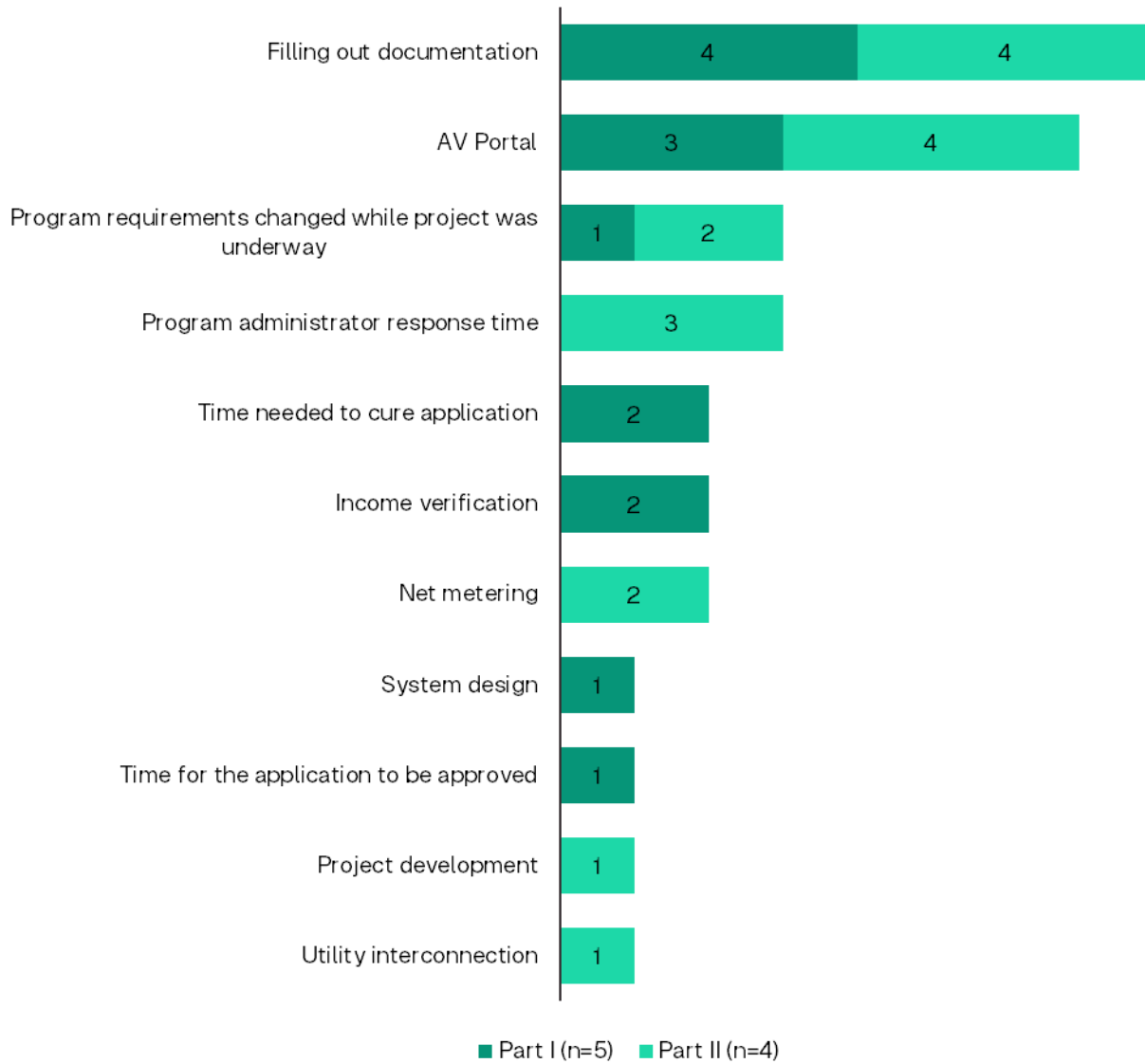
In detailed feedback, vendors highlighted submitting required documentation (n=4) and AV portal functionality (n=4) as challenges with both the Part I and Part II application processes, mirroring feedback provided in PY23-24 (Figure 20).

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*The paperwork needed after the first initial batch is difficult to manage for all vendors and it seems to prevent many from participation. – Approved Vendor*

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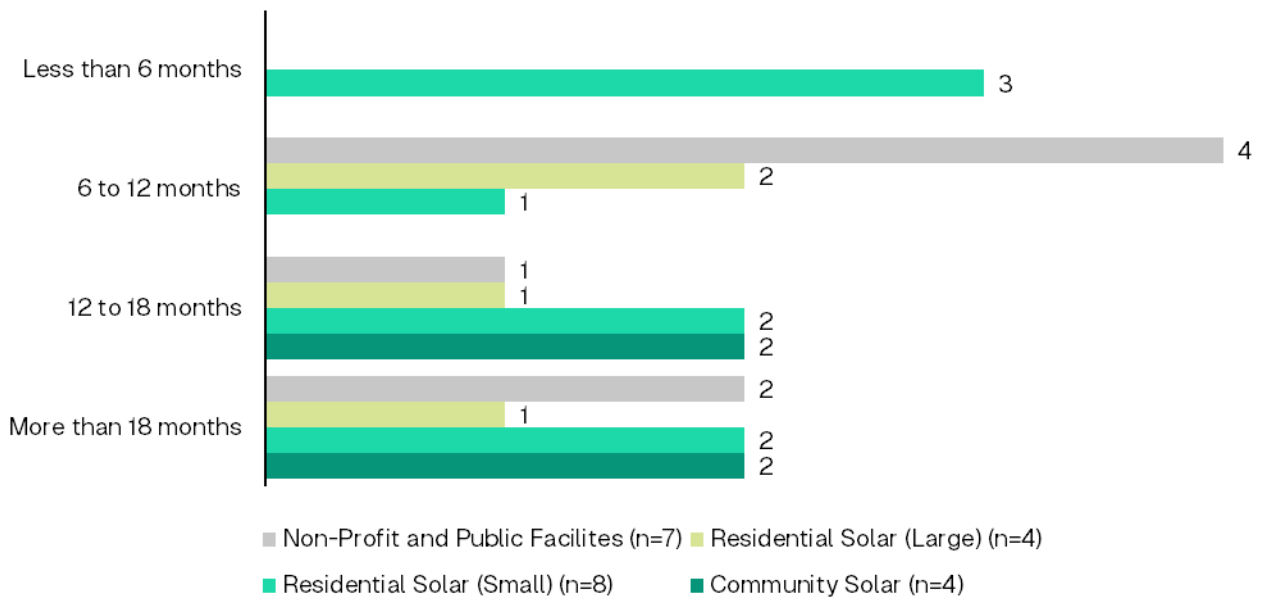
Figure 20. Application Steps That Were Difficult in Part I and Part II Project Documentation



**Timeline**

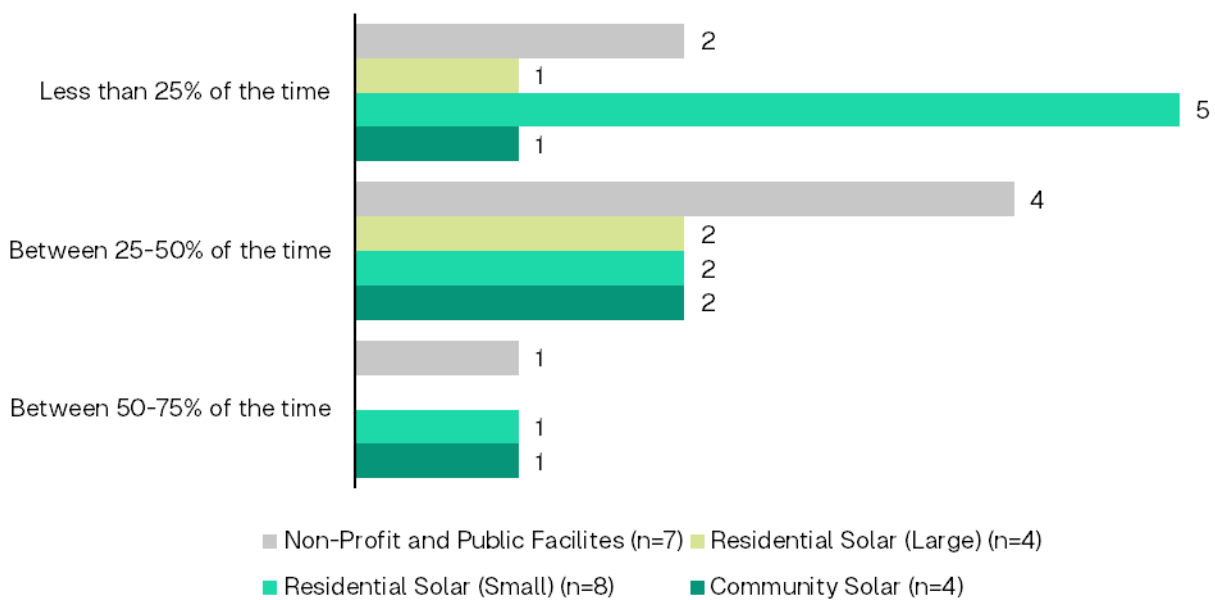
Project timelines vary across subprograms, reflecting differences in scale and complexity across project types. Residential Solar (Small) projects were most often completed in less than six months, Residential Solar (Large) and NP/PF projects most often took between six and twelve months to complete, and Community Solar projects had the longest development timelines. (Figure 21)

Figure 21. Project Timelines by Subprogram



Similarly, project delays aligned with the differences in scale and complexity. Residential Solar (Small) projects were least likely to be delayed, with most AVs reporting delays less than 25% of the time, while other subprograms experienced delays more frequently, closer to 25-50% of the time (Figure 22). One respondent reported higher delay rates (50-75%) across all projects, although they were an outlier compared to other AVs.

Figure 22. Delay Times by Subprogram

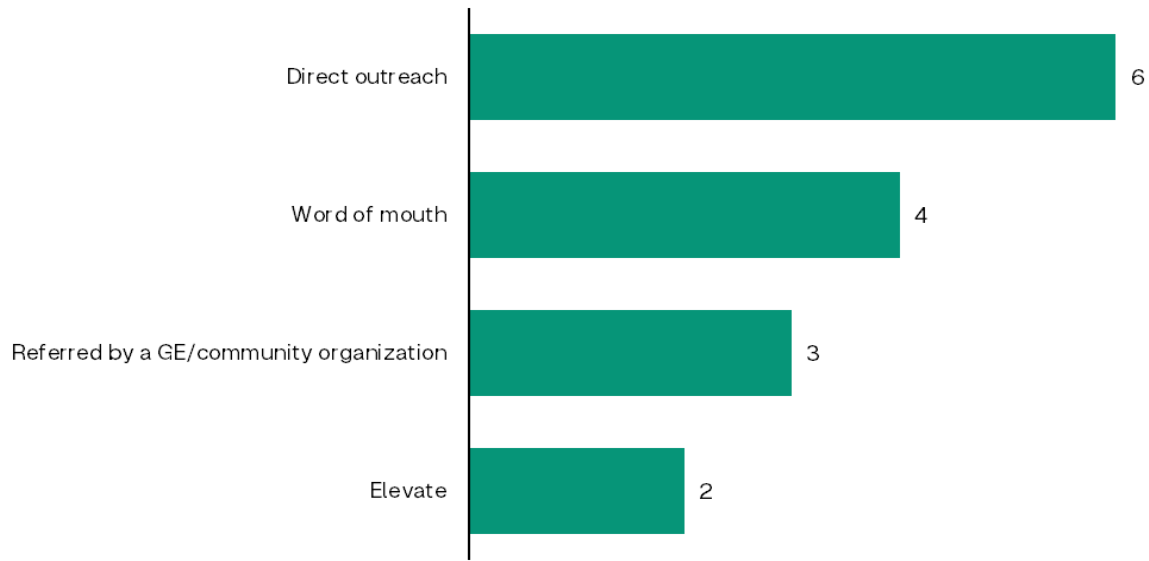


When asked for the cause of higher delay rates, respondents most often referenced permitting and interconnection issues. One respondent also said they had difficulties with financing Community Solar projects.

## Participant Acquisition

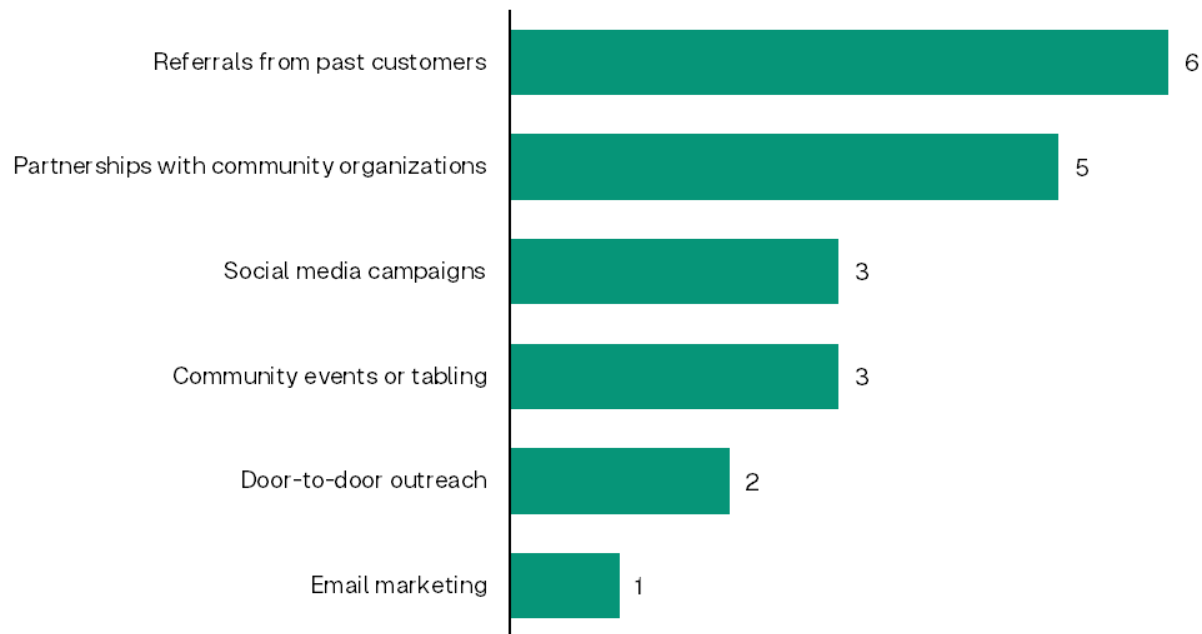
AVs play a central role in participant recruitment for ILSFA, with participants referencing AVs as one of the top two sources of awareness across subprograms. Six of eight AVs were directly involved in participant acquisition. According to these AVs, most participants learn about ILSFA from vendors, followed by word of mouth. (Figure 23)

Figure 23. AV-Reported Participant Awareness Sources (n=8)



AVs described relying heavily on relationship-based and community-centered strategies to promote ILSFA-qualified projects, including referrals from past customers (n=6) and partnerships with community organizations (n=5). (Figure 24)

Figure 24. Outreach Strategies Used by AVs (n=8)



AVs had mixed experiences with explaining the ILSFA program and its requirements to participants, with some saying it was “somewhat difficult,” while others said it was “somewhat easy” or “very easy.”

When asked what would make the program easier to explain, AVs emphasized the importance of building participant trust in the program, pointing to participant referrals (n=2) or concrete case studies (n=2) as helpful tools. Other suggestions focused on providing clear evidence that the program delivers real savings and tangible benefits, as well as greater visibility through trusted messengers, such as local government officials, and not only community organizations.

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*Clear evidence that it's not "too good to be true!" I mean, 65% savings, no or low capital costs!!! – Approved Vendor*

*Word of Mouth directly from government officials, alderman, mayors etc. – Approved Vendor*

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Most AVs reported high rates of follow-through from customers who expressed initial interest in ILSFA, with more than half of AVs (n=4) indicating that it was “somewhat uncommon” or “very uncommon” for customers to fail to complete the application process. AVs who did report drop-outs indicated that participants stopped communicating (n=2), did not trust the program’s legitimacy (n=2), were reluctant to share personal information (n=1), had difficulty providing income-verification documentation (n=1), or did not meet income eligibility requirements (n=1).

AVs described concerns about trust not only as a barrier to participant follow-through, but as a foundational requirement for the program’s long-term success. As one AV explained:

*We have identified a significant need for the Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) program. For ILSFA to succeed and be used as a model for similar programs nationwide, participants must be able to trust that administrators and vendors will protect their homes from damage. Additionally, we must ensure that any work required to make a home "solar ready" will not create future liabilities for the homeowner. If we can firmly establish this confidence, ILSFA can serve as an effective model to spread across the country. – Approved Vendor*

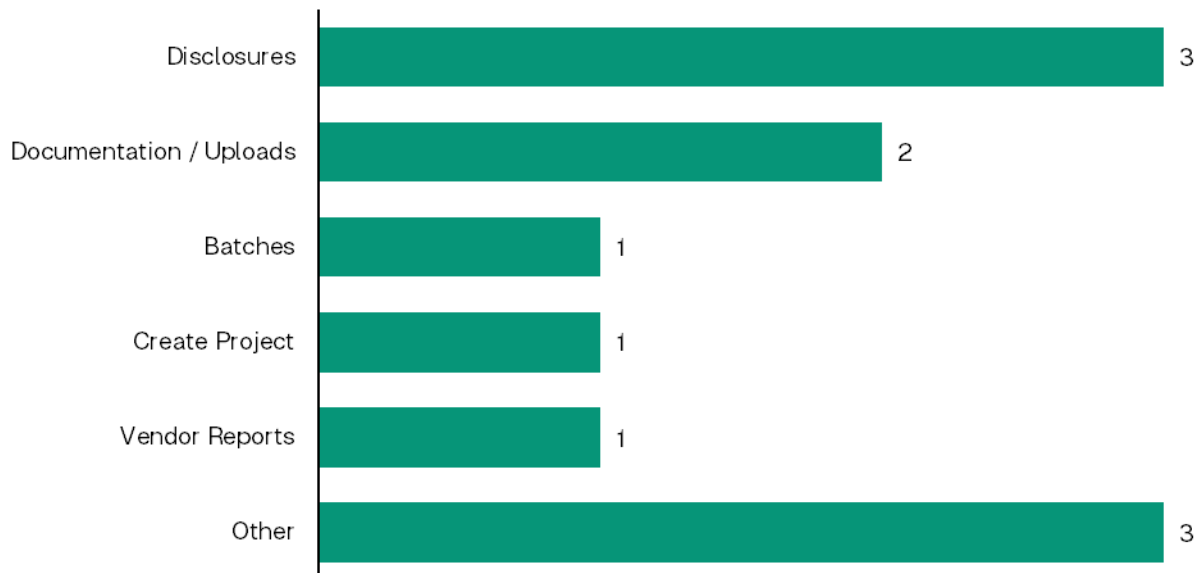
## AV Portal

Overall usability of the AV Portal received mixed feedback, with half of the respondents (n=4) describing it as “somewhat” or “very difficult” to use, one reporting it as “neither easy nor difficult”, and three describing it as “somewhat easy” or “very easy.” AVs who found the portal difficult to use included both newer and more experienced AVs, suggesting difficulties with the portal do not solely stem from lack of familiarity.

Among the four AVs who reported difficulties, more than half said the portal was non-intuitive (n=3) or difficult to navigate (n=3). Two AVs also reported issues with the portal not saving forms. A few AVs said the portal was overly complicated (n=1), redundant (n=1), or prone to crashing (n=1).

As shown in Figure 25, the issues AVs most commonly had with the portal included disclosure forms (n=3) and documentation or upload issues (n=2), including a lack of designated sections for additional documents and documents not saving properly.

Figure 25. AV Portal Sections That Caused Difficulty (n=5)

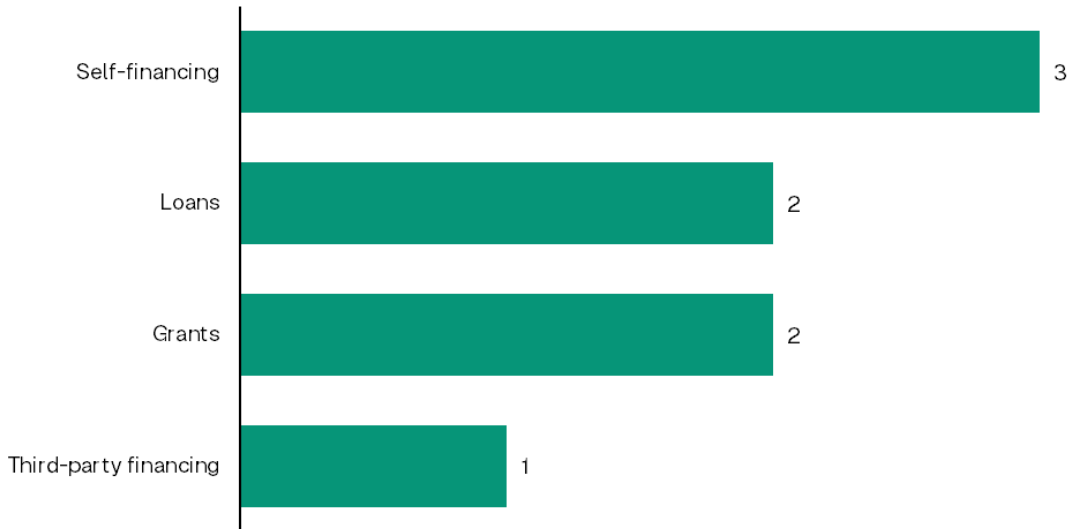


AVs generally find the portal’s training and documentation to be helpful. Six out of eight AVs said the training and documentation for the portal are “moderately,” “very,” or “extremely useful.”

### Project Financing

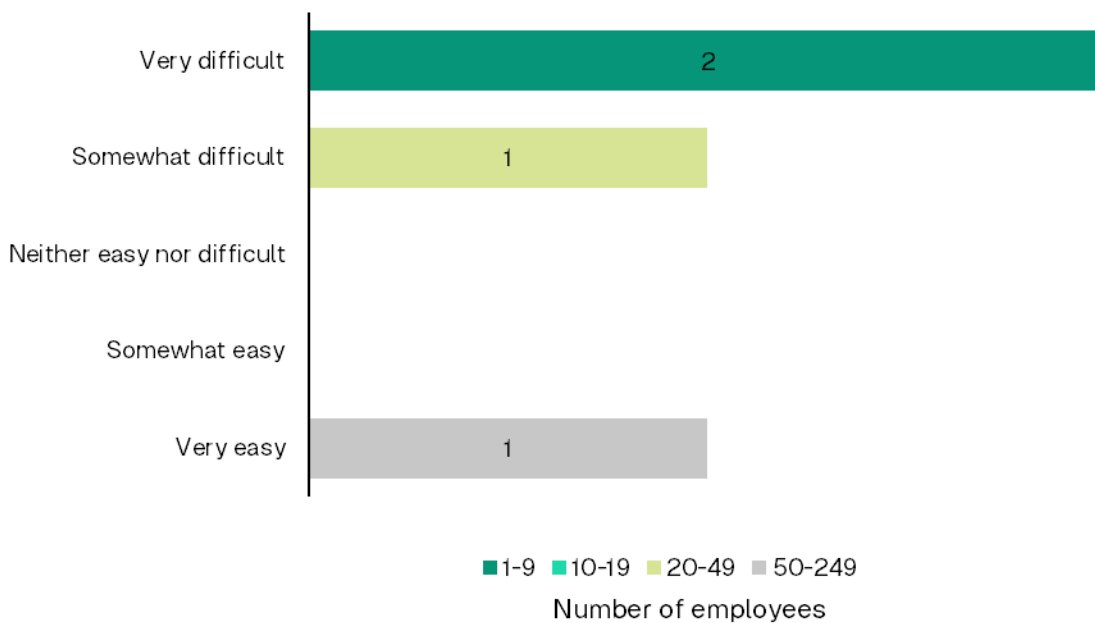
Four AVs were directly involved in financing ILSFA projects. AVs most commonly relied on self-financing (n=3), followed by loans and grants (n=2 each) (Figure 26).

Figure 26. AVs Financing Sources (n=4)



Most respondents (n=3) said it was either “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” to finance projects during the construction phase, with only a larger AV describing this process as “very easy” (Figure 27). While the number of AVs responding to the survey was small, these results suggest that firm size may influence a vendor’s ability to manage project financing, particularly during construction.

Figure 27. Experience Financing Projects, Colored by Approved Vendor Firm Size (n=4)



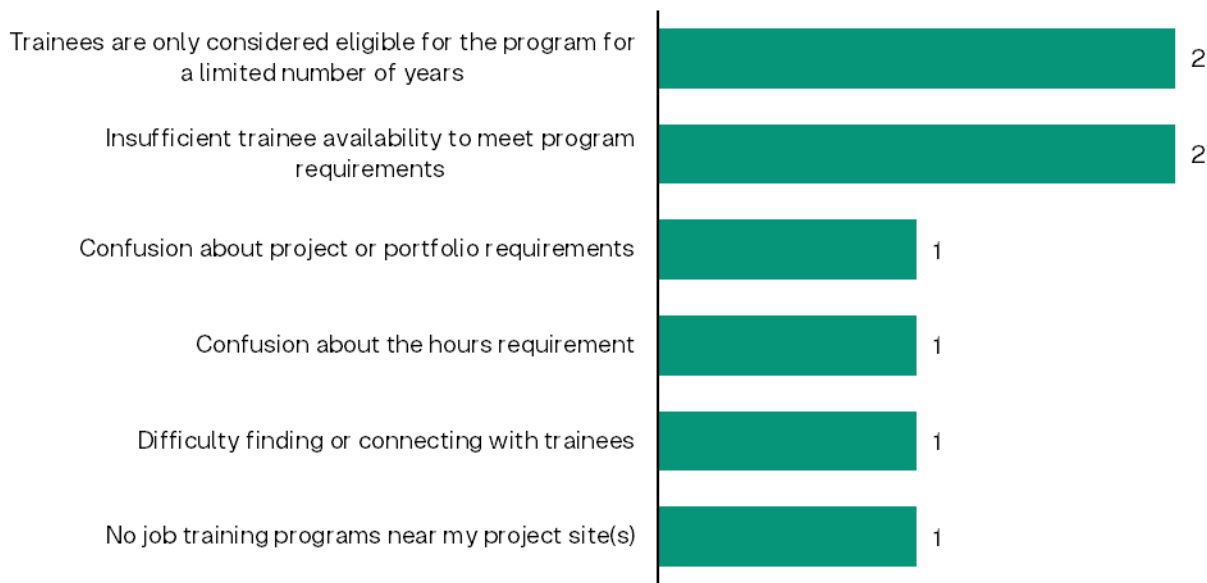
The AVs who struggled to finance ILSFA projects said they faced challenges with limited financing options (n=3), high up-front costs (n=1), and delayed incentive payouts (n=1). When asked for suggestions on how to improve the financing process, one AV mentioned the need for quicker development and disbursement of grant proceeds.

### Job Training Requirements

ILSFA projects are subject to two types of ILSFA job training requirements: **portfolio-level requirements**, which require that installations across an AV’s entire portfolio include a minimum percentage of work hours performed by eligible trainees each year, and **project-level requirements**, which require that at least 33% of an AV’s installations annually in each ILSFA subprogram include at least one eligible trainee.

Most AVs indicated that they were familiar with ILSFA job training requirements (n=7), and more than half (n=4) reported no challenges in meeting them. Those who did experience challenges most commonly reported difficulties with the limited number of years during which trainees are considered eligible for the program (n=2) and insufficient trainee availability to meet program requirements (n=2) (Figure 28). All AVs who reported specific difficulties reported challenges with project-level requirements. One AV said they also faced challenges with portfolio-level requirements but did not provide specifics.

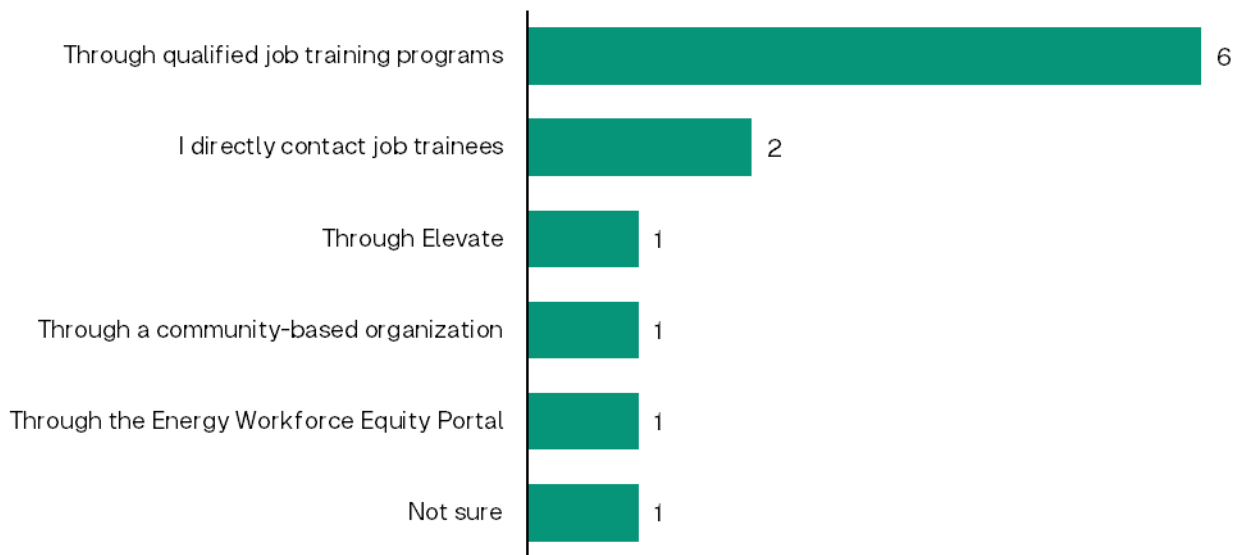
Figure 28. Difficulties with Job Training Requirements (n=2)



Two AVs had applied for a job training requirement waiver for at least one ILSFA project. Both described the waiver application process as “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult.”

When asked how they typically connect with trainees, almost all AVs reported relying on qualified training programs (n=6) (Figure 29).

Figure 29. How AVs Connect with Job Trainees (n=7)



Three AVs provided feedback on how ILSFA could better connect AVs and job trainees. They suggested strengthening direct matching, developing a centralized job board, and facilitating more direct coordination with qualified training programs. AVs also said it would be valuable to have more regularly updated information on training programs, such as start and end dates, number of trainees enrolled, and information on trainees' progress (e.g., NABCEP test outcomes), so they could better align project needs with trainee availability.

Compared to the prior evaluation cycle, AVs said job trainees were better prepared for their positions, with three of seven reporting candidates were “very” or “extremely prepared,” while two described them as “somewhat” or “moderately prepared.” Previously, most AVs described candidates as “somewhat” or “moderately prepared.”

When asked to elaborate on why they felt trainees were not fully prepared, AVs pointed to workforce readiness rather than technical training gaps. One AV noted that, for many trainees, this is their first job, which can affect confidence in the field. Another highlighted variability across training programs, explaining that some programs prepare trainees for the workforce more effectively than others.

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*It is typically their first job in the solar industry, so they lack confidence in the field. We typically conduct an additional 2 weeks of on-the-job training with our new hires before they feel confident. — Approved Vendor*

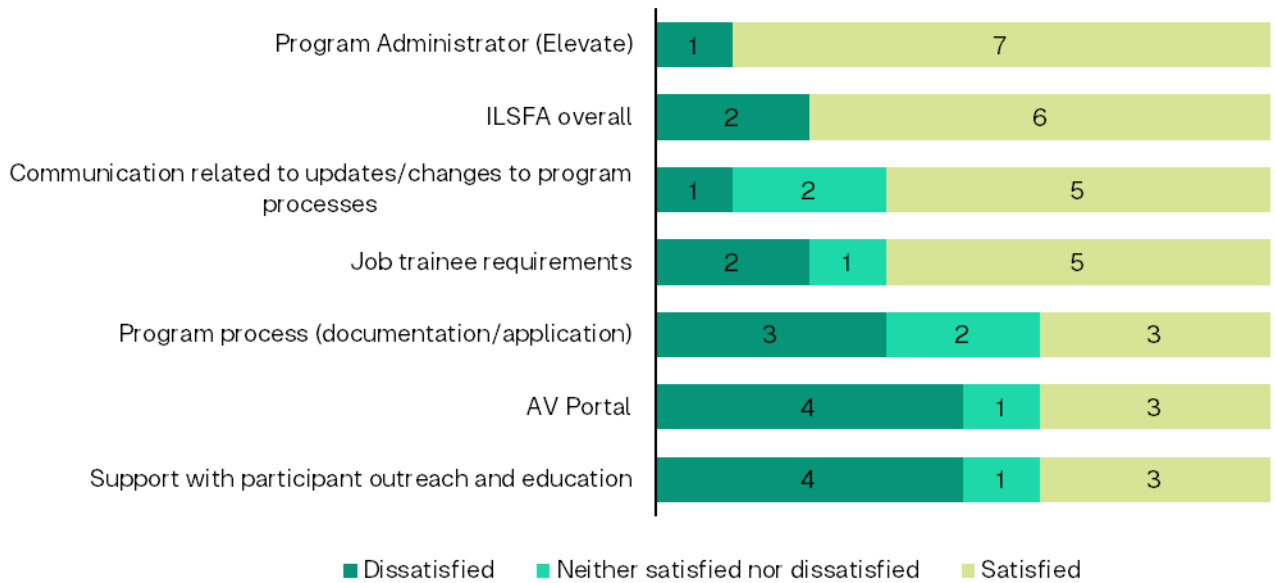
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To address these gaps, both AVs said that they assign responsibilities aligned with each trainee's skill level, and one AV also noted that they provide additional in-house training to help trainees build confidence and readiness over time.

### Program Satisfaction

As illustrated in Figure 30, AV satisfaction varied across program components, but the overall picture in PY24-25 reflects a meaningful improvement from the prior program year.

Figure 30. AV Satisfaction by Program Component (n=8)



AVs reported the highest satisfaction with Elevate as the Program Administrator (88% satisfied) and with ILSFA overall (75% satisfied). AVs also reported relatively strong satisfaction with job training requirements and communication related to program updates and changes, with nearly two-thirds indicating they were satisfied in each area.

These findings mark a shift from the prior evaluation cycle, when feedback on Elevate was more mixed due to perceived gaps in staff preparation, program knowledge, and communication. Satisfaction with job training requirements also improved substantially compared to the previous survey when this component had been identified as the area with the highest dissatisfaction (67% dissatisfied). AVs who continued to report dissatisfaction with job training requirements in PY24-25 noted technical issues within the job training requirements section of the portal and challenges communicating job training requirements with Elevate.

Consistent with prior years, satisfaction remained lower for the AV portal, program processes, and support with participant outreach and education. When asked to provide further information on why they were dissatisfied with these areas, AVs noted administrative burden and redundancy, underscoring that multiple submission steps are repetitive and increase the time required to complete program requirements.

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*There are several steps that are redundant, leading to more time on submittals. Without experience/education to the AVs, I doubt other developers will gain more confidence in the program. – Approved Vendor*

---

AVs also noted other areas of dissatisfaction, including:

- financing and access to capital
- inconsistencies in program support across sub-programs, particularly within NP/PF
- technical issues within certain sections of the portal, particularly the job trainee and Home Repair pilot sections.

---

*There is an issue on the portal during the Part II Submission when Job trainee section does not reflect on the program administrator end and it delays the review. We mentioned about it multiple times and hope this will be fixed in the future. – Approved Vendor*

*We had some technical issues with the Job trainee and HRP sections. We hope these will be improved in the future – Approved Vendor*

---

Together, these concerns help contextualize why satisfaction with the AV Portal and support with participant outreach and education remained lower in PY24-25, despite overall improvements in program perceptions.

## Participant Research

The evaluation team conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with participants in three of the four subprograms (Table 46). The evaluation team was not able to contact the single Residential Solar (Large) participant.

Table 46: Participant Research Summary

Subprogram	Data Collection Approach	Population Size	Total Respondents
Residential Solar (Small)	Survey	564	109
Community Solar <sup>a</sup>	Survey	95	29
Residential Solar (Large)	Interview	1	0
Non-Profit/Public Facilities	Interview	72	8
Total		732	146

<sup>a</sup> The evaluation team surveyed subscribers who signed up between June 1, 2024 and May 31, 2025. These subscribers all came from existing energized projects – the newly energized projects in PY24-25 had enrolled subscribers during the previous evaluation cycle.

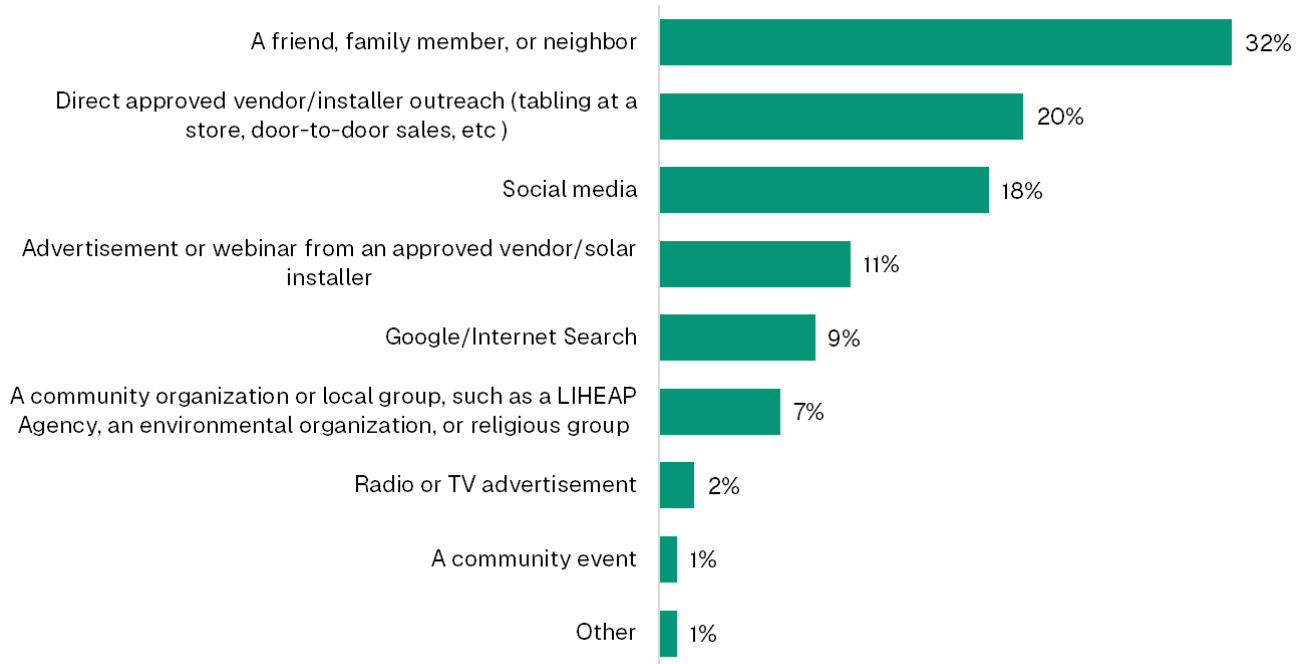
### Residential Solar (Small) Survey

The evaluation team surveyed 109 Residential Solar (Small) participants. According to the tracking data, most of respondents (81%) had an energized project and 19% were still under construction or had not yet started construction, meaning they had not begun receiving solar bill credits yet.

### ILSFA Awareness and Motivations

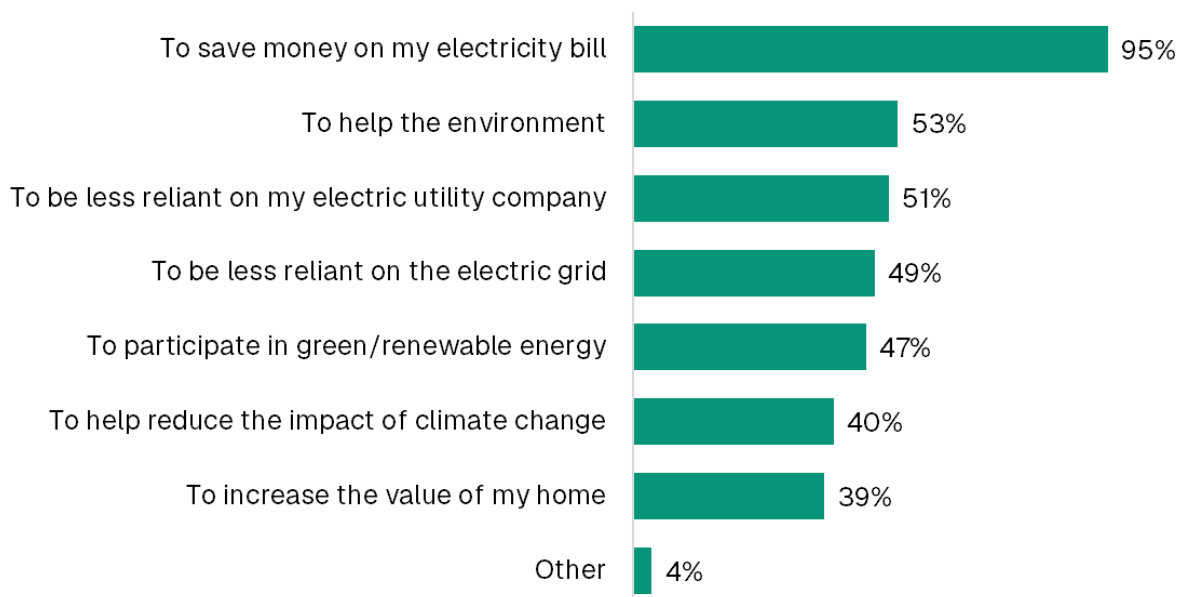
As in the prior evaluation, most participants learned about ILSFA through word-of-mouth (32%), direct vendor or installer outreach (20%), or social media (18%) (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Sources of Awareness (n=104)



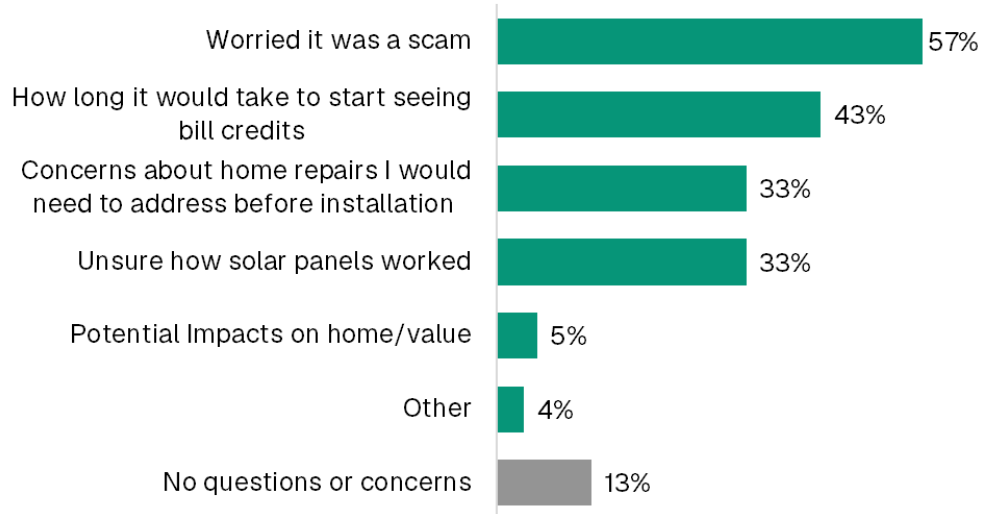
Most respondents were motivated to pursue solar panel installation to save money on their electricity bill (95%). Respondents also wanted to help the environment (53%) and be less reliant on their electric utility company (51%) and the grid (49%) (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Motivations to Enroll in Residential Solar (Small) (n=109)



The most common concern or question that had about the program was that it was a scam (57%), followed by how long it would take to see bill credits (43%). A handful of customers (13%) reported they did not have questions or concerns (Figure 33).

Figure 33: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Initial Questions or Concerns (n=105)



A few respondents provided more detail on their concerns:

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*Costs seemed 'too good to be true.' — ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*Roof damage and holes and issues in later years due to installation. — ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

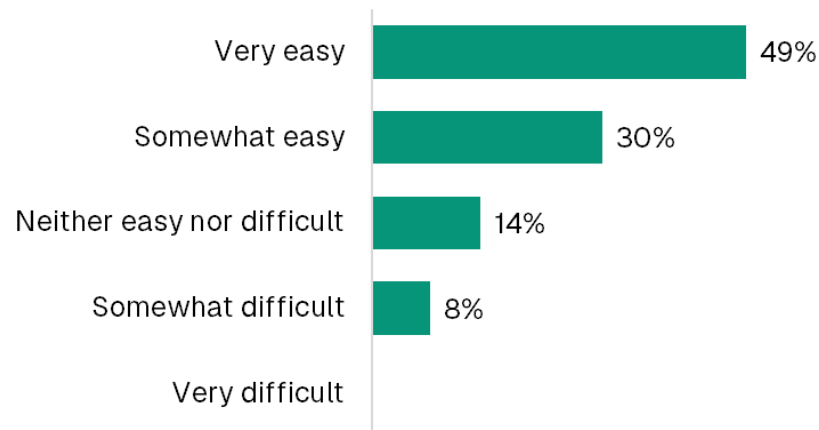
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Participants (n=91) most often looked to their solar company/installer (72%) or the ILSFA website (53%) for answers to questions or for more information about the program. Others called ILSFA (28%) or talked with their friends or family who also had solar panels (27%). Most participants said they were able to find answers to their questions (85%). Those who were not able to find answers (n=4) wanted to know how solar panels worked (n=2), how long it would take to receive bill credits (n=3), had concerns about home repairs needed to be addressed before installation (n=1), or had a concern about potential damage to their home (n=1).

### Application Process

More than three-quarters (79%) of survey respondents reported the application process was either very or somewhat easy (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Application Difficulty (n=107)



Some (21%) highlighted how helpful it was to have someone to guide them through the process, whether that was their AV or someone at ILSFA. Participants shared the following general feedback on the application process:

---

*The agent was very knowledgeable and was able to streamline through the process. — ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*Just was a rather painless process to apply and get approved. — ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*Once I submitted everything it took a while, but the submission was easy. — ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

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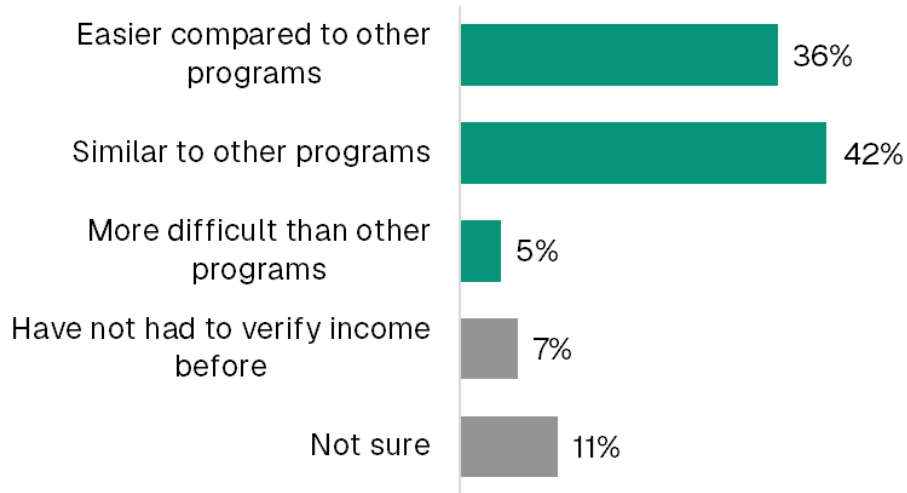
Those who experienced challenges with the application process reported the following difficulties (n=6):

- There was a lot of paperwork (n=2)
- Their AV “bailed” (n=1)
- It took a long time (n=1)
- They were uncomfortable with the process (n=1)

### **Income Verification**

Overall, 75% of survey respondents felt the income verification process was “very easy” or “somewhat easy” to complete. When asked how the ILSFA’s income verification process compared to other programs, about half of respondents (42%) said that ILSFA’s income verification process was “similar to other programs” while 36% said that it was “easier”.

Figure 35: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Ease of Income Verification (n=108)



Participants described the income verification process as follows:

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*I just had to gather a lot of documents - it took a while. —ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

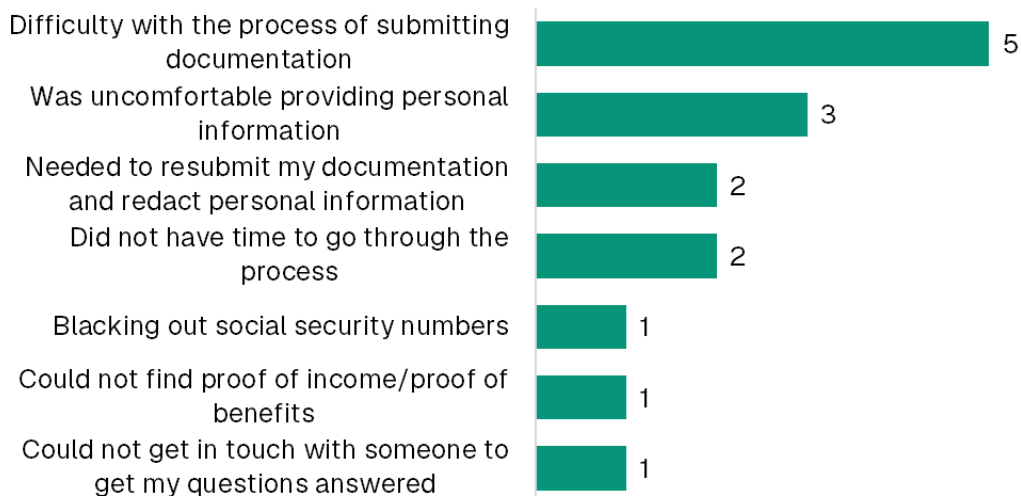
*It was like everything else I have done with income verification, so I don't really have an opinion on it so much. —ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*The response and approval was more of thing that reminded me of other programs. —ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

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A small number of respondents (12%) encountered challenges with the income verification process. These are summarized in Figure 36.

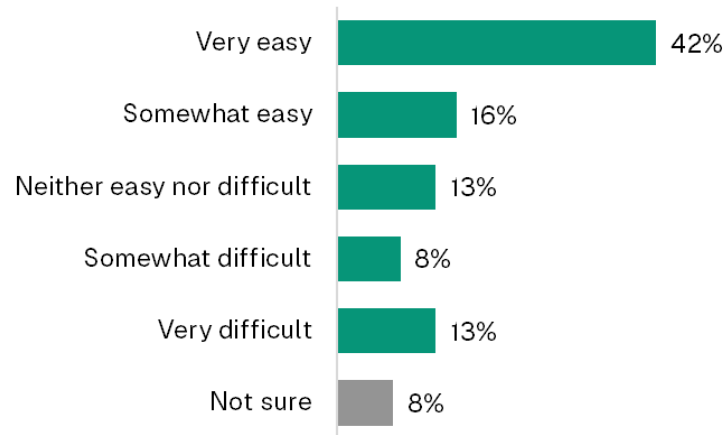
Figure 36: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Difficulties with Income Verification (n= 13)



## Finding an AV and Installation

Finding an AV was a challenge for some participants with 21% saying it was “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” (Figure 37). Three survey respondents were still looking for an AV to install their solar panels when they took the survey.

Figure 37: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Experience Finding an AV (n= 107)



Several respondents had trouble with the “Find a Solar Company” tool on ILSFA’s website, saying it was not up to date (n=9) and that AVs were not accepting residential solar projects or new customers (n=3). Slightly less than half of respondents (41%) said they would have wanted help with the process of finding an AV, with some of the most common suggestions listed below:

- ILSFA providing reviews or recommendations for AVs (n=4)
- A representative that helped them through the process (n=4)
- Vendors organized or searchable by geographic area or zip code (n=3)

A few respondents provided more detail on the challenges they faced finding an AV:

---

*Finding an approved vendor was impossible. I gave up for a few months and tried again and luckily found one that at least answered. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*Initially being more involved with people finding approved Vendors. I spent 2 years then had to reapply to ILSFA because my application had expired before I could find a vendor to even give me a call back. Once the Representative from ILSFA got directly involved I had a wonderful, approved vendor within 2 days! – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

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## Installation Experience

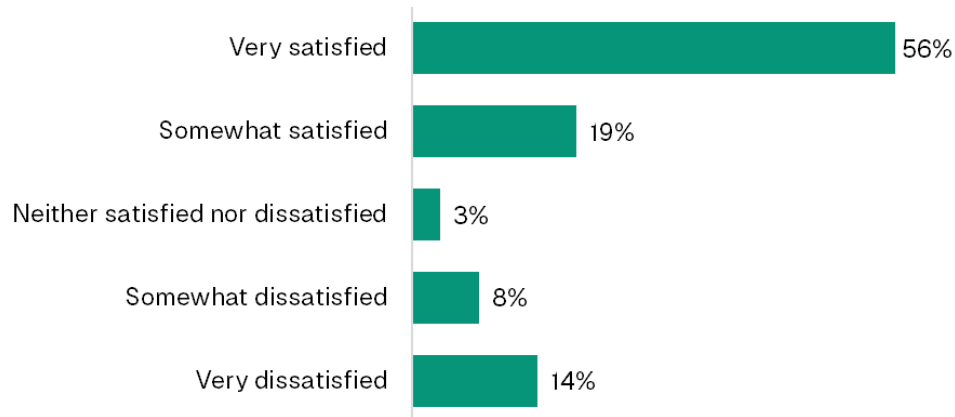
We asked survey respondents who had completed installation (83%) or who were in the middle of construction (2%) about their experience with solar panel installation.

More than a third (39%) of respondents needed to make upgrades or repairs prior to beginning construction. These included roof repairs or replacements (53%), electrical panel upgrades (33%), other electrical repairs (10%), and cutting trees down (7%).

A few of those needing repairs sought financial assistance for upgrades (36%), with two thirds (n=10) of those seeking assistance ultimately receiving it. Respondents said they received financial assistance from “the program,” “solar grant,” and “the installer helped with the grant.”

While 75% of survey respondents reported that they were very or somewhat satisfied with the work of their AV/installation contractor, 22% expressed dissatisfaction (Figure 38).

Figure 38: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Satisfaction with Work of their Solar Installer/AV (n=90)



Respondents who experienced installation challenges most often reported the following issues:

- Issues with delays and/or scheduling (n=6)
- Issues with their AV, particularly around communication (n=6)
- Vendor caused damage to their property or home (n=4)
- Other issues around electric co-op, tree removal, and position of solar panels (n=1 each)

A few respondents described some of the challenges they faced during the installation process:

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*There was a big delay that cost me to lose the net metering. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*It was difficult to get the contractor to answer my questions and address my concerns once the process had started. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*Drilled unnecessary holes in my soffit, cracked wall installing largely CB Panel installed light switch on ceiling and then when repairing they did a scrappy job. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

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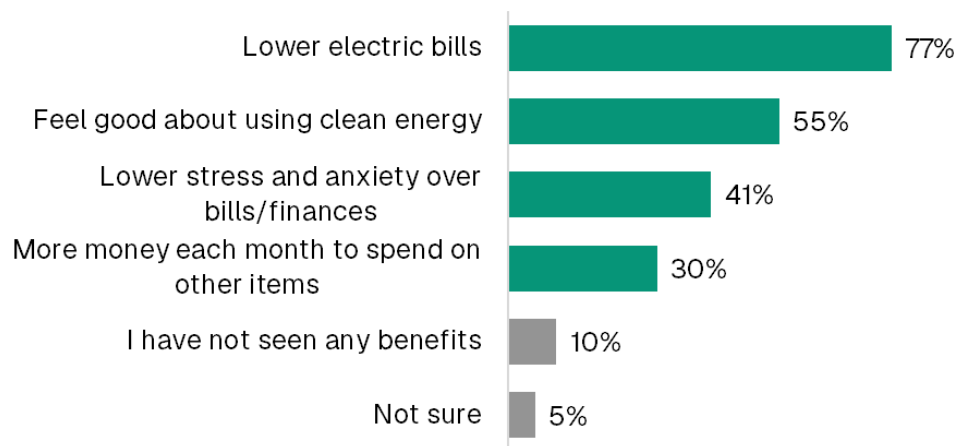
While most installations took a week or less to complete (64%), some reported that their installation took more than a month (19%). Additionally, 20% of respondents (n=86) said they faced challenges setting their panels up with their utility, including delays (n=5) issues with billing (n=4), inspection issues (n=2), and other various installation and communication issues (n=5).

## Post-Installation and Bill Savings

Nineteen percent of respondents who had completed solar installations (n=97)<sup>32</sup> said they had encountered issues since their panels were installed. These respondents most commonly reported having an initial electrical issues that had since been resolved (n=8), although a few reported ongoing issues (n=3). A few others shared that their solar production is less than they thought it would be, although they noted this was impacted by snow or other weather events (n=3).

Figure 39 summarized the benefits that respondents say they are receiving from solar. Most respondents reported bill savings (77%) as a key benefit. Respondents highlighted additional benefits arising from bill savings, including lower stress and anxiety over their finances (41%), and having more money each month to spend on other items (30%).

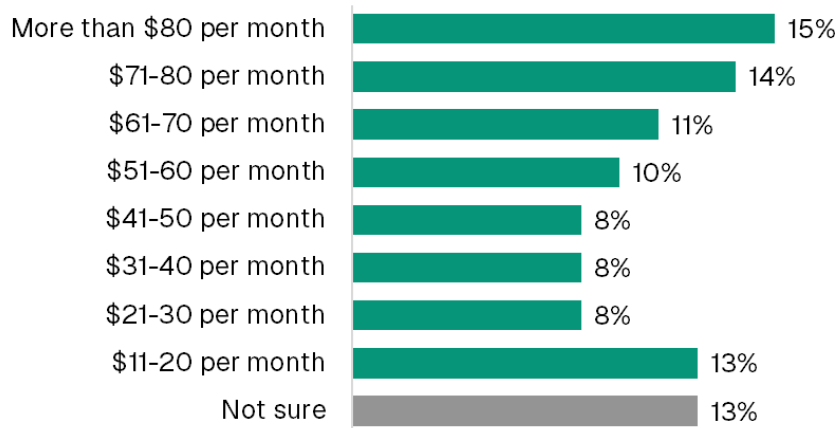
Figure 39: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Benefits to Having Solar Panels (n=93)



Respondents who had lower electric bills reported a range of savings, as summarized in Figure 40.

<sup>32</sup> Seven respondents who were indicated as having “Energized” projects in the tracking data reported a different project status or did not report their project status. These respondents still received questions about their bill credits and are included in the responses here.

Figure 40: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Bill Savings per Month (n=72)



Among with lower electric bills (n=72), 41% said that the savings are what they expected and 25% said the savings are more than they expected. Though 28% said the savings were less than expected, this did not seem to impact their overall satisfaction with the program.

Some respondents provided more detail about what they were doing with the money they saved on their electric bills (n=38). Respondents were most often putting the money into savings (n=10) or paying other bills (n=9). Others shared they were using their bill savings to pay for day-to-day living expenses like groceries (n=7) and paying off debt (n=7). We share some direct quotes from respondents illustrating how they used their bill savings below.

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*I'm on a fixed income being disabled so it helps with everything in my monthly expenses. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

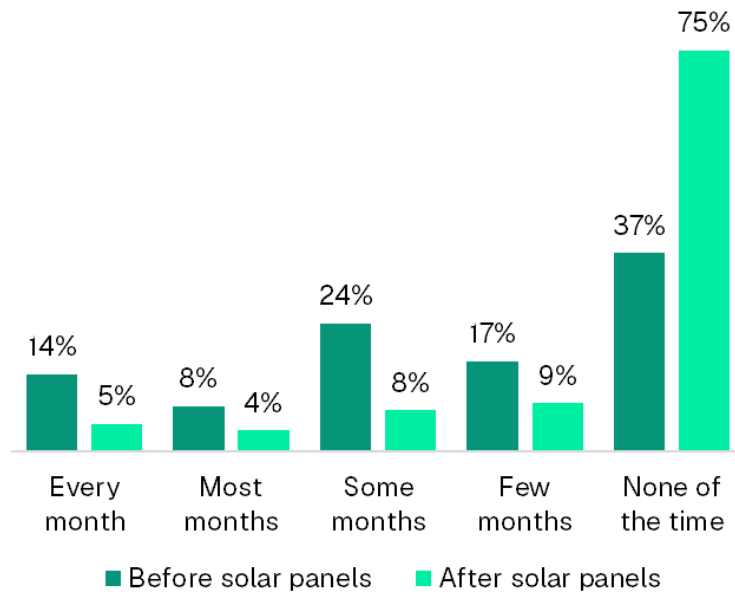
*Saving for my kids' healthcare and education. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*Easier to afford groceries. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

---

Respondents reported that their ability to afford their bills increased after installing solar panels, with the number of respondents saying they never have issues paying their bills increasing from 37% before solar to 75% after solar (Figure 41).

Figure 41: How Often Residential Solar (Small) Participants Face Challenges Paying Bills (n=79)



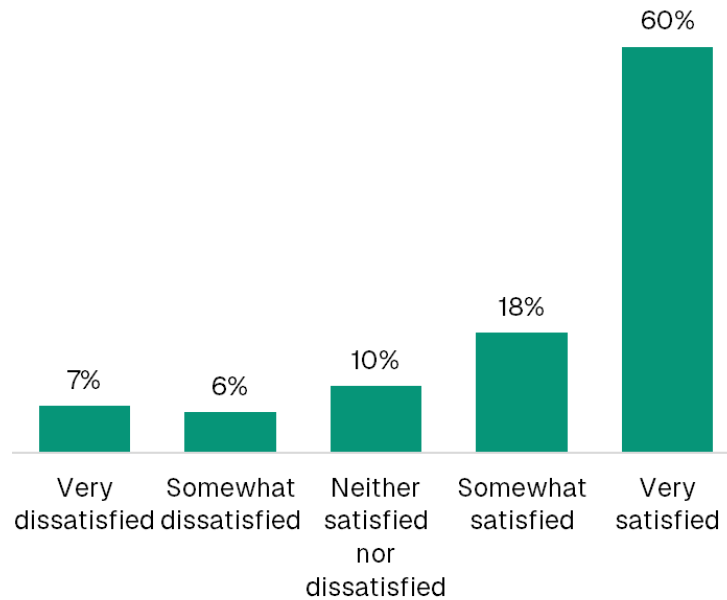
### Bill literacy

About half of survey respondents (57%) felt that it was very or somewhat easy to understand how their solar panels were affecting their electricity bill each month. Of those that said it was very or somewhat difficult to understand (n=20), 12 gave suggestions for making it easier. Suggestions include simplifying bills in general, addressing higher electric rates, making it clearer how much electricity is being consumed and sent to the grid, and including a flow chart to make their bill and solar credits easier to understand.

### Program Satisfaction

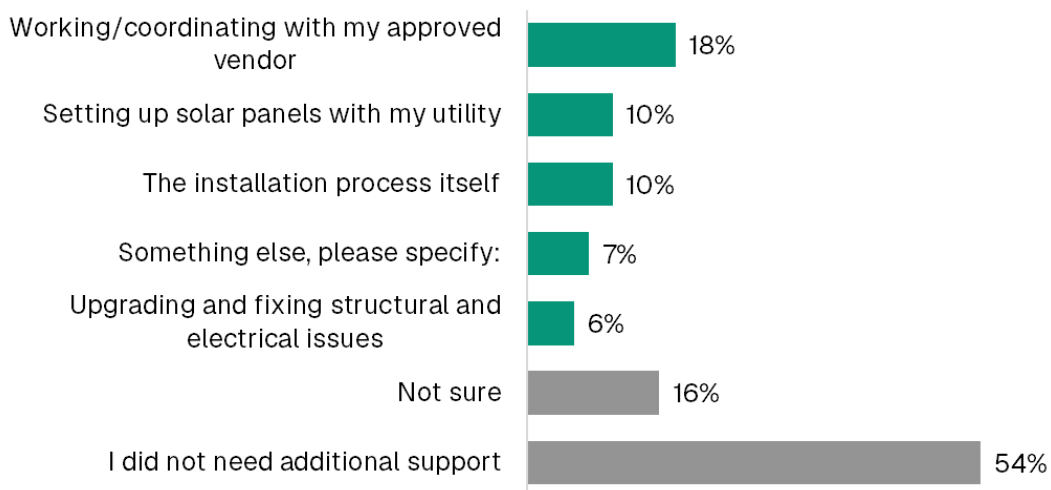
Overall, over three quarters of respondents (78%) reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram (Figure 42). There were 13 respondents that were very or somewhat dissatisfied with the program overall. These respondents tended to be more dissatisfied with the work of their AV but did not report other consistent reasons for their dissatisfaction.

Figure 42: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Overall Program Satisfaction (n=102)



Most respondents indicated they did not need additional support with various aspects of the program (54%). Among those who did want more support, respondents most often wanted help working/coordinating with their approved vendor (Figure 43).

Figure 43: Residential Solar (Small) Participant Requests for Additional Support (n=108)



About one third of respondents (n=37) gave suggestions to improve the program. These respondents requested more support with finding and coordinating with their AV (32%), better support throughout the participation process (19%), shorter project timelines (19%), and options battery storage (16%). A few respondents provide more detail on these suggestions:

---

*I think it would be better to have a liaison within ILSFA that the customers work with. Assist customers with vendor selection based on location, etc. versus just picking one at random and hoping for the best. I feel if someone with ILSFA worked as a project manager, then they could have argued for the customer. I was supposed to get a system that covered over 100% of my then usage from the first vendor. The second vendor wouldn't do that as they would lose money on the deal. I was so down and defeated after over 26 months of HELL. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*A better timeline from approval, ordering, to install. My process took a year. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

*It would be nice to add a solar battery for back-up during electrical outages. – ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) Participant*

---

Despite many respondents wanting more support with the participation process, most (63%) had not reached out to Elevate, their AV, or the IPA to request support. Those that did reach out for support (n=35) most often reached out via phone (89%) to their approved vendor/contractor (83%). However, about a third of these respondents said they somewhat or completely did not get answers to the questions they had. This highlights the potential for more proactive outreach from the ILSFA program team to ensure that customers are getting their questions answered and have support with any issues that arise.

### **Community Solar Survey**

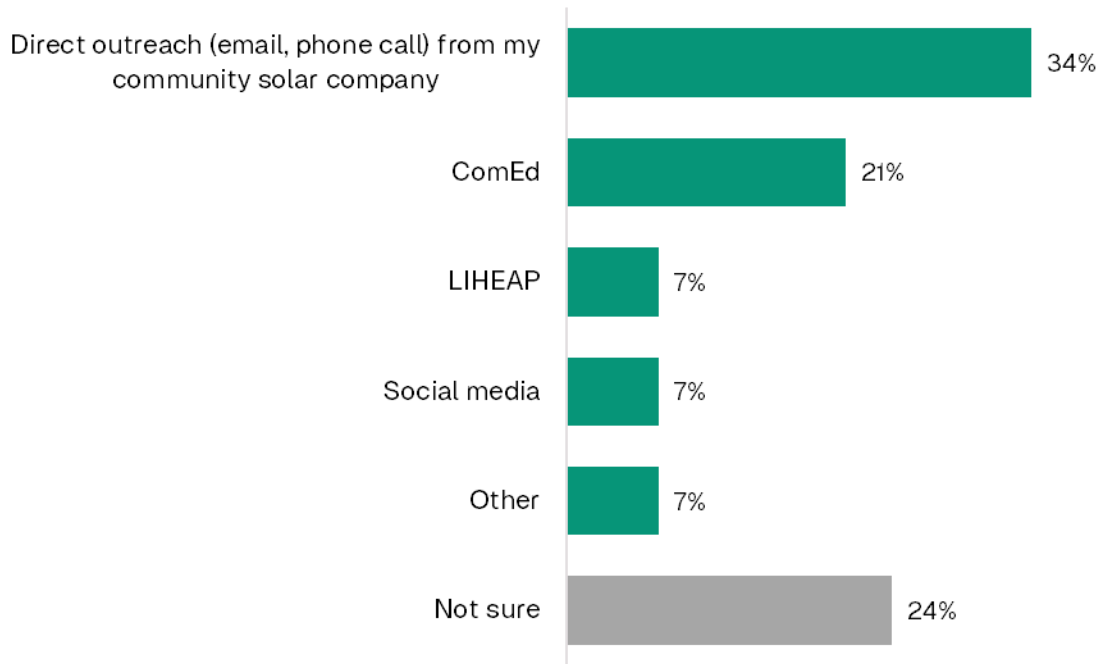
The evaluation team surveyed 29 new Community Solar subscribers who subscribed during PY24-25. Most respondents said they had been enrolled in Community Solar for more than six months (28%) or more than a year (38%).

A large portion (69%) of respondents live in single-family homes, and nearly two-thirds (66%) own their home: characteristics typically associated with participants in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram. Despite this apparent eligibility, these homes may face challenges with site suitability, such as shading, the need for home or roof repairs, or the angle or orientation of their roof, underscoring Community Solar's role as an accessible alternative for homeowners who cannot or do not want to participate in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram.

### **ILSFA Awareness and Enrollment Drivers**

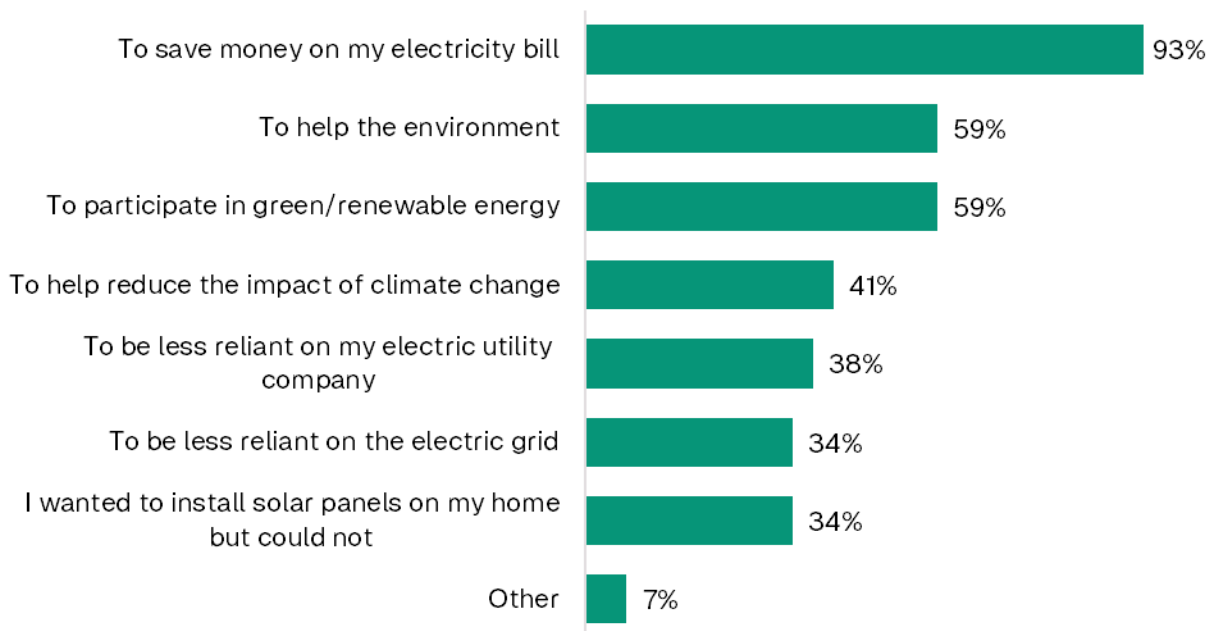
Participants most often heard about the Community Solar subprogram through phone calls and emails from their subscription company (34%), with ComEd being reported as the second most common source of awareness (21%). Notably, over one-fifth (24%) of subscribers were unsure how they first heard about the program or did not answer the question, possibly because many respondents had enrolled a long time ago. Figure 44 shows subscribers' sources of awareness.

Figure 44. Community Solar Subscriber Sources of Awareness (n=29)



Similar to participants in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, nearly all respondents (93%) reported enrolling in Community Solar to save money on their electric bills, with environmental concerns being a secondary source of motivation (Figure 45). One-third of respondents (34%) indicated they had wanted to install solar panels on their home but were unable to do so, underscoring that Community Solar is serving as an accessible alternative for households that cannot pursue on-site solar.

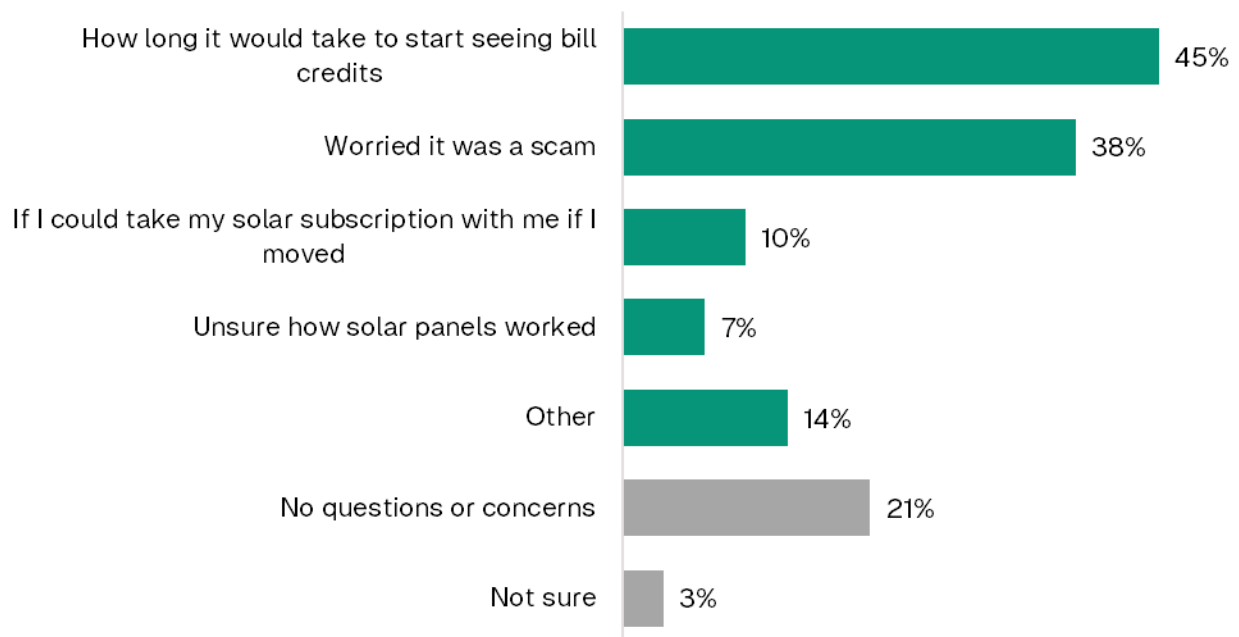
Figure 45. Motivations to Enroll in Community Solar (n=29)



## Questions, Concerns, and Resources

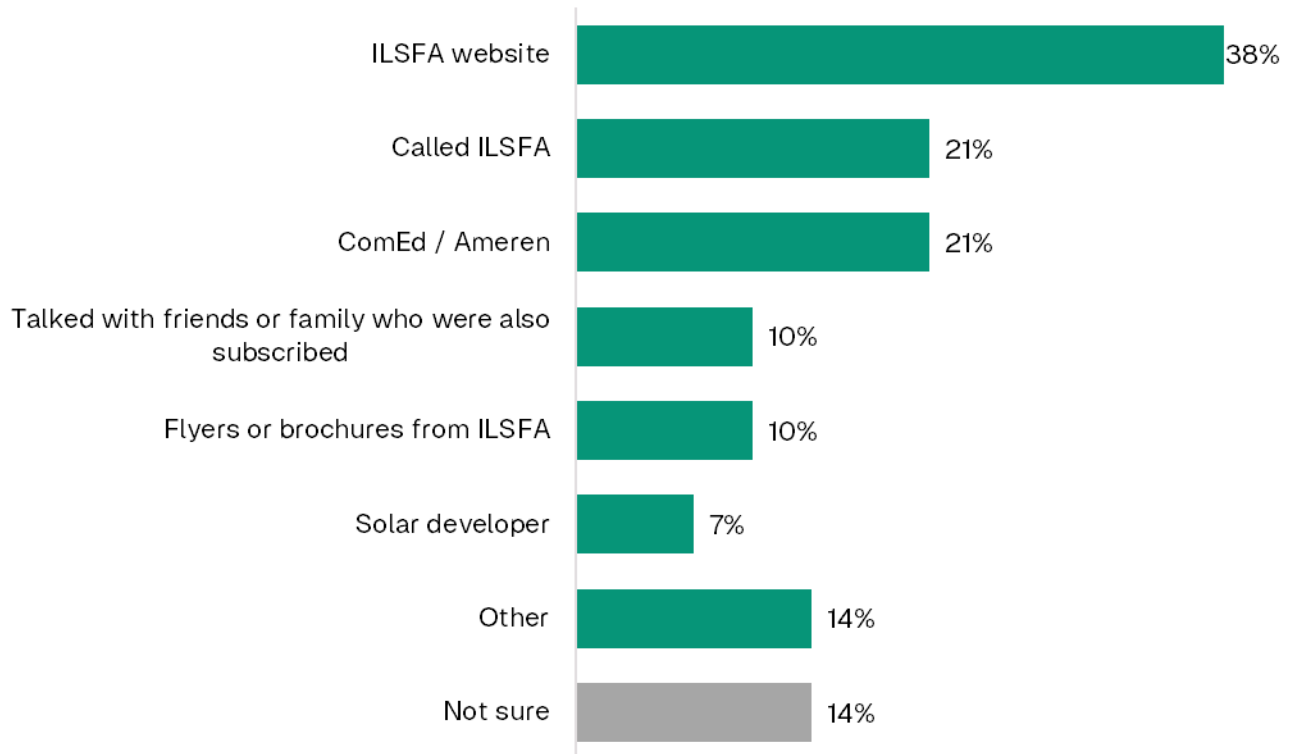
Community Solar participants most often had questions about how long it would take to begin receiving bill credits (45%). Compared to the prior evaluation cycle, fewer Community Solar participants reported being concerned that the program was a scam, although this remains a common concern (Figure 46). The program being a scam was also a top concern for Residential Solar (Small) participants, indicating trust-building is still an important component of ILSFA's education and outreach strategy. Nearly one-quarter of Community Solar respondents (24%) did not have any questions or concerns prior to participating in the program or could not remember.

Figure 46. Community Solar Initial Questions or Concerns (n=29)



Among those with questions or concerns (n=22), half (50%) reported finding answers immediately, and an additional 36% found answers eventually. No respondents indicated that they were unable to find information, though 14% said they were only able to get partial answers to their questions. Community Solar subscribers most often sought answers to their questions from the ILSFA website (38%), by calling ILSFA directly (21%), or by contacting ComEd or Ameren (21%). (Figure 47).

Figure 47. Sources of Information Subscribers Used to Answer Questions (n=29)



## Enrollment Process

### Finding a Subscription Company

Nearly half of the respondents (45%) were unsure how they found their Community Solar subscription company or did not answer the question, indicating this part of the process was not a particularly notable or burdensome step, or that the subscriber simply did not remember this part of the process due to enrolling a long time ago.

Respondents who did recall how they found their Community Solar subscription company most often used the ILSFA website and associated support services, including phone assistance (28%), followed by ComEd (17%). These findings reinforce ILSFA's and utilities' central role not only in raising awareness but also in guiding subscribers through concrete enrollment steps.

### Income Verification

Many Community Solar subscribers verified their income through existing pathways rather than submitting entirely new documentation. Nearly half (45%) reported using another income-eligible program, most commonly LIHEAP, while 28% verified income by submitting documentation such as pay stubs or tax returns. Nearly one-quarter of respondents (24%) were unsure how they completed their income verification.

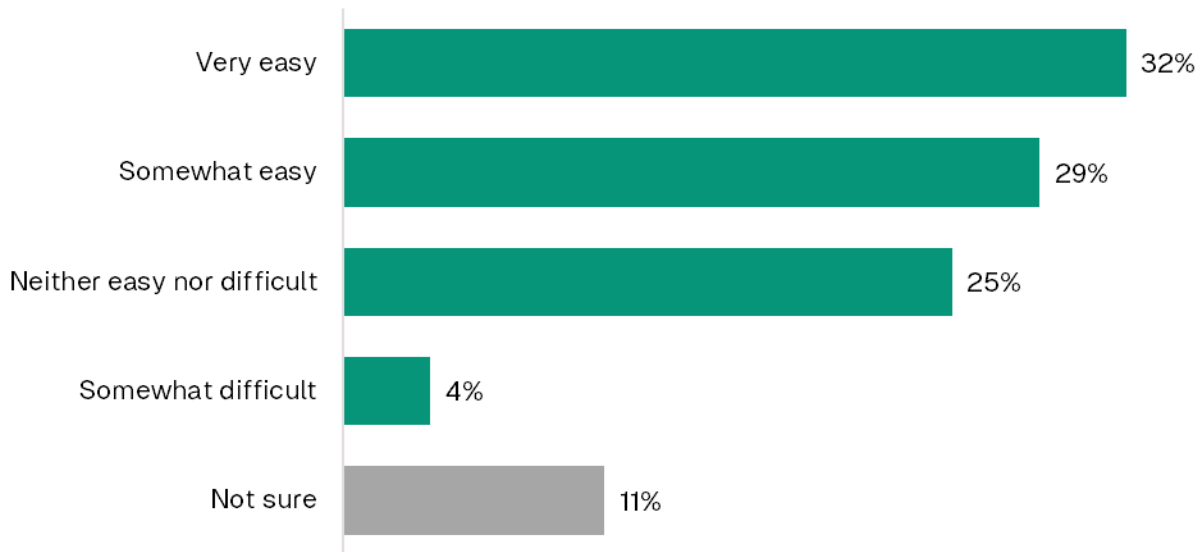
Overall, 61% of respondents reported the income verification process was somewhat or very easy (Figure 48). Only one respondent rated the process as somewhat difficult and said ILSFA’s income verification process was harder than for other income-eligible programs. This respondent described the process as follows:

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*I honestly remember it feeling like a lot, finding the info, scanning it, etc. I remember thinking how many seniors can’t do this. I also worry about info security. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

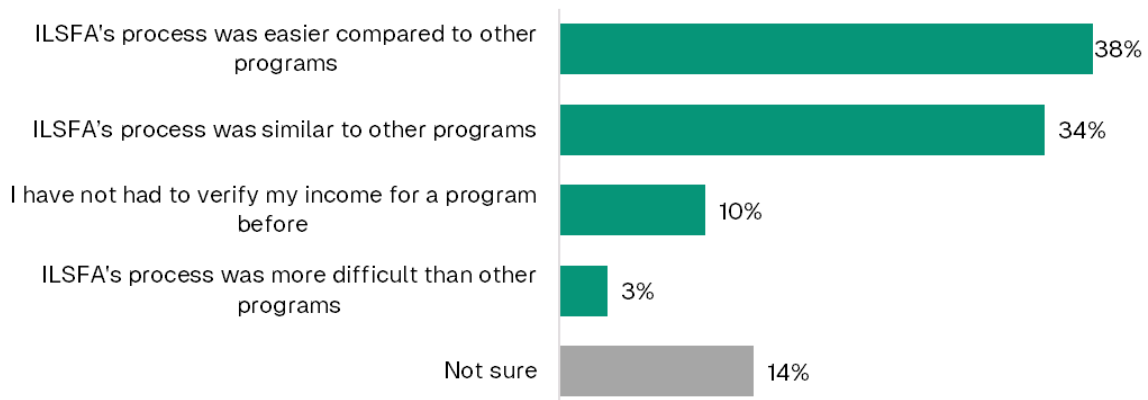
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Figure 48. Community Solar Subscriber Experience with Income Verification (n=28)



Most other respondents said ILSFA’s income verification was easier (38%) or about the same (35%) as other income-eligible programs (Figure 49), describing the process as simple and straightforward.

Figure 49. Community Solar Subscriber Comparison of the ILSFA Income Verification Process to Other Income-Eligible Programs (n=29)



Some respondents (38%) noted that the requirements relied on information they already had or were accustomed to providing, as seen in the quotes below:

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*I don't remember how income verification went. It might have been done while I was on the waiting list. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

*Because I have all necessary documents needed and am typically prepared for stuff like this. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

*Pretty basic requirements just like any income eligible thing. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

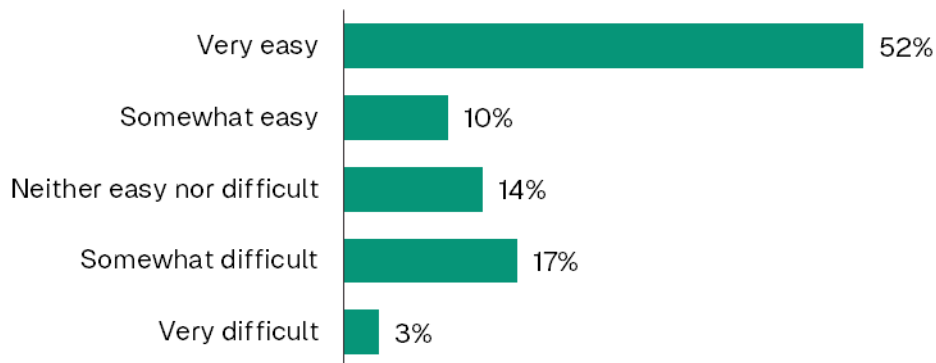
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Very few respondents reported challenges verifying their income. Those who did report difficulty submitting documentation (n=1), discomfort providing personal information (n=1), and challenges obtaining income information from all household members (n=1).

### Overall Enrollment Experience

Most respondents reported minimal difficulty with the enrollment process overall, with nearly two-thirds (62%) saying it was somewhat or very easy (Figure 50).

Figure 50. Community Solar Subscriber Ease or Difficulty with the Overall Enrollment Process (n=29)



These respondents described the process as straightforward and free of major issues (41%). Seventeen percent specifically highlighted the role of customer service agents in guiding them through enrollment, as seen below:

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*The customer service agent helped walk me through the process. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

*It wasn't a complicated process. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

*The representative Amy made it easy. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

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The 21% of respondents who described enrollment as somewhat or very difficult mostly talked about subscription availability and communication barriers, with three subscribers noting that subscriptions were not available in their area when they attempted to enroll, resulting in long waiting periods.

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*The program was full when I applied. I think someone called to say there was an opening and assisted me in the process. Idk if I could have done it again without assistance and encouragement. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

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Other respondents cited unclear or inconsistent communication (n=3), leading to confusion about when enrollment was finalized, which company they were subscribed to, and where to find credits on their electric bills. A few subscribers described being directed to multiple enrollment methods with unclear or inconsistent instructions and being referred to multiple contacts over time without clear resolution.

### **Contract**

The Community Solar contract does not seem to have been a major source of confusion or friction for most subscribers. Only five reported questions or concerns related to their Community Solar contract and most (n=3) were able to resolve these. Respondents sought answers to their questions or concerns through ILSFA (n=1), speaking with friends or family who also participated in solar programs (n=1), reaching out to a community organization (n=1), or contacting ComEd (n=1). Only one respondent reported being unable to find answers to their contract-related questions.

## **Post Enrollment and Community Solar Benefits**

### **Receiving Bill Credits**

Most respondents did not see bill credits immediately after enrollment but began receiving them within a few months. More than half (55%) reported that it took one to two months to start seeing credits on their electric bills, while about a quarter reported it took more than two months (24%). Nearly half of respondents (48%) did not have to pay for their community solar subscription, while others saw charges and credits directly on their utility bill (28%). Just one respondent said they were charged separately from their utility bill.

Only three respondents reported issues related to the billing process. These issues included:

- Different credits per month (n=1)
- Variation in when credits would appear (i.e., two months without credit, then credits starting again) (n=1)
- Credits sometimes being deducted from usage on their utility bill (n=1)

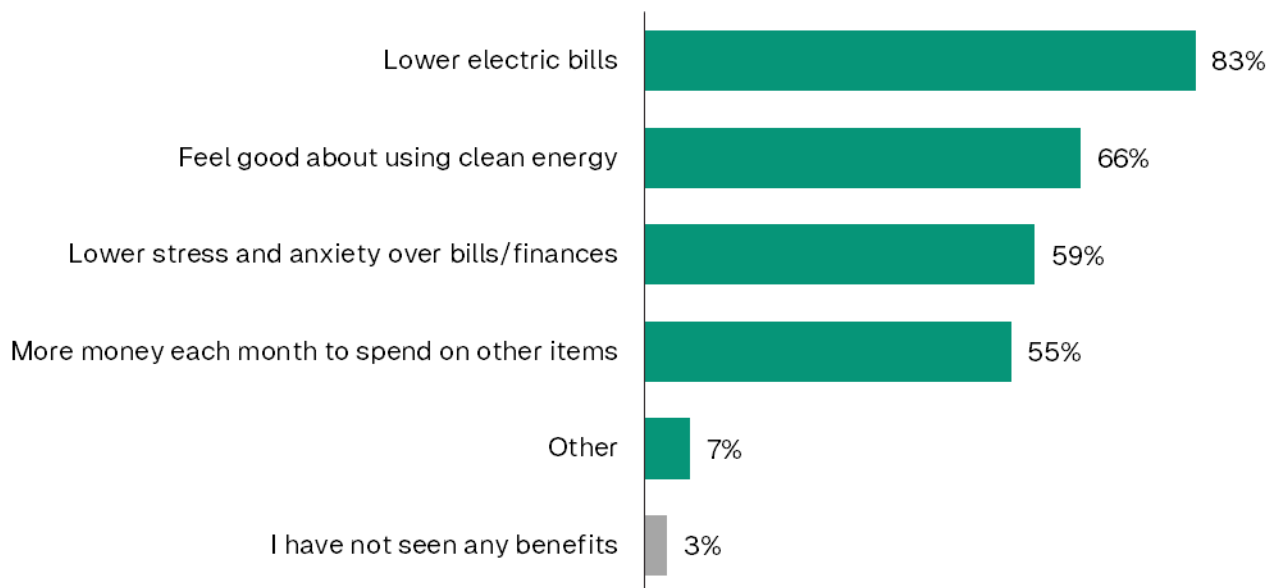
Despite these isolated issues, most subscribers (80%) found it somewhat or very easy to understand how their Community Solar subscription affected their monthly electric bill. Among the three respondents who found this somewhat difficult, suggestions for improvement were:

- Receiving a separate summary email, as the Ameren bill is “pretty dense” (n=1)
- Reflecting credits as a direct discount on the total bill (n=1)
- Simplifying the layout of bills that contain different amounts (n=1)

### Benefits of Participation

Most respondents indicated reduced electricity bills (83%), followed by feeling good about using clean energy (66%) as the main benefits of their Community Solar subscription (Figure 51). Many subscribers also described broader financial and emotional benefits, including reduced stress and anxiety related to bills and finances (59%) and having more money available each month for other expenses (55%).

Figure 51. Community Solar Survey Respondent Reported Benefits (n=29)



As seen in the Residential Solar (Small) survey results, these perceived benefits closely mirror the motivations respondents cited for enrolling in the program, suggesting that both subprograms largely deliver on what participants are expecting them to. As one respondent reflected:

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*So grateful for this program; when I was contacted I had forgotten I had ever signed up. Thankfully, my name finally came up! – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

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Another emphasized the practical impact of their bill savings:

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*The extra money available helps me pay my other household bills. It isn't much but it helps. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

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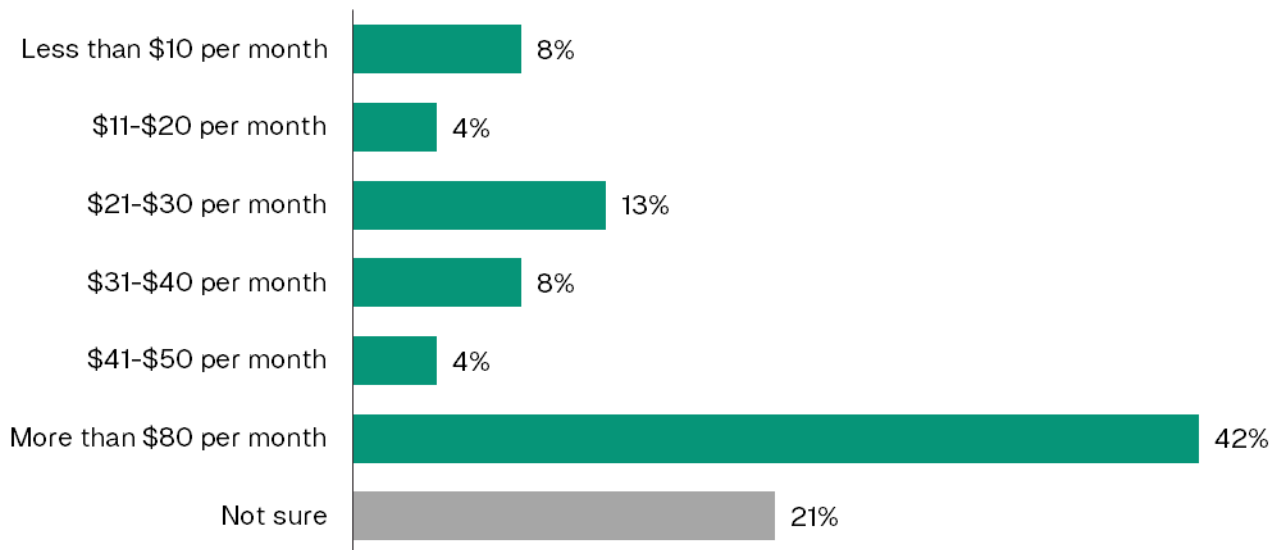
And another respondent shared more details about the impact this program has had on their life:

*I'm incredibly thankful for this program, so much that I start crying when I think about how helpful it's been. There are very few things that, for me, are literally life-changing in a good way. I'm immunocompromised and permanently & totally disabled. The addition of community solar last year helped me to better afford all of my medical needs. While housing is more expensive than electricity, I know that there's no way I'd make it if I had to continue to pay full electric bills every summer and fall. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

For most respondents, the financial benefits of being enrolled in Community Solar met or exceeded their expectations: nearly two-thirds (63%) reported that their savings were greater than expected, while another 25% said savings were about what they anticipated. Only two respondents reported savings that were less than expected. One of these subscribers stressed that credits apply only to energy supply costs and not to distribution charges, which limited the overall financial impact.

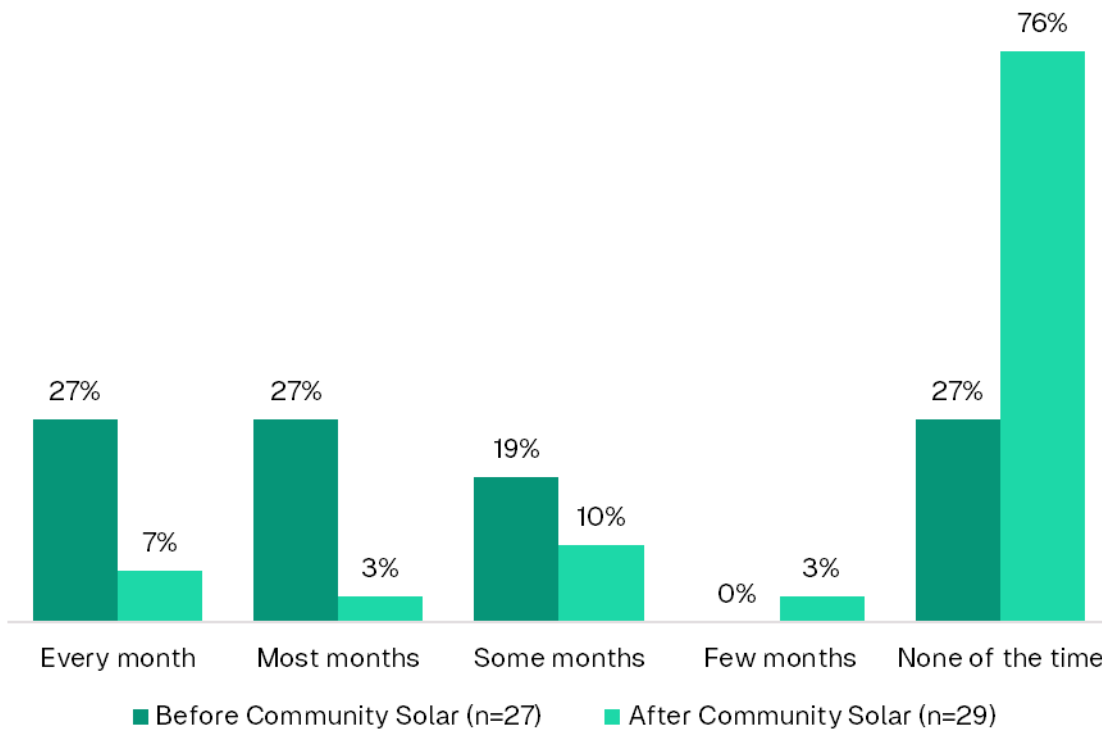
Many subscribers noticed reductions in their electricity bills, with nearly half (42%) of respondents reporting saving more than \$80 a month (Figure 52). Respondents most commonly reported using those savings to pay other bills (47%) and buy groceries (26%).

Figure 52. Community Solar Subscriber-Reported Monthly Savings (n=24)



Many subscribers reported less difficulty paying their electric bills after enrolling in community solar, with the portion who said they never struggled to pay their bill rising from 27% before solar to 76% after solar (Figure 53).

Figure 53. Frequency Community Solar Subscribers Reported Having Trouble Paying Electric Bills



**Overall satisfaction**

Satisfaction with the Community Solar subprogram was high, with 79% of respondents saying they were somewhat or very satisfied, while only three indicated they were somewhat or very dissatisfied. Beyond financial savings, respondents cited additional benefits such as confidence in maintaining their subscription even if they move (n=1), and appreciation for consolidated billing (n=1).

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*In IL it's great to have the consolidated billing, kudos! – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

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Thirty-one percent of respondents provided suggestions to improve the program. The most common recommendation was to increase awareness of the Community Solar program and expand eligibility so more households can participate (n=5).

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*None of my friends knew about this! It's also VERY difficult to find any website to sign up for a waitlist, and on the site I found for a friend, it was hard to tell if she was actually on a waitlist or just 'expressing interest'. [...] I don't know what your marketing is like, but you're completely missing a huge swath of no-and low-income people. – ILSFA Community Solar subscriber*

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Respondents who were very or somewhat dissatisfied with the program recommended improving communication by improving the USPS address confirmation during the application process (n=1) and providing tools to subscribers to track solar output (n=1).

Most Community Solar subscribers (72%) have not reached out for support with their subscription. Among those who did seek assistance (24%), the solar company was the most common point of contact (17%). Email was the primary method used to request support (86%), followed by phone calls (29%). These experiences of reaching out for support were generally positive. Most respondents who sought help reported receiving answers immediately (71%) or eventually (14%). Only one subscriber indicated that they were unable to get answers to their questions.

### **Non-Profit/Public Facilities Interviews**

The evaluation team interviewed eight NP/PF subprogram participants: six non-profits, including two private schools, two churches, two organizations offering services to the community, and two public facilities, including two public libraries. We share quotes from interviewees on their experiences with the subprogram throughout this section. These have been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

### **ILSFA Awareness and Initial Impressions**

**Most participants (5 of 8) learned about the ILSFA program through an AV.** Most participants were already interested in solar prior to learning about the program. However, some were approached by an AV that was reaching out to non-profits in eligible locations. Those who did not learn about the program through an AV reported learning about ILSFA through a Grassroots Educator or through word of mouth, including from organization board members or friends.

**The financial incentives available through ILSFA were essential for most NP/PF projects to move forward.** Participants described the ILSFA program as the primary factor that made solar financially feasible, with most saying they would not have been able to complete their project without the program. The exception was one church that had already planned to install solar through the IL Shines program when they learned about ILSFA. They were excited that ILSFA provided nearly double the incentive amount compared to IL Shines. This allowed them to pay off their loan more quickly.

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*“The program is really fantastic, and we were excited that we qualified for it. It was not possible for us to install solar at this capacity without the program” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

*“The funding from ILSFA was crucial in allowing us to move forward.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

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**Bill savings were the primary motivator for NP/PFs to participate in the program.** Saving on electric bills was the priority for all participants. However, some organizations also said they wanted to improve their sustainability or better align their operations with their values. A school participant was excited to use their panels as an educational tool. A few organizations mentioned they share information about the panels with donors to support their fundraising efforts.

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*“Environmental benefits are great. But the economic benefit was clearly the driving force.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

*“Cost savings were the biggest motivation. I also love the thought of being able to be sustainable and it makes us look good to donors, makes us feel we are doing something good for the environment.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

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## Concerns and Decision-Making

**AVs were critical in supporting participants with understanding the logistics of the solar panel installation, the ILSFA participation process, solar panel ownership or leasing models, and the benefits of their system.** AVs supported participants throughout the process, including raising awareness about the program, supporting participants with decision-making, and helping them with the program application. AVs were participants’ primary sources of information about solar installation and the ILSFA program. Participants relied on their AV to explain how much energy their solar array may generate, prepare board or congregant presentations, navigate program paperwork, and answer questions during decision-making meetings. Some participants also had board or community members with solar on their own roofs, who were able to share their experience with solar or answer questions about the technology.

**In addition to AV support, participants valued talking with other ILSFA participants to validate expectations, sometimes via connections made by Grassroots Educators or AVs.**

NP/PF participants were enthusiastic about the program but also skeptical of the program’s promised benefits. Interviewees were able to address these concerns by speaking directly with NP/PFs who had previously participated in ILSFA. Some interviewees reported that AVs and Grassroots Educators connected them with other organizations who they could talk to about the program.

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*“I was like ‘what is the catch here?’ I asked for references from churches. They all had good experiences; it worked well for all of them, so we went from there.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

*“Non-profits want the assurance of talking to others when they are taking out a loan or making a decision like this.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

---

**Participants were most often concerned about the suitability of their building’s roof when they shared their questions and concerns ahead of the solar installation process.**

Interviewees most often had questions about whether their roof was suitable for solar panels and wanted to ensure that installation would not damage the roof or impact its warranty. AVs often helped to mitigate these concerns, explaining the installation or offering modifications to fit the roof’s needs. Multiple participants combined solar installation with larger building remodeling efforts that included replacing the roof. These participants said that installing panels on a new roof gave them peace of mind. Multiple participants worked with their roofing company to ensure the solar panels installation was added into the terms of their roof warranty.

**Participants reported some confusion with ownership or leasing models for solar, especially those with Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs).** Some participants own their panels and others have PPAs. Participants reported varied understandings of these ownership or leasing models. Those that own their panels, or plan to own their panels after a certain amount of time, participated through the Energy Sovereignty component of the program. These participants were excited about the opportunity to receive the full benefits of the panels. However, they also reported that financing for these projects was more complicated, and they were concerned about being responsible for panel maintenance.

For participants with PPAs, the AV owns the panels and sells the power generated to the participant at a discounted rate. These participants appreciated the simplicity of having no upfront costs. However, they reported that the terms of the PPA contracts were complex to navigate. For some participants, the terms of the PPA were a deciding factor on which AV they worked with. One participant collaborated with a lawyer to understand the nuances of their PPA contract.

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*“The complex part was understanding the PPA, knowing that we were not owning the array but it’s on our building. The [AV] was exceptionally good. Without him I would have been lost. He was willing to make the time to walk us through hitting deadlines and getting the forms done.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

*“Power purchase agreements aren’t easy. We found a lawyer who understands the nuances and had to figure it out as we went.” – ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

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## **Finding and Selecting an AV**

Participants found their AVs in a variety of ways, including the AV reaching out to them directly, using the AV list on ILSFA’s website, and through referrals from community members, other NP/PF participants, or Grassroots Educators. Some participants noted a limited pool of available AVs, with certain vendors on the list not responding or not willing to travel to their location. Some participants only connected with or were approached by a single AV and decided to collaborate with them. Others compared multiple vendors and selected one based on the competitiveness of the proposal, the AV’s familiarity with the ILSFA program, and trust in the vendor based on references.

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*“I was aiming for three vendors, but I only ended up talking to two companies because other ones didn’t respond. Being in Central IL, the options were limited, which narrowed it down for me.”– ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

*“There was one vendor that never came to see us or followed through. There were about four vendors that we talked to, a couple of them approached us and a couple we contacted ourselves. We also worked with an organization called Faith in Place that helped refer one or two vendors to us.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

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## **Program Participation Process**

Interviewees found eligibility verification straightforward, saying it required paperwork that they already have available or that is easy to obtain. Participants said their AVs supported them through completing paperwork. Many qualified automatically based on their organization type and address, requiring minimal additional documentation. Several noted the information requested overlapped with paperwork they already maintain for other grants. One participant said that they struggled with using technology to sign and send documents.

## Installation Process

**Installation was smooth for most participants, with some participants noting they were surprised by how quiet the process was.** Most participants commented on the good communication and coordination from the AVs, including scheduling around building operations, saying AVs were considerate about noise and when the power needed to be turned off. A few participants noted gaps in communication around installation steps and timeline. This was challenging for one participant, who was completing larger building renovations and needed the AV to collaborate closely with the contractor managing the renovations during the installation process.

Some participants reported delays with the utility interconnection process. Participants were excited for the panels to be turned on and were frustrated by waiting. Some participants expressed that the utility did not show up on time for interconnection appointments.

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*“The installation went really well. The workers that were doing the installation were very conscientious about positioning solar panels, so they were not in the way and safe. It was really smooth. When they had to shut the power down, they were always coordinating with the preschool.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

*“The longest wait was sitting there and waiting until the system was active. The vendor told us the delay was associated with Ameren. They said we would lose power for 15 minutes, but we lost power for hours purely because Ameren was not on site to turn it back on. I had to apologize to my staff, and I had to be patient because we were getting the panels for free.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

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## Post-Installation Experience and Bill Savings

**Interviewees whose panels were connected reported significant savings. Some saw less savings than expected due to rising electricity costs.** Participants expressed excitement about the bill savings that they were seeing. For some participants, their electricity bill itself did not decrease significantly from what they paid prior to installing solar, but this reflected the organization avoiding increased bills in cases where electricity prices had risen or facilities had expanded. For example, a library noted that their bills remained steady despite a building expansion that happened simultaneously with solar panel installation. Other facilities noted that they still have high energy costs due to gas heating infrastructure.

**NP/PF participants are using bill savings to first pay off any loans. Then, they are using savings to increase mission-related work or to lower fundraising needs.** All NP/PF participants noted that bill savings flow into supporting their facilities, staff, and mission-aligned activities. Some described being able to increase pay for staff or expand the services they can offer. Some nonprofits noted that money saved lowers their fundraising needs and a public facility explained that lower bills allowed them to avoid raising taxes or cutting programs.

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*“We have been able to keep the tax levy for the library steady. Local residents haven’t seen as big of a tax increase as they would have. We would have been talking about cuts to different areas, like services and materials that people can check out of the library, but there haven’t been any cuts.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

*“Every dollar we save is a dollar that we can put toward our mission. It’s 50,000 I don’t have to worry about raising.” - ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

---

**Some interviewees who own their panels requested more training or information on panel maintenance and troubleshooting.** A few participants noted that they did not feel they had the knowledge or training to monitor their system and identify potential issues. One participant was surprised that no training was provided by the program after installation, expressed in the quote below.

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*“We requested a training to see how the panels work and how to troubleshoot or find if there’s a problem. It was surprising that there was no clear direction.” – ILSFA NP/PF Participant*

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## Grassroots Educators

The evaluation team conducted two listening sessions with Grassroots Educators. The conversation focused on PY24-25 but also included Grassroots Educators who are participating as of PY25-26. We spoke with 14 of the 19 Grassroots Educators that participated across these two program years.

Grassroots Educators reported modest improvement in the management of the program and coordination with Elevate, including improved technical support and training sessions. They also expressed appreciation for the updated program website that includes more information, is easier to navigate, and has more pages available translated into Spanish.

However, Grassroots Educators still noted challenges with their role and coordination with Elevate. The sections below outline these challenges as Grassroots Educators learn about ILSFA, educate their communities, and support individuals through the program participation process.

### Onboarding and Understanding the Program

Elevate educates Grassroots Educators about ILSFA through onboarding, office hours, and pod meetings. While Grassroots Educators find value in these spaces, saying they appreciate the use of office hours for training on specific topics, they also had suggestions for improvement, including:

- **Considering a different cadence or timing to the pod meetings.** As in the previous evaluation cycle, new Grassroots Educators said it took a long time for them to get up to speed on the program and begin conducting outreach at the beginning of the program year. In PY24-25, the quarterly pod meetings were timed so that the first one was before they had really gotten started on their work and the next one was not until January. In PY24-25, the program selected Grassroots Educators for an 18-month period, so that future Grassroots Education cohorts will be selected for a 12-month period aligning with the calendar year. This change aims to give Grassroots Educators more time to ramp up and attend pod meetings ahead of the first program submission windows.
- **Increasing accessibility and engagement during meetings.** Some Grassroots Educators do this work in addition to another role, which can make it difficult for them to attend office hours or pod meetings during the workday. Additional timeslots may help more Grassroots Educators attend. Grassroots Educators said that Elevate staff do not turn their cameras on during meetings which can make it difficult to engage and build relationships.
- **Responding to questions in a timely manner.** Grassroots Educators reported that Elevate has been more responsive to questions. However, they noted that response times can be slow for non-standard questions.

## Conducting Outreach and Education

Much of Grassroots Educators' role focuses on engaging community members or NP/PFs with the ILSFA program. They shared challenges and suggestions related to outreach materials, participation opportunities, and collaboration with other Grassroots Educators that would help them do this work better.

Grassroots Educators appreciated the improved website and shared challenges they continue to face related to program materials.

- **Getting materials approved by Elevate continues to be a lengthy and burdensome process.** The long timeline hindered Grassroots Educators' abilities to host events and promote the program. Grassroots Educators suggested that having basic templates for Power Points or brochures that they can adjust to include the contact info for their organizations would help decrease the need to get custom materials approved.
- **Grassroots Educators would like to have more materials translated into Spanish.** Though the website is improved and has more translation, Grassroots Educators raised that it would be valuable for the Exit Ticket and the "Find a Solar Company" tool to be translated into Spanish as well.
- **Grassroots Educators need more materials focusing on solar basics.** Grassroots Educators said they must do a lot of basic education about solar before they can provide education about ILSFA. They requested materials to support them with this education, so they do not feel like they need to be experts in solar.

- **Grassroots Educators continue to face challenges identifying active AVs in their area.** They suggested listing the geographic areas the AV covers in the “Find a Solar Company” tool and adding a flag to signal if AVs have had a project approved in the last two years.
- **Grassroots Educators that work with NP/PFs would like additional materials to support them.** These organizations expressed that they feel the program is very residential-focused and there are not as many materials conducting outreach for the NP/PF subprogram. Grassroots Educators requested that the website list which ownership options an AV offers. Some NP/PFs only want to participate with a PPA or if they can own their panels. In addition, they would like materials detailing federal tax incentives to support NP/PF participants in financing their systems.

Grassroots Educators also noted that it can be challenging to promote a program to their community members when there are limited participation opportunities. Following the increase in Residential Solar (Small) project submissions at the end of PY24-25 (February – May, 2025), Residential Solar (Small) funds ran out during the initial submission window for PY25-26, which took place during the summer of 2025. For the past several years, demand for Community Solar subprogram subscription has also outpaced availability, with many interested participants being placed on waitlists. Grassroots Educators stressed that promoting a program with limited participation opportunities damages their trust with communities, as community members get excited about participating, but then are unable to do so.

Grassroots Educators requested clear information about when they can expect additional funds for Residential Solar (Small) projects to be available, so they can time their outreach accordingly. They also asked to have visibility into when project funds are fully allocated, so they could share information with community members on the waitlist about when they might be able to move forward with their projects.

Finally, Grassroots Educators were interested in collaborating and learning from each other, requesting more support to facilitate these interactions. They were specifically interested partnering with other Grassroots Educators that focus on the same subprogram or work in the same geographic areas. In particular, Grassroots Educators working in Southern IL noted a lack of other Grassroots Educators for them partner with on outreach.

### **Supporting Participants Through Program Processes**

Once Grassroots Educators educate community members on solar and ILSFA, they often follow up with interested individuals or organizations to support them with the participation process. Grassroots Educators help potential participants gather the necessary paperwork, connect them with AVs, and guide them through the ILSFA application process.

Grassroots Educators raised confusion around their role in this part of the process, specifically around when they should hand participants off to Elevate or AVs. Some Grassroots Educators explained that they do not feel knowledgeable enough to answer technical and detailed questions about the program. They would like to refer these questions to the Elevate team but need assurance that Elevate will be responsive. Similarly, Grassroots Educators raised questions about when they should refer participants to their AVs for support.

Grassroots Educators also communicated that the amount of paperwork that the program requires is a barrier to their community members participating. Many potential ILSFA participants access the internet on their phones or do not have consistent internet access. ILSFA often requires participants to have internet access to complete forms, and these forms are often not easy to view and complete on a phone.

Grassroots Educators said that small non-profits sometimes choose not to move forward with ILSFA because they think the effort to complete ILSFA paperwork will outweigh the benefits they will receive from solar. Though we did not hear this in our NP/PF interviews, we only spoke with those that completed the participation process.

Finally, Grassroots Educators stressed that they need clarity on what happens with customer information shared with the program to address safety concerns in the current political environment.

## Job Trainees

The evaluation team surveyed eight job trainees who has worked on an ILSFA project since PY22-23 through PY24-25, excluding trainees who participated in the previous evaluation cycle's trainee survey. Given the small number of respondents, findings should be interpreted as illustrative, rather than representing all ILSFA job trainees.

As described above, ILSFA has two types of job training requirements that AVs must fulfill each program year: **portfolio-level requirements**, which require that installations across an AV's entire portfolio include a minimum percentage of work hours performed by eligible trainees, and **project-level requirements**, which require that at least 33% of an AV's installations annually in each ILSFA subprogram include at least one eligible trainee. AVs hire job trainees from qualifying programs to work on ILSFA projects to fulfill these requirements. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) coordinates qualifying job training programs. These program go beyond standard workforce development and focus on providing technical skills, particularly in solar and electrical work.

### Training Program Experience

Most trainees reported that their training programs covered essential skills and were satisfied with their program. Surveyed trainees attended training programs varying in length from one month to over three months. Trainees had graduated from a range of programs, including:

- Illinois IBEW (n=2)
- Lewis and Clark Community College (n=2)
- HeatSpring (n=1)
- Illinois Central College (n=1)
- Millennium Solar Electric Training Academy (n=1)
- Midwest Renewable Energy Association (n=1)

Programs primarily focused on technical skills including solar panel installation, solar system operations and maintenance, electrical work, and solar system design. Less frequently, trainees reported their training covered solar system commissioning, sales or client management, and project management or administration.

Overall, trainees felt prepared both for ILSFA jobs and broader employment opportunities. Five of the eight trainees said their training covered all essential skills for working with AVs on solar projects.

Three respondents noted that they would have appreciated additional training, including journeyman-level skills (being able to perform complex tasks without supervision), deeper electrical components training, and training covering typical on-the-job experiences.

Most trainees did not use support services provided through their training program. Three trainees shared that their training program offered transportation assistance, though none used it. Half (four of eight) reported they were not offered any support services.

Trainees also varied how easy they said it was to travel to and from their training program. All trainees drove themselves to their training program location. Half of the trainees (n=4) found it somewhat or very easy to reach their program's location, a quarter (n=2) found it neither easy nor difficult, and a quarter (n=2) found it somewhat difficult.

Trainees were satisfied with their training programs. Seven out of eight trainees reported they were very satisfied with their training. One trainee expressed said they were dissatisfied with their training program but did not provide a reason as to why. This trainee attended the shortest training of the respondents with a duration of one month.

### **ILSFA On-the-job Solar Experience**

All surveyed trainees reported that it was easy or very easy to secure a position with an AV after completing their training program. Most trainees (5 out of 8) secured their position within a month of completing their training program, and half of trainees (4 out of 8) found a position directly through their training programs. All trainees then began working on their first solar project within a month of being onboarded.

Most trainees (6 out of 8) reported being very or somewhat satisfied with their AV experience and said they did not encounter any challenges while working with the AV. However, two trainees were very unsatisfied, reporting difficulties including: an uncomfortable or difficult work environment, and delayed payments on completed projects.

### **Long-term Job Experience**

At the time of the survey, most trainees were still working in solar or a related field, like electrical work. Five out of eight trainees no longer worked for the AV that originally hired them, for varied reasons including their contract ending, pursuing a new opportunity, and issues with slow payment timelines. Among these trainees, three applied for jobs in similar fields (solar or electrical work), one was placed with a different AV through their training program without needing to apply, and another trainee started their own business and became an ILSFA-qualified AV.

The three trainees who stayed in their original job with their AVs have been there for one to two years or more than two years. Figure 54 below summarizes the overall outcomes from job training.

Figure 54. Overall job training outcomes (n=8)



### ILSFA Experience

All trainees were aware of ILSFA at the time of the survey, although five out of eight learned about ILSFA only after entering their training program. Others learned about ILSFA through a job board or an online search. Most respondents (seven out of eight) were familiar with ILSFA's job training requirements and did not have suggestions to improve them. Five trainees recalled completing the Trainee Affidavit and four reported it was easy to complete. Most trainees (six out of eight) were aware of which projects they worked on that ILSFA-qualified. Of those six trainees, three reported that more than half or all their projects were ILSFA-qualified.

A few trainees (three out of eight) said they interacted with Elevate to ask questions about the program or because they became an AV. All three trainees were satisfied with their interactions and did not have suggestions to improve Elevate's support of job trainees.

# Appendices

## Appendix A. Methodologies

### Primary Data Collection

The following section describes additional details on the primary data collection activities conducted for the Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) program year 2024-2025 (PY24-25) program evaluation.

### Program Material Review

The evaluation team reviewed ILSFA’s program materials for the purpose of understanding the program goals, design, and any recent changes made to the program that impacted our research activities. These materials covered several aspects of the program, such as:

- Program design (e.g., the Approved Vendor manual, the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (LTRRPP))
- Vendor resources (e.g., the overview of the Vendor Portal)
- Customer resources (e.g., “Community Solar Opportunities for Owners and Renters”)
- Marketing materials (e.g., newsletters, announcements, brochures)
- Previous reports or evaluations (e.g., quarterly, and annual reports)

The team made extensive notes from their materials review that answered the questions summarized below in Table 47.

Table 47. Program Materials Review Questions

Category	Review Questions
Program Design	Have the goals or objectives of the ILSFA program changed?
	Who are the key actors in program implementation and have there been any changes to their roles?
	What is program funding for PY24-25?
	How does the program define participation requirements? What specific carve-outs or goals are there for participation (e.g., subprogram, environmental justice communities, energy sovereignty, etc.)
	Has the income verification process changed?
	What does program success look like? Is this the same as in previous program years?

Category	Review Questions
Program Participation Processes & Barriers	Has the project selection process changed compared to prior years?
	Have there been changes to the participation process from the perspective of an Approved Vendor (AV)? What barriers might prevent vendors from participating?
	Have there been changes to the participation process from the perspective of a job trainer? What barriers might prevent job trainers from participating?
	Have there been changes to the participation process from the perspective of a job trainee? What barriers might prevent job trainees from participating?
	Have there been changes to the participation process from the perspective of a grassroots educator? What barriers might prevent Grassroots Educators from participating?
	Have there been changes to the participation process from the perspective of a participant in one of the subprograms? What barriers might prevent end-users from participating?
Program History & Status	What barriers have stakeholders raised?
	What changes were made to ILSFA in PY24-25?
	What changes are in the pipeline for ILSFA, if any?
	Did the program meet its goals in PY24-25?
	What has been successful in the program? What has been challenging?
	Are there specific end-users, program actors, geographies, building types, etc. that seem to be underserved by the program?
Program Marketing	What pilot initiatives were active in PY24-25 and how did these perform, including Bright Neighborhoods, Home Repairs and Upgrades, and the NCSP+ Energy Connector?
	Through what channels do program marketing and outreach occur? How have these changed in PY24-25?
	Have any outreach or marketing strategies been successful in PY24-25?
	Who does the marketing and outreach target?

## Program Tracking Data

The evaluation team requested PY24-25 tracking data and reviewed it to confirm that the information needed to complete the evaluation was available, complete, and sufficiently accurate for analysis. Tracking data is a foundational input for both the impact and process components of this evaluation. Elevate maintains a Salesforce database that stores program tracking data for Distributed Generation and Community Solar projects. The tracking data included the following elements used across the energy, environmental, bill, jobs/economic, and social impacts analyses:

- **Project characteristics and financials**, including application program year, project stage (and date of last stage update), system specifications (e.g., installation type, system size, azimuth, tilt), and project financial fields (e.g., project costs, incentive values, projected RECs, etc.). These fields support required statutory metrics/KPIs and PV production estimates.
- **Project location details**, including indicators for Environmental Justice Communities and income-eligible geographies. These fields support analyses of geographic distribution and participation patterns across community types and service territories.
- **Energy Sovereignty attributed**, including whether projects are structured to meet Energy Sovereignty requirements and (where available) expected ownership transfer timing.
- **Buyer and contract information** (e.g., contract type and term length). These fields support segmentation of projects by participation and ownership/financing structures (e.g., PPA/lease arrangements and buyout pathways), which can be used to interpret participation patterns across subprograms.
- **Approved Vendor (AV) information**, including vendor linkages to associated projects, vendor headquarters location, and (where available) business diversity attributes. This information supports the evaluation’s expanded equity lens by enabling analyses that compare where AVs are headquartered relative to where their projects are located, and by assessing the diversity of firms active in the program.

## Program Administrator Interviews

E Source conducted five interviews with the IPA program team and five interviews with the Elevate program teams via Microsoft Teams, an online video conferencing software, in February and March of 2026. The primary purpose of these interviews was to understand program design, delivery, and implementation successes and challenges during the PY24-25 program year.

For this data collection effort, the evaluation team developed a semi-structured interview guide to ensure we captured the key themes of interest while allowing room for the interviews to explore unexpected (yet pertinent) details associated with ILSFA’s implementation. We provided each interview guide to the IPA project manager for review and comment prior to commencing any of the data collection. The evaluation team conducted and took notes on all interviews. The evaluation team incorporated interview findings into both evaluation planning and the PY24-25 evaluation report.

Interview topics included those summarized in Table 48, below.

Table 48. Program Administrator Interview Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Roles and Responsibilities	What are the roles and responsibilities of IPA and Elevate staff? Have these changed from prior evaluation years?

Category	Primary Research Questions
Program Design and Delivery	<p>What were the program changes in PY24-25? How did these changes impact the program?</p> <p>What underlying factors are influencing program trends?</p>
Program Goals and Performance	<p>Have ILSFA's goals or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) changed from prior years?</p> <p>What goals did ILSFA have in PY24-25 related to societal benefits, impacts, or equity? What goals or KPIs did the program track related to these?</p> <p>Did the ILSFA program meet its goals in PY24-25?</p> <p>What external policy changes or market factors impact the program?</p> <p>What might have contributed to the increase in project volume for Residential Solar (Small), including policy changes, market forces, or implementation strategy?</p> <p>Which aspects of implementation went well, and where did the ILSFA program run into challenges?</p> <p>What was the status of pilot initiatives in PY24-25, including Bright Neighborhoods, Home Upgrades and Repairs, and the NCSP+ Energy Connector, and how did these perform?</p>
Marketing and Outreach	<p>Does ILSFA have KPIs or guidelines for marketing and outreach?</p> <p>What channels does the ILSFA program use for marketing outreach? Have these changed from prior years?</p> <p>What works well with program outreach, and where is the ILSFA program facing challenges?</p>
Evaluation Needs	<p>What are the evaluation priorities and needs for PY24-25?</p> <p>What are the evaluation and ILSFA program data needs across the two-year evaluation cycle?</p>

Program administrator interviews provided important context and informed findings and recommendations in the PY24-25 process evaluation report chapter.

## Approved Vendor Survey

The evaluation team administered a survey to all Approved Vendors (AVs) with active projects<sup>33</sup> in PY24-25 to understand vendor experience with the ILSFA process, including the application process, their satisfaction with the program, and key barriers to AV participation. The survey was fielded between December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Survey invitations were distributed via email and through postcards mailed to the AV's address with a link to the online survey. The evaluation team also called vendors and offered to take the survey with them over the phone.

<sup>33</sup> Active projects include all projects submitted in PY24-25, including all subsequent project stages.

Overall, 8 out of 19 vendors completed the survey for a 42% response rate. Research questions for the approved vendor survey are summarized in Table 49, below.

Table 49. Approved Vendor Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
AV participation drivers	How do AVs learn about the program and what motivates them to participate? For AVs participating in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram, has the number of Residential Solar (Small) projects submitted to the program increased? What led them to submit more Residential Solar (Small) projects?
Program process	What is the AV experience with ILSFA program documentation and review processes?
Participant acquisition	What is the AV experience promoting and explaining ILSFA-qualified projects to customers? How frequently do participants disengage early in the process, and what support do AVs need to improve outreach and education?
Energy sovereignty	How are AVs engaging with ILSFA energy sovereignty projects, and how and why has the frequency of offering these projects changed over time?
Project financing	How are AVs financing ILSFA projects? What are the challenges to financing projects, and what would be helpful to solve them?
AV Portal	What is the AV experience using the AV Portal and the training materials provided to support its use?
Job training requirements	What is the AV experience in meeting job trainee requirements, applying for an exception, connecting with trainees, and addressing their preparedness?
Program satisfaction	How satisfied are AVs with ILSFA (by programmatic element) and Elevate? Do AVs have any suggestions for improvement?
Firmographics	What are their geographic locations and business sizes?

AVs’ input informed findings summarized in the Process Section of this report.

## Participant Surveys and Interviews

The evaluation team conducted participant research with participants in three of four subprograms to inform both process and impact assessments. For the Residential Solar (Large) subprogram, we reached out to the one participant eligible for the PY24-25 research but did not receive a response.

Table 50 below summarizes the primary research questions and the associated tasks.

Table 50. Participant Research Questions

Primary Research Questions	Residential Solar (Small)	Community Solar	Residential Solar (Large)	Non-Profit/Public Facilities
How did participants hear about the Illinois Solar for All program? What sources of information did they use to learn about the program?	X	X	X	X
What is motivating participants to pursue solar? What motivated them to pursue solar now?	X	X	X	X
What questions or concerns did participants have about Illinois Solar for All and how were these addressed?	X	X	X	X
What is the process to find an Approved Vendor?	X		X	X
What were participant experiences with the income or eligibility verification process?	X	X	X	X
What was the installation/enrollment process like? Are there any pain points or challenges?	X	X	X	X
What resources do participants use to complete any necessary upgrades or address structural/electrical issues prior to installing solar? What were participants' experiences with these resources?	X		X	X
What has the post-installation/enrollment experience been like?				
How has having rooftop solar/being enrolled in community solar impacted people's household spending/financial stress?	X	X		
How did participants find the community solar vendor they used?		X		
What information has property owners/managers shared with tenants? What has feedback been like?			X	
How has the solar array impacted community engagement or services provided to the community for non-profit/public facility participants?				X
Have non-profit/public facility participants shared any information about their solar array				X

Primary Research Questions	Residential Solar (Small)	Community Solar	Residential Solar (Large)	Non-Profit/Public Facilities
with community members or any other parties?				
Are participants experiencing bill savings? Are these in line with their expectations?	X	X	X	X
Has participating in ILSFA motivated participants to pursue any energy efficiency or electrification measures?	X	X		X
Do people perceive or think about any other benefits?	X	X	X	X
What are non-profit/ public facilities participants' perspectives on energy sovereignty projects? Why are non-profit/ public facilities choosing to, or not to participate in energy sovereignty projects?				X
Are participants willing to share post-installation bills to support the evaluation analysis?	X	X		

The subsections below summarize our research methodologies and response rates for each subprogram.

**Residential Solar (Small)**

The evaluation team conducted an online survey of all Residential Solar (Small) subprogram participants from PY24-25 between January 14 and March 4, 2026 (n=565) and received 109 responses for a response rate of 19%. Participants qualified if they had a project approved in PY24-25, including all subsequent project stages. Participants also had the option to complete the survey over the phone. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. Respondents received a \$25 e-gift card for completing the survey.

**Community Solar**

The evaluation team conducted an online survey of Community Solar subprogram participants from PY24-25 between January 14 and February 23, 2026 (n=95) and received 29 responses for a response rate of 31%. Participants qualified if they started their Community Solar subscription in PY24-25. Participants also had the option to complete the survey over the phone. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. Respondents received a \$25 e-gift card for completing the survey.

### Non-Profit/Public Facilities

For this subprogram, the evaluation team conducted eight in-depth interviews on Microsoft Teams between January and March 2026. The evaluation team invited all NP/PFs with projects that were Part I approved or energized during PY24-25 (n=72) to participate in an interview. We conducted this recruitment using email and phone. The interviews were between 45 and 60 minutes, and participants received a \$100 gift card for completing an interview, if they chose to receive one.

The evaluation team discovered that 31 NP/PF participants received an invitation to complete the Residential Solar (Small) survey and two responded. The evaluation team reviewed these responses for additional insights on the NP/PF experience, and the NP/PF respondents were excluded from the Residential Solar (Small) survey analysis. These respondents received a \$25 e-gift card for completing the survey.

### Grassroots Educator Listening Sessions

The evaluation team conducted two listening sessions with Grassroots Educators to gain insight into Grassroots Educators’ experiences with ILSFA and gather feedback. Topics included Grassroots Educators’ approach to engaging communities, what they see as barriers to ILSFA participation, and their perspective on the support they receive from the program. The evaluation team conducted listening sessions during the monthly Grassroots Educator Office Hours meetings in January and February 2026. Elevate invited the Grassroots Educators via email and they were encouraged to attend one of the listening sessions. One Grassroots Educator from PY24-25 no longer works with ILSFA. The evaluation team sent an email to the contact from this organization inviting them to participate in a short phone interview but did not hear back.

The listening sessions were an hour long. Fourteen Grassroots Educators participated in a listening session, often with multiple staff from the organization joining. Of the Grassroots Educators that attended a listening session, eight participated in PY24-25, and six began as Grassroots Educators in PY25-26. The research questions for this activity are summarized in Table 51, below.

Table 51. Grassroots Educator Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Outreach and engagement	How do Grassroots Educators engage customers with ILSFA?
	What challenges do Grassroots Educators face to engage communities with ILSFA and promote participation?
	What outreach strategies and tactics are successful?
Customer experience and barriers	How do end users perceive the program?
	What are barriers that prevent participation in ILSFA?
	How could the program be more user friendly?
	Why might the participation in the Residential Solar (Small) subprogram have increased in PY24-25?

Category	Primary Research Questions
Program administrator support	What are Grassroots Educator experiences with the program?
	How could the program better support Grassroots Educators?

## Job Trainee Survey

The evaluation team developed and distributed a survey to job trainees who worked on ILSFA projects in PY21-22 through PY24-25. The sample excluded trainees that responded to the Job Trainee survey during the PY22-23 evaluation and had not worked on an ILSFA project since. The survey aimed to gather insights into job trainees’ experiences with the training and their subsequent work with ILSFA AVs. The survey took 15 minutes to complete and was conducted between January and March 2026. We invited 135 trainees through email, phone call, and postcard invitations. Respondents could complete the survey online via Qualtrics or over the phone. The survey achieved a 6% response rate, with eight complete responses. Participants received a \$25 e-gift card after completing the survey. Table 52 below shows the job trainee research questions.

Table 52. Job Trainee Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Training program experience, efficacy, and satisfaction	How do job trainees typically become aware of ILSFA job training programs?
	What is the typical duration of ILSFA training programs? Does it vary across providers or regions?
	What are the pain points for job trainees as they go through the program? Were they aware of any support services to help overcome these pain points? Did job trainees make use of support services?
	Do job trainees think their training program provided them with the required skills and tools for ILSFA projects with AVs? If not, what additional tools or skills do job trainees need?
	Does job training prepare trainees for long-term solar or energy careers? What kind of job do trainees take on?
	How satisfied are job trainees with the job training program?
Job search process and job satisfaction	How do job trainees find job opportunities in the solar field?
	What types of jobs are job trainees hired into?
	How satisfied are job trainees with their job and with the ILSFA AV who hired them?

Category	Primary Research Questions
Program Administrator coordination	What portion of the projects that job trainees work on are ILSFA-qualified?
	How aware are trainees of ILSFA and ILSFA job training requirements?
	Do job trainees interact at all with the ILSFA program administrator? If so, how satisfied are they with their interactions? What are job trainees experiences with the trainee affidavit?
Challenges and opportunities	What are the opportunities to improve the job training requirements from the job trainee’s perspective?
	What are opportunities to improve ILSFA program processes from the job trainee perspective?
Demographics	What is the geographic distribution of ILSFA’s job trainees?

## Energy Impact Analysis

The evaluation team estimated the energy and coincident demand savings of PY24-25 approved and energized projects. Approved PY24-25 projects are projects that applied for the ILSFA program in PY24-25 and advanced at least as far as the Part I approval stage between June 1, 2024, and May 31, 2025. Energized projects are projects that applied for the ILSFA program in PY1 through PY24-25 and received Part II approval by May 31, 2025. The table below (Table 53) outlines the research questions addressed by the energy impact analysis.

Table 53. Energy Impact Analysis Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Project Summary	What is the total number of approved and energized projects?
	What is the total capacity (kW <sub>AC</sub> ) of approved and energized projects?
	What is the average system cost per kW <sub>AC</sub> of project capacity (approved and energized)?
Energy Savings	How much energy would be produced in a typical meteorological year from approved and energized projects?
	How much electricity would be produced by energized projects based on observed weather data between June 1, 2024 and May 31, 2025?
Demand Savings	How much peak load would be reduced by the energy generated by energized projects in PY24-25?

## Project Summary

The evaluation team reviewed ILSFA program tracking data and summarized program participation. We quantified the total number of approved and energized projects, the total capacity (kW<sub>AC</sub>) of projects, and the average capacity per project. For energized projects, we also quantified the average cost per kW<sub>AC</sub> of project capacity.

## Electric Energy Savings

The evaluation team produced hourly PV generation simulations to generate independently verified estimates of energy savings. We collected PV system characteristics, including system size, tilt, azimuth, DC/AC ratio, and mounting configuration, from the ILSFA tracking data. These data were reviewed and cleaned to resolve data quality issues such as swapped tilt and azimuth values, outlier DC/AC ratios, and inconsistencies between Part I and Part II information. When both Part I and Part II data were available for a given project, Part II values were used for the PV simulations.

PY24-25 PV generation simulations use PVLib, an open-source Python library for simulating PV system performance, replacing the PVWatts API approach used in prior program years.<sup>34</sup> PVLib offers greater flexibility for specifying system parameters and incorporating different sources of weather data. As in prior years, we simulated hourly electricity production for each array within a project individually and calculated the hourly generation for a given project as the sum of the output of all panels.

In PY24-25, we utilized two sets of weather data to generate PV simulations, producing two sets of outputs that feed into the impact analyses.

We sourced typical meteorological year (TMY) weather data from the National Laboratory of the Rockies (NLR) National Solar Radiation Database (NSRDB) for each project's location (latitude and longitude included in the ILSFA tracking data). TMY data represents typical weather conditions assembled from historical observations and is not tied to any specific calendar year. We generated TMY-based PV simulations for both approved and energized projects.

New for PY24-25, we obtained actual meteorological year (AMY) data covering June 1, 2024 through May 31, 2025 from the Illinois State Water Survey (ISWS) Water and Atmospheric Resources Monitoring Program (WARM).<sup>35</sup> This data source provides hourly observed weather data including solar radiation, air temperature, relative humidity, and wind speed for a set of Illinois weather stations. We limited the set of eligible weather stations for analysis in the WARM dataset to those with complete, gap free hourly data for the PY24-25 period. We then matched each PV array to its nearest eligible weather station using the Haversine distance formula and then ran PV simulations using the AMY data for energized ILSFA projects.

The TMY and AMY weather datasets support two types of energy savings metrics:

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, K., Hansen, C., Holmgren, W., Jensen, A., Mikofski, M., and Driesse, A. "pvlib python: 2023 project update." *Journal of Open Source Software*, 8(92), 5994, (2023). DOI: 10.21105/joss.05994.

<sup>35</sup> <https://warm.isws.illinois.edu/warm/weather/>

- “First-year” metrics are estimated using TMY-based PV simulation outputs and assume like-new PV system conditions with no degradation applied, regardless of when the system was installed. We estimate first-year energy savings for both approved and energized projects.
- “One-year” metrics are new for PY24-25 and are estimated using AMY-based PV simulations for energized projects only. One-year impacts incorporate age-based system degradation of 0.5% per year based on each project’s invoice issued date, providing an estimate that better reflects the actual PV production of energized systems during PY24-25.

The Energy Savings section also includes estimates of capacity factor. Capacity factor is a metric of system utilization defined as the amount of energy generated during a given period divided by the maximum possible amount of energy that could have been generated during that period. Annual capacity factors are useful for comparing utilization across technology types and project sizes. The annual capacity factor was calculated as the annual PV generation during all 8,760 hours of a typical year divided by the product of the project’s capacity and 8,760.

### First-Year Electric Energy Savings of Energized Projects

Table 54 below, presents the first-year estimated electrical generation by project type for PY24-25 energized projects. This table also includes the average first year estimated energy savings per project and an estimated capacity factor. The total first-year energy savings from PY24-25 energized projects is 80.7 GWh. About 58% of the savings come from Distributed Generation projects and 42% come from Community Solar projects.

Table 54. First-Year Estimated Electric Energy Savings of **PY24-25 Energized Projects**

Project Type		Estimated First-Year Electric Energy Savings (MWh)	Number of Projects	Average Annual Estimated Electric Energy Savings Per Project (MWh)	Average Estimated Annual Capacity Factor (AC)
Distributed Generation	Residential Solar (Small)	16,911.83	1,494	11.3	18.3%
	Residential Solar (Large)	4,232.74	4	1,058.2	18.1%
	Non-Profit/Public Facilities	25,464.50	118	215.8	18.4%
	Total	46,609.08	1,616	--	--
Community Solar	Total	34,135.55	14	2,438.3	20.4%
All Energized Projects		80,744.63	1,630	--	--

## Irradiance Variability

The electricity, bill, and environmental impact analyses included in this report use PV output simulations based on TMY (from NLR NSRDB) and AMY (from ISWS WARM) data (as described in the Electric Energy Savings section above).

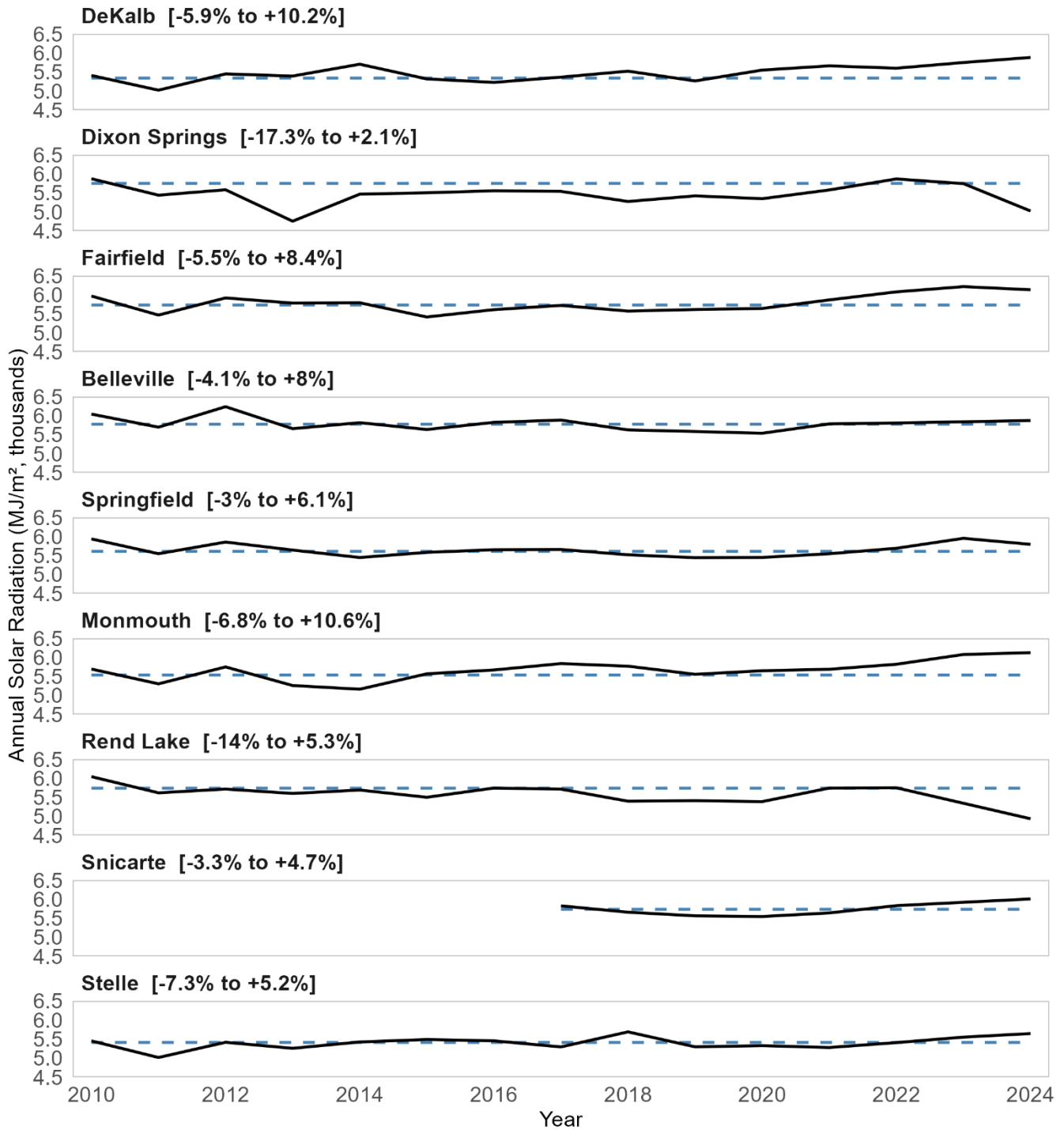
TMY-based estimates reflect an assumed “typical” weather year, while the AMY-based estimates reflect actual weather conditions during PY24-25. To understand the variability of weather data over time, we reviewed historical irradiance data from the past 14 years (from 2010 to 2024). By reviewing this data, we gain an understanding of the variability of weather data and how it could impact PV estimates.

Figure 55 below, compares annual observed irradiance from the Illinois weather stations (from ISWS WARM) to TMY (from NLR NSRDB) irradiance values at those same station locations from 2010 through 2024. This chart illustrates the degree to which any given year’s solar resource may differ from typical conditions. Across stations and years, observed, or actual, irradiance ranged from -17.3% to +10.6% of the TMY-based values, with most stations falling within a narrower range of roughly +/- 5-10%.

These differences in observed and TMY irradiance translate directly into uncertainty in the PV simulation outputs, and by extension, in the electricity, bill, and environmental impact estimates. Since we do not have actual PV generation meter data for ILSFA participant systems, we cannot validate system production. Our estimates are inherently limited by the quality and representativeness of the weather and irradiance input data. AMY-based simulations better reflect actual weather conditions for a given year but are themselves subject to measurement uncertainty and year-to-year variability, as illustrated in Figure 55. TMY-based simulations provide a stable, long-run average that is appropriate for lifetime projections but will not match any individual year's actual conditions. The irradiance comparison below suggests that our simulated PV generation estimates are likely within a reasonable margin of error, though users of this report should interpret the electricity, environmental, and bill savings estimates with this uncertainty in mind.

Figure 55. Comparison of Observed (AMY) and Typical (TMY) Solar Irradiance at Illinois Weather Stations

Black = ISWS observed | Blue dashed = NSRDB TMY  
 Station labels show the range of annual % deviation from TMY across observed years



## Electric Demand Savings

Estimated coincident peak demand impacts the generation from ILSFA systems during hours of grid-system peak demands. The highest annual grid-system peak hour provides a brief snapshot of program coincident demand impacts. However, analyzing peak demand over the top 100 peak hours can provide a greater insight into how ILSFA impacts the grid during hours of highest load.

By generating during system peak hours, ILSFA projects allow electric utilities to avoid purchasing high-cost wholesale energy and reduce transmission and distribution losses during hours of high system congestion. It should be noted, however, that these hours are not necessarily when ILSFA systems have their highest output, which typically occurs during the middle of the day when solar irradiance peaks. PJM and MISO are the independent system operators (ISOs) serving Illinois. We obtained the top grid load hours in 2024-2025 from publicly available hourly historical load data from the PJM and the MISO websites.<sup>36,37</sup> We used PJM load data specific to the ComEd load zone (CE) and MISO load data specific to Illinois (Load Resource Zone 4). Table 55 presents the hours and magnitudes of PJM-ComEd and MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 peak demand during PY24-25.

Table 55. PJM-ComEd and MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 2024 Peak Hours and Demands (MW)

ISO Region	Peak Demand (MW)	Date	Hour Beginning (Local Time)
PJM-ComEd	21,560	2024-08-27	4:00 P.M.
MISO-Illinois-ZONE 4	9,123	2024-08-27	6:00 P.M.

In PY24-25, we modified the approach used in prior years for estimating coincident demand impacts. In prior years, we relied on TMY PV simulation outputs to estimate coincident generation. For each project and each hour of the day, we calculated a rolling median of PV generation across the 15 nearest TMY observations for that same hour of the day. We then identified the TMY record corresponding to the same month and hour of day as the ISO peak demand hour and used the rolling median generation value at that time as our coincident demand estimate. This approach was necessary because TMY weather data does not correspond to the actual dates and hours when grid stress occurred, and the rolling median was used to reduce the influence of outlier generation values on the estimate.

For PY24-25, AMY PV simulation outputs eliminate the need for this proxy approach. Because we have PV generation estimates for the exact hours when grid stress occurred, we can directly use the simulated AMY generation for those hours rather than relying on a nearest-day TMY estimate. We estimated demand impacts for both the single highest-demand hour and the top 100 highest-demand hours in each ISO during PY24-25.

<sup>36</sup> [https://dataminer2.pjm.com/feed/hrl\\_load\\_metered](https://dataminer2.pjm.com/feed/hrl_load_metered)

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.misoenergy.org/markets-and-operations/real-time--market-data/market-reports>

Analyzing the top 100 peak hours results in a more robust measure of impacts during PJM-ComEd and MISO-Illinois-Zone 4 peak grid loads. Representing just 1.1% of all the hours in a year, the top 100 peak hours capture the steepest part of load distribution curves.

## Bill Impact Analysis

The bill impact analysis provides an estimate of participant savings as the difference between bill savings and the participant’s costs to acquire solar PV (e.g., system costs, debt service payment, and lease/PPA payments). We completed this analysis for all energized projects. The research questions addressed by the bill impact analysis are listed in Table 56, below.

Table 56. Bill Impact Analysis Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Bill Impacts	<p>How much bill savings can participants expect due to the energy produced by ILSFA projects?</p> <p>How do bill reductions compare to the participant’s cost to acquire solar?</p>

## First-Year Electric Utility Bill Savings

The evaluation team calculated bill savings by estimating the difference between participant bills with and without PV benefits, applying PY24-25 electricity rates to both. The analysis assumes there is no increase in electrical consumption after PV installation. Three key inputs were necessary to calculate participant bills: 1) hourly PV system generation, 2) hourly participant load shapes, and 3) utility rate selection. We calculated bills using the hourly estimated PV production from the energy savings analysis (described above). All bill impact metrics use the TMY-based PV simulation outputs and assume like-new system conditions without degradation applied.

The evaluation team leveraged the statewide load profiles available from NLR’s database of end use load profiles to approximate participant’s load.<sup>38</sup> These datasets provide an estimate of the total statewide energy usage from specific building types at 15-minute intervals for an entire year. The datasets also include information on the number of units modeled in the state, allowing an average load profile to be calculated by dividing the total energy usage by the number of units modeled. Note that this method provides a smoothed load profile and does not account for individual peaks and valleys that are typically present in an individual’s load profile. We used the single-family detached profile for the Residential Solar (Small) (1-4 unit) and Community Solar projects, the multifamily profile for Residential Solar (Large) (5+ units), and the large office load profile for the NP/PF projects. We then adjusted the load profiles so that they were sized appropriately for each participant in the ILSFA program.

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.nlr.gov/buildings/end-use-load-profiles.html>

Adjustment factors used to scale the NLR load shapes were calculated using a sample of electric bills issued prior to PV installation.<sup>39</sup> The specific treatment varied by project type, as summarized below.

- **Residential Solar (Small):** For a random sample of 37 projects, participant bills and estimated first-year PV generation were used to calculate PV Sizing Factors. The mean of these PV Sizing Factors (107%) was used in the calculation of bills for all Residential Solar (Small) projects.
- **NP/PF:** For a random sample of 46 projects, participant bills and estimated first-year PV generation were used to calculate PV Sizing Factors. The mean of these PV Sizing Factors (77%) was used in the calculation of bills for all NP/PF projects.
- **Residential Solar (Large) and Community Solar:** A PV Sizing Factor of 100% was assumed. (The availability of participant electric bills did not support calculation of PV Sizing Factors.)

In the case of Community Solar projects, the evaluation team adjusted the PV estimates to match the annual load for a single-family detached home to approximate the bill savings for an individual participant subscribed to Community Solar.

Historical rate selection information was not readily available for all projects. Therefore, results of the evaluation team’s review of a sample of bills guided assumptions with respect to participant rates. Table 57, below, presents the rate assumptions used to model participant bill savings. Note that we modeled the two MidAmerican projects using Ameren Illinois bill assumptions. The evaluation team assumed that participants were not using hourly-based versions of these rates.

Table 57. Participant Rate Selection Assumptions

Utility Service Area	Project Type	Number of Projects	Assumed Participant Rate Selection
ComEd	Residential Solar (Small)	1,463	BES – Basic Electric Service
	Residential Solar (Large)	4	BES – Basic Electric Service
	Non-Profit/Public Facilities	50	SL – Small Load
	Community Solar	6	BES – Basic Electric Service
Ameren Illinois	Residential Solar (Small)	30	DS1 – Residential Delivery Service
	Non-Profit/Public Facilities	63	DS2 – General Delivery Service
	Small Participant <150 kW		DS3 – General Delivery Service
	Large Participant >150 kW	4	
	Community Solar	8	DS1 – Residential Delivery Service
MidAmerican	Residential Solar (Small)	1	Ameren Illinois DS1*
	Non-Profit/Public Facilities	1	Ameren Illinois DS2*

\*Due to the limited number of energized MidAmerican projects (2 projects), the evaluation team estimated bill savings for these projects using Ameren rates

<sup>39</sup> Sample of electric bills was received during PY5 evaluation

The evaluation team calculated monthly bills under two scenarios: pre-solar installation, and post-solar installation. The monthly bills were calculated based on energy delivered (kWh) and the energy received from the PV system (kWh). Fixed rates, delivery charges, fees, and taxes were sourced from the ComEd and Ameren Illinois online rate definitions, as well as from the Illinois Commerce Commission archive of all tariff filings and compliance filings.<sup>40, 41</sup> Supply costs, including the purchased electricity adjustment, electricity supply charge, and transmission services charge, vary throughout the year, and the historical values from June 2024 through May 2025 were used, per data available from Plug In Illinois.<sup>42</sup> The evaluation team reviewed a small sample of nine post-installation bills which were used to confirm the bill calculation approach.

## Net Energy Metering Vintage

PY24-25 introduces separate treatment of participants under the original net energy metering (NEM) tariff and those subject to the updated NEM tariff that took effect after January 1, 2025. Under the original NEM tariff, energy exported to the grid by an ILSFA participant's PV system is credited at the full retail electricity rate, including supply, transmission, distribution charges, taxes, and fees. Under the updated NEM tariff, export credits are limited to supply and transmission charges only. This change in tariff policy affects the estimated bill savings for distributed generation projects who interconnected on or after January 1, 2025.

To account for this change in the NEM tariff, we classified each distributed generation ILSFA project's NEM vintage based on its solar disclosure created date in the project tracking data. Projects with a system energization date on or after January 1, 2025, were assigned to the new NEM tariff and all other projects, including those with no disclosure date on record, were assigned to the original NEM tariff. The bill estimation method for Community Solar projects is unchanged in PY24-25 and not affected by NEM vintage.

## Lifetime Electric Utility Bill Savings Compared to Cost

The evaluation team estimated the lifetime bill savings over 20 years. We made several assumptions regarding how bill calculation inputs would change over time. We estimated bill savings assuming an annual PV degradation rate of 0.5%, which is the rate used by IPA for program planning purposes.

We did not assume that a participant's load would change over the lifetime of the system. We assumed retail rates will increase by 4% annually based on our review of ComEd and Ameren rates from 2017 through 2023. ComEd rates increased by an average of 3% per year and Ameren rates increased by an average of 8%. Based on each utility territory's proportional representation in energized projects, we used the weighted average annual rate increase of 4% (nominal).<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> ComEd Rate Definitions: <https://www.comed.com/my-account/my-dashboard/rates-tariffs/current-rates-tariffs>.

<sup>41</sup> Ameren Illinois Rate Definitions: <https://www.ameren.com/illinois/residential/rates/electric-rates>.

<sup>42</sup> <https://plugin.illinois.gov/understanding-the-price-to-compare/price-to-compare-comed.html>

<sup>43</sup> These data were obtained from: <https://plugin.illinois.gov/understanding-the-price-to-compare/price-to-compare-comed.html>.

We also estimated the lifetime costs associated with the project. Cost assumptions were taken from ILSFA tracking data where information was available about purchase terms, including: the ownership type (purchase, lease, or PPA), the number of years of the contract terms, and the payment (per month, or per kWh for PPA terms). We present results as the net present value (NPV) of bill savings and participants' costs. We calculated the NPV using a 5.575% nominal discount rate.

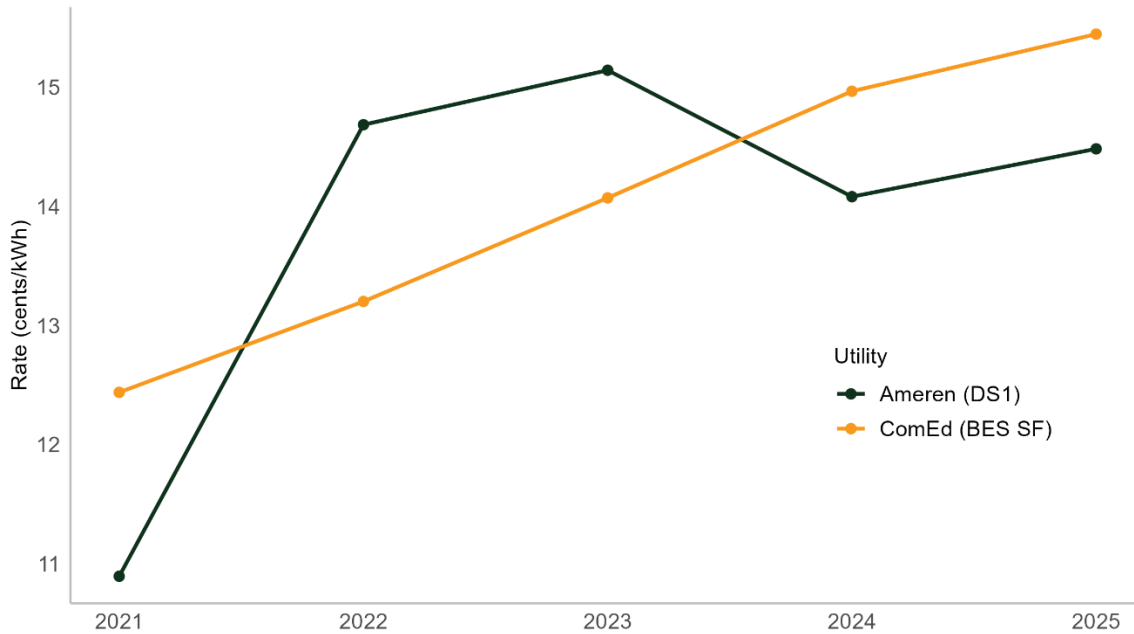
## Electric Utility Rate Increases

Over the past five years, electric utility rates in Illinois have been steadily increasing. Figure 56, below, shows annual average volumetric electric rates inclusive of supply, transmission, distribution, fees, and taxes for ComEd and Ameren residential customers from 2021 through 2025. The electric rates underlying the figure are constructed from the same rate component data underlying this evaluation's bill savings estimates. Both utilities show a general upward trend over the period, with ComEd rates rising steadily from 12.4 to 15.5 cents/kWh and Ameren rates increasing from 10.9 cents/kWh in 2021 to a peak of 15.1 cents/kWh in 2023 before declining and partially recovering through 2025. These trends are broadly consistent with rising electricity rates observed across other utilities and regions nationally.<sup>44</sup>

Rising utility rates have two implications for ILSFA participants. On one hand, higher rates increase the value of bill savings associated with PV installations. As the price of electricity rises, the avoided electric utility bill cost of each kWh offset by solar grows proportionally. However, rising rates also increase the portion of participants' bills not offset by their PV system, meaning participants experience smaller reductions in their bills year over year.

<sup>44</sup> Wisner, R., O'Shaughnessy, E., Barbose, G., Cappers, P., & Gorman, W. (2025). Factors influencing recent trends in retail electricity prices in the United States. *The Electricity Journal*, 38(4), 107516. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tej.2025.107516>

Figure 56. Annual Average Residential Electricity Rates, ComEd and Ameren (2021–2025)



Note: ComEd and Ameren rates from Verdant's internal database. Rates reflect supply, transmission, distribution, fees, and taxes.

## Environmental Impact Analysis

The environmental impact analysis evaluated the avoided emissions of approved and energized PY24-25 projects. Table 58, below, lists the research questions addressed by the environmental impact analysis.

Table 58. Environmental Impact Analysis Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Environmental Impacts	What are the first-year, one-year, and lifetime emissions reductions associated with approved and energized ILSFA projects?

Environmental impacts from solar PV generation are a result of reduced utility power plant operation. We estimated avoided CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions using data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's AVOIDed Emissions and geneRation Tool (AVERT) and the National Laboratory of the Rockies' (NLR) Cambium datasets, which are sets of simulated hourly emission, cost, and operation data for a range of modeled futures of the U.S. electric sector.<sup>45 46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). 2024. AVERT v4.3 Avoided Emission Rates 2017-2023. Available at <https://www.epa.gov/avert>.

<sup>46</sup> Gagnon, Pieter. 2025: Workbooks for 2024 Cambium Data. NLR Data Catalog. Golden, CO: National Laboratory of the Rockies. <https://data.nlr.gov/submissions/289>.

We estimated avoided NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> emissions using AVERT data only, as the Cambium data does not provide equivalent emission factors for these pollutants. For CO<sub>2</sub> impacts, our analysis uses Cambium mid-case scenarios, which utilize central estimates for inputs such as technology costs, fuel prices, and demand growth.

## CO<sub>2</sub> Emission Factors

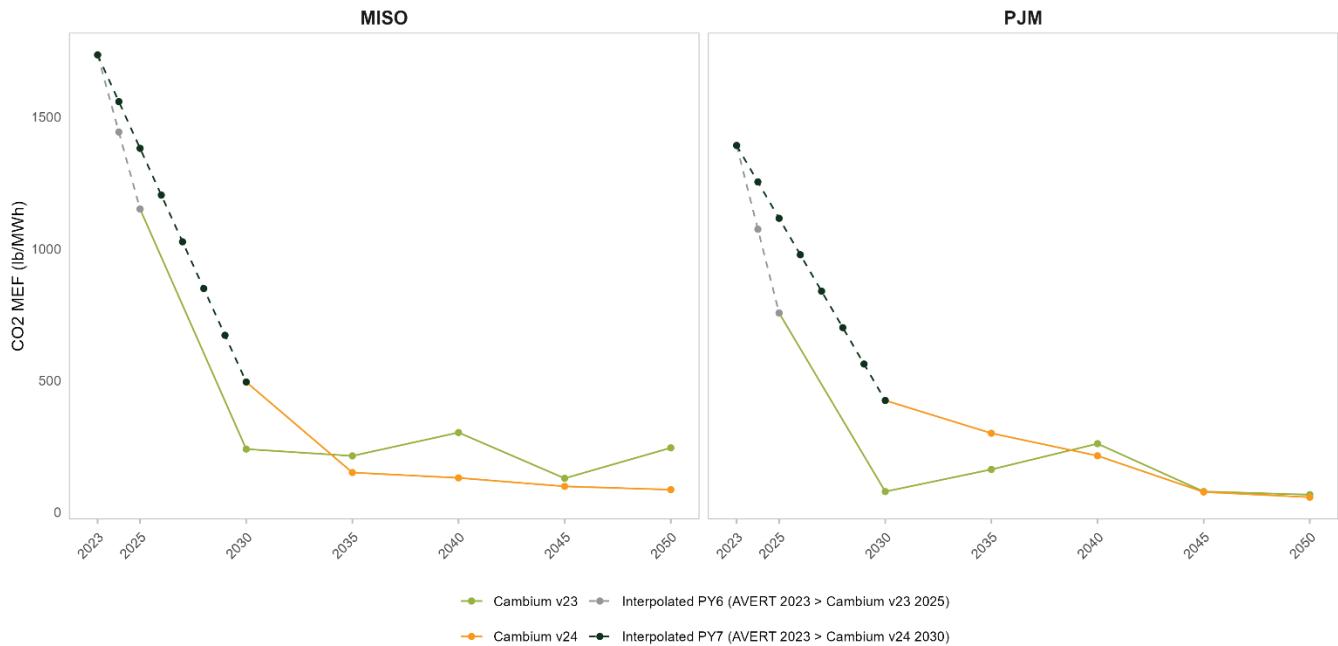
We sourced marginal CO<sub>2</sub> emission rates from two datasets: EPA AVERT 2023 and NLR Cambium 2024.<sup>47</sup> We used the Midwest region from AVERT as a proxy for MISO-Illinois and the Mid-Atlantic region for PJM-ComEd. From Cambium, we used the MISO-Central and PJM-West regions.

AVERT data ends in 2023 and the Cambium 2024 dataset begins in 2025, requiring a bridge for intermediate years to link the two sources and create a full annual schedule of marginal emission rates. For PY24-25, we linearly interpolated CO<sub>2</sub> from the 2023 AVERT rate to the Cambium 2030 estimate to produce interpolated emission rates for 2024 through 2029 and used Cambium month-hour marginal emission rates directly for 2030 and beyond. This approach differs from the PY23-24 evaluation, which used the midpoint between AVERT 2023 and Cambium's 2025 estimate as the starting point for CO<sub>2</sub> emission factors. The decision to anchor the interpolation at the 2030 Cambium value rather than 2025 is consistent with guidance in NLR's Cambium documentation, which notes that analyses seeking to be conservative about near-term rates of change may choose to ignore the 2025 projection and instead interpolate between the most recent empirical data and the 2030 Cambium data point.<sup>48</sup> Figure 57 below shows a comparison of the interpolated CO<sub>2</sub> emission rates values that were used in the prior evaluation (PY23-24) and this current evaluation (PY24-25). For PY23-24, we interpolated AVERT 2023 marginal emission factors (MEFs) to the 2025 CO<sub>2</sub> value in NLR's Cambium 2023 dataset, and the used projections from that same dataset for subsequent years. For PY24-25, we interpolated the AVERT 2023 MEF to the 2030 projected CO<sub>2</sub> value in the 2024 version of the Cambium dataset. The updated methodology results in higher CO<sub>2</sub> emission rate values than were used in the prior evaluation.

<sup>47</sup> Note: EPA AVERT 2023 is the most recent publicly available release of the AVERT tool and data.

<sup>48</sup> Gagnon, Pieter, Pedro Andres Sanchez Perez, Julian Florez, James Morris, Marck Llerena Velasquez, and Jordan Eisenman. 2025. Cambium 2024 Scenario Descriptions and Documentation. Golden, CO: National Laboratory of the Rockies. NLR/TP6A40-93005. <https://www.nlr.gov/docs/fy25osti/93005.pdf>. p. 19.

Figure 57. Interpolated CO<sub>2</sub> Emission Rates Values in PY23-24 Evaluation and PY24-25 Evaluation in MISO and PJM



To account for time of day and seasonal variation in marginal emission rates, we calculated PV generation-weighted CO<sub>2</sub> MEFs by weighting the Cambium month-hour emission rates by the actual distribution of PV generation across month-hour bins. This approach ensures that MEFs reflect when solar generates rather than applying a flat annual average. We produced separate weighted MEFs based on our TMY and AMY generation profiles, both using undegraded PV simulation outputs.

## NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> Emission Factors

We relied on marginal NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> emission rates from the Distributed PV Generation profile from AVERT 2023. To project these rates into the future, we applied a grid cleaning factor of 2.163% per year, which reflects an assumed decrease in marginal emission rates over time as high emission intensity resources are replaced by cleaner technologies. The grid cleaning factor used is the default value assumed in NLR’s Renewable Energy Integration and Optimization tool, which estimates NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> impacts from AVERT data.<sup>49</sup> We used calendar year 2025 (CY2025) as the starting year for the environmental impact analysis, and therefore applied the grid cleaning factor twice to step from the 2023 AVERT base rate to CY2025. We then projected these rates forward annually from 2025 through 2044 applying the grid cleaning factor and a 3% real discount rate to create a 20-year MEF schedule.

<sup>49</sup> <https://reopt.nlr.gov/tool>.

Table 59: AVERT First-year NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> Emissions Rates (2023 Adjusted, Distributed PV Generation Profile)

Region	No <sub>x</sub> Emissions Rate (LBs/MWH)	So <sub>2</sub> Emissions Rate (LBs/MWH)
Mid-Atlantic	0.51	0.57
Midwest	0.94	1.09

## First-Year Environmental Impacts

We estimated first-year CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and SO<sub>2</sub> impacts for approved ILSFA projects using TMY-based PV simulation outputs and CY2025 emission rates. The PV simulation outputs used for first-year impacts do not reflect PV system degradation and assume like-new system conditions under typical weather.

## One-Year Environmental Impacts

We estimated one-year CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and SO<sub>2</sub> impacts for energized projects using AMY-based PY24-25 PV simulation outputs and CY2025 emission rates. Age-based degradation is applied at 0.5% per year based on each project's invoice issued date. This metric represents our best estimate of the emissions avoided during the PY24-25 period (June 2024 through May 2025).

## Lifetime Environmental Impacts

In this evaluation, we introduced two approaches for calculating lifetime environmental impacts, one for approved projects, and one for energized projects. The methodology for approved projects is consistent with the prior evaluation. For energized projects, we applied a cohort-based marginal emission factor approach used for lifetime environmental impacts. These two approaches are described in more detail below.

### Lifetime Environmental Impacts of Approved Projects

The lifetime environmental impacts analysis covers a 20-year window beginning in CY2025 for both approved and energized projects using TMY-based PV simulation outputs.

For CO<sub>2</sub>, the 20-year lifetime calculation is split into two parts. For years 2025 through 2029, we used the interpolated AVERT-to-Cambium rates described in the CO<sub>2</sub> emission factors section above, multiplied by the annual TMY generation. For years 2030 through 2044, we used the Cambium month-hour MEFs, linearly interpolated between the 5-year mid-scenario benchmark years (2030, 2035, 2040, and 2045), multiplied by hourly TMY-based PV simulation outputs. We assume a starting point in 2025 of like new PV-systems without accumulated degradation and then apply a PV degradation factor of 0.5% and a real discount factor of 3%.

For NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> we projected the CY2025 AVERT rate forward over 20 years, applying three year-over-year adjustments: PV system degradation at 0.5% per year applied to generation, grid cleaning at 2.163% per year applied to emission rates, and a 3% real discount rate.

## Lifetime Environmental Impacts of Energized Projects

As described above, the approach for environmental impacts uses CY2025 as the starting emission factor year for all energized projects regardless of when they were energized. This means a project energized in 2020 is evaluated using the same year one emission rates as a project energized in 2024, even though the grid was meaningfully dirtier in earlier years and those projects delivered greater avoided emissions during their actual first years of operation.

To address this limitation, we developed a cohort MEF vintage approach. Using this approach, each energized project's emission factor schedule starts from its actual energization year. For projects energized between 2020 and 2023, we used the AVERT rates, then applied the AVERT-to-Cambium interpolated values for years 2024 through 2029, and Cambium month-hour MEFs for 2030 onward. For projects energized in 2024 or later, we used the interpolated bridge value corresponding to the project's energization year as the starting point for the MEF schedule. The MEF schedule for each project ends 20 years after its energization year.

This approach is intended to better reflect the actual emissions avoided over each ILSFA project's lifetime and credit projects energized in earlier program years with greater avoided emissions when marginal grid emission rates were higher.

## Impact Equivalencies

We translated both first-year (approved projects) and one-year (energized projects) estimates of avoided CO<sub>2</sub> emissions into two equivalency metrics: the number of Illinois residential homes whose annual electricity consumption is equivalent to ILSFA project generation, and the number of passenger vehicles whose annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are offset by ILSFA avoided emissions. Homes powered equivalencies are based on 2024 Illinois average residential electricity consumption statistics from the Illinois Commerce Commission.<sup>50</sup> Vehicle offset equivalencies are based on estimates of average vehicle CO<sub>2</sub> emission rates and vehicle miles traveled from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics and the Federal Highway Administration.<sup>51,52</sup>

## Jobs and Economic Impact Analysis

The evaluation team estimated economic impact metrics by applying the IMPLAN input/output economic model with tailored inputs informed by ILSFA program data. IMPLAN's economic sector characterization of the Illinois state economy allows for each of the economic impacts to be disaggregated by economic sector. This enabled an illustration of the breakdown of employment, income, or GDP impacts across sectors such as construction, manufacturing, engineering, and administration.

<sup>50</sup> <https://icc.illinois.gov/api/web-management/documents/downloads/public/en/24-23%20Comparison%20of%20Electric%20Sales%20Statistics%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.bts.gov/content/estimated-national-average-vehicle-emissions-rates-vehicle-vehicle-type-using-gasoline-and>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/onh00/bar8.htm>

To develop inputs for the economic analysis we relied on data inputs from other aspects of the evaluation, including ILSFA tracking data, total project costs, invoices from AVs, on-bill impacts, and subscriber data.

Table 60 tabulates the methods for the calculation of each of the identified economic impacts, broken out by impact category, key inputs, an overview of the technical method, and key outputs.

Table 60. Methodology and Key Outputs

Impact Category	Key Inputs	Analytic Method	Key Outputs
Near-term impacts from new solar installations	Project tracking data, including project expenditures and location by project type NLR Data on the cost of residential solar installations by labor, hardware, and soft costs Sample invoices from AVs	Project expenditures (as well as any program-related local employment, expenditure assumptions) serve as key input to IMPLAN input/output model broken out by average percent spent on each component (hardware, labor, and soft costs) IMPLAN calculates employment impacts for new activity in the New Construction of Power and Communication Structures industry	Direct, Indirect, and Induced employment impacts across sectors. Incremental earned income and GDP impacts. Impacts to taxes resulting from new near-term economic output
Ongoing impacts from energy bill savings	Average bill savings by project type and geography, estimated by Verdant Assumptions for household savings rates from the literature	On-bill savings serve as key input to IMPLAN input/output model IMPLAN calculates new household spending following gains in household disposable income	Distribution of new household spending by economic sector

## Social Impacts

The Social Impacts section draws on program tracking data, participant surveys, and stakeholder interviews to assess the social impacts of ILSFA in PY24-25. The analysis covers all projects approved in PY24-25, including six Community Solar projects, 41 NP/PF projects, and 579 Residential Solar projects. Because only two projects received approval under the Residential Solar (Large) subprogram, Small and Large Residential Solar projects are grouped together and referred to as Residential Solar throughout the section.

The primary areas of analysis and corresponding data collection activities are summarized below. Activities marked with a star (\*) also informed the Process Evaluation section.

**Geographic Distribution:** We analyzed the locations of PY24-25 approved projects among EJs, utility service territories, and income-qualified census tracts.

**Program Reach and Community Impact:** We examined how participants and communities benefit from the program, including benefits to Energy Sovereignty participants, as well as how the program is implemented and distributed across vendors, participants, and communities.

- **Energy Sovereignty:** Assessed the percentage of projects classified as Energy Sovereignty projects in PY24-25 in comparison to PY23-24. The upcoming Energy Sovereignty evaluation report will include additional exploration of these trends.
- **Approved Vendor Analysis:** Examined where AVs are headquartered and the extent to which they operate in or serve communities beyond their headquarters locations, and assessed AV participation by Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs) and Small and Emerging Business Enterprises (SEBs).
- **Community and Participant Social Benefits:** Surveyed Residential Solar (Small) and Community Solar participants, and interviewed NP/PF participants.\*
- **Demographics Analysis:** Analyzed participation demographics compared to the overall Illinois population.

Table 61 summarizes the categories and the primary research questions that supported the PY24-25 social impacts analysis.

Table 61. Social Impacts Research Questions

Category	Primary Research Questions
Distribution of benefits across communities	What portion of program projects and program funding are awarded in ILSFA Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs)?
	What portion of program projects and program funding are awarded in different utility service territories?
	What portion of program projects and program funding are awarded in income-eligible communities?
	How are AVs distributed across Illinois? What is their presence in IE, EJCs, and rural communities?
Distribution of benefits within communities	What are the demographic characteristics of the participants in the program?
	Is the program having challenges in reaching demographic subgroups?
	What percentage of AVs are MWBEs and SEBs?
Energy Sovereignty	What is the success of the program in allocating Energy Sovereignty reserved funds?
	Are there differences between subprograms?
Participant Benefits	In what ways do participants report benefiting from the program?
	What are other benefits for participants and communities?

## Key Definitions and Methodological Notes

**Environmental Justice Communities.** EJCs are areas that disproportionately bear the burden of environmental hazards associated with long-term negative health effects. ILSFA identifies these areas using a scoring system that incorporates multiple indicators, including exposure (pollution), environmental effects, sensitive populations (based on age or health), and socioeconomic factors. This scoring system ranks census block groups based on these indicators and designates the 25% with the highest scores as EJCs. In addition to this ranking process, communities may also apply for self-designation, demonstrating that they meet or closely approximate the EJC criteria used in the scoring system.

CEJA requires the program to reserve 25% of each subprogram's budget for projects located within EJCs. If the program does not distribute all the reserved funds in a given year, the unused funds roll over to the following program year. The 25% EJC carveout of that subsequent year is calculated based on the combined total amount of the leftover funds and the new program year's budget. The program may not fully distribute EJC carveout funds in a given year for several reasons. Most commonly, this occurs when there are insufficient qualifying project submissions located in EJCs. Less frequently, projects proposed within EJCs may not meet other program eligibility or approval requirements.

In addition to carveouts, ILSFA incorporates EJCs into its project selection framework. Projects located in EJCs receive higher scores in the ranking in the ILSFA project selection process, which occurs when submitted projects exceed the available incentive budget. However, as in PY23-24, ILSFA did not implement project selection for any subprogram in PY24-25, as none received enough submissions during the initial submission window to fully allocate the budget.

**Utility Service Territories.** The number of projects within and outside ComEd's service territory serves as a proxy for understanding how well ILSFA is reaching central and downstate communities.

Program stakeholders raised lower rates of participation in central and southern Illinois as a concern in prior evaluation years, and therefore, the evaluation team has monitored how the geographic distribution of projects has evolved over time.

**Income-Eligible Communities.** ILSFA consistently directs a substantial share of projects and incentive funding to Income-Eligible (IE) Communities. During the selection process, the program prioritizes projects located in IE communities by prioritizing 25% of the budget for these areas under each subprogram.<sup>53</sup> IE Communities are defined as those where most households earn below 80% of the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI), adjusted for family size, and are revised every five years.

<sup>53</sup> Projects in Income-Eligible Communities are prioritized in the third prioritization stage, but do not have a required carve-out. Projects in EJCs and those that support energy sovereignty, prioritized in the first and second prioritization stages, have a required carve-out.

**Energy Sovereignty.** Energy Sovereignty refers to arrangements in which eligible low-income households or community organizations either own or are on track to own most or all of a solar system.

As explained by the program administrator, the intent of Energy Sovereignty within ILSFA is to promote community wealth through solar ownership. In cooperative or community ownership models, Energy Sovereignty is achieved through holding a share or membership in the group that owns the solar system. The transfer of ownership occurs over the long term, as it can take as long as seven years to complete.

ILSFA reserves funding across all subprograms to promote Energy Sovereignty participation. Each year, 25% of the funding for every subprogram is reserved for projects that support Energy Sovereignty. Residential Solar and NP/PF subprogram projects can achieve the Energy Sovereignty designation through a lease or power purchase agreement (PPA) that includes an early buyout option, triggered seven years or earlier after system energization. These projects are required to clearly specify the cost, timing, and terms of ownership transfer, along with other relevant details in the participant's contract. Community Solar projects can qualify for Energy Sovereignty designation through either an ownership or cooperative model. The ownership model includes a lease or PPA with a buyout clause that allows ownership transfer seven years or earlier after energization. The cooperative model allows a co-op organization to sell low-cost subscriptions to participants who are members or owners of the co-op.

The program prioritizes Energy Sovereignty funds early in the application cycle but may be reallocate them if unused. Beginning in PY22-23 and for each subsequent program year, 25% of each ILSFA subprogram's funds are reserved for Energy Sovereignty projects for the first six months after the subprogram's application window opens. After that period, any unused funds can be awarded to any qualifying projects.

**Approved Vendors.** The analysis considers all 25 AVs with approved projects in PY24-25. Six of the 25 AVs that participated in ILSFA during PY24-25 were located outside the state.

Of these six, four are headquartered in a neighboring state, Missouri, while two AVs are located in other regions of the US. These AVs are included in counts of headquarters not located within EJs, utility service territories, or IE Communities when discussing vendor headquarters location in the sections below, although it is possible that they may have staff or field offices located in these communities.

To assess geographic reach beyond headquarters locations, the analysis examined the straight-line distance between each AV's headquarters and its project sites, generating a median distance per vendor as a proxy for how far vendors typically travel to complete projects. The analysis focuses on distributed generation subprograms (NP/PF, Residential Solar (Small), and Residential Solar (Large)), as travel distance is a meaningful indicator of vendor service territory and access constraints for these project types. Community Solar projects were excluded, as their locations are driven by factors not necessarily related to customer proximity. Of the 21 AVs that implemented distributed generation projects in PY24-25, one was headquartered outside Illinois or neighboring Missouri, so this vendor was excluded from this analysis due to its atypical location, leaving 20 AVs in this analysis.

Because straight-line distances do not account for actual driving routes, true travel distances are likely longer than reported. Additionally, not all vendors may travel directly from their headquarters to project sites (some may operate through local staff or field offices), so figures in the Social Impact section should be interpreted as approximate indicators of geographic reach rather than precise travel distances.

**Community and Participant Social Benefits.** This subsection draws on the same data collection activities described in the methodological notes of the Primary Data Collection and Process Evaluation sections.

**Demographic Analysis.** Demographic analysis draws on Customer Certification Forms for Residential Solar (Small) participants with projects approved in PY24-25. For Community Solar subscribers, figures reflect enrollments from PY2018-19 (PY1) through PY2024-25. This broader time frame is used because enrollment-date information was not previously available in a way that allowed new and existing subscribers to be distinguished in earlier reporting. With enrollment dates now available, the analysis includes all Community Solar subscribers enrolled to date to provide a more complete picture of the demographic characteristics of this group.

## Process Evaluation

The process evaluation assessed the performance of Elevate as the program administrator and examined the experiences of various stakeholders involved in implementing or benefiting from the ILSFA program. The PY24-25 process evaluation drew upon primary data collection activities, including interviews with IPA and Elevate staff, AV survey, participant surveys and interviews, Grassroots Educator listening sessions, and job trainee surveys.

The process evaluation incorporated findings from primary data collection activities and the program materials and tracking data review, synthesizing feedback both at the level of individual program actors and across data collection activities to identify cross-cutting themes that inform the evaluation's key findings and recommendations. Table 62 below summarizes the process evaluation research questions.

Table 62. Process Evaluation Research Questions

Research Themes	Primary Research Questions
Program Design and Delivery	What are the roles and responsibilities of program administrator, IPA, and other key players?
	What changes have been made to the program in PY24-25?
	How is the experience of participants, AVs, Grassroots Educators, and job trainees with the program?
	What is the experience of participants, AVs, Grassroots Educators, and job trainees with Elevate?
	Are there any parts of the program processes that may be inefficient or confusing for participants, AVs, Grassroots Educators, and job trainees?

Research Themes	Primary Research Questions
Program Actors	<p>What role does each key actor play (including AVs, Grassroots Educators, and related efforts) and how do they work together?</p> <p>Are there any opportunities to improve or streamline coordination?</p>
Program Goals	<p>What were the goals of the ILSFA program in PY24-25?</p> <p>What are program goals or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)?</p> <p>What strategies or interventions did ILSFA use to achieve these goals and KPIs?</p>
Program Performance	<p>Did the ILSFA program meet its goals in PY24-25?</p> <p>Which aspects of implementation went well, and where did ILSFA run into challenges?</p> <p>What barriers might prevent participation or success?</p> <p>How can PY24-25 process results be used to contextualize PY24-25 impact findings?</p> <p>What were program administrative costs in PY24-25?</p>
Marketing and Outreach	<p>Are there specific KPIs or guidelines for marketing and outreach?</p> <p>What channels does the ILSFA program use for outreach?</p> <p>What is working well with program outreach, and where is the ILSFA program facing challenges?</p>
Data Tracking	<p>What does the program track, and who is responsible for tracking and reporting?</p> <p>How does program data get QC'd?</p>

## Appendix B. Direct Tax Impacts

The tables below show direct tax impacts by the type of taxpayer at the federal, state, county, and municipal levels.

Table 63. Federal Direct Tax Impact by Taxpayer

Taxpayer	Federal Tax
Employee Compensation	\$2,150,000
Proprietor Income	\$236,000
Enterprises (Corporations)	\$607,000
Tax on Production and Imports	\$41,000
Households with Income < \$50k	\$0
Households with Income \$50 - 100k	\$252,000
Households with Income \$100 - 200k	\$817,000
Households with Income > \$200k	\$1,267,000
Total	\$5,370,000

Table 64. State Direct Tax Impact by Taxpayer

Taxpayer	State Tax
Employee Compensation	\$2,000
Proprietor Income	\$0
Enterprises (Corporations)	\$474,000
Tax on Production and Imports	\$426,000
Households with Income < \$50k	\$10,000
Households with Income \$50 - 100k	\$89,000
Households with Income \$100 - 200k	\$209,000
Households with Income > \$200k	\$224,000
Total	\$1,434,000

Table 65. County and Municipal Direct Tax Impact by Taxpayer

Taxpayer	County Tax	Municipal Tax
Households	\$0	\$0
Tax on production and imports	\$62,000	\$520,000
Total	\$62,000	\$520,000