Illinois Solar for All Advisory Committee Meeting
June 23, 2026
2pm – 3:30pm

Introductions and Agenda Overview

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (00:00:02):

Good afternoon, everyone. Good afternoon. Thank you so much for being here, Illinois Solar for All Advisory Committee. We so appreciate you as always for making this meeting an important part of your workday and an important part of what you do for Illinois Solar for All. Again, this is Jennifer Brown and I'm here with my colleague, Patrice, who will kick us off here in just a moment, but we're really excited for today's meeting. So let me go ahead and just share with you what we're talking about today. So our agenda will cover just a quick recap of our last two gatherings, our last two meetings. And then today's topics we have two for you. We're going to provide you with an update on the AV manual and we'll also give you some updates on project selection as that is a very important part of the program as well and we'll be even more as we move into the next program year.

(00:01:21):

And of course we'll provide you with some space for questions and then we'll close out. So today probably more than ever being present is going to be important because it's a heavy topic, a lot of details, a lot of intricate details. So definitely being present today so that you don't miss any of the intricacies that are being shared with you today will be amazing. And we're going to go ahead and get started with some of the recap from our last committee meetings. So I'll go ahead and share the mic with my colleague, Patrice. All

Last Meeting Recap

Patrice McFarlin, Encolor (00:02:09):

Right, awesome. Good afternoon advisory committee. Happy to be here with you all. So we actually had two meetings since our last time we met for our quarterly meeting. We had our standard quarterly meeting in February where we had 16 of our members were able to attend and we had two topic discussions first around grassroots education and really talked about what are some of the strategies and tactics and some direction for the grassroots education program as a response to understanding that there is heightened demand for the small resi program. And then we also talked about how we could spur some more interest and make the participant referral process more effective and efficient. Then we gathered again in March where 10 of us got together and we were able to have a conversation about the low income discount rate that was going to be happening across the state and really talking through what are some of the ways that we can position the Solar for All program there to make sure that it's still beneficial for customers who wanted to participate, understanding that the low income discount rate may reposition some of the value of participating in Illinois Solar for All.

(00:03:42):

So really appreciate your participation in those last two meetings. And of course, if you were not able to attend, we do invite you to review the meeting information that's available for you online.

Topic 1: Updates to AV Manual

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (00:04:05):

All right. Wonderful, wonderful. Thank you for that recap, Patrice. So we're just going to dive right into our first topic, which is updates to the AV manual. And we have Olivia Salazar Mendez from a director with Illinois Solar for All. Olivia is not a stranger to the advisory committee. She has joined us several times before and so we're always excited to have Olivia back. So thank you so much, Olivia. I'll let you take it away.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (00:04:39):

Thank you so much. Yeah, it's really great to be back. I wanted to go ahead and take an opportunity to review some of the approved vendor manual updates. I know that this was a topic that we had covered actually back in November, which was just kind of an overview of what the approved vendor manual covers as well as how the process of updating the approved vendor manual works as we ramp up for the upcoming program year. So now we're in a really great spot in that we are in the next program year. I'm still finding myself calling it that, trying to get out of that habit, but we're currently in the program year for 26, 27. And with that, we've had some pretty significant changes to our approved vendor manual that are really helpful to kind of step through some of those updates. So I wanted to start here by giving a little bit of background as to why some of the changes were made to the approved vendor manual.

(00:05:44):

There's a few things that usually go into these updates. So on area is typically if there's any sort of legislation changes, that's going to feed into the updates. And then we have the long-term renewable resources procurement plan. We typically call it the long-term plan for short, so you'll probably hear me refer to that as the 2026 long-term plan and that gets updated every so often so those updates get incorporated. And then finally, we have any kind of feedback or discussion topics, maybe something that's come up in the program year and all of those things feed into our updates. Well, this year we had some pretty big items that were updated that really drove a big chunk of the changes that we made to our approve vendor manual and also to our project selection protocol. So the first one is I'm going to call it CRGA.

(00:06:43):

So I'll start with CRGA. And this is the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act that the Illinois General Assembly passed in October of last year. Now the bill was actually signed into law by Governor Pritzker in January of this year and the bill itself actually took effect on June 1st of this year. CRGA it's a pretty extensive bill. There's a lot of things that are covered in it. So it's a comprehensive energy bill that was really aimed at enhancing energy reliability, affordability and sustainability by facilitating the development of battery storage projects, improving energy efficiency and introducing new long-term...So there were some items that were included in CRGA that we incorporated into our update to ensure that we were taking that into consideration for that June 1st effective deadline. The other thing that was updated is the long-term plan, which again, I'm calling it that for short.

(00:07:59):

This is actually the Illinois Power Agency's…It's kind of the guideline to the agency's activities and related to, excuse me, the development of new renewable resources to support the Illinois Renewable Portfolio Standard. So this is something that is actually updated every two years or so. So this was something where the IPA worked on getting updates on the 2026 long-term renewal resources procurement plan and a lot of those updates as well were incorporated into the approved vendor manual and into the project selection protocol. So it's just a little bit of background of kind of why there's some larger changes this year than maybe there have been in more recent years where there weren't as kind of big sweeping updates that were made on a legislation level. Next slide.

(00:09:03):

Okay. We'll start with some of these CRGA updates that were incorporated here. Now I just want to note with some of these CRGA updates, some of these updates we're going to be implementing this year and some were actually going to be working on stakeholder process this year. So I'll kind of go over everything that has been added to the approved vendor manual with some additional context as to the implementation of it. So I'll start with our workforce requirements section. So at the start of the program year, approved vendors are now required to identify the workforce requirements that they are going to comply with. So historically for Illinois Solar for All, approved vendors have had to meet the job training requirements that are outlined in the approved vendor manual. Well, the updates to CRGA actually expanded the requirements for workforce development to allow for approved vendors to utilize the minimum equity standards, which is called MES for short, which is a workforce development program that is actually managed on the Illinois Shines side.

(00:10:20):

So this offers approved vendors the opportunity to kind of decide which path they're going to take of how they're going to meet these workforce development requirements for the program. And at the beginning of the program year, approved vendors have to select which of the two options they're planning to utilize and then they are required to use that requirement for the remainder of the program year. So they can't switch back and forth between the workforce, excuse me, the MES requirements or job training requirements. It's a requirement that they have to utilize one or the other for the entirety of the program year, but they have the option to change again at the beginning of the next program year. So that's a pretty big one that we are implementing this program year.

(00:11:11):

Now the next thing that was addressed in CRGA is advance of capital. So this allows the agency to propose such payment structures to maximize equitable participation in the program and overcome challenges that challenges facing the development of projects. The advance capital piece is something that I think there's been a lot of conversation with Illinois Solar for All because we have a pretty strict requirements on what money is exchanged with customers in terms of ensuring that there is no upfront cost for projects. There has been some, I think, discussion previously and feedback previously of how to support certain vendors as they're trying to build these projects and not getting the invoice for the project until it's actually been built. So this is something that advance of capital was addressed in CRGA and we have added information about it into the approved vendor manual. Now just as a heads up for this one, the process for establishing the levels of advance of capital and the mechanisms by which the applicant will actually demonstrate the need for that advance will be developed through the stakeholder process during the 2026 and 2027 program year.

(00:12:41):

So while CRGA allows for advance of capital, the agency to actually propose the payment structure, there is going to be stakeholder process to work through what that is going to look like. So definitely stay tuned to announcement pages for ILSFA and for the IPA as those processes are being discussed, there's going to be a lot of information on those announcement pages.

(00:13:11):

Okay, next slide. Thank you. Okay. Another couple of updates for CRGA. Nonprofit and public facility requirements have been updated via CRGA. So this allows qualifying nonprofits and public facilities that can demonstrate that they serve income qualified or environmental justice communities. They may potentially qualify for the program regardless of physical location. Previously for nonprofit and public facilities, there was a requirement that these facilities had to actually be located in EJCs or IECs, which is that income qualified community and this has been expanded and is going to be expanded further with CRGA. Now, the agency will develop eligibility criteria and solicit stakeholder feedback on the proposal including the timing of implementation of these for inclusion in a future long-term plan. So this is, again, going to be something where I encourage folks to look out for announcements for the opportunity to provide stakeholder feedback so that there can be more discussion about developing that eligibility criteria.

(00:14:44):

I will go over later though that the nonprofit and public facilities requirements have still been expanded so we'll go over that in a little bit more detail in a later slide.

(00:14:58):

Income verification methodology, the agency extended the self-attestation option for two participants in residential solar small subprogram who reside in income eligible communities for the 2026 and 2027 program year. And the agency will proactively explore approaches that will make the income verification process less burdensome for residents of low income and environmental justice communities through stakeholder processes for potential incorporation in the future. Similar to the nonprofit and public facilities piece, there has been an expansion of income verification methodology implemented this year, which is allowing for self-attestation for small residential participants who are located in income eligible communities, but there is going to be stakeholder processes to potentially further explore how to make the process less burdensome. So keep an eye out for those stakeholder feedback opportunities. Next slide. Thank you. Okay. And this is the last of the CRGA updates. So there has been an update to system size and co-location requirements.

(00:16:19):

So distributed generation projects cannot have an aggregate size greater than five megawatts. So what that means is that if there is a distributed generation project that either that project itself or it's co-located, for example, with another project where the combined system size is greater than five megawatts, that's not allowable in the program. So there is now an affidavit requirement that states that the project is not affiliated with another project where they found to be co-located that would create an aggregate size greater than five megawatt nameplate capacity. There is a very similar update here for community solar. However, the main difference with community solar is that system size cap is 10 megawatts as opposed to five. So for community solar, it's going to be a system size that's allowable. And again, this is aggregate system size, the project itself as well as if there are multiple projects that are co-located, those projects cannot exceed that system cap.

(00:17:37):

Okay. We'll go to the next slide. Thank you. All right, that covers a lot of our information for CRGA, there is some more really good information that is in the approved vendor manual. I'm definitely giving a high level overview, but I'll provide a link here as soon as I finish presenting my slides so that folks can take a look at some of those other CRGA updates. Okay So for these other updates that were implemented, they were either implemented via updates to the 2026 long-term plan or feedback. I think primarily the 2026 long-term plan, a lot of the updates were incorporated from that. So just wanted to kind of go into detail about what some of those other large updates are for this program year. The first is there has been an update to our approved vendor types to incorporate a small and emerging business approved vendor type.

(00:18:41):

So what that is, is an entity that meets the definition of either a small business or an emerging business. They're able to register as an approved vendor in the Illinois Shines program after May 31st of this year and they will also be able to request the small and emerging business designation if they are already an approved vendor within Illinois Shine's registration process if they're becoming a new approved vendor. This designation is going to be something that will be allowable for both Shines and Solar for All. So if a approved vendor registers as a small and emerging business on Illinois Shines, then they will be considered a small and emerging business on Illinois Solar for All as well. And so to receive that designation, the small and emerging business on both Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All, the approved vendor has to demonstrate one of the following.

(00:19:45):

So as I mentioned previously, small business or emerging business. So the qualification as an emerging business demonstration that the entity has been authorized to do business in the United State district or territory for less than three years. So that's an emerging business and the qualification as a small business is demonstration that the entity is independently owned and operated and has a gross revenue of less than four million in the previous calendar year. Now, if you go to the next slide, why this is important is that there are some updates to our processes for small and emerging business approved vendors specifically. So projects that are submitted by small and emerging businesses are now eligible for additional prioritization points during project selection. So if they submit to the program and we go into project selection, there is additional prioritization for those small and emerging business projects. And I know that my colleague Larry is going to go into some more detail about that in later slides.

(00:21:02):

And if the project selection is not triggered, then small and emerging businesses will receive early access to your rolling submission window. So they're able to access the rolling submission window a little bit in advance of the greater rolling submission window for all approved vendors depending on the sub program. And then small and emerging businesses also may deduct the 5% collateral requirement. So for all projects, there is a 5% collateral requirement when a project is contracted or ICC approved and small and emerging businesses are able to actually deduct that 5% collateral from the invoice from the rec payment rather than having it due during the contract execution and they can do that for five projects. So what that means is that if an approved vendor is a small and emerging business, they are able to say for five projects, we would like to not actually provide the collateral at the stage of contract execution.

(00:22:17):

And then when they get invoiced, the collateral requirement will just be deducted from the invoice rather than being paid directly. So it's a little bit different and that's why it's really important for small and emerging businesses to kind of understand what that requirement is. Okay, next slide.

(00:22:40):

So as previously mentioned, I know that there was some discussion about the low income discount rates and there was definitely some discussion about the savings considerations for the low income discount rates and how it will impact the participants in our program. I know that there is some background that's been provided about the implementation specifically this is going to impact customers to my knowledge in ComEd and Ameren and currently the Illinois Solar for All Disclosure Forms, they do not account for the low income discount rate calculations when deciding the savings calculations. This is something where it is challenging to incorporate those additional considerations into the calculation because there are so many different factors for the low income discount rate as well, there are different options where it can kind of change. I think that Larry went over a lot of this information before year over year, the low income discount rate for an individual can change.

(00:24:00):

And so the savings requirements that are calculated on our disclosure forms because of the, not taking that into account, because of the change that can occur for a low income discount rate customer, there is a risk of overestimating the value of electricity to those low income discount rate customers and therefore overestimating the amount of savings. So the disclosure forms that are currently impacted by the low income discount rate. So like I mentioned, I know that ComEd currently has low income discount rate and Ameren is getting their process set up. I believe that they're planning on implementing in October. Those disclosure forms are not going to display the savings calculations because we don't want to provide an overestimate and for distributed generation projects, so not community solar projects that are in those impacted utilities, if there is not 100% savings or no cost offers that are provided to a participant, then there's an additional review that's going to take place to verify that the savings requirements are still met with that low income discount rate taken into consideration.

(00:25:27):

So there's kind of some extra steps that we're building in to have a more thorough review of the low income discount rate customers disclosure form and utility bills. Due to this update, community solar projects with no cost subscription commitments and no cost residential small projects, they also have the opportunity to be prioritized during project selection. And again, I'll let Larry go into more detail about that in later slides.

(00:26:01):

All right. And as I alluded to a little bit earlier for nonprofit and public facilities projects, there has been an update to expand the location of these projects. So I included a map. It's a little hard to see here. I'll try as well to drop a link in the chat with the map link too, but projects that are located in census blocks that are adjacent to environmental justice communities or income eligible communities are now eligible to participate in the nonprofit and public facilities sub program. So we've expanded the map here and that's what this image shows. Again, I'll share the information so that it's a little clearer when you look at the map itself, excuse me, but this has been expanded to showcase the adjacent census blocks as well. So an adjacent census block is defined as a neighboring statistical geographic area that shares a common boundary with a census tract, which is at that point in time designated as an environmental justice community or an income eligible community.

(00:27:24):

For these projects that are participating in nonprofit, they still have to demonstrate a sufficient connection to an input from members of these communities and the nonprofit and public facility that's serving those communities. So it's still a requirement that they are having to work with the environmental justice communities and income eligible communities, but now these facilities are able to be located in those adjacent census blocks. They don't have to be located directly in the environmental justice and income eligible community.

(00:28:05):

So it's a lot of information that was just covered. I did want to go ahead and add one more note here and again, dropping a few links in the chat after presenting, but wanted to make sure that folks were aware of the submission windows. So like I mentioned, Larry is going to go into a little bit more detail about project selection, but before he does, wanted to just showcase the submission windows, which is the initial period when projects can be submitted for each of these sub programs and if the budgets are exceeded, the available budgets for each of these subprograms during those initial submission windows, that's what would actually trigger project selection. So we are going to have submission windows for each of the subprograms. So for large residential that's coming up here in about a month, nonprofit and public facilities will be in August residential will be in September, residential small, excuse me, and community solar is going to be in late September and going into October.

(00:29:22):

So just wanted to make sure to share that information and Larry, I know Larry's going to share a lot more when he goes into project selection. So again, I covered a lot of information. I'm not sure, Jen Brown, if it's okay if I ask for questions right now and if not, we can roll into project selection.

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (00:29:45):

Yeah, no, you jumped right on it. That's what I was thinking is, let's just go ahead and get any questions while it's fresh on everyone's mind regarding your presentation before we go into Larry's presentation On project selection. Does anyone have a question? You can come off of mute or of course you can always pop it in the chat, but whatever works for you.

Kavi Chintman, Vote Solar (00:30:14):

Hey Olivia, thank you for that. Really appreciate it. This is Kavi from Vote Solar. I had I guess a couple of questions. One might be covered by Lawrence, but for the rolling submission and the ability for small businesses to take advantage of that sooner, I was wondering if there was any consideration or any advocacy on y'all's part to open the initial submission window sooner for small businesses. That was something that the Solar For All working group advocated for and fortunately that didn't happen. So just curious if you have any thoughts on

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (00:31:02):

So because the initial submission window is a two week period where approved vendors can all submit their projects and because they're also approved vendors are able to utilize the downtime before the windows, so an approved vendor doesn't have to actually work on the project that they intend to submit during that two week period. If an approved vendor really wants to, they can technically go into the portal today and work on getting all of the information input and prepared in the project and put it into pre-application and then submit the batches when the initial submission window opens. So because of that factor and then also the factor that we have incorporated additional scoring, I think it's something that we had initially discussed, but I think that giving the additional time that approved vendors have to prepare for those submission windows and then the scoring, I think that's ultimately where we landed was making sure that those are still prioritized with the additional scoring points.

(00:32:14):

Okay, thanks. Yeah, of course.

Kavi Chintman, Vote Solar (00:32:18):

My other question, I don't know if you'll have an answer to it, but for the CRGA trailer bill that was just passed, part of what was in there was since the RERF has run out of money with money to cover administrator costs for Illinois Solar for All partially for the next two years and thinking about the future of the program and the fact that the small residential category was finally fully allocated the past year, curious if y'all are thinking or have just for fun thought of ways to supplement the program with existing funds in other parts of the program or from other funds just because I've run the numbers and it's going to be pretty detrimental to the program. And it's great that the funds have been used, but also it's going forward for businesses, it's tough to keep a business open if that's the outlook.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (00:33:27):

That is really valuable feedback. I'm going to actually, I see that Jen Schmidt is on the call. I don't know, Jen, if you have any input or feedback that you'd like to provide about that question. I

Jennifer Schmidt, IPA (00:33:40):

Apologize. I could not hear barely anything you were saying. I don't know if somebody else could restate what the question was. I apologize.

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (00:33:51):

No, I was just going to say that, Olivia, if you wouldn't mind repeating the question because I think we were all having a hard time hearing you, Kavi.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (00:34:02):

I'll do my best and please correct me if you hear anything, but I think what I'm hearing is that there's a question regarding the CRGA Trailer Bill and the program administrative costs and how it would impact the program budget potentially. And then as well, I think there was a question about additional opportunity to find additional budget for small residential specifically. I think that's what I'm hearing because there's concern since so much of it was used up and so historically there's been a significant amount of rollover. Did I get everything on that question?

Kavi Chintman, Vote Solar (00:34:47):

Yeah. Sorry. Can you guys hear me better if I move my laptop closer maybe?

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (00:34:52):

A little better. It's very quiet. Luckily my headphones are great at canceling noise.

Kavi Chintman, Vote Solar (00:34:58):

Okay. Sorry about that. I don't know why that's happening, but yeah, basically the RERF being used up and what that means for the program going forward and if their thoughts on how to supplement the budget to make it bigger.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (00:35:21):

Jen, you're on mute.

Jennifer Schmidt, IPA (00:35:27):

Thanks. So with regards to the trailer bill, what the trailer bill provided...So taking a step back, the administration costs of Illinois Solar for All, so covering the costs of program administrator, all of that, and evaluation, that would be normally deducted from the $50 million allocation from the utility funds. What the trailer bill provided was an additional $10 million for this upcoming program year's administration. So that means that we don't have to reduce the incentives by our anticipated administration costs, at least for the first $10 million, which I mean, I think we are assuming that the $50 million allocation won't have to be impacted this year. That's an announcement going out this week.

(00:36:48):

Sorry, I'm trying to think of what I can say before when we're just a few days short of an announcement. So essentially the trailer bill allows us to use the allocation that we have for incentives rather than having it also have to cover the costs of administering the program. With regards to finding more money, that's not really something the IPA itself can do. We administer the funds that are provided. I think the ability to utilize other funds for our administration costs were very helpful in actually allowing us to find more money for next year's incentives. The RERF was only adding 16 and a half million per year, that allocation in itself was not the bulk of our Illinois solar for all budget. So I mean, I think the biggest change is that we had such an unprecedented demand that utilized the rollover that hadn't been used up in previous years.

(00:38:18):

So it's a change in demand from what we're used to. I think the actual, I mean, I forget what the percentage is. I had it looked up, but our annual allocation total now is going from 66 and a half million, which was the 50 million utility plus 16 and a half were down to just the 50. So it's a reduction, but I think it shows that we are hitting this reduction at a time when we are seeing that unprecedented demand. And so it's much more obvious and drawing to the market, I think. Does that answer your question? I mean, I know it's not a perfect answer.

Kavi Chintman, Vote Solar (00:39:11):

No, I appreciate you sharing what you can. So yeah, thanks.

Jennifer Schmidt, IPA (00:39:17):

Yes. So we'll be announcing our incentive budgets this week and we'll be providing a little bit more information with that. And then we're also planning to release to provide some more information about the budgets in a few weeks, like more of a detailed description of where we're at with the RERF and our utility budgets Because the RERF is an account and so there is a balance in it that has 15 years of recs plus other obligations to it. So it's just not a clean thing of...it's just a little bit complicated to explain, and I'm sorry, I'm a little bit limited by what we haven't announced yet.

Kavi Chintman, Vote Solar (00:40:13):

Yeah, totally. That's helpful. We'll look forward to those announcements. Thanks. Yep.

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (00:40:24):

Thanks for responding to that question, Jen. I do see a question in the comments from Kai. "Congratulations on the baby Kai. I think I remember when the baby was born. Kai said," Can you clarify whether SEB status is evaluated only by the new legal entity or whether it is common ownership and operational control with an established AV if that's being considered? "Kai says," I'm trying to understand how the program prevents a larger AV from creating a new entity solely to obtain SEB benefits, especially if we go to project selection. "So let's answer that question first because I think I see another question.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (00:41:33):

Yeah. So I apologize, Kai, because I know that this is actually a process that's established through our sister program, Illinois Shines. I am more than happy though to do a little bit of digging and get some information that I can share. I'm hoping that I can...I know that they have some small and emerging business information posted on their website, so I'll try to grab a couple of links, but if I'm not able to follow up directly to that question on this call, I'm more than happy to follow up with this group via email as well once I've had an opportunity to touch base with the team that's going to be reviewing the small and emerging business applications.

(00:42:20):

And then I know that there's another question here as well. Let me see. Could an established non-SEB approved vendor partner with an unrelated SEB AV where the SEB is the aggregator and the established AV serves as the designee? If so, the project will receive SEB prioritization point in the SEB collateral treatment simply because the SEB is the aggregating AV, even though most project development and APC work is being performed by the non-SEB AV. Are there any limits intended to prevent SEB status from being used primarily as a pass through for established AVs? That's a really good question. I know that when we were actually looking into adding the prioritization, one of the things that we had discussed was having SEB AV versus SEB designee because I know for, I believe it's MWBE, we allow for designees as well to support the status, but right now it's just for the approved vendors.

(00:43:36):

I think I see your concern with the potential for gaming for an SEB approved vendor to act as an aggregate approved vendor. So I think that we can take that internally when we're reviewing this information. And again, I can follow up via email once we've discussed it a little bit further. Go ahead, Jen.

Jennifer Schmidt, IPA (00:44:02):

And I would just add to that that it's something that we are concerned about as well and we'll be watching in the next year and the project selection protocol is something that we update every year. If we do see that there's an issue with how we've written our requirements, we should be able to adjust those in the coming year. And also, of course, we would be seeking stakeholder feedback on that and we would welcome any impacts that you're seeing and it's something that we are definitely wanting to keep an eye on and make sure that our support of small and emerging businesses is really for entities that are new to the market and don't have those foundational supports that would normally help those more established entities succeed in the market.

Topic 2: Project Selection

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (00:45:09):

Wonderful. Great questions. Are there any other questions before we move on to project selection with Larry? Okay. Hearing none, we will pass the mic on over to you, Larry.

Lawrence Kotewa, ILSFA (00:45:26):

Thanks. So project selection in essence, it hasn't changed. Project selection is designed to fairly prioritize projects for funding when there isn't enough budget in a subprogram to fund all the projects submitted. That is the underlying basis for project selection. It's required when the total incentive value submitted for a given subprogram exceeds that budget during the subprogram's 10 business day initial submission window. And additionally, even if the total submitted is under the budget, it's possible that EJC or energy sovereignty carve-outs aren't met and so the projects that are left exceed that remaining part of the budget and we would do project selection then. So it's a couple of things that are looked at to decide when project selection is required. Next slide.

(00:46:43):

So there's four stages in project selection. The first is environmental justice community, second is an energy sovereignty selection, third is income eligible community and fourth is the general remaining selection. And the first two are the ones that represent the legislative carve out requirements. Projects are scored on a rubric that's unique to each of the four stages. So some attributes aren't scored during certain stages. Then they are ranked by their scores from highest to lowest to determine the selection based on the budget availability. So we start with the highest rank and go down. If their scores are tied between projects, we will randomly order those projects to do the selection. And if a project isn't selected in a given stage, it's moved on to the next prioritization stage of selection if it has that attribute. Next slide.

(00:48:01):

So again, the first two stages, environmental justice, community, energy sovereignty are the legislative carve-outs and those carve-outs are 25% of each subprogram budget reserved for those two stages. And the EJC carve-out, that is if it's not satisfied during the initial submission window, that remaining carve-out stays there for the remainder of the program year. The energy sovereignty carve-out though does expire on January one. The income eligible community selection prioritization stage three, that's not a required carve-out, but what that is, is when we select projects in stage three that our income eligible will go up to 25% of the program budget and then move anything that's left into the fourth stage, the general stage where everything remaining all unselected projects remaining are scored there. Next slide.

(00:49:29):

So as far as the updates, again, like I said, the general understanding of what project selection is about hasn't changed, but there's been a couple of additions. One is that early access window for small and emerging business, but this one isn't affecting project selection. This is strictly after project selection, if a rolling submission window opens up, there's a two-day window ahead of that opening that small and emerging businesses can submit projects and 25% of the remaining budget is made available for SEBs during that time and the SEB can submit their projects in batches that don't exceed $200,000.

(00:50:33):

But in project selection, the prioritization points are given to small and emerging business. So this is where small and emerging business is prioritized in both the initial submission window and if project selection is required and then in the rolling submission window if project selection isn't. So during project selection, small and emerging businesses get two points, which is a significant number of points for a project. Next slide. And then the other thing is even though the community solar projects due to Surge were increased in size up to 10 megawatts, what we're looking at is we still want to prioritize projects that are five megawatts or less, but we don't penalize projects that are greater than five megawatts. So it's not preventing a project from being submitted between five and megawatts, five and 10 megawatts in size, but if it's under five megawatts, it gets points. And then in the fourth selection stage, the general selection stage, we also look at if the mix of projects that have been selected in the three previous stages result in less than 30% of those projects are under two megawatts, a two megawatt or lower project is given priority in that general selection stage.

(00:52:34):

Next slide. And so this is just the description of in the general selection stage again, we mentioned that the rubrics which are how the projects are scored, what points, what attributes are used. We look at that 30% of the total selected projects. If it's in community solar and that's under 2000, we'll prioritize them if it's a residential project and we look at the geographical diversity between the projects between group A, which is the Ameren and MISO municipal and co-ops and Mid-American or Group B, which is ComEd and the PJM municipal and co-op utilities. We look at that if it's one of those is less than 30%, they get prioritized. And the nonprofits, we look at that for projects that are sized under 100 KW.

(00:53:53):

Next slide. And in kind of addressing the low income discount piece, we're looking at in both residential solar, small, and in community solar, giving points for no cost offers, which are essentially 100% savings offers. So this is what is saying if you can do it and provide it as a no cost offer, you are going to get prioritization points. Next slide. And then the last thing is kind of as a result of how we came up with running up to the budget at the very end of the last program year. If we had projects that weren't able to get cured by the end of the early program or the closing of the program year early, they will get an additional prioritization point if project selection is necessary in that subprogram in the current program year. And that's going to be the end of my presentation.

(00:55:28):

I don't know if we've got any questions and I just squeezed it into three o'clock. Thanks.

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (00:55:50):

Thank you so much, Larry, for that in- depth look at the updates for project selection. Susan, I see your hand raised. Go ahead.

Susan MacCaulay, Maxson Mago & Macaulay, LLP a/k/a EM3 Law (00:56:01):

Yeah, I'm sorry. It just took me a minute to figure out how to get the mic on and the hand up. This is just a comment. I will say that I work with some of the solar providers, some of the developers, and the changes in the prioritization have caused a great deal of consternation amongst some of them because they feel like they have worked very hard to provide solar in underserved communities and for no cost options and that some of the point award priorities have in their view, unfairly disadvantaged them. And I just point that out. I've had one who has been, they'll get their one point for having not gotten all of their projects through last time around, but they kind of feel like one point's not really enough to represent all the work that they did to do this and then to be in having very anxious homeowners and very underserved, who otherwise could never, ever, ever get solar at all under any circumstances who are anxious to get started and find out that because of the budget and because of the point system and the prioritization, they aren't able to provide that to those customers at this point has been very concerning to them.

(00:57:41):

So I just passed that along as a generic observation, not specific to any particular developer, but reflective of those who I've dealt with.

Lawrence Kotewa, ILSFA (00:57:50):

Yeah. And I know we've definitely made the adjustments not looking to disadvantage any one developer or any one group One of the other reasons why we did add the points for the no cost options. So in addition to getting the point for not being able to get the project in last year, if they're going to do a no cost offer, they'll get points for that also.

Susan MacCaulay, Maxson Mago & Macaulay, LLP a/k/a EM3 Law (00:58:30):

And that will be helpful because one in particular does a lot of no cost.

Lawrence Kotewa, ILSFA (00:58:34):

Yeah.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (00:58:36):

Yeah. If there's any additional information about the specific point allocations that there are concerns about that might be beneficial, is there one particular point consideration that there are concerns about or there are multiple?

Susan MacCaulay, Maxson Mago & Macaulay, LLP a/k/a EM3 Law (00:59:01):

There were multiple. One that did come up was the, I believe if I remember correctly, because I haven't looked at this very specific criteria, but I know one of them was, I think it was the, maybe it was the new business, the emerging- Small emerging? Yeah, small and emerging was one because they're just slightly past that and a year ago they would have qualified and now they don't. And another was the minority woman owned piece of it, which I thought was already in place. I didn't think that was new, but they seemed to have some concerns about that.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (00:59:47):

That feedback's really helpful. Thank you.

Susan MacCaulay, Maxson Mago & Macaulay, LLP a/k/a EM3 Law (00:59:50):

I mean, I understand the sensitivity to that. I'm not a minority, and I'm a minority Majority owner of a law firm that is ... We're 51% minority owned, 49% woman owned. And so I've seen some of the sensitivity to that whole discussion and that whole argument. And so I just passed that along as that has been of some concern.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (01:00:24):

Yeah, that's really valuable feedback. So I think that's something, as Jen mentioned earlier, we'll continue to monitor the implementation of the current approved or manual and project selection protocol and identify if there are opportunities to update the information for the next program yet. But one thing that I always am very vocal about when speaking with approved vendors or representatives of approved vendors is making sure that folks are really engaged with the stakeholder feedback process. I actually included a link a little earlier in the chat, which is it shows our approve under manual and project selection protocol as they're published today, but it also includes a red line. I myself find the red line very, very helpful to help with really visualizing the changes from one program year to another. And when we do request for feedback, we always publish the red line version. So it's super valuable to have those folks engaged and discussing their feedback as it is.

(01:01:40):

Because I know that the MWBE, the minority women owned business, that was something that we did not make updates to, to my knowledge. I

Susan MacCaulay, Maxson Mago & Macaulay, LLP a/k/a EM3 Law (01:01:49):

Didn't think so. Yeah.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (01:01:51):

Yeah. So if there's feedback about that though, it's valuable to share it during that stakeholder feedback process because that's really when there is opportunity for us to have a discussion and kind of review what is being provided to us before it's actually finalized and published.

Susan MacCaulay, Maxson Mago & Macaulay, LLP a/k/a EM3 Law (01:02:11):

Yeah. I think some of the concerns, and I don't want to tie this up just on my issues, but on concern was the manner in which one was designated as a minority woman owned business. I think there are a lot of ways, as you know, to receive that designation. There's a council in Chicago. There's a bunch of different ways to do it. And I think there was only one way in the door on that. So in any case, I won't belabor the point.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (01:02:50):

Well, thank you so much for the feedback. It is really appreciated.

Susan MacCaulay, Maxson Mago & Macaulay, LLP a/k/a EM3 Law (01:02:53):

Sure.

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (01:02:57):

Thanks so much, Susan, for sharing that. I see two hands. I think Grace would be first and then Alan would be next. Go ahead, Grace.

Grace Concialdi, Citizens Utility Board (01:03:08):

Hi, everyone. Yeah, I was just looking to go over just I guess generally the lid issue. I think I'm just still trying to wrap my head around it and understand it. So if anyone can just explain it a little more generally the issue.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (01:03:32):

I'm sorry, can you clarify what you mean by lid?

Grace Concialdi, Citizens Utility Board (01:03:36):

Are you talking- Oh, LIDR.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (01:03:38):

Okay. Okay. I wanted to make sure that- Sorry. No, no, that's okay. Wanted to make sure we were addressing your question. So I'll do my best and Larry, please jump in if you have anything to add here. But essentially there was an update that is requiring specific utilities to provide discount programs to their participants. So the utilities that qualify for this that I'm aware of right now are Ameren and ComEd and they have different proposals for how they intend to implement this where there's different tier levels essentially based off of the income for somebody's home and the number of folks that are living there to implement different levels of discount based off of different tiers of income. And the programs that are being offered, there is a possibility of those to be changed year over year. So for example, if somebody's in tier one, one year for their income level, there's a possibility that they can move up to tier three in the next year depending on their income level, if there's any changes.

(01:05:05):

So it presents a little bit of a challenge because the way that the savings requirement is calculated is based off of the estimated savings, like value of the electricity that you're going to be getting over the contract period for these projects. And if somebody is getting discounted bills, then the actual estimate that we're using to determine the value of the electricity that's being provided is no longer accurate because that bill could be reduced by 50%. So if we're actually stating that somebody is going to be hitting the savings requirement, but they actually are receiving a lower bill value than what we utilize in our calculations because we actually get the information for the utility billing, then we're not able to provide an accurate estimate of the value of the electricity because the bill itself is going to be lower than we're estimating. So because of this, there is concern that when we say that somebody is going to save, let's say, $10,000 over the life of the contract on a project, but their bills are actually half of what we estimated them to be, then the value that they're actually getting is 5,000, not 10,000 for the electricity.

(01:06:36):

So we don't want to provide that misinformation or potential for misinformation to consumers by including that information on the disclosure form. And this is as well why we have definitely been encouraging some no cost offers because ultimately that is going to be the most beneficial to the participants at the end of the day and it's a net benefit to them regardless of their status in getting those discounted utility rates. So it's been kind of a greater discussion that was super, super high level. I think there's a recording of the presentation that was provided earlier this year that I'll see if we can share that information, but does that kind of answer your questions or Jen or Larry? I don't know if you have anything else to add.

Lawrence Kotewa, ILSFA (01:07:32):

Yeah, that's basically the issue in a nutshell and it does not make it any simpler that ComEd is doing it one way and Ameren is doing it another way. So what the legislation required was that the utilities have to provide discounts such that the customers are paying no more than 3% or 6% depending on whether they use electricity for space heating or not, of their income on the utility bill. So ComEd has done that by creating these five tiers of discounts and they have four different residential customer classes. So it's 20 different discounts depending on which box you end up in and it's those boxes that can shift because the tiers are based on percent of federal poverty level. And so since the federal poverty level values change every year, those percents can change and a customer's income can change household income can change from year to year.

(01:09:07):

So there's so many moving parts that you really can't get a good estimate right now of what value you're going to get over the 15 years of the program. Ameren's approach is they're going to be using an outside entity to do the analysis of the customer's income level and decide what the maximum amount of utility cost is to keep them in that 3% or 6% level and Ameren is setting the customers up on a billing period or a billing system to where they're going to pay a set amount every month for 12 months. And again, because each customer then gets a unique designation and a unique calculation by this third party and I believe DCEO is going to be the third party they're using, it makes it next to impossible to be able to come up with a good estimate of savings.

Grace Concialdi, Citizens Utility Board (01:10:37):

Okay. Thank you. That actually makes a lot of sense. I appreciate it.

Lawrence Kotewa, ILSFA (01:10:40):

Yep.

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (01:10:44):

Yeah. Great question, Grace. Thank you for asking and thank you for Larry and Olivia. Go ahead, Alan.

Allan Lake, Community Resident (01:10:56):

So I guess my question was more towards is there any notes made during the scoring process or is there any kind of like, oh, they're getting a point. Is there a designation of the scores attempt to illustrate why they're not getting those points in those particular areas so that when vendors are receiving back those applications, they can make notes of what needs to alter or what they can need to communicate more to their customers in that essence and their keys?

Lawrence Kotewa, ILSFA (01:11:45):

Yes. Yes. That is part of the process of when the projects are submitted based on the information that is submitted about the project in the portal, that's the information that's used to evaluate the attribute, the specific attribute, whether they're in an EJC community, which utility they're in, whether they have a hundred percent savings offer, whether it's a MWBE, all those are based on the information that is put into the portal about that project. And we go through setting up the initial rubrics and then we have the initial scoring for the projects and that information is provided back out prior to the project's actual project selection process. So the AVs have the ability to see what their scores are, so where they got points, where they didn't get points and if they have issues of, "Oh, I made a mistake and I didn't enter this correctly," there is time for them to fix that before the actual project selection and that also then allows them to see where they sit in relation to all the other projects that were submitted.

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (01:13:34):

I hope that answers your question, Alan.

Allan Lake, Community Resident (01:13:38):

It does. Tiny follow up. Is there anything that stops them from ... Is it more of just like a personal power if they decide not to share any of those comments or is it some part of it's like, "Oh, these are for discussion use only?" And then if you

Lawrence Kotewa, ILSFA (01:14:06):

Again, it's an attribute that they need to declare for the project and that's information that is provided on the project in the portal.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (01:14:21):

And the information, the scores are released to all approved vendors for all projects. So that information, I just dropped the calendar for the project submission windows. So that information for when those scores are released is actually dependent, of course, on the window for each of the sub programs, but it is included in there. And then I know that Jen also dropped a link to show you what the release of the scores looks like ahead of the event as well. So the information is shared pretty publicly to ensure that approved vendors are aware of the scores.

Lawrence Kotewa, ILSFA (01:15:06):

But again, it is just the attribute and the points attributed to the attribute. There's nothing publicly shared about why a project may be this or that it's strictly is a project in an EJC community or not. Is a project an MWBE or not?

Allan Lake, Community Resident (01:15:32):

I get you. I get you. Okay. Thank you.

Olivia Salazar-Mendez, ILSFA (01:15:36):

Yeah, of course.

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (01:15:45):

All right. We're coming close to time. I think I see another question. Go ahead, Kavi.

Kavi Chintman, Vote Solar (01:15:54):

I have two kind of big picture questions. First one is for Jen Schmidt if she's still on. Okay. Yeah, she is. Are there any updates on when the administrator announcement will be made?

Jennifer Schmidt, IPA (01:16:17):

So the selection phase is being finalized and that's about all I can say.

Kavi Chintman, Vote Solar (01:16:27):

Okay, got it. Thanks. My other question for anyone is if there have been any, I guess if there's been any discussion, but also if we could maybe use this space one time at some point to talk more about how to better utilize the multifamily subprogram since that's been super underutilized and is obviously a major part of the population that would benefit from Solar for All. And I feel like this would be a great group to brainstorm some of that. So just want to bring that up.

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (01:17:19):

Wow, great, great suggestion. Thank you so much for sharing. We'll definitely add that to our list of considerations for our upcoming meetings. It's a great idea.

Kavi Chintman, Vote Solar (01:17:32):

Thank you. Cool.

Closing Next Steps

Jennifer Brown, ILSFA (01:17:40):

Okay. We've got about nine minutes. Were there any other questions? Okay. Well, wow, this was a great conversation. Thank you so much for your intentional questions and just really focusing in on the matters at hand. It is such a pleasure to be able to work with our advisory committee. You guys absolutely are incredible and we couldn't do this great work without you. This is, I shared in previous emails, this is the last meeting for this program year. And so we generally and historically have taken somewhat of a break over the summer from our meetings as we are shifting over to another program year and we generally pick up our work again in the fall. So you'll get updates on when the next meeting is at some point in the near future.

(01:19:02):

And what else did I want to share? I also wanted to share that we will be able to add the recording for this meeting and the transcripts for this meeting to the website over the next coming weeks. We just need a little bit of time to get that information transferred over to our website. And so we'll send that out to the notification for that shortly in the next coming weeks, like I said. But what we can do from today's meeting is there were a lot of great links that were dropped in the chat. And so I can do a follow-up email to everyone that attended as well as those that didn't with at least the links that were dropped in today's meeting and that way you could at least have access to those while we wait for our documents to become available on our website.

(01:20:08):

And on final thing is we will also provide a document for you to be able to add any additional thoughts if you have any additional questions that you'd like to be considered. Even if you ask the question today and you just want to make sure that it gets put in writing for consideration, then you'll be able to add that to that document. So those are forthcoming, but it definitely has been an awesome time that we've been able to share together. Let me go ahead and turn off the recording.

(01:20:59):

All right. So thank you again