

# **Solar for All Expansion Kickoff Webinar Summary of Participant Questions December 2, 2024**



## **What is the difference between an observer and a participant?**

An observer will join the webinars as they can, listen in, comment, and ask questions.

Participants are volunteering to take on more actions and activities. They are volunteering to draft portions of document, recommendations, do direct program design, or do additional research. They are committing some additional volunteer time. This structure was set up to be mindful of people's schedules and capacity to contribute while ensuring that no one gets left out.

## **This grant was announced in April 2024. Why did it take so long to get to this point?**

For this grant, there is a required work plan between the U.S. EPA and the Illinois Finance Authority, which we are still in the process of finalizing. We expect that work plan to be approved in the coming days to week. We will have the work plan approved by the time of the working group meetings next week. This was the limiter on being able to start the planning process.

## **Who is eligible to be a participant in working groups?**

Anyone interested can sign up for the working groups and choose to just be an observer or to be a more active participant.

## **What will happen to the REC prices under these new programs?**

The REC contacts listed in the presentation all flow through the existing Solar for All program. The REC prices with the Illinois Solar for All Program will be the REC prices under this program. IFA is just adding additional budget to the existing program structure for the low-income community solar and low-income residential solar programs (not the public and nonprofit programs). There are no additional REC adders in these new programs.

## **Can an observer become a participant later, or vice versa? Is there a sense about how frequently working groups will meet?**

Absolutely. If you decide to change roles at any time, just let the working group leader know. Meetings will vary by working group. We will have a better sense as we identify open questions that must be addressed to structure the programs.

### **Who is administrating the new programs?**

Illinois Solar for All is a program developed by the Illinois Power Agency (IPA) and administered by Elevate Energy (Elevate). IPA will continue to administer its Illinois Solar for All programs, and IFA will be providing additional budget for its community and residential solar programs. The new programs identified in the presentation, including working capital loans, SolarApp+ grants, and Enabling Upgrades, will be administered by IFA/CB. Existing expansion dollars will flow through IPA.

### **Which working group or working groups will consider issues related to labor standards, workforce development, and community benefits for the expanded ILSFA programs?**

The IPA logistics working group. General labor standards will be discussed in every working group.

### **Will loan dollars be recycled throughout the GGRF program period?**

Yes. We will recycle repayments back to the loan fund as they are repaid. We plan to recycle funds during the program period and beyond.

### **Will there be any bridge loan programs available for approved vendors to leverage against secured REC contracts?**

Yes. The EE RLF bride loan program will do this. Please reach out to [federal\\_funding@il-fa.com](mailto:federal_funding@il-fa.com) if you would like to discuss a specific project further. We expect to have an application available on our website in the coming months: <https://www.il-fa.com/programs/ee-rlf>

### **How will these programs make financing loans easier? What does that mean?**

These programs will assist with having more knowledgeable underwriting of Illinois programs, federal tax incentives, having additional support for projects, standardized applications, and lower-than-market interest rates. There will be other forms of technical assistance for completing those loan processes.

### **Do municipalities have to adopt SolarAPP+ to access grants? Could that grant be used to implement a different instant permitting platform?**

In the application to EPA, we were very specific about SolarAPP+. SolarApp+ does integrate with other platforms that cities might already use. If you have specific questions, it may be worth discussing in the working groups.

**For nonprofit and public facilities under ILSFA, the organization has to be with low-income or EJC maps. Will this requirement stay under the expansion program?**

Yes. The IPA Solar for All program is not changing locational requirements. For IFA's bridge loans, we intend to allow Illinois EIEC-benefitting projects or federally designated disadvantaged communities to qualify.

**Will these programs require or encourage contractors to be Illinois based? Would there be any requirement encouragement for solar installation workers to be Illinois based, or that workers are paid a fair wage and participate in apprenticeships?**

Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All already have some wage requirements; these are not changing. U.S. EPA Solar for All currently includes Davis Bacon and other Build America Buy America requirements. This will be one of the discussions for the working group.

**How will IFA ensure that these funds are available and make an impact statewide? Simply adding more funding to ILSFA isn't going to address the issues of some regions of the state not seeing the benefits of ILSFA.**

This is something that came up during the stakeholder engagement process, which is why we included funds to support the development of new contractors with working capital. This is also the basis around redefining kind of the bright neighborhoods structure to provide grants directly to community-based organizations that conduct outreach and education in targeted areas of the state.

**Have you decided on the specific dollar amounts to be allocated to each program within the total amount appropriated through the IRA?**

Yes. We have general buckets of funds that we anticipate, but we have also built in flexibility based on demand. Right now, we expect that we will have \$85 million available for the expansion of Illinois Solar for All residential solar and community solar, \$20 million available for enabling upgrades, \$7 million for energy storage, \$3 million per year for technical assistance, community engagement, and outreach, \$1.5 million available for SolarApp+, and \$6-10 million paired with additional private capital for the working capital loans.

**Is the clean energy workforce development program a pre-requisite to this initial dollar flow?**

This is an open question for the working capital loans. IT will not be a prerequisite for anything else, but there will be coordination with workforce development programs.

**Can residents of Illinois stack ICB grants/financing with existing Federal tax credits AND new municipal grants funded by the Federal government? (i.e. if a community has applied for the EPA Community Change Grant for a similar program, can residents stack both?)**

Yes, some can be stackable, and some might have some restrictions. We plan for technical assistance to be available to help develop solutions on how best to stack different financial resources. This will also be addressed in the working groups as we develop the final design of this program.

**How, if at all, is it envisioned that these programs will interact with the statutorily required Equitable Energy Upgrade Program (EEUP)?**

All elements of this program must be linked to a specific solar project. We intend to develop an approach to integrate and coordinate as many of the other available programs and financial resources as possible to provide a wholesome and all encompassing approach and prevent any overlap. This is one of the matters that will be addressed in the working group discussions.

**Will the open questions on community solar be discussed in the IPA Logistics working group?**

They certainly can be! We would like to discuss any relevant open questions.

**A 50% savings requirement was mentioned during the community solar section. Does this 50% savings requirement also apply to the low-income residential program?**

Yes, it applies to both programs.

**Will some of the funding be allocated to the Illinois Shines Community Driven Community Solar category?**

No, we do not have budget within this Community Driven Community Solar for REC contracts with Illinois Shines. We have loans available for such projects, but we are not backfilling those because they are funded through a separate source by ratepayers under the Illinois Shines program, which is distinct from Illinois Solar for All.

**For SolarAPP+ grants — you mentioned that there are additional technical assistance opportunities for municipalities from DOE — does that mean there is more funding potentially available to municipalities who would need to update their IT systems in order to integrate SolarAPP+?**

The opportunities we were planning to offer are training opportunities, but this could be something we discuss in the working groups.

**Which working group or working groups will consider issues related to labor standards, workforce development, and community benefits for the expanded ILSFA programs?**

These will be discussed in the IPA logistics working group, where we will discuss generally the expansion of those Illinois Solar for All programs. Labor standards and workforce development are also great topics for other working groups as well.

**It can take a long time through the process of becoming an approved vendor, which has caused some developer to backout of Illinois. How will this program address that?**

This can be discussed in the IPA Logistics working group.

**Will there be any bridge loan programs available for approved vendors to leverage against secured REC contracts?**

Yes - the EE RLF bridge loan program will do this. Please reach out to [federal\\_funding@il-fa.com](mailto:federal_funding@il-fa.com) if you would like to discuss a specific project further. We expect to have an application available on our website in the coming months:

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**Does the lease program work with FannieMay requirements?**

We would certainly like it to be. We would love more information on these requirements, and this will be discussed in the working group.

**Will there be bridge loans available for ILSFA Approved Vendors directly to build the systems for NPFs/residential customers?**

Yes. This is something we would love to talk about within the Working Capital working group.

**Is the nonprofit and public facilities portion of Illinois Solar for All being expanded through this grant?**

No.

**Only one HUB is up and going out of 13 because it covers a lot of the capacity training for businesses. Have you determined the impact of having them going on the funding for projects?**

With anticipate coordinating with the HUBs. The places we would largely coordinate are the contract incubator and accelerator programs, and we will be able to support those over time by providing working capital or other easy-to-access financing.

**You may have covered this. Is there a plan for addressing condo buildings and residents? Particularly funding to help address conversion given the fractured ownership.**

Illinois Solar for All has been working through these issues. This will be relevant outside of existing ILSFA within enabling upgrades, energy storage grants, and financing for these projects. These are questions that we are looking for assistance from the working groups to help tackle, specifically structuring repairs to common property with fractured ownership. It can be a challenge with mixed-income housing.

**Will there be any changes or codification of a minimum conversion rate from DC to AC? Effective production rate(s) says the site is a good investment for solar that overcome shading losses under the expansion.**

Under this funding, we are following IPA's requirements under the Illinois Solar for All program. If there are any changes or codification to conversion rates or assessment of suitability, that will happen under IPA's long-term plan updates. There will be screens or assessments under the enabling upgrades to confirm that roofs are able to hold solar due to shading, size, or other requirements to be eligible for the program.

**Have you thought about (or discussed with IEPA) how those programs can be leveraged/braided with the Enabling Upgrades program?**

Yes. We have had great discussions within the state about braiding these funding sources and looping them all under one easy-to-access managed ventitiy. There is more information in the State's Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) application located on IEPA's website: [soi-cprg-implementation-grant.pdf](#). The plan talks about a whole building incentive that coordinates the different entities involved and gap fills them. We also have navigated programs with CPRG funding to IEPA to address braiding conversations as well. We do not want to make low-income homeowners figure out all of these programs on their own.

**Is there a reason the community-drive community solar will be dispersed as loans rather than grants?**

IPA already has REC contracts, and DCEO already has grants for community solar. The biggest thing stakeholders identified as a gap was financing. We are using these funds to help overcome the financing gap for these projects.