

Illinois Solar for All Expansion: Residential Solar Outreach and Assistance Grants Responses to Applicant Questions

Notice of Funding Opportunity

[IFA-SFA-02](#)

April 28, 2025 – May 2, 2025

Question: Can you please tell me when funds have to be used by? How much time is allowed for the money to be spent after award?

Response: As noted in the NOFO, the period of performance for this grant is two years, so grant funds would need to be spent within that time frame.

Question: For the metrics, is there a minimum number of people who need to sign up for Solar for All?

Response: We do not have a minimum number of people who need to sign up for Solar for All. However, as noted in the NOFO, the proposal's potential to increase the number of qualifying residents who complete the ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) program is one of the scoring criteria.

Question: Can you please give me a definition of Shared Services? I am not clear on that section of the NOFO and what exactly that means. Is there somewhere I can look for additional guidance?

Response: Shared services are services that support the delivery of residential solar outreach services and which are a common need among Grassroots Educators and other grantees who are delivering residential outreach services. Shared services could be provided to the Grassroots Educators and other outreach grantees by a grantee who is not directly providing residential outreach services. Some examples noted in the NOFO are:

- Coordination with customer outreach grantees and Grassroots Educators to determine the types of materials and services needed;
- Providing training to customer outreach grantees and Grassroots Educators;
- Create materials to facilitate customer education, outreach, and assistance such as communications materials, a reasonable amount of branded items such as polos, tablecloths, posters, and low-cost handouts (such as stickers and pens); and
- Social media or other targeted promotional campaigns, including a limited amount of paid advertising costs.

Question: Can applicants make referrals to specific Approved Vendors?



Response: Please see the NOFO for limitations on the relationship between grantees and Approved Vendors (Section C.1: " Nonprofits and units of government that are ILSFA Approved Vendors, affiliated with Approved Vendors, or who receive payments from Approved Vendors in exchange for referrals or other services are not eligible to apply.") This limitation does not address referrals made without any financial relationship and based on the experience of the grantee.

Question: What I am asking you is how does the state see this work lining up with the work that the GEs are already doing for ILSFA? What insight do you have that you can share with our team so that we know how it will impact their current work for ILSFA.

Response: The Illinois Climate Bank would like this work to be both complementary and additive to the work that Grassroots Educators are already doing for ILSFA. The Climate Bank welcomes proposals from Grassroots Educators and encourages creativity in expanding the depth and scope of their existing work to assist residents throughout the process of completing the Residential Solar (Small) program.

Question: Will the IFA be providing any feedback/guidance on applications and/or identifying opportunities for applicants to collaborate/combine efforts?

Response: The IFA may identify opportunities for applicants to collaborate and combine efforts if it sees useful opportunities to do so. However, that review and decision will be made after scoring applications and making selections. IFA welcomes collaborative proposals.

Question: Will the IFA convene/connect awardees to foster collaboration, post-award?

Response: Yes.

Question: When are projects expected to commence, and for how long are they to last? Can the first year's grant workplan contain time for planning/ramp-up?

Response: The beginning of the grant period will be dependent on the timing of US EPA's approval of selected grantees, but we hope that the period will begin in summer 2025. The grant period will last until June 30, 2027. The first year's grant workplan can contain time for planning and ramp-up. However, one of the scoring criteria is the proposal's potential to increase the number of qualifying residents who complete the ILSFA Residential Solar (Small) program. A lengthy ramp-up period would reduce the time available to recruit and assist residents. Proposals with a ramp-up period would benefit from a description of how such a trade-off would be managed.

Question: What are budgeting and accounting requirements for grantees?

Response: Grantees must be familiar with and able to comply with US EPA budgeting and accounting requirements. These requirements are described in the US EPA's Grants Management Training for Applicants and Recipients, available at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-grants-management-training-applicants-and-recipients>. Please note that there are text versions of the training at the bottom of the webpage.



Question: Since we are also Grassroots Educators (for the next year, at least), what documentation will be needed to ensure we aren't double-counting work, i.e. getting paid for the same work twice?

Response: Grantees should have workplace policies in place to prevent double-counting across multiple grants, including detailed time sheets and supervisor review of employees working on similar grants.

Question: What will we need to track and submit for our semi-annual reports?

Response: Reporting requirements may change over the course of the grant. At this time, grantees will need to track and submit expense information and fields such as type and location of outreach, who attends (as a general matter - community members, government leaders, etc), language of materials circulated, description of the outreach or meeting, description of feedback received (if any), meeting outcome, project highlights, and media attention.

Question: Will grants be paid upfront, paid out via a "drawdown" process, or something else?

Response: Unfortunately, at this time, it is our expectation that grants will be paid out through a drawdown process. IFA understands the inherent financial difficulty, including cash flow concerns, that the drawdown process creates. IFA will work with grantees to make this process as simple and expedient as possible.

Question: IPA/Elevate have stringent requirements when it comes to mentioning ILSFA in public-facing printed and digital materials. Will educational materials developed and utilized in programming funded by this grant be subject to the same oversight?

Response: IFA will have requirements for printed and digital materials. However, they may not be the exact same requirements as those currently used by IPA and Elevate.

Question: Is this grant opportunity open to nonprofits also? I read it as only units of government being able to apply.

Response: The residential solar outreach grant is open to nonprofits.

April 21, 2025 – April 25, 2025

Question: I have a question regarding the Illinois Solar for All Expansion: Residential Solar Outreach Grant, found here. Specifically, are 5-26 awards expected to be made through this solicitation? I ask because the program information also provides other numbers of expected awards.

Response: Apologies for the confusion. 5-26 is the correct number of awards.

Question: [REDACTED] is interested in applying for the Illinois Solar for All Expansion: Residential Solar Outreach Grant. We are a nonprofit based in [REDACTED]. We recently applied for the Illinois Solar for All Grassroots Education grant to serve income eligible populations in [REDACTED].

We are an Illinois Shines designee providing marketing/outreach and community solar subscriber services for the [REDACTED], a community-driven community solar project serving



only [REDACTED]. We do not feel that this would present a conflict of interest for the Residential Solar Outreach program because [REDACTED]. Our application for the Residential Solar Outreach grant would target the same income eligible communities in [REDACTED] that we are hoping to get the Grassroots Education grant for.

Please let us know if we are eligible to apply. Thank you.

Response: Thanks for reaching out. We encourage you to apply and please include documentation of the facts you stated in your email related to the potential conflict of interest concern. We will then make a final determination of eligibility based on all of the information in your application.

Question: Are non-profits able to apply for any of these funds beyond the RESIDENTIAL SOLAR OUTREACH GRANTS program? I have reviewed the other NOFOs and it states only municipalities, but maybe I missed something?

Response: Nope, just residential solar outreach grants!



The last day for question submission is May 16th at 5:00 PM CT.