

Community Solar with Illinois Shines

off-site solar serving multiple subscribers



What Is Illinois Shines?

Illinois Shines is a state-administered incentive program to support the development of new solar projects. Community solar developers receive incentive payments through Illinois Shines, which allows them to offer affordable community solar subscriptions to customers.

What Is Community Solar?

Community solar allows participants, also called subscribers, to benefit from solar energy and support renewable energy development without installing panels on their own property.

When you sign up for community solar, you subscribe to a share of a community solar project. You receive dollar credits on your electric utility bill based on how much electricity your share of the community solar project generates. Then you pay a subscription fee to your community solar provider. You can see savings if that subscription fee is less than the bill credits that you use.

Traditional community solar projects in Illinois Shines offer subscriptions to solar projects located anywhere within a customer's utility territory. A new type of community solar project within Illinois Shines is known as "Community-Driven Community Solar" (CDCS). These are community solar projects that provide direct and tangible benefits to the local community. You can ask your community solar provider whether a community solar project is a Traditional or Community-Driven project.

Community solar is not the same as "green" or "renewable" supply offers from an Alternative Retail Electric Supplier (ARES). Signing up for a community solar subscription is not the same as changing your electric supplier, although some community solar providers may require you to choose a specific electricity supply option as a condition of enrollment.

How Do Community Solar Bill Credits Work?

You will receive monetary credits on your electric utility bill based on how much electricity your share of the community solar project generates. Once you subscribe, and the community solar project is operating, it may take a few months before the credits appear on your bill.



You can view an ADA accessible version of this document at www.illinoisshines.com/accessible.



For customers in **Commonwealth Edison (ComEd) territory**, community solar bill credits are applied to your entire electric bill—that is, they can be used to "buy down" all charges on your electric bill. Bill credits roll over month-to-month and only expire if you move out of ComEd territory.

For customers in **Ameren territory**, until November 2023, community solar bill credits are only applied to the supply charges on your electric bill. After November 2023, bill credits will apply to your entire electric bill. Bill credits roll over month-to-month and only expire if you move out of Ameren territory.

When you subscribe to a community solar project, you are making a financial commitment. If possible, compare offers from different community solar providers. Also, make sure to read and understand your entire subscription contract before signing it.

How Much Will My Community Solar Subscription Cost?

Subscriptions will vary by community solar project and Approved Vendor. You are not guaranteed to save money unless your contract includes an explicit savings guarantee. **Read your contract carefully to make sure you know what you will be paying and when.**



Illinois Shines Program Administrator
admin@illinoisshines.com
(877) 783-1820

Illinois Shines is administered by Energy Solutions on behalf of the Illinois Power Agency, an independent state government agency.

Many community solar subscriptions are priced based on the amount of bill credits that the customer receives. That is, the subscription fee may be a set percentage of the bill credits. For example, your community solar charge might be set at 80% or 90% of the value of the bill credits that you receive. The bill credits (which are based on the amount of electricity generated by your share of the solar project) will vary month-to-month, so the subscription charge will also vary.

If your community solar subscription price is set a different way, make sure that you compare the subscription price and any other fees to the amount of bill credits that you expect to receive.

Carefully review your Disclosure Form and contract to understand other applicable fees, including whether there is a fee for early termination of the subscription.

How Is My Subscription Sized?

Most community solar subscriptions are sized so that the subscription's generation in kilowatt-hours (kWh) roughly matches the customer's electric usage in kWh over the course of the year. Your subscription size will be included on your Disclosure Form. If your subscription size is too large, meaning the subscription size of the project you are subscribed to will produce more kWh of electricity than you use in a year, it is possible that you may pay for more bill credits than you are able to use. Keep in mind that the solar project will generate more electricity in the summer than in the winter.

Other Considerations:

Does your subscription require you to authorize the community solar provider to act as your agent with respect to your electric utility account? If so, the community solar provider may pay your utility bills on your behalf and make changes to your utility account.

Does your subscription require you to sign up to receive electricity from a specific electric supplier or utility default service? If so, what rate will you be charged for electricity under that supply option?

Consumer Protection

Your community solar provider is required to provide you with this informational brochure and a standard Disclosure Form, which you must sign before you sign a subscription contract. The Disclosure Form includes information about the Program and consumer rights, contact information for your community solar provider,

and information about costs and savings. Review this form carefully and use it to compare offers from other community solar providers.

Other Illinois Shines consumer protections include:

- You have the right to keep your subscription if you move to a different home or business location in the same utility service territory.
- You also have rights to assign or sell the subscription to another customer within your original utility service territory without having to pay a fee to the subscription provider. Some restrictions apply.
- Illinois Shines sets out requirements for what information and terms must be included in your subscription contract.
- Only Approved Vendors may submit project applications to Illinois Shines; these companies are vetted by the Program Administrator. Your community solar provider may be an Approved Vendor or they may be a Designee who works with customers on behalf of an Approved Vendor. Designees must be registered with Illinois Shines.
- Dedicated Program Administrator staff answer questions and assist customers in resolving complaints.

Complaint Procedures

If you have a problem related to your solar project or the sales process, first try to resolve it with your installer or the Approved Vendor. If you can't agree about how to solve the problem, you may contact the **Illinois Shines Program Administrator** by emailing complaints@illinoisshines.com or by calling 877-783-1820.

If you have been subject to fraudulent or deceptive sales practices, the Illinois Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division may be able to help.

CHICAGO: 800-386-5438 | TTY: 800-964-3013

SPRINGFIELD: 800-243-0618 | TTY: 877-844-5461

CARBONDALE: 800-243-0607 | TTY: 877-675-9339

SPANISH LANGUAGE: 866-310-8398

For more information, go to www.illinoisshines.com

Illinois Solar for All, another incentive program, is available for income-eligible customers and includes savings guarantees. Learn more at www.IllinoisSFA.com.



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Equitable Access to Community Solar

What is Community Solar?

The U.S. Department of Energy defines community solar as any solar project or purchasing program, within a geographic area, in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, or other groups. In most cases, customers are benefitting from energy generated by solar panels at an off-site array

Community solar customers typically receive an electric bill credit for electricity generated by their share of the community solar system—similar to someone who has rooftop panels installed on their home. Community solar can be a great option for individuals who are unable to install solar panels on their roofs because they do not own their homes, have insufficient exposure to sunlight or roof conditions to support economic feasibility to install a rooftop PV system due to shading, roof size, or other factors, or for financial or other reasons.

Why is Community Solar Important?

Community solar supports equitable access to renewable energy by allowing all households to benefit from solar energy, even if they are unable to install solar panels on their rooftop. In areas where solar power is less expensive than traditionally-generated electricity, community solar subscribers can save money on their monthly bills while also supporting a robust and resilient clean energy system. If community solar subscribers move to a new home within the same utility service territory or county, they can typically continue to benefit from their community solar share. Programs may also have options for selling or donating subscriptions.

Because most community solar arrays are located off-site, utilities or developers can strategically locate the systems in areas of the grid that can benefit the most from additional generation capacity. Utility-owned, community solar can help utilities improve relationships with customers, reduce energy burdens, and increase customer engagement in meeting renewable energy goals. Customer-owned or community-owned community solar arrays allow communities to have control over their energy resources while building local community wealth and energy democracy.

Community solar can be particularly beneficial for low- or moderate-income (LMI) households that face high energy burdens. Some community solar programs provide discounted or free subscriptions to income-qualified customers, allowing them to immediately take advantage of energy bill savings.

SOURCE: <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/equitable-access-community-solar>