

Qualified Critical Service Providers

A qualified Critical Service Provider is a non-profit or public entity that offers critical services to an Income-Eligible Community or Environmental Justice Community. An approved Critical Service Provider is a project requirement for the Illinois Solar for All: Non-Profit and Public Facilities sub-program or may be submitted as an anchor tenant for the Illinois Solar for All: Community Solar sub-program.

All Critical Service Providers must be approved by the Program Administrator no later than the time of Part 1 application. The request should be in the form of a letter to the Program Administrator, who will review such requests on a case-by-case basis.

Please note that only non-profits and public entities demonstrating a high degree of critical services provision to Income-Eligible Communities or Environmental Justice Communities will be designated as Critical Service Providers. The list of Critical Service Providers contained in the Approved Vendor Manual was developed through a process that included stakeholder feedback and is intended to be a comprehensive list of appropriate organizational types. The Program Administrator must approve the request before an Approved Vendor submits a project application for that entity or the application will be deemed ineligible for consideration. A qualified Critical Service Provider is a non-profit or public entity that offers critical services to Income-Eligible Communities or Environmental Justice Communities, including:

- Advocacy organizations
- Affordable housing providers
- After-school providers
- Childcare centers
- Community centers
- Community financial institutions (such as credit unions and non-profit lenders)
- Disability service providers
- Domestic Violence Centers
- Emergency service providers
- Family support agencies
- Food pantries
- Homeless shelters

- Hospitals, healthcare facilities, and clinics
- Housing service providers
- Immigration service providers
- Job training and workforce development services
- Law/legal centers (non-profit providing pro-bono services to income-eligible or environmental justice communities)
- Libraries
- Mental and behavioral health facilities
- Places of worship
- Rehabilitation providers
- Public schools
- Senior centers
- Social service agencies (including unemployment and social security offices)
- Transitional or supportive housing (including for teens and LGBTQ+)
- Women's or children's shelters

Documentation of the Critical Service Provider's status must be submitted by no later than the time of Part I application.

Other types of potential Critical Service Providers not found on this list can be reviewed by the Program Administrator on a case-by-case basis. Those considering submitting as an "Other" Critical Service Provider are advised to submit their requests as early as possible to the Program Administrator; these requests will be reviewed carefully and may not be granted. Requirements for Critical Service Provider requests are outlined below.

Note: Beginning in the 2023-2024 Program Year, carceral institutions, namely police stations, jails, prisons, and immigration detention centers will no longer be considered pre-qualified Critical Service Providers. Requests from individual institutions for consideration as a Critical Service Provider may be submitted and will be evaluated in the context of the comments received about this topic.

Requirements for Critical Service Provider Requests

Letters requesting Critical Service Provider status for non-profits and public entities must include the following:

- A description of the services provided by the non-profit or public entity that it asserts should be considered critical services, and a description of the program(s) through which the non-profit or public entity offers those services. This should include the following, as applicable:
 - The nature of the critical services provided
 - The population served by the critical services (e.g., demographics, location, size)
 - The manner in which recipients access the critical services (i.e., application process, qualifications, enrollment period)
 - Who delivers the services (e.g., social worker, clinician, tradesperson, educator)

- Whether the critical services are accessed onsite and, if not, where are the services provided/accessed (e.g., mobile services using trucks)
- Critical services program (goals, origin/date program started, partner agencies/entities and roles, outlook)
- Portion of the entity's work, that is, the provision of critical services. Please provide a description, if applicable, of the non-critical services provided by the entity.
- Description of any costs to access services, and if there are differences in the cost of services for income-eligible recipients
- An explanation of how the proposed PV system will bolster the impact and delivery of critical services to income-eligible residents of Income-Eligible Communities or Environmental Justice Communities.
- Supporting documentation such as relevant metrics demonstrating the impact of the critical services, as applicable.

In order to determine if the entity qualifies as a Critical Service Provider, the Program Administrator will review the information provided in the request letter and accompanying materials, utilizing a scoring rubric. The Program Administrator's determination will be based on whether the prospective entity provides services that improve living conditions, financial status, environmental and health status, and other social welfare indicators. The review will consider the services offered, their alignment with and ability to meet identified needs, how accessible they are, and the organization's role and impact in delivering the critical services. In general, critical services should represent a majority of the activities performed by the organization. Where there are gaps in the information provided or questions about the request, the Program Administrator will send a written request for clarification.

The letter should be submitted on the letterhead of the non-profit or public entity and signed by an officer of the organization. It may be submitted directly by the entity or by an Approved Vendor with which the entity is working. Please submit the letter to the Program Administrator at least 30 calendar days in advance of a sub-program project submission window opening to allow for adequate review time. Once a letter is received, the Program Administrator will either approve the application or will communicate any deficiencies to the requesting entity within 10 business days, although a failure to complete the notification of deficiencies within 10 business days shall not be deemed an approval. If the Critical Service Provider request is denied, an appeal of that determination may be made to the Illinois Power Agency following the process in Section 1.4 of the Approved Vendor Manual.