



# Illinois Clean Energy

community foundation

2 North LaSalle Street • Suite 1140 • Chicago IL 60602  
312.372.5191 • fax 312.372.5190 • www.IllinoisCleanEnergy.org

## K-12 Solar Schools—Grant Requirements

### **Grant Amount:**

- 90% of total cost of the installation up to \$6,500 (funding amount subject to annual changes). The exact cost of your installation will depend on a number of factors. The maximum grant to your school will be \$6,500 regardless of how much you pay your installer. We recommend that you get at least three quotes and that you follow your district's contractor selection processes. The final decisions on all of these matters are your responsibility.

### **Grant Requirements:**

- **Purpose of the Grant:** the primary purpose of this grant program is to help schools provide students with a renewable energy teaching tool. The systems installed will generate a small amount of solar electricity, but most importantly, they help Illinois students better understand renewable energy, electricity, energy efficiency, science, and math. A secondary purpose is to help introduce Illinois students to green jobs and to open up the idea of a career in an evolving area. In 2009, Wanxiang America Inc. opened a solar panel factory in Rockford, Illinois, creating over 60 local jobs. New jobs provide an opportunity for our students after graduation. Our hope is to better prepare Illinois students for those jobs. Finally, it is also our hope to introduce renewable energy to local school officials, local government officials, community leaders and local media. If the State of Illinois is going to adjust to changing energy technology, we want to help prepare the people of Illinois by installing solar on schools in as many communities as we can.
- **Reimbursement Grant:** the project must be completed by the schools before the grant funds are paid.
- **Terms:** each grant award notification comes with two copies of a grant agreement that outlines the terms of the grant. Schools need to sign a copy of the agreement and return it to the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF).
  - *Time limit:* projects must be completed within one year, and schools can begin installation work only after formal approval of the grant.
  - *Installer:* the schools may hire an outside installer or they may do their own installation. There is no requirement for a school to select a certified installer, but there is a presumption that a certified installer would better understand the terms of this grant and the solar PV installation process.
  - *Size:* the system must equal approximately 1,000 watts measured in DC.
  - *Grid tied:* unless permission is given otherwise by ICECF, each installation must be grid tied. The schools must apply for and sign an interconnection agreement with their electricity provider. ICECF will verify that these interconnection agreements have been signed when reviewing the final report (needed for payment of the grant). Electricity providers that discover any grid tied installations not covered by an interconnection agreement, may subject the school to penalties. Again, the installers should handle this process, but the schools that

- do their own installations or that hire sub-contractors for parts of their project need to be aware of this requirement.
- *Warranty:* since the schools select their own installers or install themselves, and ultimately select their equipment, they need to be aware of the various warranties. Panels typically have 20 year warranties. Inverter warranties should be at least 5 years, but many are 10 or even 15 years. There should also be a warranty on the complete system by the installer. These can be as short as 12 months, but can also be as long as 10 years. Schools are responsible for decisions on these issues before they sign agreements with installers.
  - *Prevailing rate of wages:* for public schools there are also requirements in Illinois law regarding construction projects on school grounds and prevailing rate of wages. It is important to keep these policies in mind when calculating costs. ICECF does not specify any wage requirements for projects.
  - *Data monitoring:* every inverter comes with the ability to monitor the electricity generated by the solar panels on-site, but due to the educational nature of this program, data must also be publicly available at [www.IllinoisSolarSchools.org](http://www.IllinoisSolarSchools.org). This setup enables the public as well as all students to view each school's data. If you have any questions about whether or not the system you plan to use will satisfy the grant requirements, email Glen at [glen@learnenergy.org](mailto:glen@learnenergy.org) for a review.
    - There are many data collection systems that allow for live data to be posted to the internet. A data monitoring system will collect data from the panels at your school and transmit it to a central server managed by the data company you use. This data is stored centrally so that it can be displayed on any computer or smartphone with internet access.
    - As a Solar Schools participant, ICECF will cover the cost of the real-time data display on the Illinois Solar Schools web site. Schools are responsible for providing the appropriate links to their data monitoring accounts. If you have any questions about this part of your grant requirements, call Glen at (614) 339-3961 or email [glen@LearnEnergy.org](mailto:glen@LearnEnergy.org)
  - *Site:* the panels must be installed on, and visible from, school grounds. Installations can be pole mounted, awning style (typically secured to a wall or edge of roof), roof mounted or custom fitted depending on your circumstances. Schools should work with installers and facilities staff to determine the best setup. The Solar Schools program is primarily educational, and panels should be installed for high visibility to students and the public. If they are installed flat on the roof and out of site, they can be easily forgotten and ignored. Installations should not, however, compromise safety and performance for the sake of visibility. Students should not only see the equipment, but should be able to see that *it works*.
  - *Education:* each school should use the solar system in at least one class. ICECF provides teacher training workshops and has online materials available for free downloads on the [www.IllinoisSolarSchools.org](http://www.IllinoisSolarSchools.org) web site and encourages teachers to find or develop their own educational activities as well. In order for the grant funds to be paid, the schools must comply with the installation parameters and they must also document the curricular use of the solar system.
  - *Solarbration:* ICECF encourages schools to be creative in organizing an event to announce the completion of the solar installation and highlight renewable energy and environmental issues.
  - *Ongoing Operation & Maintenance:* schools are expected to maintain the solar system in good working order and should be sure to budget \$150 annually for unexpected as well as regular maintenance expenses.