



**DATE:** April 27, 2026  
**TO:** CIFP: Reliability Backstop  
**FROM:** IMM  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed backstop auction design V3

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The preferred option for data centers adding load to the PJM system is for data centers to bring their own new generation. For those data centers that do not bring their own new generation, the IMM proposes that PJM run a backstop auction designed to meet data center load plus the required reserve margin to meet that load.

The IMM proposes a specific backstop auction design. The goal is to incorporate market forces as much as possible, including choices by data centers and generation developers, and to minimize planning choices by PJM or others. The proposed IMM design does not impose data center costs or risks on other customers, consistent with the Principles defined by the National Energy Dominance Council and the PJM Governors and the Pledge by defined hyperscalers.

The IMM design creates a dedicated mechanism for new large data center load designed to complement, not replace, PJM's existing RPM construct. It is intended to ensure long term resource adequacy for data center load by directly linking new data center load with dedicated new generation, creating transparent investment signals based on a 15 year contract term.

Only organic load and existing data center load as of June 1, 2026, would be included in the BRA for 2028/2029 and in the BRA for 2029/2030. The maximum price for these BRAs would be based on the IMM's CT Net CONE calculations from the most recent quadrennial review. There would be no floor price. All forecast data center load would be removed from the BRA for 2028/2029 and from the BRA for 2029/2030. All data center load that was not online on June 1, 2026, would be required to participate in the backstop auction or to commit to the BYONG option. Data center load would have the option to commit to a specific future BYONG plan and not be included in the auction. If such data center load did not bring new generation, that load would be curtailable if that load is allowed to come on line.

The IMM's design is to run a full single clearing price auction using the BRA model for data center load. This backstop auction would be run soon after the 2028/2029 BRA. Such an auction design could be repeated in the future as needed to address additional new data center load that is not included in the first backstop auction. The auction would include the location and MW of each data center that participates, the location and MW of proposed generation that participates, full PJM CETO/CETL parameters net of the impacts from the prior BRA and any resultant locational price separation. The only product offered would be 15 year capacity at a maximum price equal to the nominal levelized equivalent of the IMM's calculated combustion turbine Gross CONE provided in the latest quadrennial review, net of defined energy and ancillary service net revenues in each year of the contract. That equivalent, in \$/MW-day, would

be higher than the calculated Net CONE in year one because the product is 15 year levelized while the current cap is based on a 20 year levelized gross CONE net of net revenues for year one.

The backstop auction would result in cleared capacity by LDA. If offers are less than demand, the highest demand offers would clear. If demand is less than offers, the lowest offers would clear.

In order to meet the intended incentive goal, the total payments received for new generation should equal Gross CONE, including both net revenue from the energy and ancillary services markets and capacity payments. The net revenues would be explicitly incorporated. The actual annual payments under the contracts would include the defined energy and ancillary service net revenues calculated annually for each year and the remaining Net CONE not covered by the net revenues. The contracts would be for total payments including energy and ancillary services net revenues and the remaining net cost of capacity.

In the backstop auction, the demand for capacity would be equal to specific demand for 15 year capacity from individual data centers, plus the required reserve margin for each data center to ensure reliability. There is no forecast of demand. All data centers with demand greater than or equal to 5.0 MW would be included. A goal of the size limit is to prevent artificial segmentation of data center load to circumvent the size threshold.

Sellers in the backstop auction would be new generation only, with clearly defined eligibility. New generation would not include uprates to existing generation, uncleared capacity, repowered capacity, units that did not retire prior to June 1, 2025, demand side resources or relicensing. This definition ensures that all cleared capacity represents investment in new physical supply rather than redefining existing resources. The goal is to support new generation and to prevent gaming of the rules by reclassifying existing capacity resources as new.

Data centers and generation would be required to comply with all requirements of the PJM capacity market. For example, new capacity is required to have CIRs and to be deliverable.

When the clearing process is complete and each generation offer is associated with one or more identified data center loads, the generators and data center loads would enter into 15 year bilateral contracts that do not permit any cost or risk shifting to other customers. The contracts would be based on a tariff defined standard contract. The risks associated with the load changing or withdrawing and generation changing or failing would be fully addressed in the bilateral contracts. The risks associated with changes in ELCC values would be fully addressed in the bilateral contracts. New capacity resources clearing in the auction would have a starting ELCC based on the recent EFORD performance of comparable generation and would have unit

specific ELCC values based on unit performance and therefore subject to management by the generator.

When the bilateral contracts are final, including bilateral contracts reached under the BYONG option, the data center load plus the reserve margin and the corresponding capacity would be included in future BRAs as price takers.

The data centers are required to coordinate with the EDC where they are located. The rules governing the coordination would be subject to approval by appropriate state authorities. Under the IMM proposal, the EDCs are not the counterparty to the contracts and the EDCs and their other customers are not at risk for any contract related issues. The data center and the capacity seller are the counterparties to the contracts. PJM and other PJM participants provide no credit support of any kind for the contracts. There is no recourse to PJM or its members. Credit issues are entirely between the parties to the bilateral contracts.