

**State of Illinois Uniform Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**  
**Summary Information**

Awarding Agency Name	Commerce And Econ Opp
Agency Contact	John Barr (john.w.barr@illinois.gov)
Announcement Type	Initial
Type of Assistance Instrument	Grant
Funding Opportunity Number	FY25-1
Funding Opportunity Title	Solar Pipeline Training Program
CSFA Number	420-00-2750
CSFA Popular Name	Solar Pipeline Training Program
Anticipated Number of Awards	6
Estimated Total Program Funding	\$3,000,000
Award Range	Not Applicable
Source of Funding	State
Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements	No
Indirect Costs Allowed	Yes
Restrictions on Indirect Costs	No
Posted Date	05/01/2025
Application Date Range	05/01/2025 - 07/01/2025 : 11:59PM
Grant Application Link	Please select the entire address below and paste it into the browser... <a href="https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/2750-2996.html">https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/2750-2996.html</a>
Technical Assistance Session	Offered : Yes Mandatory : No Date : 05/15/2025 : 1:00PM Registration link : <a href="https://illinois.zoom.us/meeting/register/00nqzYjvRwSfDd2ykF3kVg#/registration">https://illinois.zoom.us/meeting/register/00nqzYjvRwSfDd2ykF3kVg#/r  egistration</a>

# Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity Future Energy Jobs Act: Solar Pipeline Training Program NOFO ID: 2750-2996

For information about grants please visit <https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/granteeresources.html>.

## A. Program Description

### Notice of Funding Opportunity Intent

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (the “Department” or “DCEO”) is issuing this Notice of Funding Opportunity (“NOFO”) to support the Future Energy Jobs Act Solar Pipeline Program (“Program”) authorized under 220 ILCS 5/16-108.12(a)(1). Through this NOFO, DCEO is making \$3 million available for eligible organizations to provide skill development, supportive services, and solar training services for qualified, traditionally underserved participants seeking employment in the clean energy industry, specifically in solar occupations.

### Program Description

The Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA) and Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) were created to stimulate job growth in the clean energy economy with investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean energy workforce development. The Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA) establishes a Solar Training Pipeline Program (Program) to develop a solar installer training pipeline for projects authorized under Section 1-56 of the Illinois Power Agency Act (20-ILCS 3855/1-56) and to establish a pool of training installers who will be able to install solar projects authorized under subsection (c) of Section 1-75 of the Illinois Power Agency Act.

- The program shall be designed to ensure that entities that offer training are located in, and trainees are recruited from, the same communities that the program aims to serve and that the program provides trainees with the opportunity to obtain real-world experience.
- The program shall also be designed to assist trainees so that they can obtain applicable certifications or participate in an apprenticeship program. The program shall provide training to individuals who are or were foster children and target persons with a record who are transitioning with job training and job placement programs.
- The program shall include an incentive to facilitate an increase of hiring of qualified persons who are or were foster children and persons with a record. It is a goal of the program that at least 50% of the trainees in this program come from within environmental justice communities.

### Definitions

*“Bridge program”* means assistance provided to program participants with limited academic or limited English skills to bridge the gap between the initial skills of individuals and what they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and career-path employment by obtaining the necessary academic, employability and technical skills through three required components:

- Contextualized instruction that integrates basic reading, math and language skills and industry or occupation knowledge;
- Career development that includes career exploration, career planning within a career area, and understanding the world of work; and
- Transition services that provide participants with the information and assistance they need to successfully navigate the process of moving to credit or occupational programs.

*“Climate Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Programs.”* Workforce and clean energy infrastructure development programs authorized by the Climate Equitable Jobs Act (P.A. 102-662); Program grantees will coordinate directly with grantees of the Illinois Energy Transition Navigator Program (20 ILCS 730/5-35) and Returning Residents Program (20 ILCS 730/5-50)

*“Core equity values”*, as defined in the Illinois Office of Equity *“Illinois Toward Equity Action Framework <https://ooe.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/ooe/documents/illinois-towards-equity/ite-action-framework-toolkit-3-13-23.pdf>,”* include the following:

- Diversity is the representation of people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.
- Inclusion is the action or state of including and feeling as an empowered sense of belonging within a group or organization.
- Accessibility according to the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, is “when a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally integrated and equally effective manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.” The Office of Equity extends accessibility beyond disability to include the creation of financially, technologically, and linguistically accessible systems, resources, and services so that all can thrive in a society.
- Each of these three foundational elements contributes to equity: The state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair. Equity must also be both structural and systemic and comprised of a robust infrastructure and dynamic process that produce equitable ideas, power, and resources.

*“Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework”*:

<https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/ceja/documents/clean-jobs-curriculum-framework.pdf> The Curriculum Framework includes requirements for training, certification preparation, job readiness, and skill development, including soft skills, math skills, technical skills, certification test preparation, and other development needed.

*“Displaced Energy Worker”*: An energy worker who has lost employment or is anticipated by the Department to lose employment within the next 5 years, due to the reduced operation or closure of a fossil fuel power plant, nuclear power plant, or coal mine.

*“Educational Institution”*: A publicly or privately operated university, college, community college, junior college, business or vocational school, or other educational institution offering degrees and instruction beyond the secondary school level; or a publicly or privately-operated elementary school or secondary school.

*“Energy worker”*: means a person who has been employed full-time for a period of one year or longer, and within the previous 5 years, at a fossil fuel power plant, a nuclear power plant, or a coal mine located within the State of Illinois, whether or not they are employed by the owner of the power plant or mine. Energy workers are considered to be full-time if they work at least 35 hours per week for 45 weeks a year or the 1,820 work-hour equivalent with vacations, paid holidays, and sick time, but not overtime, included in this computation. Classification of an individual as an energy worker continues for 5 years from the latest date of employment or the effective date of [the Energy Community Reinvestment Act, September 15, 2021], whichever is later.

*“English Language Learner / Individual with Low Levels of Literacy”*: An individual that has limited ability in reading, writing, speaking, or comprehending the English language and whose native language is a language other than English or who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language; is unable to read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, or in the individual’s family, or in society; or perceives him or herself as possessing attitudes, beliefs, customs or practices that influence a way of thinking, acting, or working that may serve as a hindrance to employment.

*“Equity investment eligible communities”* are the geographic areas throughout Illinois that would most benefit from equitable investments by the State, which are designed to combat discrimination and foster sustainable economic growth. Specifically, equity investment eligible communities include the following areas:

- Restore, Reinvest and Renew Areas (R3 Areas) as established pursuant to Section 10-40 of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (410 ILCS 705), where residents have historically been

excluded from economic opportunities, including opportunities in the energy sector. Eligible R3 Areas are defined in the R3 service map (<https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility>). Criteria for defining R3 Areas include rates of gun injury, unemployment, child poverty, incarceration with Illinois Department of Corrections, and historic disinvestment; and

- Environmental justice communities, as defined by the Illinois Power Agency pursuant to the Illinois Power Agency Act (20 ILCS 3855), but excluding racial and ethnic indicators, where residents have historically been subject to disproportionate pollution burdens, including pollution from the energy sector.
- The Equity Investment Eligible Community Map ([Arcg.is/1Wvv4X](https://arcg.is/1Wvv4X)) defines the areas that satisfy the criteria above for both R3 Areas and Environmental justice communities.

*“Equity investment eligible person” or “eligible person”* is a person who would most benefit from equitable investments by the State designed to combat discrimination and foster sustainable economic growth. Specifically, eligible persons mean:

- persons whose primary residence is in an equity investment eligible community; or
- persons who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system; or
- persons who were formerly incarcerated.

*“Graduates of or individuals currently enrolled in the foster care system”*: Any person who is currently in the foster care system; has aged out of the foster care system; has attained age 18 and left foster care for kinship guardianship or adoption; or is in an out-of-home placement.

*“Leadership Training / Development”*: Training that provides youth participants with meaningful opportunities to develop leadership skills such as decision making, problem solving, and negotiating. The training typically encourages participants to develop strong peer group ties that support their mutual pursuit of skills and values.

*“Low Educational Attainment”*: Individuals that have limited education attainment and are basic skills deficient where the individual has English, reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job.

*“Low Income Household”*: Persons and families whose gross income does not exceed 80% of area median income, adjusted for family size and revised every 5 years. See the income eligibility lookup tool here: <https://www.illinoissfa.com/income-eligibility-lookup-tool/>

*“Persons with a Record”*: Any person who has been convicted of a crime in this State or of an offense in any other jurisdiction, not including an offense or attempted offense that would subject a person to registration under the Sex Offender Registration Act; has a record of an arrest or an arrest that did not result in conviction for any crime in this State or of an offense in any other jurisdiction; or has a juvenile delinquency adjudication.

*“Pre-apprenticeship”*: Defined by the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board as programs that are designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in apprenticeship programs or in another career pathway approach. Pre-apprenticeship programs have the following core elements:

- Inclusive Recruitment of Underrepresented Individuals
- Industry-Focused Curriculum & Training
- Hands-On Learning/Work Based Learning
- Retention Services For Successful Participation and Completion
- Partnerships with Employers and Connections to Apprenticeship Programs
- Strive for Credential Acquisition

*“Registered Apprenticeship”*: Defined by the Office of Apprenticeship of the U.S. Department of Labor, Registered Apprenticeship programs (RAPs) are an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work

experience, receive progressive wage increases, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential. Registered Apprenticeships are industry-vetted and approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor. The elements of USDOL Registered Apprenticeships outlined at 29 C.F.R § 29 include the following:

- *Industry Led*: Programs are industry-vetted and approved to ensure alignment with industry standards and that apprentices are trained for highly skilled, high-demand occupations.
- *Paid Job*: Apprenticeships are jobs! Apprentices earn progressive wage as their skills and productivity increase.
- *Structured On-the-Job Learning/Mentorship*: Programs provide structured on-the-job training to prepare for a successful career, which includes instruction from an experienced mentor.
- *Supplemental Education*: Apprentices are provided supplemental classroom education based on the employers' unique training needs to ensure quality and success.
- *Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)*: Programs are designed to reflect the communities in which they operate through strong non-discrimination, anti-harassment, and inclusive recruitment practices.
- *Quality & Safety*: Apprentices are afforded worker protections while receiving rigorous training to equip them with the skills they need to succeed and the proper training and supervision they need to be safe.
- *Credentials*: Apprentices earn a portable, nationally recognized credential within their industry.

*“Underrepresented individuals”*: Individuals, groups and communities that have experienced disparities or disadvantages in employment.

*“Work-based Learning”*, means work-based opportunities to practice and enhance the skills and knowledge gained in the program of study or industry training program, as well as to develop employability, and includes an assessment and recognition of acquired knowledge and skills.

- Work-based learning as defined in Perkins V legislation is “sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that fosters in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.”
- Work-based learning may include career awareness and exploration activities (guest speakers, job shadowing, mentorship) as well as workplace experience (internships, service learning, paid work experience, on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and apprenticeships).

**Note:** The State of Illinois will follow the definitions established by the Career Pathways Dictionary for this NOFO ([https://www.illinoisworknet.com/DownloadPrint/CP\\_Dictionary\\_11-13-18\\_FINAL.PDF](https://www.illinoisworknet.com/DownloadPrint/CP_Dictionary_11-13-18_FINAL.PDF)).

### Target Program Participants

The targeted program participants that are served under this NOFO align with the priorities of FEJA and CEJA to provide statewide access to quality solar training, jobs, and economic opportunities across the clean energy sector, specifically in solar occupations. This Award will prioritize recruitment efforts and workforce services for persons who are graduates of, or individuals currently enrolled in the foster care system or persons with a record in the applicant's service area. The program may also recruit and serve individuals who face barriers to employment such as low educational attainment, low levels of literacy, language barriers, etc., Displaced Energy Workers or Individuals from Environmental Justice Communities as defined above.

### Target Industry

The goal of this NOFO is to provide training for clean energy solar jobs as outlined in the *Illinois Clean Energy Jobs and Training Program Inventory*. See:

### Training Curriculum

Grantees provide training that is consistent with the structure and expectations of the curriculum framework including:

- Core training curricular competency areas needed to prepare program graduates to enter clean energy jobs, specifically in solar occupations.
- Required core cross-training competencies to provide a foundation for pursuing a career in solar occupations.
- Broad occupational training, remedial education, and work readiness support necessary for career entry into solar occupations.
- On-the-job training formats that provide suggested trainer certification standards, where relevant.
- Best practices to cultivate an equitable, safe, dynamic, enjoyable, and successful environment for all.

### Eligible Applicants

The Department will award funds to eligible organizations that demonstrate capacity to provide participants with individual development, economic, and/or career-related opportunities focused on solar energy jobs. Applicants must have a record of successfully delivering job training. In accordance with subsection (a)(1) of Section 16-108.12 of the Public Utilities Act (220 ILCS 5/16-108.12(a)(1)), the Solar Pipeline Training Program:

- Shall be designed to ensure that entities that offer training are located in, and trainees are recruited from, the same communities that the program aims to serve and that the program provides trainees with the opportunity to obtain real-world experience, and
- Shall also be designed to assist trainees so that they can obtain applicable certifications or participate in an apprenticeship program.

### Program Design

Projects funded under this program must include the program elements that are outlined in this section. Program grantees will be expected to develop policies and procedures that incorporate these program elements through the administration of the program and the delivery of program services.

1. **OVERALL PROGRAM DESIGN AND PARTNERSHIPS:** Grantees will work with Energy Transition Navigators and other local and regional workforce entities to recruit, pre-screen, provide training, engage employers, and provide transition services to prepare a diverse pipeline of workers for careers in solar occupations. Organizations applying for funding may deliver all program elements themselves or may partner with other organizations to deliver various program elements. Where appropriate, lead applicants may enter into agreements with other organizations that can provide outreach and recruitment, case management, training, wrap-around supportive services, work-based learning elements, assessments, or other program elements. Applicants must include a written agreement with project partners that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of each partner and lists their funding contribution. Applicants that enter into a partnership agreement with training providers should include details regarding the training program, including the length, location, class size, cost, and other important information.

2. **GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE:** Grantees will serve participants in their proposed service area within the State of Illinois. Successful applicants will demonstrate how the grant will serve the targeted program participants and communities. Note that program applicants must be located in the same communities that the program aims to serve.

3. **STAFFING:** Staff are required for all key program areas, including, but not limited to, program administration, instruction, outreach and recruitment, intake, supportive services, employer engagement, transition and follow-up, program reporting and grant administration. Program staffing must ensure the quality delivery of programs and services. Staffing decisions should also consider the experience and

ability of key staff to address barriers to employment of program participants, connect to equity investment eligible communities (Environmental Justice (EJ) & R3), and create a welcoming environment. Applicants will provide this information by completing *Attachment A4: Staffing Plan* and providing staff resumes, instructor credentials, partnership agreements, and/or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).

**4. EQUITY-FOCUSED PROGRAM CULTURE:** Grantees must utilize a program model that upholds the core values of diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity. These core values should inform all aspects of the program, including recruitment, partnerships, training, transition services, and barrier reducing supportive services. Programs should consider the unique background and experiences of program participants and pursue policies and practices to support all participants. Applicants must consider how their program will increase access, enrollment, and completion for program eligible persons. Programs should foster a shared identity in the program and a welcoming, inclusive environment for participants with different backgrounds.

**5. COORDINATION:** The Department administers an interconnected network of statewide clean energy programs authorized by FEJA and CEJA. DCEO will coordinate the activities under the FEJA and CEJA programs to ensure maximum benefit and avoid duplication of effort. To facilitate this, FEJA grantees may be required to accept referrals and will be strongly encouraged to coordinate outreach and recruitment with Illinois Energy Transition Navigators Program grantees in their service area:

<https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs/energy-transition-navigator-program.html>. Successful applicants will demonstrate an awareness and potential to coordinate with other FEJA and CEJA workforce program grantees including but not limited to:

- Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program
- Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program
- CEJA Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program
- Equitable Energy Future Grant Program
- Community Solar Energy Sovereignty Grant Program
- Energy Transition Community Grant Program
- Coal to Solar and Energy Storage Grant Program

Successful applicants will demonstrate the ability to coordinate with Local Workforce Innovation Areas and other local and regional workforce entities. Program grantees are also expected to coordinate with building trades, industry contractors, contractor associations, community colleges, community-based organizations, and secondary schools, among others. Program grantees are expected to develop structured pathways (in partnership with key stakeholders in the industry) for program graduates to transition successfully into clean energy jobs following program completion.

Finally, Program grantees will be required to ensure all participants are appropriately registered in the Illinois Energy Equity Portal administered by the Illinois Power Agency (<https://energyequity.illinois.gov/>) upon acceptance into the program: <https://energyequity.illinois.gov/job-seekers.html>. Acceptance into a FEJA program determines eligibility. Graduation or certification is not required for registration.

**6. OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT:** Recruitment and outreach strategies to enroll program-eligible persons must be equitable and inclusive of all populations (see definitions above). Outreach strategies should help eligible persons make informed decisions about their participation and career paths. Program grantees shall accept referrals from CEJA Energy Transition Navigators, described in CEJA (20 ILCS 730/5-35). Navigators work in coordination with CEJA workforce program grantees and other workforce development entities to educate program participant candidates about careers in clean energy industry sectors to ensure the training opportunities align with their career interests.

**7. APPLICATION & INTAKE:** Grantees shall review potential participants' eligibility for the program through a prescreen assessment, application, and interview. Participant eligibility requirements are outlined on page 5 of this NOFO. Program grantees will use provided pre-screen assessments, applications, supportive service assessments, and commitment agreements as provided by the

Department. The intake process should help participants determine which services best meet their interest (suitability) and needs (ability) to give them the best opportunity for success in a clean energy career. Participant candidates who do not meet the minimum program requirements shall be directed to other workforce programs and educational services in their communities, such as free literacy, GED, and ESL classes.

**8. COORDINATION OF CAREER PLANNING:** Career planning is a customer-centered approach to delivering services to prepare and coordinate comprehensive career (employment) plans for program participants, ensuring access to training activities and supportive services during program participation and continuing for one (1) year of follow-up. Successful career planning is a collaborative, ongoing process rather than a one-time activity. The process is individualized to the worker that include the following activities:

- *Assessment:* A thorough assessment is the foundation for understanding the participant's employment goals, existing skills, and career readiness and determining all possible barriers to employment. It is not a one-time activity nor is it a one-size-fits-all approach. Assessments help prepare participants to determine existing skills, identify those that require additional training, develop an employment plan, and connect them to services through appropriate referrals. At a minimum, the assessment process must be appropriate for the participant and address the areas below to inform the employment plan.
- *Individual Employment Plan:* The Individual Employment Plan (IEP) is a living document that identifies employment and education goals as part of a career pathway, objectives, and the appropriate combination of services for the participant to reach the goals. The IEP is the basic instrument for the grantee to document the appropriateness of the decisions made about the combination of services for the participant, including referrals to other programs for specified activities. It is to be developed collaboratively with the participant to establish mutual goals.

**9. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES:** Grantees will provide supportive services to participants in overcoming barriers to successful program participation as applicable. Grantees must have the ability to provide flexible, timely services to address the unique and often time-sensitive barriers that may arise during participants' training. They should have strong connections to agencies and community-based organizations to facilitate the coordination of services. These supportive services should also be offered to program completers based on an assessment of the support needed to transition to employment and be retained in the job (up to one year after completion). Grantees shall also provide student support services to assist participants in maximizing training program success and obtaining the program's offered certifications/credentials. Allowable program costs may include tutoring services, mentorships, retesting and make-up sessions, or other educational enrichment. Grantees will be required to develop a supportive services policy and procedure that is consistent with the program guidelines.

**10. STIPENDS:** Program grantees *may* offer stipends to help participants stay financially solvent during the training period. The Department encourages setting stipends at a rate that encourages participation and retention through the program and will accept proposals that offer performance-based stipends that do not exceed \$13 per training hour. Performance based stipends should be paid based on a participant's attendance and performance in the training program (i.e., passing training assessments, earning credentials, successfully completing training modules, demonstrating technical skills, etc.). A stipend is a payment made to a trainee or learner for living expenses, unlike a salary or wages which are paid to an employee. A stipend is not considered wages, so Social Security or Medicare taxes are not withheld. However, it still counts as taxable income for income tax purposes. Program grantees will be required to develop a stipend policy and procedure that is consistent with the program guidelines.

**11. TRAINING:** Training services are critical to the success of many individuals in their employment. Programs must lead to industry-recognized or post-secondary credentials and align with the program participant's choice for a career pathway that also aligns with the targeted industry outlined in this NOFO. When building the training curriculum, grantees must follow the guidelines provided in the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework to prepare participants for entry-level clean energy jobs (see:



<https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/ceja/documents/clean-jobs-curriculum-framework.pdf>). The Curriculum Framework includes requirements for training, certification preparation, job readiness, and skill development, including soft skills, math skills, technical skills, certification test preparation, and other development needed. Training should include a balance of job readiness, or soft-skills training, and technical, hands-on training. Grantees must provide a *Bridge Program* and *Solar Training* as outlined below.

- *Bridge Program*: The bridge program (see definition above) is a portion of the overall Curriculum Framework that addresses essential employability skills and clean energy basics to help participants succeed in an array of clean energy jobs and workplaces. It prepares participants for the job-specific technical training options below. The bridge program will lead students to obtain, at a minimum, an OSHA-10 certification and a First Aid/CPR certification. Some clean energy employers may be interested in hiring people directly from the bridge program. Most participants will continue to job-specific training.
- *Solar Training*: After participants complete the bridge program, they will be directed to the Solar Photovoltaic Training as the job-specific training option. Grantees should have a clear understanding of the in-demand occupations in the region. The job specific training strategies for program participants must be consistent with the comprehensive assessment and IEP. Applicants should consider including in their program design the following job-specific training strategies that include:
- *Occupational Skills Training*: Training that is directly related to a solar trade, occupation, or vocational skills, leading to proficiency in performing actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate, or advanced levels.
- *Skill Upgrading and Retraining*: Training that is provided to help improve the skills and/or retrain the participants. Training will result in the workers' acquisition of transferable skills or an industry-recognized certification or credential.
- *Work-Based Learning*: Training that provides participants with the opportunity to practice and enhance the skills and knowledge gained in the program of study or industry training program, as well as to develop employability, and includes an assessment and recognition of acquired knowledge and skills. Competitive applications will include a minimum of 10% of the training to be devoted to work-based learning. Program grantees will also be encouraged to facilitate on-the-job training placements as appropriate.
- *Entrepreneurial Training* – Prepares entrepreneurs to either start a small business or expand an existing business, usually through the development of a business plan.
- *Adult Education and Literacy Training* - Includes activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with services provided in any of the services listed above or as part of work-based learning.

**Note:** The details of the training services and strategies should be included in the *Attachment A3 Curriculum Plan* of the Project Work Plan.

12. PROGRAM DELIVERY. Grantees are encouraged to implement flexible and interactive program delivery methods to improve accessibility and help participants overcome barriers that stand in the way of their participation or success. Instructional delivery strategies to improve student outcomes may include, but are not limited to:

- Content that can be completed on-demand when convenient for participants
- Virtual or face-to-face instruction options
- Interactive learning tools, such as alternative reality or virtual reality technology
- Full-time and part-time training options
- Open entry and exit options
- Modular programming that avoids redundant training for participants who may already possess given qualifications.
- Ongoing guidance and instruction after completion to help with job placements
- Alternative testing approaches to demonstrate material mastery

13. **TRANSITION SERVICES & FOLLOW-UP:** Grantees are required to assist students in transitioning to clean energy jobs or advanced training opportunities after program completion. Grantees will be required to provide continued case management and transition services to program participants as they complete the program based on an updated assessment of the participant's needs. Transition services may include, but are not limited to, mock interviews, application preparation, resume writing, referral to a career counselor, and job search assistance. Grantees should make follow up services available to participants for at least one year following training program completion and offer transition services to help meet the career goals of the participant.

14. **DATA TRACKING AND PROGRAM OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT:** Grantees must track the data elements in Illinois workNet and other systems as directed by DCEO including, but not limited to:

- Demographic data, including racial, gender, residency in equity investment eligible communities (EJ & R3), qualification as a person with a record or former resident of foster care, and geographic distribution data on Program trainees. For those who are placed in employment, data tracking will include the percentages of trainees by race, gender, and geographic categories and whether employment is union, nonunion, or nonunion via temporary agency;
- Trainee job acquisition and retention statistics, including the duration of employment (start and end dates of hires) by race, gender, and geography;
- Hourly wages, including hourly overtime pay rate, and benefits of trainees placed into employment by race, gender, and geography;
- Percentage of jobs by race, gender, and geography held by Program trainees or graduates that are full-time equivalent positions, meaning that the position held is full-time, direct, and permanent based on 2,080 hours worked per year (paid directly by the employer, whose activities, schedule, and manner of work the employer controls, and receives pay and benefits in the same manner as permanent employees); and
- Qualitative data consisting of open-ended reporting on pertinent issues, including, but not limited to, qualitative descriptions accompanying metrics or identifying key successes and challenges.

Grantees must also track job retention rates for at least one year after job placement. Note that this may require applicants to identify how they will track the grant activities and outcomes after the grant period is over. Grantees will perform data tracking and use reporting systems as directed by the Department.

15. **OUTCOME ASSESSMENT.** Applicants must describe an approach that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the program and how this information will be used to improve program delivery. This assessment may include surveys of program graduates regarding overall satisfaction with the training activities delivered and appropriateness to the targeted job opportunities, surveys of employers concerning the comprehensiveness of coverage of required job skills, etc. In addition, the assessment plan should indicate how the results of the assessment activities will be used to improve the training program in a continuous manner. Grantees will also be required to cooperate with external evaluation efforts, as directed by the Department.

### Program History

In 2017, the Illinois Commerce Commission approved ComEd's first award of \$3 million under the FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Program [see Illinois Commerce Commission order 17-0332]. The administration of the programs authorized under the FEJA was assigned to the Illinois Department of Commerce in 2022 through CEJA [see Public Act 102-662]. In keeping with ICC Order 17-0332, the Department of Commerce awarded \$3 million in 2022 and is making \$3 million available through this NOFO.

### Performance Goals and Measures

Specific project outcomes, goals, and deliverables must be included in the proposal. Agreed upon deliverables and outcomes will be tracked utilizing project management tools developed by the Department. Grant applications must include the projected outcomes that are consistent with the program

design and definitions. Applicants must provide information regarding projected outcomes as part of the required attachments. Program Outcomes may include:

- Number of individuals enrolled in program
- Number of individuals completing program
- Number of individuals obtaining industry-linked credential(s), certification, or license
- Number of individuals placed in post-secondary education
- Number of individuals placed and number completing on-the-job trainings
- Number of individuals placed and number completing a paid work experience or internship
- Number of individuals placed in unsubsidized employment
- Number of individuals retained in unsubsidized employment for 6 and 12 months

#### Other Information

N/A

## **B. Funding Information**

This grant program is utilizing state funds appropriated by the requirements of the Public Utilities Act (220 ILCS 5/16-108.12) and the Illinois Power Agency Act (20 ILCS 3855/1-75(c)(O)). The total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this NOFO is \$3,000,000.00. The anticipated funding range for grants awarded under this NOFO is from \$350,000 to \$1,000,000.

The anticipated grant commitment date for awards is September 1, 2025, and the anticipated grant award date will be approximately August 1, 2025. The period of performance is expected to be September 1, 2025, through August 31, 2027, with the potential for up to a 12-month no cost extension.

**Allowable Costs:** Costs charged to the grant must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable based on activities contained in the scope of work.

**Administrative Costs:** It is expected that administrative costs, both direct and indirect, will represent a small portion (generally around 10%) of the program budget. Program budgets and narratives will detail how all proposed expenditures are directly necessary for program implementation.

**Grant Award and Payment Terms:** Successful applicants will be invited to negotiate a grant with the Department. The executed grant agreement will specify conditions for payment and a payment schedule. In general, grantee(s) will receive reimbursement payments and may be subject to proration. Each grant will have enrollment and outcome goals specific to the types of projects funded.

**Renewals / Previous Grants:** The Department may authorize the renewal of projects awarded under this NOFO including additional funding based on the activities, outcomes, and performance of the grant as well as the availability of funds under this program.

Applicants must submit required attachments and the Formatted Grant Technical Application that describe in detail how the award will be executed. The Formatted Grant Technical Application should include enough information for DCEO to understand the scope of the project, the budget, including a detailed breakdown of the costs associated with each budget line and any additional necessary detail to enable DCEO to manage the grant agreement activity against planned project performance. The Formatted Grant Technical Application must include evidence of capacity, quality and need as defined in Section E.1.

Program grantee agreement(s) and budget(s) with subrecipients and subcontractors must be pre-approved by and on file with DCEO. Agreements can be submitted to DCEO when available. Subcontractors and subrecipients are subject to all applicable provisions of the Agreement(s) executed between DCEO and the grantee. The successful applicant shall retain sole responsibility for the performance of its subrecipient(s) and/or subcontractor(s).

The release of this NOFO does not obligate the Department to make an award.

## C. Eligibility Information

An entity must be registered in the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal, <https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>, at the time of grant application. The portal will verify that the entity:

- Has a valid FEIN number (<https://www.irs.gov/individuals/international-taxpayers/taxpayer-identification-numbers-tin#:~:text=You%20can%20use%20the%20IRS%27s,for%20Individual%20Taxpayer%20Identification%20Number>);
- Has a current SAM.gov registration (<https://sam.gov>), SAM.gov registrations must be marked as “public” to allow the GATA Grantee Portal to expedite the review of the federal information;
- Has a valid UEI number (<https://sam.gov>);
- Is not on the Federal Excluded Parties List (verified at <https://sam.gov>);
- Is in Good Standing with the Illinois Secretary of State, as applicable ([https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business\\_services/corp.html](https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business_services/corp.html));
- Is not on the Illinois Stop Payment list (verified once entity is registered in GATA Grantee Portal); and
- Is not on the Department of Healthcare and Family Services Provider Sanctions list (<https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/oig/Pages/SanctionsList.aspx>).

Entities on the Illinois Stop Payment List and/or the Federal Excluded Parties List at time of application submission will not be considered for an award.

An automated email notification to the entity alerts them of “qualified” status or informs how to remediate a negative verification (e.g., not in good standing with the Secretary of State). A federal Debarred and Suspended status cannot be remediated.

Pursuant to the policy of the Illinois Office of the Comptroller, to receive grant funds from the State of Illinois, a grantee must be considered a regarded entity by the IRS for federal income tax purposes. Disregarded entities will not be eligible to receive grant funds.

### 1. Eligible Applicants include:

Applicants must be an organization that has a record of successfully delivering job training and also meet the specific eligibility criteria listed in section A of this NOFO and properly operate in accordance with Federal, State, and local law, in the state of Illinois, may submit a proposal for consideration.

The Department complies with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity including, but not limited to: The Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/1-101 et seq.), The Public Works Employment Discrimination Act (775 ILCS 10/1 et seq.), The United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended) (42 USC 2000a-and 2000H-6), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 794), The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USC 12101 et seq.), and The Age Discrimination Act (42 USC 6101 et seq.).

### 2. Cost Sharing or Matching.

Matching funds are not required; however, projects that include matching funds will be given priority consideration as part of the merit review process. The successful applicant will be required to report the matching and/or leveraged funds from partners over the life of the project.

There is no minimum requirement, but applications will be reviewed in part based upon their ability to leverage additional funding sources, which should be clearly described in the budget proposal.

### **3. Indirect Cost Rate.**

In order to charge indirect costs to a grant, the applicant organization must have an annually negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA). There are three types of NICRAs:

a) Federally Negotiated Rate. Organizations that receive direct federal funding, may have an indirect cost rate that was negotiated with the Federal Cognizant Agency. Illinois will accept the federally negotiated rate. The organization must provide a copy of the federally NICRA.

b) State Negotiated Rate. The organization may negotiate an indirect cost rate with the State of Illinois if they do not have a Federally Negotiated Rate. If an organization has not previously established an indirect cost rate, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted through State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system no later than three months after receipt of a Notice of State Award (NOSA). If an organization previously established an indirect cost rate, the organization must annually submit a new indirect cost proposal through CARS within six to nine months after the close of the grantee's fiscal year, depending on the grantee's audit type requirements.

c) De Minimis Rate. An organization may elect a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct cost (MTDC). Once established, the De Minimis Rate may be used indefinitely. The State of Illinois must verify the calculation of the MTDC annually in order to accept the De Minimis Rate.

All grantees must complete an indirect cost rate negotiation or elect the De Minimis Rate to claim indirect costs. Indirect costs claimed without a negotiated rate or a De Minimis Rate election on record in the State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system may be subject to disallowance.

Grantees have discretion and can elect to waive payment for indirect costs. Grantees that elect to waive payments for indirect costs cannot be reimbursed for indirect costs. The organization must record an election to "Waive Indirect Costs" into the State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system.

The following State University Facilities & Administration Rate and Base will apply to all State issued awards that contain either Federal pass-through funding or State funding.

#### **RATE:**

20% Rate for awards or programs administered On-Campus\*  
10% Rate for awards or programs administered Off-Campus\*

#### **BASE:**

Base approved in the State Universities' current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)

\*Criteria for utilization of the On/Off campus rate is located within the general terms and conditions of Federal NICRA for each State University. If not clearly defined, State awarding agencies and officers will make final determination based upon the purposes of the grant scope.

The maximum amount allowable cannot exceed the total amount under a NICRA.

**4. Freedom of Information Act/Confidential Information.**

Applications and accompanying materials are subject to disclosure in response to requests received under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/1 et seq.). Information that could be proprietary, privileged, or confidential commercial or financial information should be clearly identified as such in the application materials. The Department will maintain the confidentiality of that information only to the extent permitted by law.

**5. Other, if applicable.**

**Application Limit:** Organizations may submit one (1) application under this NOFO

**Applicant Rights:** Submission of an application confers no right to an award or to a subsequent grant agreement. The Department is not obligated to award any grants under this program, to pay any costs incurred by the applicant in the preparation and submission of an application or pay any grant-related costs incurred prior to the grant beginning date. Applicants may utilize the appeal process as stated in the Merit-Based Review Policy available in the Resource Library at [www.gata.illinois.gov](http://www.gata.illinois.gov).

**Program Eligibility Criteria:** All applicants must follow the program design and approaches outlined in Part A of this NOFO.

## **D. Application and Submission Information**

**1. Address to Request Application Package.**

Grant application forms are available at the web link provided in the “Grant Application Link” field of this announcement or by contacting the Program Manager:

Diana Fuller  
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity  
Email: [Diana.Fuller@Illinois.gov](mailto:Diana.Fuller@Illinois.gov)

**2. Content and Form of Application Submission.**

A standard application package must be submitted to and reviewed by DCEO. Each package must contain the following items:

- ☐ Uniform Grant Application in fillable PDF format. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned, and submitted with application.
- ☐ Uniform Budget utilizing the template provided by DCEO for this project. The entire budget with all worksheets included even if the worksheets are not relevant to the grant opportunity must be submitted with the application materials. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned, and submitted with application.
- ☐ Conflict of Interest Disclosure
- ☐ Mandatory Disclosures

This Notice of Funding Opportunity also requires the **submission of the following other programmatic specific items as part of the program application:**

- ☐ FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Program Formatted Grant Technical Application
- ☐ Project Work Plan (One Excel file containing a worksheet for each attachment.)
  - ☐ Attachment 1: Executive Summary
  - ☐ Attachment 2: Program Implementation Timeline

- ☐ Attachment 3: Curriculum Plan
- ☐ Attachment 4: Staffing Plan
- ☐ Attachment 5: Proposed Outcomes

Please note there is a maximum upload of 10 documents in the web form that you submit the application, so combining files may be necessary.

### **3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM).**

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal or State awarding agency that is exempt from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal or State awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

- i. Be registered in SAM. To establish a SAM registration, go to [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) and/or utilize this instructional link: [How to Register in SAM from the www.grants.illinois.gov Resource Links tab](#). SAM.gov registrations must be "public."
- ii. Provide a valid UEI number in the GATA Grantee Portal registration.
- iii. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal, Federal pass-through or State award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal or State awarding agency. The Department will not make a Federal pass-through or State award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Department is ready to make a Federal pass-through or State award, the Department may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal pass-through or State award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal pass-through or State award to another applicant.

### **4. Submission Dates and Times.**

Applications for this opportunity must be submitted by 11:59PM CST on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

Application materials must be submitted to the Department via electronic form at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/edb98e90d3e947b383efd020ed518309>

The Department is under no obligation to review applications that do not comply with the above requirements. Failure to meet the application deadline may result in the Department returning application without review or may preclude the Department from making the award.

### **5. Intergovernmental Review, if applicable.**

N/A.

### **6. Funding Restrictions.**

This opportunity does allow reimbursement of pre-award costs. Other restrictions can be found in Sections A, B, and C.

### **7. Other Submission Requirements.**

Documents stored in Google Docs or other cloud-based servers are not allowed.

Applicants may confirm receipt of the application and documents by contacting the program contact listed in this NOFO.

## E. Application Review Information

### 1. Criteria.

Grant proposals will be reviewed on a competitive basis. Each proposal will be scored on a 100-point scale. The Department shall consider the following criteria when evaluating the application submittal: Capacity, Need, Quality and Cost Effectiveness.

<b>Applicant Team Qualifications and Capacity (35%)</b>	
Applicant's qualifications and capacity to administer the FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Program and meet the proposed program outcomes.	10%
Related experience and qualifications of the applicant team's staff to be assigned to recruit, enroll, train, and provide support services to the targeted program participants	10%
The quality of applicant's experience and ability to use core equity values for program operations.	8%
Related experience and qualifications of the applicant team's staff to work with and connect participants to clean energy jobs or advanced training programs.	7%
<b>Documentation of Need (10%)</b>	
The application's focus on the targeted program participants and identification of barriers that these target communities or populations may face, and workforce needs in target communities.	4%
The project's identification of the solar employment needs and targeted occupations in the proposed area(s) and how the applicant will address these needs through clean jobs training program as demonstrated through local and regional labor market information.	3%
Expected impact of project on the identified target communities, populations, and job growth in clean energy.	3%
<b>Project Quality and Integration (40%)</b>	
Quality of plan to recruit eligible participants and assist with enrollment.	5%
Quality of training program design, curriculum, and methods of delivery and integration of Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework and Bridge Program Curricula. Quality and feasibility of program goals and outcomes (including number of students served, industry recognized skills, certifications, and employment)	15%
Quality of plan for delivering supportive services to facilitate access to and completion of training program, including a list of services to be provided.	5%
Quality of plan to help participants transition to employment in the clean energy industry and strength of partnership agreements with employers for job placement and work-based learning opportunities.	5%
Quality of plan to incorporate core equity values in program design, recruitment, wrap-around supports and transition services.	5%
Quality of plan to track program outcomes, assess the program and use this information to improve program delivery.	5%
<b>Cost Effectiveness/Return on Investments (15%)</b>	
The cost efficiency and effectiveness of the planned activities and projected outcomes	5%



The cost efficiency and effectiveness of the proposed supportive services that will be offered to program participants.	5%
Ability to leverage existing programs, services and partnerships to improve cost effectiveness, return on investment, and long-term sustainability of program.	5%

## **2. Review and Selection Process.**

Applications will be graded using the Merit Review Process and scored on the criteria specified in Section E.1. The Department will designate an Evaluation Committee to grade each application received for this funding opportunity. The final score will be used to determine the funding recommendation. The applicant selected will enter into negotiations with the Department. The purpose of negotiations will be to arrive at acceptable grant terms, including budgetary and scope of work provisions, at which time the final decision to make a grant award will be made.

The Merit Based Review process is subject to appeal. However, competitive grant appeals are limited to the evaluation process. Evaluation scores may not be protested. Only the evaluation process is subject to appeal. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Department within 14 calendar days after the date that the grant award notice has been published. The written appeal shall include the name and address of the appealing party, the identification of the grant and a statement of reasons for the appeal. To file an appeal, applicants must submit the appeal in writing and in accordance with the Merit-Based Application Review Appeals Process listed on the Grant Opportunities page of the DCEO website:  
<https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/meritappreview.html>.

## **3. Anticipated Announcement and State Award Dates, if applicable.**

After the application period is closed, the Department will conduct a merit-based review of eligible applications. Successful applicants will receive a Notice of State Award (NOSA) to initiate the grant agreement phase. During this phase, you will be contacted by a grant manager to develop a grant agreement, which can be a months long process depending on complexity, cooperation, and conformity with all applicable federal and state laws.

The Department reserves the right to issue a reduced award, or not to issue any award.

# **F. Award Administration Information**

## **1. State Award Notices.**

The Notice of State Award (NOSA) will specify the funding terms and specific conditions resulting from the pre-award risk assessments and the merit-based review process. The NOSA must be accepted in the GATA Portal by an authorized representative of the grantee organization. The NOSA is not an authorization to begin performance or incur costs.

## **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.**

**Subrecipients and Subcontractors:** Agreement(s) and budget(s) with subrecipients and subcontractors must be pre-approved by and on file with DCEO. Agreements can be submitted to DCEO when available. Subcontractors and subrecipients are subject to all applicable provisions of the Agreement(s) executed between DCEO and the grantee. The successful applicant shall retain sole responsibility for the performance of its subrecipient(s) and/or subcontractor(s).

**Grant Uniform Requirements:** The Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (30 ILCS 708/1 *et seq.*) (and its related administrative rules, 44 Ill. Admin. Code Part 7000), was enacted to increase the accountability and transparency in the use of grant funds from whatever source and to reduce administrative burdens on both State agencies and grantees by adopting federal guidance and regulations applicable to those grant funds; specifically, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200).

**Procurement:** Grantees will be required to adhere to methods of procurement per the Procurement Standards (2 CFR 200.317 – 2 CFR 200.327).

### 3. Reporting.

#### **Periodic Performance Report (PPR) and Periodic Financial Report (PFR)**

Grantees funded through this NOFO are required to submit in the format required by the Grantor, at least on a quarterly basis, the PPR and PFR electronically to their assigned grant manager. The first of such reports shall cover the first three months after the award begins. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.328, Periodic Financial Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the report. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.329, Periodic Performance Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the report. Any additional reporting requirements will be disclosed in the NOSA. Grantees are required within 45 calendar days following the end of the period of performance to submit a final closeout report in the format required by the Grantor (See 2 CFR 200.344).

#### **Monitoring**

Grantees funded through this NOFO are subject to fiscal and programmatic monitoring visits by the Department in accordance with 2 CFR 200.337. They must have an open-door policy allowing periodic visits by Department monitors to evaluate the progress of the project and provide documentation upon request of the monitor. Program staff will also maintain contact with participants and monitor progress and performance of the contracts. The Department may modify grants based on performance.

#### **Audit**

Grantees shall be subject to Illinois' statewide Audit Report Review requirements. Terms of the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (31 USC 7501-7507), Subpart F of 2 CFR Part 200, and the audit rules set forth under the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act Admin Rules shall apply (See 44 IL Admin Code 7000.90).

Program grantee performance will be reviewed monthly. Program grantees will be required to report activities in real time in the IL workNet system to facilitate this monitoring. Additional periodic reports may be requested as needed.

## **G. State Awarding Agency Contact(s)**

Grant Help Desk  
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity  
Email: **CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov**

## **H. Other Information, if applicable**

**Resources:** Below are items that applicants should familiarize themselves with to understand the application's requirements:

- State of Illinois Unified Workforce Plan: <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/wioastateplan>

- Grant Accountability and Transparency Act: <https://www.illinois.gov/sites/gata/Pages/default.aspx>
- U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Employment and Training, Office of Apprenticeship: <https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship>
- Apprenticeship Illinois: <https://www.apprenticeshipil.com>

**Additional Assessments:** Applicants may be requested to complete a programmatic risk assessment to consider grant-specific risks. This assessment will be administered towards the end of the application process by the Department. Program staff will then determine whether any risk-based conditions from the programmatic risk assessment and the internal controls questionnaire (completed as part of the State of Illinois GATA registration) shall be incorporated into a grant agreement.

**Technical Assistance:** Once a grant is established, participation in technical assistance sessions may be required and will be provided throughout the grant period (in the form of webinars, meetings, and direct support). The successful applicant must agree to receive consultation technical assistance from authorized representatives of the Department. The applicant and collaborating partners may have required site visits, training, and in-person interviews.

**NOFO Website:** The Department has posted the NOFO forms and instructions at <https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/2750-2996.html>

**NOFO Information Session:** The Department will coordinate a webinar to review the requirements of this NOFO and answer questions that will be also posted in the FAQ section of this web page. Attendance is not required but is encouraged.

**Thursday, May 15th, 1:00PM CST**

<https://illinois.zoom.us/meeting/register/00nqzYjvRwSfDd2ykF3kVg#/registration>