

CHICAGO COOK WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP
LOCAL WORKFORCE INNOVATION AREA #7

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR
FEJA SOLAR PIPELINE TRAINING PROGRAM



CHICAGO COOK WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP
69 W. WASHINGTON – SUITE 2860
CHICAGO, IL 60602

FUNDING PERIOD: July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025

RESPONSES DUE:

Monday, June 7th 2021 by or before 4:00pm*

***Under no circumstances will proposals be accepted after 4:00pm**

Respondent Webinar Conference will be held on
[May 19, 2021 from 2:00pm-3:30pmCST]

To participate in the online bidder conference, register in advance here:
[<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/3361550508543375627>

**** Attendance is not mandatory, but is highly encouraged ****

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Section 1 | Grant Program Overview

Program Overview

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership) requests proposals for program providers under The Illinois Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA) Solar Training Pipeline Program. Pursuant to FEJA, Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd) is disbursing \$3 million in 2021 to continue funding the Solar Training Pipeline Program. The Partnership will administer the review process and make final grant recommendations to ComEd. ComEd will disburse the funds and oversee program implementation throughout the life of the grant.

The Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA), enacted in 2016, aimed to stimulate job growth in the clean energy economy with investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy. The Solar Training Pipeline Program aims to create a diverse pool of talented solar installers ready to fill the jobs created through the [Illinois Solar for All Program](#). (See Appendix for relevant FEJA sections). In 2017, ComEd disbursed the first round of Solar Training Pipeline Program funding. For more information on the first two years of the Program, please see the 2019 Workforce Development Implementation Plan Report to the Illinois Commerce Commission which can be found in the RFP announcement section of The Partnership’s website.

The Partnership seeks innovative service delivery proposals that meet the specifications outlined in this RFP to train women, people of color, persons with a record, former foster recipients, and other jobseekers with specific barriers to employment to become solar installers. Selected grantees will recruit, train, and place participants in the solar industry throughout the state of Illinois.

About The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership

Created in 2012, The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership) is a nonprofit organization operating the public workforce system in the City of Chicago and Cook County. The Partnership combines federal and philanthropic resources to provide comprehensive workforce development services to employers and job seekers. As the largest public workforce development system in the nation, The Partnership has helped place more than 70,000 individuals in employment; collaborated with more than 2,000 employers; and administered

more than \$400 million in federal and philanthropic funds. The Partnership’s network consists of 90+ community-based organizations, American Job Centers, satellite sites and sector-driven centers, serving more than 140,000 people annually.

RFP Submission & Review Timeline

RFP Release	April 12, 2021
Respondents Webinar	May 19, 2021
Final day to submit questions	June 1, 2021
Responses Due	June 7, 2021 by 4:00 p.m.
Anticipated Award Date	Mid-July 2021
Anticipated Program Start	August 1, 2021
Program End	June 30, 2025

Eligible Respondents

Any governmental, not-for-profit, educational institution or for-profit entity properly operating in accordance with Federal, State, and local law, in the state of Illinois may submit a proposal for consideration. Minority-owned and women-owned businesses are encouraged to apply. Due to the program objectives, organizations located in and serving Environmental Justice Communities will be more competitive.

Respondents are encouraged to apply in partnership with sub-grantees in order to achieve the program objectives. Letters of support or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are strongly encouraged, but not required, to demonstrate partnership. Examples of partnerships could include an employer who will train and hire participants partnering with a community-based organization to recruit and identify participants; a workforce development training provider partnering with a community-based organization serving individuals in foster care and foster care alumni; or an educational institution partnering with solar industry employers. These are merely examples and partnerships should reflect the ability to accomplish all program objectives including the ability to recruit from the targeted populations, provide quality training, and place trainees in jobs.

Proposals capable of leveraging other funds to meet all program objectives will be more competitive.

Funding Range and Program Length

Program Start	August 1, 2021
Program End	June 30, 2025
Total Funding Range	\$150,000 to \$1 Million
Total Available Funding	\$3 Million

Section 2 | Solar Training Pipeline Program Objectives

The Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA), enacted in 2016, aimed to stimulate job growth in the clean energy economy with investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy. The objective of the Solar Training Pipeline Program is to ensure Illinoisans with barriers to employment and those most impacted by environmental harms have access to the jobs created by FEJA. Though training programs can serve any Illinois job seeker, FEJA specifically set a goal of 2,000 job placements for individuals who are or were foster children and individuals with a criminal record by 2029.

FEJA defines "person with a record" as "any person who (1) 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; (2) 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 (3) has a juvenile delinquency adjudication."

For the purposes of this RFP, individuals who are foster children will be referred to as "youth in care" and individuals who were foster children will be referred to as foster care alumni. To be eligible for the Solar Training Pipeline Program participants must be 18 years of age, and as such youth in care between the ages of 18 and 21 are eligible participants.

Collectively persons with a record, youth in care, and foster care alumni will be referred to as "the target groups" throughout this RFP. Please note, the Solar Training Pipeline Program is not restricted to only serving members of the target groups.

In addition to the two target groups, FEJA mandates that 50% of all trainees in the Solar Training Pipeline Program come from Environmental Justice Communities. Illinois Solar for All has identified Environmental Justice Communities across the state using a calculation utilizing the US EPA tool EJScreen and a demonstrated higher risk of exposure to pollution based on environmental and socioeconomic factors. Communities can also apply to self-designate as an Environmental Justice Community. More information can be found at [Illinois Solar for All Environmental Justice Communities](#). Competitive proposals will come from organizations located in or with deep connections to one or more Environmental Justice Communities

In addition to the requirements set out in FEJA to create jobs for individuals in the target groups and Environmental Justice Communities, The Solar Training Pipeline Program also seeks to diversify the solar energy sector by growing the pool of women and people of color qualified to be solar installers.

Section 3 | Solar Training Pipeline Program Components

Recruitment

Grantees will be responsible for recruiting participants from the target groups listed in section 2 above, namely persons with a record, individuals in foster and foster care alumni, and those residing in environmental justice communities. Respondents should demonstrate their experience working with one or more of the target groups and outline specific strategies for outreach and recruitment from these groups.

Grantees will assess participants' suitability for the program and preparing them for success. Respondents should demonstrate an understanding of the types of challenges individuals in the target groups face that could hinder their success in the program.

Eligible Participants

Anyone 18 years of age or older and eligible to work in the state of Illinois is eligible to participate in the Program. Given the goals outlined in FEJA, however, respondents should heavily prioritize serving:

- Individuals in the target groups:
 - Persons with a record
 - Youth in care and foster care alumni
- Women
- People of color
- Individuals from Environmental Justice Communities

Training

Grantees must offer a comprehensive training program that prepares participants for careers in the solar energy industry. Graduates of the program should be qualified and sought after for jobs as solar installers whether with an Illinois Solar for All installation project or other solar installation projects throughout the state. Training should include a balance of job readiness, or soft-skills training, and technical, hands-on training, sufficient to qualify participants to install solar panels.

Best in class training programs will earn graduates one or more industry recognized credentials. Industry recognized credentials position workers for further advancement along a career pathway in a given sector. Although earning an industry recognized credential is not required for this program, training models should position graduates to go on to pursue credentials such as North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) certification. As such, training models that meet NABCEP criteria for consideration in an application for NABCEP certification will be more competitive.

Job Placement and Retention

Grantees will be responsible for all elements of job placement and retention services. Graduates should expect an exceptional level of support in securing full time employment after completing their training. Grantees are also expected to provide retention services to participants as they begin their first job as a solar installer. Competitive respondents will include employer partnerships in their program model or have extensive employer relationships in the solar energy industry. Job placement services could include resume writing assistance, job-search and application assistance, mock interviews, and connecting participants directly with employers for interviews. Retention services could include job performance coaching and tracking.

Respondents will be asked to propose the number of participants enrolled, the number of graduates and number of job placements achieved for each program year.

Support Services

The Solar Training Pipeline Program aims to assist individuals with barriers to employment in pursuing a career in the solar industry. Proposed program models should include supportive services designed to alleviate barriers to employment. Examples of support services include mentoring, career coaching, financial assistance for transportation, or childcare costs. Respondents should detail the support services available and strategies used to fully support individuals through graduation and job placement.

Reporting Outcomes to ComED and Other Responsibilities

Grantees will also be expected to fulfill the following responsibilities:

- Provide accurate and timely monthly reporting of outcomes
- Provide updated financials on a quarterly and annual basis
- Provide qualitative and quantitative metrics, photos, and other supportive documents used to develop annual ICC (Illinois Commerce Commission) report
- Participate in biweekly meetings and quarterly learning sessions with ComEd staff and workforce partners
- Support combined recruitment and job placement efforts
- Share best practices and lessons learned with workforce partners and ComEd staff
- Attend annual health assessments to evaluate the health of the programs
- Provide updates to the four-year plan annually, and as material changes occur
- Other responsibilities may be assigned to support programming and reporting

Section 4 | Selection Process

A. Overview of the Proposal Review Process

Proposals are due at or before 4:00PM CDT on Monday, June 7th, 2021.

All proposals must be submitted through the online submission form>>>

https://fs21.formsite.com/Workforce_Partnership/4lb9mmtw6s/index.html

All questions should be sent to FEJA.RFP@chicookworks.org. Answers to questions will be posted on The Partnership's website. Questions must be submitted by June 1, 2021.

A diverse review committee of experts in workforce development, the solar and energy sectors, and community outreach will review all proposals during the month of May.

B. Evaluation Criteria

Grant proposals will be evaluated using multiple criteria, including the following:

Organizational Criteria

- Organizational capacity to implement the program, including leadership, staffing, business operations, and fiscal management.
- Ability to leverage additional resources leading to greater impact.
- Ability to collaborate and bring together the appropriate public, private, and nonprofit partners.
- Relationships with solar industry employers.
- Demonstrated ability to work with one or more of the target groups.
- Demonstrated success in supporting, preparing, placing, and tracking trainees.
- Demonstrated knowledge of the solar industry, including future market trends.
- Preference will be given to woman- and minority-led organizations

Program Criteria

- Clarity of program description, including goals, activities, workplan, timetable, budget, metrics, and evaluation.
- Alignment of program's activities to achieve the solar training pipeline program objectives, including but not limited to serving the two target groups and Environmental Justice Communities across the state of Illinois.
- Holistic approach in supporting, preparing, and placing trainees.
- Realistic projections on key metrics and timetable.
- Likelihood of success.

C. Documents for Submission

The following must be submitted as attachments:

1. Responses to Program Narrative Questions listed below in section D. Responses must be typed double spaced in 12 point font. **15 page limit.**
2. Workplan for the four-year grant period
3. Proposed Outcomes Form
4. Documentation demonstrating partnership (e.g. Memoranda of Understanding) if applying as a partnership
5. A detailed budget. The minimum grant request amount is \$150,000 and the maximum is \$1 million.
6. Two years of audited financial statements. Include Single Audit (if applicable), management letter, and federal and state tax returns (Form 990 / Form AG990-IL informational returns). Entities whose total public contributions (fundraising activities) in a single year are below the State of Illinois audit threshold should provide their most recent 2-year comparative financial statements (e.g., statements of financial position, statements of activities, statements of cash flows, and statements of functional expenses), if applicable.

In addition to the attachments, respondents must also complete the organizational information questions directly on the Forms site.

D. Program Narrative Questions (15 page limit)

The proposal narrative should describe how the program will address each of the following training pipeline components, including metrics and target implementation dates. Please provide narrative responses to the questions below to demonstrate your organization's programmatic, technical, administrative, and fiscal capacity for performing the duties outlined in this RFP. If applying as a partnership please clearly identify one lead organization as the main respondent. Please respond to the following questions by providing detailed responses using specific examples wherever possible:

Organizational Capacity

1. Provide a concise description of your organization's mission, vision and values. Explain how your mission aligns with this funding opportunity.
2. List any/all partner organizations and briefly explain their roles. Attach any Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or Letters of Support separately.
3. What is your organization's history or experience in managing grant dollars (public or private) and meeting compliance requirements?

4. Briefly outline your staffing plan. List all positions and the role each will play in meeting the grant objectives.
5. Briefly describe any experience you (or your partner organizations) have that is relevant to meeting the grant objectives. Please note any experience serving the solar or utility industry.

Recruitment, Assessment and Enrollment

6. What is your program's recruitment strategy? How will your organization target the priority groups listed in Section 2?
7. Tell us about the communities you plan to serve and why your organization is uniquely positioned to serve these communities? Please highlight [Environmental Justice Communities](#) served.
8. How will your organization select and assess candidates? What criteria will your organization use to assess whether someone is likely to succeed in your solar training program?

Training

9. Please describe your program model. (e.g., How long is the program? Where is the training located? Will training happen in cohorts or open enrollment? Is training in classroom, virtual, on-the-job, or a combination?)
10. What technical skills will your training program cover, and how will your program effectively prepare participants for jobs as solar installers?
11. What career readiness, or "soft-skills", will your training program cover?
12. How will your training program position graduates to advance along a career pathway in the solar energy industry and pursue industry recognized credentials?

Support Services

13. How will your program support participants with barriers to employment? Please describe any support services or resources that will be provided to trainees.

Job Placement

14. Please list at least 3 local solar industry employers in your region and please note whether they are Illinois Solar for All [Approved Vendors](#). Describe your relationship with these employers. Include any Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or Letters of Support if available.

15. How will your organization connect trainees with employers and facilitate job placement? What is the anticipated time between graduation from training and job placement for participants? Why did you believe that timeline is appropriate?

Retention and Tracking

16. How will you support participants after they begin their first job as a solar installer? What retention services will you provide?
17. How will you track progress and ensure timely reporting on outcomes (e.g. enrolled, graduated, certificates earned, placement, etc.?)
18. Please describe how you will track and report on long-term outcomes (e.g., job retention rates)?

Budget

19. Is your organization able to leverage any outside resources for this program? If so, please describe these resources.
20. Describe the basis upon which the requested amount was calculated. Identify an average unit cost per participant or program and provide an explanation to justify this unit cost.
21. What is your organization's total annual operating budget?

APPENDIX 1: Text of The Future Energy Jobs Act

(220

ILCS

5/16-108.12)

Sec. 16-108.12. Utility job training program.

(a) An electric utility that serves more than 3,000,000 customers in the State shall spend \$10,000,000 per year in 2017, 2021, and 2025 to fund the programs described in this Section.

(1) The utility shall fund a solar training pipeline program in the amount of \$3,000,000. The utility may administer the program or contract with another entity to administer the program. The program shall be designed to establish a solar installer training pipeline for projects authorized under Section 1-56 of the Illinois Power Agency Act and to establish a pool of trained installers who will be able to install solar projects authorized under subsection (c) of Section 1-75 of the Illinois Power Agency Act and otherwise. The program may include single event training programs. The program described in this paragraph (1) 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 described in this paragraph (1) shall also be designed to assist trainees so that they can obtain applicable certifications or participate in an apprenticeship program. The utility or administrator shall include funding for programs that provide training to individuals who are or were foster children or that 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 described in this paragraph (1) that at least 50% of the trainees in this program come from within Environmental Justice Communities and that 2,000 jobs are created for persons who are or were foster children and persons with a record.

(2) The utility shall fund a craft apprenticeship program in the amount of \$3,000,000. The program shall be an accredited or otherwise recognized apprenticeship program over a period not to exceed 4 years, for particular crafts, trades, or skills in the electric industry that may, but need not, be related to solar installation.

(3) The utility shall fund multi-cultural jobs programs in the amount of \$4,000,000. The funding shall be allocated in the applicable year to individual programs as set forth in subparagraphs (A) through (F) of this paragraph (3) and may, but need not, be related to solar installation, over a period not to exceed 4 years, by diversity-focused community organizations that have a record of successfully delivering job training.

(A) \$1,000,000 to a community-based civil rights and human services not-for-profit organization that provides economic development, human capital, and education program services.

(B) \$500,000 to a not-for-profit organization that is also an education institution that offers training programs approved by the Illinois State Board of Education and United States

Department of Education with the goal of providing workforce initiatives leading to economic independence.

(C) \$500,000 to a not-for-profit organization dedicated to developing the educational and leadership capacity of minority youth through the operation of schools, youth leadership clubs and youth development centers.

(D) \$1,000,000 to a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing equal access to opportunities in the construction industry that offer training programs that include Occupational Safety and Health Administration 10 and 30 certifications, Environmental Protection Agency Renovation, Repair and Painting Certification and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Green Associate Exam preparation courses.

(E) \$500,000 to a non-profit organization that has a proven record of successfully implementing utility industry training programs, with expertise in creating programs that strengthen the economics of communities including technical training workshops and economic development through community and financial partners.

(F) \$500,000 to a nonprofit organization that provides family services, housing education, job and career education opportunities that has successfully partnered with the utility on electric industry job training.

For the purposes of this Section, "person with a record" means any person who (1) 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; (2) 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 (3) has a juvenile delinquency adjudication.

(b) Within 60 days after the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 99th General Assembly, an electric utility that serves more than 3,000,000 customers in the State shall file with the Commission a plan to implement this Section. Within 60 days after the plan is filed, the Commission shall enter an order approving the plan if it is consistent with this Section or, if the plan is not consistent with this Section, the Commission shall explain the deficiencies, after which time the utility shall file a new plan. The utility shall use the funds described in subparagraph (O) of paragraph (1) of subsection (c) of Section 1-75 of the Illinois Power Agency Act to pay for the Commission approved programs under this Section. (Source: P.A. 99-906, eff. 6-1-17.)

Preview of Online Submission Form

<https://fs21.formsite.com/Workforce Partnership/4lb9mmtw6s/index.html>



Organizational Information

Name of Submitting Organization *

Type of Organization *

- Non-Profit
- For-Profit

Organizational Headquarters Street Address *

Organizational Headquarters Address Line 2

City *

State *

Zip Code *

Program service location(s), if different from headquarters?

0/200 characters

Organizational Demographics

Total Number of Employees *

Are you a woman or minority-owned business? *

- Women-Owned
- Minority-Owned
- Women and Minority-Owned
- Not Women or Minority-Owned

What percentage of your organization's staff leadership are Women? *

What percentage of your organization's staff leadership are Black or African American? *

What percentage of your organization's staff leadership are Latinx? *

What percentage of your organization's staff leadership are Asian? *

Primary Point of Contact for RFP

First Name *

Last Name *

Phone Number *

Email Address *

Proposal Documents

Proposal Narrative (PDF format only) *

No file chosen

Workplan (PDF format only) *

No file chosen

Proposed Outcomes Form (PDF format only) *

No file chosen

Partnership Documentation or Memorandum of Understanding *if applicable* (PDF format only)

No file chosen

Fiscal Documents

Detailed Budget (Word, PDF or XLS) *

No file chosen

Audited Financial Statement Year #1 (PDF format only)

No file chosen

Attachments have a size limit of 100MB. If your statement cannot be attached, please include a hyperlink to view the financial statement.

Audited Financial Statement Year #2 (PDF format only)

No file chosen

Attachments have a size limit of 100MB. If your statement cannot be attached, please include a hyperlink to view the financial statement.

Other Attachment

No file chosen