



THE CHICAGO
COMMUNITY TRUST
AND AFFILIATES

Request for Proposals: Solar Training Pipeline Program

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Section 1 | Grant Program Overview & RFP Process

Overview

The Chicago Community Trust requests proposals from workforce development service providers for solar training pipeline programs directly serving the Illinois labor market. This funding opportunity originates from the Illinois Future Energy Jobs Act. Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd) is disbursing \$3 million in 2017, 2021, and 2025 to support this effort. The Trust was selected to administer the proposal review process and make grant recommendations to ComEd.¹ ComEd will be disbursing the funds and is responsible for overseeing program implementation. Desired deliverables include recruitment, assessment, training, and job placement for Illinois residents from diverse populations and distressed places across the state, with priority for persons with a record and individuals who are or were foster children. Fifty percent of program participants must be from environmental justice communities.

About The Chicago Community Trust

The Chicago Community Trust, the Chicago region's community foundation, partners with donors to leverage their philanthropy in ways that transform lives and communities. For the past century, we have connected the generosity of donors with community needs by making grants to nonprofit organizations working to improve metropolitan Chicago. Since our founding in 1915, the Trust has awarded over \$2 billion in grant funding to more than 11,000 local nonprofit organizations – including more than \$236 million in 2016. Our region is home to people passionate about their neighborhoods. People committed to making a difference. People divided by a legacy of segregation, separated by lines of class and race and opportunity – but there is much more that unites us than divides us. As the Trust begins our next century of service, we pledge to bridge these divisions and to champion the common good, creating a place where no

¹ Any reference to organizations or their initiatives within this RFP is not an endorsement.

one is left behind. To learn more about how the Trust has improved the quality of life in metropolitan Chicago, we invite you to visit our website at www.cct.org.

RFP Process Timeline

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| August 1, 2017 | RFP launch |
| August 7, 2017 | Information session to be held from 2:00-4:00PM CDT at The Chicago Community Trust , with call-in option available: http://bit.ly/2hgA70X . Please RSVP to cmarquez@cct.org if attending in person, as seating will be limited. |
| September 30, 2017 | Proposals due at 11:59PM CDT |
| October 2017 | Interviews and/or site visits for select applicants |
| Q4 2017 | Selection notification and project start date |

Any questions regarding the RFP should be submitted to petert@foresightdesign.org by **5:00PM CDT on August 10**, with the subject line “Solar Training RFP Questions.” All questions and responses will be posted publicly at <http://www.cct.org/solarjobs> on August 14.

Following the info session, applicants may also speak with Foresight Design Initiative² staff during designated call-in hours to discuss their proposal development. Call-in hours will be available between 9:00AM-12:00PM CDT on the following dates:

- August 9-11, 2017
- August 14, 2017
- August 21-23, 2017

Please contact petert@foresightdesign.org with the subject line “Solar Training RFP Call-in” to schedule a 30-minute slot.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should be completed and submitted through The Chicago Community Trust’s online grants management system: <https://cct.smartsimple.com/>. The major elements of proposals include the following, which are outlined in detail in Section 4.

1. Proposal Narrative
2. Qualifications, Experience, & Organizational Financials
3. Workplan with Proposed Deliverables & Timeline
4. Program Budget

² Foresight Design Initiative, a sustainability-focused innovation studio, is supporting The Chicago Community Trust in managing this RFP process, and will not review the proposals.

Section 2 | Background: Overview of Solar Training Pipeline Program

A. Solar Job Growth in Illinois

The Solar Foundation's [2016 National Solar Jobs Census](#) indicates that Illinois has 3,718 solar jobs. Based on national trends, the solar workforce in Illinois could increase by 43 percent by 2021 to a total of 5,300 jobs. The [Illinois Future Energy Job Acts](#) (FEJA), signed into law in December 2016, strengthens the state's renewable portfolio standard (RPS) to further accelerate PV solar deployment.

FEJA also dedicates resources to ensuring that low-income communities across the state have access to the economic development opportunities promised by the legislation. The \$150 million [Illinois Solar for All program](#) promotes single-family and institutional rooftop solar, community solar, and pilot projects in low-income communities, with job training opportunities incorporated into installations wherever possible. While the specific training guidelines have yet to be defined, the Illinois Solar for All Working Group has issued a [report](#) with recommendations to the Illinois Power Agency.

In addition, FEJA requires utilities to fund three workforce development programs totaling \$10 million in 2017, 2021, and 2025:

1. A solar installer training pipeline program, the focus of this RFP (\$3 million in each year);
2. A craft apprenticeship program for electrical industry skills (\$3 million in each year); and
3. Six multi-cultural jobs programs totaling \$4 million (in each year), which may or may not be related to solar installations.

The solar installer training pipeline program is intended to complement Illinois Solar for All and these other initiatives in order to create a qualified and diverse workforce in anticipation of the increase in statewide installations, which is expected to begin in 2018.

B. Solar Training Pipeline Program Objectives

The objective of the solar training pipeline program is to ensure that Illinoisans across the state, including those with employment barriers, have the skills and opportunities to access the jobs created by FEJA. Specifically, it calls for job placements for 2,000 individuals by 2029, from the following two demographic groups with a need for employment access (heretofore referred to as "priority groups"). While these priority groups are the focus of the job placement goals, the program need not be restricted to them.

1. *Persons with a record.* The statute defines this 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."

2. *Individuals who are or were foster children.* For the purposes of this RFP, this group will be referred to as “current and former foster children.”

Additionally, the statute requires that 50 percent of all trainees must come from *environmental justice communities*. The Illinois Commission on Environmental Justice has recommended that state agencies use the US EPA’s “overburdened community” definition when identifying environmental justice communities. This RFP uses this definition, which is as follows:

Minority, low-income, tribal, or indigenous populations or geographic locations in the United States that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks. This disproportionality can be as a result of greater vulnerability to environmental hazards, lack of opportunity for public participation, or other factors. Increased vulnerability may be attributable to an accumulation of negative or lack of positive environmental, health, economic, or social conditions within these populations or places. The term describes situations where multiple factors, including both environmental and socioeconomic stressors, may act cumulatively to affect health and the environment and contribute to persistent environmental health disparities.

When identifying environmental justice communities, the Illinois Commission on Environmental Justice recommends the use of USEPA’s [EJSCREEN tool](#) as a platform to map the relevant indicators.

C. Solar Training Pipeline Program Metrics

Beyond the general requirements listed above, organizations will identify and track their own outcomes and evaluation metrics depending on the proposed program’s structure, subject to ComEd review and approval. They will be required to submit progress reports to ComEd’s Program Manager on a quarterly basis.

D. National Best Practices for Solar Job Training Pipelines

California’s [Single-family Affordable Solar Homes](#) (SASH) program, launched in 2007, served as a model for the Illinois Solar for All and the workforce development programs. It incorporates a number of innovative practices to integrate job training opportunities into installation projects:

- Every installation project is required to incorporate job training elements, with 20 percent of installations dedicated for workforce development organization trainees.
- Volunteer installations are available for trainees to get hands-on experience.
- Trainees can apply volunteer installation experience towards North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) certification.
- Through partnerships with subcontractors, trainees have access to paid “field interviews” working with teams of experienced installers.
- Community members are able to participate in volunteer installations and orientation programs.

E. Overview of Current Illinois Solar Training Pipeline

The Solar Training Network, an [online resource](#) for trainees and employers managed by the US Department of Energy, lists five training entities in Illinois. While it may not be an exhaustive list, it includes community colleges and nonprofit organizations that provide access to a range of relevant certifications. There are two major areas of need to create a more robust training pipeline in the state:

1. Expanding access to potential trainees who may not have the time or resources for a two-year community college program.
2. Providing more opportunities for employment, apprenticeship, and hands-on training.

F. Solar Installation Career Pathways

Preparing individuals for solar industry careers requires understanding the potential pathways, as well as trends in the job market. While the pipeline program may prepare trainees for a variety of career pathways (i.e., manufacturing, system design, project development, operations, etc.), it emphasizes preparation for distributed and utility-scale installation jobs, which are anticipated to be key growth areas for solar in Illinois. The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) requires a “qualified person” to directly supervise [distributed generation](#) or [utility scale](#) solar installation projects.

Qualified persons must complete at least one of the following. While the utility-scale qualifications are currently under review by the ICC, they are expected to be similar to those listed below.

| Qualification | Dist. Gen. | Utility-Scale |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| At least five installations of a specific distributed generation technology | Yes | No |
| An apprenticeship as a journeyman electrician from a Department of Labor registered electrical apprenticeship and training program | Yes | Yes |
| North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) distributed generation technology certification program | Yes | Yes |
| Underwriters Laboratories (UL) distributed generation technology certification program | Yes | No |
| Electronics Technicians Association (ETA) distributed generation technology certification program | Yes | No |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Associate in Applied Science degree from an Illinois Community College Board approved community college program in the appropriate generation technology | Yes | Yes |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|
| Mandated apprentice or training program for an electrician in another state | No | Yes |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|

The solar training pipeline program should aim to position trainees for the best possible opportunities to acquire or pursue one or more of these qualifications, even though solar installations jobs associated with the Illinois Solar for All program are exempt from these requirements.

Section 3 | Eligible Respondents

Private, nonprofit, and public sector entities are all eligible to respond to this RFP. Specific sectors might include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Workforce development service providers
- Educational institutions
- Solar industry employers
- Community-based organizations

Due to the broad program objectives and desire for an integrated pipeline, organizations applying in partnership with sub-grantees or leveraging other funding sources will be more competitive. Letters of support or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) are strongly encouraged, but not required, to demonstrate partnership.

Section 4 | Proposal Details

A. Program

The proposal narrative should describe how the program will address each of the following training pipeline components, including metrics and target implementation dates.

1. Recruitment

The program's recruitment plan should have well-defined target populations and a robust outreach strategy. It should be designed to recruit from the priority groups defined by the statute and listed in Section 2.

- Describe the proposed program's recruitment plan, including:
 - Specific mechanisms for reaching prospective trainees from one or more of the priority groups;
 - Anticipated conversion rate from outreach targets to actual applicants; and
 - Strategic partnerships necessary to accomplish recruitment plan.
- Identify the Illinois counties served by this proposal.

- Identify the geographies within or across counties served by this proposal. This could include corridors, districts, neighborhoods, municipalities, sub-regions, regions, and other geographies. The location of environmental justice and distressed communities is particularly relevant.

2. Assessment, Eligibility, & Enrollment

Selecting the right candidates can be as important as thorough training. The program should have a transparent process for screening and enrolling potential trainees, with clearly defined eligibility requirements and corresponding metrics. It may also include specific enrollment support to assist potential trainees from the priority groups in meeting these requirements.

- Describe the program’s eligibility requirements and application/assessment process, including:
 - Types of assessments;
 - Expected entry rate (how many applicants will enter the program); and
 - Specific measures that will be used to support/ensure the enrollment of trainees from one or more of the priority groups.

3. Training

A well-designed training program will develop both technical and “soft” skills, with the latter possibly including time management, interviewing, conflict resolution, and diversity and sexual harassment training. While practical, hands-on training is desired, the program might also include classroom time, virtual components, or both. The program should also provide a pathway for trainees to meet one or more of the requirements for being a “qualified” solar installer listed in Section 2.

- Describe the enrollment and onboarding process for the program, including the enrollment model (e.g., cohort, open enrollment, etc.).
- Describe the proposed training program, including:
 - Training model (e.g., classroom, virtual, on-the-job, or a combination);
 - Outcomes, including hard and soft skill development and how these skills will be assessed before, during, and after the training; and
 - Strategies for ensuring trainees are eligible for and on the path to meet one or more of the requirements for being a “qualified” solar installer.
- Project the expected completion rate.

4. Support

Throughout the program, support resources should be considered and, where possible, provided for trainees with barriers to employment, specifically those from the priority groups. In addition to enrollment support (as described above), this includes wraparound support such as case management, financial empowerment services, criminal record relief, childcare assistance, mentorship, workers’ rights education, and other services or resources that reduce barriers to training, employment, and retention.

- Describe any support services or resources that will be provided to trainees, including those with barriers to employment.
- If support is provided through partnerships or referral networks, describe the partnership and its integration with this program.

5. Job Placement

In order to facilitate trainee job placements, the program should incorporate partnerships with employers. These could include subsidized on-the-job training components, employer involvement in recruitment and selection of trainees, job fairs, or apprenticeship pathways. It might also involve ensuring that employers understand the regulatory requirements associated with the Illinois Solar for All program, as well as coordinating with them to align training opportunities with Illinois Solar for All projects and the other FEJA-mandated workforce development programs (see Section 2 for more information). The program should consider criteria such as wages and benefits when screening employers to connect with trainees.

- Describe how the program will connect trainees with employers and facilitate job placement, including:
 - The types of solar jobs for which trainees are being prepared;
 - If applicable, alignment with the requirements for being a “qualified” solar installer from Section 2 that trainees may meet, or be on a pathway to meet, through the training program;
 - The structure of any employer partnerships, including criteria that the program will use to screen employers; and
 - Strategy to coordinate job placement and training opportunities with employers of Illinois Solar for All projects.

6. Retention & Follow-up

The program should have a clear plan to follow up with trainees and support them with job retention. This might include a continuation of case management and other support services provided during recruitment and training.

- Describe specific ways, and on what time scale, the program will offer any ongoing wraparound support services and follow up with trainees.
- Describe how retention data will be obtained and tracked.

B. Qualifications & Experience

7. Organizational Capacity

Ability to implement the program, including leadership, staffing, business operations, and financial management.

- Provide bios of key program leadership and staff, including any proposed sub-grantees.
- Describe the organization's ability to leverage resources, partnerships, or networks for greater impact (i.e., relevant employer and industry relationships which will help in the execution of this program).
- Describe the organization's history or experience in managing grant dollars (public or private) and meeting compliance requirements. If the organization or any proposed sub-grantees has ever been declared seriously deficient in the operation of a grant or contract, describe the circumstances.
- Describe any other funding sources that the organization will leverage to support the program, if applicable.

8. Knowledge & Experience

Demonstrated knowledge of the solar industry and track record of success in workforce development programs in the proposed communities, with specific, measurable results.

- Describe 1-2 previously successful workforce development programs, including specific results (i.e., placement rate for trainees, certification rates for trainees, or dollars spent per placement, etc.), and the organization's ability to scale and adapt these models.
- Describe the proposed team's knowledge of the solar industry in Illinois and FEJA.
- Describe the organization's experience working in collaboration with public, private, and nonprofit sector partners.

9. Metrics & Data Systems

Ability to monitor progress during and after implementation to track program success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities.

- Summarize all of the metrics used and/or proposed to manage services and track outcomes, including a description of the data system used for reporting them.
- Describe how data will be used to evaluate and improve the program on an ongoing basis.

C. Other Proposal Materials

10. Detailed Budget

Applicants will need to submit a detailed budget via the GrantCentral application portal. The minimum grant request amount is \$150,000 and the maximum is \$1 million.

11. Workplan

Applicants will also be asked to upload a one-page, single-sided, workplan (as a Word document) that details the proposed deliverables over the four-year grant timeline via the GrantCentral application portal.

Section 5 | Selection Process

A. Overview of the Proposal Review Process

Proposals are due at 11:59PM CDT on Saturday, **September 30, 2017**. A two-tiered committee will review all proposals over the course of October:

- *Tier 1:* A technical committee of 3-4 workforce development experts. The technical committee will gauge the legitimacy of the proposals from a job creation standpoint.
- *Tier 2:* A policy committee of 5-7 individuals with knowledge and expertise in the energy markets, community development, and organizational capacity.

B. Evaluation Criteria

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

1. 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 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.

2. 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.
- Demonstrated ability to work with one or more of the priority groups.
- Demonstrated success in supporting, preparing, and placing trainees.
- Demonstrated knowledge of the solar industry, including future market trends.
- Preference will be given to woman- and minority-led organizations, and those with an active presence in Illinois.

Appendix: Text of FEJA Workforce Development Statute

(220 ILCS 5/16-108.12 new)

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.