



## FEJA Solar Pipeline Training

### 2026 Program Manual

# Chapter 10: Data Management

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## Chapter Overview

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Apply each step in the data management process.
- Utilize the Continuous Program Improvement (CPI) model to improve program outcomes.
- Leverage program data to enhance program delivery.
- Identify different approaches for program evaluation.

This chapter will highlight the data management process, the types of data grantees must collect and report, the role of the Reporting System, and the importance of accurate data management.

## Data Management Process

**Data** is a group of information, facts, or statistics which, when analyzed, can be used to understand program outcomes, uncover key insights and patterns, and contribute to informed decision-making and program improvements.

**Data management** is the administrative process of acquiring, validating, and processing data. Data management for the FEJA Solar Pipeline Program is done through the Reporting System for grantee and participant data.

The FEJA Solar Pipeline Program uses a four-step **data management process** that includes data collection, data entry, quality control, and accurate reporting. This section will highlight data collection, data entry, and quality control.



### Data Collection and Entry

**Collecting data** is a key step in the data management process. Data may come from the grantee's outreach efforts, discussions with participants, required forms (Program Application, Pre-screen Assessment, Services Needs Assessment, Career Assessment, Exit Interview, and Follow-up Questionnaire, among others), or grantee accounting systems.

#### Grantee & Program Data

Grantees must collect grantee and program data, which includes information about grantees, their partners, and the services provided. Grantee data includes, but may not be limited to, the:

- Curriculum
- Instructor(s)
- Worksite locations
- Communities served
- Number of cohorts
- Start and stop dates
- Services offered/provided
- Outreach events

#### Participant Data

Grantees are expected to collect participant data including, but not limited to:

- Contact information
- Demographic information
- Barrier reduction services
- Progress measures
- Outcomes

Participant data is collected and analyzed at the individual, grantee, and program levels.

- On the **individual level**, participant data allows grantees to monitor each participant's participation, progress, completion, services received, and transition outcomes to help them succeed in the program.
- On the **grantee level**, participant data can help grantees identify strengths and gaps in participation, retention, completion, and transition rates—especially for target populations. Participant data **must** be used to uncover barriers that may be limiting the progress or success of specific participant sub-groups. Participant data will include the number of enrollees, the number of participants who complete the program, the number of participants who transition to jobs, and more.

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- On the **program level**, program administrators will gather and aggregate participant data across the different grantees to evaluate whether the FEJA Solar Pipeline program is meeting its intended goals and to recommend changes for future program years.

Table 10.1 below outlines key participant data that will be collected through the Reporting System at each stage of the life cycle.

**Table 10.1: Participant Data Collection through the Participant Life Cycle Stages**

| Life Cycle Phase                           | Data Collected   |
|--|--|
| Outreach and Recruitment                   | Number of contacts, demographics, and number of events held.   |
| Application and Intake                     | Demographics of enrollees (age, level of education, race/ethnicity, gender, veteran status, and geography), employment, career interest, and need assessments. |
| Barrier Reduction Services                 | Services provided, status of service provision, referrals, and dates of delivery.  |
| Training                                   | Progress in training modules, attendance, and test scores (if relevant).   |
| Program Completion, Transition & Follow-up | Training program completions, certifications earned, jobs acquired, jobs retained, wages, additional support services, and retention rates.                    |

In general, data that the grantees collect will be entered into the Reporting System, which provides real-time tracking of grantees' progress. This allows grantees, Grant Managers, and Regional Administrators to identify early performance gaps and adjust.

“If it is not documented in the Reporting System, it did not happen.”

### Data Entry Staff

**Data entry staff** must enter data into the Reporting System and run reports regularly to ensure data completion and accuracy. The responsibilities of the data entry staff include, but may not be limited to:

- Creating new records.
- Entering information.
- Updating records.
- Running reports to check data accuracy and quality.
- Communicating data and reporting problems to Grant Managers, Regional Administrators, and SIU's Reporting System technical support staff.

Data entry staff should have:

- Basic computer skills (typing, navigating the file system, opening program files, and proficiency with basic office software).

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- Reporting System training.
- Access to technical assistance.

All staff responsible for data entry must have easy access to the data collected by program staff and contractors, as well as dedicated time built into their schedules for data entry.

### Quality Control

**Quality control** is the process of periodically reviewing data for accuracy. Accurate data are essential to maintaining the integrity of the program.

#### **Incorrect Data = Incorrect Reports = Inaccurate Outcomes and Impact**

Staff who collect and enter data must check regularly (the frequency will depend on the data) for errors. Grant managers and Regional Administrators will verify data that grantees entered into the Reporting System and notify grantee program administrators when data issues are identified.

See the table below for quality control recommendations.

**Table 10.2: Data Quality Assurance Characteristics**

| <b>Quality Assurance Characteristic</b> | <b>How It is Defined</b>                        | <b>Data Quality Example</b>  |
|---|---|--|
| Accuracy                                | Is the data correct in every detail?            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the participant's name spelled correctly?</li><li>• Was the participant's date of birth entered correctly?</li></ul>  |
| Completeness                            | How comprehensive is the data?                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the participant's legal first and last name recorded?</li><li>• Is the month, day, and year recorded for the participant's birthdate?</li><li>• Are case notes entered to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the factors that impact participants?</li></ul> |
| Reliability                             | Does the data contradict other trusted sources? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If the participant has received other state or federal workforce development services, does demographic information (name, age, etc.) match information previously recorded in the Reporting System?</li></ul>   |
| Relevance                               | Is the data needed?                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Did the participant complete the Career Assessment, Pre-transition Career Assessment, and Service Needs Assessments?</li></ul>   |

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|            |                         |  |
|------------|-------------------------|--|
|            |                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has all demographic information (age, gender, and Illinois residency, among others) been collected?</li> </ul>  |
| Timeliness | Is the data up to date? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was an individual’s application entered in the Reporting System before they began receiving services?</li> <li>• Was class attendance collected and reported as training progressed?</li> </ul> |

### Accurate Reporting



**Accurate reporting** is the culmination of data collection, entry, and quality control efforts undertaken by staff. Accurate and timely data entry is critical for accurate reporting and effective continuous program improvement.

The Reporting System is a custom database developed by DCEO in partnership with the Center for Workforce Development at Southern Illinois University (SIU). The **Reporting System** is located on the Illinois workNet platform and functions as the information hub for all **programmatic tracking** and most **program reporting**.

The data collected in the Reporting System will include, but may not be limited to:

- Recruitment and outreach activities
- Barrier reduction services
- Career assessments – Orientation and pre-transition instruction
- Completion
- Follow-up activities

The Illinois workNet staff offer resources and ongoing technical assistance to all grantees. Grantees are required to have an Illinois workNet profile to utilize the Reporting System for programmatic tracking. There is no limit on the number of grantee staff that can acquire a profile. However, it is important to remember that with more individuals entering data, there is a greater need for quality control.

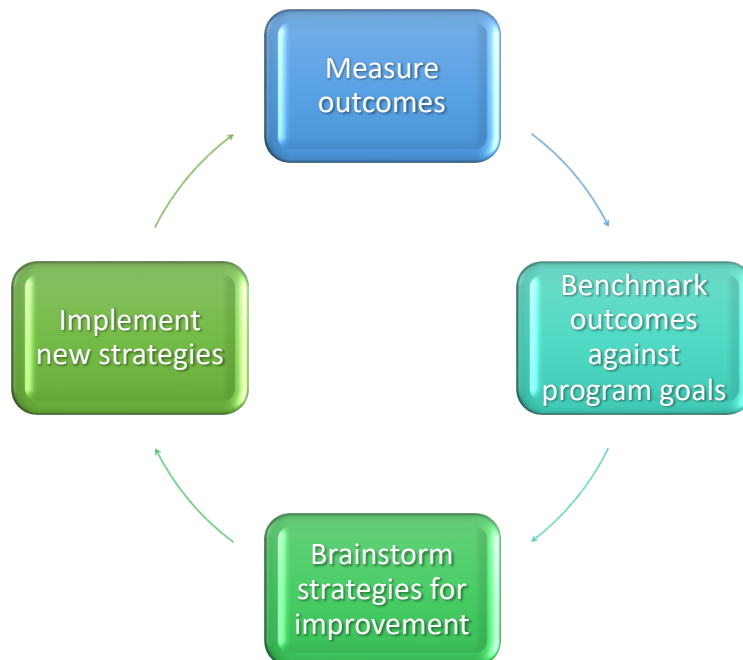
Grantees are encouraged to have one dedicated person to verify the accuracy of data entry each week. **This must occur prior to monthly reviews and be an individual who is different from the person who**

**entered the data.** This ensures that the data being entered adheres to quality standards, is entered in real-time, and more importantly, that data problems are addressed.

In addition to robust tracking capabilities, the Reporting System allows grantees to **run reports** that are required by the program. The dashboard available on the Reporting System allows grantees to have a snapshot of their performance, according to the data entered.

## Continuous Program Improvement

**Continuous program improvement** is the ongoing assessment of performance to identify ways to improve the program. The FEJA Solar Pipeline Program requires grantees to develop and implement a continuous improvement plan. Continuous improvement plans are designed to bring improvements to service delivery processes through program performance, measuring outcomes, benchmarking against program goals, brainstorming opportunities for improvement, and implementing new strategies.



### Measure Outcomes

**Program performance** is the degree to which grantees meet their objectives and achieve their goals, which are determined by the outcome measures. This approach is a systematic way of assessing if programs have achieved their goals. The FEJA Solar Pipeline Program expects that program, and participant data will be entered into the Reporting System regularly. This allows for live tracking of participant progress and program outcomes, as well as desk reviews from Grant Managers.

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**Note:** Failure to keep accurate data may result in poor performance indicators that could result in DCEO denying the renewal for funding.

Consistent and accurate data collection and data entry allow grantees to access accurate and up-to-date program reports. Reports can be utilized by grantees to monitor their program and determine if goals are being met or if there are performance gaps. Performance gaps are the difference between the program goal and the actual program performance.

### Benchmark Performance Outcomes Against Program Goals

Do not wait until the end of the year to determine if your program is meeting its program goals!

Continuous program improvement requires that grantees measure outcomes and track performance at regular intervals to see if performance goals are being met. This is called **benchmarking**. The reports and dashboards in the Reporting System can help grantees benchmark their performance. The Reporting System dashboards and reports provide a quick snapshot of actual performance, compared with program goals, exposing any performance gaps.

The **Reporting System dashboard** is focused on the progress that participants are making in getting enrolled, receiving services, and completing the training program. It allows grantees to quickly identify red flags, participant progress, completion rates, and other key participant information. It also tracks participants who have completed the program. It is focused on active tracking, long-term tracking, and follow-up participant tracking. The dashboard is fueled by the data entered in the Reporting System by grantees.

**Workplan reports** will allow grantees to see their progress toward metric goals. Grantees will be able to see and click on the number of individuals who have met each metric and the percentage of participants. By clicking on the number of individuals for each metric, grantees will be able to drill down to participant lists and individual participant profiles.

### Using the Reporting System Dashboard

Each metric on the dashboard has an associated color that indicates if actions are needed for participants and the urgency with which action must be taken.

**Table 10.3: Reporting System Dashboard Color Code**

| Color code | Action needed   |
|------------|---|
| White      | Information, no action needed.                                |
| Yellow     | Action needed.  |
| Red        | Red flag. Immediate action needed.                            |
| Green      | Complete or meets a program requirement.                      |
| Gray       | Participant not enrolled or not in program, no action needed. |

## Reporting System Dashboard Sections

The dashboard is separated into the following sections:

- Outreach
- Intake
- Referrals
- Service Status
- Earned Credentials
- Completion Information
- Transition Outcomes
- Program Follow-up

See table 10.4 below for programmatic data and participant data.

**Table 10.4: Reporting System Dashboard Sections – Programmatic and Participant Data**

| Outreach  | Total number of outreach events; total number of attendees at outreach events.  |
|---|---|
| Dashboard Sections  | Data Tracked  |
| Intake  | Total individuals with inquiry status; per cohort participants enrolled; total participants not enrolled (decline, not selected); total participants.   |
| Participant Engagement                                      | Total number of active participants; total participants with a training service; participants with an open training service that is past due for attendance entry; total participants with barrier reduction services; total participants with transition services; participants with transition services for more than six months. |
| Earned Credentials  | Total participants who have earned a credential of any type; total/per cohort that have earned a credential.  |
| Completion Information                                      | Total participants/per cohort with withdrawn status; total participants/per cohort who has successfully completed; total participants/per cohort who have exited.   |
| Completed Training Program and Receives Transition Services | Total successfully completed participants with an open transition service; total/per cohort participants who successfully completed and received a transition service; total/per cohort participants who are hired by a clean energy employer, enrolled in advanced training, or enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program.   |
| Provider and Employer Relationships                         | Total number of clean energy employer relationships.  |

**Red flags** in the Reporting System dashboard are warning signals that indicate a potential performance concern. These warning signals should be addressed with the participant immediately. Table 10.5 includes participant data red flags that are included in the dashboard.

**Table 10.5: Reporting System Dashboard Sections – Red flags**

| FEJA Dashboard Sections       | Red Flags  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Prescreening                  | If a participant has had an inquiry status or prescreen status for more than 30 days.  |
| Intake                        | If one of the three items is not complete within 10 days of being added into the system, i.e., career assessment, service needs assessment, or enrollment.                               |
| Post-Assessment               | If a participant has at least one training service that does not meet the post-assessment criteria, i.e., score of at least 70%  |
| Referral                      | If a referral is sent and 10 days have passed with no response; or the response is pending/no contact from participant; or referral for a participant is required but has not been sent. |
| Career Plan/Services          | Service does not meet deadlines set with start/end dates OR service has not been added.  |
| Program Follow-up is Past Due | i.e., 1-month, 2-month, 3-month, etc. follow-up post completion  |

**Note:** Program Participants may be referenced as Customers in the Reporting System.

### Brainstorming Strategies for Improvement

Through the grant application process, grantees provided outcome metric goals including the number of individuals that will be recruited, enrolled, completed, and transitioned to apprenticeships, jobs, etc. These metrics were initially communicated in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), agreed upon during the grant negotiations, and solidified in the Project Work Plan and grant agreement. Grantees should refer to their Grantee Project Work Plan which outlines their outcome metric goals and timelines.

If current strategies are not producing the desired results, new strategies may need to be considered to close performance gaps. Grantees should facilitate brainstorming sessions among their team to discuss ways to improve performance. Grant Managers, program managers, and the FEJA Regional Administrators may be included to offer guidance during this process.

**Note:** The grantee’s assigned Regional Administrator and Grant Manager should be contacted for questions regarding program administration, implementation, and policy. The should also be contacted for questions regarding grant requirements and agreements.

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Other grantees may have ideas for strategies that can be implemented. Grantees will have opportunities to learn from each other during webinars and training sessions.

Consider other groups to consult with to assist with brainstorming strategies to improve performance. Community stakeholders (including community-based organizations, educational institutions, and businesses) may have ideas for recruiting program participants or reducing barriers to program completion. They often have intimate knowledge of the community and its residents that may provide unique insights. Professional associations might provide industry-specific best practices, evidence-based practices, and/or evidence-informed practices that can be leveraged by the grantee.

### Implement New Strategies

Once strategies have been identified to help close a performance gap, the next step is to put them into action:

- Communicate the strategies to all relevant stakeholders and impacted staff.
- Update relevant forms, documents, processes, and procedures.
- If a new skill is involved, train appropriate instructors and staff members.
- The new strategies must have a definitive start date and benchmark date (the date performance outcomes will be benchmarked against program goals to see if there is still a performance gap or if performance has been improved).

### Program Improvement Plan

Grantees may be requested to submit a **Program Improvement Plan** if determined necessary by their monitor. This tool communicates how service delivery practices will be improved for optimal program performance.

**Note:** See the [FEJA Solar Pipeline Partner Guide](#) for a sample *Program Improvement Plan*.

The Program Improvement Plan may include, but not be limited to the following program areas:

- **Partner Engagement** - Goals/Objectives communicate how the grantee can improve on developing and maintaining partnerships with organizations for participant referrals and/or leveraged resources.
- **Participant Lifecycle** - Goals/Objectives communicate how the grantee can improve on recruiting, enrolling, retaining, training, and transitioning participants to clean energy jobs, advanced training, or DOL Registered Apprenticeships. The grantee may also communicate plans to increase the number of participants from underrepresented groups.
- **Financial Management** - Goals/Objectives communicate how the grantee can improve on managing FEJA grant funds.

# Program Evaluation

**Evaluation** takes a deeper look at program data and impacts. It employs empirical analysis to describe the operation of a program, measure the program impacts on outcomes and program interest, and determines the cost-effectiveness of the program with the goal of identifying improvements and best practices.

FEJA approaches to program evaluation may include, but not be limited to:

- **Participant Satisfaction Survey** - Participants may be asked to provide feedback on their program experience through a Participant Satisfaction Survey. Grantees will be provided with aggregate information for their cohorts as a tool to improve programming. However, responses to this survey are anonymous and individual data will not be made available to grantees.
- **Longitudinal Study** - DCEO may conduct a longitudinal study, a correlational study that documents variables over an extended period. Data for this longitudinal study may include variables such as employment and earning levels after completion.

The longitudinal study may evaluate the effectiveness of, but not be limited to:

- Preparing people for entry into clean energy employment.
  - Increasing the entry of women, people of color, formerly incarcerated people, and foster care alumni into clean energy employment.
  - Increasing the likelihood that women, people of color, formerly incarcerated people, and foster care alumni will retain clean energy jobs and advance in their careers.
- **Implementation Studies** - An implementation study documents program operation or compares it against goals, across locations, or over time. It describes and analyzes “what happened and why” in the design, implementation, administration, and operation of programs and is generally used to determine whether a program is being carried out in a manner consistent with its goals, design, or other planned aspects.
  - **Outcome Studies** - An outcome study compares individual outcomes against goals, across programs or locations, or over time. Outcome studies track participant outcomes after they complete or leave the program.
  - **Impact Studies** - An impact study estimates the difference in individual outcomes attributable to a specific program or policy. Impact studies determine whether programs or policies measure the intended impacts—that is, if the program has caused the differences in the outcomes that it is designed to influence.

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These evaluation activities will examine both FEJA Solar Pipeline Program as a whole and individual grantees and their programs.

### Role of Grantees

Grantees will contribute to evaluation studies through their accurate and timely collection and reporting of data in the Reporting System.

Grantees are expected to fully cooperate with program evaluation activities, which might occur at any point during or outside of the grant period. The results of these studies will help inform how the program will be administered in the future.

### Additional Resources

See the [FEJA Solar Pipeline Partner Guide](#) for a sample Program Improvement Plan.