



FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Program 2026 Program Manual

Chapter 3: Partnerships

Chapter Overview

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

- Ensure partners comply with program requirements (i.e., grantees/recipients, subgrantees/subrecipients, and contractors/vendors).
- Prioritize collaborative partnership and coordination with Energy Transition Navigators.
- Explore the partnerships you may wish to develop with other CEJA program grantees.
- Develop strategic partnerships to support program success.
- Track partnerships in the Reporting System.
- Establish partnerships experienced with meeting the needs of equity investment-eligible communities and other targeted populations.
- Leverage recommended resources.

Grantee Partner Roles

While partners may have expertise in one or more required program areas, it may be necessary for them to leverage the support of strategic partners. Strategic partnerships can be essential to comprehensive program implementation and long-term success.

Below are typical partner roles:

- **Grantees/Recipients:** A non-state entity receiving an award directly from DCEO to carry out the activities outlined in the award agreement.
- **Subgrantees/Subrecipients:** A non-state entity that receives a sub-award to carry out part or a portion of a state award. The sub-award creates an assistance relationship between the Grantee/Recipients and the Subgrantee/Subrecipient.
- **Contractors/Vendors:** A non-state entity that receives a contract to provide goods and/or services for the awarding non-state entity. The contract creates a procurement relationship between the contractor and the Grantee/Recipient and/or the Subgrantee/Subrecipient. This relationship may include an employer contracting with grantees for a work-based learning job site practicum.

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Note: A vendor may provide products or services but does not necessarily require a contract. However, it will create a procurement relationship. Refer to Chapter 11: Finances, Records, and Reports for procurement policy information. For more information regarding **Property Control and Personal Identifiable Information**, please access the [CEJA Policy page](#) in the Partner Guide.

Each partner may have a different relationship with the grantee depending on the nature of the agreement and the services provided. The terms of the partnership must be clearly delineated in a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**, if applicable, which establishes the expectations for each party in the agreement.

Note: MOUs outline the intention of partnerships. However, they are not legally enforceable documents. Given this, subaward agreements with subgrantees/subrecipients require more formality. If there is no exchange of money, an MOU is required. If there is an exchange of money, there **must** be a subaward agreement.

For information about relationships that require MOUs, see Table 1: Partnership and Provider Relationship Requirements below.

Components of a **Memorandum of Understanding** may include, but not be limited to:

- Parties involved
- Name of project/program/grant
- Purpose of agreement
- Scope of work
- Responsibilities per party/entity
- Mutual understandings
- Communication/Reporting expectations
- Recordkeeping, maintenance, and retention
- Duration of agreement (start and end date)

Partners may fill a particular role and have specific grantee reporting requirements. Broadly speaking, partners relate to the grant in the following ways:

Grantees/Recipients

- Are officially on record for the grant and can receive the actual funds for the grant through a grant agreement with DCEO.
- Ultimately responsible to DCEO for the terms of the overall grant agreement.
- Require an MOU with subgrantees.
- Must report program participation and outcomes through the periodic performance report, periodic financial report, and other required reporting through the Reporting System.
- Must maintain program documentation for five years.

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Subgrantees/Subrecipients/Subaward

Are officially on record for the grant (*note: if this is a program requirement*).

- Require a Subaward Agreement with Grantees/Recipients.
- Must report program participation and outcomes to the Grantees/Recipients.
- Must maintain program documentation for 3-5 years (*note: this must be in line with the funding source and outlined in the grant agreement*).
- Provide services and outcomes that are reported and managed by the Grantees/Recipients.
- Are supervised and monitored by the Grantees/Recipients.
- Receive program funds from the Grantee.

Contractors

- Are not officially on record for the grant agreement.
- Requires a contract with the entity they are compensated by (i.e., the Grantees/Recipients or Subgrantees/Subrecipients).
- Must report activities and services per the requirements of the Grantees/Recipients or Subgrantees/Subrecipients.
- Are supervised and monitored by the Grantees/Recipients or Subgrantees/Subrecipients.

It is important to note that contractors do not have to be a part of the grant contract, but utilizing a contractor will create a procurement relationship.

Note: For more information about procurement policies, see [Section 11: Finances, Records, and Reports](#).

Table 1: Partnership and Provider Relationship Requirements

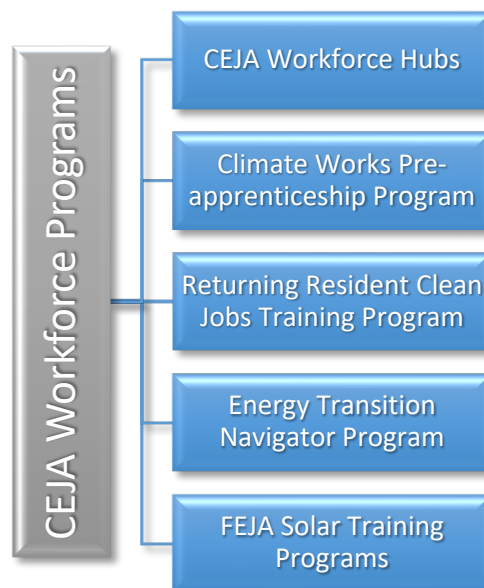
Requirements	Grantees/ Recipients	Subgrantees/ Subrecipients	Contractors ("Goods & Services")	Non- monetary Partners
On Record for the Grant	Yes	Yes		
Receives Funds Directly from DCEO	Yes			
Receives Funds from Grantee through Subgrant/Contract		Yes	Yes	
Requires an MOU	Yes			Yes
Subaward Agreement	Yes	Yes		
Must Report Program Participation and Outcomes	Yes	Yes		
Must Maintain 3-5 yrs. of Program Documentation	Yes	Yes		

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Remember that the main Grantee/Recipient will be held accountable by DCEO for all grant outcomes and for following all of the required program guidance. If a Subgrantee/Subrecipient or a Contractor is not performing as agreed, they can be removed and/or replaced. However, a **Grantee/Recipient is legally responsible for executing the project as agreed with DCEO.**

FEJA & CEJA Workforce Program Partners

The FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Program (“Solar Pipeline Training”) is part of the larger **CEJA workforce program ecosystem**, shown below. Grantees will, therefore, need to coordinate closely with the grantees of these programs to build the clean energy workforce in Illinois. Consider how partnerships with each of these might support the program’s success. The terms of the partnership must be clearly delineated in a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**, which establishes the expectations for each party in the agreement.



Workforce Hubs

Solar Pipeline Training Program grantees should be aware of, and in coordination with, their regional Workforce Hub to refer waitlisted potential participants or to accept potential participants from Workforce Hubs that are currently full. Grantees need not coordinate with all of Illinois 14 regions but collaborating with nearby hubs as necessary. Coordinating with Workforce Hubs may also aid in planning on-the-job training with employers, career exposure opportunities, and eventual employer placement.

Energy Transition Navigators

The central partnership will be with the Energy Transition Navigators. Energy Transition Navigators will provide outreach, education, and recruitment to equity investment-eligible communities and individuals

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to increase participation in the CEJA workforce programs, including FEJA Solar Pipeline Training. Energy Transition Navigators will provide support and career guidance for participants enrolling in your program. You must work with them to coordinate your outreach and recruitment efforts.

Climate Works Program

This program provides pre-apprenticeship in the construction and building trades at locations in three large regions in the state of Illinois. The program will prepare participants for successful entry into a construction and building trade apprenticeship. FEJA Solar Pipeline Training grantees may partner with Climate Works grantees to coordinate learning opportunities, provide job fairs, or share outreach referrals.

Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program

Grantees may receive referrals for individuals who receive clean jobs training in correctional facilities for additional training or support services. Coordinate with the grantees of this program to support returning residents.

CEJA Regional Administrators

Another key partner is the **CEJA Regional Administrator**. These DCEO employees oversee and support the CEJA workforce programs and will be an essential resource for program implementation. Get to know the regional administrator in your region.

- Northern Illinois Regional Administrator: Larry Dawson, Larry.Dawson@Illinois.gov
- Central Illinois Regional Administrator: Nate Keener, nate.keener@illinois.gov
- Southern Illinois Regional Administrator: Michelle Cerutti, Michelle.Cerutti@Illinois.gov

Equity Values

It is important that ALL partners understand that **equity** is the foundation of all CEJA workforce programs. **Trust** should be established in a way that allows for honest dialogue with participants. Trust is essential for building a diverse pipeline for the Clean Energy Sector in the state of Illinois.

ALL partners should be educated on:

- CEJA equity values
- Diversity among equity eligible individuals
- Equity eligible community dynamics

Each of these are critical for removing barriers and providing participants with the support they need to be successful.

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Note: For more information regarding educational opportunities, see Chapter 9: Professional Development.

Trauma-informed practice is the ability to recognize the link between trauma, social, and academic challenges. It helps ensure that people feel safe and are not re-traumatized by their engagement with the CEJA ecosystem. Trauma informed practices should be a component of the professional development provided for partners with the goal of enabling them to best support program participants, including how to assess and determine when there is a need for mental health counseling. Trauma-informed practices can help cultivate trust.

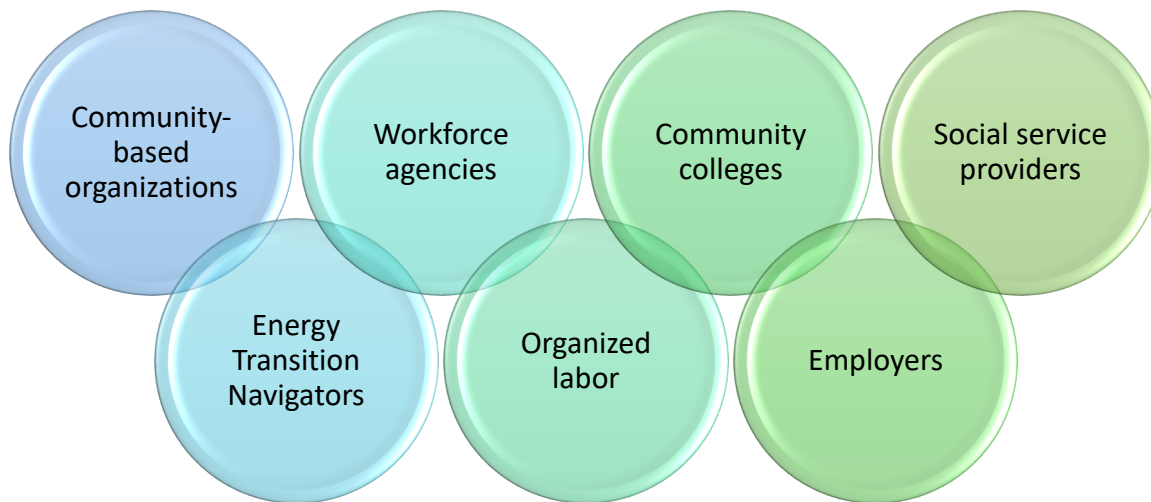
Note: For more information about the program culture, core values, and equity goals, see Chapter 2: Equity & Program Culture.

Developing Partnerships

The success of the FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Program depends on grantees' ability to **develop partnerships** with external organizations, such as organized labor, employers, community-based organizations, and workforce agencies for job placement, support service referrals, best practice sharing, and more. Solar Pipeline Training Program grantees should prioritize their region's Energy Transition Navigator, first and foremost.

As a reminder, the [Energy Transition Navigators Program](#) will focus on outreach, education, and recruitment to equity investment-eligible communities and individuals to increase participation in the CEJA and FEJA workforce programs. These entities are the ecosystem's frontline when it comes to outreach. Energy Transition Navigators will provide support and career guidance for participants enrolling in the programs. Energy Transition Navigators will work closely with the Solar Pipeline Training Program grantees and other CEJA workforce programs to grow the clean energy workforce in Illinois.

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Partnerships with other workforce organizations may already exist. Continue cultivating these relationships. Consider which type of partnerships will support the different program elements.

Outreach and recruitment: What other organizations might help with outreach and recruitment? To recruit participants, consider developing relationships with high school counselors, community-based organizations, or reentry programs. Reach out to the local [Illinois workNet/American Jobs Center](#), or the [Regional Economic Development \(RED\) Team](#) for ideas on recruiting participants. The [CEJA Grantee Map](#) includes the location of Illinois workNet Centers (be sure to enable the appropriate layer in the map to see the centers).

Reach out to these organizations and consider ways to:

- Co-host outreach events
- Spread the word about the program through fliers, posters, and word-of-mouth
- Attend meetings with their clients to share information about the program

Support service delivery: FEJA Solar Pipeline Training offers a wide variety of support services. Still, it is unlikely that one program will be able to provide all the barrier reduction services in-house. Leveraging formal and informal partnerships and relationships for referrals can help meet the needs of program participants. Referrals to other organizations will be much more effective if relationships are developed beforehand. Reach out to organizations that provide food, housing, transportation assistance, legal assistance, mental health services, substance use treatment, childcare, and more. Learn how to work together to support participants. Discuss what a warm hand-off looks like. Discuss how services will be paid for and how they can support service delivery.

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Note: For more information about available services, see Chapter 6: Barrier Reduction Services. For additional information regarding barrier reduction, please access the **CEJA Policy 02-PL-24 Barrier Reduction** policy on the [CEJA Policy page](#) in the Partner Guide. As a reminder, FEJA program grantees will not use Barrier Reduction Funds, but they should account for wrap-around services in their budgets.

Training program delivery: Training program delivery, including work-based learning, are crucial and required elements of the FEJA Solar Pipeline Training curriculum. If partnerships do not currently exist with trainers, employers, or other organizations for clean energy training components and work-based learning elements, developing these relationships must be a priority.

Explore how employers might:

- Provide job site practicums so your participants can have hands-on experience at a real job site.
- Provide job shadowing or field trips so that participants can see workers in action.
- Provide class visits so that participants can ask questions about employment.

Additionally, consider developing relationships with external education providers for tutoring or other student support services for participants with special needs.

Job placement: It is essential to develop relationships with employers in clean energy and discuss how your pipeline of participants who complete, can support their hiring needs.

The Illinois Power Agency's Energy [Workforce Equity Portal](#) maintains a list of job openings in the clean energy industry. Ameren Illinois (in partnership with Springfield Urban League) maintains a vetted list of Illinois job openings in energy efficiency.

Note: Grantees are strongly encouraged to add participants in their program to the [Energy Workforce Equity Portal](#). Please see Chapter 8 for detailed instructions.

Consider contacting these employers to discuss ways you can help them fill these job openings. Determining employer willingness to hire and advocating for the hire of FEJA participants with these employers is of the utmost importance.

Clean energy employers include, but may not be limited to:

- [Illinois Shines Approved Vendors](#) (solar developers/installers)
- [Illinois Solar for All Approved Vendors](#) (solar developers/installers)
- [Ameren Illinois Business Program Ally Contractors](#) (network of contractors who offer energy efficiency solutions for businesses and public sector facilities in Ameren Illinois territory)
- [Ameren Illinois Residential Program Allies](#) (network of contractors who offer energy efficiency solutions for residential properties in Ameren Illinois territory)

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- [ComEd Energy Efficiency Service Providers--Businesses](#) (network of contractors who offer energy efficiency services in ComEd territory for businesses and public sector organizations)
- The Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program or affiliated contractors. Contact your local [Community Action Agency](#) to find out if they are hiring.
- The [IllinoisJobLink.com](#)
- The [Network & Connect Illinois workNet Service Finder](#) is a free service for Illinois residents and employers that offers many great service providers and programs that are available throughout Illinois to help you get through tough times. These services and programs provide support to help you reach your training and employment goals.
- State of Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion [CEI BEP Diversity Management System](#)
- PDF of [Equity Eligible Contractor AVs as of 3-15-2024](#) (AVs who are currently suspended or who discontinued operations highlighted in ORANGE AVs who have withdrawn in good standing or have become inactive in the Program highlighted in BLUE).
- Illinois Commerce Commission maintains a Utility Company Database of companies required to receive a certificate from the Illinois Commerce Commission. These include energy efficiency providers, electric vehicle charging station installers (or maintainers), and distributed generation. Search for companies [here](#).
- Other local clean energy businesses not listed here. Check with your area chamber of commerce to learn more about available partners in your own backyard.

The [Regional Economic Development \(RED\) Team](#) can assist with connecting to business partners. The economic regional boundaries are available in the [CEJA Grantee Map](#) (enable the Economic Development Region layer).

When communicating with employers and apprenticeship programs, identify the value proposition: what's in it for them?

By partnering with your program, employers can:

- Access qualified candidates with fundamental clean energy knowledge and skills and essential employability skills.
- Meet minimum equity or supplier diversity requirements for participation in state solar, wind, and energy efficiency programs.
- Make commitments to diversify their workforce.
- Grow their businesses to take advantage of clean energy project funding.

Managing Relationships with Partners

Establish a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with partners to clarify the expectations of the relationship. Especially with employers and apprenticeship programs, it is essential to explain what is

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expected of them in terms of:

- Hiring participants who complete the program.
- Offering work-based learning opportunities.
- Supporting participants after hire.
- Tracking outcomes.
- Communicating with staff about participant needs.

How will you share information about participants? How will you continue to support participants who are hired by employers? What information will you need from them to report program outcomes? These issues will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

***Note:** If there is no exchange of money, an MOU is required with subgrantees. If there is an exchange of money, there should a subaward agreement or other form of contract. If MOUs were submitted for subgrantees, they need to be updated with a subaward agreement.*

A sample Memorandum of Understanding can be found in the [FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Partner Guide](#).

Tracking Partner Engagements

The **Reporting System** allows grantees to track partner engagements. Through the **Outreach & Partnership** tab, grantees will track partner relationships and engagement, including the type of partner (i.e., business association, community college, union, social service agency, and employer, among others), and the services the partner offers (i.e., support services, job site training, other instruction, and daycare, among others). This type of tracking is critical for programs to develop a robust and ever-growing network of partners.

DCEO will look at partner recruitment and engagement data as one of the key metrics denoting grantee success. For technical instructions on how to track partner recruitment and engagement, visit the resource page of the [FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Partner Guide](#). Tracking partner relationships will also enable you to share contacts with other CEJA/FEJA grantees, such as the Energy Transition Navigators, to coordinate engagement efforts and avoid duplication of efforts.

Leveraged Resources

DCEO encourages its grantees to maximize the use of their resources and minimize duplication of efforts through system alignment, leveraging alternate funding, network building, and information sharing.

Leveraged resources can include the following:

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- **Co-enrollment:** In addition to enrolling in the FEJA Solar Pipeline Training, participants may also qualify for other programs, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), that can offer critical services for participants. The FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Program allows co-enrollment with specific programs; however, it is essential to note eligibility or ineligibility for other services does not and should not impact a grantee’s decision to accept the participant into the program. Note that participants cannot be co-enrolled in another FEJA or CEJA program (such as the Climate Works Program).
- **Alternate Funding:** CEJA/FEJA does not require grantees to seek out additional programming funding. However, if grantees are interested in securing alternate funding or in-kind resources for service support or to help improve the cost-effectiveness of their programming, this is allowable and encouraged. Various other state, federal, and private programs exist and may provide an opportunity to expand the capacity of CEJA/FEJA programming.
- **Service Networks:** Many grantees have informal or formal relationships with other community-based organizations. These networks can be invaluable in helping to enhance existing programs and services. Informal relationships may consist of referral networks, while formal relationships may be solidified in a Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). Grantees that leverage their networks may provide participants with a more robust menu of support services.
- **Resource and Best Practice Sharing:** DCEO will offer grantees a suite of tools and resources based on industry best practices available throughout their grant year. Grantees are encouraged to utilize the tools available in this manual and in the [FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Partner Guide](#). DCEO also encourages grantees to contact their fellow FEJA and CEJA grantees to pull from their collective knowledge and experience. DCEO will also host technical assistance webinars and other events to share best practices and provide a space to network among grantees.

Additional Resources

See the [FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Partner Guide](#) for a sample Memorandum of Understanding.