



FEJA Solar Pipeline Training

2026 Program Manual

Chapter 9: Professional Development

Chapter Overview

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

- Identify the professional development opportunities provided by DCEO.
- Reference professional development expectations for grantees.
- Consider the internal professional development needs of your staff.
- Ensure your program integrates the CEJA/FEJA core equity values.

Grantees must participate in professional development and technical assistance to improve their performance and meet program requirements. Professional development includes group structured training sessions offered in-person or via Webex, and one-on-one or small group assistance. Each grantee is responsible for complying with FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Program (“Solar Pipeline Training”) professional development requirements. In addition, grantees must consider the professional development and technical assistance their staff will need to successfully deliver the program.

Professional Development Expectations

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO or “the Department”) aims to cultivate a network of equity-focused CEJA and FEJA workforce programs (also known as the CEJA workforce ecosystem) with a track record of program success.

Variables that impact a program’s success may include, but are not limited to:

FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Manual

- Organizational capacity
- Previous experience
- Subject matter expertise
- Program partnerships and providers

To help ensure program success, DCEO provides the following professional development and technical assistance offerings:

- Webinars and in-person training sessions
- Technical assistance
- CEJA meetings
- Annual Workforce Summit

Note: DCEO will provide basic equity training. Grantees are responsible for all other related staff development relevant to equity training, based on the needs of their staff.

Webinar and In-person Training Sessions

Webinars and in-person training sessions are designed to provide grantees with information on entering and accessing program data in the Reporting System, utilizing the FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Grantee Manual, and implementing critical program requirements.

Onboarding webinars will be held after grantees are selected and grant contracts are finalized. After onboarding is completed, the program will deliver regular and ongoing professional development webinars.

Topics may include, but not be limited to:

- Basic equity training
- Instructor accreditation and certification for curriculum delivery
- Developing and implementing the curriculum
- Providing barrier reduction services
- Delivering effective transition services
- Building relationships with clean energy employers
- Using data for continuous program improvement
- Budgeting and fiscal requirements
- Grantee-requested topics

Information about professional development opportunities will be provided in the FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Partner Guide. Webinar events will be recorded and made available in the FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Partner Guide as well.

FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Manual

Note: Unless otherwise noted, grantee administrators and program managers **must** attend all webinars. Depending on the topic, other staff may also be required or encouraged to attend.

Technical Assistance

Your specific Regional Administrator should be contacted for questions regarding program administration, implementation, and policy. Your specific Grant Manager should be contacted for questions regarding grant requirements and agreements.

Technical assistance is driven by program reports and delivered with the goal of program performance improvement. In general, technical assistance involves troubleshooting and problem-solving to ensure program compliance and the ability to achieve the program's desired outcomes. Grantees may also receive technical assistance to ensure their program is aligned with program requirements and is reaching milestones for the successful implementation of their program.

Grantees should plan to meet with their Grant Manager at least once every other week. If additional support is needed, Grant Managers may request to meet more frequently (i.e., weekly) to ensure grantees are staying on track with their expenditures, enrollments, completions, and transitions.

Grant Managers may host online office hours as needed for grantees to receive assistance and ask questions.

CEJA Meetings

CEJA meetings will be held online or in person to provide professional development opportunities for CEJA workforce program grantees, including FEJA Solar Pipeline Training grantees. These meetings are intended to promote networking and coordination opportunities between grantees and programs. Training and development sessions will focus on grantee needs, provide programmatic updates, and support data entry into the Reporting System.

Annual Workforce Summit

The Annual Workforce Summit is an in-person event that encourages industry subject matter experts and program practitioners to share and exchange ideas, information, experiences, and new technologies. The target audience for this event is all CEJA and FEJA workforce program instructors, staff, administrators, and their partners.

Grantee Internal Professional Development

Grantees are encouraged to develop an **Internal Professional Development Plan** to meet the specific needs of their program instructors and staff. DCEO will recommend specific focus areas that should be incorporated into the grantees' plan.

FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Manual

According to the Illinois Community College Board (2021), “A well-trained staff is necessary for effective programming, and a well-developed professional development plan is essential to ensuring staff have the skills necessary to perform their jobs” (p. 95).

An **internal professional development plan**, at a minimum, should include:

- Staff expectations regarding knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes.
- Professional development opportunities and requirements.

Staff expectations identify what program staff *need to know* and *be able to do* to succeed in their role, including:

- Knowledge - Facts and information acquired through training, education, and experience.
- Skills - The ability to do something well, perform, or execute a task.
- Behaviors – Actions, including how one conducts themselves towards or around others.
- Attitudes - Ways of thinking or feeling that impact actions, decisions, and others.

There are many **professional development** opportunities available for program staff including, but not limited to:

- Continuing Education – For example, academic courses and workshops through colleges or other educational institutions.
- Professional Development Organizations - For example, professional associations and conferences.
- Training/Skill-based Training - For example, certificates/certifications or trade development programs.
- Mentor/Sponsorship - For example, peer-to-peer support across grantee organizations or bag lunch topic discussions.
- Feedback - For example, regular performance review or accessing specific Reporting System dashboards and reports.

Equity Professional Development

Successful implementation of the FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Program integrates the program’s core equity values to foster an environment that allows individuals to feel safe, participate fully, develop professionally, and reach their fullest potential. **All members of your team must receive training in these core equity values.**

FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Manual



While DCEO will provide **basic equity training**, it is the grantees' responsibility to ensure their staff is appropriately trained to incorporate the core equity values into their service delivery approach.

Below are a few available resources:

- Illinois Department of Human Rights: [An Introduction to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for All State Employees](#)
- Illinois State Board of Education: [Equity Information and Resources](#)
- Illinois Board of Higher Education: [Illinois Educational Attainment and Equity Dashboards](#)

Note: DCEO will provide basic equity training. For additional information on the core equity values, see Chapter 2: Equity and Program Culture.

Professional development related to equity may involve helping staff develop the linguistic and cultural competency skills necessary to interact with diverse participants.

Skill development may include, but not be limited to:

1. **Refraining from judgment.**
Cultural differences can cause certain interactions to feel odd or unusual. These impressions are normal when individuals from different cultures interact. Interactions should not be categorized as good, bad, wrong, or right. They should be seen as different and non-punitive.
2. **Empathizing.**
Empathizing with others, or putting yourself in their shoes, helps ease communication and provides a foundation for kindness and respect. When staff and participants can empathize with each other, especially across differences, this improves team cohesion and helps to prevent potentially harmful misunderstandings.
3. **Clarifying Understanding.**

FEJA Solar Pipeline Training Manual

Clarify your understanding of what is being communicated. Broken English, accents, and dialects can interfere with effective communication. Do not assume! Instead, respectfully clarify your understanding by either paraphrasing or reframing (Madaan, Agrawal, Sethi, Kumar, & Singh 2016) what was heard and asking for confirmation that your understanding is accurate.

4. **Seeking First to Understand.**

When reasoning seems irrational or unfamiliar, seek first to understand (Covey, 2012).

Understanding intentions and/or the implications of what is being communicated is just as important, if not more important, than clarifying understanding. While clarifying understanding gives you the “what,” taking time to seek first to understand intentions gives you the “why.” This information can be key to fully understanding someone inquiring about your program, either for themselves, relatives, or a participant, and effectively responding to their needs. Use phrases like “Tell me more” or “Can you explain further?”

Additional Resources

See the [FEJA Solar Pipeline Partner Guide](#) for webinars and other technical assistance sessions.