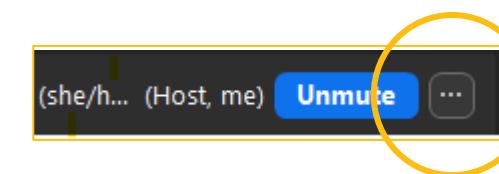


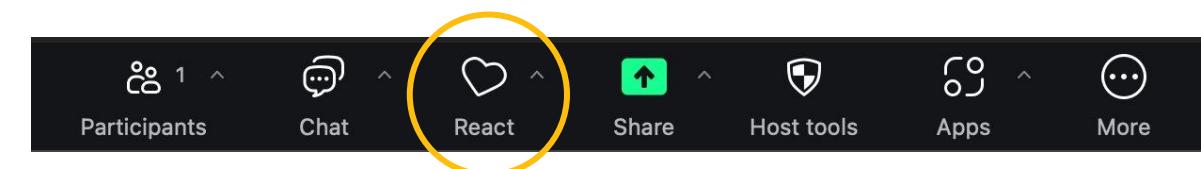
Welcome!

While we wait for participants to join:

- Please edit your name to include the company you represent.
 - Found under: Participants / Your name / Menu (3 horizontal dots) / Rename



- We encourage you to be on camera and to use the raise hand and thumbs up reactions.



Equity Accountability Learning Series:

Advancing Equity Through
Inclusive Recruitment and
Retention of EEPs

February 3, 2026

Presented by Illinois Power Agency and
Energy Solutions





Please Note:

- The IPA's 2026 Long-Term Plan is currently under consideration by the Illinois Commerce Commission ("ICC") in Docket No. 25-0945. The ICC is expected to issue a final order approving the Plan and any changes to it on or before February 17, 2026.
- As the Long-Term Plan is presently under consideration in an open docketed proceeding before the ICC, any communications with the IPA or its Program Administrator regarding the substance of the Plan are considered ex parte in nature and will be memorialized and filed as part of the record in that proceeding consistent with Section 5-50 of the Illinois State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (5 ILCS 430/).



Today's Facilitators



Jess Blue
Energy Solutions
Sector Strategist, Community
Solar



Kate Clifford
Illinois Power Agency
Senior DEI Manager

Agenda

1 Introduction

2 Equity Accountability Learning Series Background

3 Building a Diverse Clean Energy Workforce in Illinois

4 Discussion #1: Poll Question

5 Inclusive Recruitment and Retention of EEPs

6 Discussion #2: Break-out Session

7 Closing & Feedback Survey





Please Note:

- During the presentation section all participants will be muted.
- Participants will be able to utilize the chat or “raise hand” feature to come off of mute for the discussion sections.
- Break-out rooms will be utilized for the second discussion.
- This session will not be recorded.





Equity Accountability Learning Series: Background

Equity Accountability Learning Series

Highlighting the importance of equity in the clean energy economy and the Illinois Shines Program through a series of virtual trainings and resources

Today's training will cover:

- The business case for embracing a diverse and equitable workforce
- The Minimum Equity Standard (MES) as an equity-focused recruitment strategy
- Practical recruitment and retention steps for Approved Vendors and Designees

We will be utilizing Poll Questions and Break-out Rooms to guide discussion sections.



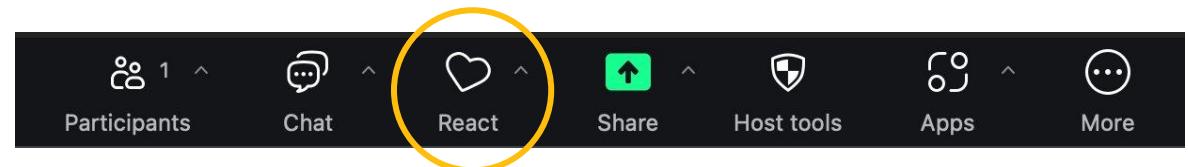


Check-in:

Our company attends job fairs at trade schools or community colleges as part of its recruitment tactics.



Utilize the "thumbs up" feature if this statement is true.





Building a Diverse Clean Energy Workforce in Illinois

Illinois Clean Energy Economy & the Equity Accountability System

Illinois passed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) and the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act (CRGA) to ensure the clean energy economy is more equitable and accessible.

To advance that objective, the Equity Accountability System (EAS) was established, which includes the following:

- Minimum Equity Standard (MES) applicable to all applicants to the Agency's renewable energy procurements, both through Illinois Shines and the Agency's competitive procurements.
- Establishes the Equity Eligible Contractor category with Illinois Shines.
- Energy Equity Workforce Portal

Who are Equity Eligible Persons and Contractors?

The IPA Act defines EEPs as:

- 1 Graduates or current or former participants in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, Illinois Climate Works Preapprentice Program, Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program, or the Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program, and the solar training pipeline and multicultural jobs program created by the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (FEJA)
- 2 Persons who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system
- 3 Persons who were formerly incarcerated
- 4 Persons whose primary residence is in an equity investment eligible community

EEC: A business that is majority-owned by equity eligible persons, or a nonprofit or cooperative that is majority-governed by equity eligible persons, or is a natural person that is an eligible person offering personal services as an independent contractor.



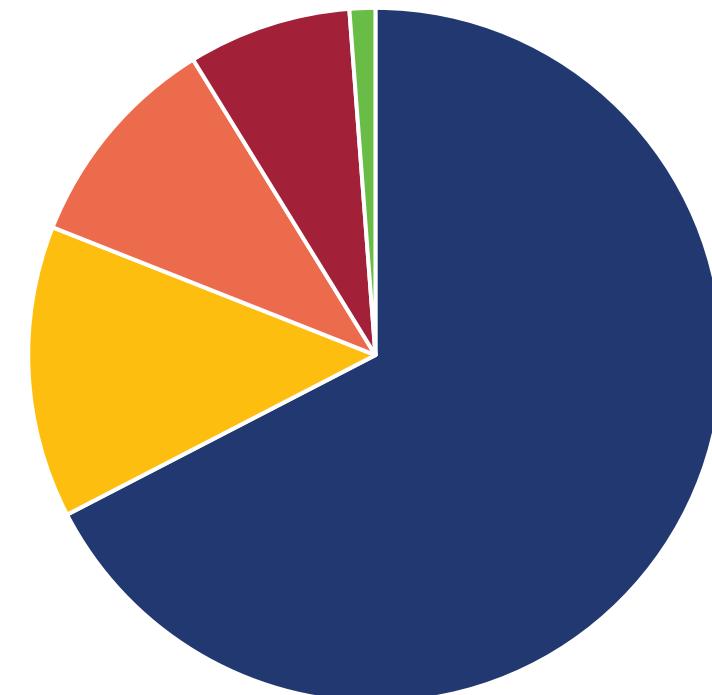
Purpose of the Minimum Equity Standard

The Minimum Equity Standard ("MES") requirement is an equity-focused recruitment strategy:

At least 30% of the project workforce for each entity must be comprised of EEPs by 2030.

Currently, **17%** of the reported Illinois Shines Program workforce is made up of EEPs:

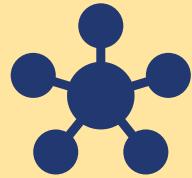
- **67.4%** of EEPs live in an Equity Investment Eligible Community
- **13.6%** of EEPs self-registered in the Energy Workforce Equity Portal, or otherwise their eligibility criteria was unknown to the AV/Designee
- **10.2%** of EEPs graduated from or are current participants in a qualifying workforce training program
- **7.6%** of EEPs were formerly incarcerated
- **1.2%** of EEPs are foster care graduates



Business Case for a Diverse and Equitable Workforce



Corporations identified as more diverse and inclusive are **35%** more likely to financially outperform their competitors. (McKinsey)



Diverse companies are **70%** more likely to capture new markets.
(HBR)



Companies with above-average diversity in leadership teams saw an increase in innovation by **19%**, while diversity-driven companies saw a **14%** higher share of the revenue from new products. (BCG)

Business Case for a Diverse and Equitable Workforce

A strong business case exists for embracing an equitable workforce, especially within the clean energy sector. Diverse and inclusive workforces can benefit Approved Vendors and Designees by:

New perspectives and improved problem-solving



Enhanced community partnerships



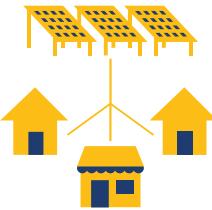
Innovation opportunities



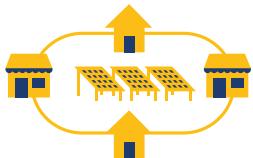
Bringing solar to new customer bases



Success Stories from the Minimum Equity Standard (MES)



Embedded EEP engagement into pre-construction planning, subcontractor selection and workforce documentation.



Leveraged existing relationships with community-based organizations and focused on local hiring events in Equity Investment Eligible Communities to promote open positions.



Attended job fairs and connected with FEJA/CEJA job training program coordinators.



Focused on employee retention, creating a supportive environment for EEPs.

Discussion



Poll Question

**How successful has your company
been in building a diverse
and equitable workforce?**

(1 being least successful, 5 being most successful)



Discussion

How has your business benefitted from creating a diverse workforce?

What's one small change a company like yours could make to widen its applicant pool?





Inclusive Recruitment and Retention of EEPs

Best Practices for Recruitment

- **Hiring for potential, not just experience:** Being open to entry-level candidates, career switchers, or apprentices and invest in on-the-job learning.
- **Transparency in job postings:** Clearly outline pay range, hours, training opportunities, and growth potential—this builds trust and attracts committed candidates.
- **Sharing job postings:** Engaging local community organizations and participate in local hiring events within Equity Investment Eligible Communities.
- **Integrating equity goals:** Including these goals in job postings and recruitment materials.
- **Connecting subcontractors to FEJA and CEJA training programs, existing MES webinars and resources:** Encouraging them to hire for their Illinois Shines workforce directly from these programs.



EEP Recruitment Resources

Approved Vendors/Designees are encouraged to use resources such as:



Energy Workforce Equity Portal, which now includes EEP resumes.



Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) CEJA Workforce Hubs.



Local educational and job training workshops.



Trade schools and community colleges job fairs and partnerships.



Best Practices for Retention: Onboarding

- **Technical Onboarding:**
 - Assigning a mentor to ensure there's a support channel in place specific to their role.
- **Cultural Onboarding:**
 - Making expectations clear from day one.
 - A hiring “fit” is made when both parties are receptive to learning, feedback and offering to be of assistance.



Best Practices for Retention: Ongoing Success



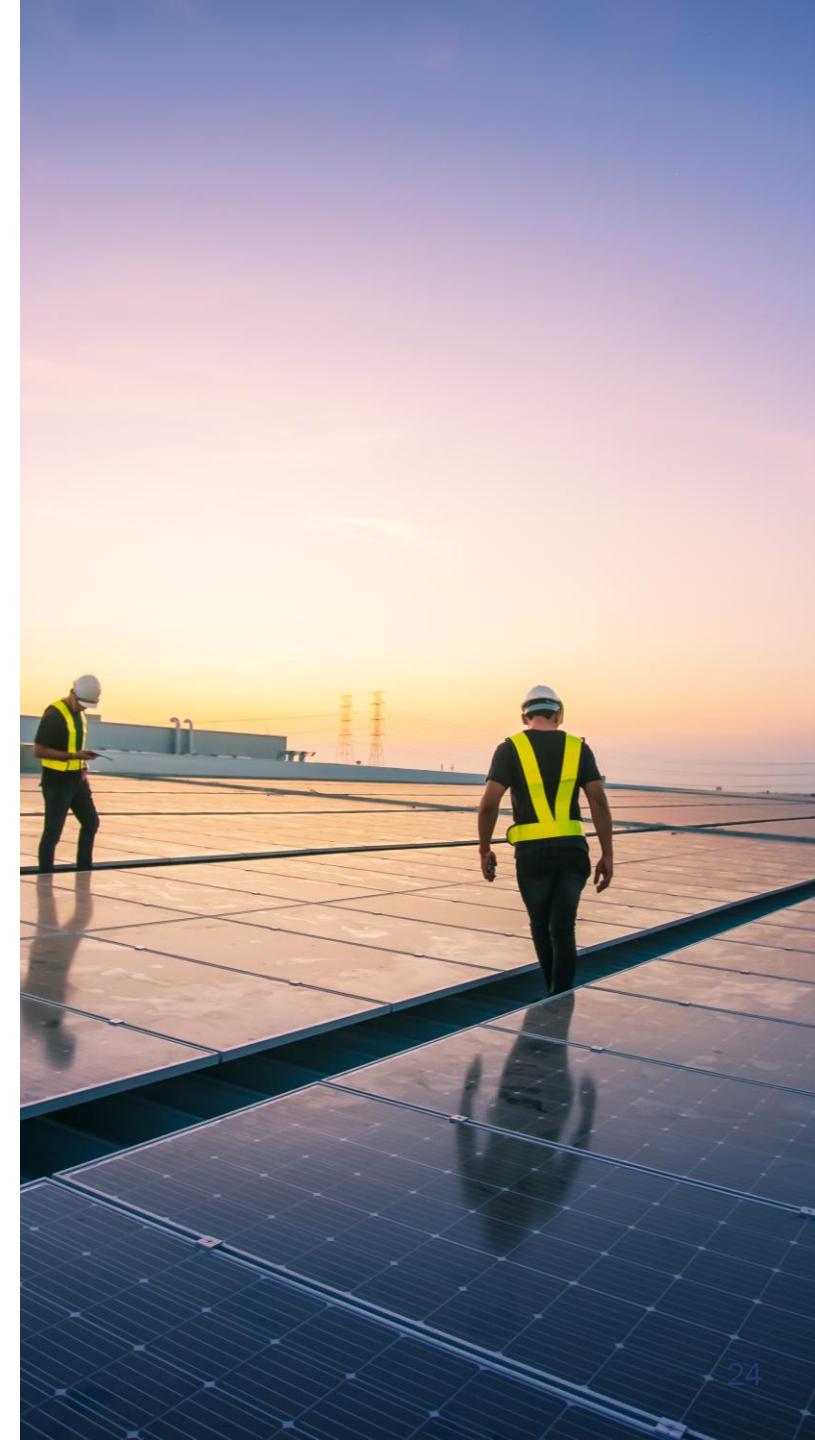
Investing in the professional development of employees – where do they want their solar career to take them?



Ensuring that employees' contributions are valued – job training, fair compensation, recognizing and rewarding good work, etc.



Creating regular feedback opportunities for employees – ensuring that the organization is actively addressing concerns and ideas for more successful employee relations.





Discussion: Break-Out Sessions

Break-out Session Discussion Questions

Are any of the recruitment and retention strategies mentioned today under consideration or employed at your company?

What are some current or expected challenges to adopting these strategies?

Are there other resources that the Program could provide that would be helpful in the recruitment and retention of EEPs?





Closing & Feedback Survey

Equity Accountability Learning Series

- Next session:
 - *Partnering for Equity: Building Genuine and Sustained Relationships with Equity Eligible Contractors*
 - Watch for further details



A wide-angle, aerial photograph of a massive solar farm. The panels are arranged in long, parallel rows that curve slightly across the landscape. The solar panels are dark blue-grey, and the ground between them is a mix of brown dirt and sparse green grass. In the background, more solar panels and a few small buildings are visible under a clear sky.

Thank you!

