

To: Elevate Energy, Program Administrator, Illinois Solar for All Program
From: Juliana Pino, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization
& Participants in the Illinois Solar for All Working Group
Date: 02/07/2019
Re: Illinois Solar for All Working Group Comments on Job Training for Illinois Solar for All

Dear Elevate Energy Administrative Team for the Illinois Solar for All Program:

The Illinois Solar for All Working Group is pleased to deliver the enclosed comments on Job Training components of the Illinois Solar for All Program. This memo describes an overview of the Illinois Solar for All Working Group.

Background: Illinois Solar for All Working Group

The Illinois Solar for All Working Group (the Working Group) formed from a subset of members of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, who had comprised an Environmental Justice-Solar-Labor Caucus (the Caucus) during the negotiation of policies that would become the Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA). The group formed in order to bring the best practices and policies to the Illinois energy landscape that would serve to maximize benefits to the economically disadvantaged households and communities that targeted programs are intended to serve. The group was co-facilitated by a representative of a solar company, Amy Heart of Sunrun, and a representative of an environmental justice group, Juliana Pino of the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization.

Following passage of FEJA in December 2016, the Caucus expanded into the Illinois Solar for All Working Group, an open membership group including experts on environmental justice, environmental advocacy, consumer protection, solar business, low-income solar policy, energy efficiency, job training, program design, and other areas, who have substantive research and experience to bring to bear on implementation of Illinois Solar for All. Over 75 participants include representatives from the following organizations and others:

BIG: Blacks in Green	Natural Resources Defense Council
Central Road Energy LLC	ONE Northside
Environmental Law & Policy Center	Seven Generations Ahead
Illinois Environmental Council	Sierra Club Illinois
Illinois Sustainable Technology Center	The People's Lobby
Little Village Environmental Justice Organization	Trajectory Energy

Working Group Process

The Working Group began convening in January 2017, and has had monthly full-group meetings until the present time. In tandem, the Working Group operates with sub-teams that focus on specific areas relevant to the policies at hand and future work on the program. These sub-teams include: Program Administration & Evaluation, Consumer Protection & Financing, Education & Engagement, Job Training, and Project Workshop. Each sub-team was facilitated by leads and co-leads and meets between monthly full-group meetings with frequency depending on the time of year.

A draft White Paper was delivered to the IPA on May 5, 2017. Many Working Group participants attended IPA's May 2017 workshops and helped develop responses to IPA's June 6, 2017 Request for Comments on the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan.¹ A final White Paper was published on July 11, 2017 on lowincomesolar.org.² The Working Group also submitted a response to the Draft Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan on November 13, 2017.³ Additionally, the group has submitted comments on: Community Solar Consumer Protection & Marketing Guidelines Draft Documents and Illinois Adjustable Block Program Draft Guidebook to InClima on December 10, 2018; Grassroots Education and Approved Vendor components of IL Solar for All on January 9, 2019; as well as Environmental Justice provisions of IL Solar for All on January 30, 2019.

Program Principles for Illinois Solar for All

During the negotiation of FEJA, the Caucus membership collectively agreed upon the following policy principles to guide our work moving forward. These principles were rooted in the *Low-Income Solar Policy Guide*⁴ authored by GRID Alternatives, Vote Solar, and the Center for Social Inclusion; further adapted through iterative deliberations in the Caucus; and ultimately adopted by the Working Group. The principles include:

- **Affordability and Accessibility.** Offers opportunities for low-income residents to invest in solar through a combination of cost savings and support to overcome financial and access challenges. Creates economic opportunities through a job training pipeline. Supports skill development for family-supporting jobs, including national certification and apprenticeship programs.
- **Community Engagement.** Recognizes community partnerships are key to development and implementation, ensuring community needs and challenges are addressed. Strive to maximize projects located in, and serving, environmental justice (EJ) communities. Allows for flexibility for non-profit/volunteer models to participate, and strives to meet potential trainees where they are, with community-led trainings.
- **Sustainability and Flexibility.** Encourages long-term market development, and will be flexible to

¹ <https://www.illinois.gov/sites/ipa/Documents/ILSfA-Working-Group-Response-RequestforComments.pdf>

²

http://www.lowincomesolar.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/20170711-ILSfA-Working-Group-White-Paper_Final_wAppendices.pdf

³

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/ipa/Documents/2018ProcurementPlan/2018-LTRenewable-Illinois-Solar-for-All-Working-Group-Comments.pdf>

⁴ www.lowincomesolar.org

best serve the unique low-income market segment over time and as conditions change. Program administrator ensures community engagement, statewide geographic equity, and flexibility to meet goals. Job training program includes all training partners in design and implementation. Training offerings should come through diverse channels including utilities, unions, tech schools, non-profits, government agencies, and existing community-based job training organizations.

• **Compatibility and Integration.** Low-income program adds to, and integrates with, existing renewable energy and energy efficiency programs, and supports piloting of financing tools such as PAYS (pay-as-you-save), on-bill financing, PACE or community-led group buy programs. Jobs training programs will strive to ensure low-income solar installations incorporate workforce development, including coordinating opportunities for job training partners and individual trainees from the same communities that the low-income solar program aims to serve.

The Working Group researched and prepared the enclosed comments to deliver high quality information and recommendations on considerations for the Illinois Solar for All Program. The contents are not intended to reflect universal consensus on any point amongst working group members. These contents reflect extensive deliberation regarding aspects that the Working Group believes are important to the Program's success moving forward.

In closing, we make these recommendations and comments to ensure high-quality implementation for Illinois communities. Communities throughout Illinois need the opportunities and services the Illinois Solar for All Program will provide and the support of groups with substantive experience in the solar industry and low-income solar in particular. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or comments in regards to this matter.

Dear Elevate Energy Administrative Team for the Illinois Solar for All Program:

The Illinois Solar for All Working Group appreciates this opportunity to provide comments on the Job Training components of the Illinois Solar for All program proposed in presentations and stakeholder sessions hosted by Elevate Energy (hereinafter the "Administrator"). It is clear that the program administration team has put a great deal of care into incorporation of various requirements and goals aimed at ensuring high quality and well-monitored integration of workforce development with the incentive provision functions of the program. These comments are intended to provide guidance and feedback on how the Illinois Solar for All Working Group (hereinafter "Working Group") views the key considerations, best practices, and outstanding questions for administration of the Job Training provisions of Illinois Solar for All. The Working Group agrees that the program should strive to deliver meaningful workforce development opportunities for low-income and environmental justice communities throughout the state. Equally, the Working Group urges the Administrator to continue to consider the broad and long-standing obstacles that disadvantaged communities, including environmental justice communities, face toward participation in like programs and processes.

The Working Group notes that such programs represent unprecedented systems to link training to employment for low-income and environmental justice community members in great need of economic justice, including formerly incarcerated individuals and alumni of the foster care system. In light of this, the Working Group strongly recommends that these opportunities must be thoroughly monitored and connected such that full participation is truly possible by the groups who the program is statutorily intended to serve. The Working Group's comments are focused on the need to ensure requirements are

equitable and fair, and that there may be a variety of challenges encountered across the different incentive categories and project sizes covered by the program. Maintaining a contextual understanding of aforementioned dynamics will be key to eliminating undue obstacles for full participation by trainees and Approved Vendors alike. The Working Group commends the Administrator for their consideration of these key provisions critical to the success of the Illinois Solar for All program overall.

1. Are the 24- and 36- month time limitations appropriate for graduates to remain qualified?; 2. Is the rationale for a longer qualifying period for FEJA graduates appropriate?

The Working Group recommends that this question and appropriate answers be understood within multiple contexts in order to balance complex goals.

Variant Time Limitation Windows

The Working Group agrees that 24- and 36- month time limitations are appropriate initial limitations for graduates to remain qualified with 24 months for Other Qualifying Programs and 36 months for FEJA Workforce Development Programs if those graduates have completed their training after the beginning of Illinois Solar for All in April 2019. The Working Group notes that this answer is related to and contingent on the subsequent response to Question 3, below. The Working Group recognizes that the substance of time limitation windows will vary among those graduates/trainees who have been employed for part of or the majority of the time before the time limitation window ends and those graduates/trainees who have had difficulty securing employment within that window. The Working Group notes that there may be different levels of demand for graduates/trainees with different levels of certification at the end of their training, which may also influence the substance of time limitation windows and create hiring differentials the Administrator should take into consideration when determining windows. The Working Group also notes that in excess of 36 months, and in some situations, 24 months, may be too long of a time period to have lapsed for graduates/trainees who have not secured employment within the window to be prepared to carry out the work. The Working Group strongly recommends that exceptions be made to the 24-hour and 36-hour time windows policy per the responses below. Additionally, the Working Group's response uses "graduate(a)" and "trainee(s)" interchangeably throughout to refer to the same group of individuals depending on context.

Delayed Qualifying Time Limitation Window Start for Pre-Program Start Training Graduates

For FEJA workforce programs that graduated trainees in 2018 or early 2019 prior to the start of Illinois Solar for All, such trainees should be eligible for windows beginning at the program start time instead of beginning at their graduation date. This type of a variant time limitation system would prevent these early training program graduates from being unfairly penalized for having been trained before program-related hiring opportunities are created. In light of the longer time limitation windows, where necessary, the Administrator should endeavor to support the training programs to provide these early trainee cohorts with opportunities to audit trainings and access skills refreshers. Approved Vendors could also be incentivized to hire graduates in hopes that they secure funds for a future project through IL Solar for All by being awarded additional points in the Project Selection phase(s) of the program.

Balancing Expanding and Maintaining Workforce Opportunities

The Working Group recommends that the Administrator seek to balance incentivizing the creation of new hiring opportunities for graduates of training programs serving low-income residents and environmental justice communities with the desire of hiring companies to retain trainees on their teams for longer than the qualification window. The Working Group recognizes that a shorter window may create difficulties for smaller companies who may not be able to create additional positions while maintaining previous hires on their teams. While the Working Group understands that there may be situations where installers may elect to send current employees into training programs for the purposes of qualification, the Working Group strongly emphasizes that the programs are intended to create a comprehensive pipeline for new trainees from the demographic groups that the program and connected FEJA Workforce Development programs are intended to serve to enter into the industry.

Longer Qualifying Window for FEJA Graduates

The Working Group agrees that a longer qualifying period for FEJA graduates is appropriate. Graduates from the subset of FEJA programs where trainees are recruited who are low-income, residents of environmental justice communities, formerly incarcerated, and alumni of the foster care system encounter higher barriers to securing employment. Such trainees face a historical systemic lack of resources and accessible educational opportunities such that individuals are in need of support throughout the training and hiring process. Such individuals should be given a longer qualifying window in light of these barriers.

Avoiding and Mitigating Incentive Gaming

The Working Group recognizes that the 24- and 36-month time windows put forward may disincentivize more rapid creation of new hiring opportunities. However, the Working Group recommends the Administrator should also seek to avoid creating a situation where shorter windows incentivize companies to hire trainees for the purposes of qualification, then let them go prematurely due to “aging” out of trainee status in order to hire new trainees for the same work. This type of incentive gaming can truly harm individuals seeking employment opportunities, particularly when such individuals are in the demographic categories served by the statutory intent of IL Solar for All and the job training programs -- individuals who are low-income, formerly incarcerated, foster care alumni, and/or environmental justice community residents. In situations where Approved Vendors are found to be incentive gaming via the workforce requirements, the Administrator should initiate the Warning and Suspension process elsewhere proposed.

Avoiding and Mitigating Wage Suppression

The Working Group strongly maintains that trainee status should not be utilized as rationale for or pretense for wage suppression by hiring companies registered as Approved Vendors looking to pay lower wages for trainees relative to other equivalent workers. Although there is no reference in the law to the difference between what a standard employee is to be paid relative to what a trainee is to be paid, the Working Group notes that there is a pay differential associated with those two different statuses, in practice. Thus, the Working Group notes that there should be no functional difference of the wages paid to a trainee and wages paid to an equivalent employee within the first two years of employment. The Working Group notes that some jobs will require multiple certifications that are time sensitive, and thus, there will be exceptions to this recommendation. Additionally, the Working Group recognizes that there

may be existing wage differentials across diverse geographies in Illinois, and data on existing wages should be taken into account when tracking to avoid and mitigate wage suppression.

To mitigate and assess the wage patterns of trainees meeting the program requirements, the Working Group strongly recommends that the Administrator track wage and salary data as suggested in Question 6. Additionally, the Working Group notes that where a relationship between naming such employees as “trainees” for the purposes of the program and lower earned wages may be created simply due to being named as “trainees,” such a designation should be limited to the purposes of the program qualification and not encouraged for utilization by companies in other contexts. In situations where Approved Vendors are found to be suppressing wages via the workforce requirements, the Administrator should initiate the Warning and Suspension process elsewhere proposed.

Implications for Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation

The Working Group strongly recommends the Administrator monitor the impacts of time limitation windows across hiring patterns by Approved Vendors of different sizes industry sectors. Monitoring of hiring and firing information in order to track the balance of job creation and career development of previous trainees, as well as the hiring and firing cycles at participating companies to identify and mitigate gaming, is also strongly recommended. Additionally, the Working Group emphasizes the recommendation to track salary and wage data in order to identify and mitigate suppression. Such a monitoring system will help to build a complex picture of the relationships between the various dynamics described and how well the suite of goals and requirements of the program are being met, as well as contributing key data for the purposes of program evaluation.

3. Is the requirement that Other Qualifying Programs accounting for 50% or more of training hours towards certification appropriate?

The Working Group strongly disagrees that Other Qualifying Programs accounting for 50% or more of hours is appropriate. The Working Group contends that quality job creation for the purposes of the Illinois Solar for All Program should prioritize trainees from the low-income and environmental justice populations, as well as formerly incarcerated individuals and alumni of the foster care system — the demographic groups that the program and connected FEJA Workforce Development programs are intended to serve. The Working Group notes that Other Qualifying Programs may not be in service of the statutory intent of the Illinois Solar for All program in that they are not necessarily designed to serve or focused on training members of these demographic groups.

The Working Group is concerned that allowing for Other Qualifying Programs to account for 50% or more of training hours would be a significant disincentive to Approved Vendors to hire trainees from the FEJA Workforce Development programs, including the competitive solar installer pipeline training program. This would not align with the statutory intent of the program and would produce and replicate unequal outcomes. This concern is akin to other instances where requirements targeting a wide swath of income levels produce unequal outcomes by allowing for such requirements to be met by targeting a subset of households that requires fewer changes or resources to reach. The Working Group emphasizes: a scenario where there is limited hiring from the FEJA Workforce Development programs and excessive

hiring of trainees from Other Qualifying Programs not focused by design on serving the demographic groups the program is intended to serve would run counter to the statutory intent of the program and should be avoided.

The Working Group further recommends that the Administrator create a process by which Other Qualified Programs can submit themselves for participation, but are only accepted if they demonstrate training is focused on and being delivered to trainees who meet the demographic goals of the program, as outlined. If the Administrator moves to include Other Qualified Programs to any degree without first clearing this demographic requirement, the Working Group recommends that Approved Vendors hiring trainees for the purposes of the program requirements provide thorough documentation that they first attempted to hire someone from the FEJA Workforce Development Programs. Such documentation could be linked or facilitated through the Data Clearinghouse for Vendors and Trainees discussed in the later response to Question 10.

4. Are NABCEP installation task categories appropriate for tracking trainee work on ILSFA projects?

5. Are NABCEP or Part 461 labor categories more appropriate to track for installation work?

The Working Group recommends that NABCEP job tasks are appropriate for tracking skills on the job. However, The Working Group notes that when the Administrator describes how this will be actualized, specific phrasing would be warranted that details job task categories. The NABCEP [PV Installation Professional Job Tasks](#)⁵ include: System Design, Installation, System Commissioning, and Operations and Maintenance. However, the Working Group notes that only utilizing NABCEP PV Installation Professional Job Tasks can be limiting to other career pathways for trainees. Thus, it would be best if the Administrator states that “work done by all Qualified Trainee must require job task categories from one of the [NABCEP certified credentials](#)⁶: PV Technical Sales, PV Installation Professional, PV Design Specialist, PV Installer Specialist, or PV Commissioning & Maintenance Specialist.” Trainees can subsequently detail all of the tasks from each of their credentials if they wish to. To this end, the Working Group recommends that NABCEP categories may be easier to track in a consistent system across the program than Part 461 labor categories, despite Part 461 including NABCEP certification programs.

6. Is it appropriate to share salary information?

The Working Group recommends that it is appropriate to share anonymized salary information within the limitations of the law such that individuals cannot be identified by the data. As detailed in the *Avoiding and Mitigating Wage Suppression* and *Ongoing Monitoring* subsections of the response to Questions 1 and 2, such tracking will aid the Administrator in avoiding and mitigating wage suppression for hired trainees by Approved Vendors, as well as contribute critical information to further program evaluation.

7. Proposed that trainee does not have to have achieved certification with Other Qualifying program.

⁵ NABCEP PV Installation Professional Job Tasks can be located here:

<http://www.nabcep.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NABCEP-PV-Installation-JTA-12-14-17.pdf>

⁶ NABCEP Credentials can be located here: <http://www.nabcep.org/certification>

Contingent on the prior response to Question 3, the Working Group agrees that trainee(s) should not have to have achieved certification with Other Qualifying program, as long as there is documentation of completion of the Other Qualifying Program, on the assumption that not every one of these programs have certification embedded.

8. *Is it appropriate that "Other Qualifying Programs" must be in Illinois?*

Yes. Contingent on the prior response to Question 3, the Working Group agrees that it is appropriate for all training programs qualifying for Illinois Solar for All requirements to be located in Illinois. One of the underlying principles of the Future Energy Jobs Act is that the growth of new renewables should be distributed throughout the state and within Illinois. As referenced in the name, another underlying principle of the law is that job creation must accompany the expansion of the clean energy economy. As written in the authorizing statute for the Illinois Solar for All program: “The objectives of the Illinois Solar for All Program are to bring photovoltaics to low-income communities in this State in a manner that maximizes the development of new photovoltaic generating facilities, to create a long-term, low-income solar marketplace throughout this State [...]” — language that clearly demonstrates development is intended within and throughout the state. Additionally, the Working Group notes that funding for the Illinois Solar for All program has historically, and will prospectively, be supported by Illinois ratepayers, hence, benefits should return back to Illinois ratepayers in the form of Illinois development and training opportunities.

9. *Should Other Qualifying program data be submitted prior to or after project completion?*

Contingent on the prior response to Question 3, the Working Group recommends that data should be submitted prior to project completion.

10. *What other data is relevant for tracking job trainees?*

The Working Group recommends the following additional data for tracking job trainees:

- Salary and wage data, broken down by incoming income and minority status demographic data, such as the data used in the environmental justice mapping process USEPA EJSCREEN tool. Such tracking would aid the Administrator and stakeholders in understanding whether or not the job training programs and solar opportunities in Illinois Solar for All are creating pockets of wage equity when compared to the disparities in the wages and job satisfaction in the broader solar industry overall
- Geographic distribution of training and hiring: such data could cover where the training program was held, where a trainee lives, where the Approved Vendor/hiring company is located, and where job sites are located
- Levels of training and certifications: There is a need to ensure training programs are training individuals to the right levels such that hiring is facilitated, and we must balance that with not penalizing Approved Vendors who may not be in a position to hire individuals with inadequate training or take on additional training internally, thus, tracking of levels of training and

certification alongside hires would assist in developing a gap analysis as the program moves forward.

The Working Group also recommends the following be implemented to facilitate hiring:

Data Clearinghouse Resources for Vendors and Trainees

For Vendors: The Working Group recommends that the Program Administrator should maintain a publicly available database of information hosted on the Internet and provided via a portal including data from entities providing training that Approved Vendors can use to identify training programs and potential training graduates to hire. Trainees, both recent graduates and graduates who were trained previously, but have not obtained employment, can elect to create profiles listing demographic information including a means of contact, name of their participating training program, types of certifications they may have, and willingness to travel and over what distances or to what areas, along with other pertinent information. Such a portal would enable vendors to assess and contact potential hires. The Working Group recommends that such a clearinghouse also be made available to companies participating in the Adjustable Block Program. However, the Working Group recommends that the Administrator should prioritize aiding Illinois Solar for All Approved Vendors to meet their trainee requirements alongside the risk that an open data clearinghouse could facilitate developers in the general market programs to hire all the trainees that could otherwise be hired for the Illinois Solar for All Approved Vendor program requirements.

The Working Group notes that everyone that gets hired from a trainee program, regardless of what Future Energy Jobs Act authorized program they work in, is a success that should be tracked, counted, and celebrated. If the result of an open data clearinghouse is that program contractors are hiring too many from the trainee programs required for FEJA, the Administrator should track this closely such that additional trainees and trainings, respective to the answer to Question 3, are quickly approved for program inclusion. Additionally, companies hiring from the training program should be encouraged to become Illinois Solar for All Approved Vendors or subcontractors to Approved Vendors. Subcontracting opportunities for trainees could be facilitated by the Administrator including and maintaining in the portal for trainees described below a publicly available list of those companies that hire from the program. Additionally, the Working Group recommends that the portal could also be used to promote best practices and award hiring subcontractors that follow these best practices as Illinois Solar for All “Approved Subcontractors.”

For Trainees: Such a database should also serve as a platform where training program graduates can search for work opportunities on Illinois Solar for All projects. Such information could be provided through a portal where Approved Vendors can advertise positions that they are hiring for with specific requirements and details provided, such as certificates, location of the job site, and other pertinent information. Such a portal would allow graduates of the training programs to regularly check to see where there are job opportunities and easily contact the companies hiring.

Additionally, the Working Group recommends that the data clearinghouse process could provide a means to track and communicate trainee availability information, including for and related to the process of

obtaining a waiver where applicable. The portals should be moderated and continually maintained and updated such that information remains current.

General Matchmaking and Training Map

Further, in addition to the Data Clearinghouse, the Program Administrator should strongly recommend that vendors establish working relationships with the training entities in their geographic area(s) such that natural connections are built and maintained that enable hiring to occur in a more timely manner. The Working Group recommends the Administrator keep track of geographic distribution of training programs, as well as the types of trainings provided and what types of projects trainings are focused on, along with the kinds of certifications that trainees may have at graduation or may test for shortly thereafter. The Working Group recommends that the Administrator continue close coordination with the FEJA Workforce Development Programs and ComEd as the entity with statutory responsibility for coordination of those programs to facilitate hiring, host events, and engage in direct matchmaking where possible.

11. Progressive stages for Approved Vendor remediation include Warning and Suspension; 12. Projects invalidated for insufficient or false information will not lose REC payments, but will follow remediation requirements which can lead to removal of that Approved Vendor from the program.

The Working Group agrees that progressive stages are appropriate for Approved Vendor remediation. Specifically, Approved Vendor data should be tracked within specific time intervals so that problems with vendor implementation can be identified in a timely manner and Approved Vendors have the opportunity to engage in discussions with the Administrator regarding the reasons for lacking compliance. If the cause(s) for lack of compliance are reasonable or the result of an honest mistake, such situations should be taken into consideration before a determination of warning and subsequent suspension is made. If the cause(s) for lack of compliance are unreasonable or the result of deliberate falsification or omission of information, then a remediation plan should be put in place with objective criteria for reaching compliance along with entering the warning stage. At the 6-month interval, an additional review of outcomes and compliance should occur to determine if an Approved Vendor should move toward remediation and out of the warning stage or if suspension and a possible additional penalty is warranted, as described below.

Pre-REC Job Training Records Provision

The Working Group recommends the Administrator should retain an additional and/or alternative measure prior to ejection from the program and the inability to apply again to minimize later non-compliance: a provision to require companies to provide satisfactory submittal of all job training records requirements for the project, or batch of projects in distributed generation, and that such training records be approved by the Administrator prior to Approved Vendors being paid their RECs. The Working Group recognizes that most program violations may be able to be remediated, but recommends this additional penalty be used when warranted. The Working Group acknowledges that requiring repayment of RECs is a significant penalty. However, it is our conclusion that without the ability to use this final penalty when warranted, Illinois Solar for All could be at risk for manipulation by some Approved Vendors who many never have intended to comply with program requirements despite having

stated valid goals and measures for compliance because they felt the penalty was not severe. Additionally, the Working Group recognizes that the Illinois Solar for All program has limited funding, thus, rigorous controls need to be put in place so that vendors who become Approved Vendors make a good faith effort to succeed.

Subcontracting and Large Community Solar Projects

The Working Group recommends that vendor remediation and program requirements take into account subcontracting relationships that will influence hiring pathways. For example, the Working Group recognizes that projects up to and at the 2MW level may be built through union contracts and hiring may be completed through subcontracted third parties. The Working Group recommends that the Administrator gather information from and partner with labor organizations to determine how best to address these hiring relationships such that requirements are reasonably implemented and demographics intended to be served by the program are benefitting from hiring for work on larger scale Illinois Solar for All community solar projects.

Translation of Job Training Requirements to Community Solar Pilot Program

The Working Group recommends that the Illinois Solar for All job training program-wide requirements be applied equivalently to the Community Solar Pilot Program despite the procurement for that program being contracted to another administrative entity. The Working Group recommends that the The job training requirements for the Community Solar Pilot Program could take the form of an "adder" with different levels of commitment above the baseline hiring requirements suggested herein increasing the size of the adder. In a low-bid-wins situation, the adder would encourage bidders to participate in, and exceed, the trainee hiring requirements because qualifying for the adder would allow them to submit a lower bid.

13. Another option for Approved Vendors on Warning is to require annual targets for job training be met with every project moving forward.

The Working Group recommends that the Administrator develop a rubric of requirements that could be utilized to assess if and when Approved Vendors should receive a warning status and how to address their warning status, including, but not limited to, the option outlined to require annual targets for job training to be met with every project moving forward. While the Working Group recommends that the baseline goals for the program should be applied universally in the process of evaluating all vendors, the Administrator should be both creative and flexible when developing remedies for vendors in the warning stage. The Working Group recommends that warning and remediation should be a collaborative process with the vendor, To the degree possible, as there may be valid reasons why some criteria are particularly hard to achieve in their area or particular circumstance, and thus, alternative remediation measures and outcomes need to be considered.

14. What kind of documentation should be required of good faith effort for waivers?

The Working Group recommends a very high bar should be set for consideration of a waiver request. The Approved Vendor in question would need to demonstrate convincing, comprehensive evidence that they

are not able to meet all program criteria, including hiring from the workforce development programs whose graduates qualify for the purposes of the job training requirements. Specifically, applicants for a waiver should document all attempts at making connections with the training entities, as well as with groups providing Grassroots Education on the program and its job training requirements. Approved Vendors should be required to call attention to their difficulties in a timely manner such that the Administrator can assist early in the process with compliance when possible. Such assistance could also aid Approved Vendors in using available tools, such as the recommended Data Clearinghouse described in the above response to Question 10.

15. Is a less stringent waiver requirement appropriate for installations with no training programs within 100 miles? Should waivers only be allowed in these instances?

The Working Group agrees that a less stringent waiver requirement is appropriate for installations with no training programs within 100 miles, but notes that Approved Vendors should still seek to hire trainees from within Illinois. The Working Group recommends that these areas be assessed and tracked, and that the entities funded to provide job training are appraised to deficiencies and gaps early in the process. There may be instances when a training site can be set up within the geographic area such that a waiver is not needed for future installations. The Working Group also notes that there needs to be granularity when it comes to different types of jobs in different sectors of the program based on different types of installations. Waivers could also apply when there is a training within 100 miles of the proposed installation, but said training is focused on a different skill set than what is needed on the particular installation. Additionally, the Working Group recognizes that there may be situations that could merit a waiver if Approved Vendors are hiring where there are trainees available, but those trainees skills have lapsed and no longer meet the criteria the Approved Vendor is looking to fill. In those cases, where it applies, the Working Group refers to the response to Question 1 in the section *Delayed Qualifying Time Limitation Window Start for Pre-Program Start Training Graduates* for cases where Administrator support may be key in resolving gaps.

Additional Issues of Note

Qualified Persons

The Working Group notes a possible inconsistency around the use of Qualified Persons for Illinois Solar for All installations. The Working Group notes that the clear statutory intent of the exemption of Illinois Solar for All from Qualified Persons requirements should apply for all installations and was included to ensure trainees from FEJA Workforce Development Programs could be hired to work on installations funded through the program.

Application of Job Training Requirements for Installations of Different Formats/Sizes

Though previously noted in these comments, the Working Group highlights that a single trainee requirement has very different implications for small versus large projects or for distributed generation versus community solar projects. Where possible, the Administrator should keep to any framework that allows for maximizing program hiring benefits for trainees equitably across categories. The Working Group recommends that such a recommendation could be implemented during the Project Application

phase where developers who commit to exceeding the baseline requirements are awarded additional points in a scoring rubric.

Trainee Tenure and Approved Vendors in Both IL Solar for All and Adjustable Block Programs

The Working Group raises that the Administrator should further clarify how the program will address situations where trainees have been hired by Approved Vendors for work on solar projects that are not IL Solar for All projects.