



## Program Updates

Our inaugural CEI Cohort Program launches this Thursday with 13 clean energy companies ready to grow and scale their businesses.

Interested in joining the next cohort this fall? Contact [Ricardo Magallon](#), Interim CEI Program Director, to sign up.

## Opportunities

### 40101(d) Grid Resilience Grant

The Illinois Climate Bank is distributing \$8 million annually to strengthen Illinois' electric grid, with individual awards ranging from \$150,000 to \$8 million. Eligible applicants include grid operators, utilities, fuel suppliers, local governments, and nonprofits. Projects focused on microgrids, weatherization, automation, and grid modernization — especially those serving disadvantaged communities — are prioritized.

Applications are due March 13, 2026.

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

### Small Utility Clean Energy Planning Grant

Municipal and cooperative electric utilities can apply for up to \$200,000 to support clean energy planning efforts, including assessing energy needs, evaluating renewable options, and developing procurement strategies. A total of \$1.6 million is available.

Applications are due April 17, 2026.

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

### State Small Business Credit Initiative: Low-Interest Loans for Clean Energy Businesses

Illinois small businesses working in clean energy can access low-interest loans through the Illinois Climate Bank's SSBCI program. Loans range from \$25,000 to \$2 million at a flat rate of 1–2% annually, with terms up to 7 years. Eligible projects include solar, wind, EV charging, energy conservation, and more. Businesses must have fewer than 750 employees and operate in Illinois.

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

### Illinois Innovation Voucher Program: Now Accepting Applications

Illinois small and mid-sized businesses can apply for vouchers covering up to 75% of costs (up to \$75,000) to partner with Illinois universities and research institutions on R&D projects. Eligible uses include product development, prototyping, testing, and access to labs and equipment. Applicants must be Illinois-based for-profit businesses.

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

### Solar Panel & Battery Storage RFP: Illinois International Port District

The Illinois International Port District (IIPD) is seeking proposals for solar panel and battery storage installation, with submissions due Wednesday, March 11.

If your company is interested in doing business with IIPD or exploring opportunities within the region's logistics, infrastructure, and maritime ecosystem, review the details and requirements below.

[Learn More and Access the RFP Here](#)

## Coming Up



Join biweekly Member Meetups at Innovation DuPage! Network, enjoy bagels & coffee, and learn from spotlight members & resource experts.

The next Member Meetup will be on March 4 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

**Member Spotlight:** Elina Conley of Azenity Consulting

**Member Resource:** Brad McConnell of Allies for Community Business

If you can't make it in person, attend virtually through our [Zoom Link](#)

[Sign up](#) to present at a future Member Meetup

## Industrial Hemp Farmer Informational Event

The banner features a row of six images at the top: three showing different stages of industrial hemp (raw stalks, processed stalks, and bales), and three showing hemp-derived products (granules, fibers, and a field of hemp). Below the images, the text reads "INDUSTRIAL HEMP FARMER INFORMATIONAL EVENT" in large, bold, green letters. To the right is the logo for IH RISE (Industrial Hemp - Regenerative Innovation for Sustainable Enterprises), which includes a stylized plant icon and the text "IH RISE - Regenerative Innovation for Sustainable Enterprises - Industrial Hemp". Below the title, the event schedule is listed: "NETWORKING 6:00-6:30PM", "PRESENTATION 6:30-8:00PM", and "Q&A 8:00-9:00PM". The date "11 MAR 2026" is prominently displayed in large green numbers. To the right of the date, the location is given: "BUILDING: TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTER", "ROOM: ROOM TEC 1038AB", and "ADDRESS: TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTER, 425 FAWELL BLVD., GLEN ELLYN, IL 60137". Below the date and location, there is a section titled "Learn about growing industrial hemp for grain and fiber as a row crop in 2026." followed by a paragraph: "Industrial hemp varieties are covered by crop insurance and have recently been classified under a 'material' designation." Below this, a list of topics is provided: "Topics Include..." followed by "Planting", "Harvesting", "Offtake Agreements", "Weed Management", "Soil Health", and "More!". A small image of a tractor in a field is shown to the right of the topics. Below the topics, there is a section titled "Free Registration" with a QR code. The text continues: "Low Labor, Low Inputs, and Improved Soil Health", "Industry Leaders share their perspectives with Farmers' best interests in mind!", "Shedding light on resources and industry developments, making this a very different opportunity than before.", and "Bring any questions you have for after the presentation!"

Join Innovation DuPage members Catavus and IH RISE (Industrial Hemp - Regenerative Innovation for Sustainable Enterprises) for an informational event on Tuesday, March 11 at the College of DuPage Technical Education Center.

This free event explores the opportunity to grow industrial hemp as a row crop in 2026. Industry leaders will share insights on planting, harvesting, soil health, and more—with farmers' best interests in mind.

[Register Here](#)

### 3rd Annual Illinois Government Contracting Summit



Tuesday, March 17th, 2026

In-Person: 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

- Learn how to “win” government contracts
- For small businesses seeking to perform services
- Sell products to the federal, state and municipal government within Illinois.

7600 Roosevelt Rd. Forest Park IL 60130

Our partners at the Illinois APEX Accelerator are hosting their 3rd Annual Government Contracting Summit on Tuesday, March 17 from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

This full-day event connects small business owners with federal, state, and local government contracting opportunities, featuring panels, an SBA Mentor-Protégé Lunch & Learn, and one-on-one matchmaking sessions with procurement professionals.

[Register Here](#)

### Clean Energy Leaders Dinner: March 25, 2026



CTLR is hosting an intimate, off-the-record dinner for clean energy and climate leaders on Wednesday, March 25 in Chicago.

CEI participants interested in attending are encouraged to reach out to [Dan Facchini](#) or [Ricardo Magallon](#) to reserve a seat.

### Clean Energy Incubator Workshop: The 7 Investor Secrets Every Fundable Startup Gets Right

## The 7 Investor Secrets Every Fundable Startup Gets Right



Shubha K. Chakravarthy

Monday, March 30th, 2026

In-Person: 5:00 – 7:00 PM

- Learn the seven core conditions investors look for—from market clarity to profitability to right-fit capital.
- Build the business and financial acumen every fundable founder needs, especially for capital-intensive and first-of-a-kind technologies.
- Walk away with a practical framework to test your assumptions, gather 'receipts,' and de-risk your path to viability.

535 Duane St. Glen Ellyn, IL 60137



The Clean Energy Incubator Program is hosting its first workshop at Innovation DuPage! Program participants and Innovation DuPage members are welcome to attend.

Join investor Shubha Chakravarthy to learn the seven core conditions investors look for, from market clarity to profitability to right-fit capital. You'll build the business and financial acumen needed for capital-intensive and first-of-a-kind clean energy technologies and walk away with a practical success map to guide product development, customer acquisition, revenue strategy, and long-term growth.

[Register Here](#)

## Resources

To access any of the resources below, Please reach out to Ricardo Magallon or Arlinda Bajrami. They will help you get connected, determine eligibility, and guide you through next steps.

### Grant Writing:

Jessica Wain — Hobbs & Wain Advancement Partners

We're excited to welcome Jessica Wain as a new resource for CEI Program companies. Jessica provides grant writing and proposal development support, helping you identify, pursue, and secure funding opportunities that can accelerate your company's growth and scalability.

### Legal Support:

CEI Program Participants can receive legal support and potential expense reimbursement for assistance with:

- Structuring or restructuring your business
- Intellectual property protection
- Contracts, compliance, or general advisement

### Interns:

We are partnering with the CEJA Aurora Workforce Hub to offer CEI companies access to paid interns in the following clean-energy career pathways:

- Commercial Energy Auditor
- Solar Installer and Sales
- HVAC-R Entry-Level Technician

This initiative is currently being developed, but we anticipate making these short-term internship opportunities available, March 1 through May 31.

### ID Team Support:

- **Mike Varon** - Strategic Business Advisor
- **Ozge Guney** - Strategic Business Advisor
- **Heidi Kuharich** - Program Instructional Designer
- **Arlinda Bajrami** - Program Manager
- **Ricardo Magallon** - Director
- **Dan Facchini** - Managing Director

[Illinois APEX Accelerator Key Info](#)

[CRGA Act Key Info](#)

[Member Portal Login Page](#)

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