

Join the Spark Cohort

Spark is a 13-week no-cost business accelerator for Clean Energy Contractor Incubator (CECI) Program members, designed to help clean energy contractors sharpen their business skills and grow their companies.

We're looking for 7 more participants to round out the next cohort. If you're an existing Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program member ready to invest in the future of your business, this is your chance to get hands-on support, connect with peers, and build toward long-term growth.

Reach out to **Ricardo Magallon** to get started.

Coming Up

The Office of Economic Equity & Empowerment (OE3) | Monthly Webinars: June 3 - December 2

The Illinois Office of Economic Equity and Empowerment (OE3) hosts regular online sessions connecting business owners with the latest financial resources from state, federal, and local programs, as well as funding opportunities from private and community organizations.

Business Development Managers are available to answer questions in English and Spanish, and attendees receive a follow-up email recap of all resources shared. Sessions are not recorded.

Choose one or more dates to attend.

[To Learn More and Register](#)

**SCORE Chicago | Small Business Pitch Competition:
August 5**

SCORE Chicago's Small Business Pitch Competition finals are open to the public and free to attend! Join them at the Polsky Center at the University of Chicago to watch the top 10 finalists, selected from 190 applicants, pitch for \$15,000 in total prize money. This is a great opportunity to see strong business pitches in action, pick up best practices, and network with other small business owners and SCORE mentors.

[To Register](#)

E2, the Electrification Coalition, Evergreen Climate Innovations, and the Midwest Sustainability Network | EVs in Illinois Panel: August 6

Join E2, the Electrification Coalition, Evergreen Climate Innovations, and the Midwest Sustainability Network for a conversation about the future of EVs in Illinois. Hear from a panel of industry leaders, innovators, and policymakers, including Illinois State Senator Rachel Ventura, State EV Officer Megha Lakhchaura, and SELOC, LLC founder and CEO Greg Coles. The discussion will cover emerging technologies transforming the EV industry, the policies shaping its future, and opportunities for Illinois. Taking place at the Rivian Showroom in Chicago.

[To Register](#)

Evergreen Climate Innovations | Fall 2026 Investment Cycle: Applications Due August 17

Evergreen Climate Innovations is accepting applications for its Fall 2026 Investment Cycle through August 17. Early-stage, Greater Midwest-based companies developing innovations to solve environmental challenges are encouraged to apply for Pre-Seed to Seed investment through Evergreen's 501vc Investment Fund.

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

Opportunities

UChicago Fall 2026 Interns | Application Deadline August 18

Great news for CECI member companies looking to grow their team! UChicago is offering fully funded internships for Fall 2026. Fill out the short

interest form by August 18 to be matched with a talented UChicago student. The program guide below has all the details if you'd like to learn more.

[Interest Form](#)

[Program Guide](#)

Elevate | Line of Credit for Clean Energy Contractors

Small business contractors working in clean energy or health and safety projects can apply for the Elevate Line of Credit (ELOC), a one-year program offering up to \$50,000 at a fixed 3% interest rate. ELOC is designed to help cover upfront costs like materials, payroll, and licensing so contractors can take on more work without worrying about cash flow. The program also includes business coaching and wrap-around support. Businesses must be located in Illinois to be eligible.



[ELOC Info Sheet](#)

[ELOC Eligibility Requirements](#)

Illinois Power Agency | Racial Disparity and Availability Study Survey

The Illinois Power Agency has partnered with Griffin and Strong to conduct a Racial Disparity and Availability Study examining the presence and impact of discrimination on minority businesses and workers in Illinois' clean energy economy. As part of the study, they are asking business owners to complete a brief 10 to 15 minute survey about their experiences doing business within the state's clean energy economy. Participants will have the chance to win a gift card. The survey runs through mid-August.

[Access the Survey Here](#)

Clean Energy Jobs and Justice Fund | Financing Resources for Illinois Contractors

The Clean Energy Jobs and Justice Fund (CEJF) is connecting Illinois contractors with financing solutions, including FairPath — offering access to a vetted lender network, lines of credit, and homeowner financing options, especially in underserved communities. CEJF is also surveying contractors on financing gaps tied to federal tax credit changes to help shape future policy and tools.

[CEJF Contractor Onboarding Portal \(FairPath\)](#)

[Clean Energy Project Form \(Survey\)](#)

Illinois DCEO | Energy Equity Futures Grant: Funding Opportunity Coming Q3 2026

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Office of Energy and Business Utility anticipates releasing the next Energy Equity Futures (EEF) Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) during the third quarter of 2026. Organizations and individuals interested in future funding opportunities, program updates, and other CEJA-related announcements are encouraged to sign up for email updates to stay informed as additional information becomes available.

[To Sign Up](#)

U.S. Chamber of Commerce | Small Business B(AI)sics: Free AI Training Program

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently launched “Small Business B(AI)sics,” a free national AI training program for small business owners. The program offers courses designed to help entrepreneurs understand and integrate AI into their daily operations.

[To Learn More](#)

National Energy Improvement Fund | Financing for Energy Efficiency & Renewable Projects

The National Energy Improvement Fund (NEIF) specializes in financing virtually any type of energy efficiency, renewable energy, and resilience projects for commercial, non-profit, and municipal properties.

NSF Seed Fund | SBIR/STTR Program Reopening for Submissions

The NSF Seed Fund, the federal SBIR/STTR program, is reopening for submissions next week. This national program provides non-dilutive funding for companies developing high-impact, early-stage technology.

Phase I awards are typically around \$300,000 for R&D, with Phase II funding of \$1M or more to continue development toward market readiness. Illinois-based recipients may also be eligible for IL DCEO matching funds — up to \$75,000 for Phase I and \$250,000 for Phase II.

To get started, complete a [Project Pitch Assessment](#) and submit a [Project Pitch](#). Applicants are notified within one to two months whether they are invited to submit a full proposal.

Need help with your pitch? Reach out to [Jess Wain](#).

MEEA | Fundamentals of Energy Efficient Building Operations (FEEBO)

The Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA) offers FEEBO, an 18-hour course covering the principles of energy efficiency and preventative maintenance in commercial buildings. Topics include HVAC fundamentals, lighting, energy conservation, and indoor environmental quality — delivered over three full days or six half days.

The course is designed for those entering building operations, existing facilities personnel, and professionals whose work intersects with the built environment.

Interested? Reach out to the [CEI Team](#) for more information.

FEEBO Flyer

Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund

The Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund is designed to help developers, contractors, and building owners finance clean energy and energy efficiency projects across Illinois. This program provides short-term bridge loans to cover upfront project costs while awaiting incentives, rebates, or tax credits, helping projects move forward without delays. Eligible upgrades may include solar, battery storage, geothermal systems, and energy efficiency improvements in commercial or multifamily buildings.

This program is a \$14 million revolving loan fund that will offer loans of up to \$1 million each for a short term (12-18 month) and, in some instances, more lengthy participation loans.

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

Policy

Illinois Worker Preference Requirement Now in Effect

If your project is funded by State of Illinois grants, a new compliance requirement is now active. Under the **Employment of Illinois Workers on Public Works Act** (30 ILCS 570), contractors on state-funded public works projects must use **at least 90% Illinois-based laborers** during periods of high unemployment.

This requirement was triggered because Illinois unemployment exceeded 5% for two consecutive months. It remains in effect until unemployment drops back below that threshold.

What this means for you: If your project involves construction or public works activity tied to state funding, review your contractor agreements to ensure compliance.

Need a waiver? Exceptions are available if Illinois workers are unavailable, unqualified for the specific work, or if compliance conflicts with federal law. Waiver requests must be submitted in writing with supporting documentation through your grant manager.

Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act Now in Effect

The Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability (CRGA) Act took effect June 1, 2026. The law creates new opportunities for clean energy contractors and businesses, including:

- Expanded battery storage deployment

- New energy efficiency programs
- A Virtual Power Plant program
- Geothermal network pilot programs
- Stronger protections against solar fraud

Funding and program rollouts will occur gradually as regulatory approvals and program development timelines are met. For more information, refer to the factsheets developed by Elevate.

[CRGA Factsheet](#)

[CRGA Overview](#)

Latest Illinois Green Policy Update: March 2026

Illinois Green Alliance's latest policy update covers legislation currently being considered by the Illinois General Assembly, including the POWER (Protecting Our Water, Energy, and Ratepayers) Act, Plug-In Solar, and Utility Data Access for Gas Utilities.

[Read More Here](#)

Partner Resources

The **Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)** website includes a page dedicated to current state and federal grant opportunities as well as Grantee resources.

[To Access Grant Opportunities and More](#)

Just upstairs from Innovation DuPage is the **Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**, part of College of DuPage's Business Development Center. SBDC advisors provide confidential guidance, training, and resources to start-up and existing small businesses, helping with everything from securing business capital and marketing to commercializing new ideas and developing innovative products and services. Client projects range from early-stage, pre-revenue concepts to established business operations.

[To Learn More](#)

Allies for Community Business provides capital, coaching, and connections to help entrepreneurs grow businesses that create jobs and wealth in their

communities. Allies for Community Business offers loans up to \$500,000 to support community businesses.

Schedule a Session: Allies for Community Business

The Illinois EPA Office of Energy supports energy efficiency, resiliency, and clean energy through public partnerships and inter-agency collaborations to reduce energy burden and improve energy equity in Illinois.

Office of Energy: Listserv Sign-up

The Building Energy Hub is designed for building developers, owners, operators, managers, and contractors. It provides education, highlights relevant tools, and connects you to key resources to support your clean energy projects. Explore playbooks, financing opportunities, case studies, and more.

Building Energy Hub Website

ID Resources

ID Mentoring Program:

A flexible, high-impact program that connects CEI members with vetted industry experts for 1:1 mentorship tailored to their needs. Whether you're seeking a one-time conversation or an ongoing relationship, mentors provide guidance, insight, connections, and encouragement while helping you stay accountable to your goals.

Support areas include business development, funding and loans, legal guidance, business planning, marketing, government contracting, and more. The program is designed to be adaptable and collaborative, allowing you and your mentor to co-create a structure that best fits your journey and level of support needed.

To Get Connected to a Mentor

Grant Writing Support:

Jess Wain — Hobbs & Wain Advancement Partners

Jess provides grant writing and proposal development support, helping you identify, pursue, and secure funding opportunities that can accelerate your company's growth and scalability.

Get Your Company Listed on Pitchbook:

Pitchbook is a leading private market database used by investors, VCs, and strategic partners to discover and research early-stage companies. Innovation DuPage is now offering all members the opportunity to be listed under ID's profile — giving your company added visibility and third-party validation as a program participant. This is an opt-in benefit available to all active members.

Interested? Reach out to [Elina Conley](#) to get started.

Newsletter Access:

Want to add a team member or partner to the Green News mailing list? Contact [Hiba Anjum](#) to get them subscribed.

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

Reach out to [Ricardo Magallon](#) or the [CEI Team](#) to get started.

ID Team Support:

- [Mike Varon](#) - Strategic Business Advisor
 - [Ozge Guney](#) - Strategic Business Advisor
 - [Heather Sattler](#) - Mentor Advisor
 - [Heidi Kuharich](#) - Program Instructional Designer
 - [Arlinda Bajrami](#) - Interim Program Manager
 - [Ricardo Magallon](#) - Interim Program Director
 - [Hiba Anjum](#) - Program Associate
 - [Dan Facchini](#) - Managing Director
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