



GREEN NEWS

The Newsletter for The CEJA Illinois Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program

Upcoming Deadline

Quarterly Performance Reports Due Tomorrow: Sept. 15

If you haven't submitted your Q1 FY2027 Quarterly Performance Report yet, please do so by tomorrow, September 15. It should already be in your inbox, sent from cei@innovationdupage.org. Can't find the email? Check your spam or junk folder before reaching out.

Completing this report is a required condition of continued no-cost CECI membership under the CEJA Illinois Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program.

Coming Up

CECI Workshop: The 7 Investor Secrets Every Fundable Startup Gets Right

The 7 Investor Secrets Every Fundable Startup Gets Right



Shubha K. Chakravarthy

Tuesday, September 22nd, 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



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.

[To Learn More and Register](#)

Illinois Green Alliance | Getting to Zero Tech Forum: September 23

The Illinois Green Alliance is hosting its annual Getting to Zero Tech Forum at the Old Post Office in Chicago. The event features fast-paced five-minute presentations from industry experts showcasing cutting-edge advancements in building technology, followed by rooftop networking with food and drinks.

Clean Energy Contractor Incubator (CECI) Program members receive 20% off with code DUPAGEOFF20.

[To Learn More and Register](#)

ID Workshop: Grow & Scale Your Business with AI

Grow & Scale Your Business with AI



Noor Aftab

Wednesday September 30th, 2026

In-Person: 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

A hands-on session designed to help business owners identify where AI can create the greatest measurable impact across revenue, operations, productivity, and customer growth.

Participants will leave with:

- 3 high-value AI opportunities specific to their business
- 1 priority workflow mapped for AI automation or augmentation
- A 30-day AI action plan with clear next steps
- A personalized AI Opportunity Map showing where to focus first

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Skilium

Wondering where AI can help you move the needle in your business? ID member Noor Aftab, former Amazon Global Lead and founder of Skilium AI, is facilitating this interactive workshop designed to help business owners cut through the noise and identify their highest-value AI opportunities. Participants will leave with three AI opportunities specific to their business, a workflow mapped for automation, and a 30-day action plan to put it all in motion.

[To Register](#)

OpenAI Academy and College of DuPage | AI Literacy Summit: Oct 7

OpenAI Academy |  College of DuPage

AI Literacy Summit

A hands-on summit for applying AI across education, work, and everyday life.

College of DuPage and OpenAI Academy are hosting a hands-on AI Literacy Summit right here in Glen Ellyn! The full-day event is designed to help you use AI confidently and responsibly in your work and everyday life. Sessions include

AI foundations, breakouts for ChatGPT for Work, ChatGPT for Parents, and Building with ChatGPT, and no prior experience is needed to attend.

[To Learn More and Register](#)

Opportunities

TrustBank Office Hours at Innovation DuPage

Have a banking question? Join the TrustBank team every other Wednesday from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., immediately following our Member Meetup, for open Office Hours at ID.

Whether you're looking for guidance on business banking, lending, cash flow, credit, financial planning, or other financial topics, a TrustBank representative will be available to answer questions and share practical insights and best practices.

No appointment is necessary. Just bring your questions and connect with the TrustBank team after the Member Meetup.



Chain Reaction Innovations | Argonne National Laboratory Fellowship: Applications Open Tomorrow

Chain Reaction Innovations (CRI), the energy and science incubator at Argonne National Laboratory, is accepting applications for its 2027 cohort starting September 15 through October 30. The two-year fellowship provides early-stage technical founders with a \$115,000 annual stipend, healthcare benefits, non-dilutive funding, and access to Argonne's world-class facilities, scientific expertise, and investor network. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.

An informational webinar is also available on September 29 for those looking to learn more before applying.

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

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](#)

National Innovation Challenge Seeks Urban Manufacturing Solutions

A national competition backed by The Grainger Foundation is seeking breakthrough energy, infrastructure, and business solutions for sustainable manufacturing districts. Winners receive \$20,000, a one-year incubator membership, and a spot at an industry summit. Applications are administered by mHUB and close September 27, 2026

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

Illinois DCEO | Federal Grant Support Program: Up to \$2M in Grant-Matching Assistance

The Illinois DCEO's Federal Grant Support Program (Round 2) is open and will make resources available to Illinois-based proposals seeking competitive federal grants. This match program will encourage more applicants to apply for federal grant opportunities, provide critical assistance to meet the minimum match eligibility requirements, increase the competitiveness of applications, and provide the State of Illinois with an opportunity to make a firm commitment and demonstration of support for projects that are well aligned with the State's economic development goals and priorities.

[To Learn More](#)

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

The Clean Energy Jobs and Justice Fund (CEJJF) 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. CEJJF is also surveying contractors on financing gaps tied to federal tax credit changes to help shape future policy and tools.

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](#)

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.

[To Learn More](#)

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](#).

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: June 2026

[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.

[Jessica's Booking Link](#)

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
- [Heather Sattler](#) - Mentor Advisor
- [Heidi Kuharich](#) - Program Instructional Designer
- [Ricardo Magallon](#) - Program Director
- [Hiba Anjum](#) - Program Associate
- [Dan Facchini](#) - Managing Director

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