

GRID ALTERNATIVES COLORADO SOLAR TRAINING ACADEMY

Developing a Trained and Highly-Employable Workforce

Since 2015, job growth in the solar industry in Colorado has increased annually, and is expected to increase by 7.5% in 2019. In 2017, GRID Alternatives Colorado (GRID CO), through funding from the Denver Urban Renewal Authority, launched a new solar workforce training program called the Solar Training Academy (STA).



The goal of the STA is to provide hands-on training for under- or unemployed Denver residents in order to create a pipeline to employment in the solar industry, as well as in construction-related fields. Since its launch in Fall of 2017, the STA provides relevant workforce training for participants and helps graduates find gainful employment.

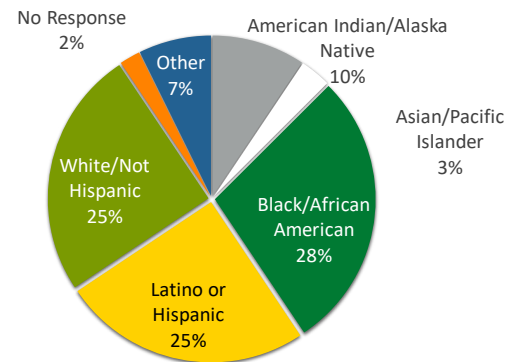
82
Program Graduates

55%
Employment Rate

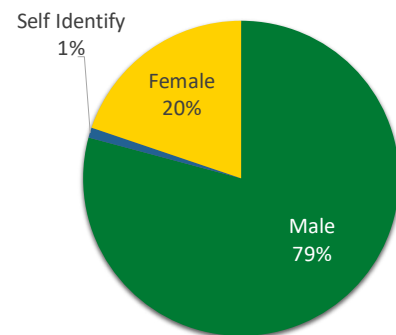
2,173
Kilowatts of Solar Installations Supported

\$12,500,000
Lifetime Solar System Savings

STA participants complete coursework and receive on-site solar installation training at an active GRID job site. In addition, program participants are trained in career-readiness skills (including 'soft skills' such as resume development and interviewing), receive construction safety training, and learn about solar and renewable energy technologies. Graduates leave the program with important industry-recognized certifications including OSHA-10 certification, Fall Protection Awareness training, and CPR/First Aid certification.



Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the STA



Gender Diversity in the STA

GRID CO is committed to ensuring that the STA is accessible to those that will benefit the most from it, including by ensuring that women, people of color, veterans, and reentry populations comprise a significant portion of trainees. Participants are eligible to receive a stipend to help cover the cost of child care while they participate in the program, and are also provided with bus passes that help make getting to the training center more manageable.



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Impacts Beyond the Individual

At the core of the STA program is its impact on the trainees and the local communities it serves. The STA has received overwhelmingly positive reviews from graduates; many have noted that having someone else believe in them meant the world to them and showed them that they have both the external support and the internal ability to change their lives. Graduates report leaving the program feeling ready to work in the solar and construction fields, and having the requisite skills and training to get stable and good-paying jobs.



"I finished with GRID CO and went immediately to my new job. I am a residential technician with Sun Systems and am working as a crew lead, and I was Employee of the Month recently! GRID CO made me who I am today. I know so much more than I ever did before."

-Jude, STA Graduate

Fifty-five percent of program graduates report being fully employed after graduation, many in the solar installation field. Since Fall 2017, STA participants have worked on solar installations totaling 2,173 kilowatts; the total lifetime savings of these systems is estimated to be nearly \$12,500,000. These installation projects include community solar arrays, affordable multifamily housing installations, and low-income single-family home rooftop arrays.

Beyond job training and soft skill development support, one of the program's biggest impacts is on participants' self-esteem and ability to see a bright future for themselves and their communities. Multiple STA graduates note that, prior to joining the program, they did not think that they had the skills, knowledge, or support needed to change their lives for the better by learning a new skill or pursuing a new career.



GRID CO is constantly looking for ways to enhance the program and improve the outcomes for individuals and communities involved in it, and in Denver the training is evolving into an Installation Basics Training (IBT-200) course; the STA will continue to be the primary training program when GRID CO works outside of Denver. As the program evolves, the benefits accrued to those that are served through the STA will also grow as GRID CO continues to support the development of a skilled, knowledgeable, and empowered workforce that can lead Colorado's transition to a clean energy economy.

"I have a career thanks to GRID Alternatives now. After a month with GRID Alternatives I am a whole new person."

- Cory, STA graduate



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