

BETTER BUILDINGS WORKFORCE ACCELERATOR

From 2020 to 2023, Elevate participated as a partner in the [Better Buildings Workforce Accelerator](#) (BBWA). The BBWA is a Department of Energy initiative seeking to raise the level of building science and energy efficiency knowledge in the nation's building-related workforce. Through the BBWA, DOE engaged industry partners in activities that build interest and awareness, streamline pathways, and improve skills for people pursuing green building careers.

As a result of participating in Elevate's Diverse Electrification Contractor Accelerator, Sesenergi Eco Solutions Enterprise augmented their service options to deliver a workforce training program called Sesenergi Solar Basics Course.

About the Partner

[Elevate](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Chicago, IL, works to create a just and equitable world in which everyone has clean and affordable heat, power, and water in their homes and communities. Elevate operates a wide array of programs nationally and strives to make the benefits and services of the clean energy economy accessible to everyone by centering equity in their services, partnerships, and research.

Elevate works with stakeholders including property owners and managers, renters and homeowners, nonprofits, contractors and other workforce members, childcare providers, real estate professionals, and government and public agencies. Elevate offers an array of services, from energy efficiency and solar assessments to municipal energy benchmarking and green financing.

About the Project

Elevate's Diverse Electrification Contractor Accelerators (DECA) are designed to support equitable pathways to enhance participating contractors' businesses through a combination of workshops and one-on-one individualized services. As an example of DECA's work, Sesenergi Eco Solutions Enterprise LLC, a 2022 DECA graduate, received technical training and business support to revamp their business plan, which resulted in adding services to their offerings. With an expressed goal to provide solar training to the next generation of black and brown individuals, Sesenergi partnered with Elevate to deliver solar training to 14 participants in 2023.

Challenges

- ▶ Elevate recognizes the lack of diversity in contracting firms in the clean energy economy is a result of many overlapping factors spanning generations. Workforce and small business development opportunities in energy efficiency and solar energy industries are rapidly increasing on a local, state, and national level, therefore, a long-term approach is necessary to successfully advance black and brown contractors as leaders in the clean energy economy.

AT A GLANCE

- ▶ **Partner:** Elevate
- ▶ **Project:** Diverse Electrification Contractor Accelerator (DECA) and Sesenergi Solar Basics Course
- ▶ **Program Location:** Chicago, IL
- ▶ **Technology:** Solar
- ▶ **Audience Served:** Incumbent Workforce, Diverse and Underrepresented Jobseekers
- ▶ **Better Buildings Workforce Accelerator Focus Area:** Improve Skills

Solutions

Contractor Accelerators

Elevate's Contractor Accelerators are designed to help remove barriers that prevent emerging and underrepresented contractors from entering the clean energy economy. Each Accelerator is developed for a select group of contractors and tailored to a specific location and market, such as solar or electrification. Elevate works closely with local utilities, municipalities, trade organizations, and technical experts on thoughtful design to make the program effective for the area and audience. Accelerators can last six to eight weeks and may consist of:

- ▶ Weekly classroom training (in-person and virtual)
- ▶ One-on-one collaboration to develop growth plans tailored to their business and individual needs
- ▶ Support and training covering accounting, branding, marketing, accessing capital, hiring talent, technical skills training, obtaining diversity certifications, and more
- ▶ Mentorship opportunities with local businesses
- ▶ Access to professional networks and job opportunities
- ▶ Ongoing support after the Accelerator

This model has been implemented with partners in cities across the U.S., including Chicago and Peoria, IL; Portland, OR; Kansas City, MO; Dane County, WI; and Detroit, MI.

Clean Energy Workforce Training Programs

In collaboration with community partners like Sesenergi Eco Solutions Enterprise, Elevate brings expertise in program design and implementation to hold clean energy trainings. These programs consist of classroom training, hands-on technical experience, life-skills training, networking, and preparation for certifications and industry-recognized credentials. Stipends are provided to cover participation in the program.

Lessons Learned

While contractors join Accelerator programs at different stages of their business, there are often similar trends in terms of barriers to accessing the clean energy economy. Elevate also works with each contractor individually to address business specific circumstances. Elevate has expanded the breadth of assistance provided in the Contractor Accelerator model to provide customized support including stipends, additional topics for operational support, and mentorship.

Outcomes and Impact

- ▶ Elevate has held more than ten Contractor Accelerators since 2018 that have increased industry knowledge, improved access to capital solutions, and supported projects that increase long-term revenue for local contractors.
- ▶ 12 contractors completed Elevate's 2022 Diverse Electrification Contractor Accelerator (DECA), which helped prepare contractors to grow their businesses in the building electrification industry.
- ▶ As a result of participating in DECA, Sesenergi Eco Solutions Enterprise augmented their service options by collaborating with Elevate to deliver a workforce training program called Sesenergi Solar Basics Course.
- ▶ A total of 13 students completed the 2023 Sesenergi Solar Basics Course and are in the process of sitting for the NABCEP exam in September. Additionally, solar training graduates are in the process of interviewing with potential employers.
- ▶ Plans to expand Sesenergi's solar training program are underway.

This case study was developed with content from [Elevate](#).