

# DIVERSITY BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

## FOR THE SOLAR INDUSTRY

NOVEMBER 2016

*SEIA believes that by having a more diverse workforce, the solar industry and your organizations will be enhanced through broadened recruitment pools, increased retention and a more engaged, productive and fulfilled workforce. Diversity is not a discrete issue area to be handled by the H.R. department, but is instead an active initiative that should permeate all major aspects of the organization. This guide is designed to assist solar companies with the practical application and implementation of diversity initiatives.*



# ABOUT THE SOLAR ENERGY INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

The Solar Energy Industries Association® is the national trade association of the U.S. solar energy industry. Through advocacy and education, SEIA® is building a strong solar industry to power America. As the voice of the industry, SEIA works with its 1,000 member companies to champion the use of clean, affordable solar in America by expanding markets, removing market barriers, strengthening the industry and educating the public on the benefits of solar energy.

For additional information, please visit [www.seia.org](http://www.seia.org).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SEIA acknowledges with appreciation the assistance of Lindsay Burke, Vice Chair - Employment Practice Group, Covington & Burling LLP in preparing this guide.

This report is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. References to specific products and projects have been included solely to advance these purposes and do not constitute an endorsement, sponsorship or recommendation by SEIA.

This guide has been a joint product of the members of SEIA's Community Engagement Committee. It does not purport to be an exhaustive resource, but rather a tool for organizations looking to implement diversity goals. This guide is not a substitute for legal advice, and should be considered only one part of a successful diversity program. For further development and implementation of a diversity integration plan for your company, you should engage an employment attorney within your state, as employment laws differ among jurisdictions.

This guide should also be used in conjunction with your organization's employee handbook, which should be evaluated and updated as needed annually. Employee handbooks can cover much of the core information around working at the organization. It is important that any diversity programs adopted have a place in the handbook. If you do not have an employee handbook, check with your attorney to become compliant.

## ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES WELCOME

SEIA recognizes that the implementation of these best practices is a work in progress. We will be continually developing and revising this guide. If your organization has developed a successful diversity hiring program and would be interested in sharing it, please reach out to SEIA Manager of Government Affairs Heather Whitpan at [hwhitpan@seia.org](mailto:hwhitpan@seia.org).

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>4</b>
Communication	
Representation	
Training Leadership	
Accountability	
<b>RECRUITMENT</b>	<b>5</b>
Recruitment Best Practices	
Interviewing & Hiring	
<b>RETENTION, CULTURE &amp; INCLUSION</b>	<b>7</b>
Retention/Professional Development	
Culture & Inclusion	
<b>DIVERSITY RECRUITING RESOURCES</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CASE STUDY: GRID ALTERNATIVES' RISE INITIATIVE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CASE STUDY: SUNGEVITY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<b>11</b>

# INTRODUCTION

The Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) is committed to promoting a diverse workforce in the solar industry.

At SEIA, we strive to hire and retain people who are smart, passionate, curious, and innovative, and then provide them the independence and development opportunities they need to flourish. Our success comes from great teamwork and exceptional individual effort, so we strive to nurture and reward collaboration and entrepreneurship. We celebrate diversity — of culture, of background, of experience and of thought — and recognize it as a key to our ability to deliver insightful and creative service to our members and our industry.

SEIA believes that by having a more diverse workforce, the solar industry and your organizations will be enhanced through broadened recruitment pools, increased retention and a more engaged, productive and fulfilled workforce. Diversity is not a discrete issue area to be handled by the H.R. department, but is instead an active initiative that should permeate all major aspects of the organization. This guide is designed to assist solar companies with the practical application and implementation of diversity initiatives.

## LEADERSHIP

For any diversity initiative to be embraced within an organization, it is imperative that there be strong demonstrated commitment from the organization's leadership. Diversity and inclusion should be identified as core values of the organization with specific goals in place to ensure its continued growth. Programs, policies and organizational structures need to be built into the organization in a way that establishes a responsibility, accountability and shared value for advancing the organization's diversity goals.

### Communication

Communication is key to success. Leaders should convey that diversity is a core value of the organization both internally and externally. They can do this by providing information about their commitment on the organization's web page, recruiting materials and customer communications, and by personally endorsing the organization's goals and values.

Organization leaders should consider scheduling face-to-face meetings with staff to regularly discuss diversity and inclusion issues. Leaders should be receptive to concerns and successes, and should be supportive of internal mentoring programs.

## Representation

Organizations should make every effort to be an equal opportunity employer and integrate individuals of all characteristics – including within federal and state protected classes – into leadership positions. Federally protected characteristics include race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status and pregnancy. State protected characteristics differ by jurisdiction but can include sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, political affiliation, familial status, status as a domestic violence victim, and marital status. During the recruitment process it should be made clear that a diverse workforce is important to the organization and that the success of the program is supported by leadership.

## Training Leadership

It is important that organizations provide leadership with inclusiveness and cultural competency trainings to help nurture an inviting work environment. Employers must also commit to cultivating a rewarding work environment by providing opportunities to all employees for development. This includes challenging work and the support necessary to have authority within their roles, and movement up the career ladder.

## Accountability

It is essential that leadership be held accountable for the positive progress of the organization's diversity goals. Set clear goals and key performance indicators that periodically monitor the organization's progress. Goals can be measured by utilizing metrics that analyze hiring, retention and attrition statistics as well as by soliciting feedback from staff and affiliates. Use data routinely collected on productivity, morale and retention to measure success. Regularly evaluate which efforts are successful and make adjustments accordingly.

Employers can provide monetary incentives, such as variable pay or bonus pay, to employees whose performance meets or exceeds company expectations, provided the company meets its own goals for productivity and profitability.

## RECRUITMENT

It is important to educate all employees involved in the hiring process on federal and state employment laws. Furthermore, employees should understand the organization's diversity goals and how to avoid biases or barriers in the recruiting, interviewing and hiring process. Adopting a strategic approach to diversity recruiting will likely involve expanding current recruiting efforts. Studies indicate that greater than half of jobs in the United States are filled through referrals and networking, making it imperative that organizations broaden their efforts to more diverse groups.

Organizations should expect that in order to attract more diverse candidates, they will need to be creative and break out of their current recruitment habits and take more risks.

## Recruitment Best Practices

- Communicate the organization's diversity goals to career services professionals and request assistance identifying and referring promising candidates.
- Consider creating marketing materials that emphasize the organization's commitment to diversity.
- Offer a referral bonus to current employees to broaden recruitment options.
- Advertise open positions in minority professional publications and websites.
- Recruit candidates from educational programs for part-time roles and recruit program graduates for full-time opportunities.
- Form strategic alliances with local and national diversity organizations to identify diverse candidates.
- Participate in job fairs that are well-attended by diverse candidates.
- Consider attending community events and sponsoring vendor tables to expand your organization's networking base.
- Maintain contact with exceptional diverse candidates who choose other employment, eventually developing an alumni network
- Some organizations may want to consider a diversity slate for each recruiting position, requiring a certain number or percentage of considered candidates to be individuals that are a part of groups underrepresented in your company or organization.

## Interviewing & Hiring

- Keeping in mind the protected characteristics protected by federal, state, and local law, interviewers should avoid asking questions that implicate those characteristics.
- Interviewers should familiarize themselves with the types of questions that are proscribed by EEOC guidance, and instead ask open-ended questions that allow candidates to emphasize what they bring to the position. Applicants should interview with several people in an organization, including other employees from diverse backgrounds, so that feedback is thorough and impartial.
- Educate interviewers on the employment law that applies to your company's operating location. It is best practice to make sure your company's employee handbook and policies go beyond minimum legal requirements. After all, diversity cannot be a core value if all employees are not protected and treated equally by your company's policies.

# RETENTION, CULTURE & INCLUSION

Efforts need to be made on a regular basis to improve the culture of inclusion within the organization, which will directly affect retention. Transparent diversity goals and achievements will support participation by the entire organization and employees will feel more included in the ongoing culture of the organization.

## Retention/Professional Development

- Take initiative to ensure all corporate policies are free from bias including recruiting, work allocation, events and training.
- Consider encouraging staff to participate in organizations focused on encouraging representation of particular groups in the workplace (e.g., Women in Solar Energy, American Association of Blacks in Energy, etc.).
- An upward review system can help identify managers in need of further diversity training.
- Implement an annual mandatory harassment avoidance and diversity awareness training and ensure that training is integrated into your onboarding process. Make sure whomever performs the training (general counsel, outside attorney, etc.) is aware of the organization's diversity initiatives so he or she can properly incorporate them into the training materials. Carefully select trainers that have experience with the industry and knowledge of legal issues, problems, and benefits that can result from diversity training.
- These training sessions should include:
  - a discussion about the organization's values;
  - the value of a diverse workforce;
  - a thorough definition of diversity and inclusion; and
  - an open discussion on cultural differences, biases and stereotypes, as well as the responsibilities of managers and staff to promote and encourage a diverse work environment.
- Implement an evaluation process to ensure that your organization's diversity program is working and that individuals from groups under-represented in your company, and particularly discriminated against in overall workforce leadership-- particularly people of color, women, differently-abled individuals, and individuals who were formerly incarcerated-- are achieving leadership positions in the organization.
- Create a staff mentoring program, pairing senior staff with junior staff to broaden communication and further career advancement opportunities. Mentors and mentees should set reasonable expectations and be provided with regular opportunities to meet.
- Consider a fund for current employees to take new employees to lunch during their first few months with the organization, to encourage employees to get to know all new employees.

## Culture & Inclusion

- Start an internal diversity committee to research training and recruitment opportunities, organize inclusive events and to be a safe zone to address any diversity issues that arise.
- Ensure the organization's equal employment opportunity (EEO) statement is up to date with all federal and state protected classes.
- Ensure that health insurance benefits are being offered to the appropriate dependents claimed by an employee, based on federal and state law.
- Ensure that social invitations are inclusive by using wording that invites partners and not just spouses.
- Consider encouraging employees to form affinity groups to provide internal support to fellow employees.
- Be openly accommodating of employees from different faith communities, age groups, ethnic backgrounds and gender identities.
- Find unique ways to celebrate and recognize diverse cultures by respecting federally recognized holidays or observance months.

# DIVERSITY RECRUITING RESOURCES

The following are some of the many resources available online that can help you in building out your diversity program:

- Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) - [colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/hbcu](https://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/hbcu)
- National Sales Network (NSN) - [www.salesnetwork.org](http://www.salesnetwork.org)
- National Society of Hispanic MBAs (NSHMBA) - [www.nshmba.org](http://www.nshmba.org)
- National Black MBA Association (NBMBAA) - [www.nbmbaa.org](http://www.nbmbaa.org)
- Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement (HACE) - [www.haceonline.org](http://www.haceonline.org)
- National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) - [www.nsbe.org](http://www.nsbe.org)
- Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) - [www.shpe.org](http://www.shpe.org)
- The Consortium - [cgsm.org](http://cgsm.org)
- Association for Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting (ALPFA) - [www.alpfa.org](http://www.alpfa.org)
- Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences - [manrrs.org](http://manrrs.org)
- Diversity Central - <http://diversitycentral.com/>
- The Black Collegian - [imdiversity.com](http://imdiversity.com)
- Diversity Jobs - [www.diversity.com](http://www.diversity.com)
- [DiversityWorking.com](http://DiversityWorking.com)
- Veterans' Employment Center - [www.vets.gov/veterans-employment-center](http://www.vets.gov/veterans-employment-center)
- [AsianHires.com](http://AsianHires.com)
- [Hispanic-jobs.com](http://Hispanic-jobs.com)
- Society of Women Engineers (SWE) - [societyofwomenengineers.swe.org](http://societyofwomenengineers.swe.org)
- Job Opportunities for Disabled Veterans (JOFDV) - [www.jofdav.com](http://www.jofdav.com)
- Advocate Online - [www.jobs.theadvocate.com](http://www.jobs.theadvocate.com)
- TA Online (Careers for Transitioning Military) - [www.taonline.com](http://www.taonline.com)
- LatPro - [www.latpro.com](http://www.latpro.com)
- Military.com - <http://www.military.com/hiring-veterans/>
- The American Association of Blacks in Energy - [www.aabe.org](http://www.aabe.org)
- Women in Solar Energy (WISE) - <http://www.solwomen.org/>
- Hispanics in Energy (HIE) - <http://www.hispanicsinenergy.com/>
- Green Latinos - [greenlatinos.org](http://greenlatinos.org)

## CASE STUDY: GRID ALTERNATIVES RISE INITIATIVE

Enabling traditionally underrepresented communities to access job training and employment in the clean energy industry is core to GRID Alternatives' mission. In 2015, GRID Alternatives launched the RISE initiative, a nationwide effort to build a more inclusive solar workforce and connect an industry that needs good people with communities that need good jobs. Through this initiative, a partnership with SunEdison, GRID will provide hands-on training and real-world solar installation experience to over 4,000 people across the country through 2016, in addition to connecting job trainees with solar companies actively looking for skilled workers.



One such job trainee, Diana Adams, came to GRID Alternatives through the East Los Angeles Skills Center and Homeboy Industries, an organization that works with formerly gang-involved and incarcerated individuals. She started volunteering with GRID and quickly became a volunteer team leader. In September 2015, Diana came to the job fair GRID hosted at Solar Power International in Anaheim to get her career started.

She applied for 11 jobs that day, and was offered interviews for nearly all of them. Just six months after her first introduction to solar, she landed a job with a local installer.

GRID also aims to bring more diverse perspectives and backgrounds into the industry through its SolarCorps fellowship program. These one-year paid AmeriCorps fellowships at GRID's regional offices throughout the country allow participants to gain broad and deep experience in a variety of aspects of the solar industry.

Antwain Nelson joined the SolarCorps program after volunteering with GRID through Sasha BruceYouthwork, a D.C. organization that improves the lives of homeless, runaway, abused and neglected youth and their families in the Washington, D.C. area. After participating in GRID's SolarCorps program for a year, Antwain was hired as a full-time Construction Assistant at GRID.



*GRID Alternatives is America's largest nonprofit solar installer bringing clean energy technology and job training to low income families and underserved communities*



# CASE STUDY: SUNGEVITY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Sungevity has always maintained a broad array of partnerships with community organizations in the cities in which we operate. Through several initiatives over the last 18 months, Sungevity has forged partnerships with organizations that will enable underrepresented groups to thrive in the solar industry given the hands-on experience they gained while working with Sungevity.



Sungevity aims to build partnerships with community groups that foster learning and innovation from a young age. While this does not have an immediate impact on diversity within the organization in the short term, the impact will be realized once these students enter the workforce five to ten years in the future.

Sungevity has partnered with over 13 organizations that educate and work with youth to prepare them for careers in tech and renewable energy, host them onsite for half day treks to meet with leaders in the company, and create a future recruiting funnel. Since January 2016, Sungevity has hosted over 17 treks to their office, welcoming over 1,000 visitors from diverse backgrounds.

One such example is Sungevity's partnership with the Junior Achievement Program. Aunica Jones has worked with Sungevity for three summers through the Junior Achievement internship program in North America, which aims to ready the next generation of entrepreneurs through relevant, authentic and experiential financial literacy. She started as a high school intern and has continued to work with Sungevity through college to help support her career goals. Aunica initially had little to no office-related skills to support her college ambitions, and has worked alongside our People Operations team to assist with workforce management planning, compensation and benefits, as well as a myriad of other projects as Sungevity has scaled over the years.



An additional organization Sungevity has partnered with is Genesys Works, which readies under-resourced high school youth in Oakland for careers in Finance, IT and Entrepreneurship. Sungevity has welcomed three high school seniors for the 2016-2017 academic year to work alongside our Finance, IT and Marketing teams on entry-level projects that expose them to a professional working environment and arm them with skills to be successful after they graduate.

*Sungevity, Inc. is a technology-driven solutions provider, offering exceptional service and choice to residential and commercial solar energy customers. Leveraging its proprietary remote solar design technology, Sungevity's software enables prospective customers to get a solar quote without a site visit and provides them with visibility to potential savings on their electricity bills. For more information, visit [www.sungevity.com](http://www.sungevity.com).*





# **SOLAR ENERGY INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION**

600 14th Street, NW, Suite 400,  
Washington, DC 20005

202-682-0556 | [www.seia.org](http://www.seia.org)