



Hosting a Solar Summit Toolkit for Local Workforce Development Boards

The National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) encourages local workforce development boards to conduct a *Solar Summit* in their regions. Solar Summits are designed to build connections between solar companies, training providers, and the workforce development board. Hosting this type of summit is in line with one of the purposes of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), *to work with local industries and ensure that residents are prepared to meet the job and skill needs of area employers*. This toolkit provides resources to assist local boards in hosting a successful Summit.

Objectives

Solar Summits should provide a forum for 1) solar employers to discuss their workforce and skill needs, 2) training providers to discuss their current solar training offerings and changes they might make, and 3) workforce boards to discuss the role they could play in facilitating the partnership between companies and training providers, and supporting individuals interested in pursuing careers in the solar industry. Solar Summits have been organized in the past by the Solar Training Network program and were helpful in improving the solar workforce pipelines in those regions.

Geography

Solar Summits can be held in your workforce development area, or multiple boards can join together to sponsor a summit in a regional area with overlapping industry and education/training markets.

Participants

There are three primary participant groups for the summit:

1. Solar industry employers,
2. Education and training providers that offer, or could offer, training for individuals interested in careers in the solar industry, and
3. Workforce development board members and staff.

Agenda

The agenda should be designed to elicit information sharing among the participants, followed by a problem-solving discussion on strategies each could play going forward to address any mismatch between employers' solar workforce needs and the availability of appropriately-skilled job candidates.

The participants can decide whether they think there is value in scheduling further meetings, forming task forces to address specific issues identified in the discussion, or planning one-on-one meetings between some of the attendees to work together in the future.

Solar Industry Labor Market Resources

During the planning phase, educate your workforce staff and other involved parties about the solar industry employment and workforce issues by reading and examining these publications. These can also be used informationally during the promotion of your Solar Summit.

- [“2016 National Solar Jobs Census,”](#) The Solar Foundation, 2017.
- [“Solar Training and Hiring Insights,”](#) The Solar Foundation, 2017.
- [Solar Industry Job Opportunities Video,](#) The Solar Training Network
- [Solar Industry and Labor Market Infographics,](#) The Solar Training Network

Who Should be Invited to Your Solar Summit?

Solar Industry Employers: Find solar employers in your region and invite them to your summit. The following resources are available to get you started:

1. [Solar Training Network](#) website
2. [Solar Energy Industries Association](#) (SEIA) Database
3. Once you find some solar companies in your area, ask them to provide you with names of other solar companies in the area.
4. Once you find some solar training providers in your area, ask them to provide you with names of solar companies in the area that they know about.

Education and training providers: Invite education and training providers who have solar programs. Consider Community Colleges and technical training schools in your area. Use the following ideas and resources to find solar education and training providers:

1. [Solar Training Network website](#)
2. [AACC Community College Finder](#)
3. Once you find some solar companies in your area, ask them where their employees have received training in the past.
4. Once you find some solar training providers in your area, ask them to provide you with names of other solar education and training providers in the area that they know about.

Community Partners: Invite economic development professionals or other community leaders with an interest in clean energy and solar energy.

Workforce Board Members and Staff: Business services representatives who can create a bridge from the supply of workers to the demands/needs of solar employers, job center staff who guide individuals looking for careers, as well as board members with strong skills in facilitating important conversations between industry and training providers are valuable participants in these conversations.

After Your Summit

NAWB and the Solar Training Network want to hear about your Solar Summit! Please [submit information about your summit using this form](#), and consider sharing a photo or two!

Sample Invitation Letter: Solar Employer

Dear [company CEO/hiring manager]:

[Board Name] is responsible for ensuring that employers are able to find the workforce and skill needs they require in the [region name] region. With the increasing importance of the solar industry in our area, we are reaching out to solar employers to determine what their workforce and skill needs are, and how best those needs can be met.

As part of this effort, we are convening a Solar Summit on [date], from [10:00-12:00], at [location]. You and/or a representative from your company are invited to join us for an open discussion about solar industry workforce needs and resources for addressing them. There will also be other solar employers and education and training providers in attendance, as well as [names of any community leaders who will be attending]. The Summit will be a great opportunity for you to indicate what you value in a training program and what skills should be targeted.

If you know of other solar companies in the area that should be invited to the event, we would appreciate it if you could let us know. Also, please let us know about any education and training providers you have used in the past so that we can include them in the meeting as well.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [e-mail, phone]. You can learn more about our organization at [web address].

We would appreciate your RSVP for attendance by [date].

Sincerely,

Name
Executive Director
[Board Name]

Name
Private Company
Workforce Board Chair

Sample Invitation Letter: Solar Education / Training Provider

Dear [education/training provider director]:

[Board Name] is responsible for ensuring that employers are able to find the workforce and skill needs they require in the [region name] region. With the increasing importance of the solar industry in our area, we are reaching out to solar employers to determine what their workforce and skill needs are, and how best those needs can be met.

As part of this effort, we are convening a Solar Summit on [date], from [10:00-12:00], at [location]. We would appreciate it if you or someone else from your institution that is well-versed in your solar and/or energy training programs could join us for an open discussion about solar industry workforce needs and resources for addressing them. Also in attendance will be solar employers and other education and training providers, as well as [names of any community leaders who will be attending]. The Summit will be a valuable opportunity to learn about what skills solar companies desire in solar applicants, and to foster relationships that might benefit your students.

If you know of any solar companies in the area that should be invited to the event, we would appreciate it if you could let us know. Also, please let us know about any other education and training providers providing solar and/or energy training programs, so that we can include them in the meeting as well.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [e-mail, phone]. You can learn more about our organization at [web address].

We would appreciate your RSVP for attendance by [date].

Sincerely,

Name
Executive Director
[Board Name]

Name
Private Company
Workforce Board Chair

Draft Agenda

The following draft agenda is set from 10:00-12:00 in order to show how a two-hour summit might be laid out. Summits do not need to be held for two hours, or from 10:00-12:00. The agenda should be adjusted to meet your board's objectives and preferences.

TIME	AGENDA	PARTICIPANTS
10:00-10:10	Introductions: <i>Quick</i> round the table introductions of participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • Title • Organization • Role in the solar industry (one sentence) 	All Participants
10:10-10:15	Statement of meeting objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To determine how to meet solar employers' workforce and skill needs 	Workforce Board
10:15-10:20	Solar Career Opportunities (Optional: to set the stage for the discussion)	Video (https://youtu.be/J5AFgY3hIac)
10:20-10:50	Discussion of workforce needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your projections for future hiring? • What specific occupations do you expect to hire? • What positions do you have trouble filling? • What are the skill and experience needs you are looking for? • What skills and experience do you have most difficulty finding? 	Solar Employers
10:50-11:10	Discussion of current training programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What solar training programs do you currently offer? • What problems are you currently facing that make it difficult for you to offer solar training programs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not enough demand for graduates? ○ Not enough individuals signing up for the classes? ○ Not enough funding? ○ Not enough input from the industry? ○ Not enough help moving graduates from training to employment? 	Educators/Trainers
11:10-11:25	Discussion of workforce development board programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What programs could you provide to employers? • What support could you provide to educators/trainers? 	Workforce Board

TIME	AGENDA	PARTICIPANTS
11:25-11:55	Problem-solving discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What changes can educators/trainers make to existing programs to better meet employers' skill needs? • What new programs could educators/trainers develop and offer to meet employers' skill needs? • What support could employers provide to educators/trainers? • What could the workforce board do to support employer and educator/trainer objectives? 	All Participants
11:55-12:00	Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage all participants to register on the Solar Training Network website (http://www.solartrainingusa.org/) • Further meetings • Task forces • One-to-one meetings 	All Participants