

# How to bring new people into the renewable energy industry



## Challenge

**You want your organization to grow, but face short- and medium- term capacity constraints.**

We are a growing nonprofit with limited resources, but ambitious goals. We needed help! We also wanted to offer a meaningful, paid program that trains new renewable energy workers. So, we started a paid Fellows program to fill the gap.



## Opportunity

**There's strong interest among the public for renewable energy and working in the industry.**

We found a tremendously wide variety of qualified and excited applicants. They ranged from high school to mid-career professionals with years of experience. All were eager to participate and learn.



## Implementing a Fellows Program



### Step 1

#### Keep the work flexible

The program will be successful if it's:

- paid
- part-time
- flexible
- permits remote work

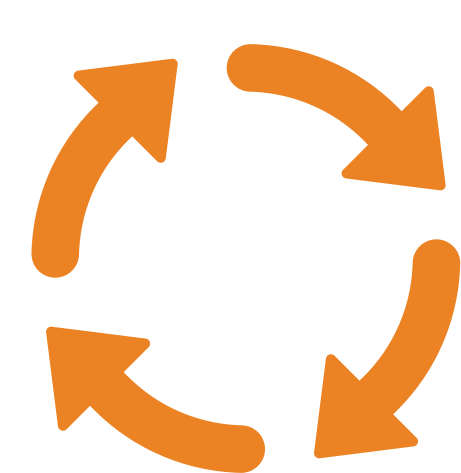
This allows people trying to enter the workforce, in school, or transitioning careers to participate.



### Step 2

#### Focus on onboarding

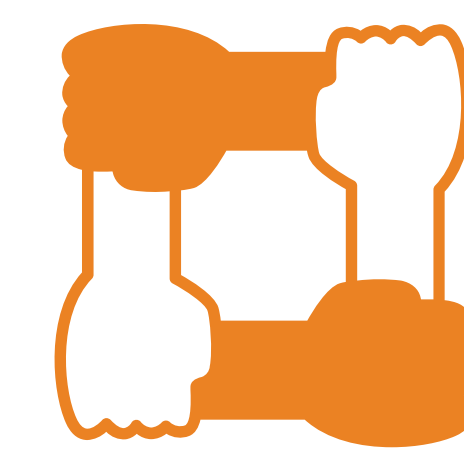
- Reassure Fellows that their time spent learning with the organization is worthwhile.
- Make the training experience clear
- Set up social interaction with other teammates
- Remind them that their opinions and contributions are valued.



### Step 3

#### Identify a repeatable need

- Identify a repeatable set of work (i.e. specific steps of a project)
- Help Fellows learn the basics quickly
- Encourage Fellows to tackle more complex work after mastering the basics.
- Confidently recruit new Fellows without the uncertainty of what they will work on and for how long.



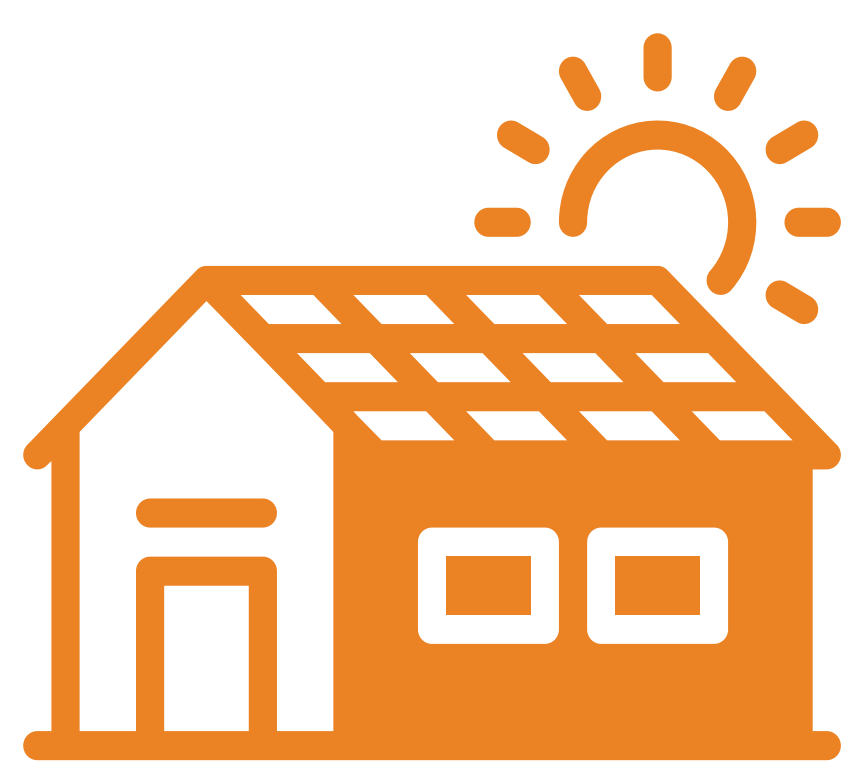
### A note about equity

#### Remove barriers

Attracting the best talent to your Fellowship means removing barriers. It's critical to:

- Offer flexible scheduling
- Pay a living wage or stipend equivalent
- Provide computer equipment if needed
- Clearly communicate with participants to identify other barriers they may have.

## How we implement the program at Solar United Neighbors



### Solar co-ops

Our flagship program is solar co-ops. A solar co-op is when a group of people go solar together to benefit from bulk purchase pricing and educational support. We operate in 11 states as well as D.C. and Puerto Rico.

This process is complex and contains many steps. With training, it can be done by someone without extensive solar experience, like a Fellow.

### The hiring process

- Fellows work with us for 9-12 months
- They work part-time for 15-20 hours per week
- Applications are open to any applicant.
- We didn't require work experience or a specific educational background.
- A subset of our staff helped train and onboard Fellows for 2-3 months.

### Work examples

- Roof reviews to evaluate for solar
  - Customer support replies
  - Special projects (i.e. Energy Equity program)
  - Research for new program offerings
- Fellows also participate in daily team activities. This lets them observe technical, educational, and advocacy work throughout the organization.

## The Results

**The program has been a huge success!** Since 2021, we have had 7 Fellows.

- 3 are current participants.
- 2 out of 4 became full-time employees.
- The other 2 found jobs at sustainability or renewable energy orgs.
- 4 were in the middle of a career switch
- 3 were entering the workforce after school.



**Fellow Fatima Ghani**

*"The fellowship program at SUN gave in depth knowledge of solar and PV technology, economics and the co-op process. I got insights and exposure to policy work, advocacy campaigns and professional development opportunities."*

## Learn more

[solarunitedneighbors.org/fellows](https://solarunitedneighbors.org/fellows)

