

income solar pilot projects for the past seven years to learn about the barriers to scaling low-income solar. We have run dozens of these programs in a wide range of states nationwide. SUN's work is intricately tied to DEI and racial equity goals. Our mission and vision statements are available here: <https://solarunitedneighbors.org/about-us/mission-and-vision/>; and more information about our solar access and energy equity work is available here: <https://solarunitedneighbors.org/access-and-affordability/> SUN is committed to this work internally as well. We are always striving for improvements. We hold an annual DEI training for staff, changed our hiring platform to one that has blind applicant screening to help eliminate bias, and alongside consultant partners, we are implementing an equity road map as we continue to build an organizational culture focused on inclusivity, equity, and justice.

Identify any partner organizations that have any certifications from Massachusetts' Supplier Diversity Office, or else meets the criteria but have not completed certification.

Although we do not qualify for the Supplier Diversity Office certification since we are not based in Massachusetts, we are a women-led organization.

Grant Funding Proposal (i.e. Proposed Approach)

Please answer the following questions. Brief responses are encouraged.

Provide a Project/Program Title: Massachusetts Energy Champion Training Program

Provide a 2-3 sentence summary of your proposed Project or Program. Think of this as your "elevator pitch".

Our energy champion training program will train non-profit and CBO staff and community leaders on how the energy system works, the importance of energy justice, and how to identify opportunities to actively participate in clean energy decisions and projects that impact the communities they represent. The goal is for participants to leave with a deeper intersectional understanding of the just energy transition and how to be an effective advocate for energy justice. The curriculum will take on a train-the-trainer model to catalyze more energy justice champions to take action in Massachusetts. It is designed for five virtual 2-hour sessions.

Based on the above, what will the requested funding specifically be used for? For example, "we will use our funding to hire part-time staff to conduct outreach in a priority group neighborhood".

We will use the majority of this funding for staff time to manage the program and participants. This will also include the development of outreach and application materials to advertise the program as well as staff time to review the participant applications. This funding will support the management of participant resources in the online platform. Funding will support staff time as well as partner time to prepare for and facilitate the five Energy Champion Program Sessions. For each of the sessions we will solicit feedback through surveys to continually improve the program. Staff will follow up and support participants for 3 months after the training with coaching and microgrant stipends to implement action projects. These microgrant stipends will be competitive and range from \$1000-\$5000 each. Once funds are dispersed, we will also follow up with participants to check in on the impact of those funds. These lessons learned from participants will be used in our final report and inform any future programs we run in other states.

What is the Priority Group you are seeking to benefit and how specifically will they benefit? Please include whether your proposal would target a geographic community (i.e. City/Town, neighborhood) or non-geographically based community (i.e. affinity group, religious network, shared language community) For example, "we will be working with low and moderate income communities in Springfield, providing opportunities to access solar PV, saving them money on their utility bills."

Our work is rooted in expanding clean energy access to communities that have traditionally been left behind in the clean energy transition, including communities of color and low-income, underserved, and rural communities. Our training program will be targeted at those priority groups and non-profits, community based organizations, municipal government, healthcare workers, and environmental organizations that serve priority groups such as environmental justice communities, low income communities and communities of color. By participating in our training program, we hope to equip leaders with the knowledge they need to take an active role in the clean energy transition, no matter what sector they work for. We hope participants will integrate what they learned back into their daily work which will

ultimately support a more comprehensive intersectional approach to the services they provide communities. As an example, a healthcare center might provide information on fuel assistance and energy efficiency programs to its low income patients who would benefit from reliable heating and electricity that is essential to their health and wellbeing.

What are the specific goals or targeted outcomes expected from the implementation of your proposed program model or project? For example, "program team anticipates we will successfully facilitate the sign up of 50 households to a shared solar project, through which households will save 20% on their utility bill".

We will empower at least 30 energy champions to advocate for a just transition in their sectors. This program will increase individuals' knowledge on energy justice and increase their confidence discussing it within their communities. We hope to facilitate the creation of relationships between program participants that extend beyond the program. We hope that at least 60% of trainees will implement an action plan in their workplace or communities. While projects are left open to each participant to design, they could include:

- An energy justice presentation to constituents
- An internal meeting to discuss some aspect of energy justice in their work
- A campaign plan to advocate for an energy justice related initiative
- A plan for joining a coalition
- A community event to share energy programs available in the state

Specific examples from our first NY cohort include engaging youth in digital literacy using energy data, providing an induction cooktop demonstration event for a housing cooperative, and hosting an energy savings event with their community.

We seek to expand the number of organizations involved in the energy justice movement and will track whether any new organizations join relevant coalitions, including MA Power Forward, Fix the Grid, or Boston Green New Deal.

What activities, such as research or stakeholder engagement, have been completed in preparation for the implementation of this program model or project? For example, "we have conducted 3 community meetings or focus groups to identify community interest in a weatherization campaign. If no stakeholder engagement has occurred, please clarify reasoning".

The program was designed by Energy Allies (now a part of Solar United Neighbors) and Eben Bein from Our Climate in early 2024 with the support of Mass CEC. The curriculum notes and slides were submitted as part of the last grant report under Energy Allies. Before designing this curriculum, we developed a survey and conducted interviews with organizations to understand community needs for a program like this. This helped inform the intersectional approach we took in the curriculum design.

Parts of this curriculum have also been implemented in a similar program in New York State. While the New York program is slightly different because of specific needs that came out of the survey there, a lot of the material overlaps and we've been able to tweak and test the material with real participants to make improvements overtime. Overall we had great feedback from the first cohort. They rated the training as a 4.6 out of 5 and 100% of participants said they would recommend the training to a friend.

(If Applicable) If this is a follow-on funding request for a previously awarded project under EmPower, please clarify the following:

Please answer the following questions. Brief responses are encouraged.

How does this follow-on funding support the evolution of your program model or project in a significant or impactful way?

Energy Allies received a Capacity Building Grant in 2023 to build the energy justice curriculum and we are excited to continue this work under the SUN name. This new funding will allow us to implement the training program and see real-world outcomes from participants.

We implemented this program in New York in 2025 and have been making improvements to the curriculum as we receive feedback from participants. We ran one cohort in New York in the spring and we are running a second one currently for a total of 32 Energy Champions this year. We have created materials, including a website, which we will tailor to MA to make it easy for partners to share in their newsletters, on social media etc. We received double the number of applicants we had for the number of spots available, so there is clear interest in this training. Their organizations ranged from housing groups, energy nonprofits, technical companies (HVAC, electrical), immigrant rights organizations, and CDCs. We had a mix of ages, career stages, and races, with 78% of participants identifying as people of color. We are eager to implement this in Massachusetts and continue to learn and improve the model over time.

What, if any, changes have been made to the design of the program to incorporate lessons learned and/or to shift focus or expand the impact of your program model or project?

Based on learnings from our New York cohorts, the best way to advertise the program is through partners. We've also reduced the slide content, to make more room for discussions and breakout activities as participants really enjoyed that aspect of the curriculum. Originally, we designed the program to be five, 90 minute sessions but found it was better to have 2 hours for each session to allow for questions and discussion. The other lesson learned we had was regarding the microgrants available to participants for their action plans. Although everyone created an action plan in the last session, we had challenges getting people to apply for the microgrants to implement their plans. We extended the deadline a few times, but in the end, only 5 out of 16 participants applied. For the first cohort we offered \$1,000 to every participant. With this current NY cohort, instead of offering \$1,000 to everyone, we are increasing the amount of funding available to each participant but putting a cap on the number of grants we can provide. Hopefully, more funding and a stricter deadline to get their applications in would encourage more people to take advantage of the microgrants.

Proposed Timeline and Outcomes

With as much detail as currently available, please clarify your expected timeline for the usage of this funding and all proposed outcomes of the funding. Please note that funding should be utilized within 3 years. Be sure to tie in all activities proposed in the previous section.

Winter 2025/26:

Development of outreach and application materials

Update existing materials with current events

Advertise program, review applications and send out acceptances

Spring 2026:

Host the first MA Energy Champions cohort

Summer 2026:

Follow up with cohort 1 participants and distribute microgrants

Advertise second cohort

Tweak curriculum based on feedback from cohort 1

Fall 2026:

Host the second MA Energy Champions cohort

Winter 2026/27:

Follow up with cohort 2 participants and distribute microgrants

Final reporting

Based on your specific goals or targeted outcomes, what would you propose to submit to MassCEC to show completion of the tasks supported by this funding? Possible examples include: metrics of clean energy systems contracted, number of people reached, number of events hosted. If selected this will be used to draft your project scope of work and milestones for payment. See example scope of work in template contract (Attachment 3).

Outreach and recruitment materials

Number of applications and sector/community representation

Training program slides and other educational content

Demographics of program participants

Proposed Budget

Proposed funding usage breakout: Please fill out the table below with each activity and proposed amount of funding associated with completing that activity. If there are multiple team members that will receive funding, please list which team member will ultimately receive funds for each budget item. Note: MassCEC will pay all awarded funding directly to the Lead Applicant (or fiscal agent) and the Lead Applicant (or fiscal agent) can disburse the funding to other team members, so be sure to clarify exactly who will receive which funds. *Applicants are encouraged to allot some time and funds to program management and reporting. If hiring new staff, time and funds for this should also be considered.*

If selected this budget will be entered directly into the scope of work, see example in Attachment 3.

Budget

	Proposed activity (e.g. funding staff time & supplies for community outreach)	Team member receiving funds for each proposed activity (e.g., the lead applicant or a specific project partner)	Funding amount
1	SUN's Director of Community Access's time to oversee partner relationships, manage the program timeline and planning process, and facilitate the program (20% of their time)	SUN	26121
2	SUN's Community Access Associate's time organizing materials, coordinating participants and follow up / evaluation for cohorts, and program delivery (30% of their time)	SUN	22620
3	SUN's Marketing & Communications team's time to build landing page for program, online platform management and promotion material development (2% of two people's time)	SUN	4420
4	SUN's Accounting Team's support to facilitate subgrants and microgrants (1% of one person's time)	SUN	1430

	Proposed activity (e.g. funding staff time & supplies for community outreach)	Team member receiving funds for each proposed activity (e.g., the lead applicant or a specific project partner)	Funding amount
5	Outreach and Communications for advertising the training program and hosting a page on an online platform	SUN	3320
6	Partner and facilitator time for planning and delivering sessions, promoting the program, and/or guest speaking	Eben Bein/Mass Power Forward, Fairmont Indigo CDC	13700
7	Microgrants for participant action projects (\$1k-\$5k each) up to 30 participants	SUN	30000
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			

Total Budget Request (up to \$150,000) 101611

Grant Payments: Applicants will receive a portion of the funding upfront and will receive the remainder once part or all of the project is completed. How would you like to receive the rest of the funds?

In one payment when the tasks supported by this funding are completed.

Non-MassCEC Funding (if applicable): Describe any other sources of support (name of grant, organization providing grant) for this proposed work, including in-kind work. When possible, please provide value of funding. (Note: no additional sources of funding are required to apply for this funding.)

As mentioned above, we received a similar grant from the Park Foundation to roll out the Energy Champions Training Program in New York State for \$120,000 for FY24-25 and will be reapplying in 2026 to do more.

Submission of Attachment 1: EmPower Massachusetts Implementation Signature and Acceptance Form

Please visit the [EmPower website](#)

here, download and sign Attachment 1 for Implementation Grants, and upload your signed document

Upload your signed version of Attachment 1 here. (If you are submitting a draft application and requesting feedback, you can upload a blank document here instead if you wish to wait to upload this form until your final submission.)

Attachment_1_-_EmPower_Mass_FY2... .pdf

If you have any questions about this document, please contact MassCEC prior to applying:
empower@masscec.com

Review of Attachment 3: Sample Grant Agreement & Example Scope of Work and Milestones Table

Please visit the [EmPower website here](#)

for a sample Implementation grant agreement, scope of work, and project milestones table.

Have you reviewed the sample grant agreement? Specifically, have you reviewed the example scope of work and milestones table? (Required)

Yes

Are there any changes to this template contract agreement that would be necessary before the Applicant could sign the contract? (Note: MassCEC has limited ability to change our standard legal contract terms. Please note that reviewing and requesting changes to standard legal contract terms, if selected, will impact timelines for contracting.

No

If you have any questions about these documents, please contact MassCEC prior to applying:
empower@masscec.com