

Meeting Notes

Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing (SOMAH) Job Training Organization (JTO) Task Force

June 21, 2024, 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Virtual Meeting

Meeting Attendees

SOMAH Program Administrator Team

Marisa Villarreal | SOMAH Program Manager
Mina Defee | SOMAH Program Manager
Ingrid Murillo | SOMAH Program Manager
Stacey Lee | SOMAH Program Coordinator
Alessandra Gonzales | SOMAH Program Coordinator
Hannah Keenan | SOMAH Program Manager
Jacqueline Rogge | SOMAH Program Coordinator
Trevor Schwartz | SOMAH Program Coordinator

SOMAH JTO Task Force

Hattie Wyatt | Young Community Developers
Jeff Trirogoff | Elements of Earth & Energy
Jon Caffery | Saddleback College
Dr. Mitchell Smith | Young Community Developers
Wanda Rogers | SoCal Pre Apprenticeship Program
Wes Olson | Center for Employment Training - Oxnard
Wshana Moss | The Niles Foundation

Not in attendance:

Janie Hodge | Paving the Way Foundation
Senait Forthal | OC Go Solar

Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Workforce Development (WFD) Updates
3. SOMAH Program Update
4. Fleet Monitoring Update
5. Next Steps, Questions, Closing

Meeting Notes

Welcome & Introductions

Mina Defee, SOMAH Program Manager

Stacey Lee, SOMAH Program Coordinator

Mina led a round of introductions and reviewed the meeting agreements, goals and agenda. Stacey Lee shared the latest updates on SOMAH's advisory bodies, including the newest members of the SOMAH Advisory Council.

Workforce Development Updates

Mina Defee, SOMAH Program Manager

Ingrid Murillo, SOMAH Workforce Development Program Manager

Notes

- JTO Task Force chair and co-chair positions open
 - Interested members can express their interest in either role on the form provided after this meeting.
- Apprenticeship working group update
 - Proposed apprenticeship program meant to focus on solar maintenance technicians.
 - Getting input from key WFD staff at GRID Alternatives.
 - Expected to launch in 2025.
- Heatspring SOMAH Academy
 - A resource that is designed to prepare trainees for work on SOMAH projects.
 - SOMAH's community-based organization (CBO) partner, Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), piloted their own Heatspring Academy for four community members out of their office in South Los Angeles.
- Job Training Portal
 - Working on translating intake form to Spanish and updating Resources page.
- Staffing
 - Hiring for a new SOMAH WFD program manager – position description is on GRID Alternatives' Careers page.
 - Would ideally start in July.

Discussion

JTO TF Member: Will there be any type of reporting to see where Heatspring Academy enrollment is? Will the SOMAH PA share that data?

- **SOMAH PA:** The Heatspring Academy does track that information. If CBO partners keep track of who they are referring the program to, the PA can cross-reference it with who is registering on the Heatspring platform and intake form in Salesforce.

Program Overview & Update

Mina Defee, SOMAH Program Manager

Mina shared the latest program stats and regulatory updates that were presented at the most recent SOMAH Public Forum. Notes on these updates can be accessed [here](#).

Mina provided an overview of the SOMAH PA team and the roles and areas of expertise for each of the four PA organizations. Mina shared a refresher on the role of the JTO Task Force in the program and the following workforce development goals of the SOMAH program:

- Ensuring all projects are following WFD requirements.
- Contractors are providing hands-on job training, so trainees are prepared for the industry.
- Trainees have meaningful and career-advancing experience, develop partnerships & make recommendations.
- Trainees are prepared for the solar industry.

The current status of the program's administrative budget has decreased starting this year and will continue to steadily decrease until the end of the program. Project incentive funds are separate from the administrative budget and are still readily available. The following discussion questions were posed:

1. What could and should the SOMAH PA prioritize to meet our workforce development goals? What needs to be right-sized?
2. What should continue as is?
3. How can the JTO Task Force be involved or assist?
4. Have you dealt with similar situations for other programs? How did you balance everything?

Discussion

JTO TF Member: We are going through budget cuts and budget review and heavily rely on city grants and local funding. There were major budget cuts, so we must prioritize our program to meet our workforce goals. First, decide what the goals are and ensure they are clear.

JTO TF Member: Do you track where trainees are going?

- **SOMAH PA:** After every project, we require contractors to fill out a post-installation survey to share their experience with the program. Through those surveys, the PA learned that ~18% of trainees are hired full time/permanently. Surveys are also sent to trainees. We have received back some responses, but it's challenging to get trainees to complete surveys. The responses we have received show that trainees usually join the solar industry in some way.

JTO TF Member: The PA should continue following up with clients, because such data collection is crucial. Try to make a point of creating a relationship, meeting space or place where you can get that information so that it doesn't go uncaptured.

- **SOMAH PA:** Post-installation surveys are conducted on an ongoing basis. Job trainee surveys aren't, but the PA can work to make it ongoing.

JTO TF Member: Have you ever done labor compliance – visiting employers and trainees on the job site and seeing how the project is going?

- **SOMAH PA:** Some PA members have done that for properties where they are allowed access. Most solar contractors are guarded about having people come onsite, and they are not required to grant access. In the instance we receive complaints about safety on the jobsite, and the PA directs folks to resources like the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) for guidance.

JTO TF Member: Are any of these projects prevailing wage? Contractors cannot deny access to the site if so. Per the DIR, we need to know if working conditions are safe, if employees are being treated fairly and if they're being compensated correctly.

- **SOMAH PA:** Per the CPUC, the PA does not have jurisdiction to enforce these labor conditions. Regulating job sites is not in the PA's scope, nor would we have capacity to visit sites in person due to our administrative budget. The PA does not play a direct role in it, but we work to ensure they are meeting compliance through the DIR and CPUC.

JTO TF Member: How many contractors have canceled their applications? Looking into this could help determine what in the program could be right-sized or improved.

- **SOMAH PA:** There are a variety of reasons contractors might decide not to participate. For project drop out specifically in the past 2-3 years, there was a big challenge around the incentive levels. Projects would drop out and reapply after new incentive levels were passed. We make sure to re-engage projects that have dropped out.

JTO TF Member: Are we finding that the job opportunities for SOMAH trainees are mostly related to installation?

- **SOMAH PA:** Most of the positions have been installation-related due to the training requirements. The PA encourages contractors to select trainees for other positions like project management, but it is ultimately up to the contractors.

JTO TF Member: Maybe there's an opportunity to shift case management to workforce development boards and have those platforms help with job placement with solar contractors.

Fleet Monitoring Update

Luis Amar, Technical Manager, SOMAH PA

Luis presented an overview of SOMAH's fleet monitoring program that was launched last year.

Discussion

JTO TF Member: Are there any plans to involve trainees in system monitoring?

- **SOMAH PA:** SOMAH's Technical Assistance team has started putting together and providing these resources. The PA could possibly provide a webinar on this in the future.

Next Steps

Mina reviewed action items for the JTO Task Force. The Q3 meeting will be joint with SOMAH's Advisory Council and is expected to take place in late September.