

May 20th, 2025



Fort Myers Technical College: Solar Workforce Training

The condition of Lee County's continued economic success is the ability to educate for the future of work. This in turn, requires the strengthening of career and technical education (CTE) programs and pathways in view of developing a robust system of increasing work-based activities and partnerships.

Among the list of current programs hosted by Fort Myers Technical College (FMTC), is excited to announce the new Solar Photovoltaic Installation and Maintenance Program in conjunction with our partners at The Solar Energy Institute.

Solar Photovoltaic System Design, Installation and Maintenance is a 600-hour Energy training program that will prepare students to become Solar Photovoltaic Installers and other installation, maintenance and repair workers. Students who take this program will learn about all the aspects of the Solar industry including:

- Solar site surveys & design
- Hands on plumbing, electrical & battery storage labs
- In field installation training solar electric, hot water & solar pool systems
- Industry trends, manufacturing & federal tax credits
- Safety, tools & troubleshooting
- Graduate with NABCEP Associates Certification & OSHA certification.

Our Board of Directors consists of owners and operators from solar installation companies that are Certified Members of FlaSEIA (Florida Solar Energy Industry Association). The Board will be headed by Rick Vaske who is a Florida licensed solar contractor with over a decade of experience in the industry. Rick is also a Certified NABCEP exam practitioner, was the director of the solar program for the Charlotte County Technical College and will be participating as one of our training instructors. We are excited to have Rick's knowledge and experience.

Open enrollment for the program begins October 2024 and will be accepting candidate applications at the Fort Myers Technical College Student Services Center or through our partnership with CareerSource where tuition assistance can be provided for qualified candidates.

Additional tuition assistance can be provided for interested Veterans through our partnership with the Department of Energy: Solar Ready Vets program. More details for this program are available on the Solar Energy Institute website.

Fort Myers Technical College
3800 Michigan Ave
Fort Myers, FL 33916
www.fortmyerstech.edu

Solar Energy Institute
12713 McGregor Blvd. #2
Fort Myers, FL 33919
www.SolarEnergy.Institute

CareerSource Southwest Florida
6800 Shoppes at Plantation Dr Suite #170
Fort Myers, FL 33912
www.careersourcesouthwestflorida.com/

The Solar Energy Industry is one of the fastest growing industries with the U.S.

Solar Job Trends

- As of December 2022, there were 263,883 solar workers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. This represents an increase of 8,846 jobs, or 3.5% growth since 2021.
- This growth came in a year of transition for the solar industry, as the threat of new tariffs on panels and cells and other supply chain concerns led to a slowdown in large-scale solar installations. Nationwide, the utility-scale solar market lost about 6,000 jobs in 2022. In contrast, residential solar jobs grew by 11%, or about 9,500 jobs, balancing out the losses in utility-scale solar.
- About two-thirds of all solar jobs in 2022 (171,558) were at installation and project development firms. There were 33,473 jobs at manufacturing firms, 30,618 in wholesale trade and distribution, 16,585 in operations and maintenance, and 11,648 in a miscellaneous “all others” category.
- Solar jobs grew in 42 states and Puerto Rico in 2022. The state with the most jobs added in 2022 was California, the nation’s largest solar market, with 2,404 jobs added. California was followed by New York (988 jobs), Texas (904 jobs), Florida (506 jobs) and Massachusetts (476 jobs).
- Total solar manufacturing jobs increased only slightly from 2021. Since the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, there have been a flurry of announcements for new domestic manufacturing facilities, which if built could substantially increase manufacturing employment in 2023 and beyond.
- In addition to the 263,883 workers spending the majority of their time on solar, there were additional workers who spent less than half their time on solar-related work. In total, there were 346,143 workers who spent all or part of their time on solar.¹
- The solar industry expects a year of recovery in 2023, with anticipated growth in both the large-scale solar and residential markets. The passage of the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022 will lead to a transformative expansion of the clean energy sector in 2024 and beyond.

Solar Workforce Demographics

- The proportion of women in the solar workforce increased from 27% in 2017 to 31% in 2022. Black people made up 9% of the solar workforce in 2022, considerably less than the proportion in the overall workforce (13%).
- Eight percent of solar employees are veterans, well above the 5% in the overall workforce. Only 13% of the workforce is 55 and over, compared to 24% nationwide.

Solar Workforce Development

- In 2022, 44% of solar industry employers said it was “very difficult” to find qualified applicants—the highest such percentage ever recorded in the *Solar Jobs Census*.
- Most new hires in 2022 required some previous work experience. However, less than half of all new hires required a bachelor’s degree, about a third required an associate’s degree, and almost none required a vocational or post-secondary certificate.
- 10.5% of solar workers are represented by a union, collective bargaining agreement, and/or project labor agreement. By comparison, 7% of the U.S. private sector workforce is represented by a union.
- The Inflation Reduction Act will encourage the utility-scale solar industry to increase the use of Registered Apprenticeships, one of the best ways to hire and retain a skilled workforce.

*The 13th annual *National Solar Jobs Census* is a comprehensive review of employment and workforce development in the U.S. solar energy industry, nationwide and state by state. It is published by the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC). This year’s report also includes information on jobs in the battery storage sector and other clean energy industries.

The *Solar Jobs Census* is based on a rigorous survey administered by BW Research in the spring of 2023 for the U.S. Department of Energy’s *United States Energy & Employment Report (USEER) 2023*. The data in the *Solar Jobs Census* are as of December 2022.

The *Solar Jobs Census* defines solar workers as those who spend 50% or more of their time on solar-related work.

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