

# Skilled Pathways for Advancement, Resilience, and Knowledge (SPARK) Youth Workforce Pilot Program

## *Sub-Award Program Guidelines*

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# Introduction

The Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) is soliciting proposals for up to five eligible applicants to implement regional projects furthering the goals of the Skilled Pathways for Advancement, Resilience & Knowledge Youth Workforce Pilot Program (SPARK program).

The SPARK Program is an energy workforce development initiative targeting Virginians ages 14–25. The program aims to spark early interest in a broad range of energy careers through paid training, mentorship, and hands-on work experiences.

By engaging youth, with a focus on youth from rural and low-income communities, the SPARK program will help build a pipeline to meet the growing demand for skilled energy workers in Virginia.

This initiative is funded through the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The US Department of Energy awarded Virginia Energy approximately \$1.3 million in IIJA funding for the SPARK program. Virginia Energy will disburse the \$1.3 million via sub-awards to up to five sub-awardees, each receiving up to \$500,000. Virginia Energy may partially award proposals at its discretion.

The SPARK program is anticipated to be implemented from the date of contract signing through December 2028, or until project completion, whichever comes first.

**All proposals are due electronically by September 26, 2025, at 11:59 PM (EST).**

## SPARK Program Overview

Virginia Energy is seeking proposals from prospective sub-awardees that can implement regional workforce initiatives in accordance with the SPARK Program's key objectives. These objectives are listed below, along with examples of activities that could be undertaken to further them.

### **1. Expand Early and Dual Enrollment Opportunities in Energy Fields**

- Partner with Virginia Community Colleges to integrate courses into dual enrollment programs.
- Work with high schools and Adult Career Technical Education Centers to increase student awareness and participation in Career and Technical Education (CTE) Energy cluster.
- Provide early exposure to energy career pathways by engaging students as early as age 14.
- Provide opportunities for youth to “earn-and-learn” by receiving wages during training and internships.

### **2. Establish Pathways to Energy Careers to Facilitate Completion of In-**

### **Demand, Industry-Recognized Certifications**

- Cover training and certification costs for youth entering in-demand and emerging career pathways such as:
  - Energy Transmission and Distribution
  - Power Generation (Nuclear, Natural Gas, Solar, Wind)
  - Grid Modernization
  - Energy Efficiency
- Establish or expand pre-apprenticeship and youth registered apprenticeship programs.

### **3. Develop funding partnerships with energy employers and workforce development boards to increase student access to technical training programs**

- Pair participants with experienced Advisors/Coaches/Instructors (industry professionals, engineers, technicians) who provide guidance, role modeling, and career advice.

### **4. Marketing, Education, and Outreach Campaigns**

- Partner with high schools, workforce centers, and community colleges to recruit participants, including participants eligible for FastForward/FANTIC and the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Identify processes to promote employment through employer networks, veteran organizations, and career fairs.

Actively recruit individuals from rural and low-income communities, including by offering wrap-around support (e.g., transportation assistance, academic tutoring, life skills coaching) to help overcome barriers to participation.

## **Sub-Awardee Eligibility and Qualifications**

### **5. Eligible applicants can include:**

- workforce training organizations;
- youth development organizations;
- institutions of higher education, both public and private;
- community development corporations;
- nonprofit and for-profit entities;
- neighborhood-based or faith-based institutions; or
- any combination of the above.

**6. Virginia Energy is seeking proposals from entities that have:**

- Ability to offer industry-recognized credentials leading to employment in high-demand fields.
- 3+ years of experience delivering high-quality workforce development or youth programming for ages 14–25.
- A track record of effective case management and wraparound supports that reduce employment barriers (e.g., transportation, academic support, childcare, financial counseling, etc.).
- Capacity and ability to track data and outcomes, including credentials and employment documentation.
- Ability to provide training compensation to students or tuition reimbursements to industry-recognized training providers,
- Strong relationships with employers and evidence of successful placements.
- Understanding and application of positive youth development and trauma-informed approaches.

## Sub-Award Proposal Instructions

Carefully review the sub-award program guidelines package, including terms and conditions. Proposals will be evaluated competitively and awarded based on evaluation as outlined under Evaluation and Scoring Criteria.

**All proposals are due electronically by September 26, 2025, at 11:59 PM (EST).** Only complete proposals submitted by the deadline will be considered. Late submissions will not be considered.

**Additionally:**

- A percentage not to exceed 15% of the allocated funds to the Program can be used for administrative purposes, including establishing the program guidelines, evaluating applications, and managing grant issuance and reporting.
- Applicants must use the format provided and respond using a font size of no less than 12.
- Proposals must be limited to a maximum of 25 pages.

**Proposal forms are available at: <https://energy.virginia.gov/energy/spark.shtml>. Completed proposals must be submitted electronically via [energyworkforce@energy.virginia.gov](mailto:energyworkforce@energy.virginia.gov). Paper submissions will not be accepted.**

Please submit large documents (over 10MB) in Zip file format.

Please submit all questions to:  
Andrea Dixon-Schesventer  
Energy Workforce Coordinator  
Virginia Department of Energy  
[andrea.dixon-schesventer@energy.virginia.gov](mailto:andrea.dixon-schesventer@energy.virginia.gov)

## Required Proposal Components

### 1. Applicant:

- State the name of the applicant organization.

### 2. Primary Contact:

- Provide the name and all relevant contact information, including physical and email addresses and phone numbers of the primary contact for purposes of application and administration of the sub-award. A secondary contact may also be provided.

### 3. Project Title and Target Area:

- Provide a project title and the proposed geographic target area.

### 4. Organizational Overview

- State your organizational mission. How does your mission/vision/work align with the objectives of the SPARK program?
- Years of operation and number of years developing curriculum and operating high-quality workforce development programs for youth and young adults (ages 14-25).
- How does your program prioritize a youth-centered training approach that promotes voice, agency, and holistic development? Additionally, how do you implement trauma-informed practices to foster emotional safety and resilience—such as mentorship, culturally responsive curricula, and wraparound supports?
- How do you incorporate cultural competence into your program design?
- Describe your community and youth engagement process and recruitment for participation in the SPARK program, and how you will specifically reach out to draw from rural and low-income communities?
- What qualifications and experience make your staff well-equipped to meet this proposal's requirements and effectively serve participating youth and young adults, including those in rural and low-income communities?

### 5. Project Description

#### *i. Program Objectives Alignment*

Clearly describe how the proposed project will support and successfully advance the objectives of the SPARK program, including aligning

workforce development activities with in-demand and emerging energy careers in your target geographic area.

*ii. Description of Work and Compliance*

Provide a detailed explanation of the activities you will conduct as part of this sub-award. Describe staff responsibilities, partnerships, program structure, and how you will meet reporting and compliance requirements, including tracking performance metrics.

*iii. Training Standards & Industry Alignment*

Explain how your training will establish a career pathway and align with recognized industry standards, such as certifications, safety requirements, and occupational competencies relevant to employment in the energy sector.

*iv. Career Readiness & Coaching*

Describe how your program incorporates career readiness training, including resume building, mock interviews, soft skills development, workplace etiquette, and mentorship support.

*v. Anticipated Challenges & Solutions*

Identify any foreseeable challenges to program implementation (e.g., participant recruitment, employer engagement, transportation) and describe proposed strategies to mitigate these barriers.

## **6. Budget**

- Provide a detailed budget (in the format of the [SF424A](#)) addressing all aspects of your proposal, including personnel costs, any subcontractor costs, program-related travel, student training, training compensation, wrap-around services, tuition reimbursement, career counseling, etc. All anticipated costs should be clearly accounted for.
- Training compensation must be distributed in accordance with established policies and documented by signed agreements and payment records. Wrap-around services must be tracked through invoices, receipts, or service provider logs and reported on a quarterly basis.
- State the anticipated cost per participant.
- Describe the type, amount, source, and timing of any cash or in-kind cost share. Cost share is not required, but applicants are encouraged to leverage additional funding. Qualifying contributions include cash, staff time, facility use, employer contributions, and related programmatic support, as documented in the budget.
- All sub-awardees must complete a [Federal Vendor Information Form](#) to enable payment processing, ensure compliance with federal regulations, confirm eligibility, and support transparent financial reporting under
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## **6 7. Prior Grant Management Experience**

- Provide information on your prior experience working with state and/or

federal grant programs.

## **8. References**

- Provide up to three references. Relevant references should demonstrate your organization's experience, credibility, partnerships, and alignment with program objectives.

## **9. Letters of Support**

- Provide two or more letters of support from employer partners verifying their commitment to hiring program graduates.

## **10. Leveraged Funding**

- Describe how this funding can be leveraged against other grant and/or private funding resources to ensure high-efficiency use of Virginia Energy funding.

## **11. Certification:**

- To the best of my knowledge and belief, the information in this proposal is true and correct, and it has been duly authorized by the Applicant's governing body.

Name:	
Title:	
Date:	

## Evaluation and Scoring Criteria

Criteria	What We're Looking For	Points
Project Alignment with SPARK Objectives	Clear, innovative, and youth-centered project developmentally embedded with soft skills training and career coaching, tailored for 14–25-year-olds to achieve success, including the CTE Energy Career Cluster, with a focus on one or more in-demand and emerging energy sectors.	25
Outcomes & Impact	Alignment with regional demographics and workforce needs. Outcomes meet/exceed benchmarks; solid plan for tracking employment outcomes and providing follow-up services.	20
Youth Development Approach	Demonstrated commitment to positive youth development, trauma-informed mentoring, and culturally competent support services.	15
Capacity & Experience	Experience working with youth or young adults; past performance on similar projects; readiness to recruit and support participants.	15
Employer Partnerships	At least two letters of support from employers; strong relationships demonstrated; realistic job placement plans in relevant energy-related fields.	10
Budget, Cost Share & Leveraged Funding	Realistic and cost-effective budget; leveraged funds encouraged.	10
Innovation, Anticipation, and Collaboration	Strong partnerships with youth-serving organizations or innovative training approaches that can scale with anticipated challenges and corresponding solutions.	5
<b>Total Possible Score:</b>		<b>100</b>



# **Fiscal Procedures and Compliance for Program Delivery for Sub-Awardees**

## **Payment Schedule and Invoices**

To receive payment, all applicants must confirm registration in the [Electronic Virginia Registration](#) (eVA) system.

All invoices must be submitted to the Accounts Payable department via email at [accountspayable@energy.virginia.gov](mailto:accountspayable@energy.virginia.gov)

Invoice MUST include the following (as applicable) to be considered for payment:

- a. Name and address of contractor materials sold to
- b. Materials on invoice must have line item from contract
- c. Invoice Date
- d. Invoice Number
- e. Project Number/Contract Number
- f. Description of materials
- g. Unit of measure
- h. Unit price
- i. Extended price
- j. Freight/shipping

## **Disbursement Process and Participant Engagement**

Sub-awardees must maintain a documented list of all participants receiving grant or award funds, including the amounts disbursed and dates of payment. Upon request, sub-awardees must provide verification of payments made to participants—such as copies of canceled checks or other payment receipts. Each sub-awardee is also required to establish and submit a clearly defined internal disbursement process that outlines participant eligibility criteria, benchmarks for continued engagement, and a system to withhold remaining funds if participation requirements are not met. To maintain accountability, lump-sum disbursements are not allowed; instead, funds should be distributed based on progress and engagement to support participant retention and program completion.

### **Initial Deposit and Reimbursement Structure**

Sub-awardees may receive a 20% initial deposit upon execution of the contractual agreement. The remaining 80% will be reimbursed based on the incurrence of eligible expenses and verification of continued participant engagement. The initial 20% deposit will be deducted from the first request for reimbursement and must be substantiated with appropriate documentation. To ensure accountability and program integrity, sub-awardees must meet attendance and performance benchmarks, submit timely progress reports, and provide receipts and supporting logs for all reimbursed costs.

### **Invoicing and Reporting Requirements**

Sub-awardees must submit monthly invoice packets by the 15th of each month. Each packet must include a summary of participant disbursements, copies of receipts or payment records, and documentation verifying ongoing participant engagements such as attendance logs, case manager notes, or training progress reports. These materials are critical for financial accountability and compliance monitoring.

### **Match Grant Requirements**

Should a sub-awardee intend to utilize funds from Virginia Energy as a match for a different grant, prior written approval is mandatory. Virginia Energy must be notified prior to any commitments being made or statements issued to external agencies or funding sources.

Upon request, Virginia Energy will provide an official letter delineating the specific mandates and restrictions associated with the grant award. Sub-awardees are explicitly prohibited from using Virginia Energy funds to match any other federally funded grant.

## **Travel Reimbursement Guidelines**

### **Personnel Travel Reimbursement**

All personnel travel expenses related to the program must adhere strictly to GSA-approved rates. Mark-ups, administrative fees, or upcharges on travel costs are not allowed under the reimbursement structure.

### **Transportation Reimbursement Requirements (for Participants or Personnel)**

To request reimbursement for travel, sub-awardees must include a detailed travel log that outlines the travel date, origin (Point A), destination (Point B), purpose of the travel, and total miles driven. The travel must align with scheduled program activities or documented participation. Fuel receipts are required for gas-related reimbursements, and verification of mileage through odometer readings or mapping tools (e.g., Google Maps printouts) may be requested to support the claim.

## **Youth Wrap-Around Services Requirements**

Sub-awardees are required to submit comprehensive documentation with their monthly invoices to verify adherence to approved services. When applicable, each

invoice must be supplemented by an itemized receipt explicitly indicating the participant's name, date of service, type of service rendered, and aggregate cost. Additionally, proof of payment must be provided, which may comprise of a paid receipt, canceled check, or redacted bank statement.

Sub-awardees bear responsibility for guaranteeing equitable access to comprehensive support services for all eligible participants by implementing a transparent disbursement mechanism with clearly defined approval checkpoints and oversight procedures. All authorized services must comply with program guidelines, including predetermined cost limits per participant.

Wrap-around services are exclusively reserved for active participants who cannot access comparable assistance through alternative federal, state, or community programs (e.g., TANF, LIHEAP, CBOs). The sub-awardee and the participants must present documentation demonstrating that the services are essential to support individuals' engagement in training and employment activities. Under no circumstances shall funding be provided to the sub-awardee, their staff, their immediate families, or any affiliated entities.

**Approved Services:**

- Transportation
- Child Care and Dependent Care
- Assistance with Uniforms or Other-Work-Related Items
- Internet & Technology Support
- Housing
- Medical
  - Pre-Employment or Work-Required Medical Exams
  - Medical Tests for Certification or Enrollment
- Utility Assistance
  - Electricity
  - Water and Sewer
  - Gas/Heating Fuel
  - Internet and Phone Services
  - Cooling Assistance (if separate from electric)

To ensure compliance, accountability, and equitable distribution of program funds, all sub-awardees must adhere to the following documentation requirements for invoicing wrap-around services provided to program participants:

**List of Approved or Applicable documentation:**

1. Transportation Assistance: Mileage Log: Dated entries with origin and destination points, purpose of travel, and total miles driven; must be signed by the participant.
  - Fuel Receipts: Dated, legible fuel receipts showing location and amount paid.
  - Public Transit: Proof of fare payment, dated transit passes, or smart card usage logs.
  - Vehicle Repair Services: Itemized invoice from licensed repair shop.,
  - Proof of payment (receipt, bank transaction, or cancelled check).

- Vehicle registration or insurance listing participant as owner/authorized user.
- Explanation of how the repair is necessary for training/work participation.

## 2. Childcare Assistance

- Invoice from Licensed Childcare Provider: Clearly showing dates of care, rates, and provider's license number.
- Proof of Payment: Receipt, electronic transfer documentation, or cancelled check.
- Participant's Schedule: Training/work schedule aligning with care hours requested.
- Verification of Child's Age: Birth certificate or school enrollment as applicable.

## 3. Work-Related Supplies & Equipment

- Purchase Receipts: Itemized proof of purchase for eligible items (e.g., uniforms, boots, tools, PPE).
- Justification Letter: Statement from employer or training provider confirming the necessity of item(s) for participation or employment.
- Acknowledgment of Receipt: Signed form by participant confirming delivery and intended use of items.

## 4. Internet & Technology Support

- Internet Bill: Must list participant's name and service address.
- Technology Purchases:
  - Receipts for laptops, tablets, or other digital tools.
  - Proof of procurement (packing slip, shipping confirmation)
- Training Justification: Documentation from provider demonstrating virtual or hybrid participation requirements
- Non-Duplication Statement: Participant acknowledgment confirming they are not receiving duplicate technology assistance from another program (e.g., ACP, school-based laptop loan).

## 5. Housing, Emergency, or Crisis Support (If allowable under funding source) Rental Agreement: Showing participant as tenant, amount owed, and terms.

- Shutoff/Disconnection Notice: From a utility or housing authority with the participants' name, and service address listed.
- Invoice or Payment Confirmation: From landlord, hotel, or third-party assistance provider.
- Hardship Explanation: Written narrative or support request form outlining the urgent circumstance and how it impacts program participation.
- Proof of Exhausted Other Resources: Denial letters or statements from TANF, housing programs, or community agencies.

## 6. Medical Services:

- Eligibility & Justification: Written verification from the employer or training provider stating the medical service is required for enrollment, certification, or job placement.
- Verification of Service Type: Letter or form from employer/training provider outlining the specific required medical exam or test (e.g., DOT physical, TB test,

drug screening).

- Description of the job or training program necessitating the service.
- Non-Duplication of Services: Self-attestation form or staff verification confirming the service was not covered by Medicaid, ACA, private insurance, or another public benefit.

#### 7. Utility Assistance:

- Utility Bill: Copy of most recent utility bill showing participant's name and service address.
- Payment Receipt: Proof of payment (confirmation, statement from utility provider).
- Participant Support Request Form: Description of financial need and how assistance enables training or work continuation.
- Eligibility Screening Form: Confirmation that participant is not receiving assistance from LIHEAP or other existing programs for the same utility.

#### 8. General Documentation Required for All Services

- Completed Supportive Services Request Form: Including participant signature, date, item(s) requested, justification, and estimated cost.
- Participant Agreement: Signed form outlining allowable use of funds, expectations for documentation, and consequences of misuse.
- Case Notes or Case Manager Verification: Narrative summary detailing the assessment and approval process.
- Tracking Log: Subrecipient-maintained record of all supportive services issued, dates, amounts, and categories per participant.
- Receipts or Reimbursement Documentation: Submitted within 30 days of expenditure.

Sub-awardees are empowered to exercise discretion in assessing participant eligibility for wrap-around services, provided such decisions conform to the reporting, documentation, and compliance standards specified in the program guidelines. These services may be allocated during the active participation period and, if required, during a subsequent twelve-month follow-up to facilitate job placement and transitional support. All services must be rendered within the duration of the sub-award or by no later than January 31, 2028.

## Reporting Requirements

The reporting requirements for this contract are as follows:

Sub-Awardees are required to comply with all applicable state and federal laws, regulations, and terms and conditions.

#### **Quarterly Progress Reports:**

Progress Reports and Financial Reports are due within 10 calendar days after the end

of the quarterly reporting period that occurs during the performance period of your award. These dates are January 10, April 10, July 10, and October 10.

The progress report must include, but not limited to, the following information.

1. Organizations
  - Identify all subrecipients, contractors, U.S. National Laboratories, partners, and collaborating organizations. Recipients must also include all foreign collaborators as outlined in the Foreign Collaboration Considerations term of the award Terms and Conditions. For each, provide name, UEI, zip code or latitude/longitude, role in the project, contribution to the project, and start and end date. This information can be included in the qualitative section of the report.
  - Sub-awardees must maintain detailed financial records, payroll and training compensation documentation, attendance logs, training curricula, performance reports, and supporting documentation for all expenditures for at least three years post-award.
2. Tasks and Milestones with progress to date and status of each
3. Total amount spent on the project with details for each budget category, as applicable
  - Personnel, including time sheets
  - Fringe
  - Contracts, including copies of contracts
  - Travel, including receipts
  - Equipment, including receipts
  - Supplies, including receipts
  - Other, including receipts
  - Indirect, including a cost rate agreement
  - Funds leveraged (e.g., other funds and their source used to support work under this award)
  - Activity metrics, at a minimum, as applicable to your chosen activities:
4. For all others:
  - Number of workshops and number of people attending
  - Number of training sessions and number of people attending
  - Number of education sessions and number of people attending
  - Full-time equivalent Number of sustainability officers or energy managers hired
  - Number of information contacts (e.g., webinars, site visits, media fact sheets) by sector in which Energy Sustainability and Efficiency, Energy

Transmission, Distribution, and Storage, Power Generation, Industrial Maintenance Technology measures were recommended

5. Qualitative section

- Summary of success, general updates on the progress, problems or issues, and any activities that altered the schedule.
- Summary of recommended or anticipated next steps
- Summary of items that require guidance or decisions from Virginia Energy

### **Financial Report SF-424A**

Yearly financial reporting must include all financial information reported in the same format and categories as the SF-424A, which Virginia Energy will aggregate and submit to the U.S. DOE quarterly. A spreadsheet template will be provided to awardees.

These reports are required on an annual basis, within 10 calendar days after the end of the federal fiscal year (October 10).

1. Number of people trained (count)
2. Number of professional certifications achieved (count)
3. Jobs created/retained, as applicable. (e.g., Full-time equivalent, number of energy coaches or outreach coordinators hired), using the Good Jobs template, which will be provided.
4. Number of training sessions completed (count)
  - Did the training program target an underserved or underrepresented population for training (e.g., disadvantaged, rural, fossil energy, or tribal communities)?

### **Final Report:**

A final report is required at project completion.

Provided in the same format as the quarterly progress report, but covering the entire project, including total metrics and financials. This report will be due within 60 days of the completion of the funded work.

### **Employee Ineligibility and Conflict of Interest Compliance Guidelines**

All Virginia Energy employees are strictly ineligible to participate in or benefit from any sub-award funding associated with this program. This exclusion ensures full compliance with the Virginia Conflict of Interests Act (**§ 2.2-3100 et seq. of the Code of Virginia**).

Sub-award recipients are also expected to review and adhere to the principles outlined in the

Virginia Conflict of Interests Act to ensure that no individuals affiliated with their organization violate state ethics laws.

## Youth Employment Compliance Guidelines: 16 and under

Per **Virginia Code § 40.1-80.1** and the **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)**, participants aged 16 and under must have a verified youth employment certificate and may only work limited hours based on school status. Employers and program administrators must maintain records, including the employment certificate and proof of age, throughout the minor's engagement. Any violation of these rules may result in federal or state penalties and jeopardize grant compliance.

## Documents Required Prior to Award and Final Contract Execution

- Completed Commonwealth of [VA W-9](#)
- Completed [Financial Capabilities Questionnaire](#)
- Completed [Vendor Information Form](#)
- Completed Audit Certification form & copy of two most recent audits
- Verification of other sources of funding that will support the project