



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

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Virginia Energy to Award \$1.3 Million to Expand Youth Access to Energy Sector Careers

Four Programs Selected to Offer Training for High-Demand Energy Jobs and Strengthen Virginia's Talent Pipeline

Richmond, VA — The Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) has selected recipients to award a total of \$1.3 million through its new [Skilled Pathways for Advancement, Resilience, & Knowledge \(SPARK\)](#) Youth Workforce Pilot Program—a forward-looking initiative designed to prepare young Virginians for high-demand careers in the energy sector.

“Energy drives more than just power—it drives possibility,” said **Virginia Energy Director Glenn Davis**. “Through the SPARK initiative, we’re investing in young Virginians and opening doors to high-demand, high-impact careers. This is about more than workforce development—it’s about building a resilient, future-ready economy rooted in opportunity for every community.”

Funded by the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), SPARK assists youth ages 14 to 25, with a focus on individuals from rural and low-income communities. The program offers paid work-based learning, industry-recognized certifications, and mentorship opportunities with employers in fields such as power generation, transmission, grid modernization, and energy efficiency.

Programs selected:

[Southwest Virginia Community College](#) – \$499,703

The **Developing the Next-Generation Workforce for Energy and Power in Southwest Virginia initiative** via the Energy Career Exploration Camp prepares participants for energy careers through dual enrollment, internships, and work-based learning. The program offers pathways to credentials such as NCCER, OSHA 10/30, EPA 608, AWS Welding, CompTIA,

and CDL. Key support partners include Coronado Global Resources, Coalfield Strategies LLC, and the Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board.

Central Virginia Community College – \$483,000

The **CareerLink Preparing Our Workforce for Energy Resilience (POWER) Program** expands credentialed training for students in electrical, HVAC, industrial maintenance, mechatronics, welding, machine tool, and nuclear technology. The program includes career coaching, tutoring, transportation, and financial aid, with support from Virginia Career Works and industry partners such as BWXT, Framatome, and Delta Star.

George Mason University – \$228,188

The **Small Modular Reactor (SMR) and Grid Operator Training Hub** prepares students using advanced simulation technology and industry-led curricula and offers a Clean Energy Technology Micro-credential. Support partners include Dominion Energy, Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative, Dewberry, MPR Associates, Corscale Data Centers, and Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories.

People Inc. – \$131,500

The **SPARK Youth Workforce Development Program** offers training in power line work, HVAC, solar, and electrical trades. Participants receive stipends, transportation assistance, tuition support, digital literacy training, and job placement services. To support recruitment, People Inc. is collaborating with the New River and Wytheville Community Colleges and public-school systems in the cities of Bristol and Galax and the counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe. Credentials offered include OSHA 10/30, NCCER Power Line Worker, Flux Core Welding, EPA 608, NATE, AWS D1.1, NABCEP Solar, and SHINE (NRCC).

The SPARK initiative addresses critical labor shortages in Virginia’s energy sector, as employers face a wave of retirements and rapid infrastructure growth. By investing in local talent, SPARK helps ensure these high-quality jobs—and their economic benefits—remain rooted in Virginia communities.

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