

**SOLAR ENERGY
INTERNATIONAL**

Educate.
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February 1, 2019

Colorado Governor's Office
200 E Colfax Ave,
Denver, CO 80203

To the Honorable Governor Jared Polis;

Solar Energy International writes to congratulate Governor Polis on his election and commend his commitment to addressing climate change. With our vision of a world powered by renewable energy driving us, we will use our expertise to help the Governor achieve the policies and market solutions necessary to make his 2040 vision for 100% renewable energy generation a just and inclusive reality.

Solar Energy International (SEI) is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization that has pioneered renewable energy education and technical training from our home base on the Western Slope in Paonia, Colorado. Since our founding in 1991, we have educated over 65,000 individuals from Colorado and around the world in renewable energy technologies including solar PV, solar thermal, and micro-hydro systems via both hands-on technical trainings and online courses. In total, our alumni have gone on to help design, install, and maintain over 4,500 megawatts of renewable energy capacity around the globe.

We are dedicated to accelerating our efforts in a fashion commensurate to the climate crisis, with a goal of doubling our impact over the next three years. This means we aim to train over 110,000 individuals by 2022. Alongside adding capacity, SEI is constantly updating our training to reflect the rapidly changing technological innovation occurring throughout our industry, including in energy storage, operations and maintenance for utility-scale projects, and interconnections with the grid. We strive to provide industry-leading training in solar, not only train people new to the workforce, but also upskill the existing solar workforce. We were recently awarded a second grant from OSHA to develop PV safety training. As the preeminent solar training organization in Colorado, SEI is uniquely positioned to develop the skilled workforce necessary to scale the green energy economy and install renewable generation across the state.

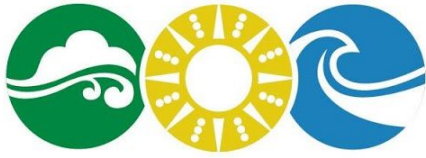
While SEI has a strong international presence with campuses in Costa Rica and Oman and with alumni from 145 countries, we remain focused on ensuring Colorado retains and increases its status as a clean energy leader and innovator. According to a 2018 report from the Natural Resources Defense, Colorado ranked 6th in the nation for total clean energy jobs with 7,918 of the total 57,591 being solar jobs. Data from the Solar Energy Industries Association shows that Colorado ranks 12th in the country in terms of solar energy capacity, with



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1,086.55 megawatts installed as of Q3 2018. While these rankings are laudable, Colorado's population and vastly untapped solar resources mean there is ample potential to improve these numbers. SEI strongly encourages Governor Polis to use the resources of his office to promote clean energy generation and support workforce development programs targeted around solar, wind, and energy efficiency, among other technologies.



A recent example that could serve as a template for these goals and underlines SEI's capabilities is the Solar Ready Colorado program. In 2016, SEI partnered with a consortium of organizations including COSEIA, GRID Alternatives, and Colorado solar companies to apply for a grant under the Work Act administered by the Colorado Department of Labor. The result of the grant was Solar Ready Colorado, a program aimed at increasing access to quality training for all Coloradans interested in joining the green energy economy. These efforts resulted in 411 Coloradans trained in solar energy technologies. Total demand for participating in Solar Ready Colorado, however, vastly exceeded the program's capacity with over 1,000 individuals registering interest. Additional feedback collected from Solar Ready Colorado and supplemental data indicate that financial cost remains a key barrier to more Coloradans seeking to retrain or enter the solar energy workforce. We urge Governor Polis to look at ways to increase the affordability and access to quality technical trainings for all of our state's residents.

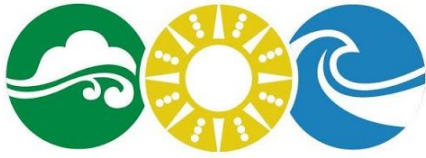
As an organization based on the Western Slope, we are keenly aware of the specific energy challenges facing rural Colorado communities. Coal-mining had been the largest source of jobs and economic development in our home of Delta County, but market forces have led to mine closures and thousands of lost jobs in recent years. SEI responded to the mine closures by launching the Economic Revitalization through Solar Program in 2015. This program included launching a group-purchase solar growth program and advocating Delta County to adopt



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Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (CPACE). These efforts resulted in the successful passage of C-PACE, more than 450 kW of newly installed solar, over \$1.5 million dollars in local solar energy investment, and the direct creation of at least 10 new solar jobs. Delta County was designated as a SolSmart Gold community in the Fall of 2018 by the U.S. Department of Energy, making it the second smallest county in the country to receive this prestigious recognition. Delta County also installed the first agricultural CPACE project in the state.

SEI is now sharing these successes and lessons learned with other former coal-mining and rural Colorado communities via the new Solar Forward program. Launched in January of 2018, Solar Forward is helping communities kickstart their own local solar markets by pairing them with an SEI technical advisor and equipping them with a solar “toolbox” of tried and tested solutions to make it easier for homes and businesses to go solar. Solar Forward has thus far partnered with community non-profits, local solar installers, public officials, and graduate students at Western Colorado University to accelerate solar energy adoption across Gunnison County. A solar group-purchase program will officially commence in Gunnison on January 31, 2019, and the Solar Forward team is now working with Montrose, and Summit Counties to implement similar programs. SEI commends Governor Polis’s dedication to increasing economic opportunity for all Coloradans and recommends the Governor prioritize programs that ensure rural communities will be included in the financial, environmental, and health benefits realized through a clean energy economy.

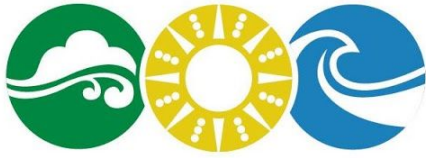
The majority of SEI’s students have been adults, but we are increasingly focused on empowering our youth with the tools necessary to stay competitive in the 21st century economy and find fulfilling careers that address climate change. Since 2001, our Solar In Schools program has run workshops for over 900 K-12 students on the principles of energy efficiency, energy conservation, and the basics of solar photovoltaics. We are now taking our youth educational programs to the next level with our Solar High School Technical Training and Careers Program.



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Since the program's launch in 2015, we have partnered with two high schools to train over 70 high school students. We are now expanding the program to an additional four high schools and expect the number of students trained to more than double by the end of 2019. These students visit our world-class training center in Paonia, receive teaching from SEI professional instructors, and are eligible to receive the same industry-recognized Record of Completion as adults. We are working with Delta County School District to formalize the offering as a Career and Technical Education program recognized under the Colorado Department of Education. Additionally, we have formed an unprecedented partnership with our local utility, DMEA, to finance the installation of four, 10-20 kW solar PV systems with real-time energy monitoring at participating local high schools. We are in discussion with several other utilities to create similar programs across the state. SEI hopes that Governor Polis will examine strategies to further integrate solar energy onto school facilities and into school curriculums across Colorado.

SEI is enthusiastic about Governor Polis's renewable energy agenda and is at the ready to help in its implementation. By focusing on statewide workforce development, increasing renewable energy access in rural communities, and integrating solar energy education into Colorado schools, SEI sees several key paths to partnership.

We are a resource for the Governor; please join us in our efforts and work with us to build the clean energy workforce and realize our shared vision of a Colorado powered by renewable energy. To further discuss how we can work together, please call us anytime at 970-527-7657 ext. 207 or email at kswartz@solarenergy.org.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Swartz, Executive Director



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