

# The Solar Industry and U.S. Veterans

## Veterans in the Work Force

The Solar Foundation's 2015 National Solar Jobs Census found the solar industry employed 16,835 veterans throughout the United States, or 8.1% of all solar workers in the nation. This is more than the 7.6% veteran employment percentage of overall workers in the economy.<sup>1</sup> Many of these jobs are in the areas of installation, production, manufacturing, sales or management throughout a number of solar companies. While this number is above the national percentage for industry, there is significant room for growth.




## SEIA's Commitment

In 2015, in support of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Joining Forces Initiative", SEIA decided to address the challenge that too many of our veterans face at home: finding employment after active duty service. This challenged the industry to do more for the men and women who serve in our armed forces by promoting more employment opportunities for veterans within the solar industry. Along with this challenge, SEIA announced its goal of employing 50,000 veterans in the solar workforce by 2020. In order to meet this goal, SEIA has been taking active steps towards promoting veteran jobs and solar job training for our veterans.

## Challenges Facing Veterans

Although there is a push for more veteran job growth within the solar industry, to do this means tackling various challenges that make the transition from active duty to civilian life difficult. The skills that many who have served in the armed forces acquire through their military service can easily be applied to the solar industry. Being able to translate those skills onto a resume or during an interview, however, is a different matter that many veterans struggle with when looking for work post service.

Many veterans learn crafts and technical skills that can benefit the solar industry during their time in active duty. However, veterans also have workforce assets beyond strictly technical skills. The training that veterans receive during their service gives them an uncanny ability to effectively coordinate as part of a team. This, along with their accumulated leadership skills, make many veterans perfect fits for work in the solar industry. It takes a team effort to raise and mount just one panel onto a rooftop, let alone multiple in an array. This is where solar training programs come into play.

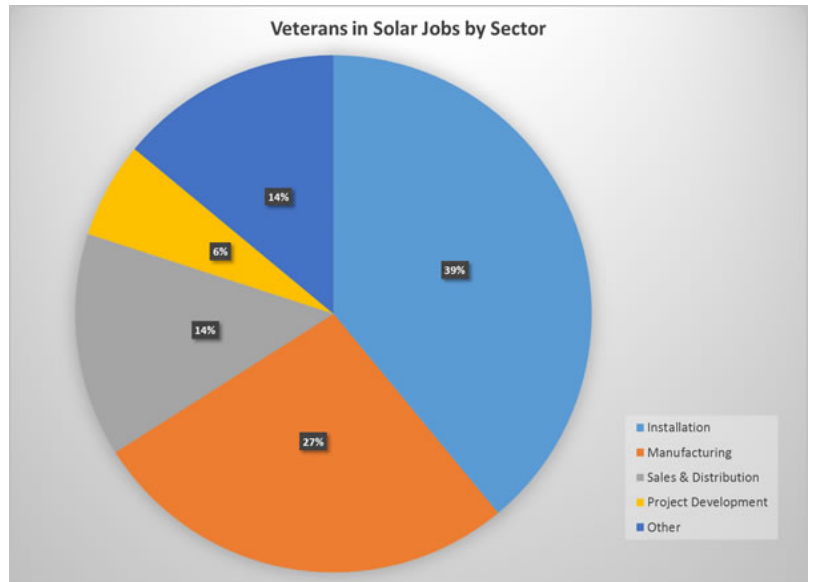


Established in 1974, the Solar Energy Industries Association® is the national trade association of the U.S. solar energy industry. Through advocacy and education, SEIA® and its 1,000 member companies are building a strong solar industry to power America. As the voice of the industry, SEIA works to make solar a mainstream and significant energy source by expanding markets, removing market barriers, strengthening the industry and educating the public on the benefits of solar energy. [www.seia.org](http://www.seia.org)

## Solar Programs

Solar training programs allow veterans to receive training in the practical skills needed to work in the solar industry, which can give them an edge when applying for jobs. Through these programs, veterans will gain experience and knowledge of solar energy technologies and solar installation. This coupled with learning how to translate their skills and experiences into assets that will draw company's attention make for an impressive combination for securing jobs within the industry. Currently there are a number of solar-industry specific programs aimed at integrating veterans into solar jobs. Two well-known initiatives are:

- Solar Ready Vets** - This program, funded by the Department of Energy's Sun Shot initiative, funds 6-week training programs for service members on military bases before they are discharged. It is an immersion program where they are taught the basics of solar installation, project management, and other industry necessities. By expanding the number of bases that provide this program, more veterans will be able to make the transition to solar jobs after their service period.<sup>2</sup>
- Troops to Solar** - This GRID Alternatives program, founded in 2015, is a project funded by a \$750,000 grant over the course of a three-year life cycle. The program trains veterans and active duty service members in hands-on solar installation experience, and utilizes GRID Alternatives' connections within the industry to advance in their careers. While it is nearing the end of its term, this program provides a model for others to continue to train veterans for jobs in the solar industry. By the time the program runs its course, it will have trained 1,000 veterans for solar jobs.<sup>3</sup>



1. The Solar Foundation, 2015 Solar Jobs Census, [www.thesolarfoundation.org/national/](http://www.thesolarfoundation.org/national/)
2. Department of Energy, Solar Ready Vets, [energy.gov/eere/sunshot/solar-ready-vets](http://energy.gov/eere/sunshot/solar-ready-vets)
3. GRID Alternatives, Troops to Solar Initiative, [www.gridalternatives.org/programs/workforce-development/troops-solar-initiative](http://www.gridalternatives.org/programs/workforce-development/troops-solar-initiative)
4. Veterans in Solar Jobs by Sector Graph taken from the Solar Foundation's *Veterans In Solar: Securing America's Energy Future* Report, 2014.

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