



Industry Led. Community Focused.

AUGUST 2025 E-NEWSLETTER

Workforce Development

Success Story: Héctor Arias De Loza

Congratulations to Héctor Arias De Loza, a 2025 graduate of the Illinois [IBEW Renewable Energy Fund's](#) Summer Solar program! The Summer Solar Program combines classroom instruction and hands-on field training in solar and renewable technologies, leading directly into [IBEW Local 134's](#) Pre-Apprenticeship Program. "The program opened doors I never imagined and helped me find a career I'm passionate about," shared Hector. Héctor began his journey with HIRE360 through the [ComEd EV Take Charge Program](#). Today, he joins a growing number of professionals ready to power Illinois' clean energy future. We're proud to support career seekers like Héctor who are driven to make an impact, and we're excited to see where his journey takes him next.

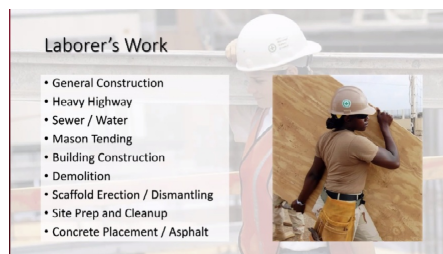


Build Your Future with LiUNA Local 1: Info Session

[Laborers' International Union of North America \(LiUNA\) Local 1's](#) information session was a great success, drawing in participants from across the region who are eager to start or advance their careers in the skilled trades.

Led by Jeremy Esparza, Union Representative and Business Agent for [LiUNA Local 1](#), the session offered a comprehensive look into the benefits of union membership, the structure of apprenticeship programs, and the many career paths available in construction and general labor. It emphasized the union's commitment to empowering workers and building strong communities through education, opportunity, and solidarity.

If you missed the session, don't worry — more opportunities are on the way. For more information or to access session materials, contact your HIRE360 case manager or email us at getstarted@hire360chicago.com.





Illinois Works Will County Visits IBEW Local 701

Our [Illinois Works Will County Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) candidates had an incredible opportunity to explore the world of electrical trades with an exclusive visit to the [IBEW Local 701](#) Electrician Apprenticeship Program!

From touring the state-of-the-art training facility to engaging in meaningful conversations with instructors, participants got a firsthand look at what it takes to build a successful career as an electrician. The experience offered valuable insights into the skills, dedication, and training required to thrive in this high-demand field. A huge thank you to IBEW Local 701 for your warm welcome and for sharing your expertise and passion for the trades.



Illinois Works Visits Roofers & Waterproofers Local 11

Candidates from our second Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship cohort recently toured the [Roofers & Waterproofers Local 11](#) training facility. From essential safety practices to hands-on skill development, the visit provided a comprehensive introduction to the profession. Led by Brian Dubin and Aramis Melecio, the tour offered valuable insight into union apprenticeship pathways and created space for meaningful conversations with union members and instructors.

We're thankful to the entire Local 11 team for their warm hospitality. Partnerships like this are essential to preparing individuals for long-term success in the skilled trades.

CTA Workforce Outreach Event

Join the [Chicago Transit Authority](#) in Chatham at the Shine Bright Community Center on **Friday, September 12, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.** for a Workforce Outreach Event.

This free public event offers a chance to learn about employment opportunities on upcoming CTA projects and connect with contractors, workforce partners, and trade organizations. Don't miss this opportunity to explore careers in construction and

transit!

Register [here](#).

CTA Workforce Outreach Event

CTA invites you to join us at Shine Bright Community Center to learn more about employment opportunities with CTA contractors on upcoming projects. Don't miss this opportunity to engage with CTA Workforce Partners, representatives from various building trades, workforce agencies, and construction contractors.

This event is free and open to the public. Please save the date!

Friday, September 12, 2025
10am – 12:00pm

Shine Bright Community Center
8560 South Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago, IL 60619
Parking Available on Site

Current & Upcoming CTA Projects

- All Stations Accessibility Plan (ASAP)
- Forest Park Blue Line Racine Station ADA & Traction Power Improvements
- Forest Park Blue Line Track Improvement
- Kedzie Bus Garage
- Red Line Extension
- Ravens Shop
- Substation Roof Replacement Program
- Substation Upgrades

Meet CTA Staff, Contractors and CTA's Workforce Partners

Please register at: <https://forms.gle/h7EP525ibX2QitC9>



Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Highlights

From Hustle to Hire: Alec Severins Joins Local 18

Alec Severins recently completed the [East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#), and even before graduation, he secured a union job with [Heat & Frost Insulators Local 18](#)!

After facing years of instability and piecing together work to get by, Alec saw the trades as a real opportunity to build a future. Through hands-on training and support from the program, he found a path toward stability, purpose, and a career he's proud of.

Congratulations to Alec on this well-earned next chapter!



From Walmart to Union Roofer: Ghion Brigham Joins Local 97

Ghion Brigham was working at Walmart when he learned about the [East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) through his partner. He saw it as a real opportunity to build a better future for himself and his family, and he jumped in with determination. With hands-on training, career guidance, and the right support, Ghion found a path to stability and purpose.

Big congratulations to Ghion for graduating from the program and starting his union career with [Roofers Local 97](#)!



Southwestern Illinois College Third Cohort Graduation

[Southwestern Illinois College](#) recently celebrated the graduation of its third cohort from the [Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#). Six participants successfully completed the program, gaining hands-on experience and career-readiness skills that will help launch their careers in the clean energy and construction industries.

Congratulations to the graduates on earning their certificates of completion and taking the next step toward a life-changing career. At HIRE360, we believe in expanding access to opportunities that lead to real, family-sustaining jobs, and programs like Climate Works are doing just that across Illinois.



Goodwill Northern Illinois Second Cohort Graduation

Fourteen students just wrapped up [Goodwill of Northern Illinois'](#) second cohort of the [Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#), and they crushed it! After more than 180 hours of hands-on learning, including the MC3 curriculum, soft skills training, Habitat for Humanity builds, inspiring guest speakers, and apprenticeship facility tours, these grads are now ready to take on the building trades.

We're proud to support pathways like Climate Works that prepare individuals for success in high-quality, union careers. Congratulations to this hardworking and motivated group, we're cheering you on every step of the way!



East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council

Second Cohort Graduation

Congratulations to the second cohort of the [East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#)! For 13 weeks, our pre-apprentices gained the hands-on training, career readiness, and industry insight needed to pursue long-term careers in the unionized skilled trades. Some have already earned positions with local unions, others are preparing to interview, and many are waiting for application windows to open. We'll be by their side every step of the way.

Special thanks to the elected officials who joined to celebrate this milestone, and to Pat Devaney of the [Illinois State AFL-CIO](#) for delivering such inspiring remarks. We're excited to keep the momentum going and continue building pathways into high-quality, union careers across Illinois.

Recruitment

Clean Energy Construction Trades Pathway Program

Applications are now open for [HIRE360's Clean Energy Construction Trades Pathway Program](#), a 9-week paid training supported by [JPMorgan Chase](#)!

This program helps Illinois residents prepare for union careers in clean energy. Participants receive industry-recognized certifications, career support, and exposure to trades like electrical, pipefitting, and sheet metal — all while earning a stipend.

If you're ready to take the next step, check out the flyer for details and apply today!

Clean Energy Construction Trades Pathway Program

HIRE360's Clean Energy Construction Trades Pathway program, made possible with support from JPMorganChase, is a 9-week pre-apprentice training program that will introduce participants to the clean energy industry. The program is designed to prepare individuals for careers in trades that are leading Illinois' transition to a clean energy economy and helps participants transition into union-affiliated Building Trades Apprenticeships. Through this initiative, participants will be exposed to trades critical to clean energy efforts—like electricians, pipefitters, sheet metal workers, and many more—and gain the certifications and support needed to succeed.

Program Offerings Include:

- Test Prep Readiness for the aptitude test
- GPO Certification
- CPA Certification
- Forklift Certification
- Career Planning
- Site tours
- Network opportunities
- Stipend upon program completion

To Apply, You Must:

- Be an Illinois resident, 18 or older
- Be authorized to work in the U.S.
- Have a valid driver's license
- Be able to pass a drug test
- Possess a GED or high school diploma with a C or better in Algebra (or higher)
- Have a genuine desire to seek a construction career

Interested in learning more?

Complete the assessment form below. Once completed, a HIRE360 representative will reach out to you about the next steps.

HIRE | INVEST | REACH | EMPOWER

[HIRE360Chicago.com](#)

Trade Openings!

HIRE360 is excited to announce our trade partners are accepting applications for their apprenticeship programs:

Sheet Metal Workers Local 73:

- Sheet metal workers specialize in everything from fabrication and installation to maintenance, testing and balancing. **Applications are open from 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. on Wednesdays until September 17, as well as on the following Saturdays: August 2, 23, and September 13.**

Operating Engineers Local 150:

- Local 150's ASIP is a premier training program designed for today's construction professionals, including heavy equipment operators, technicians, drillers, and construction material inspectors. Work on job sites like highways, tunnels, and power plants. This union produces rock, sand, and gravel for construction. **Applications are accepted online through their official website.**

Pipefitters Local 597:

- Are you interested in becoming a Pipefitter? This union is now accepting applications for a 5-year program with two tracks: building trades pipefitter or HVAC service technician. Contact your HIRE360 case manager for application details and a letter of recommendation.

Roofing and Waterproofing Local 11:

- If you enjoy working outdoors and often at heights, consider becoming a roofer and waterproofer. They perform various jobs, including applying hot and cold built-up roofing, single-ply roofing systems, shingle, tile, and slate roofs, waterproofing foundations, plaza decks, and traffic coatings, lining ponds and tanks, and installing environmentally friendly green roofing systems.

Bricklayers:

- Create architectural structures using stone and tile. Work outdoors and at heights. Applications are accepted year-round at the Bricklayers District Council Training Center in Addison, IL. The new class begins early next year.

Electricians IBEW Local Union 701 (DuPage County):

- Work with this union to install and maintain electrical systems in buildings. There is no residency requirement but most of the work is in DuPage County. There are two training programs available: commercial electrician and telecommunications electrician.

For those individuals interested in applying and needing a letter of recommendation, please contact your HIRE360 Case Manager today or email us at info@HIRE360Chicago.com.

Business Development



Aspen Ideas: Climate Conference

At last month's [Aspen Ideas](#): Climate conference in Chicago, Jay Rowell, Executive Director of HIRE360, joined Bria Scudder, Deputy Governor, and AJ Patton, [548 Enterprise](#) Executive Director, for a dynamic conversation on growing Illinois' clean energy workforce. The discussion explored how expanding career pathways and building a stronger talent pipeline can help drive long-term economic growth in the climate economy.

We're thrilled to partner with [Aspen Institute](#) to spotlight the leaders shaping the future of clean energy, right here in Chicago — and grateful to CBS's Tara Molina for doing an outstanding job moderating the conversation.



CCBC's Second Outreach Event at HIRE360

[Bally's Chicago](#) and the [Chicago Community Builders Collective \(CCBC\)](#) returned to our Training and Business Development Center to host an outreach session on upcoming bid opportunities for the Bally's Chicago Casino project. Presenters shared updates on key scopes of work, including masonry, metal framing, drywall, and more.

During the session, CCBC also emphasized the [City of Chicago](#) and [Cook County](#) MBE/WBE certification goals for this project. Firms certified through other agencies, like CMSDC or WBDC, are encouraged to connect with HIRE360 for support with the expedited certification process. To stay up to date on upcoming bid packages, visit [ChicagoCBC.com](#) and follow [@Chicago_CBC](#) on Instagram.



Our Mission is to Expand Employment Opportunities

Click "View Entire Message" to see more below!

Blueprints for Opportunity: The 78 and The Chicago Fire FC Stadium

Join us on **Thursday, August 21** at our Training and Business Development Center to hear about exciting developments and opportunities on [The 78](#) and the future [Chicago Fire FC Stadium](#). Guest speakers include Don Biernacki, EVP of [Related Midwest](#), and Dave Baldwin, President of Chicago Fire FC. The event includes networking time for community contractors, assist agencies, developers, and industry leaders to discuss collaboration on the major projects shaping our city.

Huge thank you to [Chicagoland Associated General Contractors](#), [U.S. Minority Contractors Association](#), [Black Contractors United Chicago](#), [HACIA](#), the [Federation of Women Contractors](#), [National Association of Minority Contractors](#), and [Black Contractors Owners and Executives](#) for co-hosting this important conversation.

If you are a community contractor looking to learn more about this project, explore opportunities, and network with peers, please [register here](#).

A promotional poster for an event. At the top is a photo of a large stadium under construction with many people gathered in front. Below the photo is the title "BLUEPRINTS FOR OPPORTUNITY" in a blue box. The main title "The 78 and The Chicago Fire FC Stadium" is in bold. Below it is a paragraph about the event. To the right, in an orange box, is the date and time: "Thursday, August 21 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM HIRE360 2540 S. State Street, Chicago IL 60616". Below this is a QR code and a "REGISTER NOW!" button. At the bottom, under "GUEST SPEAKERS:", are two circular headshots: Don Biernacki (Executive Vice President, Related Midwest) and Dave Baldwin (President, Chicago Fire FC). At the very bottom is a row of logos for sponsors: HIRE 360, CHICAGOLAND, U.S. MCA, BCU, NAMC, and others.

BLUEPRINTS FOR OPPORTUNITY

The 78 and The Chicago Fire FC Stadium

Join us for our monthly event, bringing contractors and industry leaders together to network, discuss construction trends, and learn more about exciting projects to Chicagoland.

This month, we will dive into the future of The 78 with the bold addition of the Chicago Fire FC Stadium.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

DON BIERNACKI
Executive Vice President,
Related Midwest

DAVE BALDWIN
President,
Chicago Fire FC

**Thursday, August 21
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM
HIRE360
2540 S. State Street,
Chicago IL 60616**

Limited parking available. We recommend public transportation or ridealike.

REGISTER NOW!

Brought to you by:

HIRE 360 CHICAGOLAND U.S. MCA BCU NAMC

Cook County Small Business Source

The [Cook County Small Business Source](#)

Running a small business is hard.

The Source is here to help!



We offer small business owners:

Expert Advising

The foundation of The Source's work consists of providing no-cost, one-on-one business advising from members of our trusted network of Business Support Organizations (BSOs). Through a simple intake form, The Source matches business owners with a dedicated business advisor who provides in-depth knowledge and the necessary support to take your business to the next level.

Informative Events

Join in-person and virtual events that connect entrepreneurs to our network of BSOs and industry experts on topics critical to small business success.

Valuable Resources

Access a robust list of resources, including the latest information on sources of financing, taxes, and marketing, curated specifically for business owners at any stage of development.

Our Business Support Organization (BSO) Network:

Allstate for Community Business
 Berwyn Development Corporation
 Business Avenue
 Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council
 Chicago Urban League
 Chinese Mutual Aid Association
 Greater Southwest Development Corporation
 Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
 Illinois Restaurant Association
 Rogers Park Business Alliance
 Southland Development Authority
 Women's Business Development Center
 365Square

The Source's Impact*

\$67M in grants distributed to small businesses

28K+ businesses served directly

80% of businesses served owned by people of color

63% of businesses served owned by women

93% of businesses served are microbusinesses (less than 10 employees)
*2020 - 2024



Mohammad Salehi
Owner of Herby Spice, Chicago, IL

"They say to raise a child, you need a nation or a village. I think to raise a business, you also need a nation - you need advisors like the Cook County Source."



Learn more and sign up for assistance for your small business at cookcountysmallbiz.org



offers no-cost support to small business owners through expert business advising, access to capital, events, and a network of over 50 partners. Whether you're launching a new business or ready to grow, the Source is here to help.

Visit cookcountysmallbiz.org to learn more and get connected today!

Youth Engagement



Celebrating the Next Generation of Builders at HIRE360

This summer, we, alongside partners [After School Matters](#) and [Related Midwest](#), trained the future of Chicago's workforce through the Next Builders program. The powerful initiative was designed to introduce high school students to the world of construction through hands-on learning, site visits with [Power Construction](#) and Related Midwest, certifications, and real-world project work. Far more than just an introduction to the trades, Next Builders is a launching pad for young people to pursue careers that offer strong pay, excellent benefits, and long-term growth.

A special thank you to Kayla and Sabas for sharing their personal career journeys at the wrap up event, and to all the students who presented their construction company projects with such creativity and confidence.





Chicago Vocational Career Academy

We welcomed more than 100 incoming freshman girls from [Chicago Vocational Career Academy](#), [Dyett High School](#), and [Hyde Park Academy](#) to our Training and Business Development Center for a powerful day of career exploration. In partnership with [Chicago Public Schools](#), the [Chicago Teachers Union](#), the [Chicago Sky](#), and the [Obama Foundation](#), the students participated in breakout sessions that introduced them to careers in the construction industry and the many pathways available to build a successful future in the trades.

Events like this underscore the importance of showing young women what's possible in fields they may not have considered and connecting them with role models who are building lasting impact in their communities.

IN THE NEWS

IN THE NEWS

Meet the Notable Leaders in Finance for 2025! Crain's Chicago Business

HIRE360's Director of Finance & Operations was named one of [Crain's Chicago Business Notable Leaders in Finance for 2025!](#)

Karen has played a key role in building HIRE360's financial systems and guiding our transition to an independent nonprofit. Her leadership continues to strengthen our operations and expand our impact.

[Read more here.](#)

CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS 2025 NOTABLE LEADER IN FINANCE



KAREN LARSON

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS AT HIRE360

Climate Job Training Shows What We Can Accomplish at the State Level! Chicago Tribune

The Chicago Tribune recently published a [Letter to the Editor](#) by [Climate Jobs Illinois](#) spotlighting the growing impact of clean energy workforce development efforts across Illinois. The piece highlighted [Climate Jobs Illinois](#) partnership with HIRE360 and unions statewide to expand access to pre-apprenticeship programs for equity-eligible communities.

Read about how strategic collaboration at the state level is helping open doors for new careers in the green economy, while building a more inclusive future for Illinois workers.

[Read more here.](#)

Chicago Tribune

OPINION > LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters: Climate job training shows what we can accomplish at the state level



Even in today's extremely challenging times, there are places in Illinois where environmental justice is happening, as was beautifully told in the June 23 front-page article "Clean energy job training offers hope: It's changed my life" by Nara Schoenberg.

Due to the game-changing law passed in 2021, the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act workforce hub training classes are currently graduating many Black and brown students who are going on to well-paid clean-energy jobs. It is proof that we all must continue to fight and advocate for environmental justice here in Chicago and throughout the state.

ComEd, HIRE360 Celebrate New Graduates
Lawndale News

Lawndale News recently featured the graduation of 20 local job seekers from the [Take Charge: EV Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#). Held at the ComEd Chicago Training Center, the graduation ceremony highlighted the growing momentum behind clean energy workforce training.

Launched in 2023 by [ComEd](#) in partnership with HIRE360, the program prepares community members for careers in the rapidly expanding electric vehicle industry, supporting the state's goal of placing one million EVs on Illinois roads by 2030.

[Read more here.](#)



ComEd, HIRE360 Celebrate New Graduates



ComEd and HIRE360 celebrated 20 local job seekers who graduated from the TAKE Charge: EV Pre-Apprenticeship Program, a training program designed to build the skilled talent pipeline needed for careers in the electric vehicle (EV) industry and related trades on June 25th at the ComEd Chicago Training Center. In partnership with HIRE360, ComEd launched Take Charge in 2023 to prepare community members for careers in the fast-growing EV industry – which is experiencing growth in large part thanks to the state's goal of adding one million EVs on Illinois roads by 2030.

Business Spotlight: Valadez Electrical Service

[Valadez Electrical Service](#) is a Chicago-based electrical contractor known for its skilled workforce, exceptional service, and commitment to quality. Established in 2020, the company brings more than 20 years of industry experience to residential, commercial, and industrial projects throughout the region. Led by founder Derly Valadez, an industry veteran with over 25 years of experience with IBEW Local 134, the team has built a strong reputation for reliability and high-performance work. Derly's leadership extends beyond the field; he also serves on the board of Chicago Unidos Construction and is a member of the Orange Crush Social Athletic Club.



Valadez Electrical Service has contributed to major projects for clients such as the Obama Presidential Center, FEMA, Cabrera Capital Markets, and Elgin Community College. Their core services include new construction, wiring and cable upgrades, lighting controls, value engineering, generator installations, and more. Certified as an MBE and DBE firm, Valadez Electrical was referred to HIRE360 for assistance with capital access, back-office support, and networking opportunities as they continue to scale their business.

To learn more, visit www.valadezelectrical.com.

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