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Solar Holler and Act Now Collaborate on Training Program for Solar Workers

100 Workers to Graduate Program in the Next 18 Months

Huntington, WV - On Friday, Coalfield Development Corporation and West Virginia based solar developer Solar Holler jointly announced a partnership to train 100 new solar workers in the next 18 months. Leveraging the recently announced award to the ACT Now (Appalachian Climate Technology) Coalition, these two entities will collaborate on innovative strategies to recruit, train, and employ local workers in the growing renewable energy industry.

ACT Now is an historic coalition formed by Coalfield Development with the purpose of growing environmentally sustainable sectors of the economy in southern West Virginia. It includes the state's two largest cities, its two largest universities, several unions, and more than 50 private employers, including Solar Holler. In 2022, the Coalition competed against nearly 600 other groups across the country as part of the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Build Back Better Regional Challenge.

ACT Now was one of only 21 winners nationally, and received the third largest award of \$62.8 million.

Coalfield Founder and CEO Brandon Dennison is excited to see the grant money doing what it is supposed to do: "We don't want ACT Now to just be another grant. We don't want to just have a big ribbon cutting, do a press release, and then have the public never hear from us again. We're determined to leverage this historic opportunity for the real, tangible benefit of working people in our hills and hollows. That's what this announcement is all about."

According to Solar Holler Founder and CEO Dan Conant, the Solar Holler team now has more than 100 employees, compared to 30 just a few years ago, and the company will continue to grow in the coming months.

“Solar has never been more promising in Appalachia, not just because we’re bringing affordable power to more and more folks every day, but because of the ripple effects,” said Conant. “In the beginning, we set out to strengthen local communities and give folks the opportunity to stay and build careers in their hometowns. This partnership will help see that we continue to do just that.”

Dennison continued: “We know many are skeptical about whether a new economy really is possible in our coal-impacted areas. This, and many other investments like it, prove the future is here. And it’s a future that’s bright for Appalachia.”

The training for the 100 workers will take several forms. Solar Holler has developed first-of-its-kind training programs with the local IBEW and Carpenters Union. The company also recently announced an internship program with Wayne County Schools. Coalfield Development designs pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships for people facing barriers to employment (including Substance Use Disorder, long-term unemployment, and justice-system involvement). Individuals interested in these opportunities should complete an application at the organization’s online job board: [Join The Crew | Coalfield Development \(coalfield-development.org\)](https://coalfield-development.org)

“Interestingly, one of the earliest workforce programs we designed was in collaboration with Solar Holler, in an effort to diversify the economy in southern West Virginia and help coal-impacted workers make the transition into solar. So in many ways, this is a full-circle moment for what has proven a remarkably impactful partnership,” Dennison said.

“We’re excited to be working alongside our friends at Coalfield Development again and look forward to adding a new class of talented solar workers to our ranks in the coming months,” said Conant.

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Solar Holler is bringing the next generation of energy production to our ancient mountains, and strengthening our communities with union employment. Solar Holler relentlessly pursues innovative approaches that bring solar within reach of all Appalachians, starting with low-interest financing options with no upfront cost. Solar Holler has helped dozens of businesses, nonprofits, and churches, and hundreds of homes go solar across West Virginia, southern Ohio, and eastern Kentucky.

Coalfield Development is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization headquartered in Wayne, West Virginia focusing on rebuilding the Appalachian economy through social enterprise creation, job training, and community-based real-estate development.

The ACT Now coalition is a partnership of West Virginia cities, economic revitalization organizations, leading academic institutions, and private sector innovators whose mission is to create 5,000 new direct full-time and 15,000 indirect jobs, 125 new businesses, and leverage

\$250+ million in private sector investment towards green energy sectors in southern West Virginia and beyond.