

# Diversifying the Solar Workforce Through Inclusive Apprenticeships

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With the solar industry projected to add an additional 500,000 to 1.5 million<sup>1</sup> workers by 2035, there is a growing need for a new talent pool to help fill the positions of tomorrow. An apprenticeship program that is designed to be inclusive of people with disabilities can help create a diverse talent pipeline of valued workers to fill this need.

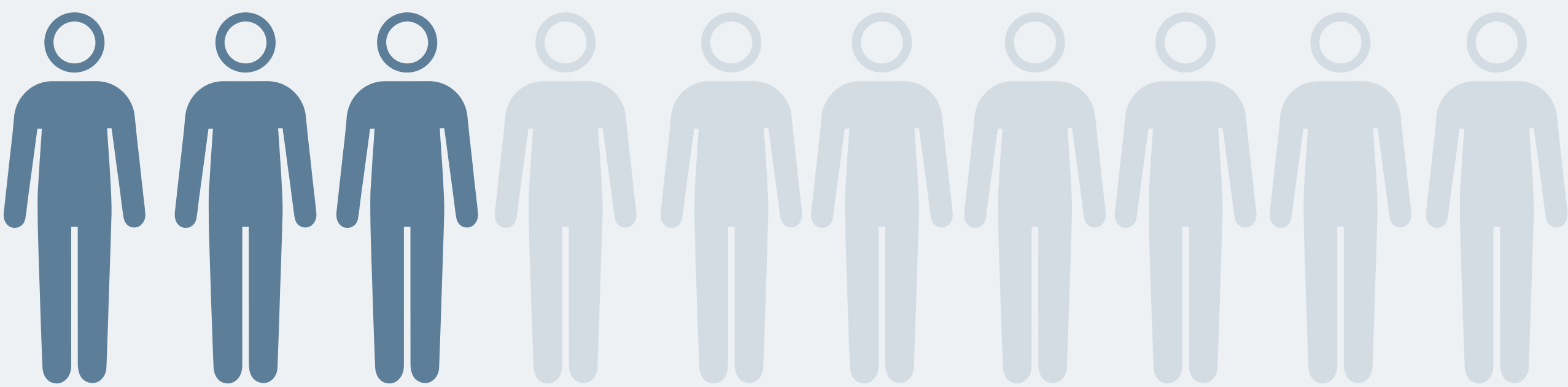
The Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship (PIA) supports the workforce development community to better understand and design programs that are inclusive of everyone, including people with disabilities.



## THE INCLUSIVE TALENT POOL OPPORTUNITY



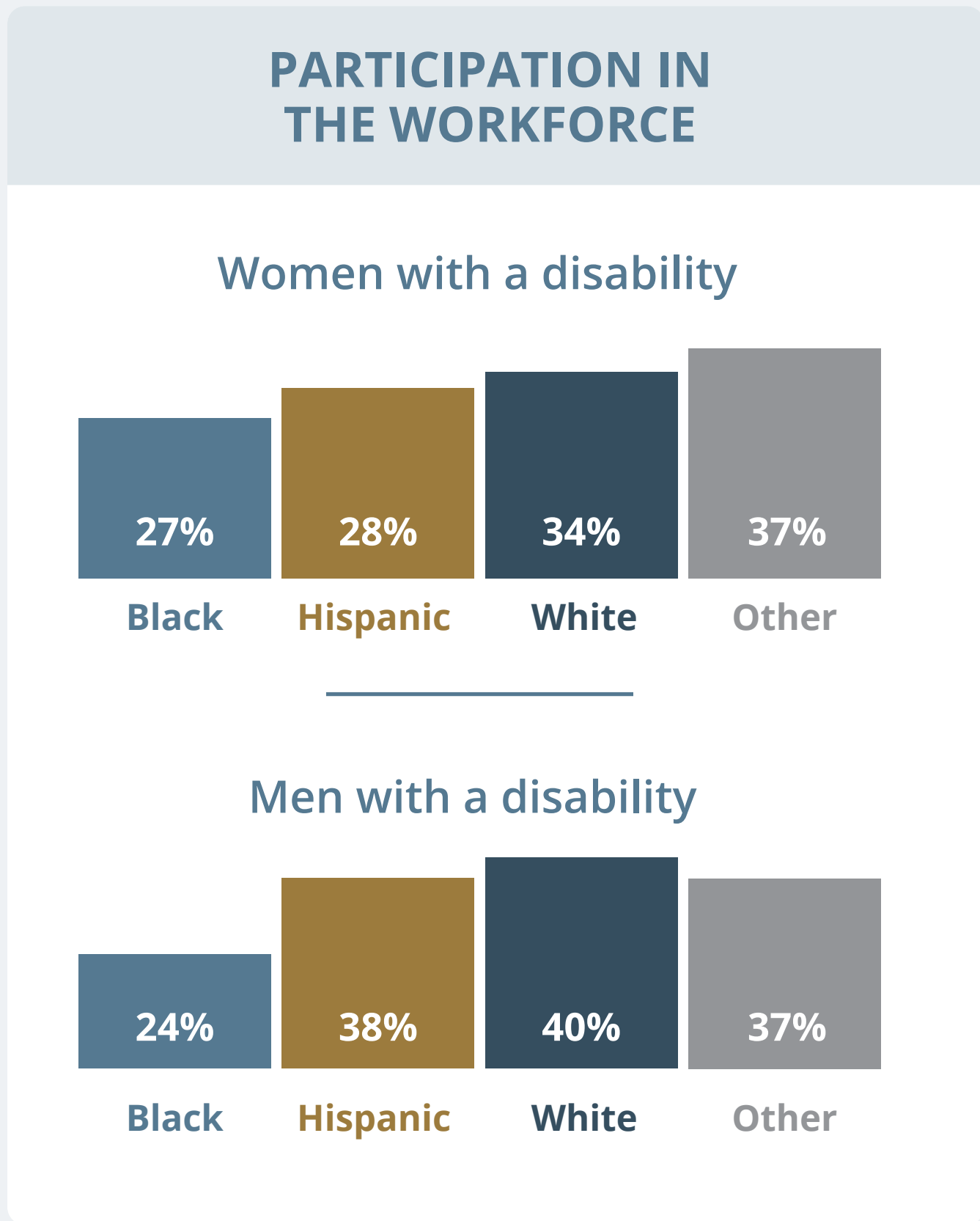
### A WIDER TALENT POOL:



Only **29.1% of working-age adults with a disability** are employed, compared with **70% of working-age adults without a disability**.<sup>2</sup> Nearly 11 million Americans could enter the labor force and pursue jobs, including through apprenticeships, if companies embraced the full inclusion of workers with disabilities.

### FASTER PROGRESS TOWARD DEI GOALS:

Underrepresented demographic groups often have high rates of disability and lower levels of employment<sup>3</sup>. Making apprenticeship programs and other workforce pathways more inclusive of people with disabilities will create opportunities for underrepresented workers more broadly, better enabling them to achieve any existing goals around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).



## THE VALUE OF INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIP



### SIGNIFICANT RETURN ON INVESTMENT:



**170%**  
RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**28%**  
HIGHER REVENUE

**30%**  
HIGHER PROFIT MARGINS

In 2020, the average Registered Apprenticeship Program yielded a **170% return on investment**<sup>4</sup> for North Carolina employers. Companies that embraced best practices for employing and supporting workers with disabilities averaged **28% higher revenue**, doubled their net income, and attained **30% higher profit margins**.<sup>5</sup>

### LOWER TURNOVER AND REDUCED TRAINING COSTS:



Apprentices have significantly lower turnover than college graduates<sup>6</sup> which means employers spend fewer resources finding and training new hires. At four Walgreens locations, the three-year average **turnover rate was 48% higher for team members without a disability**, compared to team members with a disability.



## A PATH FORWARD: STEPS TO CREATING AN INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM



- STEP 1**  
Explore how apprenticeship programs can help prepare the future solar workforce by learning more about the value of inclusive apprenticeship programs.
- STEP 2:**  
Build a foundation to create an apprenticeship program, making sure to take advantage of funding sources available in many states that can aid businesses in developing programs, adopting best practices for inclusive hiring and training, and funding workplace accommodations for job seekers with disabilities.
- STEP 3:**  
Partner with local workforce development leaders that can help connect apprentices and employers, including community and technical colleges, community-based organizations, labor-management partnerships, workforce development boards, chambers of commerce, and industry associations.
- STEP 4:**  
Register an apprenticeship program with a state apprenticeship agency or the U.S. Department of Labor.
- STEP 5:**  
Recruit talented career seekers while ensuring it's done in a way that is inclusive of people with disabilities.

Learn how to put these steps into action at [InclusiveApprenticeship.org](https://www.inclusiveapprenticeship.org)

**PIA** Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship

**REFERENCES:** (1) National Renewable Energy Laboratory, 2021, (2) US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022, (3) US Department of Labor, 2021, (4) ApprenticeshipNC, 2020, (5) Accenture, 2018, (6) US Department of Labor, 2018, (7) American Society of Safety Professionals, 2012

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