



October 31, 2018

Custer, Wisconsin

## **Transitioning the MREA Site Assessment Certificate & Recognized Training Provider (RTP) Programs**

Dear MREA supporter,

As someone involved or interested in the MREA PV Site Assessment Certificate Program, we are sending this letter to inform you that we are discontinuing the program in its current form and transitioning to a new PV Site Assessment *Endorsement* program.

The transition will include the following changes:

- We are ending the *Recognized Training Provider (RTP) Program*.  
With our renewed accreditation from the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) came a few changes to our programs and courses. The most significant change was that accreditation does not extend to partnering institutions that teach with MREA curriculum. Furthermore, the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) will no longer accept completion of MREA courses offered via the RTP Program. In short, this means that RTP courses are not IREC accredited, nor can they be recognized for credit towards a NABCEP credential. This is unfair to RTP students eager to take the NABCEP PV Associate exam.
- We are replacing the two mandatory, tech-mentored practice site assessment reports with a 100-hour related work experience requirement.  
We've seen the challenges that our students face in completing the practice reports required by our Certificate Program. Each year, roughly 250 people take our PV Site Assessment (201) course, but less than 10% submit a practice report. Even fewer do the second report or take the exam. In 2017, six people earned the MREA Site Assessment Certificate, and we're up to five in 2018. As the solar industry has grown, so has the interest from employers to find people with field experience. To satisfy this need, we have worked to facilitate eight internships with industry partners over the last two years. We're convinced that facilitating and recognizing related work experience will add value to, and ultimately improve the quality of our programs.
- We are establishing *Endorsements* to recognize achievements of individuals new to the PV industry.  
The term *Certificate* is often confused with *Certification*, but they are two different words with significantly different meanings. *Certification* requires ongoing maintenance of knowledge and experience, continuing education credits, annual peer review, and legal liability for the issuer. A *Certificate* is simply a recognition of achievement. The MREA does not manage any certification programs, but we do align our curriculum to NABCEP Job Task Analyses and industry best practices. We see the value in recognizing achievements that help those new to the industry get jobs, so we are transitioning our Certificate Program to an *Endorsement* program. In short, we will endorse and recommend those who have successfully fulfilled their academic and experiential requirements to prospective employers.

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To make this transition, the MREA is managing the following steps:

1. We will maintain the list of MREA PV Site Assessment Certificate holders and honor the PV Site Assessment Certificate process, including the current exam and tech-mentored practice site assessment reports, for anyone that has completed the first report and wishes to pursue the Certificate.
2. For all current and future students, we will be requiring 100 hours of related work experience in lieu of the practice site assessment reports. This can include the internships (paid and unpaid) that we have and will continue to develop and offer with industry partners. It can also include recognition of related work experience from an employer that confirms the type, quantity, and quality of work.
3. We will maintain a list of PV Site Assessment Endorsements, available for verification upon request by current and potential employers.
4. We will also soon be developing Endorsements in *PV Design & Sales* and *PV Installation*, including paid and unpaid internship opportunities with a network of solar industry employers.

We are excited about these change, and hope you are too. Our goal is student success - helping those new to the solar industry gain work experience and employment. Please contact us directly if you have any questions as we work through the transition.

Warm and sunny regards,

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