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SOLAR CAREER EXPLORATION WORKSHOP PRESENTATION OUTLINE

The purpose of this document is to provide you, the solar professionals, with a loose outline of talking points and tips to help create a workshop development presentation that will best engage students. To ensure this resource would be valuable to your business, we developed this with input from an advisory group comprised of technology education teachers and industry professionals.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- One effective presentation approach is for the technology education teacher to interview the solar contractor by asking questions regarding the suggested presentation talking points listed below.
- It is highly suggested that you review this list with the technology education teacher when planning the presentation. The technology education instructor can provide insight on which of the discussion topics should be emphasized and finalize details like the length of the presentation.
- If possible, the solar professional should have one of their younger employees attend the presentation as well. A younger employee can provide a perspective that will resonate with the students.

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

1. How did the solar professional get started in the industry?
   - What was their first role or position in the industry and what additional roles have they had throughout their career?
   - Provide a couple of different perspectives to highlight the different pathways into the industry and the various roles.
     - Solar professionals: Consider bringing along another individual from your organization and have them answer these questions as well.

2. What does a day in the life look like?
   - Solar professionals should provide insight on what a typical day looks like for various solar roles within their company.

3. What is the typical work schedule?
   - Discuss the typical work schedule (days and hours) for the various roles.

4. What types of equipment and technologies that the solar tradesperson/tradespeople work with and work on?
   - Provide a high-level overview of the common technologies such as solar panels, inverters, low and high-voltage wiring, battery storage, and software.
   - Discuss technological advancements in the industry to give students some visibility on the various technologies that are frequently used.
   - Consider showing the service van or bringing along some of the equipment and demonstrating them to the students.

5. What career opportunities are available?
   - Provide an overview of common entry-level positions and discuss what the typical career progression looks like in these various positions.
     - On average, how long does it take to advance from one position to the next?
   - Talk about how students can start in an entry-level position, needed skills, and the growth opportunities.
     - Discuss the various pathways for on-the-job training and the certification route.
     - What skills does an entry-level worker need and what skills are needed to progress upwards in the organization?

6. What key skill sets are solar professionals looking for when they are hiring?
   - Provide an overview of the key skills and attributes you look for when hiring staff:
     - Mechanical aptitude for service tech positions.
   - Emphasize the soft skills that are essential:
     - Effective communication.
     - Listening.
     - Positive attitude.
     - Good customer service.
     - Reliability.

Recommendation: This can be a great opportunity for the technology education teacher to provide some commentary on some high school courses that the students should consider if they are interested in a career in the trades.

7. Is on-the-job training available?
   - Provide specifics on what the on-boarding process looks like if on-the-job training is available within your company.
   - Consider mentioning that there is no single path to entering the solar industry and that a post-high school education/degree is an option but not necessary.
   - Are apprenticeships available?

8. What does a career in the solar industry look like?
   - The FOCUS ON ENERGY® solar career exploration overview document can be referenced to cite the various solar industry statistics and projections.
   - Speak to what the job outlook is for your specific market and service territory.

9. What is the average salary for various solar industry roles?
   - The Focus on Energy solar career exploration document can be referenced to cite the various solar industry statistics and projections.
   - Speak to information that is specific to your local market.

10. Are there education recommendations for interested students?
   - Work with the technology education teacher to inform students on which classes and skills will help set students up for success in the solar industry.
   - Make sure to mention that post-high school education is one path to becoming a solar professional, but another option is to join the workforce directly after high school.

11. Are there job shadowing opportunities with your company?
   - Discuss what job shadowing looks like at your company and what next steps are for interested students.

12. Provide hands-on demonstrations
   - If schedules allow and it is feasible, consider including some hands-on demonstrations as part of the presentation with the students. Feedback from the advisory group is that even the simplest activity is effective in engaging students and making the presentation memorable.

     Below are some examples for consideration:
     - Show the students the service truck along with the various tools and equipment that are used in the field.
     - Consider bringing in a solar panel to the classroom.
     - Consider demonstrating panel output with DC load for various angles and shading.
     - Software demonstration.

13. What are some next steps for interested students?
   - Provide students with a path to move forward if they are interested or would like additional information.
     - This could include a job shadowing opportunity or an invitation to stop at the business to see the shop and talk with some employees like an open house at your business if it can be done safely.
   - Provide your contact information to the students and encourage them to contact you with questions.
   - Potentially collect student contact information (pending approval from technology education teacher), which will allow you to send follow-up information or an invitation to stop by the business if an open house at your business is a viable option. Consider inviting parents as well.