Governor Pat Quinn announced in September that Illinois State University will lead the creation of an **Energy Learning Exchange**. The one-year $50,000 grant is part of a $10.3 million public-private partnership to improve education in Illinois and boost careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

“Our mission is to prepare our students for the 21st Century workforce,” said Governor Quinn. “These new Learning Exchanges will provide students with real-world experience and advanced educational opportunities to ensure they are ready to compete for the jobs of tomorrow.”

The Energy Learning Exchange will have the support of Illinois State University’s Center for Renewable Energy, Institute for Regulatory Policy Studies, and Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology. Dr. David Loomis, Executive Director of Illinois State’s Institute for Regulatory Policy Studies and Director of the University’s Center for Renewable Energy, joined Governor Quinn and other leaders in Illinois business, high-tech industry, and education for the announcement.

Eight different statewide STEM Learning Exchanges will be coordinated through multiple state agencies in partnership with the Illinois Business Roundtable, and established through contracts with the Illinois State Board of Education. The Learning Exchanges will work with regional, educational and business networks to aggregate curricular resources, assessment tools, professional development systems, work-based learning opportunities and problem-based learning challenges to prepare students to compete in the global economy.

The funding package is comprised of $2.3 million in federal Race to the Top funds, which leveraged another $8 million in business resources. Learning Exchange organizations were selected by an expert review committee that considered each applicant’s plan and experience in coordinating statewide public-private partnerships and the matching or in-kind matching contribution.

Learning Exchanges provide a new infrastructure by voluntary association that helps coordinate investments at a statewide level to better connect and serve local programs in a similar career cluster while also tracking local and statewide performance. Compare the traditional Historic Funding Model approach below to the Systemic Funding Model approach advanced by the Illinois Pathways Initiative. More details are available at www.IllinoisWorknet.com/ILPathways.
What’s Next for the Energy Learning Exchange?

The Energy Learning Exchange will be presented with planning funds for one year to build the network and further develop capacity for implementation.

The energy cluster includes developing, planning and managing the production of energy including renewable energy and clean coal technology, and its distribution through smart grid technologies.

Dr. David Loomis, Executive Director of Illinois State University’s Institute for Regulatory Policy Studies and Director of the Center for Renewable Energy, and Dr. Willy Hunter, Director of the University’s Center for Mathematics, Science, and Technology, and staff recently met to discuss the planning stages of the Energy Learning Exchange.

Conference calls will soon be scheduled to begin detailed discussions for each subcommittee, and to determine a specific plan of action for the next year. Suggestions for invitations to participate in the ELE should be emailed to EnergyLearningExchange@ilstu.edu.

Illinois Pathways is a new and innovative State of Illinois-led STEM initiative designed to support college and career readiness for learners and better prepare youth and adults for transitions into employment.

The State of Illinois’ P-20 Council set a goal to increase the proportion of Illinoisans with high-quality degrees and credentials from 44% to 60% by 2025. By 2018, Illinois employers will offer over 319,000 jobs requiring education and training in STEM, increasing nearly 20% since 2008. According to Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, over 90% of those STEM occupations will require postsecondary education or training. To grow the economy and maintain its competitiveness, preparing students for STEM careers is essential.

Source: Illinois Pathways STEM Learning Exchanges Overview Flyer

Organizations Already Involved:
- Adlai E. Stevenson High School
- Ameren
- Caterpillar, Inc.
- College of Lake County
- Commonwealth Edison Company
- Cook County Workforce Investment Board
- DuPage Workforce Board
- Eastern Illinois University
- EDP Renewables
- EMB Consultants, Inc.
- Homewood-Flossmoor Com. H.S. Dist. 233
- Iberdrola Renewables
- Illinois Business Roundtable
- Illinois Commerce Council
- Illinois Energy Association
- Illinois Green Economy Network
- Illinois Institute of Technology
- Illinois State University
- Integrys Energy Group
- Kankakee Community College
- Kestrel Development Company
- Lake County Workforce Investment Board
- Local 776
- Mainstream Renewable Power
- McHenry County Workforce Investment Board
- National Corn to Ethanol Research Center
- Nicor
- Northern Illinois University
- Northwestern University, ISEN
- Operation Green Jobs
- PALM and TRICON
- Peoria JATC Local 34
- Pontiac Township High School
- Primera Chicago
- PROactive Strategies, Inc.
- Richland Community College
- River Valley Workforce Investment Board
- Robert M. Fletcher Company
- SEIU Local 73
- Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- Sustainable Strategies
- Teamsters Local 786
- University of Illinois, School of Labor & Employment and Graduate College
- University of Illinois at Chicago, Summer Institute on Sustainability and Energy
- Utility Workers Union of Americia, Local 18007
- Western Illinois University, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
- Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago
- Workforce Investment Board of Will County