



Dr. Cynthia Finley, Ph.D.

Dr. Cynthia Finley is a nationally recognized leader in workforce and economic development, dedicated to building a competitive and inclusive regional economy by aligning workforce development with employer demand through industry partnerships, occupational training, credentialing, and apprenticeship pathways.

With more than two decades of experience bridging education and industry, Dr. Finley has led large-scale initiatives that align education systems with employer needs and advance equity in access to high-quality careers. Her work centers on helping public agencies, training providers, and employers design data-driven strategies that prepare today's workforce for emerging opportunities in clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and infrastructure.

Previously, Dr. Finley served as Vice President of Workforce & Strategic Innovation at the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC), where she led national initiatives to expand inclusive talent pipelines and strengthen workforce systems across the clean-energy economy. She helped to improve job retention and representation across the sector through a multi-million-dollar platform connecting job seekers, employers, and educators.

She has also held multiple leadership roles within Virginia's Community College System and the Virginia Department of Education, where she directed workforce programs, adult education, and literacy initiatives statewide. Her portfolio included oversight of the *FastForward* credentialing program, *SNAP E&T* research initiatives, and integrated education and training models that connected adults and returning citizens to career pathways and family-sustaining employment.

A frequent national speaker and published author, Dr. Finley's research and commentary have appeared in *Solar Today*, the *Building Performance Association Journal*, and the *Journal for Workforce Education and Development*. She currently serves on numerous national advisory boards, including the Department of Education's Energy Curriculum Review Committee, Solar Energy International, and Advanced Career and Technical Education.

Dr. Finley holds a Ph.D. in Community College Leadership from Old Dominion University, where her research examined workforce networks that bridge education, industry, and opportunity.