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EGIA Foundation and the GRIT Foundation Partner to Expand HVAC Scholarship Program, Build Career Pathways, and Equip Students for Job Readiness

New scholarship program opens doors for students who have the drive but not the resources, by providing free training, certifications, and direct pathways to employment.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SACRAMENTO, Calif., March 2, 2026 – For millions of young people and career-seekers across the country, the desire to build a better life is there. What’s often missing is access.

The EGIA Foundation and the GRIT Foundation announced a new national scholarship partnership designed to change that, opening doors to HVAC careers for students who may face barriers to access traditional trade education. Launching in early March, the expanded program builds on the EGIA Foundation’s long-standing \$2,500 scholarships awarded to up to 30 HVAC trade school students annually and additionally introduces up to 50 fully sponsored online HVAC Trade School Diploma scholarships, removing financial and logistical barriers for students nationwide.

At its core, this partnership is about creating real pathways into stable, meaningful, in-demand careers, and giving people a chance to see themselves in a future where they can thrive. The EGIA Foundation is the charitable arm of EGIA, a nonprofit organization that empowers home services contractors to grow stronger, more profitable businesses through industry-leading training, financing, and program solutions, while also supporting utility and government energy efficiency and workforce development initiatives.


The GRIT Foundation, supported by SkillCat, is dedicated to opening doors into the skilled trades by connecting students with hands-on learning, mentorship, and accessible, industry-relevant education.

Together, the organizations share a belief that talent is everywhere, but opportunity can be difficult to locate and gain access to. This enhanced scholarship program prioritizes youth and individuals who need assistance, with a focus on underrepresented communities and job-ready training.

“Too many people have the drive to succeed but never get a real shot,” said Leilani Orr, Executive Director of the GRIT Foundation. “This partnership is about telling them: we see you, we believe in you, and we’re investing in your future. When we remove cost, location, and access as barriers, incredible things happen.”

Students who complete the program will earn industry-recognized certifications, including OSHA 10, EPA Section 608, and NATE Ready-to-Work. These credentials ensure graduates are not just trained, but job-ready and aligned with real contractor hiring needs.

But education is only the beginning. The partnership also extends into workforce engagement and placement. The EGIA Foundation and GRIT Foundation will collaborate on regional Career Day initiatives that connect students with contractors, trade schools, junior colleges, and community leaders. In addition, the organizations are developing an online hiring directory to directly connect graduates with



employers seeking entry-level HVAC and skilled trades talent. The GRIT Foundation will further support graduates through job placement tools designed to ease the transition from classroom to career.

“This partnership allows us to extend our charitable mission beyond financial assistance and into long-term impact,” said Bruce Matulich, CEO and Executive Director of EGIA. “By combining education, certification, and job placement support, we’re creating a more inclusive on ramp into the skilled trades and helping address the workforce shortages contractors across the country continue to face.”

To accelerate impact, the EGIA Foundation and GRIT Foundation are actively pursuing federal, state, and local workforce development grants, as well as utility and government initiatives, aimed at closing the labor gap for ready-to-hire HVAC technicians and other high-demand skilled trades roles. For students, this means a chance to step into a career that offers stability, purpose, and upward mobility. For contractors, it means access to a stronger, better-prepared talent pipeline. For the industry, it means a future built on opportunity, inclusion, and skilled hands ready to go to work.

To learn more about the EGIA Foundation’s scholarship program and this new partnership with the GRIT Foundation and SkillCat, visit EGIAFoundation.org/Scholarships.

About the EGIA Foundation


The EGIA Foundation is a nationwide 501(c)(3) organization focused on promoting HVAC as a first-choice career option through a unique coalition of industry stakeholders devoted to building the home service trades workforce through initiatives including public outreach, mentorship programs, scholarships, and more. The Foundation is also dedicated to expanding the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy through innovative, educational programs that empower contractors and enhance workforce development. The Foundation's collaboration with educational institutions and industry leaders aims to promote the advancement of energy-efficient and renewable technologies. You can learn more about the EGIA Foundation at its website, EGIAFoundation.org, or its student-targeted web portal, AlwaysInDemand.com.

About the Electric & Gas Industries Association (EGIA)

EGIA is a nonprofit organization that empowers home services contractors to get the most out of their businesses through industry-leading training, financing, and marketplace solutions. Its Contractor University offers access to the industry’s most recognized educators, who deliver innovative keys to success through online training systems, in-person workshops, conferences and webinars. EGIA’s HVAC Distributor University delivers powerful and convenient training solutions designed to empower sales team success within HVAC distribution businesses. OPTIMUS Financing, which has facilitated financing for hundreds of thousands of residential and business projects valued at over \$9 billion, provides contractors with a best-in class suite of financing options. EGIA is also a recognized leader in delivering sponsored demand management and resource efficiency services on behalf of electric, gas and water utilities and municipalities. These services include financing; rebate program administration and rebate processing; contractor network management, training and certification; and sales channel development and support. Learn more at www.EGIA.org.

About the GRIT Foundation

The GRIT Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering the next generation with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities to thrive in the skilled trades. Through hands-on, community-driven programs like GRIT Camps, the foundation connects youth with skilled trades professionals who serve as



mentors, guiding participants through real-world experiences in HVAC, electrical, plumbing, carpentry, and more. Focused on accessibility, inclusion, and career pathways without the burden of college debt, the GRIT Foundation works alongside contractors, educators, and industry partners to expand access to trade education, build confidence through doing, and strengthen the future skilled trades workforce. Learn more at www.TheGritFoundation.com.

About SkillCat

SkillCat is the online trade school built for the modern workforce. We provide affordable, accessible, and mobile-first training for HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and other skilled trades- helping anyone start or advance their career from their phone.

Through accredited courses, industry-recognized certifications, hands-on simulations, and employer partnerships nationwide, SkillCat is removing barriers and bringing more people into the trades at scale. Our mission is simple: make world-class technical education available to everyone, strengthen the skilled trades workforce, and help companies hire and upskill with confidence. Learn more at SkillCatapp.com.

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