

# 2025 Equitable Energy Futures Grant Program

## Scoring Alignment

*Updated: June 2025*

Scoring for the Equitable Energy Future Grant Program is based on four scoring criteria: Documentation of Need (10%), Applicant Qualifications & Capacity (20%), Cost Effectiveness/Return on Investment (20%), Project Quality (50%). Merit review teams use these scoring categories, and the questions listed below to score grant applications.

The table below provides questions directly from the scoring rubric, each question's total score, a statement that describes what merit reviewers are seeking (*italicized*). Each question also offers grant writing tips and relevant helpful resources and reference to questions that are most relevant to the scoring criteria.

**General Resources:** [CEJA Q & A](#) | [One-on-One Technical Assistance](#) | [NOFO Page & Information Sessions](#)

Documentation of Need	10%
<b>Is the project located within or directly serving an equity investment eligibility community?</b> <i>Program Application Q16, Q18</i>	5%
<i>The project's location within or serving equity investment eligible communities or populations and suitability for proposed use.</i>	
<a href="#">Equity Investment Eligible Community Map</a> provides details on communities and populations.	
<b>Does the applicant identify the community needs that the project will address?</b> <i>Program Application Q19</i>	5%
<i>The project's identification of community needs that the project will address.</i>	
When discussing community needs applications that provide labor market or census data, community stakeholder engagement results, local reports, economic development plans among others. It is important to provide community needs information that is relevant/related to the proposed project.	
Applicant Qualifications & Capacity	20%
<b>Does the applicant have the capacity (or a clear and realistic plan to increase capacity) to execute the project? Capacity includes qualified staff, partners, and financial resources.</b> <i>Program Application Q28, Q31, Q32</i>	5%
<i>Applicant's capacity to execute the project and the qualifications of those assigned to the project and/or plan to hire or contract with other partners to execute the project.</i>	
Applicants are asked to provide resumes/biographies of their vital staff and partners along with their role in the project. Being detailed in this space and ensuring the experience of these staff and partners align with the proposed project can help demonstrate capacity.	
If the applicant is still working on capital stack development, they should outline what financial sources they have secured or will seek in the future as the project progress. Provide as much information as possible to demonstrate the ability to secure funding to complete the project.	
Additional resources: <a href="#">Clean Energy Funding Resources</a>   <a href="#">DCEO's Grant Opportunities page</a>	
<b>What is the applicant's historical, current, or planned connection with the community in which project will be located?</b> <i>Program Application Q18, Q19; CEJA Ecosystem Utilization Plan</i>	5%
<i>Applicant's historical or future long-term partnership with the community in which the project will be located.</i>	

<p>When discussing partnerships, it can be helpful to provide Memorandums of Understanding or Partnership Agreements when available. If partners are listed for this project, providing greater detail on the role the partners will play can help increase the score in this space. Applicants are encouraged to integrate the CEJA Ecosystem in the proposed project: Equity Eligible Contractors, Equity Eligible Persons, Renewable Energy Credits, Climate Bank and Jobs and Justice Fund financial products.</p> <p>Additional Resources: <a href="#">CEJA Illinois Map</a>   <a href="#">CEJA Potential Partners List</a>   <a href="#">EEC Vendor List</a></p>	
<p><b>Does the applicant have experience or have an established partner that has experience completing projects like the proposed project?</b> <i>Program Application Q31; CEJA Ecosystem Utilization Plan</i></p> <p><i>Applicant's or partner's expertise in successfully completing similar projects.</i></p> <p>In addition to the capacity of the applicant and partner, it is also important to discuss experience in the same or similar projects that are being proposed. If the lead applicant does not have this experience, it's important to outline partner experience.</p>	5%
<p><b>Is the applicant organization/business led and staffed by equity-eligible persons (EEPs)/contractors (EECs), have partnerships with EEPs/EECs and/or have a plan to hire EEPs/EECs?</b> <i>Program Application Q34; CEJA Ecosystem Utilization Plan</i></p> <p><i>Extent to which applicant and partners/contractors exceed minimum equity eligibility qualifications (such as equity eligible contractor requirements)</i></p> <p>Additional Resources: <a href="#">Equity Portal for Equity Eligible Persons</a>   <a href="#">EEC Vendor List</a></p>	5%
<b>Project Quality &amp; Integration (50%)</b>	<b>50%</b>
<p><b>Does the applicant describe in detail a plan to save or generate energy through renewable energy projects or energy efficiency improvements? Is there a description of anticipated outcomes in terms of energy saved, energy generated, reduction in utility energy costs, and non-energy benefits?</b> <i>Program Application Q14, Q23, Q24</i></p> <p><i>Quality of plan to save or generate energy through renewable energy projects or energy efficiency improvements and the anticipated outcomes in terms of energy saved, energy generated, reduction in utility energy costs, and non-energy benefits.</i></p> <p>Applicants should provide a plan that is as detailed as possible and demonstrates that the project has been thought through even if the plan is not solidified or if parts of the plans are dependent on others.</p>	15%
<p><b>Is there a quality plan to execute project through activities related to project feasibility, project conception, project planning, project development, and implementation?</b> <i>Program Application Q14, Project Timeline</i></p> <p><i>Quality of plan to execute project through activities related to project feasibility, project conception, project planning, project development and implementation.</i></p> <p>Describe the project plan as it stands at the time of application. As this is a planning grant, it is acceptable to note that the current plan is based on expected outcomes (i.e. site is deemed feasible, interconnection timeline, site control timeline etc.). It is better to explain that a plan is tentative and provide details than leave out information.</p>	10%
<p><b>Is there a detailed and realistic plan to show how the energy and cost savings will benefit equity investment eligible communities, low-income households, or not-for-profit organizations serving equity investment eligible communities?</b> <i>Program Application Q23, Q24</i></p> <p><i>Quality of plan for how the energy and cost savings will benefit equity investment eligible communities, low-income households, not-for-profit organizations service equity investment eligible communities, etc.</i></p> <p>When communicating the energy and cost savings benefits provide as many details as possible. This may include reduction in utility rates, production of MWs, information about subscriptions and sale of energy. Highlight specifically how this project will provide benefits to equity investment eligible communities, low-income households, and/or not-for-profits.</p>	10%

<b>Does the applicant describe how the project will support clean energy workforce development by hiring CEJA/FEJA program graduates or offering on-the-job training opportunities?</b> <i>Program Application Q29, Q33 - Q36</i>	15%
<i>Quality of plan to support clean energy workforce and contractor development by hiring equity eligible contractors including CEJA or FEJA workforce program graduates and/or contractor participants to work on the project and/or offer on-the-job-training opportunities to CEJA/FEJA participants.</i>	
Additional Resources: <a href="#">CEJA / FEJA Grantees - Workforce and Contractors</a>   <a href="#">EEC Vendor List</a>	
<b>Cost Effectiveness/Return on Investments</b>	
<b>Does the applicant describe the cost efficiency and return on investment of the planned activities and projected outcomes?</b> <i>Program Application Q30; Uniform Budget Template</i>	5%
<i>The cost efficiency and effectiveness of the planned activities and projected outcomes.</i>  Ensure that there is a budget narrative added for each budget sheet where line items exist. In these budget narratives provide details regarding how costs were determined, for personnel/subcontractors/consultants outline what their role will be.	
<b>Does the applicant describe their ability to leverage existing funding sources, incentives, services, and partnerships to improve the cost effectiveness and return on investment of the project?</b> <i>Program Application Q27, Q28</i>	10%
<i>Ability to leverage existing funding sources, incentives, services, and partnerships to improve the cost effectiveness and return on investment of the project.</i>  This grant funding is only part of the overall capital stack. Applicants should outline other funding sources, incentives, services, and partnerships to advance the success of the project. Identifying what sources are existing versus planned can be helpful as well. For projects that are seeking funds for early stages, the applicant can strengthen this score by discussing their plan if Phase 1 goals are successful.  Additional resources: <a href="#">Clean Energy Funding Resources</a>   <a href="#">DCEO's Grant Opportunities page</a>   <a href="#">CEJA Potential Partners List</a>	
<b>Did the applicant complete/provide budget narratives that outline the amount of each line item, a clear outline of line items costs, and are costs reasonable for the items that are being requested?</b> <i>Uniform Budget Template</i>	5%
<i>The Budget Narratives outline the amount of each line item and are costs reasonable.</i>  Each sheet in the Uniform Budget Template features line items and a section to provide a budget narrative. It is required that each sheet has a completed budget narrative that provides additional details regarding the timeline. Depending on the costs these may include how the costs were calculated, a description of what is being purchased etc.  It can be helpful to merit reviewers on sheets where no line items are listed to place "N/A" on that sheet to acknowledge it was deliberately left blank.	