

**State of Illinois Uniform Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Summary Information**

Awarding Agency Name	Commerce And Econ Opp
Agency Contact	Kristi Dula (kristi.dula@illinois.gov)
Announcement Type	Initial
Type of Assistance Instrument	Grant
Funding Opportunity Number	FY24-1
Funding Opportunity Title	Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program
CSFA Number	420-35-3271
CSFA Popular Name	Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program
Anticipated Number of Awards	13
Estimated Total Program Funding	\$21,000,000
Award Range	\$500000 - \$2500000
Source of Funding	State
Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements	No
Indirect Costs Allowed	Yes
Restrictions on Indirect Costs	No
Posted Date	10/11/2023
Application Date Range	General announcement open for a period of time with no specific due dates for applications.
Grant Application Link	Please select the entire address below and paste it into the browser... https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/3271-2636.html
Technical Assistance Session	Offered : Yes Mandatory : No Date : 05/20/2024 : 2:00PM Registration link : https://illinois.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtceuqrz4rGtKHxa1Wpu88a ssBkPu1yuRG

Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program NOFO ID: 3271-2636

For information about grants please visit <https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/granteeresources.html>.

REVISED 5/9/24 – Changed application period end date to rolling. Updated award start date and period of performance to reflect rolling application period. New Technical Assistance session day/time. Clarified the Hub Locations/Areas that the Department will accept applications from.

A. Program Description

Notice of Funding Opportunity Intent

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (the “Department” or “DCEO”) is issuing this Notice of Funding Opportunity to fund proposals establishing a network of Clean Energy Contractor Incubators. It is Illinois’ goal to increase business opportunities for clean energy contractors and nonprofits located in areas impacted by economic, social, and environmental challenges.

This funding opportunity is targeting the following Hub locations/areas: Waukegan, Champaign, Danville, Carbondale, East St. Louis, and Alton.

Program Description

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) sets forth the requirements for funding for the Illinois Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, as specified by the Energy Transition Act (“Climate and Equitable Jobs Act,” or CEJA), 20 ILCS 730/5-45 Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program.

The Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program (“Program”) will support the development and growth of clean energy contractor businesses and nonprofits that support clean energy. This program will serve businesses that are primarily located in and owned by individuals who reside in areas impacted by economic and environmental challenges. The Department expects to fund at least one award for a Contractor Incubator located in or near each of the following 13 areas: Chicago (South Side); Chicago (Southwest and West Sides); Waukegan; Rockford; Aurora; Joliet; Peoria; Champaign; Danville; Decatur; Carbondale; East St. Louis; and Alton.

These Contractor Incubators will provide access to low-cost capital and financial support for eligible clean energy businesses and contractors; provide support for business operations, such as obtaining permits and insurance, and provide training and mentorships; provide recruitment and ongoing engagement with entities that hire contractors and subcontractors for clean energy projects; and connect participant contractors with Department of Labor resources for prevailing wage compliance. The goal is to prepare these companies to participate in business opportunities in the clean energy sector.

This NOFO intends to fund community-based organizations (nonprofit organizations including accredited public colleges or universities) to deliver the Program. The community-based organizations selected to deliver this Program will have a history of providing business-related assistance and knowledge to help entrepreneurs start, run, and grow their businesses; have knowledge of construction and clean energy trades; demonstrate relationships with local residents and other organizations serving the community; and demonstrate the ability to effectively serve equity investment eligible persons and communities (see definition below).

This Program will be administered by the Department through Regional Administrators (20 ILCS 730/5-15), who will oversee the implementation of the Program and the work of each of the Contractor Incubators.

Program Coordination

The program under this NOFO is part of a highly interconnected set of Illinois statewide clean energy workforce and contractor development programming. The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA, Public Act 102-0662 <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/102/PDF/102-0017.pdf>) establishes various new programs and sets forth goals and policies to accelerate the adoption of clean energy sources, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency. Because these goals will require significant expansion of businesses and well-trained workers in the clean energy industry, the CEJA legislation includes several new workforce and contractor development programs.

Contractor Incubators will be required to collaborate and coordinate with the other CEJA workforce and economic development programs as they become available. Successful applicants will demonstrate awareness of these programs and recognition of the need for collaboration and coordination.

Though these programs are not in operation yet, information about each program is available here:

- Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program (20 ILCS 730/5-20). Creates 13 workforce hubs run by community-based organizations to provide clean jobs training and a career pipeline for equity-eligible individuals and displaced energy workers. <https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs/clean-jobs-workforce-network-program.html>
- Energy Transition Navigators (20 ILCS 730/5-35). Community-based organizations that provide education, outreach, and recruitment to eligible populations to access workforce development programs. <https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs/energy-transition-navigator-program.html>
- Illinois Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program (20 ILCS 730/5-40). Trains equity-eligible individuals for careers in clean energy sector construction and building trades. <https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs/climate-works-pre-apprenticeship-program.html>
- Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program (20 ILCS 730/5-50). Trains soon-to-be-released (within 36 months) incarcerated people for jobs in the solar and energy efficiency sectors. <https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs/returning-resident-clean-jobs-program.html>
- Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program (20 ILCS 730/5-55). A program for contractors seeking to expand their capacity and fill the role of the prime contractor on clean energy projects through a structured five-year program with mentorship, operation support grants, business coaching, assistance applying for certifications, procurement programs, and preparing bids. <https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs/clean-energy-primes-contractor-accelerator-program.html>
- Jobs and Environmental Justice Grant Program (20 ILCS 730/5-60). A program that provides upfront capital to support the development of projects, businesses, community organizations, and jobs creating opportunities for historically disadvantaged populations, and to provide seed capital to support community ownership of renewable energy projects (including community solar). <https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs/ceja-other-programs.html>

This Program is also intended to coordinate with and build upon the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network, which assists pre-venture entrepreneurs with launching their new business ventures and provides guidance to existing businesses to help them grow and expand, and the APEX Accelerator Network (formerly Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, or PTACs), which provide guidance for government contracting success.

Program Definitions

This NOFO uses the definitions established in CEJA, including the definitions for “Equity eligible contractor,” “Equity investment eligible person,” “Equity investment eligible community,” and “Community-based organization.”

Equity eligible contractor:

- A business that is majority-owned by equity investment eligible individuals or persons who are or have been participants in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program, Illinois Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program, or Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program;
- A nonprofit or cooperative that is majority-governed by equity investment eligible individuals or persons who are or have been participants in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program, Illinois Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program, or Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program; or
- An equity investment eligible person or an individual who is or has been a participant in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program, Illinois Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program, or Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program and who is offering personal services as an independent contractor.

Equity investment eligible person: A person who would most benefit from equitable investments by the State designed to combat discrimination and foster sustainable economic growth. Specifically, eligible persons mean:

- Persons whose primary residence is in an equity investment-eligible community; or
- Persons who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system; or
- Persons who were formerly incarcerated.

Equity investment eligible community: The geographic areas throughout Illinois that would most benefit from equitable investments by the State are designed to combat discrimination and foster sustainable economic growth. Specifically, the eligible community means the following areas:

- R3 Areas, as established in Section 10-40 of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act, where residents have historically been excluded from economic opportunities, including opportunities in the energy sector. Eligible R3 Areas are defined in the R3 service map. Criteria for defining R3 Areas include rates of gun injury, unemployment, child poverty, incarceration with Illinois Department of Corrections, and historic disinvestment; and
- Environmental justice communities, as defined by the Illinois Power Agency pursuant to the Illinois Power Agency Act, but excluding racial and ethnic indicators, where residents have historically been subject to disproportionate pollution burdens, including pollution from the energy sector. For more information on the criteria and for a map that defines these areas in Illinois, refer to the Illinois Solar For All webpage on Environmental Justice Communities.

Equity-focused populations means:

- low-income persons;
- persons residing in equity investment-eligible communities;
- persons who identify as black, indigenous, and people of color;
- formerly convicted persons;
- persons who are or were in the child welfare system;
- energy workers;
- dependents of displaced energy workers;
- women;
- LGBTQ+, transgender, or gender nonconforming persons;
- Persons with disabilities; and
- Members of any of these groups who are also youth.

Community-based organization: a nonprofit organization, including an accredited public college or university that:

1. has a history of providing business-related assistance and knowledge to help entrepreneurs start, run, and grow their businesses;
2. has knowledge of construction and clean energy trades;
3. demonstrates relationships with local residents and organizations serving the community; and
4. demonstrates the ability to effectively serve diverse and underrepresented populations.

Core equity values, as defined in the Illinois Office of Equity “Illinois Toward Equity Action Framework,” include the following:

- Diversity is the representation of people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.
- Inclusion is the action or state of including and feeling as an empowered sense of belonging within a group or organization.
- Accessibility, according to the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, is “when a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally integrated and equally effective manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.” The Office of Equity extends accessibility beyond disability to include the creation of financially, technologically, and linguistically accessible systems, resources, and services so that all can thrive in a society.
- Each of these three foundational elements contributes to equity: The state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair. Equity must also be both structural and systemic and comprised of a robust infrastructure and dynamic process that produce equitable ideas, power, and resources.

Required Program Elements

Each Contractor Incubator will deliver the following program elements:

1. Provide access to low-cost capital for small clean energy businesses and contractors.
 - a. An important source of low-cost capital will be the Equitable Energy Future Grant Program, a subprogram of the Jobs and Environmental Justice Grant Program (20 ILCS 730/5-60). The Equitable Energy Future Grant Program is designed to provide seed funding and pre-development funding opportunities for equity eligible contractors. Contractor Incubators will work closely with the administrators of this grant fund.
 - b. Contractor Incubators will work with other organizations to access other sources of low-cost capital such as the U.S. Small Business Administration, Minority Business Development Agency, Community Development Financial Institutions, and other state and local business and economic development funds.
2. Provide support for obtaining business and financial services including, but not limited to:
 - a. financial assurance (e.g., bonding);
 - b. back-office services;
 - c. insurance, permits, training and certifications;
 - d. business planning; and
 - e. low-interest loans.
3. Train, mentor, and provide other support needed to allow participating contractors to:
 - a. build their businesses and connect to specific projects,
 - b. register as approved vendors,
 - c. engage in approved vendor subcontracting and qualified installer opportunities,
 - d. develop partnering and networking skills,
 - e. compete for capital and other resources, and
 - f. execute clean energy-related project installations and subcontracts.
4. Ensure that participating contractors, community partners, and potential contractor clients are aware of and engaged in the Program.

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5. Connect participating contractors with the Department of Labor for resources, training, and technical support on prevailing wage compliance.
6. Provide recruitment and ongoing engagement with entities that hire contractors and subcontractors, programs providing renewable energy resource related projects, incentive programs and approved vendor and qualified installer opportunities.
7. Participate in matchmaking activities, other events, and collaborate with other Contractor Incubators.
8. Coordinate efforts and services with the Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Energy Transition Navigators Program, Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program, and Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program, as directed by the Department.

Applicants may propose to deliver all required elements as a single organization, or applicants may subcontract to other entities for the provision of portions of Program elements, including, but not limited to, training and mentoring, one-on-one counseling, recruitment, support for obtaining business and financial services, or provision of other support functions for Program delivery compliance.

Contractor Incubators will work with the Department to establish participant eligibility and recruitment guidelines in accordance with the legislative requirements in 20 ILCS 730/5-45(c). In admitting participants to the Program, each Contractor Incubator shall dedicate Program placements as follows:

1. In each Hub Site where the applicant pool allows:
 - A. dedicate at least one-third of program placements to the owners of clean energy contractor businesses and nonprofits who reside in a geographic area that is impacted by economic and environmental challenges, defined as an area that is both (i) an R3 Area, as defined pursuant to Section 10-40 of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act, and (ii) an environmental justice community, as defined by the Illinois Power Agency, excluding any racial or ethnic indicators used by the agency unless and until the constitutional basis for their inclusion in determining program admissions is established. Among applicants that satisfy these criteria, preference shall be given to applicants who face barriers to employment, such as low educational attainment, prior involvement with the criminal legal system, and language barriers; and applicants that are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system; and
 - B. dedicate at least two-thirds of program placements to the owners of clean energy contractor businesses and nonprofits that satisfy the criteria in paragraph (1) or who reside in eligible communities. Among applicants who live in eligible communities, preference shall be given to applicants who face barriers to employment, such as low educational attainment, prior involvement with the criminal legal system, and language barriers; and applicants that are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system; and
2. prioritize the remaining program placements for: applicants who are displaced energy workers as defined in the Energy Community Reinvestment Act; persons who face barriers to employment, including low educational attainment, prior involvement with the criminal legal system, and language barriers; and applicants who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system, regardless of the applicants' area of residence.

Consideration shall also be given to any current or past participant in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Illinois Climate Works Preapprenticeship Program, or Returning Residents Clean Energy Jobs Training Program.

Program History

This is the inaugural opportunity for this program.

Performance Goals and Measures

The primary goal of the Contractor Incubator Program is to increase the number and economic vitality of equity eligible contractors in Illinois to develop and implement clean energy projects. To achieve this goal, the Program is designed to increase participation of individuals who live in equity investment eligible

communities, as well as those who face barriers to employment including people with low educational attainment; prior involvement with the criminal legal system; people who face language barriers; and applicants that are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system. Participant contractors that receive services through the Contractor Incubator should be fully capable of participating in Illinois clean energy projects.

Performance Measures and Reporting: Each Contractor Incubator shall be required to submit quarterly reports including program performance metrics to the Regional Administrator of their Program Delivery Area as required by the Department. Program performance metrics include, but are not limited to:

- Demographic data including race, gender, geographic location, R3 residency, Environmental Justice Community residency, foster care system participation, and justice-involvement for the owners of contractors applying, accepted into, and graduating from the Program (graduation is defined as participants who have received a contract, alone or in partnership, for a clean energy project, through assistance from the program);
- Number of contracts secured for clean energy and related projects and dollar value of contracts secured by participant contractors, alone or in partnership and related demographic data (see above).
 - For projects completed in partnership, the type/name of partner organization;
- Number of partnerships with participant contractors that are expected to result in contracts for work by the participant contractor and related demographic data;
- Changes in participant contractors' business revenue and related demographic data;
- Number of jobs created and jobs retained by participant contractors and related demographic data and average wages;
- Number of bids submitted by participant contractors who received technical assistance;
- Number of proposals submitted by participant contractors who received technical assistance;
- Number of proposals and the dollar value won by clients who received technical assistance;
- Number of clients submitting white papers or full proposals to Funding Opportunity Announcements who received technical assistance;
- Number of contractors gaining Approved Vendor status for the Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All Program;
- Number of certifications gained by participant contractors including, but not limited to, registration under the Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Act program and other programs intended to certify Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) entities;
- Number of participant training events and number of participant attendees;
- Number of consultation hours;
- Number of direct referrals that resulted in a business opportunity;
- Indicators relevant for assessing the general financial health of participant contractors;
- Dollar value of debt financing secured by clients and related demographics;
- Dollar value of non-debt financing secured by clients and related demographics;
- Number of businesses advised and related demographics;
- Number of Contractor Incubator sponsored/cosponsored seminars/workshops/events;
- Number of Program sessions attended by participant contractors, aggregated by race;
- Number of success stories submitted through the grant term (minimum 6);
- Number of events hosted in which local, state, and/or federal legislators and other key stakeholders are invited to visit the incubator (minimum 2).

Confidentiality: The Contractor Incubators, the Department, and Regional Administrators shall protect the confidentiality of any personal information provided by program participants regarding the participant's status as a formerly incarcerated person or foster care recipient. However, the Department or Regional Administrators may publish aggregated data on the number of participants that were formerly incarcerated or foster care recipients so long as that publication protects the identities of those persons. Any person who applies to participate in the Program may elect not to share with the Contractor Incubators, the Department, and Regional Administrators whether they are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system or were formerly convicted.

B. Funding Information

This grant program is utilizing state funds appropriated by the Illinois General Assembly under Public Act 102-0017 <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/102/PDF/102-0017.pdf>. Total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this NOFO is up to \$21,000,000 for the first 12 months of the awards. Awards will range from \$500,000 to \$2,500,000 million for the delivery of the Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program in each region identified in Section A of this NOFO. An applicant may submit multiple applications if they intend to administer the program in more than one of the Workforce Hub Locations. The Department expects to make at least 13 awards for though this NOFO.

This is a rolling opportunity. Anticipated start date for awards is August 1, 2024. The period of performance for grants is expected to be 1 to 3 years.

The initial period of performance is expected to be 12 months. The Department intends to offer up to two (2) twelve (12) month extensions for each award based on the performance of the grantee. Additional funds of up to \$21,000,000 may be available for each of the twelve (12) month extension periods.

The Program's regional focus facilitates reduced administrative costs, the maximum use of available resources, and stronger regional coordination of all small business assistance services to better meet regional needs.

Special consideration will be given to those applications that best demonstrate cost-sharing, cooperation, coordination, and consolidation within their respective regions.

Program budgets and narratives will detail how all proposed expenditures are directly related to program implementation and program costs.

Applicants should include a contingency in their budgets for participation in regular meetings and networking activities. This contingency is a direct cost for the grant and not an administrative cost. It should estimate time and potential in-state travel costs.

The release of this NOFO does not obligate the Department to make an award.

C. Eligibility Information

An entity must be registered in the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal, <https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>, at the time of grant application. The portal will verify that the entity:

- Has a valid FEIN number (<https://www.irs.gov/individuals/international-taxpayers/taxpayer-identification-numbers-tin#:~:text=You%20can%20use%20the%20IRS%27s,for%20Individual%20Taxpayer%20Identification%20Number>);
- Has a current SAM.gov registration (<https://sam.gov>), SAM.gov registrations must be marked as "public" to allow the GATA Grantee Portal to expedite the review of the federal information;
- Has a valid UEI number (<https://sam.gov>);
- Is not on the Federal Excluded Parties List (verified at <https://sam.gov>);
- Is in Good Standing with the Illinois Secretary of State, as applicable (https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/business_services/corp.html);
- Is not on the Illinois Stop Payment list (verified once entity is registered in GATA Grantee Portal); and
- Is not on the Department of Healthcare and Family Services Provider Sanctions list (<https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/oig/Pages/SanctionsList.aspx>).

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Entities on the Illinois Stop Payment List and/or the Federal Excluded Parties List at time of application submission will not be considered for an award.

An automated email notification to the entity alerts them of “qualified” status or informs how to remediate a negative verification (e.g., not in good standing with the Secretary of State). A federal Debarred and Suspended status cannot be remediated.

Pursuant to the policy of the Illinois Office of the Comptroller, to receive grant funds from the State of Illinois, a grantee must be considered a regarded entity by the IRS for federal income tax purposes. Disregarded entities will not be eligible to receive grant funds.

1. Eligible Applicants include:

Eligible applicants include:

Eligible applicants are community-based organizations, including nonprofit organizations, and accredited public colleges or universities, with demonstrated history and effectiveness in serving program-eligible populations in one or more of these Program Delivery Areas: Chicago (South Side), Chicago (Southwest and West Sides), Waukegan, Rockford, Aurora, Joliet, Peoria, Champaign, Danville, Decatur, Carbondale, East St. Louis, and Alton.

Eligible applicants must show evidence of the following attributes:

1. have a history of providing business-related assistance and knowledge to help entrepreneurs start, run, and grow their businesses;
2. have knowledge of construction and clean energy trades;
3. demonstrate relationships with local residents and organizations serving equity investment-eligible communities within the service region; and
4. demonstrate the ability to effectively recruit and serve diverse and underrepresented populations in one or more of the Program Delivery Areas.

Applicants must also demonstrate that they have adequate ADA-compliant facilities with capacity for program operations and training. The Department strongly prefers eligible applicants with headquarters located within equity investment-eligible communities and conveniently accessible by public transportation.

Community-based organizations may propose to deliver all required elements or may subcontract to other entities for the provision of portions of program elements, including, but not limited to, training and mentoring, recruitment, support for obtaining business and financial services, or provision of other support functions for program delivery compliance.

*** Targeting the following Hub location/areas: Waukegan, Champaign, Danville, Carbondale, East St. Louis, and Alton.**

The Department will consider eligible applicant organizations and teams led by experienced organizations that demonstrate the required history, knowledge, and qualifications, as described above, and the capacity to deliver all required program elements. The Department encourages applicant teams to include experienced organizations that deliver other contractor assistance programs, such as the Illinois APEX Accelerator Program (formerly the Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Program, or PTAC). Organizations that deliver these programs may be the lead applicant or a sub-grantee.

Organizations with less experience and the history, qualifications, and capacity to deliver some but not all required program elements are encouraged to apply in partnership with other relevant organizations to create a team with the required history, qualifications, and capacity to effectively design and deliver all required services.

The Department reserves the right to assign partners, mentors, and training to grantees to increase the Department's capacity to successfully deliver the program.

Organizations that wish to apply to deliver multiple CEJA workforce and contractor programs (including the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program, the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, the Energy Transition Navigator Program, and the Clean Jobs Contractor Incubator Program) as well as other DCEO programs must consider their capacity to deliver all proposed services if their proposals are selected.

The Department complies with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity including, but not limited to: The Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/1-101 et seq.), The Public Works Employment Discrimination Act (775 ILCS 10/1 et seq.), The United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended) (42 USC 2000a-and 2000H-6), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 794), The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USC 12101 et seq.), and The Age Discrimination Act (42 USC 6101 et seq.).

2. Cost Sharing or Matching.

Cost sharing or match is not required for this opportunity.

3. Indirect Cost Rate.

Indirect costs are allowed for this opportunity.

In order to charge indirect costs to a grant, the applicant organization must have an annually negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA). There are three types of NICRAs:

a) Federally Negotiated Rate. Organizations that receive direct federal funding, may have an indirect cost rate that was negotiated with the Federal Cognizant Agency. Illinois will accept the federally negotiated rate. The organization must provide a copy of the federally NICRA.

b) State Negotiated Rate. The organization may negotiate an indirect cost rate with the State of Illinois if they do not have a Federally Negotiated Rate. If an organization has not previously established an indirect cost rate, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted through State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system no later than three months after receipt of a Notice of State Award (NOSA). If an organization previously established an indirect cost rate, the organization must annually submit a new indirect cost proposal through CARS within six to nine months after the close of the grantee's fiscal year, depending on the grantee's audit type requirements.

c) De Minimis Rate. An organization may elect a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct cost (MTDC). Once established, the De Minimis Rate may be used indefinitely. The State of Illinois must verify the calculation of the MTDC annually in order to accept the De Minimis Rate.

All grantees must complete an indirect cost rate negotiation or elect the De Minimis Rate to claim indirect costs. Indirect costs claimed without a negotiated rate or a De Minimis Rate election on record in the State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system may be subject to disallowance.

Grantees have discretion and can elect to waive payment for indirect costs. Grantees that elect to waive payments for indirect costs cannot be reimbursed for indirect costs. The organization must record an election to "Waive Indirect Costs" into the State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system.

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State Universities may request an indirect cost rate of 10% due to the State of Illinois' continuous funding of a portion of facility and administrative costs.

4. Other, if applicable.

Costs for developing proposals are entirely the responsibility of the applicant and shall not be reimbursed by the Department.

Once an entity is registered, the applicant must complete the Internal Controls Questionnaire (ICQ) through the GATA Grantee Portal. The ICQ assesses the applicant organization's fiscal and administrative risk. Applicants must complete the ICQ annually as part of the pre-award process, and program staff will then determine whether any or all risk-based conditions shall be incorporated into the grant agreement.

Applicants will also be assessed for programmatic risk to determine grant-specific risk. This assessment will be conducted during the application process by the Department.

Program staff will then determine whether any or all risk-based conditions shall be incorporated into the grant agreement. The Department reserves the right to assign partners, mentors, and training to grantees to increase the organization's capacity to successfully deliver the program.

Applicants may submit multiple application(s) for this opportunity.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package.

Grant application forms are available at the web link provided in the "Grant Application Link" field of this announcement or by contacting the Program Manager:

Ericka White
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
607 East Adams Street
Springfield, IL 62701
Phone: 1-800-252-2923
Email: CEO.EIT.CEJA@illinois.gov

2. Content and Form of Application Submission.

A standard application package must be submitted to and reviewed by DCEO. Each package must contain the following items:

- Uniform Grant Application in fillable PDF format. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned and submitted with application.
- Uniform Budget utilizing the template provided by DCEO for this project. The entire budget with all worksheets included even if the worksheets are not relevant to the grant opportunity must be submitted with the application materials. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned and submitted with application.
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure
- Mandatory Disclosures

This Notice of Funding Opportunity also requires the submission of the following other programmatic-specific items:

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- Executive Summary (one page): Provide a one-page summary that describes the:
 - Applicant team
 - Proposed Workforce Hub area and community(ies) to be served.
 - Partnerships including, but not limited to, Small Business Development Centers, APEX Accelerator Centers, community-based organizations, education and training agencies, one-stop partners, contractor associations, and others determined appropriate
 - Brief description of services to be provided and the equity investment eligible people and communities to be served
 - Anticipated goals and outcomes of this project based on Attachment 2: Participant Outcomes Summary
 - Grant amount requested

- Technical Proposal (not to exceed 20 pages): Provide a narrative proposal to describe the program activities and outcomes that will be supported by this grant. Note that each section of the technical proposal must correspond with the application review criteria in Part E of this NOFO.

Applicant Team Organization Capacity and Qualifications (approx. 4 pages)

- Provide high-level information regarding the lead applicant organization's size, structure, and history. Specify whether the applicant is a start-up or an established organization. Describe any other organizations that will be partners or subcontractors or subrecipients for the project.
- Include a list of the key staff, including subcontractor personnel, to be assigned to the project. This must align with Attachment 1: Staffing Plan.
 - Describe the role each key staff person will fulfill and the percentage of time they will allot to the project.
 - Provide short bios of key staff that indicate, at a minimum, their positions and total years in the organization, education, and relevant work experience.
- Provide information demonstrating the experience and knowledge of the applicant team in:
 - Launching and administering business development assistance programs for business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.
 - Working in equity investment-eligible communities and providing services to equity-focused populations near the Contractor Incubator location.
 - Providing technical assistance under State and Federal business and entrepreneurial development programs.
 - Performing program outreach and participant recruiting in equity investment eligible communities.
 - Training and education in entrepreneurship and business skills.
- Describe the applicant team's knowledge of the construction and clean energy trades and any experience providing business development services to contractors in these trades, including training and services for contractors that intend to become union signatories.
- Provide information demonstrating the applicant team's experience with and ability to use an equity lens for program operations. An equity lens is a process that analyzes the impact of policies and practices on marginalized communities to inform and ensure equitable outcomes.
 - Describe the applicant team's experience with and capacity to intentionally and deliberately analyze the delivery and/or impact of the program on participants, including underserved and marginalized groups, such as persons with barriers due to their lack of education, job training, reliable housing and transportation, criminal history, communities of color (Black, Hispanic or Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of

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- color), members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.
- Describe the applicant team's experience delivering business development services to underserved and marginalized groups such as those described above.
 - Provide detailed information about members of the applicant team's leadership and/or staff that have lived in the community to be served or their work experience within the community and/or provide real-life situations or success stories showing how their roots within the community have helped guide the organization's work.
 - Describe the applicant team's capacity to meet the proposed training program outcomes (number of students trained, job placement rates, etc.)
 - Identify the location, address, and operating hours of the incubator. Provide a description of the physical space and capacity, client intake area, and how clients will be serviced when professional staff is out of the office. Include a description of the facility, parking arrangements, accessibility, and internal and external signage. Your narrative should also provide details on how equipment and program files will be handled and include a disaster operations plan.
 - Describe how your organization will adequately hire, manage, and review the performance of Contractor Incubator staff (including consultants, volunteers, students, etc.). An organizational chart of the Contractor Incubator is required. Resumes should be submitted for all key program staff (e.g., incubator director, business advisor, office support, etc.) listing the specific duties and responsibilities of each person. Describe in detail how staff impacts the delivery of incubator services.
 - Identify the fiscal agent for the incubator program. Describe your organization's fiscal procedures and controls and responsible staff in the following areas:
 - Reconciliation of cash accounts, separation of program income, maintenance of property control records, time and effort certification, bookkeeping procedures, and the maintenance of general ledgers.

Documentation of Need (approx. 2 pages)

- Identify the Hub Area where this project will operate and the specific equity investment eligible communities or populations the project will target. The hub area may include the city where the hub is located as well as surrounding areas, as applicable (e.g., the Peoria hub may propose to serve applicants in Bloomington-Normal as well). When proposing where to operate, applicants should consider the equity investment eligible communities in the region.
- Describe the barriers that contractors in these target communities or populations may face that may affect the growth of their businesses and how these barriers will be addressed. Describe how the social and economic conditions of these populations or communities may affect the growth of clean energy businesses in the region. Describe the needs of contractors in these communities to grow their clean energy businesses and how your program will address these needs.
- Describe the expected impact of the project on the identified target populations, communities, and job growth in clean energy and related trades.
 - Describe how the proposed Contractor Incubator will help participating contractors to compete for jobs on projects/RFPs and to grow and sustain their businesses.
 - If applicable, describe how the work of this project will result in creating or expanding clean energy businesses in areas where clean-energy contractor businesses are not robust or do not exist.

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- Provide any additional contextual details that will strengthen the reviewers' understanding of the identified issues/problems, needs, and expansion opportunities.

Project Quality and Integration

Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program Plan (approx. 12 pages)

Provide a 3-year plan that describes the design and implementation of all elements of the Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, as defined in Section A. Program Description. The 3-year plan, by year, description should, at minimum, include the following:

- An overall diverse marketing strategy, including an outline of how programs and services will be marketed to the appropriate client base.
- A plan for outreach and recruitment strategies to meet the program placement requirements described on page 5 of this NOFO. Applicants should identify the specific equity investment-eligible communities and populations they will target and how they will work with Energy Transition Navigators to recruit participants, once the navigators become available.
- A plan for how the Contractor Incubator services will be offered and the overall approach for delivering these services.
 - Describe the proposed program structure (e.g., delivery through cohorts of participants vs. individualized participation; frequency and timing of service delivery).
 - Briefly describe the tasks, deliverables, milestones, and program timeline (must align with Attachment 2: Project Work Plan).
 - Describe the services that will be offered, including:
 - Sample topics of training and networking events and who will provide them.
 - Types of consultation services and who will provide them.
 - Examples of resources and tools you will leverage to provide consultation services, training, and networking events.
 - To illustrate the program delivery approach, provide examples of a full program experience for 2 sample participant types:
 - A commercial contractor that intends to become a union signatory
 - A non-union residential contractorIn the examples, describe the overall timeframe and duration of the participant engagement, how their interests and needs will be assessed, how they will proceed through sequences of Contractor Incubator service offerings (financial services, professional networking engagements, training, mentorship, and other services), and any other details that will strengthen the reviewers' understanding of the program experience.
- The goals and anticipated outcomes of the proposed Contractor Incubator (must align with Attachment 2: Project Work Plan). Goals and outcomes should include:
 - The anticipated total number of participant contractors applying, accepted into, and graduating from the Program.
 - The anticipated number of services that the Contractor Incubator will provide (including training sessions attended and support to acquire financial assurance, back-office services, one-on-one consultations, business planning, and permit and insurance planning).
 - The anticipated outcomes, including the number of projects completed by participant contractors, the dollar amount of the projects, the number of new hires, the number of employees retained, the number of partnerships with participant contractors that are expected to result in

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- contracts for work, number of certifications received, changes in business revenue, and number of grants or loans received.
- A plan to create an equity-focused program culture that incorporates the core values of diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity (see definitions above) in all aspects of program delivery. Equity-focused strategies may include but are not limited to:
 - Equity training for all staff.
 - Marketing and recruitment strategies that reach equity-eligible investment communities and people with barriers to employment.
 - Accessible service delivery locations.
 - Service delivery that identifies and leverages the strengths of diverse participant contractors.
 - Partnerships with organizations with ties to diverse participant contractors.
 - Plans to create an inclusive and welcoming environment.
 - Plans to support and coach participant contractors.
 - A plan to coordinate Contractor Incubator activities with state, regional, and local partners, including but not limited to:
 - Other Contractor Incubator program administrators;
 - Other CEJA workforce programs including the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, Illinois Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program, and Returning Residents Clean Energy Jobs Training Program;
 - Regional workforce, educational, economic development, and business development entities, including APEX Accelerators (formerly PTAC) and Small Business Development Centers.
 - Construction and clean energy employers, industry leaders, unions, and apprenticeship programs.
 - A plan to track participants and program outcomes using the content management system provided by the Department, assess the program, and use this information to improve program delivery.

Cost Effectiveness/Return on Investment

Budget Narrative (approx. 2 pages):

- Provide a high-level budget narrative that justifies the main budget expense items and includes an analysis of the Program's cost efficiency in relation to the planned activities, the number of participant contractors, and other planned outcomes;
- Describe any leveraged/matching funds from workforce partners, participating businesses, and others to improve cost-effectiveness, return on investment, and long-term program sustainability.
- Allowable costs are those that are necessary and reasonable for the performance of the award. These include:
 - Personnel (salaries, wages, and fringe benefits)
 - Travel and supplies
 - Contractual services, subawards, and consultants
 - Miscellaneous Costs (including reasonable food costs for events)
- Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable as direct or indirect costs.

Attachments: Applicants are required to complete and submit the attachments listed below which are available in the Appendix of this NOFO and on the NOFO website.

- Attachment 1: Staffing Plan: Applicants will utilize this attachment to outline how program services will be delivered, who will deliver services, and organizational

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capacity. Resumes, credentials, partnership agreements, or MOUs should be included in this attachment. Refer to Attachment 1 of this NOFO.

- Resumes and Credentials of Program Staff: Grant applications must include the resumes of key program staff and instructors demonstrating the capacity to complete the work outlined in the application.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Grant applications should include MOUs and Partnership Agreements (as opposed to Letters of Support) with all key partners detailing the entity's information, key staff information, roles and responsibilities associated with this project, and dollar amounts for specific services to be rendered.

□ Attachment 2: Proposed Work Plan: Grant applications must include a work plan that describes outcomes, tasks, deliverables, milestones, and project timeline. Refer to Attachment 2 of this NOFO.

Application Format Requirements: All applicants must meet the following submission requirements: Applications must be formatted to an 8 1/2 x 11-inch page size, using 11-point type and at 100% magnification. Tables may be used to present information with a 10-point type. The program narrative must be typed single-spaced, with 1-inch margins on all sides. The entire application, including appendices, must be sequentially page-numbered (hand-written page numbers are acceptable). Items included in the attachments are NOT included in the page limitations.

3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM).

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal or State awarding agency that is exempt from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal or State awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

- (i) Be registered in SAM. To establish a SAM registration, go to www.SAM.gov and/or utilize this instructional link: www.grants.illinois.gov Resource Links tab. SAM.gov registrations must be "public."
- (ii) Provide a valid UEI number in the GATA Grantee Portal registration.
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal, Federal pass-through or State award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal or State awarding agency. The Department will not make a Federal pass-through or State award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Department is ready to make a Federal pass-through or State award, the Department may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal pass-through or State award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal pass-through or State award to another applicant.

4. Submission Dates and Times.

This opportunity is rolling, and funds will be awarded until depleted.

Application materials must be submitted to the Department via electronic form at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/55fbc43d71f349c5a05ac4e453113872>.

The Department is under no obligation to review applications that do not comply with the above requirements. Failure to meet the application deadline may result in the Department returning application without review or may preclude the Department from making the award.

5. Intergovernmental Review, if applicable.

N/A

6. Funding Restrictions.

This opportunity does not allow reimbursement of pre-award costs. Other restrictions can be found in Sections B. and C.3.

7. Other Submission Requirements.

Documents stored in Google Docs or other cloud-based servers are not allowed.

Applicants may confirm receipt of the application and documents by contacting the program contact listed in this NOFO.

E. Application Review Information

1. Criteria.

Grant proposals will be reviewed on a competitive basis. Each proposal will be scored on a 100-point scale. Applicants must demonstrate that they meet the requirements under this NOFO as described throughout. The following criteria will be used as part of the merit review of applications: Applicant Capacity, Documentation of Need, Project Quality and Integration, and Cost-Effectiveness/Return on Investments. Cost sharing will not be considered in the evaluation.

Documentation of Need (15%)	
The project’s focus on specific equity investment eligible communities or populations; identification of barriers that contractors in these target communities or populations may face; and how these barriers will be addressed through the program services.	5%
The project’s identification of the clean energy workforce and economic development needs in the proposed areas and how these needs will be addressed through the program services.	5%
Expected impact of project on the identified target communities, populations, and target trades.	5%
Applicant Capacity (35%)	
Applicant’s qualifications and capacity to administer the Contractor Incubator Program and meet the proposed program outcomes.	10%
Related experience and qualifications of the applicant team’s staff to be assigned to recruit, enroll, train, and provide business development assistance to equity eligible contractors.	10%
The quality of applicant’s experience and ability to use an equity lens for program operations.	10%
Demonstrated knowledge of and experience working with construction and clean energy trades.	5%
Project Quality and Integration (35%)	
Quality of plan to recruit eligible participant contractors and assist with enrollment.	5%
Quality of incubator program design (including tasks, deliverables and milestones), types of services, approach and methods of service delivery.	10%
Quality and feasibility of program goals and outcomes.	5%
Quality of plan to address equity in program design, recruitment, supports and other services.	5%

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Quality of plan to coordinate with other workforce, economic development, and contractor development programs.	5%
Quality of plan to track program outcomes, assess the program, and use this information to improve program delivery.	5%
Cost Effectiveness/Return on Investments (15%)	
The cost efficiency and effectiveness of the planned activities and projected outcomes.	10%
Ability to leverage existing programs, services, and partnerships to improve cost-effectiveness, return on investment, and long-term sustainability of the program	5%

2. Review and Selection Process.

Applications will be graded using the Merit Review Process and scored on the criteria specified in Section E.1. The Department will designate an Evaluation Committee to grade each application received for this funding opportunity. The final score of each Committee member will be calculated and an average of all scores will be the final applicant score. Grants will be awarded according to the following process:

All applications will be sorted by proposed region. The highest-scoring applications per region will be prioritized. The final grants will be negotiated by the Department based on the applications' alignment with the requirements of this NOFO. The purpose of negotiations will be to arrive at acceptable grant terms, including budgetary and scope-of-work provisions, at which time the final decision to make a grant award will be made.

The Merit Based Review process is subject to appeal. However, competitive grant appeals are limited to the evaluation process. Evaluation scores may not be protested. Only the evaluation process is subject to appeal. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Department within 14 calendar days after the date that the grant award notice has been published. The written appeal shall include the name and address of the appealing party, the identification of the grant and a statement of reasons for the appeal. To file an appeal, applicants must submit the appeal in writing and in accordance with the Merit-Based Application Review Appeals Process listed on the Grant Opportunities page of the DCEO website:
<https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/meritappreview.html>.

3. Anticipated Announcement and State Award Dates, if applicable.

After the application period is closed, the Department will conduct a merit based review of eligible applications. Successful applicants will receive a Notice of State Award (NOSA) to initiate the grant agreement phase. During this phase, you will be contacted by a grant manager to develop a grant agreement, which can be a months long process depending on complexity, cooperation, and conformity with all applicable federal and state laws.

The Department reserves the right to issue a reduced award, or not to issue any award.

F. Award Administration Information

1. State Award Notices.

The Notice of State Award (NOSA) will specify the funding terms and specific conditions resulting from the pre-award risk assessments and the merit-based review process. The NOSA must be accepted in the GATA Portal by an authorized representative of the grantee organization. The NOSA is not an authorization to begin performance or incur costs.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

Subrecipients and Subcontractors: Agreement(s) and budget(s) with subrecipients and subcontractors must be pre-approved by and on file with DCEO. Agreements can be submitted to DCEO when available. Subcontractors and subrecipients are subject to all applicable provisions of the Agreement(s) executed between DCEO and the grantee. The successful applicant shall retain sole responsibility for the performance of its subrecipient(s) and/or subcontractor(s).

Grant Uniform Requirements: The Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (30 ILCS 708/1 *et seq.*) (and its related administrative rules, 44 Ill. Admin. Code Part 7000), was enacted to increase the accountability and transparency in the use of grant funds from whatever source and to reduce administrative burdens on both State agencies and grantees by adopting federal guidance and regulations applicable to those grant funds; specifically, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200).

Procurement: Grantees will be required to adhere to methods of procurement per the Procurement Standards (2 CFR 200.317 – 2 CFR 200.327).

3. Reporting.

Periodic Performance Report (PPR) and Periodic Financial Report (PFR)

Grantees funded through this NOFO are required to submit in the format required by the Grantor, at least on a quarterly basis, the PPR and PFR electronically to their assigned grant manager. The first of such reports shall cover the first three months after the award begins. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.328, Periodic Financial Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the report. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.329, Periodic Performance Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the report. Any additional reporting requirements will be disclosed in the NOSA. Grantees are required within 45 calendar days following the end of the period of performance to submit a final closeout report in the format required by the Grantor (See 2 CFR 200.344).

Monitoring

Grantees funded through this NOFO are subject to fiscal and programmatic monitoring visits by the Department in accordance with 2 CFR 200.337. They must have an open-door policy allowing periodic visits by Department monitors to evaluate the progress of the project and provide documentation upon request of the monitor. Program staff will also maintain contact with participants and monitor progress and performance of the contracts. The Department may modify grants based on performance.

Audit

Grantees shall be subject to Illinois' statewide Audit Report Review requirements. Terms of the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (31 USC 7501-7507), Subpart F of 2 CFR Part 200, and the audit rules set forth under the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act shall apply (See 30 ILCS 708/65(c)).

G. State Awarding Agency Contact(s)

Grant Help Desk
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
Email: CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov

H. Other Information, if applicable

The Department reserves the right to request additional information from applicants to evaluate applications.

Submission of an application confers no right to an award or to a subsequent grant agreement. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is not obligated to award any grants under this program, to pay any costs incurred by the applicant in the preparation and submission of an application, or to pay any grant-related costs incurred prior to the grant's beginning date.

Freedom of Information Act/Confidential Information: Applications are subject to disclosure in response to requests received under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/1 et seq.). Information that could reasonably be considered to be proprietary, privileged, or confidential commercial or financial information should be identified as such in the application. The Department of Commerce will maintain the confidentiality of that information only to the extent permitted by law.

NOFO Technical Assistance: DCEO will provide Technical Assistance (TA) throughout the application process in the form of a bidder's conference, office hours, and a Frequently Asked Questions page. More information will be posted at:

[https://illinois.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtceuqrz4rGtKHxa1Wpu88assBkPu1yuRG](https://illinois.zoom.us/join/9876543210). The TA session will be May 20, 2024, at 2:00pm CST. Please register at the link above.

Extensions and Grant Modifications: The Department may authorize the extension of projects awarded under this NOFO. The initial period of performance is expected to be 12 months. The Department intends to offer up to two (2) twelve (12) month extensions for each award based on the performance of the grantee as well as the availability of funds under the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act. The extension, if granted, would occur after a review of programmatic performance and an evaluation of services and outcomes.

Technical Assistance and Professional Development: Grantees are required to attend on-boarding activities; group or individual technical assistance and/or training sessions throughout the year with designated DCEO program staff. Applicants should budget for attendance to training and relevant certifications necessary in delivering the contractor incubator program. Depending on the grantee's needs and capacity, the Department may require grantees to meet with a program administrator or designated program coach on a regular basis or may assign an experienced organization to partner with the grantee to provide assistance.