

Energy Community Reinvestment Report 2024

The Energy Community Reinvestment Act (“Act”) was signed into law as an article within the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA, P.A. 102-0662) by Governor JB Pritzker on September 15, 2021. This Act entailed the enactment of a range of programs to support the Illinois workforce and communities during the transition to renewable energy in Illinois. Section 10-40 of this Act required that the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) prepare a report “365 days after the effective date...and at least once each calendar year thereafter” to provide an update on the impact of those programs and recommendations for future modifications. This is the third such report.

Energy Community Reinvestment Act Implementation

News and information on programs established in this Act are available [here](#). This is also where DCEO provides updates and documentation related to all DCEO CEJA program.

Throughout the process of launching DCEO CEJA programs there has been a strong focus on stakeholder engagement to ensure the programs are designed to help target populations. All CEJA programs are being developed with community and stakeholder input, and all programs will be administered by qualified entities (e.g., training providers, etc.), which will be selected through a competitive process. DCEO has partnered with several public universities to assist with program launch. The general process for rolling out CEJA programs is as follows:

- *Request for Information (RFI) and Community Engagement Process:* For each program, DCEO issued RFIs to ask for input to ensure that the program design is informed by stakeholder feedback and meets the needs of the communities. Stakeholders included impacted communities, clean energy companies, educators, contractors, and the labor community. This was a critical step. The Department hosted listening sessions and networking fairs and conducted surveys and interviews with stakeholders and employers to inform the CEJA program development as well.
- *NOFO Release and Technical Assistance:* The Department developed Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) for the CEJA programs. NOFOs request applications from eligible entities to apply to run CEJA programs. NOFOs are competitive processes outlined by state rules and statutes. They also outline the core elements, requirements, and design for the programs. The Department has engaged in outreach through webinars and in-person networking events to encourage organizations to submit applications. It has also offered technical support through information sessions and office hours for NOFO applicants for each of the NOFOs released.
- *Grantee Selection:* After issuing the NOFO, DCEO evaluates the applicants through a merit review process. An exception was made for Zion, which was named directly in the legislation, subsequent public act.
- *Program Development:* DCEO is developing the data reporting systems, program manuals, grantee training sessions, and other materials necessary to administer these programs. This development also involved stakeholder engagement and feedback.

Energy Transition Workforce Commission

The Energy Transition Workforce Commission (“Commission”) held its first meeting on August 10, 2022. The Commission’s main task is to produce a report regarding the anticipated impact of the energy transition and a comprehensive set of recommendations to address changes to the Illinois workforce during the period of 2020 through 2050, or a later year. To complete this report, DCEO has entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the University of Illinois Springfield. Economist Dr. Ken Kriz led the university team assigned to perform

this analysis. The 2022 and 2023 reports and updates can be found here: [Energy Transition Workforce Commission - Public Notices \(illinois.gov\)](#) The 2023 report was released in March 2024 and can be found here: [energy-transition-workforce-commission-phase-ii-coverletter.report.3.2024.pdf](#) with specific recommendations found here: [the-energy-transition-workforce-commission-cover-letter.recommendations.final-3.19.24.1-.pdf](#).

Energy Transition Community Grants

Energy Transition Community Grants (ETCG) support economic development in communities that have recently experienced or will soon experience a fossil fuel plant, nuclear plant, or coal mine closure. Energy Transition Community Grants (ETCG) support economic development in communities that have recently experienced or will soon experience a fossil fuel plant, nuclear plant, or coal mine closure. On January 29th, 2024, the Round 2 Notice of Funding Opportunity for Phase 1 was posted. May 23rd, 2024, 58 successful grantees were told of their award. A NOFO soliciting applications for Round 3 of ETCG funding is slated for Q1 2025.

Similarly, the CEJA legislation carved out ETCG dollars for the ten (10) municipal entities that experienced the nuclear plant closure prior to CEJA's implementation yet should be eligible for these dollars. The legislation has set aside \$14m over ten (10) years around the Zion Nuclear Plant. Out of the ten (10) municipal agencies seven (7) entities received funds. Grantees for these ETCG and Zion-ETCG can be found [here](#).

DCEO staff will be meeting with the three (3) entities that did not apply to listen and learn more. This meeting will take place in January 2025. It is the intent to come from the meeting with recommendations on the Zion grant opportunities, specifically.

As for the nearly 60 ETCG grantees and the program, it is our recommendation for an increase in program management with the grantees. A stronger emphasis will be placed on the grants intent and background, which will move grantees to incorporate even more focus on CEJA programs/projects.

Displaced Energy Workers Bill of Rights

The Displaced Energy Workers Bill of Rights entails the prompt provision of services to employees upon the announcement of a plant or mine closure, along with new reporting requirements for plant owners.

The NRG Joliet Generating Station transitioned from coal to natural gas in recent years to align with cleaner energy goals. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), in collaboration with the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), also worked closely with unions, peer counselors, and workforce partners to assist the employer in facilitating career transitions and training opportunities as energy workers transitioned responsibilities.

Company	WARN Notification Date	Rapid Response Workshop Dates	Employees Impacted
NRG Joliet Generating Station	N/A	September 20, 2023	N/A – no involuntary employee losses.

DCEO's Rapid Response Unit integrates services for displaced energy workers. These efforts, aligned with the Bill of Rights and the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), to ensure displaced workers receive comprehensive assistance to transition successfully, including access to WIOA programs, training, and entrepreneurial resources through Small Business Development Centers. The range of services provided as part of Rapid Response may include the following: career services such as resume writing, assistance with online job applications, career exploration, labor market information, testing/assessment, career planning, case management, skills upgrade, information on applying for employment benefits, job search and placement assistance, training, or retraining. Training services may include on-

the-job training, classroom training, or incumbent worker training in relation to layoff aversion strategies.

Overall Program Metrics, between 2022-2024, DCEO's Office of Employment and Training (OET) has supported two employers across five locations by delivering Rapid Response workshops with career counseling, financial literacy, and reemployment services, alongside customized efforts like peer counselor training, skills assessments, and referrals to training and entrepreneurial resources, mitigating closure impacts through job placement, tuition reimbursement, cross-training, and career fairs.

DCEO does not collect demographic data of participants affected by energy sector closures but does gather information on job functions. A comprehensive list of job titles held by displaced workers is requested from employers, ensuring tailored support and alignment with workforce transition efforts.

It is recommended to establish a dedicated Compliance Representative to manage and streamline processes when decommissioning is filed. This responsibility would enhance communication and coordination by developing and mandating standardized templates for employers to submit required closure information, worker job functions, and support activities to the DCEO-OET Rapid Response Unit. These templates would ensure consistency, improve data analysis, and provide a structured approach to meeting program requirements efficiently.

Displaced Energy Worker Dependent Transition Scholarship

The Displaced Energy Worker Dependent Transition Scholarship Program provides scholarship assistance to children of eligible displaced energy workers. The program was designed to support students who attend or will attend an undergraduate or graduate program at an Illinois institution and have been impacted by a parent's layoff from a retiring power plant or a closing coal mine. The Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) has promulgated rules for the program authorized by Section 10-30 of the Act, and these can be found in the Illinois Administrative Code Title 23, Part 2746 (effective July 1, 2022).

In FY24 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024) there was one eligible applicant for the program; awardee equals one (1). In FY25 (July 1, 2024, through Nov 30, 2024) there are two eligible applicants; awardee equals one (1). It looks like the same two eligible applicants will be applying for the Spring Semester.

For FY24, \$14,119.25 was paid to the eligible institution. So far in FY25 (July 1 2024 through Nov 30 2024), \$7,996.50 has been paid to the eligible institution.

The demographics are as follows: Two (2) white males; ages 19 and 23. Both are biological children of displaced workers. They are attending Illinois Central College and Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

Despite increased promotion and a press release that was sent out this year, ISAC still sees very low application volume. However, the student that has received the funds is deeply appreciative and has thanked us for the impact it has had on making his education more affordable. Based upon the volume of applications at this time, ISAC does not anticipate awarding the entire \$1.1M appropriation for this fiscal year.

ISAC posts the annual program application on its Student Portal. Additional information about the program, including eligibility criteria and award details can be found [here](#). Prospective applicants can contact ISAC's Call Center for more information at 800.899.ISAC, or email isac.studentservices@illinois.gov. Spanish-speaking counselors are available.

One recommendation to better utilize this program and make a stronger impact on recipients, would be a statute change allowing this scholarship to be renewable for recipients up to 4x or to complete their degree. This is a niche scholarship program and might have a naturally smaller pool of applicants. Providing the funds for a longer duration might help ISAC spend the appropriation and serve our students more robustly.