CEJA Workforce and Contractor Programs

Frequently Asked Questions

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# General questions about CEJA workforce programs

## General CEJA workforce questions

**What is CEJA?**

The Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, or CEJA, is comprehensive energy legislation that expands renewable development, provides funding for electric vehicles and charging stations, creates clean energy workforce training programs, supports communities experiencing a plant closure, and much more. For more information, visit <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.23893.html>.

The CEJA workforce and contractor programs will help Illinois residents prepare for and train to capitalize on jobs in the clean energy industry. These programs will prioritize participation from individuals in communities that historically faced economic and environmental barriers, bolstering a diverse workforce in the clean energy industry.

**What state agencies are implementing CEJA?**

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is charged with implementing [many programs under CEJA,](https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs.html) including the clean jobs workforce and contractor programs.

The following state agencies are also implementing CEJA programs and renewable energy programs:

* [The Illinois Power Agency (IPA)](https://ipa.illinois.gov/) has developed the Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan and is implementing the programs and procurements contained in the Plan, including:
	+ [Illinois Shines](https://illinoisshines.com/) (The Adjustable Block Program).
	+ [Illinois Solar for All](https://www.illinoissfa.com/)
	+ [Energy Workforce Equity](https://energyequity.illinois.gov/) programs and requirements
* The [Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC)](https://icc.illinois.gov/programs/climate-and-equitable-jobs-act-implementation) is implementing programs, initiatives and directives related to public utility programs.
* The [Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)](https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/ceja.html) is establishing rebate and grant programs for electric vehicles and charging stations and overseeing the phase-out of fossil fuel-fired electrical generation units.

**What clean energy industries are the CEJA workforce programs focused on?**

The programs will prepare people for clean energy jobs, defined in the CEJA legislation as “jobs in the solar energy, wind energy, energy efficiency, energy storage, solar thermal, green hydrogen, geothermal, electrical vehicle industries, other renewable energy industries, industries achieving emission reductions, and other related sectors including related industries that manufacture, develop, build, maintain, or provide ancillary services to renewable energy resources or energy efficiency products or services, including the manufacture and installation of healthier building materials that contain fewer hazardous chemicals. “Clean energy jobs” includes administrative, sales, and other support functions within these industries and other related sector industries.”

**Who is eligible to participate in the CEJA workforce and contractor programs?**

While eligibility for program services varies somewhat by program, the programs will serve equity investment eligible individuals, defined as:

* Persons whose primary residence is in an [equity investment-eligible community](https://energyequity.illinois.gov/resources/equity-investment-eligible-community-map.html); or
* Persons who face barriers to employment, including those who are formerly incarcerated or graduates of or current members of the foster care system; or
* Former energy workers.

## Questions about employers and the CEJA workforce programs

**How can employers and industry leaders participate in the workforce programs?**

Clean energy employers, industry groups, and trades are encouraged to participate in the CEJA workforce programs by 1) hiring graduates of the CEJA workforce programs, 2) partnering with the training programs to provide work-based learning or on-the-job training elements to program participants, 3) coordinating with workforce programs to identify curriculum, training, and hiring needs, and 4) supporting training program participants through mentorships and job transition support. Employers and contractors may also wish to participate in the CEJA Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program or the Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program to receive services, training and funds to grow their businesses.

**How will the workforce programs help employers comply with minimum equity standards and requirements?**

CEJA created an equity accountability system mandating minimum equity standards for Illinois Power Agency (IPA) administered programs and procurements. The Minimum Equity Standard went into effect on June 1, 2023 and will require that 10% of the work on renewable energy projects supported through certain IPA programs and procurements be performed by Equity Eligible Persons or contractors. That target will increase to 30% by 2030.

Employers are encouraged to hire individuals from the CEJA workforce programs (once they are in operation) to meet the Minimum Equity Standard. Graduates of the CEJA workforce programs are “equity eligible individuals” that can be counted towards the Minimum Equity Standard. We encourage employers to learn more about the Minimum Equity Standards and register as a clean energy company on the Energy Workforce Equity Portal (<https://energyequity.illinois.gov/>) to connect to job seekers (including CEJA workforce program graduates) and post jobs.

**How can we submit a job posting for participants of the CEJA workforce programs?**

The CEJA workforce programs will begin training participants this winter and we expect that employers will be able to begin hiring graduates of these programs in the Spring. More information about how to hire graduates will be available at that time. In the meantime, we encourage you to check out the Energy Equity Office’s “Energy Workforce Equity Portal.” There are resources for employers at this website: <https://energyequity.illinois.gov/employers.html>. Here you can register as a clean energy company to be able to submit job postings and view a list of Equity Eligible Persons.

## CEJA program implementation questions

**When will the Notices of Funding Opportunities for the CEJA workforce programs be released?**

* The NOFO for the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program was released April 27, 2023, and applications were due July 3, 2023. https://www.illinoisworknet.com/cejaclimateworkspreapp
* The NOFO for the Energy Transition Navigator Program was released June 6, 2023, and applications are due August 15, 2023. https://www.illinoisworknet.com/cejaenergy
* The NOFO for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program was released July 6, 2023, and applications are due September 1, 2023. https://www.illinoisworknet.com/cejaworkforcenetwork
* The NOFO for the Contractor Incubator Program will be released in August of 2023 (estimated release).
* The NOFO for the Returning Resident Clean Jobs Program will be released in September or October of 2023.

**Who is DCEO partnering with to implement the CEJA workforce programs?**

DCEO’s research and facilitation partners currently include several public universities across the state and the Illinois Community College Board. These partners are working with DCEO to conduct a statewide engagement process, develop the programs, create the clean jobs curriculum, prepare Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), and develop the infrastructure to manage the programs. DCEO’s ultimate goal is to develop many partnerships to implement these CEJA workforce programs.

DCEO’s research and facilitation partners include the Illinois Community College Board, the University of Illinois, Illinois State University, Northern Illinois University, University of Illinois Springfield, Governor’s State University, Western Illinois University, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Chicago State University, and the Illinois Innovation Network.

**When will the CEJA workforce and contractor programs start delivering training and services?**

The CEJA workforce programs will begin to enroll participants this winter; stay tuned for more information. We will announce the launch of the various programs on this [webpage](https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs/ceja-program-announcements.html) when they are open for enrollment.

**How did public input inform CEJA workforce program design?**

DCEO hosted listening sessions, conducted surveys, and launched several Requests for Information to gather input from interested stakeholders about developing the workforce and contractor programs. Results from this stakeholder outreach can be found [here](https://uofi.app.box.com/file/1108000488407?s=806vpi07qwy2kljz2hzbwxap06wdhiht). Though the initial public input period has passed, people may send questions and comments to ceo.ceja@illinois.gov.

**How is DCEO being intentional about listening to and involving people and organizations with deep roots in environmental justice communities and R3 communities?**

In addition to the outreach and input sessions described above, the Department hosted meetings with equity-focused community-based organizations to solicit feedback on curriculum and program design. The Department continues to reach out to communities and community-based organizations, employers, workforce agencies, and other stakeholders to solicit input on program design and implementation.

**How will DCEO ensure CEJA equity goals are met?**

The Department seeks to utilize an equity lens in all aspects of program design and administration to ensure equity goals are met. The legislation itself establishes eligibility requirements for participation in these programs. In addition, the merit review rubric for grant applications will award points for demonstrating a history of experience serving the eligible communities, capacity to do so, and for strong plans to serve those targeted populations. The Department will collect data from grantees to ensure that grantees are enrolling the appropriate numbers of participants from equity investment eligible populations. It will provide training and support to grantees to meet equity requirements and create an equity-focused program culture. The barrier reduction fund will ensure participants are able to participate in the program by reducing barriers to entry and completion. Finally, state and federal incentive funding structures and minimum equity standards will ensure that employers are motivated to hire graduates of CEJA programs. Transition and follow-up services will ensure that participants continue to receive support to get a job and succeed in that job.

**If CEJA is trying to develop a system that will positively impact communities decades into the future, what will happen after the three-year grant period ends? What supports are planned to achieve programmatic sustainability beyond the first three years?**

The CEJA workforce programs are expected to continue well beyond the initial 3-year period. The Department shall initially select grantees to deliver programs for a twelve-month period, with two twelve-month renewals, and will subsequently select grantees every 3 years.

## Questions about staying informed and applying for funding

**How can I stay informed?**

* Fill out our [interest form](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/354dfa104e0f4190b0e9f2b1404a6b03) to receive regular updates and announcements.
* Check the [DCEO website](https://dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs/ceja-program-announcements.html) for periodic updates and announcements.
* Go to <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/nofo> to see current and past CEJA Notices of Funding Opportunity.

**How do I apply for funding to deliver the workforce or contractor programs?**

Organizations interested in applying for funding to deliver one or more of the workforce and contractor programs are encouraged to respond to Notices of Funding Opportunity which will be released in the spring and summer of 2023.

**Who can apply for funding to deliver the CEJA workforce or contractor programs?**

Eligibility for delivering the different workforce and contractor programs varies by program. Organizations can deliver all program elements themselves or can subcontract with other organizations, labor organizations, or educational institutions to provide program elements.

**How do I find potential partners or employer partners to deliver the CEJA workforce or contractor programs?**

See our [Potential Partner List](https://uofi.box.com/s/3zl0x41n3ihumlcsfocbrpmgbf0e42t2) for a list of organizations, employers, and training providers who may be interested in partnering for one or more of the CEJA workforce programs.

**Can applicants apply to deliver more than one CEJA workforce program?**

Yes, but please consider your capacity if selected to deliver multiple grants. Applicants will not be penalized for applying for more than one grant.

**Can community colleges apply to deliver the workforce programs? How should they work with other organizations to deliver these programs?**

Community colleges are considered a “community based organization” and may apply to deliver a number of the different CEJA workforce programs, including the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program. We encourage community colleges to partner with other nonprofit community-based organizations, employers and workforce entities to apply to deliver the CEJA workforce programs. Community colleges are NOT considered “community based providers,” and are therefore ineligible to deliver the Energy Transition Navigator Program.

**What is the role for High Schools in the CEJA workforce programs?**

High schools play a critical role in increasing awareness of clean energy career opportunities for young people. Energy Transition Navigators are encouraged to provide outreach to high school students, teachers, and counselors to encourage young people to pursue clean energy jobs and to participate in the CEJA workforce programs. Participants for the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program must be 16 years of age or older, so there may be opportunities for High Schools to partner with Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Centers. The eligibility age for participation in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is 18, but high school students could be referred to this program after they graduate.

**How is DCEO supporting grant applicants and grantees who are selected to deliver the CEJA workforce programs?**

DCEO will provide several opportunities for NOFO assistance at in-person networking events, informational webinars and during individualized online technical assistance hours for potential applicants. If you are interested in taking advantage of these opportunities, please watch the NOFO websites and email announcements, where the Department will announce dates, times, and registration links.

Additionally, the Department will provide training and professional development to grantees once they have been selected to ensure high-quality and successful programs. The Department remains committed to looking for further opportunities to build upon these services to expand the ability of providers to be competitive in the grant application process and to successfully deliver programs.

***Have a question about the CEJA workforce or contractor programs not addressed by this FAQ? Please send us an email at*** ***CEO.CEJA@illinois.gov******.***

# Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program (“workforce hubs”)

## Timing questions

**When was the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program released, and when are proposals due?**

The NOFO was released on July 7, 2023, and applications for the first round of reviews are due September 1, 2023.

**What does the first round of review mean? Will there be another round?**

DCEO will review all applications as a group that come in by the initial deadline. If the agency does not award grants in all 13 workforce hub locations defined in the NOFO, they will review applications on a rolling basis until funding has been expended.

**When will grantees be selected?**

The Department expects to announce awards 11-15 weeks after the September 1 due date.

**When will the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Hubs start enrolling participants?**

We expect the Workforce Hubs to start enrolling participants in the winter (2023/24).

**Will this grant program be offered next year as well?**

The grants are for a three-year cycle, with an initial period of performance of 12 months. The Department intends to offer up to two twelve-month renewals for each award based on the performance of the grantee. The Department expects to release another Notice of Funding Opportunity for this program every three years.

## Grantees and partners questions

**How do I find organizations or employers interested in partnering for this funding opportunity?**

Check out our [CEJA Potential Partner list](https://uofi.app.box.com/file/1142346867267?s=3zl0x41n3ihumlcsfocbrpmgbf0e42t2), which includes a list of organizations interested in partnering, as well as clean energy employers and training providers. You can be added to the list by emailing ceo.ceja@illinois.gov with your name, organization, role, email, and phone number.

**When you apply to the grant, do all the positions in the organization need to be already occupied by somebody, or can they be hired once the grant is approved?**

Organizations can hire staff after the grant is approved. The staffing plan, budget, and budget justification will need to reflect the intended roles / full time employees that you plan to hire.

**Are subrecipients able to hire contractors?**

Yes, just make sure it’s included in the budget and corresponding justification and narrative documentation.

**Are there any limits on how many partners or sub-contractors a Hub lead can submit a proposal with?**

Currently there is no maximum number of collaborators permitted on an application. As long as you can justify your partners sufficiently within the application, we encourage you to seek as many partners as necessary! Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are required for all partnerships to outline roles and responsibilities.

**What are the roles and responsibilities of the lead organization in a hub and where does the lead entity's responsibility begin and end? If subcontractors don’t fully expend funds or meet their requirements, who is held responsible?**

The lead grantee is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the program is delivered as intended, that program outcomes are met, and for dispersing funds to any subgrantees, as outlined in the budget. Subcontractors are responsible for providing program elements and carrying out portions of the scope of work. They are accountable to the primary grantee for this work. A memorandum of understanding should be developed to outline roles, responsibilities, and budgets.

**Will grantees with existing partnerships with federal initiatives or existing grant funds from federal initiatives gain an advantage over those who do not?**

Leveraging the experience of partners and existing resources is key to a successful application, but the Department also seeks to ensure equity and access for smaller or less experienced organizations who may not have the established history in this space. Just because an organization has the capacity to win a previous federal or state award does not necessarily mean they are the appropriate entity to manage a CEJA Grant Program. With that said, integrated approaches and strong partnerships are preferrable to siloed approaches.

**How can community colleges work with community based organizations to deliver the program?**

We encourage community colleges to partner with community-based organizations, employers, and other entities to apply to deliver the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program.

**How will the Energy Transition Navigator Program work with the workforce hubs?**

The Energy Transition Navigator Program will help the workforce hubs recruit participants. A separate Notice of Funding Opportunity has been issued for this program. These two programs must work closely together. Energy Transition Navigators will conduct outreach to equity-focused populations and direct them to the workforce programs that best meet their needs. They will help the workforce hubs provide career guidance and support to participants as they enroll in the programs. Energy Transition Navigators will also engage with other organizations and employers to spread the word about the CEJA workforce programs and coordinate job placement efforts.

**What's the difference between "community-based organizations" and "community-based providers"?**

"Community-based organizations" are eligible to apply to deliver the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program. As defined in the legislation, community-based organizations include community colleges and potentially other governmental institutions. "Community-based providers" are eligible to apply to deliver the Energy Transition Navigator Program. As defined in the legislation, they are “not-for-profit organizations that have a history of serving low-wage or low-skilled workers or individuals from economically disadvantaged communities.” This definition does not specifically include community colleges or other institutions, so they are not eligible for programs that list “community-based providers” as the eligible entities.

**Do the subgrantees need to be a not-for-profit organization too?**

Main grantees must be a community based organization (a nonprofit organization, community college, or municipality), but subgrantees/subrecipients do not. Private businesses can't apply to be the principal awardee for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, but they can be a contractor or subawardee (for instance, a private company might be part of a team to deliver work-based learning elements or solar training).

**Do the subgrantees need to be GATA pre-qualified?**

Subgrantees and subcontractors are NOT required to be GATA pre-qualified, but they are required to be in good standing with the state (not on Stop Payment List, Excluded Parties List, etc.)

**Are entities located outside of the 13 hub areas eligible to apply for this funding? How can entities participate if they are outside of the hub areas? How does an entity know if they fit into a hub site?**

Please note that the hubs will serve the 13 areas identified in the legislation *as well as the surrounding areas*. Entities outside of the 13 hub areas that have experience serving equity-eligible communities in the areas surrounding the hubs are encouraged to apply as a part of the applicant team. They may consider partnering with the lead applicant to provide training in satellite locations in the areas surrounding the 13 hubs. Community based organizations providing barrier reduction services must be capable of providing services to people throughout the region—within the hub areas as well as in the surrounding areas.

**Does the lead applicant have to be an Illinois-based firm?**

To be eligible, lead applicants must "have at least one main operating office" in the hub region they propose to serve. They also must "provide employment, skill development or related services to members of the community" in the areas they are proposing to serve and "demonstrate relationships with residents and other organizations serving the community." The lead applicant must be based in Illinois and/or operate in Illinois to meet these requirements, and the applicant team as a whole must demonstrate their ability to collectively serve equity focused populations in the proposed region. The lead applicant may subcontract or partner with an organization that is based outside of Illinois if necessary to deliver all program elements. Note that any organizations that deliver training must be approved to operate in Illinois by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

**Should community-based organizations (CBOs) be the applicant?**

Only community-based organizations are eligible to be the lead applicant for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program. The definition of "community-based organization" includes community colleges, nonprofits, and local governments. See "definitions" on page 3 of the NOFO. Team partners or subcontractors may include other for-profit organizations, employers, and training providers.

**Are instructors required to be certified to deliver the curriculum?**

The [Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework](https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/ceja/documents/clean-jobs-curriculum-framework.pdf) provides instructor requirements for the different aspects of the curriculum. For the bridge program, instructors must have an intermediate to advanced knowledge in construction, the building trades, manufacturing technology or another clean energy related field. For the solar training option, instructors must be NABCEP certified training providers. Please see the curriculum framework for other instructor requirements.

**Does DCEO have a way or a plan to put less experienced groups in touch with more experienced groups to ensure capacity?**

The Department certainly encourages collaboration and knowledge-sharing between more and less experienced groups. The Regional Networking Fairs and Potential Partnering List can help applicants identify other organizations in their area that they might partner with or learn from. After grantees are selected, the Department will provide technical assistance and support to grantees, as needed. This support may include pairing less experienced grantees with more experienced organizations. The Department is also exploring additional technical assistance efforts to support less-experienced groups in the future.

## Application questions

**If an organization wants to apply for one or more CEJA programs, do we have to apply for both grants?**

Yes, if your organization would like to fulfill multiple aspects of programming across the Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), you should apply for each of those NOFOs separately.

**Can an organization serve more than one Workforce Network Hub location?**

Yes, organizations may serve more than one Workforce Network Hub Location (as defined on page 2 of the NOFO). Note that an applicant must submit multiple applications if they intend to administer the program in more than one of the Workforce Hub Locations.

**How many grants will be awarded under the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program?**

The Department expects to make at least one award in each of the Workforce Hub locations through this NOFO. Note that the Department may award multiple grants in a Workforce Hub Location.

**Is it necessary to submit the Notice of Intent to Apply?**

Submitting the Notice of Intent to Apply is optional and will assist the Department in planning the merit review of applications. See the NOFO webpage for due dates and a link to the form: <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/cejaworkforcenetwork>

**If we're applying as a group of organizations (one primary applicant, but number of partners), do you want the Applicant Team Organization & Qualifications section to have info about all the partners or only the primary applicant?**

The Applicant Team Qualifications section as well as the Staffing Plan should include information about the main applicant as well as the whole team. Please provide information about how your team collectively has the qualifications and expertise to deliver the program.

**What files need to be filled out by the main applicant versus the subrecipients?**

The main applicant will submit the final package, including the technical proposal, budget, budget justification, attachments, applications, documents of good standing, etc. Subrecipients should be included in the staffing plan and resumes (if subrecipients are included in the key staff). They should submit separate budget documents to the main applicant so that the main applicant can fill out the final budget template, and should create a Memorandum of Understanding documenting the scope of work they will be responsible for executing.

**Is "Barrier Reduction" a separate program one has to apply for?**

Barrier Reduction funds are embedded in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program. Applicants for this program will need to propose how they will deliver the Barrier Reduction services and identify an organization or staff to deliver the Barrier Reduction services.

## Budget and funding questions

**How much funding is available for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program and Barrier Reduction Program?**

$22.9 million per year is available for the delivery of the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program and up to $15 million per year will be allocated to the Workforce Hubs for the distribution of the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program services and funds for program participants. DCEO will issue up to 13 awards for the combined $37.9 million per year in funding, subject to appropriation. When putting together a budget, applicants should list expenses for the two programs separately.

**Will funds be distributed evenly or non-evenly across the hubs?**

Total amount of funding per award may range from $1 million to $5 million per year for each of the workforce hub areas. Hubs serving a larger number of equity investment eligible individuals (such as those in Chicago) should consider applying for more funding than hubs serving fewer numbers of equity investment eligible individuals (such as Champaign). Please consider capacity and the number of participants your team can reasonably serve when putting together a budget.

**Can we request funds for building renovation or construction of our training facility?**

No. Program funds are not allowed for construction or capital expenditures. The budget may include training-related supplies and materials (weatherization materials to teach students how to weatherize, using your building as a "job site"). The reasonableness and allowability of the costs will be reviewed when the grant is established.

**Can program funds be used for construction, material, and supply costs associated with work-based learning opportunities? (For example, work-based learning that involves renovating a community center or building a Habitat for Humanity home).**

Expenses categorized as construction or capital costs will not be allowed, but training program costs (including costs associated with work-based learning opportunities) are allowed, including costs associated with tools, work wear, equipment, training materials and training supplies. The material costs associated with construction projects such as a community center renovation or building a Habitat Home (which are extensive) are not allowed.

**Can we request funds for equipment?**

Yes, grant funds can be used for the purchase of program-related equipment.

**Are train-the-trainer activities a permissible program cost?**

Yes, program funds may be used for train-the-trainer expenses to get training program staff certified to teach the training that is part of CEJA programming.

**Can license fees be included in the budget, such as technology licenses?**

License fees can be included in the budget if the licensing is directly attributable to the program. Licensing for common desktop programs that your organization uses across all of your programs may be considered part of the indirect costs.

## Performance-based payment questions

**How will the performance-based repayment work, especially for organizations that may not have the capacity to pay for everything up front without surety that they’ll be reimbursed?**

Grantees will be reimbursed for their work based on their performance in meeting performance targets (outcomes) established during grant negotiations. These performance targets include participant enrollments, participant completions, and participant transitions (job placement, advanced training). Payment will be prorated based on the extent to which they meet their targets. Real time data reporting will be required to show progress towards targets and will be used to determine reimbursements on a monthly basis. DCEO will negotiate advance payments (typically 10% of the grant) based on a risk assessment of each grantee before performance targets are met.

**Will there be upfront funding for capacity building or just getting the program started?**

Yes, though the amount has yet to be determined. Grantees will have the option to request start-up funds at the beginning of the grant period to build their programs. After an initial period, grantees will be reimbursed based on their performance meeting outcome metrics. More information will be provided about the performance-based payment during the grant negotiation period.

**Are participant training stipends subject to the performance-based payment model, or is that a direct reimbursable cost?**

Participant training stipends are considered a Program expense, not a barrier reduction service, and are therefore subject to the performance-based payment model.

**What is the structure of the funding? How are funds dispersed among partners?**

The lead grantee is responsible for providing funds to any identified partners or subgrantees based on services provided. The Department will utilize a performance based payment model to disperse funds to the lead grantee, based on the entire grantee team's performance in meeting outcome metrics, and the lead grantee will disperse funds to team partners.

## Geography questions

**Is the Hub a physical location or a team?**

In the NOFO, "Workforce Hub" refers to the organization or team that will deliver the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program in one of the 13 designated hub areas. The Workforce Hub will deliver training and services at one or more physical locations within or near the designated hub areas. Locations should be accessible to equity investment eligible communities within and around the hub area.

**Where will the workforce hubs be located?**

The workforce hubs will be geographically distributed across Illinois, serving people who reside in or near the following 13 hub areas: Chicago (South Side), Chicago (Southwest & West Sides), Waukegan, Rockford, Aurora, Joliet, Peoria, Champaign, Danville, Decatur, Carbondale, East St. Louis, and Alton. Workforce hubs will offer training and services in these hub service areas. Teams that apply to manage the workforce hubs are invited to propose the exact locations where services and training will be provided.

**Where can I find a map of R3 and Environmental Justice Communities in Illinois?**

See page 4 of the NOFO. R3 Map: <https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility>; Environmental Justice Map: <https://www.illinoissfa.com/environmental-justice-communities/> . The Equity Investment Eligible Community map identifies locations that are Environmental Justice communities and/or R3 communities <https://energyequity.illinois.gov/resources/equity-investment-eligible-community-map.html>

**How will ancillary locations be served if they are located far away from the Hub?**

Equity investment eligible persons and communities are eligible to participate in the CEJA workforce programs, regardless of whether they live in one of the 13 hub areas. Please also note that the Workforce Hubs are required to serve people in the surrounding areas as well. Workforce Hub applicant teams are encouraged to propose programs that serve equity investment eligible individuals and communities within the hub area *and* in the surrounding areas. Hubs may propose to offer training in "satellite" locations around the hub location (e.g., the Decatur Hub could propose to offer satellite training in Springfield). They may also propose to offer portions of their training online to accommodate people who live far away. Hubs are encouraged to recruit eligible people in surrounding communities and to provide support to remove barriers to participation (such as travel and hotel cost reimbursement if they must travel longer distances to participate).

**Why is Springfield not included as a possible Workforce Hub location?**

Springfield was not listed as one of the 13 hubs in the CEJA legislation. However, Springfield residents can still participate in one of the hubs and may be considered one of the “surrounding areas” served by the Decatur hub. Applicant teams may propose to serve Springfield as a “satellite location” of one of these hubs or they may work to remove transportation barriers for Springfield residents seeking to participate in nearby training in Decatur.

**Why wasn’t south suburban Cook County included in the list of areas for a hub?**

South suburban Chicago was not listed as one of the 13 hubs in the CEJA legislation. However, residents in the area can still participate in one of the hubs, and south suburban Cook County may be considered one of the “surrounding areas” served by nearby hubs. Applicant teams may propose to serve south suburban Cook County as a “satellite location” of the Chicago hubs or they may work to remove transportation barriers for other Cook County residents seeking to participate in nearby training in west or south Chicago.

**Can community colleges outside of the 13 local hubs serve as satellites to the program? How can they be connected to the CEJA programs?**

Yes. The Workforce Hubs will serve the thirteen assigned locations AND surrounding areas. Community colleges in those surrounding areas, especially those that serve equity investment eligible communities, may partner with a hub to provide "satellite" training to people in the surrounding areas.

**What if training locations are close to an equity investment eligible community but not within the community exactly?**

Consider accessibility--If the training location is not within an equity investment eligible community, is it a location where people from equity eligible communities can easily get to?

**The NOFO refers us to R3 areas at** [**https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility**](https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility)**, which contains the table of R3 areas in Illinois including those marked “High Need Area.” Is the Department’s interest in any R3 area, or only those [areas] that the table lists as “High Need”?**

Competitive applications will identify specific high need areas in their region to target for recruitment, outreach and training delivery. Applicants should prioritize areas that are both R3 and Environmental Justice areas and may propose to prioritize “high need” R3 areas as well. People who have been incarcerated or who are current or former members of the foster care system and former energy workers should also be prioritized, regardless of where they live.

**Can applicants propose a different hub location, apart from the 13 designated hubs?**

The general locations of the 13 hubs have already been selected. Per the legislation, at least one hub will be located in or near each of the following areas: Chicago (South Side), Chicago (Southwest and West Sides), Waukegan, Rockford, Aurora, Joliet, Peoria, Champaign, Danville, Decatur, Carbondale, East St. Louis, and Alton. Hubs serving these locations may propose additional satellite training locations in the surrounding areas (e.g., Decatur could propose to provide training in Springfield as well).

**Could you please provide clarity on how the boundaries are defined regarding recruiting and serving program participants in the two Chicago hubs? Are we restricted from serving a participant in the Chicago South Side region who meets all eligibility criteria but resides on the north side of the city? Additionally, where are the lines drawn between the South Side and Southwest/West Sides with respect to eligible recruitment areas?**

The Workforce Hubs and Energy Transition Navigators are required to serve the designated hub areas as well as the "surrounding areas." Thus, the Chicago Southwest and West Side Hub could also propose to serve eligible participants in the Northside of Chicago, and the Chicago South Side Hub could propose to serve eligible participants in Calumet City and Chicago Heights. Applicants should propose to serve high-need areas within the designated hub *and the surrounding area*. The Department will work with grantees to develop procedures and strategies to coordinate the delivery of CEJA program services in the Workforce Hub Regions.

**Will the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program serve the West Central Illinois region? If not, are we able to submit an application and be considered?**

The program will serve all eligible Illinois residents, including those who live in West Central Illinois. The Workforce Hub areas of the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program were established in the CEJA legislation. Workforce Hub sites serving West Central Illinois may include Peoria, Alton, East St. Louis, and Decatur. Please note that these hubs are required to serve the "surrounding areas" as well. Teams that propose to deliver the Peoria or Decatur hub could propose to serve Springfield, Galesburg, or Maccomb as well. The Department will consider proposals for "satellite" training locations in the areas surrounding the hub, as well as proposals that make training more accessible for people who live farther away (e.g., offering online training options or services to reduce transportation barriers). If your organization serves one of these "surrounding areas" consider partnering with the nearest Workforce Hub as part of a larger applicant team to provide training and services to people in your area.

**Will the hubs be located or based out of the current WIOA One Stop Centers?**

Applicants should propose training at locations that are accessible to equity investment eligible communities within their region. These proposed locations may be in places that currently offer DCEO-funded employment and training services, but this not a requirement or expectation.

**Is census data for R3 and Environmental Justice communities available? Where can we find it?**

The R3 Map (<https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility>) and R3 Table, as well as the environmental justice communities map (<https://www.illinoissfa.com/environmental-justice-communities/>) provide census tract numbers for eligible areas. You can then use the census tract numbers to look up demographic information about these tracts, using sites such as data.census.gov. The Department is working on a map that will provide more information on eligible census tracts, which will be available to grantees.

## Participant eligibility questions

**Could you explain where the "equity-focused populations," formerly incarcerated individuals and graduates of the foster care system fit within the 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 breakdown of participants?**

Among the two thirds of geographic placements, preference will be given for people with barriers to employment (including people who have been incarcerated, who are current or former members of the foster care system, people who have low educational attainment, and people who have language barriers). Placements for the remaining third of program applicants are not required to be based on geography and will be prioritized for people with barriers to employment (including people who have been incarcerated, who are current or former members of the foster care system, people who have low educational attainment, and people who have language barriers), as well as displaced energy workers. Thus, formerly incarcerated individuals and graduates of the foster care system should be prioritized for *all placements*.

**Do the placement priorities apply to each individual hub, or to the statewide program as a whole? Our hub does not have a large number of individuals living in R3 or EJ designated communities.**

The placement priorities apply to each hub. If there are relatively fewer eligible individuals in your region, you may need to lower your estimate of funding and participants. You should also consider recruiting eligible participants in the areas surrounding the hub area (e.g., the Decatur hub may propose to serve Springfield as well).

**Can you explain your justification for workforce hub program placements? My reading of the legislation is that 1/3 + 2/3 = 1.**

The legislation states that at least one third of program placements are for applicants who reside in both EJ AND R3 communities and two thirds of placements are for people residing in EJ OR R3 communities, and the remaining placements are for people who face barriers to employment and displaced energy workers. We interpret this to mean that the two thirds placements (either EJ OR R3) INCLUDES the one third (BOTH EJ AND R3). The remaining one third of placements do not need to be based on geography. All placements will prioritize people with barriers to employment (including people who have been incarcerated and foster care alumni as well as displaced energy workers).

## Training curriculum and delivery questions

**What will be taught in the training program?**

Workforce hubs will offer training, certification preparation, and skill development for entry-level jobs in clean energy-related industries. This program will utilize a *Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework* developed by DCEO and its implementation partners and prepared via a broad stakeholder process. This curriculum framework identifies career pathways, curriculum requirements, and skill sets needed for participants to enter clean energy jobs.

**What clean energy jobs will the workforce hubs provide training for?**

State and regional employment data and a stakeholder engagement process have informed the creation of several “job-specific training options” included in the clean jobs curriculum framework. The workforce hubs are required to select at least two “job-specific training options” to train people for entry-level jobs in solar, wind, building energy efficiency, and electric vehicle maintenance. The clean jobs curriculum framework provides information about the specific clean energy jobs that these training options will prepare people for. Workforce hubs have the flexibility to select the job-specific training options that best meet their region’s needs based on employer outreach and regional labor market analysis. They can also propose an alternative job-specific training option.

**Where can I find the clean energy curriculum framework?**

It is linked in the NOFO, on the NOFO webpages, and can be found here: <https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/ceja/documents/clean-jobs-curriculum-framework.pdf>

**How was the clean jobs curriculum framework developed?**

DCEO engaged stakeholders in the fall of 2022 to solicit input on what should be included in the clean jobs curriculum framework and how it should be delivered. The DCEO team developing the clean jobs curriculum framework includes instructional designers from public universities in Illinois and members of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). Drafts of the curriculum framework have been shared with representative community-based organizations, training providers (including community college training providers and community-based organizations), industry leaders, and clean energy employers for feedback. Webinar discussions were held in February and early March with clean energy employers and other stakeholders to gather feedback on the curriculum framework.

**Can you describe the bridge program? Does everyone have to take it?**

The bridge program is intended to provide the job readiness skills and clean energy basics needed for various clean energy training programs and jobs. This training will introduce clean energy job opportunities and help participants develop the skills they need to succeed in the workplace. The bridge program consists of two main components:

* Essential employability skills (goal setting, dependability and reliability, time management, adaptability, financial literacy, getting and keeping a job, emotion management, verbal, written, and digital communication, teamwork, customer service, critical thinking and problem solving, workplace rights, and diversity and inclusion).
* Clean energy basics (clean energy careers, energy and sustainability fundamentals, safety basics, construction basics, electrical basics, and building energy basics).

The curriculum framework includes instruction for pre-assessments that can be used to determine whether participants can skip some or all of the bridge program.

**What job-specific training options will be offered?**

After participants complete or test out of the bridge program, they will transition into the job-specific training option that best meets their needs and interests. Workforce hubs must offer participants at least two job-specific training options that align with the demand in the area. Workforce hubs may choose two of the following job-specific training options (described in the curriculum framework) or may propose a different job-specific training option.

* Solar PV (installer, sales, and design)
* HVAC (installer and technician)
* Auto mechanic with specific electric vehicle and hybrid training
* Wind (turbine technician/installation)
* Energy auditor (residential focus)
* Weatherization (installation, sales, technician)

Workforce Hubs should select the job-specific training options based on regional job needs, employer engagement, and training gaps. Workforce Hubs may also propose to develop a different job-specific training option *not* included in the list.

**How many training programs should I have?**

The Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework requires all hubs to provide a "bridge program" as well as at least two job-specific training options for participants. Applicants may propose more than two job-specific training options based on the needs of their region.

**How long is the training?**

The total length of the training is a program design question that must be answered by the applicant in the technical proposal and attachments based on the targeted occupations and the assessment of the training needs of the program participants. The Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework recommends hour ranges for different aspects of the curriculum. The Bridge Program is 120-200 hours. Job-specific training options range from about 80 hours to 300 hours. Applicants are encouraged to propose hours within the range outlined in the Framework.

**How much customization is allowed for the training in the Workforce Hubs?**

The Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework outlines the minimum requirements (objectives, content areas, certifications) for the training programs, but Workforce Hubs will have flexibility to propose additional content, the specific curriculum they will use, delivery methods, work-based learning opportunities and more. In addition, Workforce Hubs can select the "job specific training options" to meet regional employment needs, and can even propose a job-specific training option not included in the Framework.

**Can hubs direct participants to existing clean energy training programs?**

Yes. Existing clean energy training programs may be included among the hub training program options, but they must meet requirements described in the NOFO and the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework.

**Can Workforce Hubs propose to offer pre-apprenticeship training?**

No. The Workforce Hubs are required to align their training program with the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework, which is different from the construction-focused training required by the Climate Works pre-apprenticeship program. Though there is some overlap in the curriculum between the two programs, the main goal of the Workforce Hubs is to prepare people for entry level clean energy jobs, whereas the main goal of the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program is to prepare people for apprenticeships.

**Can workforce hubs direct participants to work-based or on-the-job training opportunities?**

Yes. Work-based learning is a strongly encouraged best practice—and a curriculum requirement! Some clean energy employers may be interested in hiring people directly from the bridge program and providing training themselves. Other clean energy employers may be interested in providing work-based training opportunities to participants while completing the training program. Workforce hubs are encouraged to form partnerships with employers providing work-based learning or on-the-job training opportunities to participants.

**Can we partner with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity to provide work-based learning opportunities? Can the costs associated with building a Habitat Home be included in the budget?**

Partnering with local employers or nonprofits to provide work-based learning opportunities is allowed and instrumental in creating employment opportunities for participants with barriers to employment. A minimum of 10% of training hours should be devoted to work-based learning. However, the program will not cover the building material costs associated with building a Habitat Home, which are extensive. Applicants would need to partner with Habitat Chapters or other organizations to cover the building material costs.

**Will one industry or occupation cluster be favored over another? Or will an integrated approach to multiple industries or occupational clusters be favored over an approach that is siloed?**

The Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework requires Workforce Hubs to provide broad clean jobs training through the Bridge Program, as well as industry or occupational training by offering up to two job-specific or industry-specific training options (such as solar, wind, or HVAC training). In selecting these options, Hubs should consider regional job needs, employer partnerships, and existing training program availability. The Curriculum Plan attachment requires that applicants demonstrate a need for the training. Some jobs (such as solar jobs) are in high demand throughout the state, while other jobs (such as wind jobs) may be concentrated in certain areas of the state. The Department favors approaches that do not merely train people for one specific job, but that provide skills and career trajectories that prepare people for a wide variety of clean energy jobs.

**Can students receive funding to complete degree or certificate programs that contain the clean job training outlined in the curriculum framework? For example, an automotive certificate that also contains EV training since that foundational knowledge is required to work on EVs.**

Yes, Hubs can request funding for a larger certificate program that provide foundational knowledge required by the industry, as long as they meet the specific clean energy content requirements outlined in the curriculum framework.

**What are the job titles and jobs that are included in the Clean Energy Jobs Network?**

The Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program prepares people for a variety of clean energy jobs (see definition section of the NOFO). Specifically, the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework (https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/ceja/documents/clean-jobs-curriculum-framework.pdf) outlines a number of "job specific training options" that Workforce Hubs can select to prepare people for a number of in-demand entry level clean energy jobs. Each job specific training option lists a number of jobs/roles that the training focuses on, as well as some career progression options. Workforce Hubs may also propose a different job-specific training option for additional clean energy jobs.

**What solar jobs are included in the Solar Curriculum?**

See the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework, page 24. The solar curriculum will train people for the following jobs: Solar PV System Installer, Solar PV System Site Evaluator/Designer, and Solar PV System Sales Representative. Career progression options include Solar PV Sales Representative and Site Assessor, Solar PV Crew Chief, Solar PV Project Manager, PV System Inspector, Solar Field Technician, and Solar Project Developer.

**Will the Workforce Network Program provide training in weatherization and energy efficiency?**

The Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program will train people for a variety of clean energy jobs, including energy efficiency and weatherization jobs. Workforce Hubs will have flexibility to select training options that include weatherization and energy efficiency, based on demand for these jobs in their area.

**Can applicants propose to train people for agricultural (e.g., hydroponic farming), biofuel, or environmental/natural resource jobs?**

These jobs are *not* included in the job-specific training options of the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework. Applicants may propose alternative job-specific training options, but these alternative options must train people for “clean energy jobs,” as defined in the legislation. The CEJA legislation definition of "clean energy jobs" for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program does NOT include agriculture, biofuel, and natural resource industries, but DOES include "industries achieving emission reductions." To the extent that agricultural, biofuel, and natural resource industries are achieving *demonstrated* emission reductions, they may be considered clean energy jobs.

**Can we propose to train or credential current/incumbent workers? If a contractor wants to partner with a training provider to credential their workers, would this be an allowable activity?**

The Department will consider proposals for training current/incumbent workers, and applicants may partner with contractors/employers to provide this training. Workforce Hubs are required to align their training with the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework, which provides training for a variety of entry level clean energy jobs. However, they can propose additional "job specific training" to meet the needs of the clean energy industry in their region, including training for current/incumbent workers.

**Will grantees be able to choose the best fit certifications and credentialing to ensure successful candidates within the State of Illinois?**

The Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework requires that training providers prepare participants for specific certification exams in some areas (such as OSHA 10 and NABCEP PV Associate) and offers flexibility to choose among several certifications in others (HVAC Excellence vs. NATE). Applicants may propose the certifications that best meet the needs of employers in the region. The Department has consulted with industry experts and training stakeholders to determine the credentials and certifications that are most common in the State of Illinois and that are used by employers when making hiring decisions.

**Are there any specific requirements or certifications needed to teach the curriculum?**

Please see the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework and the "Instructor Requirements" under each section of the training. For example, the solar job specific training option requires that instructors be NABCEP certified training providers. There are other occupations that require certification based on industry standards.

**How does the training offered by the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program differ from the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program?**

The key differences and similarities are summarized in the table below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program | Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program |
| Locations | 13 local hubs: Chicago Southside and Southwest/west sides, Waukegan, Rockford, Aurora, Danville, Decatur, Peoria, Champaign, Carbondale, E. St. Louis, Alton | 3 regional centers: Illinois Department of Transportation Region 1, Regions 2 & 3, and Regions 4-5.  |
| Funding | $22.9 million/year + $16 million/year for barrier reduction services. Number of awards: Up to 13 | $10 million/year + $6 million/year for barrier reduction services. Number of awards: Up to 3 |
| Program goal | Prepare people for entry-level clean energy jobs. | Prepare people to enter and succeed in registered apprenticeship programs & clean energy jobs.  |
| Eligible participants | Equity investment eligible persons | Equity investment eligible persons |
| Curriculum | Standard clean jobs curriculum. Bridge program (job readiness + clean energy basics) + job-specific training options (determined by hubs) | Construction basics (NABTU Multi-craft Core or NCCER Core curriculum) + job readiness + clean energy basics.  |
| Employer connections | Coordination with clean energy employers for work-based learning and job placement/retention | Coordination with registered apprenticeship programs to facilitate placement. Connections with clean energy employers for work-based learning and job placement. |
| Barrier reduction services | Hubs offer barrier reduction services and funds, including assistance with transportation, childcare, tutoring, education costs, stipends, etc. | Centers offer barrier reduction services and funds, including assistance with transportation, childcare, tutoring, education costs, stipends, etc. |

## Barrier reduction services questions

**Is "Barrier Reduction" a separate program one has to apply for?**

No. Barrier Reduction funds are required elements of both the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship and Clean Jobs Workforce Network Programs. There is not a separate barrier reduction fund application.

**When delivering Barrier Reduction Program services, will the workforce hubs provide direct services or assist with the cost of services to reduce barriers?**

Both. The Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program, administered through the Workforce Hubs, will provide direct services and assist with the cost of services to reduce barriers. See legislation 20 ILCS 730/5-30. Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program.” Services allowed are intended to help eligible individuals overcome financial and other barriers to participation.

**Is family member care excluded from the Clean Job Workforce Network?**

Family care is an allowable barrier reduction service. Services allowed are intended to help eligible individuals overcome financial and other barriers to participation.

**How will barrier reduction services be delivered?**

The Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program will be embedded into the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program and the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program. Workforce hubs will receive additional funds to administer barrier reduction services and should identify an organization or staff member(s) on their team who will deliver these services. Barrier reduction staff should assess participants’ needs and be able to offer services and funds in a flexible and timely manner. The performance-based payment model will NOT be used for the delivery of barrier reduction services.

**How do barrier reduction funds work with different timing of the instruction and different needs and with an eye toward outcomes?**

Barrier reduction funds should be provided to participants throughout the duration of the training program (e.g., bridge program, work-based learning, job-specific training) based on an assessment of what is needed to support the participant. Barrier reduction services will also be available after completion to support participants while they are applying for jobs and during the first few months after they have been placed in a job. Barrier reduction funds is an important tool to support the program outcomes. Barrier reduction funds are not subject to the performance-based repayment model; disbursement of funds is not tied to participant outcomes (enrollments, completions, and transitions).

## Transitions and job placement questions

**Has an approximation been determined for the amount of time it takes for trainees to transition to jobs? Or will that be flexible or individual to specific hubs and specific trainees?**

There will be no hard “deadline” for completion of transition services. The Department plans to allow for support of a participant during their time searching for a job and even after hire to help the participant get established. The goal is to get people into jobs as soon as possible. Applicants should have relationships with employers to help facilitate that placement.

**How can employers be encouraged to hire people at these various levels of training and certification? How can employers put people to work while they are training - to fulfill job demands while learning?**

The CEJA workforce programs and the organizations who deliver the programs will engage employers to encourage them to hire people who complete the training. The organizations delivering the workforce programs should also work with employers to identify work-based learning opportunities and on-the-job training opportunities, partnering with employers to provide these opportunities to program participants. Minimum equity standards will encourage employers to hire people from the CEJA workforce programs.

**Will this work be focused on Illinois-based business partners, or will national/international firms with an existing or planned Illinois presence participate?**

Illinois-based business partners as well as national/international firms with an existing or planned Illinois presence are strongly encouraged to participate in and recruit graduates from the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program .

## Outcomes and data tracking questions

**What are reasonable goals for enrollments, completions, and transitions?**

Applicants should complete the Outcomes Plan attachment to propose reasonable goals for enrollment, completion, and transitions into clean energy jobs or advanced training programs, based on their capacity to serve and the size of the equity investment eligible population in their region (i.e., propose to serve a smaller number of participants if there is a smaller number of eligible individuals). They should consider a cost per participant range between $10,000 and $15,000. If 100 participants enroll, what percentage of those participants do you expect to complete the different parts of the program? What percentage do you expect to transition into clean energy jobs? DCEO will define program metrics based on the experience of other similar grant programs as well as through benchmarking with grantees who receive funds. This will be a topic of discussion during grant negotiations too.

**How will we be able to meet our outcomes and goals if we don’t have a sizable equity investment eligible population in our region?**

While CEJA programs require grantees to serve equity investment eligible populations, it is up to grant applicants to right-size their outcomes and budget according to realistic estimates of how many equity investment eligible persons they can serve. If a region has relatively fewer equity investment eligible persons in it, grant applications should reflect that relatively smaller population and commit to serving fewer people, and therefore request a smaller budget than an applicant from a region with a large equity investment eligible population.

**Are participant job placement goals tied to training related employment? Or will job placement in other industries be sufficient to meet goals?**

The primary "transition" outcome is placement in a clean energy job or advanced clean energy training program (see definition of clean energy jobs in the NOFO), and grantees will receive full reimbursement for primary outcomes. The secondary "transition" outcome is placement in a job or advanced training program outside the clean energy sector, and grantees will receive partial reimbursement and credit for secondary outcomes.

**Does DCEO have plans to develop a system for collecting participant data, or do provider teams need to develop and implement these systems?**

DCEO will implement a system for collecting participant data that grantees will be required to use.

**How are outcomes tracked in terms of "planned spend" and "actual spend"? What will the metrics look like?**

The Department will use a performance-based repayment model to reimburse grantees based on their progress towards participant outcomes (enrollment, completion, and transition/job placement goals). Applicants should use the Participant Outcomes Summary attachment to propose reasonable outcome metrics (in terms of enrollments, completions, and transitions) for their program and determine the "planned spend" in terms of budget needs to meet these outcomes. During the grant negotiation period, the Department may negotiate the outcomes and budget with the applicant. "Actual spend" refers to the amount that will be reimbursed by the department, based on outcomes. If you meet the outcomes metrics agreed upon, you will be reimbursed in full. Data tracking will be required to track outcomes.

***Have a question about the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program not addressed by this FAQ? Please send us an email at*** ***CEO.CEJA@illinois.gov***.

# Questions about the Energy Transition Navigators Program

## Timing questions

**When was the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Energy Transition Navigator Program released, and when are proposals due?**

The NOFO was released on June 8, 2023, and applications for the first round of reviews are due August 15, 2023. Access the NOFO here: <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/cejaenergy>

**When will grantees be selected?**

The Department expects to announce awards 11-15 weeks after the August 15 due date.

**When will the Energy Transition Navigator grantees start providing services?**

The Department expects to officially launch the program in the winter.

## Grantees and partner questions

**Who can apply to run the Energy Transition Navigator Program?**

"Community-Based Providers" may apply. The legislation defines "Community-based Providers" as “not-for-profit organizations with a history of serving low-wage or low-skilled workers or individuals from economically disadvantaged communities.” Community colleges and county governments are NOT included in the definition of Community-based provider. Organizations that apply must have at least one operating office within the region served.

**What's the difference between "community-based organizations" and "community-based providers"?**

"Community-based organizations" are defined in the legislation to include community colleges and potentially other governmental institutions. "Community-based providers" are defined in the legislation as “a not-for-profit organization that has a history of serving low-wage or low-skilled workers or individuals from economically disadvantaged communities.” This definition does not specifically include community colleges or other institutions, so they are not eligible for programs that list “community-based providers” as the eligible entities.

**Can more than one organization apply together as a team?**

Applicants may propose to provide program services as a single, lone provider for a hub region, or applicants may propose to provide program services as a team of multiple organizations and subcontract to other entities for the provision of portions of program elements.

**How do I find organizations or employers interested in partnering for this funding opportunity?**

Check out our [CEJA Potential Partner list](https://uofi.app.box.com/file/1142346867267?s=3zl0x41n3ihumlcsfocbrpmgbf0e42t2), which includes a list of organizations interested in partnering, as well as clean energy employers and training providers. You can be added to the list by emailing ceo.ceja@illinois.gov with your name, organization, role, email, and phone number.

**When you apply to the grant, do all the positions in the organization need to be already occupied by somebody, or can they be hired once the grant is approved?**

Organizations can hire staff after the grant is approved. The staffing plan, budget, and budget justification will need to reflect the intended roles / full time employees that you plan to hire.

**Are there any limits on how many partners or sub-contractors an applicant lead can submit a proposal with?**

Currently there is no maximum number of collaborators permitted on an application. As long as you can justify your partners sufficiently within the application, we encourage you to seek many partners as necessary! Memorandums of Understanding are required for all partnerships to outline roles and responsibilities.

**What are the roles and responsibilities of the lead organization and where does the lead entity's responsibility begin and end? If subcontractors don’t fully expend funds or meet their requirements, who is held responsible?**

The lead grantee is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the program is delivered as intended, that program outcomes are met, and for dispersing funds to any subgrantees, as outlined in the budget. Subcontractors/subgrantees are responsible for providing program elements and carrying out portions of the scope of work. They are accountable to the primary grantee for this work. A memorandum of understanding should be developed to outline roles, responsibilities, and budgets.

**Are entities located outside of the 13 hub areas eligible to apply for this funding?**

Please note that the Energy Transition Navigators will be serving the 13 locations as well as the surrounding areas. Entities outside of the 13 hub areas are encouraged to partner with organizations inside the hubs. They may consider providing outreach and recruitment to people in the areas surrounding the 13 hubs.

## Application questions

**How much funding is available for the Energy Transition Navigators Program?**

$6 million per year, subject to appropriation. DCEO will issue up to 13 awards (up to one award per workforce hub region). Applicants may propose to serve more than one region.

**Are Energy Transition Barrier Reduction funds included in this grant?**

No. Energy Transition Barrier Reduction funds are included in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program and the Climate Works Preapprenticeship Program, not the Energy Transition Navigator Program. Energy Transition Navigators will direct participants to these two other programs to receive barrier reduction services.

**What does the first round of review mean? Will there be another round?**

DCEO will review all applications as a group that come in by the initial deadline. If the agency does not award grants in all 13 workforce hub locations defined in the NOFO, they will review applications on a rolling basis until funding has been expended.

**How many grants will be awarded under the Energy Transition Navigator Program?**

The Department expects to make at least one award in each of the Workforce Hub locations through this NOFO. Note that the Department may award multiple grants in a Workforce Hub Location.

**Is this program a separate Notice of Funding Opportunity, or is it embedded in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program?**

There is a separate funding opportunity for the Energy Transition Navigator program. Funding for this program will NOT be included in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the other CEJA workforce programs.

**Can my organization apply to be an Energy Transition Navigator as well as to manage a Clean Jobs Workforce Network Hub or Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship center?**

Yes, but please consider your capacity to deliver both grants if you are selected.

**If an organization wants to apply for one or more CEJA programs, do we have to apply for both grants?**

Yes, if your organization would like to fulfill multiple aspects of programming across the Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), you should apply for each of those NOFOs separately.

**Is it necessary to submit the Notice of Intent to Apply?**

Submitting the Notice of Intent to Apply is optional and will assist the Department in planning the merit review of applications. See the NOFO webpage for due dates and a link to the form: [https://www.illinoisworknet.com/cejaenergy\](https://www.illinoisworknet.com/cejaenergy%5C)

**Will this grant program be offered next year as well?**

The grants are for a three-year cycle, with an initial period of performance of 12 months. The Department intends to offer up to two twelve-month renewals for each award based on the performance of the grantee. The Department expects to release another Notice of Funding Opportunity for this program every three years.

## Program delivery questions

**How will the Energy Transition Navigator Program work with the workforce and contractor programs?**

The Energy Transition Navigator Program will prioritize outreach and recruitment for the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program and the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Hubs. Energy Transition Navigators must work closely with the administrators of these two programs to coordinate outreach efforts and provide career guidance and support to participants as they enroll in the programs. They will also work with these two programs to engage with employers and registered apprenticeship programs to facilitate job and apprenticeship placement.

Energy Transition Navigators will also direct people to the other CEJA workforce and contractor programs, including the Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program and the Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program. Energy Transition Navigators will engage various stakeholders and community organizations to provide information about the CEJA workforce and contractor programs and how to apply.

**How should Energy Transition Navigators engage with High Schools?**

High schools play a critical role in increasing awareness of clean energy career opportunities for young people. Energy Transition Navigators are encouraged to provide outreach to high school students, teachers, and counselors to encourage young people to pursue clean energy jobs and to participate in the CEJA workforce programs. Participants for the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program must be 16 years of age or older, so there may be opportunities for High Schools to partner with Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Centers. The eligibility age for participation in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is 18, but high school students could be referred to this program after they graduate.

## Geography questions

**Where will the Energy Transition Navigators Program be located?**

Applicant teams can propose to serve one or more of the 13 workforce hub regions and surrounding areas: Chicago (Southside), Chicago (Southwest/west sides), Waukegan, Rockford, Aurora, Danville, Decatur, Peoria, Champaign, Carbondale, E. St. Louis, Alton. Applicant teams should conduct outreach throughout their proposed region, focusing on [equity investment eligible communities](https://energyequity.illinois.gov/resources/equity-investment-eligible-community-map.html) and equity focused populations in the areas proposed.

**Where can I find a map of R3 and Environmental Justice Communities in Illinois?**

See page 4 of the NOFO. R3 Map: <https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility>; EJ Map: <https://www.illinoissfa.com/environmental-justice-communities/>

**The NOFO refers us to R3 areas at** [**https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility**](https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility)**, which contains the table of R3 areas in Illinois including those marked “High Need Area”. Is the Department’s interest in any R3 area, or only those [areas] that the table lists as “High Need”?**

Competitive applications will identify specific high need areas in their region to target for recruitment, outreach and training delivery. Applicants may consider prioritizing areas that are both R3 and Environmental Justice areas, as well as “high need” R3 areas. People who have been incarcerated or who are current or former members of the foster care system are also eligible to participate in the workforce programs, regardless of whether they live in an equity investment eligible community.

# Questions about the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program

## Timing

**When was the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program released, and when were proposals due?**

The NOFO was released on April 27, 2023, and applications were due July 3, 2023. Access the NOFO here: <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/cejaclimateworkspreapp>

**When will grantees be selected?**

The Department expects to announce awards 11-15 weeks after the July 3 due date.

**When will the program start training participants?**

We expect to officially launch the program in the fall.

**Will this grant program be offered next year as well?**

The grants are for a three-year cycle, with an initial period of performance of twelve months. The Department intends to offer up to two twelve-month renewals for each award based on the performance of the grantee. Additional funds of up to $16M may be available for each of the twelve-month renewal periods. DCEO expects to release another Notice of Funding Opportunity for this program every three years.

**If we can't apply to the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program right now, can we still apply to deliver the Illinois Works Pre-apprenticeship Program?**

Yes. The Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Illinois Works Pre-apprenticeship Program is open. Applications are due August 30, 2023. The Illinois Works Pre-apprenticeship Program is NOT a CEJA program, but it is administered by DCEO, and it shares many similarities with the CEJA Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program.

## Grantees and partners questions

**Who can apply to manage the Pre-apprenticeship Centers?**

Pre-apprenticeship Centers will be managed by organizations that provide employment, skill development or related services to community members. These organizations should demonstrate relationships with residents and other organizations serving the communities in the regions they propose to serve. They should also have relationships with the Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Programs and contractor associations to facilitate the placement of participants in apprenticeships and jobs.

Teams are encouraged! Applicants can propose to provide all elements required or may partner or subcontract to other entities to provide portions of program elements.

**Can you share the list of potential applicants who filed the intent to apply?**

Yes. [CEJA Sharing Contact List](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/3zl0x41n3ihumlcsfocbrpmgbf0e42t2).

**Do all sub-grantees have to be sub-grantees to the prime (lead recipient); or can sub-grantees contract with providers of their choice to reach additional communities?**

Subgrantees or contractors may contract with other subgrantees instead of with prime (lead recipient), but all subgrantees must have a Memorandum of Understanding and be on the record for the grant to receive funds. They must report program participation and outcomes and will need to develop a separate budget and budget justification.

**Do sub-grantees proposed by the lead applicant also need to meet requirements for GATA, SAM, and other regulatory requirements to which the lead applicant is subject?**

Only recipients and grantees (main applicants) are required to be GATA Pre-Qualified. However, subrecipients/subgrantees must be in good standing with the state (not on the debarred, suspended, excluded parties, or sanctioned parties’ lists). Subrecipients/subgrantees must have a Memorandum of Understanding and be on the record for the grant to receive funds. They must report program participation and outcomes. They will need to develop a separate budget and budget justification.

**Does the main applicant need to be a nonprofit organization?**

Yes. The main grantee must be a nonprofit organization, and the organization that delivers the energy transition barrier reduction services must be a community-based provider, as defined in the NOFO.

**How do the different grant prizes function together as the partnerships overlap one another?**

We discourage applicants from applying to be the main grantee for more than one workforce program--if they do, they should consider their capacity to operate both grants if they are selected. However, we anticipate that some organizations may wish to be sub-awardee to deliver program elements for more than one program. For instance, a training provider may be interested in providing training for both the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship program and the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program. A community-based organization may also be interested in providing wrap-around services for both programs. The services and training they offer may overlap, but they will serve different participants and engage with different program teams.

**If we apply for the CEJA Pre-Apprenticeship program, will that diminish our ability to be selected for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Hub program?**

Applicants may apply to deliver more than one program. It will not impact the merit review process. However, applicants should carefully consider whether they can deliver both programs if their proposals are selected.

**The NOFO for Pre-Apprenticeship states that the Applicant does not have to be a nonprofit to be eligible as long as they have a nonprofit sub-awardee manage the barrier funds. Does this mean they can be a for-profit company and still apply?**

The main grantee must be a nonprofit organization to apply for funding to deliver this program. A subgrantee may be a for-profit organization as long as the lead organization is a nonprofit.

**What level of capacity must my institution have at this time in order to be eligible to apply for Climate Works?**

The Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program is a large workforce program, with each regional Center receiving between $3 million and $6.5 million in funding to deliver the training program and support services for their proposed region(s). Using a program cost per participant estimate of $10,000, each Center will serve between 300 and 650 participants. To determine whether your organization has the capacity to deliver the program, please review the program requirements and eligibility requirements in the NOFO. Smaller, less experienced organizations are encouraged to team up with larger, more experienced partners to deliver this program.

**Would a lead participant be able to change subgrantees or adjust goals among existing sub-grantees if the situation warranted such?**

Yes. There are avenues for adjusting goals/budgets and changing subgrantees if the situation warrants these changes.

## Application questions

**Are there any limits to the number or sizes of files that can be submitted as a complete application?**

There is no limit to the number of attachments or size of files.

**In the NOFO Applicant Team Organization Capacity; Staffing Plan, space allowed (4 pages), will not allow for all staff in a region. May we summarize our staffing plan, qualifications, and list all in the staffing plan attachment w/ biographies/resumes?**

Yes, the technical proposal may contain a summary of the staffing plan that is supplemented with the staffing plan attachment, biographies, and resumes.

**What level of detail is required on staffing from each sub-grantee of the program?**

Applicants should list all key staff--including subgrantee staff--that will be assigned to the project and include personnel costs for these staff.

## Training program delivery questions

**Who can participate in the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program?**

Pre-apprenticeship centers will enroll equity-eligible individuals, defined as individuals from equity investment eligible communities ([see map](https://energyequity.illinois.gov/resources/equity-investment-eligible-community-map.html)), as well as individuals who face barriers to employment, including those who are formerly incarcerated or graduates or current members of the foster care system.

**What will the pre-apprenticeship training look like?**

The Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program will focus on construction basics, utilizing either the NABTU Multi-craft core curriculum or the NCCER core curriculum. This core curriculum will be supplemented with training in clean energy basics, job readiness and employability training.

**Can different groups in a grant application employ a different model? I.e., one org is cohort-based, and another offers program flexibility.**

Yes, applicants may offer different training options that provide different delivery models.

**Are there specific expectations for the inclusion of Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework & conflict mediation topics? Are devoted classes expected, or can topics be incorporated into NABTU-MC3 programming & other workforce readiness topics?**

Applicants are encouraged to utilize the Essential Employability Skills Handbook and Assessment to develop a curriculum around these topics. Applicants may propose to devote classes entirely to these topics or incorporate them into existing programming or other workforce readiness topics. For an example of the topics and content that could be taught, please see pages 95-123 of the [Illinois Works Program Handbook](https://www.illinoisworknet.com/DownloadPrint/Illinois%20Works%20Pre-Apprenticeship%202022%20Grantee%20Manual%20FINAL.pdf).

**The curriculum template calls for 32 hours of Soft Skills based on the IEESF. Is a curriculum already available for these hours? 32 dedicated hours seem to contravene the recommended incorporation of these topics by IEESF developers.**

Applicants do not need to use the same curriculum hours as those proposed in the curriculum example. Applicants should adjust the hours as they see fit, depending on their program design and content. Applicants are encouraged to contextualize and integrate essential employability skills into the construction curriculum when relevant or provide stand-alone training for some topics.

**The NOFO mentions drug testing as part of the screening process for participants. Is this mandatory, and if so, does it need to test for cannabis?**

Drug testing is not required for participation in the Pre-Apprenticeship program, but please note that many apprenticeship programs require drug testing (and some test for cannabis). Grantees should ensure that program participants are aware of drug testing requirements.

**How does the Pre-apprenticeship program integrate with the Clean Jobs Workforce Network hubs?**

The Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program and the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program ("Workforce Hubs") are complementary, with the Pre-apprenticeship Program focusing on preparing people for apprenticeships in the building and construction trades and the Workforce Hubs preparing people for a wide variety of entry-level clean energy jobs. Both programs will also help people with job placement. The two programs should be integrated at several key points including, but not limited to, 1) recruitment (to help applicants decide which program will best meet their needs), 2) support services (to remove barriers for program participants and facilitate referrals), and 3) employer engagement (to identify the employment needs in the region and facilitate job and apprenticeship placement across the two programs).

**Dues and initiation fees are a financial barrier to candidates’ entry into apprenticeships. Can Energy Equity Barrier Reduction Funds be used to cover union apprenticeship initiation fees and early (such as the first month or first quarter) union dues?**

Barrier reduction fees may be used to cover union apprenticeship initiation fees and early (up to the first quarter) union dues.

**Youth vs. Adult Programs: Please define the age ranges for each category.**

Youth Programming: 16-24; Adult Programming: 18+. Applicants, who propose youth programming, may propose a narrower age range (such as a program in high school).

**How will barrier reduction services be delivered?**

The Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program will be embedded into the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship program. Pre-apprenticeship centers will receive additional funds to administer barrier reduction services. Barrier reduction staff will assess participants’ needs and should be able to offer services and funds flexibly and timely. They should identify an organization (a community-based organization or nonprofit) or staff member(s) on their team who will deliver these services.

**How will the Energy Transition Navigator Program work with the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program?**

The Energy Transition Navigator Program will help Pre-apprenticeship centers recruit participants. A separate Notice of Funding Opportunity will be issued for this program. The Energy Transition Navigator Program must work closely with the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program. Energy Transition Navigators will conduct outreach to equity-focused populations and direct them to the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program or the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program. They will help the Pre-apprenticeship centers provide career guidance and support to participants as they enroll in the programs. Energy Transition Navigators will also work with the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship program and to engage with other organizations, employers, and apprenticeship programs to raise awareness of the program and facilitate apprenticeship placement.

**How does the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship program differ from the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program?**

The key differences and similarities are summarized in the table below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program | Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program |
| Locations | 13 local hubs: Chicago (southside), Chicago (southwest/west sides), Waukegan, Rockford, Aurora, Peoria, Danville, Champaign, Decatur, Carbondale, E. St. Louis, Alton | 3 regional centers: Illinois Department of Transportation Region 1, Regions 2 & 3, and Regions 4-5.  |
| Funding | $24 million/year + $16 million/year for barrier reduction services. Number of awards: Up to 13 | $10 million/year + $6 million/year for barrier reduction services. Number of awards: Up to 3 |
| Program goal | Prepare people for entry-level clean energy jobs. | Prepare people to enter and succeed in registered apprenticeship programs & clean energy jobs.  |
| Eligible participants | Equity investment eligible persons | Equity investment eligible persons |
| Curriculum | Standard clean jobs curriculum. Bridge program (job readiness + clean energy basics) + job-specific training options (determined by hubs) | Construction basics (NABTU Multi-craft Core or NCCER Core curriculum) + job readiness + clean energy basics.  |
| Employer connections | Coordination with clean energy employers for work-based learning and job placement/retention | Coordination with registered apprenticeship programs to facilitate placement. Connections with clean energy employers for work-based learning and job placement. |
| Barrier reduction services | Hubs offer barrier reduction services and funds, including assistance with transportation, childcare, tutoring, education costs, stipends, etc. | Centers offer barrier reduction services and funds, including assistance with transportation, childcare, tutoring, education costs, stipends, etc. |

## Funding and performance based payment questions

**How much funding is available for the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program?**

$10 million per year. An additional $6 million per year will be allocated to the Pre-apprenticeship Centers for the distribution of the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program services and funds. DCEO will issue up to 3 awards (one per designated area) for the combined $16 million per year in funding. Applicants may propose to manage more than one center.

**For budgets, which funding category should cover stipends to participants (Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program funds or Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Services funds)?**

Applicants have flexibility to pay stipends through either funding category.

**Is the $10,000 per participant a reference to enrolled candidates, candidates who complete, or candidates who transition to primary and/or secondary outcomes?**

The $10,000 estimate per participant is based on the number of participants enrolled.

**Is the formula on Page 13 of the NOFO based on the combined Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program funding and Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Services together, or only the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program funding alone?**

The Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Services are not included in the estimate of $10,000 per participant cost and are not subject to the performance-based payment model.

**Is there flexibility in the payment model? We often have candidates that do not complete training because they got into a trade. Since getting into a trade is the goal, would we be paid for both completing and the transition?**

Yes. Completion (regardless of whether they are placed in an apprenticeship program) represents 30% of the total funding. Outcomes represent 35% of the total performance-based model, and payment will be based on whether the outcome is the primary outcome (apprenticeship placement or waiting list) or a secondary outcome (job placement or alternative training program enrollment). The exact amount that will be paid for primary and secondary outcomes has not yet been determined.

**Can a participant who transitions to a registered apprenticeship program prior to completion of pre-apprenticeship training still be counted as a successful transition?**

To be determined. It may depend upon how much of the pre-apprenticeship program they complete.

**Will Illinois Works Reporting System (IWRS) be the main data reporting method? Will opportunities exist to upload data from systems such as Salesforce to IWRS or to produce alternate reports be allowable?**

Illinois Works Reporting System will be the main data reporting method.

## Geography questions

**Where will the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship centers be located?**

The three Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship centers will locate in Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Region 1, IDOT Regions 2 and 3, and IDOT Regions 4 and 5.
Specific locations for the Pre-apprenticeship centers and the organizations that will manage the centers will be determined through a Notice of Funding Opportunity process. Applicant teams are invited to provide training in multiple locations throughout the regions.

**Are you specifically looking for applicants from Chicago, East St. Louis, and Peoria?**

Chicago, Peoria, and East St. Louis are three potential locations for the three Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Centers but certainly not the only options. Competitive applications will propose training at multiple locations throughout the proposed regions. Applicants should identify locations in the region where large numbers of equity investment-eligible individuals reside and provide outreach and training accessible to these individuals. When selecting training locations, they should consider the availability of apprenticeship programs in the region to facilitate apprenticeship placement.

**For participants’ geographic boundaries: If we want to work with a school district and the school is located in the zone, but a student lives outside the area, could they still qualify?**

In this circumstance, we need to determine whether the schools' geographic boundaries mostly align with the Environmental Justice or R3 community boundaries. We are willing to be flexible with eligibility as long as the school boundaries mostly align.

**If we are proposing to work in all three regions, do we need to submit three proposals?**

Yes, applicants should submit one proposal for each of the three regions.

**Must all participants reside in an R3 or Equity Eligible area, or can any person who meets the criteria of equity-focused population participate?**

Applicants must meet the criteria of equity investment eligible individual to participate (i.e., be in an equity investment eligible area or be formerly incarcerated or a current/former member of the foster care system). The equity-focused population criteria are provided for outreach purposes.

**The NOFO refers to R3 areas, which contains the table of R3 areas in Illinois, including those marked “High Need Area.” Is the Department interested in any R3 area, or only those listed as “High Need”?**

Eligible participants for the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship program are people who reside in an R3 and/or Environmental Justice area, regardless of whether they reside in an R3 "High Need Area". However, competitive applications will identify specific high-need areas in their region to target for recruitment, outreach, and training delivery. The [R3 Map](https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility) may be used to identify high-need areas. Applicants may also consider prioritizing areas that are both R3 and Environmental Justice areas. People who have been incarcerated or who are current or former members of the foster care system are also eligible to participate, regardless of whether they live in an equity investment-eligible community.

## Transitions/connections with apprenticeships and employers questions

**Are the federal and state incentives and governmental programs coordinating how the solar industry operates pushing towards making all solar companies eventually convert to unionizing? Or are there programs that would assist non-union installers?**

The CEJA programs will build a diverse pipeline of candidates for both non-union and union clean energy jobs. Applicants who apply for funding to deliver the CEJA workforce programs (including the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program) are encouraged to partner with employers (both union and non-union) to identify the most promising opportunities for engagement around workforce needs. The CEJA Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program and the Clean Jobs Contractor Accelerator Program, once they are open, will provide support to contractors to help them grow their businesses and take advantage of CEJA and other state and federal funding for clean energy projects. Support from these programs may include assistance to become unionized if beneficial to the participating contractors.

**Will this work lead to the US Department of Labor opening up a solar apprenticeship option?**

It is certainly possible that the CEJA workforce development programs will support and lead to the development of Registered Apprenticeship Programs. The Apprenticeship Illinois Team (www.apprenticeshipillinois.com) continues to work with employers, unions and other sponsor in Illinois to facilitate growth in registered apprenticeships. The ultimate decision regarding the establishment of a registered apprenticeship program is by US Department of Labor.

**Is this NOFO pro-union? What about those of us that are not unions?**

The primary goal of this program is to prepare people to enter and succeed in a Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship program in the construction or building trades. In Illinois, most, but not all, of these Registered Apprenticeship programs are union labor. Applicants may partner with any construction or building trade Registered Apprenticeship program, regardless of whether it is a union program, to help facilitate placement in apprenticeship programs. The organization(s) that deliver the pre-apprenticeship program need not be union-affiliated but will likely need to work with union apprenticeship programs to achieve program outcomes.

**The unions (building trades) have historically not been kind to the black community. How do we bring nontraditional candidates into the trades outside of union sponsorship?**

We appreciate your concern. In Illinois, the racial and gender disparities, and historical inequities in the construction/building trades (especially unionized trades) are well documented. This program attempts to address these disparities by preparing equity investment-eligible people to enter apprenticeship programs and by offering transition services to help people who enter these programs succeed. Applicants who are applying for funding to deliver the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program are encouraged to form partnerships with Registered Apprenticeship programs (either union or non-union) to facilitate placement in apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities. The participating apprenticeship programs need not be unionized, but they must be Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship programs. While apprenticeship placement is the primary outcome of the program, the secondary outcome is job placement or enrollment in a different training program. We encourage applicants to form relationships with both union and non-union employers and other clean energy training programs to help program participants successfully join the clean energy workforce.

***Have a question yet to be addressed by this FAQ? Please send us an email at*** ***CEO.CEJA@illinois.gov***.

# Questions about the Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program

**What is the Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program?**

The Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program (“Returning Resident Program”) provides training to prepare people in the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections for entry-level clean energy jobs. It will utilize the Clean Jobs Curriculum, developed by DCEO and modified as needed.

**How much funding is available for the Returning Resident Program?**

$6 million per year, subject to appropriation. The number of awards has yet to be determined.

**Where will the Returning Resident Program be offered?**

Inside Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) facilities. IDOC has developed a preliminary list of facilities where training may be offered; applicant teams can propose to deliver training at one or more of these correctional facilities:

* Decatur
* Danville
* Western
* Kewanee
* Shawnee and/or Vienna
* East Moline
* Jacksonville

These facilities may have space and equipment that can be used for training (including construction shops or classroom space), but space availability is often limited during the weekdays due to other programming. To address this constraint, applicants are encouraged to offer training during the evenings or weekends or provide mobile training units at facilities. More details about facilities and space availability will be provided when the NOFO is released.

**Who is eligible to deliver and manage the Returning Resident Program?**

Program Administrators will be selected for each Program Delivery Area, and community-based organizations can apply to provide training and support services. One organization can provide all program elements or partner or subcontract with other entities to provide various program elements. Community-based organizations, including community colleges, nonprofits, and local governments, must provide community members employment, skill development or related services. They must have a history of serving committed persons or justice-involved persons.

**Who can participate in the training?**

According to the CEJA legislation, eligible participants include United States residents who are a) 17 years or older, b) in the physical custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections, and c) scheduled to be re-entering society within 36 months.

To be eligible, participants must also:

* Consent in writing to participate in the program
* Meet all program and testing requirements (including a TABE score of 6.0 or above)
* Not pose a safety and security risk for the facility or anyone

The Department of Corrections will determine whether a committed person can participate. To enter the program, they must complete a simple application, undergo an interview and coaching session, and have a TABE score of 6.0 or higher. After completing a one-week orientation, they can continue to the full program. Drug testing will be required at least once before graduation.

**What will the training program look like?**

Participants will receive essential employability skills training as part of vocational or occupational training. The training will lead to certifications or credentials that prepare candidates for employment. The Returning Resident Program will use a standard Clean Jobs Curriculum (similar to the one used in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program), as shown below.



**Can you describe the bridge program?**

The bridge program is intended to provide job readiness skills and clean energy basics needed in various clean energy training programs and jobs. This training will introduce clean energy job opportunities and help participants develop the skills they need to succeed in the workplace. The bridge program consists of two main components:

* Essential employability skills (goal setting, dependability and reliability, time management, adaptability, financial literacy, getting and keeping a job, emotion management, verbal, written, and digital communication, teamwork, customer service, critical thinking and problem solving, workplace rights, and diversity and inclusion).
* Clean energy basics (clean energy careers, energy and sustainability fundamentals, safety basics, construction basics, electrical basics, and building energy basics).

**What job-specific training options will be offered?**

Applicants may propose to offer one of the following three job-specific training options at the proposed facility:

* Construction laborer with a solar PV installation focus
* HVAC/building maintenance, with an energy efficiency and heat pump focus

Applicants should select the job-specific training options that best align with the local employment needs in the communities where returning residents will be released. They may offer the training themselves or partner with community colleges, community-based organizations or other private or public training providers to offer the training. DCEO has developed a curriculum framework for each training option, and the training must align with this framework. This framework will be shared when the NOFO is released.

**What post-release and job-placement services will be offered?**

Program graduates released from the custody of the Department of Corrections will receive support to find jobs in the clean energy jobs industry. Program administrators will work with potential employers to support hiring and supporting returning residents via employee/employer liability, coverage, insurance, bonding, training, hiring practices, and retention support. They will provide job coaching and financial coaching to program graduates to support employment longevity. They will identify clean energy job opportunities and assist participants in achieving employment.

# Questions about the Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program

**What is the Clean Jobs Contractor Incubator Program?**

The Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program (“Contractor Incubator Program”) will provide eligible contractors with access to capital, support for obtaining insurance, assistance registering to become vendors for state incentive programs, connections with firms hiring contractors and subcontractors, and other vital services.

**How much funding is available?**

$21 million per year will be allocated. There will be 13 awards, one for each of the 13 Contractor Incubator program delivery areas. Awards for each program delivery area will range from $1 million to $2 million annually.

**Where will the Contractor Incubators be located?**

The Contractor Incubators will be geographically distributed across Illinois, serving people who reside in or near the following 13 areas: Chicago (South Side), Chicago (Southwest & West Sides), Waukegan, Rockford, Aurora, Joliet, Peoria, Champaign, Danville, Decatur, Carbondale, East St. Louis, and Alton. Specific locations for the Contractor Incubators and the organizations that will manage and house the hubs will be determined through a NOFO (Notice of Funding Opportunity) process.

Teams that apply to manage the Contractor Incubators are invited to propose the locations where services will be provided. Locations should be in or near [equity investment eligible communities](https://energyequity.illinois.gov/resources/equity-investment-eligible-community-map.html) and accessible to equity investment eligible individuals in the region.

**Who can participate?**

Participant placement must be prioritized as follows:

* One-third of program placements are for people residing in an area that is BOTH an [R3 area](https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility) and an [environmental justice community](https://www.illinoissfa.com/environmental-justice-communities/).
* One-third of program placements are for people who reside in EITHER an [R3 area](https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility) OR an [environmental justice community](https://www.illinoissfa.com/environmental-justice-communities/). Preference will be given to applicants who face barriers to employment, such as low educational attainment, prior involvement with the criminal legal system, language barriers, and applicants that are graduates of or current members of the foster care system.
* Priority for the remaining placements must be given to displaced energy workers or persons who face barriers to employment (as defined above).

**Who can apply to deliver the program?**

Eligible applicants are community-based organizations, including nonprofit organizations, accredited public colleges or universities, with demonstrated history and effectiveness in serving equity eligible populations in one or more program delivery areas.

Applicants should have a history of providing business-related assistance, including business incubator or contractor incubator services, and knowledge to help entrepreneurs start, run, and grow their businesses. They must also know about construction and clean energy trades and relationships with residents and other organizations serving the communities in the program delivery area, especially equity investment eligible communities.

**What services will be offered by the Contractor Incubator Program?**

Support services provided to Contractor Incubator participants include:

* Access to low-cost capital through the Equitable Energy Future Grant Program and other sources
* Support for obtaining business financial services, such as financial assurance (e.g., bonding) and low-interest loans
* Support for obtaining back-office services
* Support obtaining insurance, permits, training, certifications, and business planning.
* Training, mentoring and support to build a business, connect to projects, compete for capital, and execute clean energy-related project installations and subcontracts
* Connections to Department of Labor resources and training