



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

Energy Workforce Advisory Committee Meeting

April 7, 2026

3:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual WebEx Video Conference

Minutes:

I. Call to Order at 3:07 p.m.

II. Roll Call of Membership

Vernis Barrier-Likes: Yes

Jonathan Carson: Yes

Ramone Collins: No

Rep. Marcus Evans Jr.: No

Chynna Hampton: Yes

Jennifer Martin: No

Marlon McClinton: Yes

Angela Morrison: Yes

Scott Onque: Yes

William Ryan: Yes

Sen. Steve Stadelman: No

Darnell Tingle: Yes

Rep. Michael Coffey: No

Michael Boyd: No

Shaneal Clayborne: No

Rep. Eva-Dina Delgado: No

John Freitag: No

Alaina Harkness: Yes

Lesley McCain: No

Denise Moore: No

Amalia NietoGomez: Yes

John Pady: No

Lorenzo Savage Sr.: Yes

Beatrice Thompson: Yes

Aur Beck: No

III. Approval of February 3 and March 3, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Approve the February 3 and March 3, 2026 meeting minutes.

Moved by: Jon Carson

Seconded by: Scott Onque

Outcome: No vote was recorded in the meeting record to approve the meeting minutes from the February 3, 2026 and March 3, 2026.

Action Item: Minutes were accepted by council members for approval of the for approval of the February 3, 2026 and March 3, 2026 meeting minutes.

IV. EWAC old business

Chair Hampton provided the following updates:

- One-on-ones with Council members are still being scheduled. Calendar invites will be sent out for them.
- The Council acknowledged DCEO staff for their continued support and how Diana Fullers presentation last meeting was informative and appreciated based on the needs of the group.
- Subgroups will meet at the May 5th meeting since there have been speakers at the last two meetings.

Ation Items	Responsible Party	Due
Schedule remaining one-on-one meetings	Chair Hampton/DCEO Staff	Before next Council meeting
Convene Council subgroups	Subgroup Chairs	May 5 meeting

V. EWAC New Business

A. CEJA Report- Mary Kuhn, CJC CEJA Specialist & Chris Warland, CJC Director of Policy & Advocacy

Mary presented how the CJC works to identify problems and build relationships to better assist in improving the workforce development and issues, all while working with multiple organizations across various workforce programs.

Council Discussion Summary

Members discussed:

- Cross-training opportunities that allow workers to move between related industries.
- Workforce placement outcomes following CEJA-funded training.
- Employer engagement, particularly among utility-scale solar developers.
- Funding sources supporting workforce research.
- Lessons learned from statewide workforce reports.
- Recommendations the Council should consider providing to the General Assembly.

Resources Shared

- <https://www.cjc.net/>
- [Building CEJA from the ground up: Ambitious goals, robust funding, and complex challenges — %CJC](#)
- <https://www.cjc.net/resources-library>
- [CJC CEJA Progress.pdf](#)
- [Chicago-based construction firm Clayco launches solar energy business - Chicago Sun-Times](#)
- CEJA Job Fair hosted by GWTP later in April. <https://chicookworks.org/event/clean-energy-jobs-fair/>

Questions and Answer

1. How can training programs better support cross-training across related industries such as solar, water, and other clean energy sectors?

Answer:

The presenters emphasized focusing on **transferable skills**. Individuals trained in solar often develop electrical and construction skills that can transfer into electrician work, construction, and related trades. They also discussed strengthening collaboration with contractor development programs so participants can pursue entrepreneurship or other clean energy career pathways. Flexibility in career pathways was identified as important.

2. What alternative career pathways are available for job seekers who may not find opportunities in solar?

Answer:

Alternative pathways mentioned included:

- Electrician careers
- General construction
- Contractor/entrepreneur pathways
- Other occupations utilizing transferable electrical and construction skills.

3. What recommendations should this council make to the legislature regarding improvements to clean energy workforce training programs?

Answer:

No specific legislative recommendations were offered. Instead, the presenters explained that CJC serves as a convener rather than a direct service provider. They indicated recommendations should come from the workforce providers participating in the CEJA Table. Emerging themes included:

- Better coordination among providers
- Stronger employer engagement
- Clear career pathways
- Improved connectivity across the workforce ecosystem.

4. What types of jobs did the individuals highlighted in the presentation obtain?

Answer:

One example, Romeo, accepted a position with **Four Seasons Heating, Air Conditioning, Plumbing & Electric** after graduating from Revolution Workshop. The specific job title was not provided.

5. When did those individuals obtain employment, and are they still working in those positions?

Answer:

This question was **not answered during the meeting**. The presenter stated she would follow up with Revolution Workshop, and DCEO also offered to provide additional information.

6. How is your organization funding the reports it produces?

Answer:

The reports are funded through:

- **JP Morgan Chase** (supporting the CEJA Table)
- **Energy Foundation** (supporting earlier Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition work before CEJA passed).

7. What is the purpose and scope of those reports?

Answer:

The reports focus on:

- Green jobs and career pathways
- CEJA workforce ecosystem coordination
- Workforce implementation lessons
- Employment pathways
- Data collection and administrative processes.

8. What are the top three lessons your organization has learned from those reports?

Answer:

Angela Morrison identified three primary lessons:

- Employment and employer engagement remain critical.
- Better coordination is needed to reduce duplication across workforce providers.
- Administrative reporting and data collection requirements create significant burdens that reduce time available for direct services.

9. Have you had success engaging larger employers involved in utility-scale solar projects?

Answer:

Only limited success. Most engagement has been with smaller employers. The presenters noted ongoing efforts to connect with **Clayco** regarding future large-scale projects expected in 2027–2028 and welcomed introductions.

Action Items	Responsible Party	Due
Members review CEJA Progress Report and identify potential legislative recommendations	Council Members	Prior to next meeting
Consider future agenda item on workforce cross-training strategies	Chair/DCEO Staff	Future agenda

B. CEJA Ecosystem- Christine Flynn, Workforce Policy Lab- Northern Illinois University

Presentation Summary

Christine presented about the collaborations with various state entities and programs to achieve goals involving 12 entities that drive training and labor demand. The goal is to focus on employment and connections within the system making sure jobs align with workforce training programs creating continuous talent to send out into the growing industry.

Council Discussion Summary

Members discussed:

- Examples of workforce and contractor development programs.
- Navigation pathways between training programs and employment.
- Upcoming CEJA Capacity Grant opportunities.
- Expectations for new and returning applicants.
- Planned curriculum improvements through an upcoming Request for Information (RFI).
- Interest in receiving future RFI announcements.

Questions and Answer

1. What is a workforce development program in the context of the work being discussed today?

Answer:

The presenter explained that workforce development programs provide bridge training followed by occupation-specific training through Workforce Hubs. Participants then transition into employment or other opportunities based on their career goals.

2. Can you provide a specific example of a contractor development program?

Answer:

The presenter described the Contractor Incubator and Contractor Accelerator programs. She shared an example in which graduates from the College of DuPage Workforce Hub were referred to Innovation DuPage, the regional CEJA Contractor Incubator, to begin developing their own businesses.

3. How do participants typically transition from workforce development programs into contractor development programs?

Answer:

As participants complete workforce training, staff discuss next steps. Those interested in entrepreneurship are referred directly to contractor incubator or accelerator programs through established regional partnerships.

4. What specific skills do participants gain through these programs?

Answer:

The presenter explained that participants complete bridge training followed by occupation-specific technical training. However, she was unable to identify which specific trade (e.g., solar, HVAC, EV) the example participant completed.

5. Is the contractor development program primarily focused on entrepreneurship and business development?

Answer:

Yes. The Contractor Incubator helps entrepreneurs launch businesses, while the Contractor Accelerator helps existing contractors grow and expand their businesses.

6. Is the funding presented for 2026 associated with the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), particularly the Economic and Community Grant?

Answer:

Yes. Another funding round is planned for:

- Equitable Energy Future Grants
- Community Solar Energy Sovereignty Grants
- Energy Transition Community Grants.

7. What timeframe is meant by "spring" in the funding schedule?

Answer:

The presenter clarified that "spring" refers to the next couple of months (through June), while noting that schedules may change.

8. How will the grant process work for new applicants compared with returning grantees?

Answer:

Both new applicants and returning applicants are eligible to apply. There are no restrictions based on prior participation.

9. Are there any special considerations for organizations reapplying for funding?

Answer:

No additional considerations or restrictions were identified for returning applicants.

10. Will grant opportunities be open to both new and returning applicants?

Answer:

Yes. The grant opportunities are open to both new and returning applicants.

11. Is there any preference or advantage given to either new or returning applicants during the review process?

Answer:

No. The presenter stated there is no preference or favoritism toward either new or returning applicants during the review process.

Action Items	Responsible Party	Due
Share CEJA Capacity Grant information with Council when available	DCEO Staff	Upon release
Distribute curriculum framework RFI to Council members CEJA Interest Form	DCEO Staff	Upon publication

C. CEJA Website- Noah Bond, CEJA Small Business Manager

Presentation Summary

Noah shared the functionality of the website in navigating it and how it is user friendly and gets users to what they are looking for with fewer clicks and more precise searches.

- Illinois workNet CEJA Portal <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/CEJA/Pages/default.aspx>

Questions and Answers

1. How can job seekers use the new CEJA website to find training opportunities?

Answer:

The website is designed to minimize the number of clicks needed to reach information. By selecting "**Job Seeker**," users can quickly access available training opportunities based on their interests. Each program page provides:

- Program overview
- Eligibility requirements
- Locations
- Key benefits
- Contact information
- Direct enrollment assistance through program staff or Energy Transition Navigators.

2. What feedback was provided on the website?

Answer:

A council member commented that they appreciated the website's approach of helping users get to answers quickly. After viewing the Job Seeker section, they indicated they would continue exploring the site and study it further. No recommendations for changes were made during the meeting.

Additional comments from Noah (not in response to a question)

Noah also requested ongoing feedback from council members, asking them to report:

- Broken links
- Missing information
- Additional resources users may want
- Suggestions to improve transparency and communication

He emphasized that the website would continue to evolve based on stakeholder feedback.

VI. EWAC Administrative Business

Matthew Swaine mentioned if anyone has suggestions for agenda items or speakers just email him.

Action Items	Responsible Party	Due
Submit agenda and speaker recommendations	Council Members	Ongoing

VII. EWAC Member Comment Period

A. Legislative Updates

Council members discussed upcoming energy legislation, including the anticipated Power Act and emerging issues related to data centers.

Members emphasized:

- The importance of developing timely recommendations for the General Assembly.
- The need to consider workforce impacts alongside energy and water policy.
- Aligning Council recommendations with the legislative calendar.

Beatrice Thompson announced her retirement and requested guidance regarding appointment

of her successor.

Action Items	Responsible Party	Due
Provide information regarding Council appointment process	DCEO Staff	Before next meeting
Consider legislative recommendations related to workforce impacts of data center development	Council	Future meeting

VIII. Audience Comment Period (required by OMA)

There were no audience comments at this time.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: Adjourn the meeting.

Moved by: Marlon McClinton

Seconded by: Vernis Barrier-Likes

Result: Meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Outcome: Meeting was adjourned with there no being a voice vote for this motion.