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

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| Awarding Agency Name | Commerce And Econ Opp |
| Agency Contact | Diana Fuller (Diana.Fuller@illinois.gov) |
| Announcement Type | Initial |
| Type of Assistance Instrument | Grant |
| Funding Opportunity Number | FY27-1 |
| Funding Opportunity Title | Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program |
| CSFA Number | 420-30-3197 |
| CSFA Popular Name | CEJA Workforce Network Program |
| Anticipated Number of Awards | 20 |
| Estimated Total Program Funding | $50,900,000 |
| Award Range | Not Applicable |
| Source of Funding | State |
| Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements | No |
| Indirect Costs Allowed | Yes |
| Restrictions on Indirect Costs | No |
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| Application Date Range | 09/22/2026 - 12/31/2027 : 11:59 PM |
| Grant Application Link | Please select the entire address below and paste it into the browser...<br>https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/3197-4343.html |
| Technical Assistance Session | Offered : Yes<br>Mandatory : No<br>Date : 09/29/2026 : 10:00 AM<br>Registration link :<br>https://illinoisstate.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_eBkidr0FRVuS-xh2ReMqGg#/registration |

# Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program 2027

## NOFO ID: 3197-4343

For information about grants please visit:
**https://dceo.illinois.gov/dceo-grants.html**

# A. Program Description

### 1. Notice of Funding Opportunity Intent

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (the "Department" or "DCEO") is issuing this Notice of Funding Opportunity ("NOFO") to support the Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, a network of Illinois Clean Jobs Program delivery hub sites in 14 CEJA workforce regions ("Workforce Hubs") throughout the State, to provide clean energy and related workforce training to jobseekers.

Workforce Hubs will engage with potential employers, community-based organizations, educational institutions, and community-based and labor-based training providers to ensure program-eligible individuals across the State have dedicated and sustained support to enter and build clean energy careers. The Workforce Hubs will be run by community-based organizations and utilize the 2027-2029 Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework (**https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/ceja/documents/ceja-2027-2029-clean-jobs-curriculum-framework.pdf**) to provide clean jobs training and a career pathway for participants.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity also includes funding from the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program services to support participants of the Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program with "wrap-around" and support services to improve access and successful program outcomes.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity also includes funding from Illinois' Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Illinois will "leverage" Illinois CEJA Workforce Hub networks and provide training funding in targeted occupations outlined in the Illinois CPRG workplan with USEPA. Grantees may apply through this NOFO for additional funds that will be awarded in a second "companion grant" that is selected under this NOFO that includes the specific terms and conditions of the CPRG funding source. Note that applicants are encouraged but not required to apply for CPRG funding. The special considerations for applicants applying for both CEJA and CPRG funds will be noted throughout this NOFO. An applicant must be selected as a CEJA Workforce Hub grantee to receive CPRG or CEJA grant funds. The Department will issue a separate grant agreement to Workforce Hub grantees that provide CPRG funded training.

### 2. Program History

The Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program began under a series of Notices of Funding Opportunity that established Workforce Hubs in CEJA workforce regions across the State. This NOFO refers to those awards issued in the first three years of the CEJA program as "Cycle 1". Cycle 1 built the initial statewide network of Workforce Hubs and established demand for clean energy training, supportive services, and employer connections in equity investment eligible communities. This NOFO opens Cycle 2 where the Department will award Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program grants for up to three years to serve the CEJA workforce regions listed under Workforce Hub Locations found in section A.3. of this NOFO.

In order to provide more clarity about the relationship between Workforce Hubs and the Energy Transition Navigators Program, Cycle 2 defines the Workforce Hub role more specifically than Cycle 1 did. In Cycle 1, Workforce Hubs and Navigators operating in the same region each conducted outreach, intake, and eligibility screening. The division of responsibility for case management, Barrier Reduction administration, and training varied by region. Cycle 2 sets a common starting point for these responsibilities and assigns the remainder through the grant negotiation and workplan development process. Cycle 2 changes the Workforce Hub service delivery model in four respects.

**Primary point of entry.** The CEJA Navigator serves as the primary point of entry to the Workforce Hub in its region. The Workforce Hub receives participants by referral and does not conduct its own outreach, recruitment, application, or intake.

**Training model.** The design and delivery of training must follow the 2027-2029 Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework.

- The CEJA "Core Competencies" replace the Cycle 1 "Bridge Program", and
- "Career Pathways / Occupations" replaces the Cycle 1 "Job-Specific Training" options.

**Additional Training Funds.** This NOFO includes the opportunity for applicants to apply for additional training funds to support training in clean energy jobs included in the State's *Climate Pollution Reduction Grants* (CPRG). Grantees will follow the Curriculum Framework and program design, but the technical training will be paid by the CPRG grant.

**Post-award planning and coordination.** Each Workforce Hub grantee will be required to participate in a post-award planning period with the Department and the CEJA Navigator from their CEJA hub region. The planning period settles work plans, service volumes, and participant handoffs with the CEJA Navigator.

**3. Program Description**

This NOFO sets forth the requirements for funding the Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program (20 ILCS 730/5-20; 14 Ill. Admin. Code Part 840) and the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program (20 ILCS 730/5-30), as specified by the Energy Transition Act as part of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, PA 102-0662 ("Climate and Equitable Jobs Act" or "CEJA") and PA 104-458, as amended. CEJA establishes several workforce programs, administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, to expand the clean energy workforce in Illinois and accelerate the adoption of clean energy sources, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency. Finally, this NOFO will provide additional training funds for successful applications under the CPRG Program. The CPRG Program is funded by the federal Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that allocated funds to the Illinois EPA Office of Energy under the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant [FAIN 00E03862] to implement greenhouse gas reduction measures.

Investments in clean energy technology and infrastructure, funded through CEJA and other state and federal funding sources, will generate significant construction, installation, maintenance, and repair activity in Illinois. Historically, these investments have not benefited all Illinois' communities and workers. The Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is one of several programs created by CEJA to grow the clean energy workforce in a more equitable way.

To create a qualified, diverse pipeline of workers prepared for careers in clean energy, the Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program creates Clean Jobs Workforce Hubs in 14 regions throughout the State

to provide clean energy and related workforce and training opportunities to participants, engage with potential employers, and form partnerships to ensure participants have dedicated and sustained support to build careers in clean energy and related sector jobs. The main objective of the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is to increase access to and opportunities for education, training, and support services to help program-eligible individuals succeed in the labor market generally and the clean energy sector specifically. Upon completion, participants will be prepared for entry-level clean energy jobs.

**ILLINOIS CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

The Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is aligned with Illinois' workforce, education, and economic development priorities. Billions of dollars of funding in clean energy technology and infrastructure through CEJA and other state and federal funding sources over the next decade have the potential to be a catalyst for the full inclusion of program participants in the clean energy workforce. By providing training, employment, and career development, the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program will help to increase and sustain prosperity in all communities.

*The CEJA Ecosystem*

The Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is one part of the CEJA Ecosystem, a coordinated network of programs, grantees, and partners established under CEJA to deliver equitable clean energy and workforce outcomes across Illinois. The CEJA Ecosystem advances the State's climate and equity goals by:

- Maximizing impact and reach. Coordinating among CEJA grantees and community-based partners to extend the benefits of clean energy and workforce programs statewide.
- Facilitating seamless access. Ensuring individuals, businesses, and communities can navigate and access opportunities across CEJA programs.
- Fostering collaboration and innovation. Promoting shared learning, data exchange, and new approaches among CEJA-funded organizations.
- Eliminating duplication. Reducing service overlap and improving efficiency and quality for the communities most in need.

Grantees contribute to the CEJA Ecosystem by delivering projects that produce measurable improvements in the environmental, economic, and social well-being of Illinois residents, particularly those in the CEJA target regions of Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) areas and environmental justice communities.

*Illinois Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan*

The Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program supports the goals of the Illinois Unified State Plan under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which identifies expanded access to clean energy jobs, regional sector partnerships, and reentry support among the State's workforce priorities. Workforce Hubs are expected to coordinate with local workforce innovation areas and the partners that deliver services under that plan.

**PROGRAM COORDINATION**

The Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is part of a highly interconnected set of Illinois statewide clean energy workforce and contractor development programs. The Workforce Hubs will be required to collaborate and coordinate with the programs listed below. In particular, the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is closely coupled with the Energy Transition Navigators Program, as described above. Workforce Hubs will be required to operate with an exceptionally high level of coordination and

collaboration with the Navigator in their region to ensure a seamless experience of referral, enrollment, and training for participants. Background information about each program is available here:

- Illinois Energy Transition Navigator Program: **https://dceo.illinois.gov/ceja/workforce-training-programs.html#energy-transition**
- Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program: **https://dceo.illinois.gov/ceja/workforce-training-programs.html#climate-works**
- Returning Residents Clean Jobs Program: **https://dceo.illinois.gov/ceja/workforce-training-programs.html#returning-resident**
- Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program: **https://dceo.illinois.gov/ceja/ceja-contractor-programs.html#1**
- Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program: **https://dceo.illinois.gov/ceja/ceja-contractor-programs.html#2**
- Future Energy Jobs Act Programs: **https://dceo.illinois.gov/ceja/workforce-training-programs.html#solar-training**

Workforce Hubs will coordinate with the Energy Transition Navigator in the proposed region and with the other CEJA-funded programs, including the Illinois Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program and the Returning Residents Clean Jobs Program. Applicants must describe how they will establish and maintain these relationships.

**The Energy Transition Navigator.** The Navigator serves as the single point of entry to the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program and performs the outreach, screening, application support, intake, assessment, orientation, and referral functions described above. Workforce Hubs and Navigators will coordinate on referrals, assessment results, participant information, participant handoffs, training capacity and referral planning, and the delivery arrangements settled in the post-award planning period. Following the planning period, the joint project work plan governs the coordination responsibilities of both parties. Workforce Hubs must maintain current knowledge of the Navigator's services and offerings, and will keep the Navigator informed of the Career Pathways the Workforce Hub offers, their entry requirements, and their availability, so that the Navigator does not describe a Career Pathway as available where it is not being offered.

*Navigator Roles*

Workforce Hubs must partner with the organizations that manage the Energy Transition Navigators Program and the Illinois Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program in their region. The CEJA Navigator serves as the primary point of entry for a program participant. The Navigator is responsible for

- Conducting participant outreach and recruitment,
- Screening participants for eligibility,
- Assisting with the participant application and completing intake,
- Conducting the required pre-assessments and providing the career exploration orientation,
- Referring the qualified participant to the Workforce Hub for enrollment in the CEJA Program, and
- Reporting Program Activities and Outcomes

*Workforce Hub Roles*

The Workforce Hub is primarily responsible for coordinating the CEJA Training and Job Placement services including:

- Curricula Development, Instruction and Program Delivery
- Provision of Case Management Services
- Work-Based Learning Instruction and Coordination

- Provision of Supportive Services
    - Academic Supports
    - Stipends / Incentives / Income Support
    - Barrier Reduction
- Job Placement / Transition and Follow Up Services

**Climate Works.** Climate Works prepares participants for careers in clean energy sector construction and building trades. Construction is also one of the five Career Clusters. The two offerings are differentiated, and a participant retains a choice between them. Navigators, Workforce Hubs and Climate Works will coordinate so that a participant is directed to the offering that fits the participant's interests and goals.

**Returning Residents Clean Jobs Program.** Workforce Hubs must coordinate closely with the Returning Residents Clean Jobs Program to support participants who have received clean jobs training while incarcerated and who have recently been released from the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections. Returning Residents Clean Jobs Program grantees may refer their participants to Workforce Hubs for additional training, transition services, and wrap-around supports as needed.

**Other workforce and community partners.** Workforce Hubs should coordinate with local workforce innovation areas and other local and regional workforce entities. Workforce Hubs are also expected to coordinate with building trades, industry contractors, contractor associations, community colleges, community-based organizations, and secondary schools, among others. Workforce Hubs are expected to develop structured pathways, in partnership with key stakeholders in the industry, for program graduates to transition successfully into clean energy jobs following program completion.

**PROGRAM DEFINITIONS**

This NOFO will use the definitions established in the Energy Transition Act of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, including the definitions for "equity investment eligible person," "equity investment eligible community," “community-based organization,” and “clean energy jobs.” It will also use the State of Illinois definitions for work-based learning and core equity values.

"Advanced Training" means training that occurs after a participant completes CEJA Core Competencies and Career Cluster training. It occurs on a limited, case-by-case exception for a participant who needs additional training toward a clean energy job, with documented employer need, and has no other funding source available. CEJA is the payer of last resort for advanced training. See PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, Advanced Training, for the conditions that apply.

"Career Cluster" means a group of occupations that share a common base of skills, so that a participant trained in the Career Cluster can move among related jobs as demand shifts. Cycle 2 uses five Career Clusters: Manufacturing; Construction; Utilities; Installation, Maintenance, & Repair; and Professional Services. Career Cluster training is the training a participant enters after completing the CEJA Core Competencies, in one or more of the five Career Clusters, selected on the basis of regional clean energy workforce demand.

"Career Pathway" means a credential and training sequence within a Career Cluster. Each Workforce Hub proposes at least two Career Pathways, within a single Career Cluster or across more than one, selected on the basis of regional employer demand. Training within the proposed Career Pathways is within the scope of the grant.

"CEJA Core Competencies" means the foundational training each participant completes before entering Career Cluster training. The CEJA Core Competencies consist of two components: Essential Employability Skills and Clean Energy Basics. Clean Energy Basics includes an introduction to clean energy careers and the required OSHA-10 and First Aid and CPR certifications. Building science principles and construction basics from the Cycle 1 bridge program are now addressed within the applicable Career Clusters. The CEJA Core Competencies replace the bridge program used in Cycle 1. Funding for this training is included in the Workforce Hub grant, and delivery is a Workforce Hub function.

"2027-2029 Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework" or "Curriculum Framework" means the statewide curriculum standard that Workforce Hubs follow, required by CEJA and updated every three years. The Curriculum Framework sets the CEJA Core Competencies, the Career Clusters, the minimum academic levels for entry into training, and the minimum requirements for each Career Cluster.

“Clean energy jobs”, as defined in 20 ILCS 730/5-25(a), means 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.

“Community-based organization” means an organization that:

- provides employment, skill development, or related services to members of the community;
- includes community colleges, nonprofits, and local governments;
- has at least one main operating office in the community or region it serves; and
- demonstrates relationships with local residents and other organizations serving the community.

"Continued Training" means a participant's placement into further education or training after program completion, funded by an employer, a scholarship, financial aid, WIOA, or another source rather than by CEJA. Continued training costs are not funded by CEJA and is a successful outcome, distinct from advanced training (defined above).

“Core Values” means the values of diversity, inclusion accessibility and equity.

- “Diversity” means the representation of people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.
- “Inclusion” means the action or state of including and feeling an empowered sense of belonging within a group or organization.
- “Accessibility” means when a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally integrated and equally effective manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.
- “Equity” means the state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair

"Displaced energy worker" means an energy worker who has lost employment or is anticipated by the Department to lose employment within the next 5 years, due to the reduced operation or closure of a fossil fuel power plant, nuclear power plant, or coal mine.

"Eligible populations" means those individuals who meet the requirements to participate in the Program.

"Energy worker" means a person who has been employed full-time for a period of one year or longer, and within the previous 5 years, at a fossil fuel power plant, a nuclear power plant, or a coal mine located within the State of Illinois, whether or not they are employed by the owner of the power plant or mine. Energy workers are considered to be full-time if they work at least 35 hours per week for 45 weeks a year or the 1,820 work-hour equivalent with vacations, paid holidays, and sick time, but not overtime, included in this computation. Classification of an individual as an energy worker continues for 5 years from the latest date of employment or the effective date of [the Energy Community Reinvestment Act, September 15, 2021], whichever is later.

"Environmental justice communities" means the definition of that term as defined by the Illinois Power Agency pursuant to the Illinois Power Agency Act [20 ILCS 3855], but excluding racial and ethnic indicators, where residents have historically been subject to disproportionate pollution burdens, including pollution from the energy sector. For a map that defines these areas in Illinois, refer to this website: **https://dceo.illinois.gov/ceja/map.html**.

“Equity Investment Eligible Communities” are the geographic areas throughout Illinois which would most benefit from equitable investments by the State which are designed to combat discrimination and foster sustainable economic growth. Specifically, “Equity Investment Eligible Communities” means the following areas:

- Restore, Reinvest and Renew Areas ("R3 areas”) as established pursuant to Section 10-40 of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (410 ILCS 705), where residents have historically been excluded from economic opportunities, including opportunities in the energy sector. Eligible R3 areas are defined in the R3 service map (website at **https://dceo.illinois.gov/ceja/map.html**); and
- Environmental justice communities. See the Equity Investment Eligible Community Map (website at: **https://dceo.illinois.gov/ceja/map.html**), which defines the areas that satisfy the criteria for both R3 areas and environmental justice communities.

“Equity Investment Eligible Person” or “Eligible Person” is a person who would most benefit from equitable investments by the State designed to combat discrimination and foster sustainable economic growth. Specifically, Eligible Persons mean:

- persons whose primary residence is in an Equity Investment Eligible Community; or
- persons who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system; or
- persons who were formerly incarcerated.

"Low-income person" means an individual whose income does not exceed 80% of the area median income, adjusted for family size, based on the data published most recently by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"Nonprofit organization" means a corporation organized under the General Not For Profit Corporation Act of 1986, in good standing to operate in the State of Illinois, that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community.

"Transition services" means services delivered at completion to help a participant move into a clean energy job or further training, including job search assistance, application preparation, resume writing, mock interviews, referral to a career counselor, and connection to the Workforce Hub's employer

partners. Transition services are a fixed Workforce Hub responsibility. Retention follow-up after placement is not a transition service.

"Work-based learning", defined in the Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary (**https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IL-Career-Pathways-Dictionary.PDF**) means work-based opportunities to practice and enhance the skills and knowledge gained in their program of study or industry training program, as well as to develop employability, and includes an assessment and recognition of acquired knowledge and skills.

**WORKFORCE HUB LOCATIONS**

This NOFO will award grants to fund Clean Jobs Workforce Network Hub (Workforce Hub) sites located in or near each of the following CEJA workforce regions:

- Chicago (South)
- Chicago (Southwest and West)
- Waukegan
- Rockford
- Aurora
- Joliet
- Peoria
- Champaign
- Danville
- Decatur
- Carbondale
- East St. Louis
- Alton
- Kankakee

Note that the Department may award multiple grants in a workforce region. The Chicago (South) and Chicago (Southwest and West) regions may each support more than one Workforce Hub and more than one Energy Transition Navigator. Where that occurs, the Department will pair each Workforce Hub with an Energy Transition Navigator grantee after applicants are designated as finalists, so that each pair operates as a bilateral partnership as in every other region. Applicants in these regions apply as they would anywhere else and are not asked to identify a Navigator partner in the application.

Each Workforce Hub will serve participants in its proposed hub municipality and surrounding areas, including nearby regions. For instance, the Peoria Workforce Hub may propose to serve participants in Peoria and Bloomington-Normal. Applicants must identify the Workforce Hub region they propose to serve, the specific locations where training will be offered, and the equity investment eligible communities in the proposed area. The Workforce Hub activities should be offered within or near the Workforce Hub municipality that is accessible to program participants in the Workforce Hub region. The Workforce Hub municipality and surrounding geographic location define the labor market information, industry and employer based that should be considered when selecting the training that will be offered in the Workforce Hub.

**PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY**

The focus of the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program and the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program is to prepare program-eligible participants to successfully gain employment in the clean energy

industry. To be eligible for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, a person must meet both of the following:

1. Be an Illinois resident who is aged 18 or older, or who will reach age 18 on or before the participant's scheduled program completion date; and
2. Meet at least one of the following:
    a. Resides in an area that is both an R3 Area, as established pursuant to Section 10-40 of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (410 ILCS 705), and an environmental justice community;
    b. Resides in an area that is either an R3 Area, as established pursuant to Section 10-40 of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (410 ILCS 705), or an environmental justice community;
    c. Meets the definition of a displaced energy worker; or
    d. Is a person who faces barriers to employment, including but not limited to low educational attainment, prior involvement with the criminal legal system, language barriers, or being a graduate or current member of the foster care system.

Item 1 applies to every participant. Item 2 states alternative routes to eligibility, and a person needs to meet only one of them. A person who qualifies under 2(c) or 2(d) is eligible regardless of where that person resides.

**PRIORITY OF SERVICE**

The Energy Transition Navigator Team applies priority of service at outreach, screening, and referral. The Workforce Hub applies it at enrollment and placement. Neither party discharges the obligation alone. Placements are prioritized as follows, in each CEJA Workforce Region where the applicant pool allows:

1. At least one-third of program placements are for applicants who reside in an area that is both an R3 Area and an environmental justice community.
2. At least two-thirds of program placements are for applicants who satisfy item 1, or who reside in an area that is either an R3 Area or an environmental justice community. The two-thirds includes the one-third described in item 1. It is not additional to it.
3. Priority for the remaining program placements is given to applicants who are displaced energy workers, applicants who face barriers to employment, and applicants who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system, regardless of the applicant's area of residence.

Within items 1 and 2, preference is given to applicants who face barriers to employment, such as low educational attainment, prior involvement with the criminal legal system, and language barriers, and to applicants who are graduates of or current members of the foster care system. Priority of service governs placement. It does not govern eligibility. A person who falls in none of these tiers may still be eligible under PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY above.

Confidentiality. An applicant may decline to disclose status as a person who was formerly incarcerated or as a person who is or was a member of the foster care system. The Workforce Hub protects the confidentiality of that information and may not require its disclosure as a condition of participation. The Department may publish data on these populations in aggregate. Because disclosure is voluntary, the preference described above is applied on the basis of the information applicants choose to provide.

NOTE: The Department recognizes that not all CEJA Workforce Regions will have a significant number of individuals who reside in R3 or environmental justice communities. Workforce Hubs will be required to describe their priority of service considerations in Enrollment Policy and Procedures.

**PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

The focus of the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is: 1) to deliver clean energy training that prepares participants referred by Energy Transition Navigators for entry-level clean energy jobs; 2) to build and maintain the employer and sector partnerships that give participants priority access to work-based learning and hiring; and 3) to move completers into clean energy jobs or further training. Projects funded under this program must include the program elements that are outlined in this section in coordination with the CEJA Navigators. Grantees will be expected to develop policies and procedures that incorporate these program elements through the administration of the program and the delivery of program services.

1. **PROGRAM DESIGN AND DEMAND PLANNING:** Workforce Hubs will coordinate with Energy Transition Navigators and other local and regional workforce entities to provide training, engage employers, and provide transition services to prepare a diverse pipeline of workers for careers in the clean energy industry. Organizations applying for funding may deliver all program elements themselves or may partner with other organizations to deliver various program elements. Where appropriate, lead applicants may enter into agreements with other organizations that can provide case management, training, wrap-around supportive services, work-based learning elements, assessments, or other program elements. Applicants must describe the organizations that will deliver each part of the program and the role each will play.

   Applicants must focus the program design on the activities that will achieve the CEJA Workforce Hub Program objective of increasing the number of clean energy workers in Illinois. Applicants must analyze the labor market information and develop employer partnerships to support and facilitate the placement of CEJA graduates in clean energy jobs, Localized clean energy employment demand is difficult to document through publicly available data sources alone. Training offering should be driven by documented hiring needs of local employers. See the EMPLOYER AND SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS sections below. Applicants are also encouraged to review the following resources to identify current needs:
   - Illinois Clean Energy Jobs Regional Data Packets **https://ler.illinois.edu/climate-jobs-institute-archive/illinois-clean-energy-jobs-regional-data-packets/**
   - 2027-2029 Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework
   - Climate and Equitable Jobs Act Stakeholder Outreach Report

2. **EQUITY PROGRAM CULTURE**: Workforce hubs must utilize a program model that upholds the core values of diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity (defined above). These core values should inform all aspects of the program, including partnerships, training, transition services, and barrier reducing supportive services. Programs should consider the unique background and experiences of program participants and pursue policies and practices to support all participants. Applicants must describe how their program will increase access, enrollment, and completion for program eligible persons. Programs should foster a shared identity in the program and a welcoming, inclusive environment for participants with different backgrounds.

   An equity lens is a process for analyzing how program policies and practices affect eligible populations so that differences in access, service quality, and outcomes are identified and corrected. Workforce Hubs apply an equity lens by examining who reaches the program and who does not, where participants stop out, what barriers explain the difference, and then changing program delivery in response. The application asks for the applicant team's record of delivering services to eligible

populations, its experience helping participants address barriers to employment such as low educational attainment, involvement with the criminal legal system, participation in the foster care system, and language barriers, and the ways leadership and staff draw on lived experience or work history in the community being served. Specific examples carry more weight than statements of commitment, including instances where the applicant changed a service, schedule, location, or partnership after analyzing its effect on participants.

3. **EMPLOYER AND SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS**: Workforce Hubs will develop formal employer and sector partnerships that give participants priority access to employment training, work-based learning opportunities, and hiring activities, as required under Section 5-20(e)(2) of CEJA. Applicants must describe their employer partners, the commitments those partners have made, and how they will maintain these relationships over the funding period. Business engagement is a required Workforce Hub function. The role builds and maintains employer relationships, cultivates hiring commitments, and coordinates work-based learning placements. Applicants must identify the staff who will perform this function and their qualifications. Sample job descriptions are provided at the NOFO website. Workforce Hubs will:
    - ensure that training offerings meet local demand through employer input;
    - develop formal employer and sector partnerships that give participants priority access to training, work-based learning, and hiring;
    - demonstrate employer demand through documented commitments and memoranda of understanding rather than nominal partner lists. Reviewers score the strength and specificity of the demonstrated demand;
    - convene the applicant's employer partners as a standing employer advisory group; and
    - conduct regional engagement through existing channels where possible, including local workforce innovation boards, the Energy Workforce Board, or existing sector partnerships, rather than by establishing new bodies.

    Evidence of employer partnerships must be included in the application as memoranda of understanding or partnership agreements identifying the entity, key staff, the roles and responsibilities associated with the project, and any dollar amounts for specific services to be rendered. The employer verification form and the employer MOU template are provided at the NOFO Website.

    ***Relationship to CEJA Navigators***. The Workforce Hub's employer engagement and the Navigator's stakeholder engagement run in different directions and do not duplicate one another, but should be closely coordinated. The Workforce Hub connects employers to its training, work-based learning, and hiring pipeline. The Navigator connects participants to employers and carries its own partnership duties including work with local workforce innovation boards on career pathway support.

    ***Relationship to Utility Contractor Grantees***. DCEO's Equitable Energy Futures Program provides awards that require grantees to staff at least half of their project work with CEJA workforce training graduates. Workforce Hubs and Navigators should treat these contractors as a hiring channel for their completers.

4. **STAFFING**: Staff are required for all key program areas. The eight required key staff roles are program administration and grant management; enrollment, referral, and assessment, including administration of the CEJA Core Competencies proficiency assessment and the test-out determination; case management and career planning; administration and delivery of Energy Transition Barrier Reduction services; instruction, including delivery of the CEJA Core Competencies,

Career Pathway training, and academic supports; employer and business engagement; transition services and the one year of follow-up after program completion; and data entry, participant records, reporting, and fiscal administration. These are functions, not job titles. One person may cover more than one role, a role may require more than one person, and partner organizations may share a role. Staffing must be able to handle peak periods. Peak periods are the points in the training calendar when demand on a role concentrates, including cohort starts, enrollment and assessment following a batch of Navigator referrals, concurrent CEJA Core Competencies and Career Pathway cohorts, credential testing windows, and the completion and placement activity at the close of a cohort. Where one person covers more than one required role, the applicant must show that the coverage holds when those periods overlap. Attachment 4 defines each role and records the position or positions covering it. Program staffing must ensure the quality delivery of programs and services. Staffing decisions should also consider the experience and ability of key staff to address the barriers to employment that program participants face and to connect with equity investment eligible communities. Applicants will provide this information by completing Attachment 4: Staffing Plan and providing staff resumes, instructor credentials, partnership agreements, and/or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).

5. **RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND ENROLLMENT**: The Energy Transition Navigator is the primary point of entry to the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program. The Navigator refers participants to the Workforce Hub. Applicants must describe how they will receive referrals, confirm participant fit to the training being entered, and plan training capacity with the Navigator. Outreach and recruitment are Energy Transition Navigator functions and will not be supported by the Workforce Hub grant. Workforce Hubs and their training providers will not conduct their own outreach or recruitment, including through social media, community events, or walk-ins.

   The Navigator is responsible for completing the pre-screen, application, eligibility determination, required pre-assessments, and career exploration orientation and refers the participant to the Workforce Hub. Workforce Hubs and Navigators use the same participant tracking system, so the enrollment record follows the participant from the Navigator to the Workforce Hub without re-entry. Workforce Hubs will:

   - Receive referrals from the Navigator to be enrolled;
   - confirm each participant's fit to the training being entered and place the participant into that training;
   - maintain the participant's training record in the CEJA Reporting System; and
   - coordinate with the Navigator on referrals, assessment results, participant information, and participant handoffs

   The Workforce Hub is responsible for determining the training capacity and the CEJA Navigator has the recruitment responsibility. Workforce Hubs will:

   - propose a training capacity plan for each grant year, stating how many participants the Workforce Hub can take, into which Career Pathways, and when;
   - express the plan based on the proposed delivery model. The applicant must outline the number of cohorts, the seats in each, the Career Pathway each serves, and the planned start dates. An open entry program will state the number of participants it can absorb in each period, by Career Pathway, and any constraint on when a participant may start;
   - convert the capacity plan into a referral plan agreed with the Navigator, stating how many participants the Navigator will refer, by Career Pathway and by period, cohort, or continuous intake and how far in advance of each start referrals must arrive;

- notify the Navigator promptly when planned capacity fills, a start date moves, or a Career Pathway is added or suspended;
- review the plan on the cadence set by the joint project work plan, and revise it when enrollment, completion, or employer demand differ from the plan; and
- agree in advance what will happen when referrals fall short of planned capacity or exceed it, including whether training runs under-filled, the start date moves, capacity shifts to a later start or another Career Pathway, or referrals are held for the next available opening. The partners will not leave a participant waiting while capacity questions are resolved.

6. **ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT**: The 2027-2029 Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework requires a set of pre-assessments before a participant begins CEJA Core Competencies training. The Navigator completes three of these before referral. The Workforce Hub completes the fourth after enrollment. Applicants must describe how they will use the assessment results they receive and how they will administer the CEJA Core Competencies proficiency assessment. The four pre-assessments are:
    - *Needs assessment.* Identifies the wrap-around supports the participant needs to attend and complete training. Completed by the Navigator before referral.
    - *Reading and math assessment*. Establishes the participant's reading and math level against the entry requirements for training. Completed by the Navigator before referral.
    - *Career assessment*. Explores the participant's interest in clean energy jobs. Completed by the Navigator before referral as part of the career exploration orientation.
    - *CEJA Core Competencies proficiency assessment*. Measures proficiency in the training content and determines whether the participant may test out of part or all of it. Completed by the Workforce Hub after enrollment.

    The Workforce Hub receives the results of the first three assessments with each referral and will use them to enroll the participant. The 2027-2029 Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework sets the minimum academic level for entry into CEJA Core Competencies: a reading and math level of 6th grade or higher. Certain Career Pathways require more, and the Framework sets 8th grade for the solar and energy auditor pathways. The Navigator assesses each participant against these levels before referral.

    A participant who has not reached the applicable level is referred to an adult education, literacy, or other appropriate provider before enrollment, unless the Department approves a documented exception. The Curriculum Framework requires Workforce Hubs to provide participants with access to that tutoring or adult education. Workforce Hubs will support the participant's enrollment in the program once the requirement is met, and will record the referral, the follow-up, and enrollment so that a participant who leaves for academic preparation is not lost. Applicants must describe the circumstances under which they would seek an exception, including how they determine that an academic gap can be closed within a reasonable time. A participant who is already enrolled and struggling with part of the training receives academic supportive services.

    Workforce Hubs will administer a CEJA Core Competencies proficiency assessment after enrollment and before training begins to determine whether a participant can “test out” of part or all of the *CEJA Core Competency* training. An experienced participant, such as a displaced energy worker, may test out and move directly into *Career Cluster* technical training, directly into a work-based learning training opportunity, or, where the participant already holds the Career Pathway credential and an employer has identified the advancement the additional credential supports, directly into advanced training under section 12 below. The Department will specify the assessment instruments and

standards in the CEJA Workforce Hub program manual. Workforce Hubs must assign qualified staff or contract with the CEJA Navigator or other partners to complete this assessment. It is important to note that assessment results inform enrollment, placement and support the provision of case management strategies. They are not an eligibility determination, and a participant is not made ineligible by an assessment result. The assessment results must be recorded in the CEJA Reporting System.

7. **CASE MANAGEMENT**: Grantees must coordinate *case management* or *career planning* services directly with grantee staff or with program partner staff. Case management / career planning is a customer-centered approach to delivering services to prepare and coordinate comprehensive career (employment) plans for program participants, ensuring access to training activities and supportive services during program participation and continuing for one (1) year of follow-up. Successful career planning is a collaborative, ongoing process rather than a one-time activity. The process is individualized to the worker that includes the following activities:
    - *Assessment:* A thorough assessment is the foundation for understanding the participant's employment goals, existing skills, and career readiness and determining all possible barriers to employment. It is not a one-time activity. Nor is it a one-size-fits-all approach. Assessments help prepare participants to determine existing skills, identify those that require additional training, develop an employment plan, and connect them to services through appropriate referrals. At a minimum, the assessment process must be appropriate for the participant and address the areas below to inform the employment plan.
    - *Individual Employment Plan:* The Individual Employment Plan (IEP) is a living document that identifies employment and education goals as part of a career pathway, objectives, and the appropriate combination of services for the participant to reach the goals. The IEP is the basic instrument for the grantee to document the appropriateness of the decisions made about the combination of services for the participant, including referrals to other programs for specified activities. It is to be developed collaboratively with the participant to establish mutual goals.
    - *Program Tracking:* The case manager tracks each participant's progress through training and into employment, connects participants with the services they need to remain enrolled, responds to problems that interrupt training, and provides retention support after placement. The Workforce Hub maintains working knowledge of the supportive services and community resources available in the service area, coordinates support referrals and handoffs with the responsible program or provider under approved referral and data procedures, and carries the follow-up that runs for at least one year following training program completion
    - *Supportive Services:* The case manager administers the Barrier Reduction Program services based on the Workforce Hub's policy and the CEJA participant's needs. This requires the case manager to provide extensive follow-up with program participants to ensure that the proper documentation for the supportive services is maintained.

    Case management support will be paid with different funding sources depending on the CEJA services that are being provided.
    - Workforce Hub funds will pay for the case management that is focused on the technical assessments, IEP and CEJA program tracking. These costs are included on the CEJA budget lines:*1A Hub Personnel, 2A Hub Benefits, and 6A Hub Contractual*
    - Barrier Reduction funds will pay for case management that is focused on the needs assessments and the provision of supportive services. These costs are included on the

CEJA budget lines: *1B Barrier Reduction Personnel, 2B Barrier Reduction Benefits, and 6B Barrier Reduction Contractual*

8. **TRAINING:** CEJA requires that the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program utilize a standard 2027-2029 Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework ("Curriculum Framework"), developed through a stakeholder process to identify the career pathways and training curriculum needed for participants to be skilled, work-ready, and able to enter clean energy jobs. The Curriculum Framework includes requirements for training, certification preparation, job readiness, and skill development, including soft skills, math skills, technical skills, certification test preparation, and other development needed. Applicants are encouraged to review the 2027-2029 Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework, posted at **https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/ceja/documents/ceja-2027-2029-clean-jobs-curriculum-framework.pdf**

   The CEJA Workforce Network Program training requirements are broken into three parts: 1) CEJA Core Competencies, 2) CEJA Career Cluster Training and 3) Work-Based Learning. Applicants must describe the training they propose to deliver, the job it leads to, and the regional demand that supports it. Using the Curriculum Framework, Workforce Hubs are required to deliver the CEJA Core Competencies and Career Cluster training organized into at least two Career Pathways. Every participant completes the CEJA Core Competencies, or tests out of part or all of that content, before entering Career Cluster training.

   ***Part 1: CEJA Core Competency Training***

   The CEJA Core Competencies provides the foundational training needed for entry-level employment in the clean energy sector and for additional technical training within the Career Clusters. The CEJA Core Competencies focus on developing the employability, safety, foundational technical literacy, and clean energy fundamentals necessary for successful participation in Career Cluster training and entry into clean energy careers. The CEJA Core Competencies include:

   - *Essential Employability Skills:* The skills required for a worker to be successful in all sectors of the labor market. They are separate from the technical skills attained in Career Pathways and from academic skills such as math and reading. Essential employability skills are not limited to personal ethics, work ethics, communication skills, and teamwork. The Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework is incorporated in the 2027-2029 Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework and governs the essential employability skills component. For more information see: **https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/illinois-essential-employability-skills-framework**; and
   - *Clean Energy Basics:* An introduction to clean energy careers, contextualized career exploration tied to the occupations the participant is preparing for, and safety basics including the required OSHA 10 and First Aid/CPR certifications. The 2026 revision of the Curriculum Framework broadens and universalizes foundational construction and electrical-related concepts while reserving more specialized technical instruction for the Career Cluster and Illustrative Career Pathway levels.

   Note that the recommended content for each component is set in the Curriculum Framework. Some clean energy employers may be interested in hiring people directly from the CEJA Core Competencies. Most participants will continue to Career Cluster training. A contextualized bridge program, such as a solar math course, remains an optional model a provider may offer in addition to the CEJA Core Competencies.

***Part 2: CEJA Career Cluster Training***

After completing the CEJA Core Competencies, participants enter Career Cluster training. The CEJA Curriculum Framework organizes the technical training around the five industry clusters listed below to prepare participants for multiple related clean energy occupations.

- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Utilities
- Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
- Professional Services

Within each career cluster, the Curriculum Framework includes one or more career pathways that demonstrate how shared competencies within a career cluster translate into the knowledge, skills, and credentials needed for careers within the cluster. Workforce Hubs are required to offer at least two Career Pathways, within a single Career Cluster or across more than one, selected on the basis of regional employer demand, training availability, and employer partnerships. For each proposed Career Pathway, applicants must identify:

- the occupations it leads to;
- the credentials participants will earn;
- the sequence and duration of training; and
- the employer partners that have committed to hire from it.

The Curriculum Framework sets the competencies, applied skills, industry credentials, and minimum requirements for each Career Cluster, and illustrates Career Pathways within them. The illustrations show how the shared competencies of a cluster translate into a credential and a training sequence. They are examples rather than a fixed list, and applicants are not limited to them. Applicants may propose a Career Pathway the Curriculum Framework does not illustrate, provided it sits within one of the Career Clusters and addresses that cluster's competency requirements. Such a proposal must meet the documentation requirements set out in the Curriculum Framework and must demonstrate employer demand and job placements. A competitive application will answer the following questions for each proposed Career Pathway.

- the occupational demand and projected growth for the occupations in the proposed Career Pathway;
- wage data for those occupations;
- the employers actively hiring for those occupations;
- existing programs and training already available in the region;
- the foundational competencies and cluster-specific skills the training builds;
- the credentials participants will earn; and
- the gaps the proposed training fills.

***CPRG CONSIDERATIONS:*** *Grantees may apply for additional funding to provide Career Cluster Training that aligns and is authorized under Illinois CPRG Grant. The CPRG Program follows the Same CEJA Curriculum Framework and Program Guidelines. The only difference is that grantees can use the additional CRPG funds to offer Career Cluster Training to support occupations listed below and may request funding from the CPRG program under this NOFO. Note that grantees may apply for CPRG Option A, CPRG Option B, both CPRG options or choose not apply for the CPRG funds.*

*CPRG Option A: Clean Jobs Workforce Network Grant Program*

- *heat pump water heater installation*
- *roof replacement and repair*
- *electrical upgrades, and*
- *energy storage installation*

*CPRG Option B: Freight Operations and Heavy-Duty Charging Infrastructure Maintenance.*

- *fleet and freight operations*
- *heavy-duty charging infrastructure maintenance*

***Part 3 Work-Based Learning***

Work-based learning (WBL) is training that provides participants with work-based opportunities to practice and enhance the skills and knowledge gained in their program of study or industry training. Partnering with local employers to provide work-based learning opportunities is instrumental in creating employment opportunities for participants with barriers to employment. Work-based learning hours must equal at least ten percent of curriculum instructional hours. Work-based learning hours are added to the curriculum hour requirement rather than counted within it and are eligible for participant stipends. Work-based learning occurs during or after formal classroom instruction and must be completed before a participant is recorded as a completer. A Climate Works pre-apprenticeship placement does not count toward this requirement. Work-based learning may include

- Career awareness and exploration activities with “hands on” experiences (guest speakers, job shadowing)
- Workplace experience (service learning, paid work experience, on-the-job training, job site practicums, transitional jobs, and apprenticeships).
- Job site practicums, supervised by the program instructors and coordinated with employers, community-based organizations, contractors, or government entities, that give participants opportunities to put into practice what they learned in the classroom.

Work-based learning must include “hands-on” experience of program participants. Guest speakers, presentations, and site tours are acceptable components of a work-based learning plan but do not by themselves satisfy the 10% requirement and are acceptable in place of hands-on experience only where hands-on experiences are impracticable. Applicants must document proposed work-based learning specifically, identifying the experience, the employer or host, the participants who will take part, and the hours involved.

**Program Duration:** The CEJA training should not exceed 12 months. Training that runs longer than twelve months falls outside the Curriculum Framework and is characterized as *advanced training.*

**Curriculum Plan:** Applicants are required to submit a proposed curriculum plan that includes the hours, instruction modules offered, length of the training, and the logistical plan for delivery, using Attachment 3: Curriculum Plan.

**Employer Support:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or partnership agreements with employers and/or industry associations should demonstrate the support of the CEJA career cluster and training curriculum plan.

**CPRG CONSIDERATIONS**: Applicants that request additional CPRG funds must complete the CPRG Curriculum Plan block in Attachment 3, identifying the CPRG occupations, the training supports and which of their proposed Career Pathways it sits within.

9. **PROGRAM DELIVERY:** Workforce Hubs are encouraged to implement flexible and interactive program delivery methods to improve accessibility and help participants overcome barriers that stand in the way of their participation or success. Applicants must describe the delivery model they propose and how the proposed training holds together as a coherent sequence. Instructional delivery strategies to improve student outcomes may include but are not limited to:
   - Content that can be completed on-demand when convenient for participants
   - Virtual or face-to-face instruction options
   - Interactive learning tools, such as augmented reality or virtual reality technology
   - Full-time and part-time training options
   - Open entry and exit options
   - Modular programming that avoids redundant training for participants who may already possess given qualifications
   - Alternative testing approaches to demonstrate material mastery

   *Cohort delivery* is the expected and preferred training model, but it is not required. A proposal that does not use cohorts will be accepted where the sequencing is coherent. A proposed training program must read as a coherent training sequence rather than a collection of separate modules spread across many months. Applicants are encouraged structure training activities that builds in a deliberate order, in which each component depends on what came before, and for a schedule that a working adult can realistically complete.

   It is important to note that flexible delivery and curricular cohesion are not in conflict. An open entry program, a part-time program, or a program using on-demand content may meet the cohesion criterion, provided the applicant shows the order in which components are taken and the supports that keep participants moving through them.

   Applicants must describe the program duration, the number of cohorts or classes per year where applicable, the hours per week, and the delivery methods proposed, including any plans to improve the accessibility of instruction. Applicants are advised to make sure that this description aligns with the required NOFO attachments.

10. **SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**: Supportive Services are intended to help participants overcome financial and other barriers to participate in and complete the CEJA training program that are paid with the CEJA Barrier Reduction funds. The table below summarizes the supports that are integral and must be offered to CEJA participants. Successful applicants will address these supports in their program design proposal. Applicants may also propose additional supportive services that are not listed to meet unique participant needs.

| Wrap Around Services | Student Services | Transition Services |
|---|---|---|
| Transportation costs, including car repairs, gas cards, or bus passes | Tutoring, especially in math | Mentoring and coaching |
| Childcare or family care | Make-up classes | Job exploration, search and placement services |

| Wrap Around Services | Student Services | Transition Services |
|---|---|---|
| Driver's education and driver's license fees | Retesting | Resume writing and mock interviews |
| Personal health services, including dental, vision, and mental health care | Educational enrichment | Job fairs with clean energy employers |
| Emergency bill payments, rental assistance, or emergency housing | Technology assistance for virtual learning | Education or training costs associated with an apprenticeship or employment |
| Referrals for other services (food, housing, rental assistance, substance use treatment) | Expenses related to certifications, testing or applications | Other supportive services needed to obtain or retain employment |
| Legal assistance, including record expungement | | |
| Technology assistance for virtual learning | | |
| Expenses related to certifications, testing, or applications | | |
| Income supports / stipends | | |
| Follow up support after job placement, for at least a year | | |

Workforce Hub grantee must develop and implement a supportive service policy that describes how they will offer supportive services to assist participants in maximizing training program success, job placement and retention. Workforce Hub grantees must identify the appropriate supportive services for each participant based on an individualized assessment that is updated throughout the life of the program based on the specific needs of the program participant. Supportive services must be provided consistent with CEJA Policy 02-PL-24, Barrier Reduction. Applicants must have the ability to provide flexible, timely services and funds to address the unique and often time-sensitive barriers that may arise during participants' training.

11. **PARTICIPANT INCOME SUPPORT / STIPENDS / INCENTIVES**: Workforce Hubs must provide income support to help program participants stay financially solvent during the training period. The Department acknowledges that the training offerings will vary in length/duration and in the number of hours each day and each week. Grantee should budget for an average hourly stipend of $15 per contact hour with the program participant. Income support including stipends or incentives are payments made to a program participant that can be used for living expenses. The stipend or incentives are not considered wages, so Social Security or Medicare taxes are not withheld, however, it still counts as taxable income for income tax purposes. This 2026 Workforce Hub NOFO provides more flexibility to Grantees to structure the participant income support budget.
    - Grantees may provide stipends on a seat-time basis however this is not a requirement
    - Grantees may offer performance-based or milestone-based incentives paid based on a participant’s attendance and performance in the training program (i.e., passing training assessments, earning credentials, successfully completing training modules, demonstrating technical skills, etc.).

    Participant income support will be paid with different funding sources depending on each “part” of the CEJA training program.

- Part 1 – CEJA Core Competency Training: Income Supports paid during the CEJA Core Competency Training will be paid using the Barrier Reduction Funds
- Part 2 – CEJA Career Pathway Training: Income Support paid during the CEJA Career Pathway Training will be paid using the CEJA Workforce Hub Program Funds
- Part 3 – Work-Based Training: Income Supports paid that are associated with Work-Based Training will be paid using the CEJA Workforce Hub Program Funds. It is important to note that On-The-Job Training contracts reimbursement may exceed the $15 per hour average rate.

***CPRG CONSIDERATIONS:*** *Grantees requesting CPRG funding for CRPG trainings should budget for the participant income supports as follows:*

- *Part 1 – CEJA Core Competency Training: Income Supports paid during the CEJA Core Competency Training will be paid using (leveraging) the CEJA Barrier Reduction Funds*
- *Part 2 – CEJA Career Pathway Training: Income Support paid during the Career Pathway Training will be paid using the CPRG Program Funds*
- *Part 3 – Work-Based Training: Income Supports paid that are associated with Work-Based Training will be paid using the CPRG Program Funds. It is important to note that On-The-Job Training contracts may exceed the $15 per hour average rate.*

Workforce Hub grantees must develop and implement a Participant Income Support / Stipend / Incentive policy that describes how they will structure the income supports to assist participants in maximizing training program success, job placement and retention. See the BUDGET APPENDIX of this NOFO Template for more information.

12. **ADVANCED TRAINING:** The primary outcome of the CEJA Workforce Hub Program is the placement of a participant in a clean energy job, a clean energy related Registered Apprenticeship program, or in continued training (see program definitions). The CEJA Workforce program is focused on funding accelerated programs that are generally no more than twelve months in duration. Advanced training builds on the CEJA training may be an allowable CEJA cost *if* other funding sources (such as WIOA) are not available to pay for this cost and CEJA funding is available.
    - Advanced training costs may be approved on a case by case based on the grantee's budget and project workplan.
    - Advanced training should be identified in the participant's Individual Employment Plan and be supported by documented employer need.
    - Advanced training may include traditional degree or certification programs or other industry recognized credential programs that are needed to support a participant's ultimate placement in a clean energy job.
    - Grantees should not expect a significant portion of the CEJA budget to be available to support advanced training.

    CEJA is the payer of last resort for advanced training. Before charging advanced training to this grant, the Workforce Hub must verify that other available sources have been exhausted, including displaced energy worker scholarship programs, federal and state financial aid, and WIOA programs. Applicants must describe who performs that verification and at what point in the process, and grantees must document it for each participant.

    Participant income support does not continue during advanced training. A grantee may budget time-limited transition support in place of the stipend, stated per participant and justified against the participant's expected entry into employment.

13. **TRANSITION SERVICES & FOLLOW-UP:** Workforce Hubs are required to assist program participants in transitioning to clean energy jobs, apprenticeships, or continued training opportunities after program completion. Workforce Hubs are required to provide continued case management and transition services to program participants as they complete the program based on an assessment of the participant's needs. Transition services may include, but are not limited to, mock interviews, application preparation, resume writing, referral to a career counselor, and job search assistance. Workforce Hubs should make follow up services available to participants for at least one year following training program completion and offer transition services to help meet the career goals of the participant.
    - *Work-Based Learning Placements* Grantees may offer completers with work-based learning opportunities including on-the-job trainings, apprenticeships and work experience opportunities that help build a participants resume and employability. Applicants that include this strategy should consider the time-limits and per-participant caps to support transitional jobs based on the available budget. A transitional job or time-limited paid work experience may include a paid trial period of up to 30 days in which the program pays the participant's wage and workers compensation coverage. Applicants that propose one must state the time limit and the per-participant cap their budget supports.
    - *Follow-up and retention support.* Follow-up services must be available to participants for at least one year following the CEJA training program completion. A primary goal of this strategy is to provide the supports that are needed to help the participant retain employment and/or advance in their clean energy career.

14. **CEJA WORKFORCE HUB AND NAVIGATOR WORKPLAN COORDINATION:** Each Workforce Hub grantee will be required to participate in a post-award planning process with the Department and the CEJA Navigator from their CEJA hub region. This is an opportunity to coordinate the roles and responsibilities regarding recruitment, assessment, case management, supportive services, training, and job placement with the CEJA Navigator and Hub grantees. Workforce Hub grantees are encouraged to contract all or a portion of these services to the CEJA Navigator if this will optimize the coordination of CEJA Services. It is recognized that capacity varies across the CEJA workforce regions and the grant negotiations will be the opportunity to develop a customized workplan that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of the CEJA Navigator and the CEJA Workforce Hub grantee.
    - Based on the CEJA navigator's capacity and CEJA Workforce Hub program design, it is recommended that the Workforce Hub consider subcontracting the provision of case management and supportive services to the CEJA Navigator.
    - Based on the CEJA Navigator's capacity and CEJA Workforce Hub program design, it is recommended that the Workforce Hub considers subcontract all or a portion of the CEJA Core Competencies training.

    The NOFO timing and the GATA regulations prevent Workforce Hubs and Navigators from submitting joint proposals. Case management, Energy Transition Barrier Reduction administration, and delivery of the CEJA Core Competencies are Workforce Hub responsibilities in every region. What the post-award planning process settles is not who is responsible for them but how each is delivered, and in particular whether the Workforce Hub performs a function with its own staff or subcontracts it to the CEJA Navigator. Applicants must therefore describe their capacity to perform each of these functions, and must budget for all three, whether they would deliver them with grantee staff, through a program partner, or by subcontract to the CEJA Navigator. A subcontract to the Navigator is paid

from the Workforce Hub award. Naming a proposed subcontractor in the application is not binding on the post-award planning process.

Note that the Department will work with the grantee to identify alternative service strategies if a navigator grantee is not initially identified when the Workforce Hub grant is established.

15. **DATA TRACKING**: Workforce Hubs must track the data elements included in the CEJA legislation and provide quarterly reports including:
    - Demographic data, including racial, gender, residency in eligible communities, and geographic distribution data, on Program trainees who are placed in employment, including the percentages of trainees by race, gender, and geographic categories in each individual job type or category and whether employment is union, nonunion, or nonunion via temporary agency;
    - Trainee job acquisition and retention statistics, including the duration of employment (start and end dates of hires) by race, gender, and geography;
    - Hourly wages, including hourly overtime pay rate, and benefits of trainees placed into employment by race, gender, and geography;
    - Percentage of jobs by race, gender, and geography held by Program trainees or graduates that are full-time equivalent positions, meaning that the position held is full-time, direct, and permanent based on 2,080 hours worked per year (paid directly by the employer, whose activities, schedule, and manner of work the employer controls, and receives pay and benefits in the same manner as permanent employees); and
    - Qualitative data consisting of open-ended reporting on pertinent issues, including, but not limited to, qualitative descriptions accompanying metrics or identifying key successes and challenges.

    Workforce Hubs must also track job retention rates for at least two years after job placement. This is a reporting obligation, and it continues after the one-year follow-up services have ended. Applicants must identify how they will obtain retention data beyond the follow-up period and after the grant period is over, which may include employer verification, participant contact, or data matching as the Department directs.

    Workforce Hubs will perform data tracking and use reporting systems as directed by the Department. Workforce Hubs will enter and maintain participant records in the CEJA Reporting System, which Workforce Hubs and Navigators share. Workforce Hubs will document each participant service event, including:
    - receipt of the referral and the participant's placement into training;
    - the results of the CEJA Core Competencies proficiency assessment and any test-out determination;
    - progress through the CEJA Core Competencies and Career Cluster training, and completion;
    - credentials earned and work-based learning completed;
    - transition services provided, and placement into employment or continued training; and
    - each approved Barrier Reduction expense and the participant need it addresses.

16. **OUTCOME ASSESSMENT**. Applicants must describe an approach that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the program and how this information will be used to improve program delivery. This assessment may include surveys of program graduates regarding overall satisfaction with the training activities delivered and appropriateness to the targeted job opportunities, surveys of employers

concerning the comprehensiveness of coverage of required job skills, etc. In addition, the assessment plan should indicate how the results of the assessment activities will be used to improve the training program in a continuous manner. Grant recipients will also be required to cooperate with external evaluation efforts, as directed by the Department.

**4. Cost Sharing or Matching**

Cost sharing or matching is not required for this NOFO.

**5. Allowable and Unallowable Activities**

The Department will provide grant funding for all allowable activities that are consistent with the program rules and the requirements of this NOFO. Unallowable activities include but are not limited to lobbying, fundraising, entertainment, political activities, alcohol, food and or personal-use activities as outlined at 2 CFR 200.

**6. Allowable and Unallowable Costs**

The Department will provide grant funding for all allowable activities that are consistent with the program rules, requirements of this NOFO and the requirements specified in 2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Costs Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards ("2 CFR 200"), the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (30 ILCS 708/1 et seq.) ("GATA") and this NOFO.

**7. Pre-Award Costs**

Costs from a date specified by the Department (around the time that the Notice of State Award is accepted by the Grantee) through the grant period of performance start date may be allowed to be charged to the grant as long as they meet the requirements specified in 2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Costs Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards ("2 CFR 200"), the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (30 ILCS 708/1 et seq.) ("GATA") and this NOFO.

**8. Payment Methodology**

The payment of grant funds will be made by providing a variable advance with the remainder based on the grantee's immediate cash needs and the reimbursement of costs. The Department may authorize an initial disbursement in an amount sufficient to address the Grantee's immediate cash needs according to their reported and approved obligations. Thereafter, the payments may be made for the dual purpose of reimbursing for expenditures incurred as well as documented cash needs of the Grantee as approved by the Department.

**9. Relevant Program-Specific Rules and Regulations**

The administrative rules for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program can be found at 14 Ill. Admin. Code Part 840.

**10. Performance Goals and Measures**

The goals and anticipated outcomes of the program include number of participants served, number of certifications achieved, number of individuals who complete the different Career Pathways training options, numbers of participants employed in clean energy jobs post-graduation or enrolled in other continued training programs. The performance goals and measures will be entered in *Attachment 2: Activities and Outcomes* of the Workforce Hub Project Work Plan, which is posted along with this NOFO.

## B. Funding Information

This grant program is utilizing CEJA and CPRG funds appropriated by the Illinois General Assembly through Public Act 104-0464. The total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this NOFO is $50.9 million, of which, approximately $26.5 million will be provided from the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, $16 million from the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Services Program and $8.4 million from the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. It is projected that the total NOFO amount will support grantees for 12 months of the program. Please note that grantees that are awarded CPRG funds will be issued two grant awards that include the additional terms and conditions of the CPRG federal award.

Awards will range from an estimated $1,250,000 to $6,500,000. The final award amounts will be based on the number of participants, quality of the program and impact of the outcomes.

- The initial grant awards will range from approximately $700,000 to $3.5 million for the delivery of the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program in each region identified in Section A of this NOFO.
- The initial grant awards range from approximately $300K to $2 Million for the delivery of the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction services to support the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program in each of the regions identified in this NOFO.
- The initial grant awards range from approximately $500K to $2 Million for the delivery of the CPRG Career Pathways training services in each of the funded regions identified in this NOFO.
- The initial grant awards for the three funding sources combined will range from approximately $1,250,000 to $6,500,000 for each Workforce Hub location identified in this NOFO.

The Department is not bound by these estimates.

The Department expects to make 14-16 Workforce Hub awards, plus approximately 5-7 additional CPRG awards through this NOFO.

The period of performance is expected to be June 1, 2027 through May 31, 2028. Please note that the initial term of the award may extend beyond 12 months to provide flexibility in the administration of the program. Applicants should provide a 12-month budget in the application. The application, the Project Work Plan, and the Uniform Budget cover year one.

The Department intends to offer up to two (2) twelve (12) month renewals for each award based on the initial performance of the grantee. Additional funds of up to approximately $42,000,000 may be available for each of the twelve (12) month renewable periods for the entire network of CEJA Workforce Hub grantees. Note that additional funding as part of the renewal process is not available for the CPRG grants.

Applicants must submit a project narrative that describes in detail how the award will be executed. The project narrative should include enough information for DCEO to understand the scope of the project, the budget, including a detailed breakdown of the costs associated with each budget line and any additional necessary detail to enable DCEO to manage the grant agreement activity against planned project performance. The Project Narrative must include evidence of capacity, quality and need as defined in Section E.1.

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

**1. Indirect Cost Rate.**

In order to charge indirect costs to a grant, the applicant organization must have an annually

negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA). There are three types of NICRAs:
a) Federally Negotiated Rate. Organizations that receive direct federal funding, may have an indirect cost rate that was negotiated with the Federal Cognizant Agency. Illinois will accept the federally negotiated rate. The organization must provide a copy of the federally NICRA.
b) State Negotiated Rate. The organization may negotiate an indirect cost rate with the State of Illinois if they do not have a Federally Negotiated Rate. If an organization has not previously established in indirect cost rate, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted through State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system no later than three months after receipt of a Notice of State Award (NOSA). If an organization previously established an indirect cost rate, the organization must annually submit a new indirect cost proposal through CARS within six to nine months after the close of the grantee's fiscal year, depending on the grantee's audit type requirements.
c) De Minimis Rate. An organization may elect a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct cost (MTDC). Once established, the De Minimis Rate may be used indefinitely. The State of Illinois must verify the calculation of the MTDC annually in order to accept the De Minimis Rate.

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

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

The following State University Facilities & Administration Rate and Base will apply to all State issued awards that contain either Federal pass-through funding or State funding.

| | |
|---|---|
| RATE: | 20% Rate for awards or programs administered On-Campus*<br>10% Rate for awards or programs administered Off-Campus* |
| BASE: | Base approved in the State Universities' current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) |

*Criteria for utilization of the On/Off campus rate is located within the general terms and conditions of Federal NICRA for each State University. If not clearly defined, State awarding agencies and officers will make final determination based upon the purposes of the grant scope.

## C. Eligibility Information

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

The portal will verify that the entity:

- Has a valid FEIN number (**https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/get-an-employer-identification-number**)
- Has a current SAM.gov registration (**https://sam.gov**). SAM.gov registrations must be marked as "public" to allow the GATA Grantee Portal to expedite the review of the federal information
- Has a valid UEI number (**https://sam.gov**)
- Is not on the Federal Excluded Parties List (**https://sam.gov**)

- Is in Good Standing with the Illinois Secretary of State, as applicable (**https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business_services/corp.html**)
- Is not on the Illinois Stop Payment list
- Is not on the Department of Healthcare and Family Services Provider Sanctions list (**https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/oig/Pages/SanctionsList.aspx**)

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

An automated email notification to the entity alerts them of "qualified" status or informs how to remediate a negative verification (e.g., not in good standing with the Secretary of State).

Currently, federal memo M-21-20 allows entities to apply for grant awards without a valid UEI number. The UEI number must be obtained prior to grant execution. The State of Illinois has adopted this guidance for the issuance of state awards also.

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

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

**1. Eligible Applicants include:**

Eligible applicants are community-based organizations, defined as organizations that:

- Provide employment, skill development or related services to members of the community;
- Includes community colleges, nonprofits, and local governments;
- Has at least one main operating office in the community or region it serves; and
- Demonstrates relationships with residents and other organizations serving the community.

Competitive applications will include a team of multiple partner organizations that collectively demonstrate the following:

- The ability to effectively serve equity investment eligible persons and other program-eligible individuals by providing employment services;
- Agreements with employers, nonprofit organizations, or other industry organizations for work-based learning opportunities and to facilitate job placement or on-the-job training opportunities.
- The ability to deliver the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework, including the instructor knowledge and experience it sets for the CEJA Core Competencies and each proposed Career Pathway. Where an applicant proposes to prepare participants for the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) Photovoltaic Associate credential, the training program must satisfy current NABCEP Associate Registered Training Provider requirements.
- Capacity to provide supportive services, ongoing engagement during and beyond training, and job retention services to participants.

- Capacity to offer training in locations that are accessible to equity investment eligible persons and other program-eligible individuals in the service region.

Successful applicants must also deliver the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program services for Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program participants. The main grantee may propose to deliver the barrier reduction services themselves or may partner with a different community-based organization or other nonprofit to deliver these services. Energy Transition Barrier Reduction services must be delivered by a community-based organization or a nonprofit organization that has:

- The ability to effectively serve diverse and underrepresented populations in the proposed region;
- Capacity to provide individualized supportive services and distribute barrier reduction funds in an efficient and timely manner;
- Strong connections to other community-based organizations and local agencies for referrals and warm hand-offs; and
- Strong connections to and experience serving equity investment eligible communities within the service region(s).

The applicant team must have the capacity to deliver the services outlined above, including a demonstrated ability to hire and retain project staff and instructors when the grant commences. Applicants may apply to deliver the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program training in one or more of the designated hub areas. Proposals must provide performance data and outcomes from relevant prior work to demonstrate capacity and effectiveness.

**Experienced and New Providers:** This NOFO will consider organizations that have experience with and a trajectory of delivering clean energy job training programs. Applicants that have not provided clean energy or related sector training but have experience serving equity investment eligible people in their communities are encouraged to apply in partnership with other relevant organizations that have experience in effective design and delivery of the required services.

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

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is exempt from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110 or has an exception approved by the State) must:

- Be registered in SAM.gov. SAM.gov registrations must be set to “public.”
- Provide a valid UEI number in the GATA Grantee Portal registration.
- Continue to maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal, Federal pass-through or State award. DCEO may not make a Federal pass-through or State award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time DCEO is ready to make a Federal pass-through or State award, the DCEO may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal pass-through or State award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal pass-through or State award to another applicant.

### 3. Other

If an applicant indents to request funding to serve multiple Workforce Hub Regions they must submit a unique and complete application for each Workforce Hub Region. However, an applicant may only submit one application per Hub Region it seeks to serve.

## D. Application and Submission Information

### 1. Address to Request Application Package.

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

Diana Fuller
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
Springfield, IL 62701
Tele: 217-685-1608
Email: **Diana.Fuller@illinois.gov**

### 2. Content and Form of Application Submission

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

☐ **Uniform Grant Application** in fillable PDF format
- Signature page must be signed by the authorized signatory before submission
  - Can be printed, signed, and scanned
  - Can be signed digitally

☐ **Uniform Budget - CEJA** utilizing the template provided by DCEO for this project
- The entire Excel document with all the tabs included, even if the tabs are not relevant to the grant opportunity, must be submitted
- Do not send a restricted version of the Uniform Budget
- Certification page must be signed by the authorized signatory before submission
  - Can be printed, signed, and scanned
  - Can be signed digitally

☐ **Uniform Budget – CPRG** utilizing the template provided by DCEO for this project only IF the applicant is requesting CPRG funds.
- The entire Excel document with all the tabs included, even if the tabs are not relevant to the grant opportunity, must be submitted
- Do not send a restricted version of the Uniform Budget
- Certification page must be signed by the authorized signatory before submission
  - Can be printed, signed, and scanned
  - Can be signed digitally

☐ **Conflict of Interest Disclosure**
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure must be signed by the authorized signatory before submission
  - Can be printed, signed, and scanned
  - Can be signed digitally

☐ **Mandatory Disclosure**

- Mandatory Disclosure must be signed by the authorized signatory before submission
  - Can be printed, signed, and scanned
  - Can be signed digitally

This Notice of Funding Opportunity also requires the submission of the following other programmatic specific items as part of a program application:

☐ **Guided Program Application**. Complete the Workforce Hub Guided Program Application available on the NOFO webpage.

☐ **Project Work Plan**. Complete the Workforce Hub Project Work Plan in the excel workbook that includes the following attachments:

☐ **Attachment 1: Project Summary.** A brief narrative summary of the project, the organizations delivering it, the region and communities served, and the proposed training locations, with a summary of the total activity and outcome figures entered in Attachment 2.

☐ **Attachment 2: Activities and Outcomes**. Projected employer and work-based learning partnerships, service delivery, participant characteristics, and transition outcomes, by quarter and cumulatively for year one.

☐ **Attachment 3: Curriculum Plan.** Applicants must complete the curriculum plan that includes detail regarding the required CEJA Core Training and at least 2 Career Pathways training options. Applicants requesting CPRG funds must also complete the CPRG Curriculum Plan block in Attachment 3.

☐ **Attachment 4: Staffing Plan.** How program services and instruction will be delivered and by whom, for both grantee and partner organizations, across the required key staff roles.

☐ **Attachment 5: Timeline.** Start-up activities and program delivery activities, with the staff responsible, the month, and the deliverable or milestone for each, covering enrollment, instruction, work-based learning, and transition.

☐ **Resumes and/or Job Descriptions:** Grant applications must include the resumes of key staff and instructor positions that will need to be filled using Program funds. Include a job description for each position and individual qualifications sought for each position.

☐ **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) / Program Partners:** Grant applications should include MOUs and Partnership Agreements (as opposed to Letters of Support) with all key partners on the Applicant team detailing the entity's information, key staff information, roles and responsibilities associated with this project, and dollar amounts for specific services to be rendered

☐ **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) / Employers:** Grant applications should include MOUs and Partnership Agreements (as opposed to Letters of Support) from employers who

agree to consider hiring program graduates and/or offer on-the-job training opportunities or work-based learning opportunities.

Please note there is a maximum upload of 10 documents in the web form that you submit the application, so combining files may be necessary.

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

**3. Submission Dates and Times**

Applications for this opportunity must be submitted by October 30, 2026. If grantees in any CEJA Workforce Hub Region are not awarded, this NOFO will remain open on a rolling basis for the regions not awarded until December 31, 2027.

Application materials must be submitted to the Department via electronic form at **https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/227bb58555ee4fb3b59cf9738b05447b**.

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

**4. Other Submission Requirements**

The applicant can receive a copy of their submitted application by checking the "Send me a copy of my responses" box at the bottom of the application submission form.

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

**5. Freedom of Information Act/Confidential Information**

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

## E. Application Review Information

**1. Criteria**

Grant proposals will be reviewed on a competitive basis. Each proposal will be scored on a 100-point scale. The Department shall consider the following criteria when evaluating the application submittal: Need, Capacity, and Quality.

| Criterion | Question # | Application question | Max Points | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CAPACITY | 1 | Your track record and administrative capacity | 5 | |
| | 2 | Your team across the required key program areas | 5 | |
| | 5 | Your equity lens and your roots in the communities you would serve | 4 | |
| | 6 | Employer and sector partnerships | 8 | |
| | 16 | Coordination with the Navigator and the other CEJA programs | 5 | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 17 | Records, reporting, and continuous improvement | 4 | |
| | | **Capacity subtotal** | | **31** |
| NEED | 3 | Your service area, training locations, and access | 4 | |
| | 4 | Regional employer demand and the training it supports | 6 | |
| | | **Need subtotal** | | **10** |
| QUALITY | 7 | Receiving referrals, training capacity, and the referral plan | 5 | |
| | 8 | The proficiency assessment and test-out | 4 | |
| | 9 | Case management | 6 | |
| | 10 | The training you would deliver | 11 | |
| | 11 | Work-based learning | 4 | |
| | 12 | Your delivery model | 5 | |
| | 13 | Academic supports | 3 | |
| | 14 | Supportive services and Barrier Reduction administration | 6 | |
| | 15 | Transition services and follow-up | 4 | |
| | 18 | Your proposed outcomes and how the program would build | 3 | |
| | | **Quality subtotal** | | **51** |
| COST EFFECTIVENESS | 19 | Your budget, stipends, and advanced training | 6 | |
| | 20 | Leverage, efficiency, and sustainability | 2 | |
| | | **Cost Effectiveness subtotal** | | **8** |
| | | **TOTAL** | | **100** |

**2. Feedback**

Applicants will be provided with feedback focused on the required technical changes to their application package as part of the Department's administrative review - prior to final merit review being conducted. The Department will provide applicants with a short timeline (typically 1-2 business days) to resubmit the application to remedy technical submission errors or omissions. This feedback is limited to the technical application requirements and applicants are not allowed to make substantive changes to the application and attachments.

**3. Review and Selection Process**

Applications will be graded using the Merit Review Process and scored on the criteria specified in Section E.1. The Department will designate an Evaluation Committee to grade each application received for this funding opportunity. The final score of each Committee member will be calculated and an average of all scores will be the final applicant score. Grants will be awarded according to the following process: All applications will be sorted by proposed Workforce Hub region. The highest scoring applications in each Workforce Hub region that meet the NOFO requirements will be prioritized for funding. If none of the applications within an open region are recommended for funding, DCEO will accept and review new applications on a first come/first served basis. Where the concentration of program-eligible participants justifies it, DCEO reserves the right to award grants to multiple applicants in a given area. Grants will be awarded after a successful negotiation process with the Department based on the applications' alignment with the requirements of this NOFO. The purpose of negotiations will be to arrive at acceptable grant terms, including budgetary and scope-of-work provisions, at which time the final decision to make a grant award will be made.

***CPRG CONSIDERATIONS:*** *Depending on the availability of CPRG funding after merit review of applications and finalists, the Department may allow applicants that are selected as finalists to be the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Hub grantees to request CPRG funds as part of the grant negotiations.*

The Merit Based Review process is subject to appeal per **https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/meritappreview.html**. However, competitive grant appeals are limited to the evaluation process. Evaluation scores may not be protested. Only the evaluation process is subject to appeal. The appeal must be submitted through the merit review appeal request form (**https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/6444bed39ef140c589f002f53b9bc092**) within 14 calendar days after the date that the grant award notice has been published.

### 4. Anticipated Announcement and State Award Dates

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

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

## F. Award Administration Information

### 1. State Award Notices

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

### 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

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

**Business Enterprise Program:** For grant awards of $250,000 or more, grantees will be required to comply with the Business Enterprise Program for Minorities, Females, and Persons with Disabilities Act (30 ILCS 575/0.01 *et seq*.), which establishes a goal for contracting with businesses that have been certified as owned and controlled by persons who are minority, female or who have disabilities. The Department will work with the grantees to ensure compliance prior to the establishment of the grant agreement as well as through the life of the grant.

**3. Reporting.**

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

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

**Monitoring**

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

**Audit**

Grantees shall be subject to Illinois' statewide Audit Report Review requirements. Terms of the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (31 USC 7501-7507), Subpart F of 2 CFR Part 200, and the audit rules set forth under the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act Admin Rules shall apply (See 44 IL Admin Code 7000.90).

## G. State Awarding Agency Contact

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

## H. Other Information

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

Please visit the following website for instructional videos that guide applicants through each step of applying for and administering a grant:
(**https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/learning-library.html**)

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

**Questions and Answers:** Applicants may submit questions about this NOFO to ceo.ceja@illinois.gov Answers to questions will be posted on the NOFO webpage.

**NOFO Technical Assistance**: DCEO will provide technical assistance throughout the application process, in the form of webinars, FAQ and program documents. More information will be posted at the NOFO webpage at **illinoisworknet.com/climateworksnofo2027**

**Renewals and Grant Modifications:** The Department may authorize the renewal, for up to two additional years, for projects awarded under this NOFO and additional funding based on the activities, outcomes and performance of the grantee as well as the availability of funds under the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act. The renewal, if granted, would occur after one year of programmatic performance and an evaluation of services and outcomes by the DCEO. Note that DCEO may de-obligate funds from under-performing grantee(s) and reallocate the CPRG funds after the first year of program; however, the total amount of CPRG funds that are available for this three-year funding cycle is $8.4 million.

**Technical Assistance and Professional Development:** Grantees must plan on attending group or individual technical assistance and/or training sessions throughout the year as directed by the Department. Applicants must also budget for instructors' attendance to training and certification classes. In addition to ongoing technical assistance and professional development trainings, grantees may have the opportunity to garner additional support from a program coach contracted by the Department.

Depending on grantee needs and capacity, the Department may require grantees to work with the program coach to support the administration of the grant.

**APPLICATION CHECKLIST**

This checklist outlines the required documents that must be uploaded to the DCEO application Smartsheet at: **https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/227bb58555ee4fb3b59cf9738b05447b** by **October 30, 2026** to be reviewed in this application round.

Applications that are **submitted by October 16, 2026** will have the administrative review completed by **October 23, 2026** to verify that the application meet the minimum administrative requirements.

- ☐ Uniform Grant Application in fillable PDF format. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned and submitted with application. **[PDF FORM]**
- ☐ Uniform Budget - CEJA utilizing the template provided by DCEO for this project**. [EXCEL FILE and PDF]** *The entire budget with all worksheets included even if the worksheets are not relevant to the grant opportunity must be submitted with the application materials. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned and submitted with application*
- ☐ Uniform Budget - CPRG*.* **[EXCEL FILE and PDF]** *Applicants that will provide CPRG training must submit a separate budget that includes the CPRG training costs. Applicants are not required, but are encouraged to offer CPRG Training. Only applicants that proposed CPRG training are required to submit a CPRG budget.*
- ☐ Conflict of Interest Disclosure **[PDF FORM]**
- ☐ Mandatory Disclosures **[PDF FORM]**
- ☐ Guided Program Application **[WORD NARRATIVE]**
- ☐ Project Work Plan containing the following required attachments (tabs) **[EXCEL FILE]**
    - Attachment 1 – Project Summary
    - Attachment 2 – Activities and Outcomes
    - Attachment 3 – Curriculum Plan
    - Attachment 4 – Staffing Plan
    - Attachment 5 – Timeline
- ☐ Resumes and/or Job Descriptions **[PDF]**

- Memorandum of Understanding / Partnership Agreements – *Program Partners* **[PDF]**
- Memorandum of Understanding / Partnership Agreements - *Employers* **[PDF]**.

**BUDGET APPENDIX:** This appendix provides applicants with practical guidance for developing, presenting, and justifying the CEJA grant budget. Applicants should use this guidance together with the program requirements and application instructions in the NOFO. A well-developed budget should clearly demonstrate how requested funds will be used to achieve the proposed project's objectives and deliver measurable results. Each budget item should be reasonable, necessary, allowable, and adequately supported by the accompanying budget narrative.

**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:** Applicants should develop their budgets using the following principles:

1. *Align the Budget with the Project*: The budget should directly support the activities, outcomes, deliverables, and timeline described in the application. Reviewers should be able to understand the connection between:
    - Project Activities → Resources Needed → Costs → Expected Results
    - Applicants should avoid including costs that are not clearly connected to the proposed project.
2. *Be Reasonable and Necessary:* Each cost should be reasonable for the goods or services being purchased and necessary to accomplish the proposed work.
    - Applicants should use realistic estimates based on current market conditions, organizational experience, historical costs, vendor quotations, salary schedules, or other appropriate documentation.
3. *Follow Applicable Cost Requirements*: Applicants are responsible for ensuring that proposed costs comply with all applicable requirements. Costs should generally be:
    - Allowable under the NOFO;
    - Necessary for the proposed project;
    - Reasonable and appropriately priced;
    - Consistent with the applicant's established policies and practices;
    - Appropriately allocated to the project; and
    - Supported by sufficient documentation.
4. *Answer Budget Questions*: The budget narrative should explain and justify the costs included in the budget. It should not simply repeat the numbers shown in the budget table. For each major cost category, applicants should explain:
    - What is being purchased or funded;
    - Why it is needed;
    - How the cost was calculated;
    - Who will perform the work, when relevant; and
    - How the cost supports the proposed project.
5. *Common Errors to Avoid*: Applicants should carefully review their budgets for the following common problems:
    - Insufficient Detail
    - Unsupported Costs
    - Inconsistent Information
    - Mathematical Errors
    - Unallowable Costs
    - Excessive or Unnecessary Costs
    - Missing Personnel Effort
    - Unclear Consultant Costs
    - Incorrect Indirect Cost Calculation
    - Budget Does Not Support the Work Plan

**CEJA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT HUB PROGRAM GUIDANCE**

Applicants are encouraged to connect the CEJA grant costs with the major project activities. The budget should demonstrate a clear relationship between the budget and the number of program participants that will be enrolled, trained and placed. The following table provides grantees with general guidance regarding baseline activity and outcome service level expectations for workforce hubs. Please note that the size of the hub generally depends on the projected number of job openings and placements.

*Table 1: Service and Outcome Level Baseline Expectations*

| **WORKFORCE HUB PARTICIPANTS** | SMALL HUB | AVERAGE HUB | LARGE HUB |
|---|---|---|---|
| ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS TOTALS (Annual) | 135 | 275 | 400 |
| TRAINING PARTICIPANT TOTALS (Annual) | 110 | 225 | 335 |
| TRAINING COMPLETERS (60-80% of Training Participants) | 65-90 | 135-180 | 200-250 |
| PLACEMENTS (50-60% of Training Completers) | 35-50 | 70-110 | 100-160 |

Table 2 provides applicants with general guidance regarding the major budget categories or "cost objectives" that are associated with administering the CEJA Workforce Hub Program. The major cost objectives include *Income Supports, Supportive Services, and Training Delivery / Program Administration.* Please note that cost per program participant will generally depend on the length / complexity of the training program and the program outcomes / job placements.

*Table 2 Participant Cost by Cost Objective – General Guidelines*

| **COST OBJECTIVE / COST PER PARTICIPANT** | SHORT PROGRAM | AVERAGE PROGRAM | EXTENDED PROGRAM |
|---|---|---|---|
| INCOME SUPPORT (STIPENDS/INCENTIVES) | $4500 (300 Hrs) | $5250 (350 Hrs) | $6000 (400 Hrs) |
| SUPPORTIVE SERVICES / BARRIER REDUCTION | $500 | $1000 | $1500 |
| TRAINING / PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION | $3500 | $5000 | $6500 |

**BUDGET REVIEW CHECKLIST**

Before submitting an application, applicants should verify the following:

- The total budget does not exceed the maximum award amount.
- All proposed costs are allowable under the Funding Opportunity.
- Each significant cost is necessary to accomplish the proposed project.
- Costs are reasonable and based on credible estimates.
- Personnel calculations include appropriate salaries or wages and levels of effort.
- Fringe benefits are calculated using an appropriate rate and methodology.
- Travel costs include sufficient detail to demonstrate reasonableness.
- Equipment costs are appropriately classified and justified.
- Supplies and materials are linked to project activities.
- Contractual costs identify the services to be provided and the basis for the estimate.
- Indirect costs comply with applicable requirements.
- The budget narrative explains the purpose and calculation of significant costs.
- Budget totals reconcile across all application components.
- The budget supports the proposed work plan and timeline.
- No cost is duplicated across budget categories or funding sources.
- The final budget has been reviewed for mathematical and typographical errors.