



**Illinois  
Department of Commerce  
& Economic Opportunity**

JB Pritzker, Governor

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 21, 2023

**DCEO Contact:**

DCEO.media@illinois.gov

**Governor Pritzker Announces \$25.5 Million for CEJA Equitable Energy Future Grants**

*Eligible entities can apply for grant funding to support renewable energy and energy efficiency projects as part of the landmark Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA)*

**CHICAGO** – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) launched \$25.5 million in funding for the Equitable Energy Future Grants Program as part of a larger strategy to equitably grow the clean energy workforce in Illinois through the landmark Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA). The program supports renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in low-income and historically disadvantaged communities to grow and diversify the clean energy ecosystem across Illinois. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process.

“Since day one, I have prioritized moving our state into a clean energy future that is equitable in every facet,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Curbing the devastating effects of climate change requires decisive action. In Illinois, we are making history with the implementation of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, and The Equitable Energy Future program is a key cornerstone of that approach.”

The goal of the Equitable Energy Future program is to provide seed and pre-development funding opportunities to eligible contractors to support the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency projects benefitting businesses, community organizations and the workforce in historically disadvantaged communities. The program is designed to help remove barriers to projects, community and business development efforts caused by lack of access to capital.

“In Illinois, we are committed to 100% clean energy by 2050, creating a sustainable future and job creation across our state,” **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton**. “Thanks to the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, we are on our way to being at the forefront of climate justice.”

Grant funding can be used to support a variety of projects to benefit historically disadvantaged communities, including planning and project development, professional services, purchasing and leasing of land, equipment, staff, and more.

“Equity was at the forefront of the passage of the landmark CEJA legislation, and it continues to be a top priority for DCEO during the implementation process,” **said DCEO Director Kristin Richards**. “Through the Equitable Energy Future Grant Program, equity-eligible contractors have an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the communities that need it the most by supporting projects that will grow and diversify Illinois’ clean energy ecosystem.”

Qualified entities include equity eligible contractors and independent contractors, non-profits, co-operatives that are majority-owned by equity eligible persons, and businesses or non-profits with a proposed project that meets equity building criteria. Equity eligible contractors are businesses or non-profits that are majority-owned by equity eligible persons, including participants in CEJA workforce programs, Illinoisans who are in the foster care system or who were formerly in the foster care system, people who were formerly incarcerated, and Illinoisans who live in an R3 zone or environmental justice community.

“As its name directly states, The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) was written with equity at its core,” **said Senate Majority Caucus Whip Cristina Castro (D-Elgin)**. “During legislative committee hearings we heard repeatedly that access to capital was one of the main barriers that kept Black and Brown contractors from sharing in the economic benefits of the growing clean energy sector. This investment is a major component of CEJA that will help deliver on the promise of equitable jobs in every part of Illinois.”

“The State of Illinois has been leading the charge on sustainability since the historic passage of the CEJA legislation,” **said Senate Asst. Majority Leader Bill Cunningham (D-Chicago)**. “The Equitable Energy Future program is providing an avenue to support renewable energy projects that will prepare the state’s world-class workforce for the clean energy jobs of the future.”

Through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), qualified entities can apply for grants, with awards ranging from \$250,000 to \$1 million. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until funds are exhausted. To view the NOFO and apply for the grant, please visit the [DCEO website](#). Interested parties are encouraged to reach out to [CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov](mailto:CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov) for application assistance. To help applicants prepare to apply for funding, DCEO will be holding technical assistance webinars from 12-1 p.m. on **[November 30](#)** and **[December 14](#)**.

“When I sponsored the landmark Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, I knew we needed to put equity at the center of Illinois’ path toward a more sustainable future,” **said House Asst. Majority Leader Marcus C. Evans, Jr (D-Chicago)**. “I look forward to working with the Governor and the Department to ensure that the numerous programs created by CEJA will create good-paying jobs for people living in disadvantaged communities across our state. The goal has always been for these opportunities to help our communities benefit from the clean energy future; not only environmentally, but financially as well.”

“Equitable Energy Future grants will have a lasting effect on Illinoisans as the State supports renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in historically disadvantaged communities,” **said House Assistant Majority Leader Robyn Gabel (D-Evanston)**. “As an original sponsor

of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, I know how important it is that we work together to push our state toward a clean energy future that will be felt for generations to come.”

The Equitable Energy Future Grant Program is one of several contractor, workforce, and community support programs established by the landmark CEJA legislation intended to move Illinois to a 100% carbon-free future. This program is one of two programs under the Jobs and Environmental Justice Program (20 ILCS 730/5-60: The Equitable Energy Future Grant and the Community Solar Sovereignty Grant). Under CEJA, DCEO will administer \$180 million per year in workforce and community support programs designed to build Illinois' clean energy economy and prepare the state's workforce and communities for the jobs of the future.

“Many contractors have historically been locked out of public works projects, but the Equitable Energy Future Grants Program seeks to remove the barriers to entry that have existed for far too long,” **said Rep. Maurice West (D- Rockford)**. “I was proud to sponsor the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act to increase equity in the clean energy ecosystem in every corner of Illinois.”

**CEJA training, contractor & community investment programs administered by DCEO include:**

- Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program (20 ILCS 730/5-45)
- Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program (20 ILCS 730/5-55)
- Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program ("Clean Jobs Hubs") (20 ILCS 730/5-20)
- Coal to Solar and Energy Storage Initiative Fund (20 ILCS 3855/1-75)
- Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program (20 ILCS 730/5-30)
- Energy Transition Community Support Grants (20 ILCS 730/10-20)
- Energy Transition Navigators Program (20 ILCS 730/5-35)
- Illinois Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program (20 ILCS 730/5-40)
- Jobs and Environmental Justice Grant Program (20 ILCS 730/5-60)
- Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program (20 ILCS 730/5-50)

###