

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)



**Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity**

Community Input Sought – Request for Information (RFI)

Energy Transition Community Grant Program

Please submit response to DCEO via the online form at:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/bf0cad712d3b4b49a075895bb32cf3e5>

Note: This RFI has been updated to reflect a new deadline for submissions of September 30, 2022.

Background

On September 15, 2021, Governor JB Pritzker signed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (P.A. 102-0662, referred herein as “CEJA”) into law, which is designed to equitably transition the state to 100 percent clean energy by 2050. Under CEJA, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is responsible for implementing several workforce development and community support programs designed to prepare the Illinois workforce for the transition to clean energy and to support Illinois communities impacted by the transition, including:

- Clean Jobs Workforce Hubs Network Program
- Clean Jobs Curriculum
- Climate Works Preapprenticeship Program
- Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program
- Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program
- Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program
- Energy Transition Navigators Program
- Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program
- Energy Transition Community Grant Program
- Jobs and Environmental Justice Grant Program
- Displaced Energy Workers Bill of Rights
- Energy Transition Workforce Commission
- Energy Workforce Advisory Council
- Utility Job Training Programs (220 ILCS 5/16-108.12)
- Coal to Solar and Energy Storage Initiative Fund Grant Program

Scope & Objective: Input on the Energy Transition Community Grant Program

To ensure the design of the program best meets the needs of Illinoisans, this request for public information (RFI) seeks input on the **Energy Transition Community Grant Program** (Program), which was established by CEJA and will be implemented by DCEO. Per statute (20 ILCS 735/10-20), the Energy Transition Community Grant Program will provide grants to communities that have experienced or will experience a fossil fuel or nuclear plant or mine closure. Eligible communities will be those that contain a facility that retired or significantly reduced services in the past six years, or that will retire or significantly reduce services within the next six years. Grants can be used to address the economic and social impact on the community of the plant retirement or transition. The objective of the grant program is to support communities experiencing an economic loss and associated hardship due to the closure of an energy facility.

DCEO is seeking information from stakeholders on the anticipated needs of target communities, the structure and eligible uses of funds, and additional feedback to help inform program creation.

Please note, the RFI is not an application for the program. There will be a future Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) released after which applicants will be able to compete through the process required by the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (30 ILCS 708) to receive a grant award. Responding to the RFI is not a prerequisite to participating in a future NOFO process and does not obligate DCEO to conduct a future NOFO process based on the responses received. Further, a response to this RFI does not provide any advantages to the participant in any potential future NOFOs. All information received in a participant’s response will be made available for public review and may be used by DCEO to inform implementation of the Energy Transition Community Grant Program.

Participant Organization Information

Please provide the following information for the organization or community submitting a response:

- The organization or community name
- Description of the impacted community, if applicable
- Contact information, including telephone number, e-mail address, mailing address, city, and zip code
- A brief overview of your organization and/or community
- Type of facility closure your community has or will experience and location of the facility (i.e. coal plant, coal mine, natural gas plant, etc.), if applicable

Questions

All interested parties are encouraged to respond to any question to which they can provide meaningful or helpful input. Responses should not include confidential and/or proprietary information, as this information will be available for public review. Responses are not limited in word count, but brevity where possible is appreciated.

1. The Program statute defines an eligible area as one that experienced the closure of a fossil fuel or nuclear plant, or coal mine within six years before the program application is submitted or that anticipates closure of such a facility six years after the application. (20 ILCS 735/10-20(c)(1), (2)). The statute also allows for the area to have had operations or service “significantly reduced” within that window. If applicable, describe the area that will be or has been impacted by a plant or mine closure. What is the geographic reach of the impact (e.g. does it impact only the town, or does it have a county or multi-county impact)? If you are not responding as the representative of a specific impacted area, provide information on the typical geographic scope of the impact of coal mine or plant closures.
2. What are the largest impacts and primary challenges to economic revitalization for communities impacted by plant or mine closures? For example, does the community have inadequate or aging transportation infrastructure; population and income loss; a lack of job opportunities or mismatch of worker skills; lack of investment, etc.? If you are not responding as the representative of a specific impacted area, provide information on the general impacts and challenges communities in this position tend to experience.
3. What are the strongest assets of the impacted community/region? What strengths does the community already possess that will help with economic recovery? For example, this may include transportation or other infrastructure, educational institutions, workforce, industry clusters, broadband infrastructure, local economic development incentives, etc. If you are not responding as the representative of a specific impacted area, provide information on the strongest assets in communities in Illinois that are likely to be eligible for these grants in the future.
4. These funds can be used to address the economic and social impact on the community or region experiencing a plant retirement or mine closure. For example, they may be used for planning, research and development, workforce training, infrastructure, and other economic development projects or initiatives. What are some of the pressing needs and uses for the funding that will be provided by Energy Transition Community Grants? If you are not responding as the

representative of a specific impacted area, what do you anticipate will be the most common needs and uses for the funding in impacted areas?

5. The Program statute requires that a county applicant or other entities that are not the municipality where the plant or mine is located include a resolution of support from the host community with their applications. If the plant or mine is in an unincorporated area and therefore no municipal governing body exists, what type of documentation should the county or other entity use in lieu of a resolution of support from the host city?
6. Electric generating plant and mining communities are considered eligible if they have had a plant or mine close or significantly reduce operation within six years before the NOFO application is submitted to DCEO, or where a plant or mine is anticipated to be closed or have operations reduced six years after the NOFO application is submitted to DCEO.
 - a. What information or documentation should be used to verify that a mine or plant is “anticipated” to be closed or have operations reduced? How should DCEO define “anticipated”?
 - b. How should DCEO define “significantly reduced operations” for a coal mine? Should that be based on reductions in production rates or employment numbers? If so, by how much? What are other considerations?
 - c. How should DCEO define “significantly reduced operations” for a fossil fuel plant? Should that be based on megawatt production rates, employment numbers, or unit retirements? What are other considerations?
7. Please provide past examples, experiences, or lessons learned from similarly purposed grant programs that have supported community revitalization. Respondents should also consider providing best practices and successful approaches from communities that have experienced a significant economic loss, regardless of industry. This can include approaches seen in other states and/or communities in other states.
8. Please provide any additional comments or thoughts not specifically addressed in this RFI.

Process Overview and Stakeholder Submission

DCEO will review the responses for the purpose of identifying key concepts and information that may be beneficial to DCEO in designing and implementing its Energy Transition Community Grant Program.

Responses to this RFI may be submitted via the online form at

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/bf0cad712d3b4b49a075895bb32cf3e5>

Please provide your response by Friday, September 30, 2022. Responses submitted after this date may not be reviewed or considered.