

Gov. Pritzker Announces \$21 Million for CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs

October 12 2023 1:29 PM



CHICAGO - Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) launched \$21 million in funding for the Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program or "CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs." The program establishes a network of 13 community-based hubs across the state offering incubator services designed to assist clean energy contractors – especially those from underserved

areas – grow their businesses. The organizations that will run CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process.

“Illinois’ nation-leading Climate and Equitable Jobs Act is the boldest climate action plan in our state’s history, and it’s anchored in equity to ensure no one is left behind,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “That’s why I’m proud to announce additional funding for our CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs that will further advance our clean energy businesses and workforce. It’s another step on the path to creating the clean energy future that all Illinoisans deserve.”

The CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs is CEJA’s central small business support program among a highly interconnected set of statewide clean energy workforce development and community support programs. The Hubs will provide a variety of services to contractors and clean energy small businesses, including access to low-cost capital, training, mentorship, networking opportunities and other business-related assistance. The program prioritizes support for business owners and contractors from historically marginalized backgrounds as well as entrepreneurs located in environmental justice communities.

“Our administration is prioritizing not only environmental justice, but how we empower our small businesses and working families to thrive. CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs are a critical part of how we connect our communities to clean energy,” **said Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton**. “This \$21 million investment will uplift our local businesses and community-based organizations with opportunities to grow.”

The CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs will serve small clean energy businesses and contractors with the goal of empowering them to grow their clean energy businesses. The Hubs will be comprised of organizations with extensive experience supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs in capacity building.

“The CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs are essential to moving our state toward a clean energy future under the landmark CEJA legislation,” **said DCEO Director Kristin Richards**. “Through community-based hubs, DCEO will uplift and support small businesses and clean energy contractors, especially those in historically underserved communities across Illinois.”

Through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), qualified entities can apply for grants, with awards ranging from \$500,000 to \$2.5 million. Applications will be accepted until December 11, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. 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 for application assistance. A [Technical Assistance Webinar](#) will be held on October 20, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

“With a goal of moving Illinois toward a carbon-free future, the CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs are critical to supporting clean energy contractors across Illinois,” **said Sen. Cunningham, a Democrat who represents portions of Chicago and the Southwest Suburbs**. “This \$21 million program will provide Illinois’ small businesses with the resources and tools necessary to prepare for a clean energy future.”

Qualified entities include community-based organizations such as non-profit organizations and accredited public colleges or universities that have experience providing business-related assistance, knowledge of the construction and clean energy trades, have a record of effectively serving diverse populations, and have established relationships within the local area.

“Prioritizing clean energy contractors from underserved areas through the CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs program is necessary to enact the equitable component of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act,” **said Rep. Evans (D-Chicago)**. “The State is ensuring minority contractors have a seat at the table when designing and preparing for the clean energy jobs of the future.”

“Illinois’ landmark CEJA legislation has numerous facets, and the Hubs are one of many steps the State is taking to prepare for the clean energy future,” **said Rep. Gabel (D-Evanston)**. “The State of Illinois is committed to moving toward a 100% carbon-free future that will be felt in Illinois communities for generations to come.”

The Hubs will be located in the 13 geographic areas designated by statute: Alton, Aurora, Carbondale, Champaign, Chicago (South Side), Chicago (Southwest and West Sides), Danville,

Decatur, East St. Louis, Joliet, Peoria, Rockford, and Waukegan. DCEO anticipates identifying at least one grantee to administer the program in each of the 13 locations.

“Preparing Illinoisans for job opportunities in the clean energy sector is a top priority of CEJA,” **said Rep. Hoffman (D-Swansea)**. “Supporting clean energy contractors through the Hubs program will give them resources and opportunities to grow their businesses while providing a variety of support services to contractors and small businesses across the state.”

“Launching yet another CEJA program is a major step in preparing Illinois for a greener future,” **said Rep. Ann Williams (D-Chicago)**. “The Contractor Incubator Hubs will

offer tailored support on the ground to assist clean energy contractors in every corner of the state.”

The Clean Energy Contractor Incubator 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. 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.

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)