

# Governor Pritzker Announces \$6 Million for CEJA Returning Residents Program

February 27 2024 1:25 PM



**CHICAGO** – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) launched \$6 million in funding for the Illinois Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program as part of a larger strategy to equitably grow Illinois' clean energy workforce through the landmark Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA). The program will deliver clean jobs training, education, and support services in Illinois Department of Corrections facilities to individuals within 36

months of their release to prepare them to work in clean energy and related sector jobs upon release. Organizations that will run the Returning Residents Program will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process.

“It is critical that as we build our clean energy future, all of our communities can access the training they need to secure jobs in growing industries,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “Thanks to the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, Illinoisans impacted by the justice system will not only be prepared for the good-paying jobs of tomorrow, but they will also help us create a cleaner, more sustainable state for all.”

The Returning Residents Program will provide classroom instruction and hands-on learning opportunities, utilizing a standard Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework, and connect Program graduates with potential employers in the clean energy industry.

“The Returning Residents Program is exactly what we mean when we say we are shifting Illinois toward a more restorative justice system,” **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton.** “The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act has always been rooted in equity. We’re reimagining what reentry looks like while further diversifying the clean energy workforce.”

Program curriculum will include training in essential employability skills and clean energy basics to help participants succeed in an array of workplaces and clean energy jobs. Upon completion, participants will continue to the job-specific training portion of the curriculum to receive solar PV training or HVAC training, with an energy efficiency focus.

“Launching the Returning Residents Program will promote diversity and inclusion in the clean energy sector,” **said DCEO Director Kristin Richards.** “Returning residents deserve the chance to make a positive, lasting impact on our state by participating in this CEJA program that will give them the opportunity to pursue successful careers in the clean energy jobs of the future.”

Post-release services will be provided in coordination with the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program Hubs and the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Centers to continue to support participants after release as they prepare for and transition into employment. A wide range of support services will be available, including help with transportation, childcare, supplies and other expenditures, along with support to gain and retain employment.

“The Returning Residents Program is a great example of what is possible when you prioritize equity,” **said Assistant Majority Leader Marcus C. Evans, Jr. (D-Chicago).** “As chief sponsor of the landmark Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, I know

this funding will not only help Illinois in building a clean energy future, it will also provide meaningful opportunities to individuals who need it most - reducing recidivism and creating a pathway to a greater future.”

The Returning Resident Program will work with clean energy employers to identify job and work-based learning opportunities for participants and help facilitate job placement. DCEO will publish a Hiring Returning Residents Handbook for employers, and the organizations that deliver the program will engage with employers to promote company policies to support hiring and supporting returning residents.

“This investment is essential to ensuring all Illinoisans, regardless of their background, have an opportunity to thrive,” **said Assistant Majority Leader Aaron Ortiz (D-Chicago)**. “As a cosponsor of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, I am thrilled to see continued support for our state's shared vision of building a clean energy future.”

Up to four grantees will receive funding through the program to serve participants in the Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center, Decatur Correctional Center, Western Illinois Correctional Center, and Vienna Correctional Center.

“As one of the sponsors of the transformative Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, I am thrilled to witness its continued positive impact on our state,” **said Majority Caucus Appropriations Leader Elgie R. Sims, Jr. (D-Chicago)**. “This investment will not only help us in our efforts to build a cleaner future and expand our clean energy workforce, but it will allow us to do so through an equitable lens and provide greater opportunity for historically disadvantaged communities.”

Qualified entities include community-based organizations such as non-profits, community colleges, and local governments that provide employment skills, training, or related services. Organizations are encouraged to partner with each other to deliver training within the correctional facilities and support participants as they are released into communities throughout Illinois. Applicant teams must demonstrate relationships with returning residents and organizations serving returning residents.

Through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), qualified entities can apply for grants, with awards ranging from \$1 million to \$2 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](#).

To help applicants prepare to apply for funding, DCEO will be holding a [webinar](#) at 1 p. m. on March 1 and a [webinar](#) at 1 p.m. on March 8. [One-on-one technical assistance](#) is also available for applicants. Interested parties are encouraged to reach out to CEO. GrantHelp@illinois.gov for application assistance.

The Returning Residents 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)