



Workforce Development Program Year 2025 – CEJA Workforce Hub Grant

Grant Period: July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Grant Award: \$2,750,000

Strategic Imperative Supported: Create a Culture of Equitable Prosperity

Project Purpose: Expand access to clean energy career pathways and build an inclusive green workforce in Lake County.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) awarded Lake County Workforce Development \$2,750,000 through the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Workforce Hub Grant. This major investment supports a wide range of activities to prepare residents for careers in green economy sectors including energy efficiency, solar installation, electric vehicle infrastructure, and sustainable manufacturing.

The CEJA initiative prioritizes individuals from historically underrepresented communities, including justice-involved individuals, low-income residents, and disconnected youth.

Planned initiatives include:

- Pre-apprenticeship and credential-based training in clean energy sectors
- Outreach, coaching, and case management to support equitable access and navigation
- Employer and union engagement to expand apprenticeship and hiring opportunities
- Supportive services including transportation, technology, and clothing assistance
- Industry engagement through job fairs, forums, and community hiring events

This project ensures Lake County can meet the growing demand for clean energy jobs while advancing racial and economic equity through workforce development.

CEJA Program Outcomes – Waukegan Workforce Hub

The **Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA)**, signed into law in Illinois in 2021, is a landmark piece of legislation designed to expand clean energy opportunities while advancing equity across the state. Through its workforce development provisions, CEJA creates pathways for underrepresented and equity-eligible individuals to gain access to training, certifications, and career opportunities in the growing clean energy sector.

The **Waukegan CEJA Workforce Hub**, operated in partnership with the **College of Lake County**, serves as a central resource for recruitment, training, and wraparound support services. The

Hub provides participants with employability training, industry-recognized certifications, and direct connections to clean energy employers. In addition to technical instruction, the program prioritizes holistic support, including stipends and barrier reduction services, to ensure that participants can complete training and transition into sustainable careers.

Program Outcomes PY24

- The Job Center referred over **300 interested individuals** to CEJA. **178 applicantes** began enrollment in the program.
- **68 participants** successfully completed the Bridge Program. Training covered **Employability Skills** and **Clean Energy Basics**, with all participants earning both an **OSHA-10 Card** and **First Aid/CPR certification**.
- **17 individuals** have secured full-time employment in the clean energy sector.
- A total of **\$136,000 in stipends** has been disbursed to participants, and an additional **\$161,000 in Barrier Reduction Wraparound Services** has been deployed to support participant success.
- Strategic partnerships have been established with **NorthShore Gas, Nicor, ComEd**, and several local businesses to continue expanding pipelines for training and hiring CEJA program graduates.