



Request for Information (RFI) under the
Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and
Inflation Reduction Act

PREPARING WORKERS AND BUSINESSES TO DELIVER ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND BUILDING
ELECTRIFICATION MEASURES
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
(DE-FOA-0002885)

ISSUE DATE: DECEMBER 15, 2022
RESPONSES DUE: JANUARY 26, 2023
SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
AGENCY: DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, OFFICE OF STATE AND COMMUNITY ENERGY PROGRAMS (SCEP)

Description

This is a Request for Information (RFI) issued by the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of State and Community Energy Programs (SCEP). The intent of this RFI is to obtain public input regarding the solicitation process and structure of future DOE Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) to fund the Energy Auditor and Career Skills Training grant programs, in accordance with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).¹ This RFI also seeks public input on the State-Based Home Energy Efficiency Contractor Training program, as set forth in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).² Specifically, this RFI seeks input on:

- The content of, and proposed programmatic requirements for
 - BIL section 40503 (the Energy Auditor Training Grant Program, or EAT)³;
 - BIL section 40513 (the Career Skills Training program, or CST)⁴;
 - IRA section 50123 (the State-Based Home Energy Efficiency Contractor Training program, or Contractor Training Program)⁵
- Respondent type
- Workforce and business characteristics
- Workforce development and business owner training strategies
- Accessing federal funding
- Equity and partnerships
- Access to high quality jobs
- Other

¹ Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. 117-58 (November 15, 2021).

² Inflation Reduction Act, Pub. L. 117-169 (August 16, 2022).

³ Codified at 42 U.S.C. 18793.

⁴ Codified at 42 U.S.C. 18802.

⁵ Codified at 42 U.S.C. 18795b.

The information collected from this RFI will be used by DOE for planning purposes to develop one or multiple potential FOAs related to BIL sections 40503 and 40513 and IRA section 50123. The information collected will not be published.

Background

On November 15, 2021, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. signed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which appropriates more than \$62 billion to DOE to ensure that clean energy future delivers true economic prosperity to the American people by:

- Investing in American manufacturing and workers, including good-paying jobs that are subject to Davis-Bacon prevailing wage protections and provide the free and fair opportunity to join a union, effective workforce development to upskill incumbent and dislocated workers, and equitable workforce development pathways into good jobs for workers from underserved⁶ communities.
- Expanding access to energy efficiency and clean energy for families, communities, and businesses.
- Delivering reliable, clean, and affordable power to more Americans.
- Building the technologies of tomorrow through clean energy demonstrations.

On August 16, 2022, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The energy and climate provisions of this bill include tax credits for clean energy technologies, almost \$9 billion in residential energy efficiency rebates, \$200 million for energy efficiency contractor training, and billions more for clean energy research and development, community investment, energy justice, and permitting processes.

SCEP intends to use principles of equity and justice to guide BIL and IRA implementation, consistent with the Biden Administration's commitments to ensure that overburdened, underserved, and underrepresented individuals and communities have access to federal resources.⁷ The BIL and IRA implementation processes should advance equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. BIL and IRA implementation efforts for the EAT and CST support the goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities (the Justice40 Initiative)⁸.

⁶ Here and throughout this RFI, we define "underserved communities" as BIPOC individuals, LGBTQ+ individuals, women, immigrants, veterans, opportunity youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals in rural communities, individuals without a college degree, individuals with or recovering from a substance use disorder, and justice-involved individuals.

⁷ See Executive Order (E.O.)13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities*; E.O. 14020, *Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council*; and E.O. 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*.

⁸ The [Justice40 initiative](#), established by E.O. 14008, sets a goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities. Justice40 covers these [DOE programs](#). DOE's definition of disadvantaged communities, which should be used to determine benefits calculations, is available on the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST). CEJST uses eight burden categories to identify disadvantaged

The implementation of the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Programs aims to support the creation of good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union, the incorporation of strong labor standards, and high-road workforce development, especially sector-based training, Registered Apprenticeship, and quality pre-apprenticeship.^{9,10}

Having a well-trained workforce is essential to improving the energy performance and quality of the nation's building stock, developing career pathways in the building trades and ensuring Federal funds can be deployed quickly and efficiently to meet our climate challenge and market demand. A study from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) states the number of workers in renewable energy and energy efficiency will double by 2025 and triple by 2030.¹¹ Workforce development and business owner training programs at the local, state, and federal levels can prepare students, workers, and businesses for opportunities in these crucial industries. For example, a number of cities, states, and utilities are delivering energy efficiency workforce development programs to increase the supply of qualified workers while also pursuing policies and programs to increase demand for the technologies and services these workers deliver.¹²

DOE seeks to enhance and expand new and established, nonprofit-, state-, and locally driven efforts to scale a well-trained, diverse workforce. The agency will do so in part through three new workforce development programs: Contractor Training Program, EAT, and CST. DOE intends to use these three programs to support the development of a more equitable energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification workforce. For example, the existing energy efficiency workforce is disproportionately male and has a lower concentration of

communities: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development. CEJST considers a community disadvantaged if it is in a census tract that meets at least one of the tool's burden categories or is on land within the boundaries of Federally Recognized Tribes.

⁹ Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs are a proven model of job preparation, registered by DOL or a DOL-recognized State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA), which employ workers and combine paid On-the-Job Learning (OJL) (also referred to as On-the-Job Training (OJT)) with Related Instruction (RI) to progressively increase workers' skill levels and wages. RA is also a business-driven model that provide an effective way for employers to recruit, train, and retain highly skilled workers. RA allows workforce partners, educators, and employers to develop and apply industry standards to training programs, thereby increasing the quality of the workforce and workforce productivity. RAP allows job seekers immediate employment opportunities that pay sustainable wages and offer advancement along a career path as they complete their training. Registered Apprentice completers receive industry-recognized certificates of completion leading to long-term career opportunities. For more information on RA, please visit www.apprenticeship.gov.

¹⁰ The U.S. Department of Labor has developed a framework for Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Programs in its [Training and Employment Notice 13-12](#).

¹¹ NREL, [State-Level Employment Projections for Four Clean Energy Technologies in 2025 and 2030](#).

¹² ACEEE, [Through the Local Government Lens: Developing the Energy Efficiency Workforce](#); ACEEE, [Expanding Opportunity through Energy Efficiency Jobs: Strategies to Ensure a More Resilient, Diverse Workforce](#); and University of California Berkeley Labor Center, [Putting California on the High Road: A Jobs and Climate Action Plan for 2030](#).

Hispanic workers compared to the national, economywide workforce, although it has a higher percentage of other non-White workers.¹³

The table below describes the purpose, funding levels, and eligible entities for the Contractor Training Program, EAT, and CST.

Program Name	Authorizing Statute	Funds Available	Eligible Recipient(s)	Purpose
Energy Auditor Training (EAT)	BIL Sec. 40503	\$40 million for the period of fiscal years 2022 through 2026	States ¹⁴	The Secretary “shall establish a competitive grant program” to “award grants to eligible States to train individuals to conduct energy audits or surveys of commercial and residential buildings.”
Career Skills Training (CST)	BIL Sec. 40513	\$10 million to remain available until expended	Nonprofit partnerships ¹⁵	The Secretary “shall award grants to eligible entities to pay the Federal share of associated career skills training programs under which students concurrently receive classroom instruction and on-the-job training for the purpose of obtaining an industry-related certification to install energy efficient buildings technologies.”
State-Based Home Energy Efficiency Contractor Training Grants (Contractor)	IRA Sec. 50123	\$200 million to remain available through September 30, 2031	States ¹⁶	To develop and implement a State program to “provide training and education to contractors involved in the installation of home energy efficiency and electrification improvements, including improvements eligible for rebates under a HOMES rebate program or a high-efficiency

¹³ U.S. DOE, [United States Energy & Employment Report 2022](#).

¹⁴ Under section 40503(a)(2), an “eligible State” means a State that – “has a demonstrated need for assistance for training energy auditors; and [] meets any additional criteria determined necessary by the Secretary.” 42 U.S.C. 18793(a)(2).

¹⁵ Under section 40513(a), an “eligible entity” means a nonprofit partnership that “(1) includes the equal participation of industry, including public or private employers, and labor organizations, including joint labor-management training programs; (2) may include workforce investment boards, community-based organizations, qualified service and conservation corps, educational institutions, small businesses, cooperatives, State and local veterans agencies, and veterans service organizations; and (3) demonstrates (A) experience in implementing and operating worker skills training and education programs; (B) the ability to identify and involve in training programs carried out under this section, target populations of individuals who would benefit from training and be actively involved in activities relating to energy efficiency and renewable energy industries; and (C) the ability to help individuals achieve economic self-sufficiency.” 42 U.S.C. 18802(a).

¹⁶ The term “State” means a State, the District of Columbia, and a United States Insular Area, which means American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands. IRA sections 50111 and 50211 (42 U.S.C. § 17113b note and 43 U.S.C. § 3006 note, respectively).

Training Program)				electric home rebate program, as part of an approved State energy conservation plan under the State Energy Program.”
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Purpose

The purpose of this RFI is to solicit feedback from states and nonprofits, as well as partner stakeholders such as labor unions, employers and contractors, workforce development boards (WDBs), institutions of higher education including community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), energy efficiency training providers, researchers, community partners, manufacturers, community-based organizations (CBOs)¹⁷, and others on issues related to the development and implementation of the Contractor Training Program, EAT, and CST. These programs focus on energy efficiency and/or residential buildings-focused electrification and do not cover renewable energy or transportation electrification workforce development programs. This is solely a request for information and not a Funding Opportunity Announcement. SCEP is not accepting applications through the release of this RFI.

You may answer as few or as many of the questions below as you would like. Please use the bolded Category numbers and sub-numbers as headings in your response to the greatest extent possible and refer to the questions (A1, B1, etc.) in the body of your responses. This helps save time both for the responder and the reviewers.

Specifically, DOE is interested in public input on questions across the following categories and questions:

Category A: Respondent Type

- A1. What type of entity is the organization (e.g., non-profit, state government, company, local government, etc.)?
- A2. In what city(ies) and state(s) do you live or operate?

Category B: Workforce and Business Characteristics

DOE is seeking to identify the types of energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification energy jobs in greatest demand. Please provide supporting research and evidence for responses to these questions, when available.

- B1. What job categories in the energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification industries/technologies are the most in demand (e.g., the types of jobs hired most frequently or employers’ highest-priority vacancies)? What is driving this demand?

¹⁷ Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are public or private not-for-profit resource hubs that provide specific services to the community or targeted population within the community.



- i. What job categories are the hardest to find qualified candidates for (i.e., the types of jobs most difficult to fill)?
 - ii. What are the key characteristics of these hard-to-fill jobs? For example, is it difficult to retain workers in these jobs (i.e., is there high turnover)?
 - iii. What hourly wages and/or annual salaries (or ranges) are associated with these occupations?
 - iv. What are the entry qualifications—educational background, related experience, training, skills, and/or certifications—necessary to fill these positions?
 - v. Are there promotion opportunities within these jobs? Are these jobs part of broader career pathways?
- B2. In what locations do you project the greatest demand for workers? What trends and factors are driving that demand? Please provide any available data and sources.
- B3. What supports do workers need to overcome barriers to employment in these high-demand jobs (e.g., a criminal record, transportation, child and elder care, etc.)? Where possible, include data and examples of where supportive services have positively impacted recruitment, hiring, retention, and upskilling of underserved populations:
- B4. What types of contracting firms should DOE target for workforce development and business owner training (e.g., general contractors, home performance contractors, HVAC or electrical contractors, etc.)? What skills and knowledge are most pressing for these contracting firms to have? How do the needs of contracting firms vary based on the size of each business?

Category C: Workforce Development and Business Owner Training Strategies

DOE is seeking to understand the best strategies to prepare individuals and businesses for energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification jobs. Please provide supporting research and evidence for responses to these questions, when available. **Please specify the relevant program (EAT, CST, and/or Contractor Training Program) in each response.**

- C1. What education and training (i.e., workforce development) strategies are most effective, and why, for incumbent workers and contracting firms in the energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification industries (e.g., online learning, classroom and lab instruction, on-the-job training, hybrid models)? Are there effective training models that target incumbent workers and contracting firms? Who is best positioned to administer these programs?
- C2. What education and training (i.e., workforce development) strategies are most effective, and why, for new workers in the energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification industries (e.g., online learning, classroom and lab instruction, on-the-job training, hybrid models)? Are there effective training models that target new workers?
- C3. Is there a need for programs to train the trainer? If so, what strategies are most effective for programs that train the trainer? Who is best positioned to administer these programs?
- C4. What education and training (i.e., workforce development and business owner support) are most effective, and why, for contracting firms? Why and when do contracting firms



- participate in training, amidst other competing priorities? What business owner training strategies for contracting firms exist?
- C5. Which certifications or credentials should the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program prepare participants for? Please specify the program in your response.
- C6. What obstacles prevent access to training for workers and contracting firms? What type of incentives or return on investment would workers and employers need to invest in the training?
- C7. How could DOE funding be used to support continued education, job placement, and supportive services (e.g., transportation, child and elder care) for the energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification workforce? How can DOE ensure that workers have pathways for growth and well-paying careers within these industries?
- C8. How can DOE-funded workforce programs support career ladders for individuals to ensure they continue to acquire skills and advance their career and wages over time?
- C9. How can DOE-funded workforce programs best help connect trainees with employment opportunities?
- C10. How could the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program most effectively work together?
- C11. How should DOE assess if a state has a “demonstrated need for assistance for training energy auditors”? What additional criteria should DOE consider necessary to determine eligibility?
- C12. What are examples of effective existing workforce development programs that meet the purposes set forth for the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program?
- C13. How can DOE investments support sector strategies in the energy efficiency sector¹⁸?

Category D: Accessing Federal Funding

DOE is examining eligible recipients’ capacity to apply for, design, fund, and implement the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program. Please provide supporting research and evidence for responses to these questions, when available. **Please specify the relevant program (EAT, CST, and/or Contractor Training Program) in each response.**

- D1. What information can DOE provide in the FOA that would be helpful to applicants?
- D2. Is a 50% match requirement for eligible nonprofit partnerships viable as part of the CST? What challenges do prospective applicants face to this cost share requirement? How can DOE help organizations with the greatest need access these funds?
- D3. How can the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program dollars enhance funds from other federal, state, local, utility, and private sources? How can DOE encourage applications that draw on non-federal resources to leverage federal funds for maximum impact?
- D4. What is the minimum award size to be meaningful for EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program funding recipients?

¹⁸ A sector strategy is a partnership of multiple employers within a critical industry that brings together education, economic development, workforce systems, and community organizations to identify and collaboratively meet the workforce needs of that industry within a regional labor market. Source: [U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration](#).

- D5. Should DOE deliver the Contractor Training Program funds to states using a formulaic or competitive approach? Why?
- D6. How much would the activities funded under these programs cost on a per-participant basis and for a program-level budget? Please be as specific as possible.

Category E: Equity and Partnerships

DOE is exploring how to design the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program to support an equitable energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification workforce with robust partnerships. Please provide supporting research and evidence for responses to these questions, when available. **Please specify the relevant program (EAT, CST, and/or Contractor Training Program) in each response.**

- E1. How can DOE design the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program to include and best serve individuals from disadvantaged communities and underserved populations in workforce development and economic inclusion programs? How can DOE design these programs to reach rural community members and businesses?
- E2. What are examples of successful existing nonprofit partnerships between nonprofits, industry, and labor organizations? What is needed to develop more partnerships, particularly to reach disadvantaged communities and underserved populations and provide access to career-track training?
- E3. What degree of industry representation is needed to ensure that the partnership is developing a strategy that is broadly responsive to industry need within a given region or locality?
- E4. What key equity-aligned review criteria should DOE use to evaluate and select projects funded by the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program?
- E5. What level of interest is there in DOE support to forge partnerships with other prospective applicants? If there is interest, how can DOE help?¹⁹
- E6. How can DOE use funds to expand business ownership in energy efficiency and electrification fields for people of color, women, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and other disadvantaged communities and underserved populations?
- E7. Are there currently organizations (for profit, nonprofit, trade, labor organizations, etc.) or networks comprised of or supporting disadvantaged communities and underserved populations that should be engaged in this effort of economic inclusion?
- E8. How can DOE ensure that workers from disadvantaged and underserved communities have access to good quality union jobs? What evidence-based models can DOE deploy to hire, recruit, retain, and develop a diverse workforce while also eliminating gender, race, and disability-based pay gaps?

Category F: Access to High Quality Jobs

DOE seeks to expand good energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification jobs by supporting programs that prepare a diverse and skilled workforce. DOE is interested in

¹⁹ As an example, see the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office's Teaming Partner list as part of its [Advancing Equity Through Workforce Partnerships Funding Notice](#).

public input on how to design the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program to advance high quality, well-paying union jobs. Please provide supporting research and evidence for responses to these questions, when available. **Please specify the relevant program (EAT, CST, and/or Contractor Training Program) in each response.**

- F1. How can DOE best design these programs to support the direct and indirect creation of high quality, good-paying union jobs, especially in disadvantaged communities and for dislocated workers?
- F2. What are the barriers and challenges to creating high quality energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification jobs and businesses? Are these barriers and challenges different for those from disadvantaged communities?
- F3. What existing workforce education and training efforts (e.g., specific registered apprenticeship programs, labor management training programs, community college or technical school programs, pre-apprenticeship programs, etc.) are preparing displaced, underrepresented, and historically disadvantaged workers for energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification jobs? How can those efforts be best supported or augmented to ensure the success of the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program? What training pathways are needed, or already exist, to address these needs?
- F4. How can DOE encourage diverse and inclusive entrepreneurship in the energy efficiency and residential buildings-focused electrification industries?
- F5. Will prospective funding applicants or recipients commit to ensuring workers have the free and fair chance to join a union, beyond current legal requirements, by providing union organizers access to property and workers, pledging to remain neutral in any union organizing campaign, and voluntarily recognizing a union based on authorization cards signed by a majority of your employees, entering a collective bargaining agreement with a union selected by a majority of your employees within 1-year, and/or establishing a labor-management partnership? If not, why?
- F6. How should the quality of and equitable access to jobs by these programs be measured and evaluated? What specific performance measures should be collected to assess program quality? Are there related studies or reports on this topic available?

Category G: Other

- G1. Please provide any additional information or input not specifically requested in the questions above that would be valuable to help DOE develop the Program FOA and implement the EAT, CST, and Contractor Training Program.

Disclaimer and Important Notes

This RFI is not a Funding Opportunity Announcement; therefore, SCEP is not accepting applications at this time. SCEP may issue a FOA in the future based on or related to the content and responses to this RFI; however, SCEP may also elect not to issue a FOA. There is no guarantee that a FOA will be issued as a result of this RFI. Responding to this RFI does not provide any advantage or disadvantage to potential applicants if SCEP chooses to issue a FOA regarding the subject matter. Final details, including the anticipated award size, quantity, and timing of SCEP funded awards, will be subject to Congressional appropriations and direction.

Any information obtained as a result of this RFI is intended to be used by the Government on a non-attribution basis for planning and strategy development; this RFI does not constitute a formal solicitation for proposals or abstracts. Your response to this notice will be treated as information only. SCEP will review and consider all responses in its formulation of program strategies for the identified materials of interest that are the subject of this request. SCEP will not provide reimbursement for costs incurred in responding to this RFI. Respondents are advised that SCEP is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information received or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted under this RFI. Responses to this RFI do not bind SCEP to any further actions related to this topic.

Confidential Business Information

Pursuant to 10 CFR 1004.11, any person submitting information that he or she believes to be confidential and exempt by law from public disclosure should submit via email, postal mail, or hand delivery two well-marked copies: one copy of the document marked “confidential” including all the information believed to be confidential, and one copy of the document marked “non-confidential” with the information believed to be confidential deleted. Submit these documents via email or on a CD, if feasible. DOE will make its own determination about the confidential status of the information and treat it according to its determination.

Evaluation and Administration by Federal and Non-Federal Personnel

Federal employees are subject to the non-disclosure requirements of a criminal statute, the Trade Secrets Act, 18 USC 1905. The Government may seek the advice of qualified non-Federal personnel. The Government may also use non-Federal personnel to conduct routine, nondiscretionary administrative activities. The respondents, by submitting their response, consent to SCEP providing their response to non-Federal parties. Non-Federal parties given access to responses must be subject to an appropriate obligation of confidentiality prior to being given the access. Submissions may be reviewed by support contractors and private consultants.

Request for Information Response Guidelines

Responses to this RFI must be submitted electronically to eworkforceprograms@hq.doe.gov no later than 5:00pm (ET) on January 26, 2023. Responses must be provided as attachments to an email that includes “Workforce RFI Response” in the subject line. It is recommended that attachments with file sizes exceeding 25MB be compressed (i.e., zipped) to ensure message delivery. Responses must be provided as a Microsoft Word (.docx), text document, or PDF attachment to the email, and no more than 10 pages in length, 12-point font, 1-inch margins. Only electronic responses will be accepted.

For ease of replying and to aid categorization of your responses, **please copy and paste the RFI questions, including the question numbering, and use them as a template for your response.** Respondents may answer as many or as few questions as they wish.

SCEP will not respond to individual submissions or publish publicly a compendium of responses. A response to this RFI will not be viewed as a binding commitment to develop or pursue the project or ideas discussed.

Respondents are requested to provide the following information at the start of their response to this RFI:

- Company / institution name;
- Company / institution contact;
- Contact's address, phone number, and e-mail address.