

## Catalyze Chapter 10 LTP Feedback

### TOPIC 2: Project Workforce Definition

#### Questions

1. What additional guidance or clarity can the Agency provide regarding the project workforce definition?

Catalyze has noticed contradictory information in documents provided by the IPA. Most notably, there is contradictory information on whether employees must reside in Illinois in order to qualify as part of the project workforce.

Separate questions on the [Vendor FAQ](#) give contradictory information as to whether someone who lives outside of Illinois but works on projects that would participate in Illinois Shines count toward the Illinois project workforce. See the screenshots from the Vendor FAQ below.

#### What does “duties performed in Illinois” mean in terms of a project workforce location? –

The Agency understands the primary policy objective of Section 1-75(c-10) of the IPA Act as advancing equity across Illinois by providing access to the Illinois clean energy economy for businesses and workers from Illinois communities that historically have been excluded.

Therefore, the **relevant location is where the work is performed** as that is the location of the economic opportunity. Only workers whose duties are performed in Illinois are included in the IPA’s “project workforce” definition for Minimum Equity Standard (“MES”) compliance in Illinois Shines. Employees who perform duties in Illinois that are related to developing projects or educating consumers about Program options should be included in the project workforce.

While the IPA understands that project labor crews and locations vary, applicants **do not need to include office workers who work outside of Illinois in their project workforce. Non-construction employees doing work outside of Illinois are not included in the project workforce for the MES, regardless of where they live.** Such an outcome would not serve the purpose the MES, which is intended to increase access to clean energy jobs for Illinois workers.

#### If a company has employees that live and/or work outside of Illinois, do those employees count towards the project workforce? –

Individuals who perform work **in Illinois** do count towards the project workforce, regardless of where they live. Only workers whose duties are performed **in Illinois** are included in the IPA’s “project workforce” definition for Illinois Shines.

2. Are there any populations currently excluded from the project workforce definition that should be included?

a. Are there any populations that are currently included in the project workforce definition that should be excluded?

Catalyze does not have feedback on 2 or 2a.

3. Are the current thresholds (e.g., 5% of REC value) and definitions for counting subcontractor employees clear and equitable?

Catalyze believes the current thresholds are clear and equitable.

### **TOPIC 3: Minimum Equity Standard Compliance**

#### *Questions*

1. Should the Agency maintain or adjust the proposed MES percentage increase schedule? If it should be adjusted, how?

Catalyze has concerns regarding the Minimum Equity Standard's steep annual increase and 30% standard in 2030. It will be difficult for even large corporate entities to achieve the 30% standard in the 2029-2030 program year. Additionally, companies may not need to hire for their Illinois project workforce every year, which puts them at risk of non-compliance. Catalyze believes 20% would be a more appropriate and achievable Minimum Equity Standard in 2029-2030.

Given that more than half of EEPs live in Cook County, Approved Vendors and Designees that work in the rest of the state have more difficulty achieving the Minimum Equity Standard and risk non-compliance. Potential employees living in Cook County may not want to or be able to commute to project sites in the rest of the state.

2. What resources, tools, or supports would help entities meet higher MES thresholds while also providing opportunities for EECs to build their skills and experience?

Catalyze believes Approved Vendors and EEPs would benefit from the IPA facilitating more connections between them\*. For example, the IPA could automatically add graduates of the workforce programs to the MES portal instead of requiring them to register themselves. The IPA could also include more promotions of job fairs in the weekly IPA announcements sent out on Fridays.

Because multiple criteria for EEPs are sensitive, Catalyze believes Approved Vendors and EEPs could benefit from training conducted by the IPA on how to talk about the Minimum Equity Standard in the hiring process.

3. How effective are the current enforcement tools in encouraging compliance? Are there unintended consequences or equity impacts in how the Agency currently handles MES noncompliance?

Catalyze believes the current enforcement tools are not very effective at encouraging compliance and that the IPA could take a more active approach in facilitating connections between EEPs and Approved Vendors and Designees. Catalyze elaborates on other potential tools to facilitate compliance in Question 2.

4. Should the Agency develop paths to demonstrate compliance in situations where an entity demonstrates it will not qualify for Safe Harbor, does not have the requisite number

of EEPs in the project workforce, and cannot expand its workforce due to economic constraints faced by the clean energy marketplace?

The IPA should add a section in the Minimum Equity Standard Waiver Request asking if the Approved Vendor or Designee hired anyone for their Illinois project workforce in the program year. Approved Vendors and Designees that did not hire anyone for their Illinois project workforce during the program year should have their waiver request approved.

Separately, projects sited in an area without a strong populations of EEPs should be subject to a lower threshold due to the unavailability of EEPs.

a. If the Agency were to explore alternative pathways for entities to demonstrate alignment with the MES, in what ways could an entity meaningfully demonstrate this?

Because many projects are sited in areas with a low population of EEPs, Approved Vendors and Designees could get credit for abiding by the Minimum Equity Standard for working to increase the EEP-eligible population, even if such people cannot yet be hired. One example is Approved Vendors and Designees could conduct workforce training at detention centers in lieu of hiring EEPs, especially when EEPs are not available in the area. These trainings would increase the future EEP-eligible population, but the people would not likely be able to be employed in the same project year that they were trained.

5. Should the Agency create different Minimum Equity Standards for projects in different areas of the state? If so, which areas?

Projects outside of Cook County should be subject to half of the Minimum Equity Standard as projects within Cook County because half of the EEPs are within Cook County.

a. If the Agency were to adopt differing standards for distinct geographic areas, what criteria or factors should the IPA consider in setting those standards?

Catalyze's answer is included in the response to Question 5.