



DEI Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting

Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2026

Meeting Time: 9:30-11:00am

Welcome

Attendees

- Esther Kim
- Tanvi Shah
- Ella Johnson-McGowan
- Chris Warland
- Jessica Wagner
- Linda Larsen
- Chynna Hampton
- Aliza Ramirez
- Brady Briska
- Ky Ajayi
- Denise Moore
- Hector Trello

Review of Norms

Review Agenda

Introductions

- Introduction Slide
- What has recently inspired you in your equity work?
 - Stories of EEPs & EECs that have successfully navigated the sector.
 - Coming up on second grant cycle of job training programs. Inspiring to see the progress and how far we've come.
 - Seeing the CEJA workforce program work expand to Central Illinois and meet with workforce grantees and learn about their interest in the equity goals of CEJA.
 - Connecting with partners in the sector and see that they have the same vision for equity.
 - Feeling uninspired due to administrative issues. There is lack of financing and slow processing timelines for grants.
 - Our work continues despite the lack of follow-through and funding.
 - Supporting EECs navigate PLA requirements coming out of CRGA.
 - Waiting for funding, but able to continue supporting job seekers and contractors through other funding sources. The work continues.

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- The workers on sites is inspiring. Seeing the number of folks on sites and those doing the work.
- Inspired when I talk to people. The people on the ground, the ones doing the work, the staff of these programs trying to do the work.
- In the compliance stage, we're seeing the number of EEPs engaged in employment opportunities.

Updates from Bureau Chief

- Racial Disparity Study
- MES Combined Report Review
- New MES Resources webpage on Equity Portal
- Illinois Shines Mentorship Program
- Equity Learning Series

Topic: How can IPA's resources close gaps in the ecosystem and address evolving needs?

- Financing: What resources or enhancements to resources would help Equity Eligible Contractors (EECs), Small and Emerging Businesses (SEBs) understand financial resources available to them?
 - Committee members identified that slow deployment of pre-development funding remains a challenge for contractors and ways in which the IPA can partner with other agencies and departments to ensure expediency of funding for EECs, SEBs, and other contractors in the clean energy economy.
 - The Equitable Energy Futures grants take 6+ months or even 2 years to access. Doesn't help businesses if can't rely on funds.
 - DCEO is has required steps (GATA) that delay the process, they have to complete them to be good stewards of public funds, and they are understaffed which add to the timing challenges.
 - There is misalignment between what DCEO administrators understand about business operations and documentation and data they require versus what actual business operations are and what documentation and data can be produced.
 - Some EECs expressed that the Advance of Capital (AoC) comes too late in the process. Not helpful to EECs as they apply; however, the IPA can't advance capital until Part 1 stage as a REC contract is needed to be able to advance funds.

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- It is helpful to know where the gap in funding lies so we can share that feedback with funding partners like DCEO, CEJFF, etc. That can be supplementary to AoC.
- Vendor Support: What enhancements to vendor resources in the Illinois Shines and Illinois Solar for All programs would increase inclusion and accessibility of diverse contractors and workforce?
 - Committee members noted the ILSFA AV Manual is great. Lots of details and resources.
 - Committee members cited the following enhancements and corrections to program resources:
 - The ILSFA Savings calculator is producing incorrect results which requires the Approved Vendor to work with the AV manager to edit the disclosure form to match the incorrect calculation in order to be in compliance.
 - The IPA will look into this issue.
 - The following resources are in-progress within the IPA:
 - Video tutorials to connect employers/contractors and EEPs accessing the Equity Portal to other resources such as the DCEO CEJA website for training program information.
 - The IPA is partnering with DCEO by attending their technical assistance sessions to update their grantees on Equity Portal resources.
 - The IPA connects with EEPs through other avenues such as outreach events.
- Collateral: How can collateral for contractors and workforce be improved to better reach diverse audiences?
 - Creating three categories of EECs: A. New trainee working in the sector. B. EEC starting to work in the ecosystem. C. Established EECs that are looking to grow. Resources for each group could be made according to their unique needs.
 - The IPA has discussed this internally to see how we can create different tiers of supports for the different tiers of EECs and will partner with EECs and vendors to better understand different categories that would benefit prospective EECs to enter the market.
 - Having EEC collateral for different stages of EECs. A committee member noted that the Illinois Shines Mentorship Program is outstanding. They get to know the program, get inspired and get connected, but then they join the sector and there isn't much support there.

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- EECs have different capacity to fulfill compliance reports or other programmatic compliance, therefore having a great mentor in the sector is key.
 - DCEO does not let you skim or cherry pick the best individuals for training. We have the barrier reduction fund to help address the needs individuals have to access employment opportunities.
 - Centralizing collateral for the different CEJA ecosystem programs that would allow for the public to know what programs are currently accepting applications or important dates to take note of.
- EEP Supports: What resources can increase connectivity between EEPs and workforce/training programs and employers?
 - Having a feature on the DCEO CEJA website that allowed for someone to directly apply to the training programs.
 - The CEJA map might be a tool that can help with directly accessing training programs since it has links to each programs websites.
 - Flyers for programs that highlight the type of trainings being offered since they are so many now or adding videos to the home page of the CEJA website that can explain the program.
 - Energy Efficiency often gets left out of the conversation but they also have extensive training programs and resources.
 - The IPA DEI team is in the process of creating tutorial videos in partnership with DCEO to help qualified EEPs and training participants navigate each agencies' platforms.
 - The IPA is also exploring a partnership with IDES to expand clean energy job postings on the Equity Portal.
- Other:
 - Increase outreach to contractors that qualify as an EEC. A committee member has interfaced with many contractors don't know that they meet the criteria of an EEC, especially throughout Central and Southern Illinois. There isn't as much awareness outside of the Chicagoland area.
 - Increasing EEPs on Union Rolls: A committee member commented that CEJA workforce hubs are seen as non-union training hubs and those EEPs rarely make it into union halls. How could we get CEJA hubs registered as pre-apprenticeship hubs so they can be included in union rolls? The member asked for the committee's support on this effort they are conducting with ICJC.
 - Another committee member shared a similar observation after discussing with someone running a solar farm in Southern IL who was resistant to hire workforce hub graduates because this member's program is a non-union shop.



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- A committee member mentioned that a recent study showed placements for pre-apprenticeship programs are higher than the workforce hubs. There is a sense of an artificial divide. This member has spoken with DCEO to make edits to the curriculum to align it to pre-apprenticeship curriculum so we can address that perceived divide.
- In Central IL, there is a challenge of who is getting the opportunities in unions.

Future Meeting Topic Generation

Closing

- [Home - Illinois Power Agency Racial Disparity and Availability Study](#)
- Survey will be sent with the meeting minutes