

Department of Energy

DOE Announces \$16 Million to Support Community-Driven Pathways to Clean Energy

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New Initiative Aids Environmental Justice And Fossil Fuel Communities in Developing Plans For Sustained Economic Empowerment, Improved Local Environments

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today launched the Local Energy Action Program (Communities LEAP)—an initiative designed to help environmental justice communities and communities with historical ties to fossil fuel industries take direct control of their clean energy future. The Communities LEAP pilot program provides supportive services valued at up to \$16 million to help communities develop locally-driven energy plans to more effectively leverage public and private sector resources to reduce local air pollution, increase energy resilience, lower utility costs and energy burdens, and create good-paying jobs.

DOE's Communities LEAP reflects the Biden-Harris Administration's goal to assist community-led transitions to a decarbonized economy, and to build a healthier, more equitable, and sustainable future.

“Clean energy is a doorway to a healthier and more prosperous future, but for too long those doors have been closed to many of our nation’s communities,” said **Secretary of Energy Jennifer M. Granholm**. “President Biden charged his administration with taking bold action to tackle the climate crisis and to center that action in equity. By providing unprecedented access to some of the nation’s top experts, DOE’s Communities LEAP initiative is supporting those who have carried the weight of powering our nation to develop their own solutions for ensuring a sustainable future – one that will benefit all Americans.”

The transition to a carbon-free economy lowers local air pollution and energy burdens, and is also poised to bring billions of dollars in continued investments to communities across the country while generating good-paying jobs. In 2019, renewable energy investments in the U.S. **reached \$55 billion** and clean energy jobs paid 25% more than the national median wage – workers in the clean energy earned a **median hourly wage of \$23.89** compared to the national median wage of \$19.14.

Communities LEAP is available to assist to up to 36 low-income communities and energy-burdened communities that are either experiencing environmental justice concerns or direct economic impacts from the shift away from historical reliance on fossil fuels. Communities participating in Communities LEAP will develop an initial roadmap for identifying clean energy economic development pathways or accelerate progress toward existing plans for clean energy development projects.

Communities LEAP participants will receive support jointly offered by five DOE offices to pursue local energy action plans that focus on one or more of the following opportunities:

- **Creating pathways for large-scale clean energy project planning and infrastructure** – Action plans can include design implementation and/or investment strategies for renewable energy projects that meet local environmental, economic, or community priorities and, where possible, quantifies benefits to community (e.g., energy bill savings, reduce pollution, improve energy access, revenue streams). Among other activities, DOE anticipates providing selected communities with an analysis of clean energy planning and development opportunities based on current infrastructure, workforce availability, energy resource potential, utility regulatory structure.

Projects could include technologies such as solar, wind, hydropower, geothermal, hybrid power plants, energy storage, energy efficiency, distributed energy resources, and EV charging stations.

- **Evaluating the ability to use microgrids to increase community resilience** – DOE will provide community partners with analysis and assistance to determine how they can install backup power under grid emergencies to ensure local critical facilities can maintain services for public health and safety and to keep a steady power supply available for local industries, businesses, and economic development zones.
- **Creating job opportunities in fossil fuel communities or those home to heavy industries** – Action plans can evaluate Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) opportunities or develop a plan for energy site reclamation, critical mineral extraction, and/or create an environmental reclamation workforce program to train new or displaced workers that will assist in remediating environmental hazards from coal extraction and/or use.
- **Planning for clean transportation investments** – DOE’s partners will work with community stakeholders to assess the local transportation system, identify community transportation needs, and determine plan objectives (e.g., decarbonization, air quality improvement, community access to transportation, workforce development, increase electric vehicle charging availability, assess grid capacity for transportation electrification).
- **Improving building energy efficiency** – DOE’s technical assistance providers will work with community stakeholders to assess the current building stock and power supply, identify building-related load management needs and opportunities for energy and cost savings, and determine additional community priorities such as reducing energy bills for residents and businesses, increasing building and community resilience and sustainability, improving the health of indoor environments, and developing new workforce opportunities.
- **Enhancing investments in the nation’s clean energy supply chain and improving the energy performance and reducing the cost of industrial manufacturing** – Selected communities can receive assistance to engage with existing local manufacturing facilities on energy performance to lower emissions and reduce waste; identify how local strengths – such as natural

resources or existing manufacturing infrastructure or capabilities – could play a role in manufacturing new clean energy technologies

The pilot will also prioritize connections to other agencies doing work to support place-based, sustainable economic development.

Participating DOE offices include the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE), Electricity (OE), Policy (OP), Indian Energy (IE), Fossil Energy and Carbon Management (FECM), and Economic Impact and Diversity (ED).

The initial Opportunity Announcement will be released September 15th, coinciding with the opening of the comment period. The comment period closes on October 12th. Registration opens and a final Opportunity Announcement will be issued on October 25th. Applications are due December 17th. Selections are expected to be announced in March 2022.

[Learn more](#) about this initiative, upcoming informational webinars, and how to apply.

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