



Maine's Application to the State-Based Home Energy Efficiency Contractor Training Grants Program

Draft Program Framework for Public Comment

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Deadline for Comments: January 24, 2024

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Summary

The Governor's Energy Office (GEO) intends to apply on behalf of the State of Maine for \$1.3 million in formula funding from the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of State and Community Energy Programs' State-Based Home Energy Efficiency Contractor Training Grants Program (TREC). This program was established by Section 50123 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

The TREC program is an opportunity to prepare individuals for a growing number of energy efficiency jobs in Maine. The TREC program focuses on in-demand energy efficiency professions, including but not limited to heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) mechanics, installers, and technicians, weatherization installers and technicians, energy auditors, insulation workers, carpenters, electricians, and plumbers and pipefitters. The goals of DOE's TREC program include:

- 1) Reduce the cost of training contractor employees including, but not limited to, subsidizing available training, testing and certifications
- 2) Provide testing and certifications for contractors to install home energy efficiency and electrification technologies and deliver residential energy efficiency and electrification improvements.
- 3) Partner with nonprofit organizations to develop and implement a State sponsored workforce program that attracts and trains a diverse set of local workers to deliver the influx of new federally funded energy efficiency and electrification programs.

How to Submit Comments

This Draft Program Framework outlines the potential content of GEO's application and provides an opportunity for interested stakeholders to offer input. Please submit comments regarding the content of this draft, particularly in response to questions identified throughout this document. Additional comments related to Maine's application to the TREC program are also encouraged. GEO may modify the final application contents from what is described in this draft and may make changes based on feedback received from interested stakeholders.

Submit comments via email to tagwongo.obomsawin@maine.gov **no later than January 24, 2024**. GEO also invites letters of support from impacted communities and organizations. If your organization is willing to provide or sign a letter of support, please indicate so in your email.

An Opportunity for Maine

As part of Maine's comprehensive climate action plan, [Maine Won't Wait](#), Governor Mills set several key goals related to energy efficiency, including: 1) grow clean energy jobs to 30,000 by 2030, 2) install 175,000 additional heat pumps by 2027, and 3) weatherize 17,500 homes and double the pace of weatherization by 2025.

To meet those goals, Maine must grow its energy efficiency workforce. Currently, energy efficiency jobs comprise more than half of all clean energy employment in the state, with most being related to HVAC installation and repair. Energy efficiency firms in Maine are generally small businesses with less than twenty employees, and over 70% operate as part of the construction sector.¹ According to the *2022 Maine Clean Energy Workforce Analysis Report* developed by BW Research Partnership, nine out of ten surveyed clean energy employers reported that hiring was somewhat or very difficult, and that a small applicant pool was the biggest challenge, particularly for weatherization and heat pump installation positions.²

Proposed Concepts:

GEO proposes to invest in innovative workforce development strategies to grow the talent pipeline of energy efficiency workers and support existing contractors and employees. Specifically, GEO is considering one or more of the following project concepts:

- 1) Innovative marketing, recruitment, and retention strategies to increase and diversify enrollment in existing energy efficiency workforce training programs.
- 2) New or expanded short-term training, pre-apprenticeship, and/or internship programs that reduce barriers faced by disadvantaged and underrepresented communities.
- 3) Training and upskilling opportunities for energy efficiency contractors and employees.

GEO is working to ensure Maine's application will align with the goals established by *Maine Won't Wait*, serve disadvantaged and underserved communities, and meet [federal Justice 40 requirements](#). Additional information about GEO's proposed program concepts is included below.

¹ [e4thefuture 2023 Maine Fact Sheet](#)

² [BW Research Partnership, 2022 Maine Clean Energy Workforce Analysis Report](#)

Concept 1: Innovative marketing, recruitment and retention strategies to increase and diversify enrollment in existing energy efficiency workforce training programs.

Maine’s education and training institutions offer a range of workforce training programs and pre-apprenticeships related to energy efficiency jobs; however, information can be challenging to find, and there may be limited public awareness of the opportunities.

According to the *2022 Maine Clean Energy Workforce Analysis Report*, “potential workers are mostly unaware of the types of clean energy jobs or positions that are available and where to find clean energy job postings or related training and education.”³ Additional resources for marketing and recruitment could raise awareness of existing training programs and help recruit a larger and more diverse applicant pool.

Additionally, retention of trainees can be challenging. Deploying new strategies such as earn as you learn models, additional academic support such as tutoring, and providing transportation to reduce barriers may help with retention.

This concept would benefit new and prospective energy efficiency workers by ensuring equitable access to existing training programs. Target occupations may include HVAC installers and technicians, weatherization technicians, insulation workers, or other in-demand occupations based on stakeholder feedback. Funding for marketing, recruitment, and retention tools and strategies may be deployed through competitive grants to training and education institutions, non-profits, or other qualified entities.

³ BW Research Partnership, [2022 Maine Clean Energy Workforce Analysis Report](#)

The GEO may propose one or multiple project concepts and invites specific comments from stakeholders regarding whether one concept should be preferred, or whether multiple should be proposed. The GEO may modify the final application contents from what is described in this Draft Program Framework, including based on feedback received from interested stakeholders.

Concept 2: New or expanded short-term training, pre-apprenticeship or internship programs that reduce barriers faced by disadvantaged communities and underrepresented groups.

Individuals from disadvantaged or underrepresented communities can face barriers to participation in education and training programs. Customized programs that build in supports such as contextualized curricula, access to wrap around services such as transportation or childcare, and strong employer partnerships can increase participant enrollment and success. As part of a strategy to scale training opportunities, programs could also develop additional incentives or train the trainer programs to increase the number of instructors for energy efficiency training programs.

Outside of the classroom, paid internship or practicum opportunities can provide critical hands-on experience for new energy efficiency workers. Additionally, they provide meaningful networking opportunities and connections with employers that can lead to long term employment. Paid work experiences can also offset the financial risks for employers to expand their workforce. Programs may include specific actions to increase representation among the clean energy and energy efficiency workforce by engaging with and supporting disadvantaged and underrepresented populations.

This concept would benefit new and potential energy efficiency workers by investing in training, education and internship opportunities to serve disadvantaged and underrepresented populations in areas with high demand for workers. Target occupations may include HVAC installers and technicians, weatherization technicians, insulation workers, or other in-demand occupations based on stakeholder feedback. Funding for training and internship programs may be deployed through competitive grants to training and education providers and other qualified entities.

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Concept 3: Training and upskilling opportunities for energy efficiency contractors and employees.

There is an unequal distribution of energy efficiency contractors across Maine and a low density of contractors serving rural communities. Two-thirds of Maine’s energy efficiency workforce is located in the metropolitan areas of Bangor, Lewiston-Auburn, and Portland-South Portland, with nearly half (48%) located in the Portland-South Portland area alone.⁴ Additionally, low-income households, especially rural low-income households, often pay a higher percentage of their income to meet their home energy needs.

New and expanded training opportunities to serve the existing workforce may help increase the statewide availability of energy efficiency contractors, increase familiarity with advanced energy efficiency technologies, and ensure that contractors are well-positioned to deliver state and federal rebates and incentives, particularly for low-income households. Trainings may include business startup and administration, weatherization and energy efficiency upgrades and advanced technologies, and low and moderate-income rebate and incentive programs.

This concept would benefit existing energy efficiency workers by providing new short-term training and upskilling opportunities, including on-demand trainings. Target occupations may include HVAC installers and technicians, weatherization technicians, insulation workers, or other in-demand occupations based on stakeholder feedback. Funding for training development and delivery may be deployed through one or more competitive grants to training and education providers and other qualified entities.

⁴ [e4thefuture 2023 Maine Fact Sheet](#)

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