

2025-01-15 SCEP Career Skills Training OSS Transcript

January 15, 2025, 8:00PM

Christi Pezzone 0:14

Good afternoon, everybody.

We're going to give everyone a couple of minutes to come in from the lobby before we get started. So if you can just hold on for a couple of seconds, we'll get going here shortly.

It looks like we have most of the people in from the lobby. We'll go ahead and get started. So we can get into the main part of this, the briefing, and the Q&A.

I'd like to welcome everybody to the objective strategic session for the Office of State and Community Energy Programs Career Skills Training Program.

My name is Christy Pezzone. I am the Deputy Director here at ENERGWEX, and I wanted to go over a couple of notes with everyone before we get started.

We are recording this OSS. The recording and the transcript will be available on the opportunity page tomorrow. We are monitoring for AI note-taking bots and will remove them per DOE policy, so please review and adjust any of your settings proactively. This is an information session, and there will be time to ask questions after a quick briefing from the Program Office on CST.

We ask that you please submit all questions in Slido. You can either click on the link, go to slido.com, or you can scan that QR code. All questions will be read out loud from Slido after the briefing, and then we will have time to respond. You'll also have an opportunity to upvote any questions you see that you're interested in hearing the response to. The Q&A will be posted as well once DOE has time to review, so that will be sometime next week.

We also ask that you reserve the chat for any technical issues. We will not be answering any questions that are posted in chat; we will only be answering questions in Slido and will reserve the use of chat for any helpful links.

I wanted to go over a few upcoming key dates. We do have an office hour scheduled for February 5th at 3:00 PM Eastern Time. That will be another opportunity to ask questions. This will be the final webinar before the opportunity closes, and applications close at 3:00 PM Eastern Time on March 6th. If you are having any application issues, please reach out to info@energywerx.org , and we will be happy to help you with those.

Moving on to the overview portion of the OSS, I'm turning this over to Mary MacPherson from SCEPS Workforce Training Program Office, Mary.

MacPherson, Mary 4:16

Thanks, Christy.

Thanks, everyone, for joining this session. We're really excited about your interest in the Career Skills Training Partnership Intermediary Agreement.

So today I'm going to start by giving an overview of DOE's Office of State and Community Energy Programs, as well as the Career Skills Training Program. We'll dive into eligibility requirements, some tips for a strong application, the application process, and wrap up with helpful links, a timeline, and time for Q&A.

The Office of State and Community Energy Programs, also known as SCEP, has several strategic priorities. Our mission is to partner with state, local, and tribal governments, as well as other community partners, to deploy clean energy funds and catalyze clean energy job creation through equitable clean energy investments. SCEP does this by managing a portfolio of \$16 billion in formula and competitive funds for those key partners I mentioned. We distribute these funds across a few strategic priorities that I've listed on the screen, with the overarching goals of reducing energy costs, catalyzing local economic development, and deploying clean energy solutions across the United States.

The Career Skills Training Program, which we also refer to as CST, was authorized through the bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Section 40513. The goal of the CST program is to strengthen partnerships between industry and labor organizations to provide both classroom and on-the-job training around building energy efficiency technologies. The bipartisan Infrastructure Law authorized \$10 million for this program, and this Partnership Intermediary Agreement will issue about \$6.8 million in awards.

To expand upon the Career Skills Training PIA opportunity, we are making these funds available as part of a relatively new funding mechanism at DOE called Partnership Intermediary Agreements, designed to streamline the process for both DOE and applicants for DOE funding. The CST awards will range from about \$400,000 to \$1.1 million to train and certify workers to install building energy efficiency technologies. However, there is a 50% cost share requirement as part of this program, which we'll dive into in greater detail shortly.

DOE and ENERGYWERX will provide funding for nonprofit partnerships between one industry partner and one labor partner. The goal of this program is to deliver a more equitable clean energy future while also providing workforce development program participants with industry-recognized credentials and skills to pursue careers in clean energy.

Many of you might be wondering about the 50% cost share requirement. We require that applicants propose at least a 50% cost share of the total project cost, and this must come from non-federal funding sources. However, it can come from a variety of sources like businesses, labor, community-based partners, philanthropic organizations, or others. All sources of cost share are considered part of total project costs, and the cost share dollars will be scrutinized under the same federal regulations as the federal dollars. The lead partner is solely responsible for managing cost share contributions by the project team and enforcing the cost share obligation assumed by project team members in subawards or related agreements. Additionally, cost share may be provided in the form of cash, cash equivalents, or in-kind contributions, offering some flexibility around how applicants provide their cost share.

The Career Skills Training Program has a unique set of eligible entities. This visual helps break down the partnership structure that we are envisioning. You can see here that we have a variety of lead performers. DOE can issue the award primarily to the industry organization or the labor organization, but the applicants must choose one lead performer for DOE to work with. Applicants can also work with a variety of additional partners, which we have depicted in green on the right side of the screen.

To delve deeper into the organizations and entities in that graphic: industry organizations can be public or private employers, industry or trade associations, or other industry organizations related to energy efficiency and renewable energy. Labor organizations, which are the other required partner, could include unions, labor management organizations, joint labor management training programs, or worker centers and organizations. The Career Skills Training Program also allows for a variety of optional partners, depicted in green in this box, but these are not required. These optional partners could include, but are not limited to, workforce investment boards, community-based organizations, qualified service and conservation corps, educational institutions, small businesses, cooperatives, state and local veterans agencies, or veterans service organizations.

As part of the Career Skills Training PIA, we have offered two parallel work streams, and we are asking all applicants to select one work stream to apply for. The first work stream is enhancing existing training pathways. Through this work stream, projects will receive federal funding to expand on existing occupations. Federal funds will go to expanding existing training programs to help them train around new occupations, career tracks, or pathways that they're not currently serving. The second work stream on enhancing existing energy efficiency career skills will also provide funding to expand existing training programs to enhance them, offering training around different and new energy efficiency field practices, technology We have a few eligibility requirements outlined here. The first and most important is that applicants have equal participation between industry and labor organizations. We are also asking for letters of commitment when you submit your application. The lead performer must submit at least one letter of commitment from the industry or labor organization with which they are partnering, as

well as one letter of commitment from each additional proposed partner. Potential performers must provide written assurance of their A few more eligibility requirements: nonprofit partnerships must demonstrate the following qualifications. They must have experience implementing and operating worker skills training and education programs. Applicants must be able to identify and involve certain target populations of individuals who would benefit from these training programs and be actively involved in training around energy efficiency and renewable energy. Thirdly, applicants must have a plan to help individuals achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Now I will explore the criteria that DOE will use to evaluate applications. We've chosen three categories of evaluation criteria. The first is technical merit, which we will weigh at 40% of the score we give to every application. As part of the technical merit criterion, applicants must align with the work stream objectives of either work stream one or two. Applications must articulate the occupational skills needed and really map out the current supply of qualified workers against the projected demand for qualified energy efficiency workers. Applications must also include strong outreach, training, and employment placement plans.

The second evaluation criterion is project implementation, which DOE also weighs at 40%. As part of this criterion, we are asking applicants to describe their proposed partnership as well as their project team and that team's experience with clean energy job training. We want to see the processes you plan to use for managing each component of your training program, along with a clear, detailed, timely, and reasonable work plan and budget.

The third and final criterion that DOE will use to evaluate applications is community benefits, which will constitute 20% of your overall application score. As part of this criterion, we are looking for a plan to connect all participants with high-quality jobs. It's important that training leads to job placement, particularly in high-quality jobs. DOE will also look for a plan to recruit and engage participants from disadvantaged communities and those facing barriers to employment. We want to see plans to partner with organizations located in or working with disadvantaged communities

Christi Pezzone 20:05

Perfect. Thank you, Mary.

We're going to give Kristin a quick second to pull up the Slido. Please use the link in the chat to ask any questions. We will not be answering any questions that are asked in Slido. That should be reserved for any technical issues, and remember that the video recording. The slides and the transcript we posted on the opportunity page by tomorrow.

And I will turn it back over to Kristin.

Kristin Davis 20:32

Do applicants need to secure industry or labor partners by the time they apply?

MacPherson, Mary 20:43

Yes, applicants must submit a letter of commitment from their required industry or labor partner, as well as any proposed partners at the time that they apply.

Kristin Davis 20:58

Does the PIA require a cost share?

MacPherson, Mary 21:02

Yes, performers must provide a 50% cost share from non federal sources. Performers must also provide written assurance of their proposed cost share contributions. That includes 1. A letter of commitment from each entity providing cost share and 2. The amount that they are committing to the project.

Kristin Davis 21:27

Can a non-profit organization apply as a lead performer?

MacPherson, Mary 21:33

We really encourage folks to refer to the eligibility section of the opportunity announcement, DOE or ENERGYWERX will not make eligibility determinations for potential applicants prior to the date on which applications must be submitted. The decision on whether to apply in response to this opportunity lie solely with the participant.

Kristin Davis 21:59

Does the award amount include the cost share or is the cost share in addition to the award amount (400,000 to 1.1 million)?

MacPherson, Mary 22:08

The cost share is in addition to the award amount. DOE expects to issue awards in the amount of 400,000 to 1.1 million and we would expect, as an example, someone is selected for a \$400,000 award, we would then expect that selectee or performer to also have \$400,000 from another non-federal source.

Kristin Davis 22:37

Can you define a non-profit partnership?

MacPherson, Mary 22:41

It's a partnership between an industry and a labor organization.

I think what's most important to the DOE is that the entities in the partnership meet our requirements and there's one industry and one labor organization, but the nature of the partnership itself, I don't have a clearer definition around what makes it non-profit, but if you have clarifying questions, we welcome them.

Kristin Davis 23:19

If the applicant is a joint labor management training program, are they required to provide written commitments from a Labor partner and an employer partner? Yes.

When do you think the selections will be announced?

MacPherson, Mary 23:38

In late April of 2025.

Kristin Davis 23:43

Are the programs that train individuals in solar installation considered an energy efficiency training program? And are you interested in supporting such programs?

MacPherson, Mary 23:53

Likely not, but we would.

I'd like to consult with my team on this before we give a final answer.

I would say experience delivering renewable energy programs could help an entity become eligible to apply for this, but we are prioritizing funding for energy efficiency training rather than solar.

We will provide a more thorough answer though, shortly.

Kristin Davis 24:20

If an organization has affiliates that are independent entities that deliver their own training programs, are multiple affiliates eligible to apply?

MacPherson, Mary 24:30

I will have to consult with my team and get back to whoever posed this question in the next few days, early next week, likely.

Kristin Davis 24:56

Can you provide examples of organizations that fall under the Labor Organization category?

MacPherson, Mary 25:02

Labor unions, labor management organizations and joint labor management training

programs, as well as worker centres and organizations. I don't think I'm at liberty to call out names of specific labor organizations externally.

Kristin Davis 25:25

Are there any restrictions on the use of funds?

MacPherson, Mary 25:29

I would encourage folks to look at the opportunity announcement for those guidelines, and I think DOE would want more information on the types of restrictions you're wondering about in order to give a more accurate and specific answer.

Kristin Davis 25:46

Are support services and allowable expense?

MacPherson, Mary 25:50

I would love to consult with my team on this one as well. We have allowed support services for other DOE workforce programs, but we kind of make that determination on a program by program basis. So I'll get back to the questionnaire on this one.

Kristin Davis 26:11

Can applicants also be a community organization that includes a collaboration between academic or profit and nonprofit entities?

MacPherson, Mary 26:23

I don't think I'm going to address more eligibility questions right now.

Kristin Davis 26:32

For the cost share portion, can we leverage funds from a different grant?

MacPherson, Mary 26:37

Yes. What's key though, is that that grant is not from a federal source, but otherwise you can leverage funds from a different grant, a non-federal grant.

Kristin Davis 26:50

One slide stated that federal sources cannot be used as a match, and the same slide later stated sources can include federal, state and local funds. Please clarify.

MacPherson, Mary 27:01

Federal sources cannot be used as a match.

Kristin Davis 27:09

Is funding available for training facility expansion as in HVAC training building addition?

MacPherson, Mary 27:15

Potentially. That would probably need to go through a review under the national Environmental Policy Act, and we'd have to work with our NEPA team to confirm what's allowable. We'll get a more formal answer to that question next week as well.

Kristin Davis 27:35

Is there a specific age bracket for this program?

MacPherson, Mary 27:38

No, there's no age bracket.

Kristin Davis 27:42

Is curriculum development or curriculum revision an allowable cost?

MacPherson, Mary 27:48

I will get back to folks on this question next week. I think likely yes. I just want to confirm with our General counsel.

Kristin Davis 27:58

Can you define "Self-sufficiency"?

MacPherson, Mary 28:02

I will get back to folks on this question as well.

Kristin Davis 28:08

Can the program being applied for be a new initiative or does it have to be a job training program that the lead already has experience with?

MacPherson, Mary 28:17

It must be a job training program that the lead already has experience with.

Kristin Davis 28:27

Is the purchase of new training equipment allowable under the terms of the grant?

MacPherson, Mary 28:33

I will get back to folks on that one. I think that's kind of aligned with the training facility expansion question.

Kristin Davis 28:44

Can a training program be considered if they are an energy efficiency training program?

MacPherson, Mary 28:48

Yes.

Kristin Davis 28:52

**Can you please clarify the cost share again.
Is it 100%?**

MacPherson, Mary 29:00

If you get a \$400,000 award, you need to provide \$200,000 in cost match.
I'm going to double check with my GC on that to be absolutely crystal clear.

Kristin Davis 29:21

You said that the application should only take a couple of hours. Did you mean the submission process or grant writing time?

MacPherson, Mary 29:30

I think maybe it is going to take more than a couple of hours on your application just to be forthright. That is on the grant writing time, the submission and the upload process should be very quick, under a couple of hours, but I think it will take more than two hours to develop your answers to our questions.

Kristin Davis 29:56

How long is the grant period?

MacPherson, Mary 29:59

The grant period lasts from around June 2025 through April of 2028, so just under three years.

Kristin Davis 30:14

What are the reporting requirements for sub-awardees and contractors on a project?

MacPherson, Mary 30:20

I will follow up with folks on that question next week.

Kristin Davis 30:27

Would a non-profit that places newly graduated students in clean energy and conservation organizations fall under the requirements for this opportunity?

MacPherson, Mary 30:36

I can't make that determination at this time.

Kristin Davis 30:44

For the questions that you will need to get back to us on, how we get to those answers?

MacPherson, Mary 30:50

Great question.

They will be on the career skills training announcement page.

Christi Pezzone 30:55

They will be uploaded to the opportunity website next week. So you can just keep checking back. I would check early next week, and if they're not there, then go ahead and check back around the middle of next week. They should be there within the next seven days or so.

Kristin Davis 31:12

Is adding or augmenting to an existing training program, more advanced energy assessment skill training, the type of skills training targeted by this grant?

MacPherson, Mary 31:38

Yes, that sounds right.

Kristin Davis 31:44

Do you waive indirect costs based on a federally negotiated indirect rate count as cost match?

MacPherson, Mary 31:53

I will talk to general counsel about that one.

Kristin Davis 31:58

If an apprenticeship program that has a built in on the job training component, is that sufficient to meet the job placement expectations of the grant?

MacPherson, Mary 32:08

I think likely yes.

Kristin Davis 32:15

Are all states incorporated into the grant announcement?

MacPherson, Mary 32:20

So states are not eligible to apply for this program, but.

Eligible industry labor partnerships in any state or territory could apply to this program.

Kristin Davis 32:38

Would an HVAC training program that includes building efficiency elements and heat pump installation elements qualify for consideration?

MacPherson, Mary 32:46

Yes.

Kristin Davis 32:51

Can a program period that the grant pays for be less than three years?

Could it be 1.5 years?

MacPherson, Mary 32:59

Christi, do you have thoughts on this one?

Christi Pezzone 33:03

I think that's something that we'll have to look into and get back to you. If you can propose and submit an application for whatever you want and then it's up to DOE to review the application and decide if it is something that they're willing to allow.

Kristin Davis 33:25

Would training associated with building controls qualify for consideration?

MacPherson, Mary 33:31

Possibly I'll need to talk to general counsel about this one.

What's tricky with the career Skills Training program is that the statute requires the training to focus on the installation of building energy efficiency measures, and it's unclear if that includes more building operation and maintenance type training.

And so that's why I'm hesitant to say yes right now, but we'll get back to that person next week.

Kristin Davis 34:00

What are the reporting requirements for this grant?

MacPherson, Mary 34:05

We will get back to you on that one as well.

Christi Pezzone 34:08

So the reporting requirements in the specifics to the work will all be outlined in the statement of effort that will be part of the business-to-business agreement that would be signed with ENERGYWERX and that's something that will be negotiated after Grant award.

Kristin Davis 34:27

If we'd like to leverage other grant funds, the timeline for these would have to overlap with the grant period for this grant, correct?

MacPherson, Mary 34:35

Yes, I believe so.

We'll confirm that with General Counsel as well.

Kristin Davis 34:43

Any examples of gift in kind please?

MacPherson, Mary 34:47

I don't have those right now.
But we'll get back to folks.

Kristin Davis 34:53

If a weatherization program has a training program that a new weatherization grantee just got, can they change the training program with this grant?

MacPherson, Mary 35:21

So if the weatherization program training already exists, and maybe you're working with a new grantee on an existing program, I think you should be able to use career skills training programs to expand that existing program.

Kristin Davis 35:48

What about a credential to 3D print homes that are more energy efficient than traditional stick built homes? Do we define the energy work in our grant app?

MacPherson, Mary 35:59

This is another question for General counsel because it's not exactly the installation of building energy efficiency measures, but we wouldn't. We would need you to define the energy work in your grant application.

Christi Pezzone 36:15

So real quick, while we're waiting to see if any other questions come in, I wanted to point out that the B2B agreement that you signed with ENERGYWERX is from a fixed fee.

Christi Pezzone 36:27

How that works is that our invoicing is results based. So the invoicing occurs in arrears. There will be specific reporting documentation, whether that be reports or holding

events etc, that have to be uploaded in support of your invoice that you submit. But no time or personnel reporting, we're not looking at itemized expenses.

We're not looking at travel. No indirect costs or anything like that. So it's a fixed fee that is being awarded. So, take that into consideration when you're doing your application.

And then we'll give it a couple more seconds to see if anybody has any other questions.

Any of the questions that were not answered here today, the DOE will go back and work with GC and get those answers resolved.

And we will have those posted on the opportunity page next week. If you have any. Questions that you'd like to have answered that you think of after today that you come up with later after you've gotten into the application, please feel free to reach out to Info@energywerx.org, if you have any questions.

Again, we have the upcoming office hours happening on February 5th at 3:00 PM Eastern Time and applications are due on March 6th at 3:00 PM Eastern Time, and I see that we have another question, so I'll turn it back over to Kristin.

Kristin Davis 38:00

Did you say all parties need to contribute to the cost share, or can that only be the lead?

MacPherson, Mary 38:07

That can only be the lead. That's allowable, but the lead is the one who manages the cost share, whether they are the only one providing it or collecting it from others.

Christi Pezzone 38:23

OK. And I'll just give it a couple more seconds to see if anybody has any last minute questions.

I did want to thank everybody for their time here today.

Thank you, Mary and her team for being here and as always, thank you to the ENERGYWERX team for your support for this event.

No other questions are coming in, so remember the recording will be posted by tomorrow along with the transcript and the slides. You'll be able to access all of the helpful links there.

We'll look to see if you have any other questions for us and we'll get the Q&A will answers for the questions posted next week, as soon as we have those, and we hope that everyone has a great rest of your week.

Thank you all so much.

MacPherson, Mary 39:12

Thanks everyone.