

Guidance on BPRA Training and Retraining Funds

In 2023, the New York State Budget granted greater responsibilities to the New York Power Authority (NYPA) to ensure the state meets its legally-mandated renewable energy goals. The budget specified that new projects built by NYPA must have gold standard labor provisions, including project labor agreements and prevailing wage requirements, which would also apply to contractors and subcontractors.

In order to ensure there is a well-trained workforce to carry out these projects, NYPA is also empowered to distribute \$25 million per year in training and retraining funds. We were excited to see these funds included in the New York State budget, and we encourage NYPA to think expansively about how funds can be used to build a robust, equitable clean energy economy in the state. Below are a few recommendations we urge NYPA to consider as they structure this new program.

Dedicate training funds for wraparound services for pre-apprentices and apprentices

Registered apprenticeship programs are a proven pathway into high-quality jobs for New Yorkers, but structural barriers exist that make it difficult for underserved populations to access training opportunities. Pre-apprenticeship is a key tool to expanding opportunities, and many successful programs provide wraparound services, such as childcare funds, stipends, and transportation, that allow participants to succeed. We encourage NYPA to dedicate funds to wraparound services that pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs can use to best help their targeted populations succeed. Illinois' Barrier Reduction Fund (BRF), passed as part of the state's Climate & Equitable Jobs Act, provides a useful model. For all funds dedicated to registered apprenticeships, we encourage NYPA to prioritize collaboration with joint labor-management programs typically found in the unionized building and construction trades.

Prioritize allocating funds to match projected construction timelines

To maximize effectiveness, the training opportunities NYPA funds should lead directly to high-quality employment opportunities. In order to make this happen, NYPA can coordinate directly with pre-apprenticeship programs and leaders from building and construction trades unions to create a multi-year plan forecasting clean energy projects and projected labor demand. Such planning would help ensure a well-trained, easily dispatchable workforce over the next several years.

A reliable pipeline of projects would also give registered apprenticeship coordinators the confidence needed to accept larger classes and partner with pre-apprenticeship programs and community organizations on recruitment. With a longer projected runway to train the new clean energy workforce, parties would be able to formulate recruitment

strategies to target frontline and underrepresented communities, in line with the larger goals of the Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act.

Allow for flexibility and worker voice in program design for funded projects

There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to effective workforce development. In the construction industry, organized labor is heavily involved in funding and administering training through joint labor-management programs. In other relevant industries, such as utilities, management is typically responsible for training its employees. NYPA should invest in a range of diverse training models with a minimum of red tape. NYPA can also explore partnering with organized labor and other stakeholders to co-create rigorous joint labor-management training infrastructure in places where it does not currently exist.

The clean energy buildout also provides an opportunity to institutionalize worker voice in training programs. For example, NYPA can prioritize funding training programs that incorporate worker voice and trade union representation in program design. In utilities and other industries where currently-operating plants will be phased out, workforce funds should provide job transition training and cost of living stipends for the existing workforce for the duration of that training.