**2023 Inflation Reduction Act Climate-Ready Workforce for Coastal States and Territories Competition**

**NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-2007783**

**Notice of Request for Information**

**December 20, 2023**

**Background**

The Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) is developing a grant application to receive federal funding through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Climate-Ready Workforce for Coastal States and Territories Competition. Connecticut is eligible to participate as a coastal state per 16 U.S.C. § 1453(4).

The goal of this Request for Information (RFI) is to identify the in-demand and emerging climate resilience skills needs of employers; potential strategic partners, including community-based organizations and employers; job placement or promotion commitments from potential employers; and other funding or investments that can be leveraged. OWS is seeking this information through written comments. Submissions will inform the RFI but are not a guarantee of funding or inclusion within the program. We expect to follow-up with potential partners following our review of submissions by January 22, 2024.

The grant activities are not limited to coastal communities within the state. The goal of this grant is to “prepare and place workers in good jobs that enhance climate resilience and will advance environmental justice.” This grant defines “**good jobs**” as defined by the “Departments of Labor and Commerce Good Jobs Principles, whereby “good jobs” address benefits; diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; empowerment and representation; job security and conditions; and pay, among other factors” with additional details available at [DOL’s website](https://www.dol.gov/general/good-jobs/principles#:~:text=Organizational%20Culture%3A%20All%20workers%20belong,fair%2C%20transparent%2C%20and%20equitable).

This grant opportunity describes climate-informed skills that “enhance climate resilience”:

1. Apply equity-centered climate resilience principles such as the following:
   1. Articulate historical precedents leading to differential exposure of people to climate-related hazards.
   2. Include diverse voices in delivering climate resilience priorities.
   3. Establish community consent and support for climate resilience priorities, including how to identify impacts of greatest concern before, during, and/or after a climate-related event.
2. Reduce exposure, vulnerability, and risk to climate-related impacts, including but not limited to:
   1. Apply best available science and knowledge, such as projections of climate risk.
   2. Evaluate potential climate-related impacts so that the return on investment of one project may be evaluated relative to that of another.
   3. Measure initial conditions, as well as improvements to climate resilience.
   4. Evaluate and measure actions to enhance climate resilience, taking into consideration multiple value systems to ensure long-term sustainability. Measures may include, but are not limited to, monetary value, community values, continuity of operations, supply chain reliability, business functions, and ecosystem services.
   5. Develop funding and finance plans for resilience projects that include all phases of implementation and project sustainability.
3. Design, build, operate, maintain, and/or improve the infrastructure and systems (including nature-based systems) needed to reduce climate-related vulnerability and/or risk to people, assets, services, resources, ecosystems, or other attributes valued by individuals, businesses, communities, and/or governments.
4. Other relevant skills.
   1. The applicant must demonstrate that “other relevant skills” are necessary to complete climate resilience work that may be missing in the applicant’s workforce.
   2. Such skills may be defined by climate-resilience plans, employers, and resilience experts.

OWS expects to apply for the following two activities: Program design (up to $2 million) and program development (up to $8 million). The grant does not include costs for salaries for participants after they receive training and depends on employer commitments.

NOAA expects the results from this opportunity to directly support the actions from the [U.S. Ocean Climate Action Plan](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Ocean-Climate-Action-Plan_Final.pdf), including, but not limited to:

* Promote coastal community resilience strategies that are adaptive, equitable, and based on best practices.
* Support transformational resilience investments in coastal habitat restoration, conservation and in coastal community resilience.
* Advance evaluation and adoption of nature-based solutions, such as living shorelines, to build resilience against climate-driven coastal hazards.
* Reduce climate threats and improve the resiliency of climate-vulnerable protected species, including marine mammals.

This opportunity advances the President’s Justice40 initiative, established by EO 14008, which set a goal of 40% of certain federal investments to go to disadvantaged communities or “Justice 40” communities. These communities are identified on the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, created by the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Many of these communities also overlap with the state-designated environmental justice communities as defined by CT General Statutes (CGS) Sec. 22a-20a, which includes certain census block groups, and distressed municipalities as defined by CT General Statutes Sec. 32-9p. Our partners at the Office of Policy and Management have prepared a [map viewer](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/eca1509b3e324cd99e1359ff65a04e20/) that demonstrates the federal disadvantaged communities and the state environmental justice communities. NOAA encourages applicants to recruit workers with barriers to the labor market, including historically underserved and under-resourced communities and individuals (as defined by [EO 13985](http://ttps://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government)) including, but not limited to, communities of color; women; people with disabilities; others facing employment barriers; disconnected youth, such as individuals in their late teens to mid-twenties with limited education, experiencing social exclusion, with lack of work experience, and/or with few opportunities to develop mentors and valuable work connections; individuals in recovery; individuals with criminal records including justice-impacted and reentry participants; those participating in the public benefits programs; and veterans and military spouses.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Below you will find the following sections: General Questions, Questions for Potential Strategic Partners, Questions for Academic or Training Partners and/or Climate Service Practitioners,and Questions for Potential Employers. Please complete the General Questions then as many questions as possible in the appropriate section that apply to your organization’s role. Information collected as part of this RFI may be used in the state of Connecticut’s application.

The deadline to submit your response to this RFI is **January 11, 2024, at 5 p.m. ET.** You must email your response to [allie.mulrooney@ct.gov](mailto:allie.mulrooney@ct.gov) as a Microsoft Word (.docx) attachment. Attachments larger than 25MB should be compressed, or zipped, to ensure message delivery. Only electronic responses will be accepted. Please identify your answers by responding to a specific question or topic, if applicable.

**General Questions for ALL:**

1. What type of entity do you represent (e.g., manufacturer, developer, academic institution, community-based organization, labor union, etc.)?
2. Please describe your organization’s work and/or mission.
3. In what cities and states does your organization currently operate or expect to operate?
4. We have conducted some preliminary outreach to government, environmental, and climate service providers, which identified the following types of jobs, job responsibilities, and related skills that could serve Connecticut. Please review the attachment at the end of the RFI for additions and omissions. This list is not a guarantee of inclusion in the final program and is meant for discussion purposes only.

**Questions for STRATEGIC PARTNERS (e.g., business alliance, training organization, workforce boards, labor unions, community organizations)**

1. What is your, or your organization’s, experience with working with or serving historically underserved populations, including but not limited to:
   1. Communities of color, including: Black, Latino, Indigenous and/or Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and other person of color
   2. Women
   3. Disconnected youth
   4. Members of religious minorities
   5. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons
   6. Veterans and/or military spouses
   7. Persons with disabilities
   8. Persons in recovery
   9. Persons with past criminal records including justice-impacted and reentry participants
   10. Persons who live in rural areas
   11. Persons adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality
2. What climate change impacts are you seeing in your community? What types of skills would be needed to address those impacts?
3. How do you perceive your role in creating a climate-ready workforce? What efforts are you currently involved in?
4. Do you have any experience engaging with or communicating with stakeholders and the public on climate resilience, especially in disadvantaged communities, to date? If so, please describe.
5. Do you or your organization have any experience in engaging with climate resilience training and education providers and/or programs to date? If so, please describe.
6. What do you see as the challenges/barriers to growing a skilled and diverse workforce? Can you share any potential or demonstrated solutions to these challenges?
7. Are there certain key performance indicators or metrics that you think we should use to measure success?
8. Are you aware of or able to offer, public or private investments and/or in-kind support that would enhance a climate-resilience workforce development program?
9. What type of commitment would you be able to make to participants in this workforce program and/or sustain the work beyond the initial opportunity, e.g., scholarships, program support, or formalized partnerships?

**Questions for ACADEMIC OR TRAINING PARTNERS and/or CLIMATE SERVICE PRACTITIONERS**

1. What climate change impacts are you seeing in the communities you serve? What types of skills and/or jobs would be needed to address those impacts?
2. Do you have additions or suggestions for the types of jobs and/or skills described in the table (see Attachment)?
3. Do you currently have programs that relate to these types of job pathways or skills? Programs could include non-credit, short-term training courses, professional development short-courses, certificates, associates, bachelor’s, graduate degrees, work to learn, or other type of formalized training.
4. Are you planning on developing any programs related to these types of job pathways or skills? If so, please share where you are in the planning process and how long would the development take.
5. Are there additional skills or job pathways you would suggest to address Connecticut’s climate vulnerabilities?
6. Do you have examples or ideas of job development pathways that would address Connecticut’s climate vulnerabilities?
7. Are there certain key performance indicators or metrics that you think we should use to measure success?

**Questions specifically for EMPLOYER PARTNERS (including but not limited to local, regional, and state government; private companies; academic researchers, etc.). If possible and necessary, please prioritize completion of questions marked with an asterisk\***

1. \*What job categories in climate resilience, adaptation, or vulnerability are the most in-demand now or in the next 5 years?
   1. What are the qualifications—educational background, experience, training, skills, and/or certifications—necessary to fill these positions?
   2. Which roles require proprietary onsite training (e.g., to operate or maintain a specific piece of equipment)? If possible, please quantify the number of job openings and anticipated vacancies.
2. \*What are the wages and benefits associated with these roles? Are there advancement opportunities associated with these roles?
3. \*Which occupations exhibit high degrees of under-representation with respect to workers’ demographic characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, gender, ability, recovery status, re-entry status, rural location, persistent poverty, disconnected youth, veteran or military spouse, etc.)?
4. \*What job categories are the hardest to find qualified candidates for (i.e., the types of jobs most difficult to fill)? What solutions are needed to overcome these challenges (e.g., more accessible training and education programs, higher wages and benefits, better defined career pathways, etc.)?
5. \*Has your company developed a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy and/or taken steps to hire and promote people from groups currently underrepresented in the workforce? Do you specialize in serving environmental justice communities or “[disadvantaged communities](https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#7.12/41.503/-72.758)” to address their climate vulnerabilities?
6. \*If there was an education and/or training program that met your skill demands for jobs that you are hiring for, would you be willing to create work-based learning opportunities, such as internships or pre-apprenticeships, for individuals participating in these programs?
7. \*Job Commitments: Would you make a commitment to hire employees from a climate-resilience workforce development program that met your skill demands? If so, for what roles and how many?
8. Does your company employ labor-union-affiliated workers? Why or why not? Do you see a potential role for organized labor in helping to meet your anticipated workforce demand? Why or why not?
9. Are there certain key performance indicators or metrics that you think we should use to measure success?

**ATTACHMENT**

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| **Type of Job or Job Grouping** | **Example Activities** |
| Community Engagement/Outreach Specialist | Educating the community on potential impacts; connecting residents to social services; identifying community resources to reduce risk; serve as a liaison to emergency management and health departments; produce outreach documents to inform residents and visitors on disaster preparedness e.g. shelter & cooling center locations |
| Sustainability & Resilience Coordinator; Planning Technician | Coordinating activities across municipal departments; coordinating across municipalities; reviewing permit applications for climate change vulnerabilities; assist municipal departments in site inspections; assist in public engagement or meetings; develop outreach materials (social media or websites); review town infrastructure for green infrastructure opportunities and Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) reduction: floodplain management; project management |
| Conditions Inspector (plant & animal inventory, drone photography capture & assessment, site pre-inspections); Engineering pathway, Erosion Control Technicians | GPS unit/remote sensing/drone operation; downloading data for use in GIS or other computer software; plant/wildlife identification; Desktop review of site prior to visit, site inspection and note-taking/survey completion/photography labeling; review of inspection notes/maps and identification of site improvements; maybe some hydraulic measurements; plant/wildlife identification; interviews with site operators/owners; monitoring coastal change over time; trail building; first aid |
| Forestry Fellows - Urban & Rural | Inspect, install or maintain trails; inspect, plant, or maintain urban trees; operate machinery for forestry management; review safety briefings or acquire appropriate safety certifications |
| Dam & Culvert Assessment Program | Desktop review of site prior to visit, site inspection and note-taking/survey completion/photography labeling, review of inspection notes/maps and identification of site improvements; maybe some hydraulic measurements; plant/wildlife identification; interviews with site operators/owners; first aid |
| Grant Writing | Identification of state, federal or nonprofit climate grant programs; review of plans, maps, or documents to synthesize and summarize conditions; communicate across departments; manage grant application; project management |
| Home Inspector (enforcement too) for residential resilience | Desktop review of site prior to visit, site inspection and note-taking/survey completion/photography labeling, review of inspection notes/maps and identification of site improvements; interviews with site operators/owners |
| Water reclamation & street cleaning; green infrastructure maintenance. Machine Operation | Inspecting and maintaining green infrastructure; inspections of storm water systems; operation of equipment needed for GI cleaning (e.g. vacuuming permeable pavement, mowers) (water treatment overlap); first aid |
| Resilient Construction including historic preservation, flood risk reduction, high wind impact retrofits, insulation, solar install and HVAC retrofits. | Site preparation, heavy equipment usage; carpentry, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, etc; materials inspection; identification of needed permits; first aid; training contractors and inspectors on FORTIFIED building standards and techniques; project management |
| Water Treatment Operator and Operator in Training | Example activities water sampling; monitoring mechanicals; emergency response; review of records for trends |
| GIS Specialist and/or a Data Analyst | Produce, review, or analyze databases; work with decision-makers, public, customers, or other stakeholders |
| Engineer | Assess impacts to air, land, water quality and quantity to reduce vulnerability; design infrastructure to withstand climate impacts; review historical documents; conduct site inspections; conduct appropriate testing of materials; oversee repair, installation or maintenance of replacement infrastructure (Could specialize in transportation, civil, environmental, electrical or electric grid); project management |
| Climate and Public Health Vulnerability/Risk Mitigation | Establish and support partnerships with community organizations, local health departments and schools to build capacity in understanding the impacts of climate and environmental justice issues on health disparities, with a focus on vulnerable populations. Would support adaptation activities at health departments and ensure that all programs advancing health equity. |
| Climate Financials | Develop nature-based capitals appraisal process; climate responsive rate-making (e.g. water utilities rates for conservation); insurance valuations |
| Inclusion or exclusion of specific skills or jobs is not a guarantee of what could be considered through this program. It is intended for discussion purposes. | |