

March 26, 2024

Commissioner Katie S. Dykes
Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commissioner Dykes,

On behalf of the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), I am submitting this letter of commitment for the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (CT DEEP) *individual* application requesting federal funding from the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Phase II Implementation Grant (EPA-R-OAR-CPRGI-23-07). The Office of Workforce Strategy commits to partner with the CT DEEP through an interagency Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) - the mechanism by which the EPA funding will be subawarded to OWS - for the implementation of the workforce development strategy included in the application.

The OWS is an executive branch that serves as the administrative staff to the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC). Our vision is for every Connecticut resident to have access to a meaningful career pathway and the support needed to fulfill their aspirations and for every Connecticut business to have access to a skilled workforce. Our mission is to build the systems, teams, and approaches that will make Connecticut a talent environment that attracts and motivates students, career builders, and companies alike.

As part of our commitment to partner with CT DEEP, the OWS, in consultation with the CT Department of Labor, will administer the Request for Proposals (RFP) and monitor the RFP's awardees to implement the high-quality workforce development activities included in CT DEEP's application for funding to benefit individuals in low-income and disadvantaged communities, tied to the implementation of the following climate action measures in its application:

- Medium-heavy duty zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) financial incentives program to lower the cost of purchasing medium-heavy duty ZEV vehicles, build charging infrastructure, and improve grid reliability.
- Supplemental funding for Connecticut's Residential Energy Preparation Services (REPS) program and Conservation and Load Management Program (C&LM). The REPS program removes health and safety barriers (asbestos, mold, knob-and-tube wiring, etc.) when these barriers prevent weatherization (such as insulation and air sealing). The C&LM program helps Connecticut businesses and residents become more energy efficient.

The Request for Proposals to implement the workforce development activities, may include:

- Pre-apprenticeship programs with connections to one or more Registered Apprenticeship Programs;
- Registered Apprenticeship Programs;
- Joint Labor-Management Training Programs;
- Paid internships; and/or,
- Partnerships with community colleges that award an industry-recognized credential.

These workforce development activities will also include a strategy for including individuals with barriers to employment and include funding for case management and supportive services, such as childcare and transportation, for participants to address common barriers.

Partnering with the OWS will allow CT DEEP to perform the project more effectively. OWS leads significant programs that are focused on historically marginalized communities and embed supports, including childcare, transportation, housing and stipends to help participants overcome barriers to economic mobility. The \$70M, ARPA-funded Career ConneCT program provides training in in-demand industries, along with supports, to unemployed and underemployed individuals, with a targeted recruitment focus on underserved communities. Similarly, OWS is the largest grantee of the EDA's Good Jobs Challenge grants; our \$23M grant provides training and supports that lead to quality jobs for 2,000 individuals. OWS also has already engaged more than 400 employers in workforce development efforts through fourteen, industry-specific Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs). These employers are defining skills needed for immediate and future jobs, reviewing curricula with higher education and training partners, providing work-based learning experiences to students in K-12, community college and college, and providing apprenticeships and jobs. We plan to leverage these existing models for the purposes of this grant application because they bring employers to the table, convene relevant partners, and produce successful results. In addition, OWS, along with the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, launched the CT Clean Economy Council (CCEC). The CCEC regularly convenes businesses to communicate opportunities, inform the needs and development of clean energy workforce development training programs, and advise on approaches to deploy funding on opportunities and needs.

As exemplified by this work, OWS shares the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program's strong commitment to facilitating the generation of high-quality jobs with a diverse, highly skilled workforce and supporting "high road" labor practices. OWS has partnered with labor organizations, including the Connecticut Building Trades Training Institute, a \$3.6m Career ConneCT grantee, to ensure the right for employees to join a union and collectively bargain, the use of project labor agreements, and comprehensive health and safety plans for workers. OWS also works with the five regional workforce development boards of Capital Workforce Partners, Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board, Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, Inc., Workforce Alliance, and the Workplace, Inc., and the CT Building Trades Training Institute among our many workforce ecosystem partners.

In closing, OWS strongly supports CT DEEP's application for additional funding and incentives to reduce greenhouse gases and maximize community benefits, particularly through the creation of equitable career pathways and training opportunities. Specifically, this includes preparing individuals for high-quality, middle-skill career pathways that enable economic mobility, rather than short-term, low-wage jobs. We look forward to partnering with CT DEEP to ensure we achieve these goals.

If you have any questions about OWS's strong commitment to this effort, please contact us via email at Kelli-Marie.Vallieres@ct.gov or 860 334-3491.

Sincerely,



Kelli-Marie Vallieres, PhD
Chair, Governor's Workforce Council
Chief Workforce Officer, State of Connecticut