

**Illinois EE Stakeholder Advisory Group  
Equity Subcommittee Meeting:  
Joint with Income Qualified (IQ) North and South EE Committees**

**Tuesday, April 30, 2024  
10:30 am – 12:30 pm**

**Attendees and Meeting Notes**

**Meeting Materials** .....1  
**Attendees** .....1  
**Meeting Notes** .....3  
**Opening and Introductions** .....3  
**Nicor Gas Market Development Initiative Update** .....3  
**Illinois Workforce and Contractor Programs** .....9  
**IQ North EE Committee Update**.....12  
**Closing and Next Steps** .....13

**Meeting Materials**

Materials are posted on the [April 30 meeting page](#):

- [April 30, 2024 SAG Equity Subcommittee Agenda – Joint with IQ North Committee and IQ South Committee](#)
- [Nicor Gas Presentation: Market Development Initiative Update](#)
- [SEEL Presentation: SEEL Capabilities and CEJA Workforce Overview](#)

**Attendees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Company or Organization</b>
Celia Johnson	SAG Facilitator (Celia Johnson Consulting)
Jorge Medina Zambrano	SAG Meeting Support (Inova Energy Group)
Abigail Miner	IL Attorney General's Office
Alan Elliott	Opinion Dynamics
Alex Deeb	Ameren Illinois
Allison Gregoire	Nicor Gas
Amy Jewel	Elevate
Angie Ostaszewski	New Buildings Institute
Briana Moore	Will County Land Use Department
Bryan Haney	Erthe Energy Solutions
Cassidy Kraimer	Community Investment Corp.
Cheryl Johnson	People for Community Recovery
Cheryl Watson	Equitable Resilience & Sustainability LLC
Chester Kolodziej	Sustain Rockford
Chris Vaughn	Nicor Gas
Dan Ringo	Walker-Miller
Deirdre Collins	VEIC (IL-TRM Administrator)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Company or Organization</b>
Dr. Crystal Davis	Walker-Miller
Edith Makra	Metropolitan Mayors Caucus
Elizabeth Horne	ICC Staff
Erika Dominick	Walker-Miller
Eve Pytel	Franklin Energy
Hannah Howard	Opinion Dynamics
Jake Moushon	ICC
Jamie McCloskey	Staples Energy
Jamie Ricks	Walker-Miller
Jane Anderson	Inova Energy Group
Jarred Nordhus	Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas
John Mansfield	Nicor Gas
Jonathan Skarzynski	Nicor Gas
Julie Hollensbe	ComEd
Kari Ross	NRDC
Kate Shonk	Citizens Utility Board
Keely Hughes	The JPI Group
LaJuana Garrett	Nicor Gas
LaShelle Newland	Resource Innovations
Laura Agapay-Read	Guidehouse
Lionel Valencia	Village of Lansing
Mark Milby	Elevate
Marsha Belcher	CAP Lake County
Matt Armstrong	Ameren Illinois
Michele McSwain	Sustainable Environmental and Economic Development Solutions
Mike King	Nicor Gas
Nelson May	Future Energy Enterprises (IQ South Facilitation Team)
Nick Bafaloukos	ComEd
Nick Lovier	Ameren Illinois
Nick Warnecke	Ameren Illinois
Nicole Popejoy IACAA	IACAA
Nikki Pacific	Ameren Illinois
Odette Hyatt-Watson	East Central IL CAA
Omayra Garcia	Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas
Philip Halliburton	ComEd
Philip Mosenthal	Optimal Energy, representing IL AG and NCLC
Sam Stahl	Ameren Illinois
Scott Alan Davis	SEEL
Seth Craigo-Snell	SCS Analytics
Stephen Robinson	Northwest Austin Council

<b>Name</b>	<b>Company or Organization</b>
Sy Lewis	Meadows Eastside Community Resource Org.
Tamika J. Cole	Walker-Miller
Ted Weaver	First Tracks Consulting, representing Nicor Gas
Theresa Collins	Senior Services Plus
Tim Dickison	Ameren Illinois
Tina Grebner	Ameren Illinois
Tristan Siddharth Stamets	SEEL
Wade Morehead	Morehead Energy

### **Meeting Notes**

See **red font** for follow-up items.

### **Opening and Introductions**

#### **Purpose of April 30 meeting:**

1. For Nicor Gas to present a Market Development Initiative update;
2. To educate Subcommittee participants on Illinois workforce and contractor programs established by the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA); and
3. For the Income Qualified (IQ) North EE Committee Leadership Team to share an update on Committee activities.

### **Nicor Gas Market Development Initiative Update**

*Allison Gregoire, Nicor Gas*

#### **Overview of MDI**

- Background
  - New initiative built into filed EE Plan.
  - MDI research was completed in 2022.
  - Implementation of programs informed by research.
  - 2.3 million customers across the service territory.
- Objectives
  - Increase opportunities for diverse contractors and workers.
  - Build support from community partners.
  - Increase transparency and equity for contractors.

#### **Trade Ally Development (TAD) Overview**

- The objective is to develop and support diverse trade allies in energy efficiency industry to:
  - TAD program is for existing energy efficiency contractors or small business owners who want to support and develop their businesses.
  - Improve business practices for resiliency including social media, accounting, HR, and marketing.
  - Create a business mentorship environment.
  - Provide support for diverse supplier/technical certifications.
  - Educate them about the Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program's (EEP) rebates and incentive opportunities.
  - Help Allies become part of the contractor circle network and highlight them on the recommended contractors list on the Nicor website.

- Meet the energy efficiency needs of communities in the Nicor Gas service territory.

### **2023 Key Accomplishments**

- May – July
- Marketing and outreach
  - Partnered with five CBOs to promote and bring awareness to the program.
  - Engaged three CBOs as subject matter experts (SMEs) to provide back-office support services.
- KPI GOAL ACHIEVED: 5 CBO Partnerships
- Recruitment
  - Received 18 applications.
  - Interviewed 14 applicants.
  - Accepted 10 applicants into the cohort.
- KPI GOAL ACHIEVED: Accept 10 Cohort Members
- Worked closely with Walker-Miller to implement this program.

### **July – December**

- Led eight webinars via the virtual program which added flexibility and increased attendance.
- Held 12 one-on-one business coaching sessions.
- Facilitated business model canvas (BMC) and business growth plan (BGP) development exercises.
- 100% of cohort members completed BMC and BGP
- 80% of cohort members attended all webinars.
- 90% of cohort members attended all one-on-one biz coaching sessions.
- Graduated all 10 cohort members.
- Certifications acquired by diverse trade allies (DTAs). 3 of them acquired them.
- KPI GOAL ACHIEVED: Three certifications acquired by DTAs.

*Angie Ostaszewski (via chat) – Do you have any data on how many staff your cohort members added as a result of participation in the program? Or retained? That is important as well.*

### **Program Goals**

- Diversify our trade ally network by increasing the number of minority, women and veteran contractors.
- Educate about the Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program's (EEP) offerings; generate projects to increase business and help customers participate in the EEP to help save money and energy.
- Evaluate company needs and provide weekly one-on-one support and assistance with: HR, IT/technical, business practices, certifications, EE growth plans, project financing, sales, and marketing, etc.
- Identify, address, and resolve barriers to cohort members' success.
- Had orientation in person on April 25<sup>th</sup> so the cohort could meet in-person before it goes virtual.

## **Wraparound Services**

- To encourage attendance there are engagement stipends that contractors receive in order to entice new participants.
  - Every cohort member receives \$130 per/hour for attending all the webinars and all their 1-1 business coaching sessions.
  - Webinars (8)
  - One-on-one business coaching (15)
- They receive a certification stipend of \$1,500 that can be used for licensing and diverse industry certifications.
- Also receive a back-office support stipend of \$1,000 usable in administrative tasks, taxes, technical support, etc. Could also be used for masterminds, marketing, or technical support.

## **Training Webinars**

- In-Person Orientation & Intro to Energy and Sustainability – April 25<sup>th</sup>
- Overview of Nicor Gas EEP Portfolio – May 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Five S's of Business Optimization – May 9<sup>th</sup>
- Deep Dive: Nicor Gas Trade Ally Network & Diverse Suppliers – May 26<sup>th</sup>
- Best Business Practices and Project Financing – May 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Understanding the “Whole Home Approach” – May 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Marketing & Lead Development – June 6<sup>th</sup>
- Business Planning for Growth in Energy Efficiency – June 13<sup>th</sup>
- One-on-One Coaching & Support Services – Through August 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Graduation Ceremony – Week of August 26<sup>th</sup>

## **Business coaching sessions**

- 15 weekly one-on-one support sessions to assist with certification, EE growth plans, project financing and building relationships (via zoom or in-person).
- Identify, address and resolve barriers to success.
- Educate on the details of the Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program's offerings.

## **What's New in 2024?**

- Mentorship Program
  - Performance metrics
    - Completion of individual development plans
    - Participation in required mentorship sessions (in-person and/or virtual) with coaches who are not in their service territory so they will be able to participate in business coaching without competition bias.
- Alumni Network
  - Alumni engagement: media presence, project walk throughs/project spotlights.
  - Performance metrics will be tracked via RSVPs and attendance at events, number of alumni participating in mentorship sessions, projects completed, Terms saved, and number of alumni accepted into the trade ally/Contractor Circle Network
  - Workforce training and employment

## **WTE Objectives**

- Objectives
  - Expand the energy efficiency workforce by developing building scientists.
  - Provide free hands-on training and industry certifications.

- Help individuals find gainful employment in the industry that will support their family's economy.
- Priorities
  - Reduce barriers to success through wraparound services.
  - Focus on novice and skilled professionals.
  - Target underserved and under-resourced communities within the Nicor Gas service territory.
- Last year, we focused on South Cook County, South Holland area. This year the focus is more on the Aurora, Illinois area.

### **Novice Cohort**

- Target participants
  - Entry-level skillset
  - MDI communities
- Safety training
- HHP, BSP, ALCI, DET Verifier
- On-the-job training
- Partner employers

### **Skilled Cohort**

- Target participants
  - MDI communities
  - Experience in and already employed in the energy efficiency field.
  - Employed by local contractors
- BSP and BA-T training
- Increased earning potential
- The service territories, comprising 11 residents in the South Suburban area and one resident in the West Suburban region, there is a diverse demographic profile. The age range spans from 18 to 50 and above, with a majority of male residents, totaling 10 individuals, while the female population stands at 2.

### **Wraparound services**

- Cohort members receive comprehensive support services tailored to their needs, including wage replacement (\$16/hour for novices, \$300/week for skilled workers), daily meals, childcare (\$125 stipend), and travel assistance (\$25/week). Mental health services, career support, financial literacy education, and resume writing assistance are also provided, along with essential work tools for on-the-job training, fostering skill development and professional advancement.

### **2023 Skilled Cohort Highlights**

- Skilled Cohort (July-August 2023):
- 22 applicants, 12 phone interviews, 10 final interviews, 6 participants.
- All 6 participants graduated and passed building science principles certification.
- 5 individuals passed the business analyst Technician exam, 2 promoted since program completion.
- Two individuals promoted since August, with a 3 to 5% pay increase; one had a title change to crew leader.

## 2023 Novice Cohort Highlights

- Novice Cohort (August 26 to October 18, 2023):
  - 50 applicants, 6 graduates.
  - Majority shifted from minimum wage to \$28/hour.
- Diverse backgrounds: recent high school graduates, a hotel industry worker, former medical tech.
- 5 of 6 received Healthy Housing Principles' certifications; all received Building Science Principles, Air Leakage Control Insulator, and Duct and Envelope Tightness Verifier certifications.
- 4 work placements and 3 promotions since October.

*Allison Gregoire (via chat) -*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWIDuuXkJYc&t=3s>

## What do we know in 2024?

- Targeted area: Aurora/Western Suburbs
  - This area has a large population of needs
  - Large Hispanic and African-American population
- Training Space:
  - Waubensee Community College
  - City of Aurora – Hollywood Casino Warehouse
  - Nicor Gas Technical Training Center for safety trainings & Skilled cohort
- Cohorts:
  - Novice Cohort:
    - July 15—August 30
    - Expecting 10-12 Cohort members
  - Skilled Cohort:
    - September 30—October 18
    - Expecting 5-6 cohort members
- Instructor:
  - Insight Property Services; Joe Konopacki
- Marketing/Recruitment:
  - Leverage Nicor Gas' existing community relationships.
  - Collaborate with CBOs that service the targeted area
  - Partner with Nicor Gas' Trade Ally Program Manager for Skilled recruitment
- Opportunities
  - Subsidized tools
  - Safety training with the Nicor Gas team

## Curriculum Review

- Novice Curriculum
  - Seven Weeks: Full-time
- Safety Trainings:
  - OSHA-10
  - CPR/First AID/AED
  - Confined Spaces, Ladder Safety, Safe Driving
- BPI Trainings:
  - Healthy Housing Principles
  - Building Science Principles

- Air Leakage Control Installer
- Skilled Curriculum
  - Three Weeks: Part-time
- BPI Trainings:
  - Building Science Principles
  - Building Analyst Technician

*Angie Ostaszewski – In the novice cohort, how do you help and guide them onto which career path is best for them?*

*Allison Gregoire – BPI certifications are a priority because they give an advantage in future job searches and differentiation, but the curriculum includes all trainings to help them decide what path is best for them.*

*Keely Hughes (via chat) – What happens to the students that do not finish the program?*

*Allison Gregoire – All students have completed the program. Implementation teams are supportive and help all students succeed.*

*Keely Hughes (via chat) – Do you track the zip codes or communities your graduates come from?*

*Allison Gregoire – Yes, the majority are from the South Cook County area and this year the focus will be on the western suburbs.*

*Keely Hughes – Are you communicating with local mayors or local representatives?*

*Allison Gregoire – Yes, they are strong advocates of the program and are supportive in various ways.*

*Michelle McSwain – For the initial graduates, what type of contracting services does that group provide?*

*Allison Gregoire – Attic insulation, window sealing, etc. It depends. They do have to service natural gas appliances.*

*Nicole Popejoy (via chat) – Did I miss how these students were chosen? Or what the eligibility requirements to participate are?*

*Allison Gregoire – The application process is on the website ([nicorgas.com/mbi](http://nicorgas.com/mbi)) that needs to be submitted and then a follow up with an interview (with the Walker-Miller implementation team) and a math exam.*

*Tristan Siddharth Stamets – Have you received feedback from contractors as possible barriers (high capital costs, equipment, etc.) and how to potentially counter those?*

*Allison Gregoire – It is an issue. There is support to connect them to rented equipment in order to reduce capital expenditure costs and other support services (including certification support).*



*Matt Armstrong – The program was 7 weeks. Is there consideration about doing multiple rotations of cohorts?*

*Allison Gregoire – There are some budget limitations, but there is a plan to expand the program in the future.*

## **Illinois Workforce and Contractor Programs**

*Scott Alan Davis and Tristan Stamets, SEEL*

### **Overview of SEEL**

- Established in 2009, celebrated 15th anniversary recently.
- Experience in multiple states, with ongoing growth.
- 100% Disabled Veteran Business
- Emphasis on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in all work
- Commitment to community benefits agreements and community priorities
- Core values include:
  - Energy efficiency for all
  - Community Partnership
  - Workforce Development
  - Diverse and inclusive professional practices

### **SEEL Capabilities**

- Energy Efficiency Program Implementation & Rebate Processing
- Customer Outreach & Contact Center
- Technical and Engineering Support
- Grant Writing and Support Classes
- Community Partner Engagement & Management
- Workforce Development & Training
- Certified BPI Testing Center
- Strategic Planning & Consulting
- Weatherization
- Broadening the scope of work to include new offerings including increased customer outreach and a contact center.
- SEEL Learning Institute recently launched.

### **Workforce development**

- Started in 2009 during the height of the recession in Detroit.
- Have worked with development programs that include scholarships, training, and internships.
- Workforce Development Program
  - Fills labor gaps in the EE workforce with diverse candidates and provides training to existing and new staff.
- EE Scholarship Program
  - Manage process and funding to develop a workforce pipeline.
- EE Internship Program
  - Manage process and funding to develop a workforce pipeline for students and adults looking to change career paths.
- Training
  - MCL JASCO University, SEELs Learning Management System with over 75,000 courses available.

### **Grant Writing, Consulting and Planning**

- Over 20 years of experience in grant writing, teaching, management, and planning.
- Grant Research
  - Conduct thorough research to identify potential grant opportunities that match the client's needs, objectives, and eligibility criteria. This includes government grants, foundation grants, corporate grants, and other sources of funding.
- Grant Proposal Development
  - Collaborate with the client to develop a compelling grant proposal that effectively communicates their project or program's goals, objectives, methodology, and budget. This involves crafting a persuasive narrative, outlining project details, and ensuring alignment with the grant guidelines.
- Budget Planning
  - Assist in developing a detailed budget for the grant proposal, including all necessary expenses such as personnel, supplies, equipment, and overhead costs. Ensure the budget is realistic, well-justified, and aligned with the funder's requirements.

### **Grant Writing Training**

- Comprehensive Curriculum
  - The training covers all grant writing essentials, from grant types to proposal development and post-award management, ensuring participants grasp the entire process.
- Interactive Learning
  - The training offers engaging workshops, case studies, and feedback sessions, providing hands-on experience and immediate application of skills.
- Ongoing Support
  - Continuous support and access to resources including private foundation opportunities, federal opportunities, budget evaluation, and program braiding.

### **CEJA Grant Writing Support**

- In 2023, and now 2024, SEEL has completed:
  - 10 CEJA grant submissions
  - 6 different regions
  - \$12.6M in requested funding
  - \$4.9M in approved funding
- Providing grant writing support and strategic guidance to partners
- Outreach to potential applicants, forming partnerships, and provide project management and grant writing individuals who help with the submissions.

### **CEJA Common Goals**

- “CEJA programs prioritize Illinoisans who live in communities that have historically faced economic barriers and environmental damage with the goal of bolstering a diverse workforce in the clean energy industry.”
- Shared grounds and goals with the organizations that align well with program goals in order to help them acquire additional funding.

### **Different Programs, Different Needs**

- Workforce Development Programs: To expand and develop skills within the existing clean energy workforce, place individuals in newly established clean energy jobs, and provide support services to energy workers.

- Contractor Programs: To establish new, local businesses to carry out clean energy work in the coming years, and to provide existing businesses with resources, support, and capital to take on larger-scale energy projects.
- Project Funding Programs: To provide communities with funding to accomplish their unique clean energy transitions, through tangible projects to be located throughout the state.
- Equipping individuals in the workforce with more skills and capabilities as well as EE projects as well directed at communities.

### **Current CEJA Programs**

(Asterisk programs are still open and encouraging new applications)

- Workforce Development Programs
  - Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program\*
    - 13 CEJA hubs across the state of Illinois.
  - Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program
    - Pairing jobseekers with recognized apprenticeships within the energy efficiency and clean energy space.
  - Energy Transition Navigator Program\*
    - Works hand-in-hand with the clean jobs workforce network program, and establishes community stakeholders that perform outreach and intake services.
  - Returning Resident Clean Jobs Program\*
    - To provide clean energy and EE instruction to incarcerated individuals approaching release so they can get into clean energy jobs.
  - Solar Training Pipeline Program
    - Solar installers, PMs, etc.
  - Multi-cultural Jobs Program\*
    - Multilingual and various ethnic communities.
  - Craft Apprenticeship Program
    - Looks to train specific skills such as carpentry, welding, etc.
- Contractor Programs
  - Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program (CEJA Contractor Incubator Hubs)
    - Look to establish new contractors in those areas.
  - Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program \*
    - Existing contractors with 1-1 business advisement and strategic direction
    - Also provides pathway to capital loans and grants to do larger projects.
- Project Funding Programs
  - Equitable Energy Futures Grant Program \*
    - Funds individual energy efficiency projects across the state so different communities and different contractors can submit for projects. Typically, larger projects (\$1M+).
  - Community Solar Energy Sovereignty Grant Program \*
  - Energy Transition Community Grant Program
    - Looks to fund battery storage and other kinds of energy independence programs within communities.
  - Coal to Solar Energy Storage Grant Program
    - Specifically aimed at church communities that are dependent on coal and support those communities during the transition to solar.
  - Displaced Energy Worker Dependent Transition Scholarship Program

- Retraining for workers that worked in coal or near coal plants to help them transition to clean energy.

*Celia Johnson – Is there a best place for participants to get more information?*

*Tristan Stamets – DCEO website is best to see what programs are still open.*

*Angie Ostaszewski (via chat) - Can attest to the true and lasting impact of this work! Bravo SEEL! 2023 was the most successful year of funding leveraging in the Ameren MDI (as you can see on the slide!). Congratulations!*

*Angie Ostaszewski – What is changing in 2024 MDI program?*

*Tristan Stamets – Focusing on the grant writing program in 2024. What is being done differently is that there is a specific lookout for grants that are attainable that fell through last year and are now open in other places. 7 CEJA hubs. The goal is to touch all 7 in 2024. Danville is the focus, currently.*

*Angie Ostaszewski – How do DCEO get involved with the hubs at a strategic level?*

*Tristan Stamets – SEEL can help connect to the hubs individually.*

*Angie Ostaszewski – How do utilities help CBOs manage funds received given burdensome admin costs. With CEJA grants being issued there will be overlap in deliverables with CEJA scopes. Will utilities help manage the administrative costs given to CBOs?*

*Nick Lovier – Having discussions with all CBOs to help in any fashion because it is understood there is a lot of work to be done.*

*Tristan Stamets – SEEL makes sure that all submissions that tracking and reporting is in place for every application to measure the success of the program. Very meticulous about managing resources and human capital to track and implement programs.*

*Cheryl Johson – What is the geographical boundary and do your programs service any organizations in Chicago?*

*Tristan Stamets – Since the grant writing scope is implemented under the larger portfolio of Ameren IL the focus is on Ameren territory. Many networks of partnerships extend in Chicago. CEJA Returning residents program is Chicago based and focused on work in the Chicagoland area. Follow up on local corporate efforts that SEEL has been doing in Chicago.*

*[tstamets@seellc.com](mailto:tstamets@seellc.com)*

### **IQ North EE Committee Update**

*Briana Moore, Will County Land Use Department (representing IQ North EE Committee Leadership Team)*

- Brief update on IQ North EE Committee
- Represents leadership team for the IQ North Committee
- IQ North Committee members represent communities from east Chicago to Rockford, and up to the state border with Wisconsin.

- Capacity-building efforts focused on organizing inclusive, responsive, and constructive committee.
- Acknowledges members' patience regarding regular meetings and energy efficiency education grants.
- Expresses gratitude for progress made with ComEd and the Illinois Commerce Commission in facilitating and administering initiatives.
- Eager to advance committee's mission and looks forward to sharing more announcements in the coming months.

### **Closing and Next Steps**

**Next SAG Equity Subcommittee Meeting:** Wednesday, July 24, 2024