

Overview

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) wants to ensure that its investments in decarbonization are sustainable and successful. To help achieve this, DOE requires that funding opportunity applicants develop and submit Community Benefits Plans when applying to Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Programs managed through DOE's Offices of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management and Clean Energy Demonstrations. When considering proposed project applications, DOE will apply community benefits criteria when assessing these Plans. The Community Benefits Plan consists of four sections:

- Community, Labor and Stakeholder Engagement
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)
- Justice40 Initiative
- Investing in the American Workforce: Quality Jobs

These plans will be scored during the merit review/project selection process – just like other technical components – which means that the quality of the Community Benefits Plan will impact which projects are selected and funded. Community Benefits Plans account for 20% of the total score.

Purpose

The aim of these plans is to help applicants move from **vision** through **assessment** to **implementation**.

Many project teams at early phases of research and development may begin planning with affirmations of their values and aspirations for doing better with diversity, inclusion, engagement, and environmental justice. DOE requests teams also conduct rigorous assessment of the status quo social implications of their projects, and assess how they can engage with, benefit, and minimize harms to communities. The assessment leads to goals, as well as quantifiable outcomes, i.e. what it will look like when the goals are achieved. DOE then requests teams develop implementation strategies with concrete milestones, timelines, and resources that will outline the steps needed to reach the outcomes at each phase in the project.

Community Benefits Plan Planning Phases



Plan Sections at a Glance

Community, Labor, and Stakeholder Engagement

- An **analysis** of impacted communities, and communities and stakeholders to engage
- **Engagement methods** and **timeline**, including statements on **two-way engagement** and how engagement will influence the project direction and **project agreements (Workforce and Community Agreements)**
- **Resource summary** of staff, capabilities, and budget to implement the plan, and plans for **evaluating** engagement

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- **Background** with assessment of DEIA in the project team
- **Milestones and timelines** for actions the applicant will take to meet DEIA goals, for example, how applicants will offer workforce opportunities for underrepresented groups
- **Resource summary** of staff, capabilities, and budget to implement the plan

Justice40 Initiative

- An **energy and environmental justice assessment** of impacted communities; where and to whom benefits flow; where and to whom harms or disbenefits flow; and information gaps
- An **implementation strategy** for actions to maximize benefit and minimize or mitigate harms, with milestones, timelines and resources needed

Investing in the American Workforce

- Plans to attract, train, and retain a **skilled, qualified, local, and diverse workforce** and create **quality jobs**
- Plans to invest in **workforce education and training** and to utilize an appropriately credentialed workforce
- Plans to support **workers rights**

An initial FAQ to cover these topics at a high level can be found at [Community Benefits Plan Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) | Department of Energy](#). Note: these are general categories; each FOA should be consulted for specific requirements. For example, FOAs with a smaller scope (e.g. paper study) will have a different set of requirements than a demonstration project.