



Incorporating Public Input into OCED's H2Hubs Negotiations

Background

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)'s Community Benefits Plan (CBP) framework was developed based on extensive engagement and input from experts in the four CBP pillars. The framework includes **1) community and labor engagement**, which seeks to involve impacted stakeholders in decision making and create projects responsive to the needs of communities and workers; **2) diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility** (DEIA), which seeks to ensure that the clean energy economy is reflective of all Americans and provides equitable access to wealth-building opportunities; **3) investing in the American workforce**, which focuses on building the skilled workforce needed to power the energy transition in the long term; and **4) Justice40** (J40), which sets a goal to provide 40% of the benefits of certain federal investments to disadvantaged communities.

DOE's Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED), which manages more than \$25 billion in funding to deliver clean energy demonstration projects including the Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs (H2Hubs) Program, is committed to implementing this framework to provide tangible benefits to communities and workers. OCED recognizes that the long-term success of the H2Hubs depends not only on technical merits, but also on two-way engagement with and support from local communities, federally recognized tribal nations and Native Alaskan villages (tribes), relevant labor partners and workforces, and other impacted groups. Local stakeholders will have substantive opportunities to engage with both DOE and H2Hub projects throughout the full lifecycle of each project. To date, OCED has engaged more than 1,300 community members, tribes, and other affected parties, including interested members of the public; labor and workforce organizations; environmental justice organizations; first responders; elected tribal leadership; local, state, and federal government officials; local businesses; energy professionals; and others across the country.



OCED used feedback gathered to strengthen and tailor OCED's community benefits framework.

Below are the key themes that emerged through these engagements and how we incorporated them into our overall approach—specifically the community benefit activities for the first phase of our projects (“Phase 1”). Phase 1 is focused on detailed planning. During this Phase, H2Hubs will make progress on planning, development, and design activities around site selection, technology deployment, community benefits, labor partnerships, and workforce training. The H2Hubs will be conducting community and labor engagement throughout Phase 1. This is a high-level summary and is not comprehensive of all required community benefit activities. For more information on individual H2Hubs community benefit commitments, see our H2Hubs [webpage](#).

Transparency

What we heard: The public wants additional information about proposed projects such as location, technology, potential benefits and negative impacts, and opportunities for meaningful engagement.

How we addressed: All H2Hubs are required to set up public data reporting platforms in Phase 1 to share information related to project status, project technologies, engagement opportunities, community advisory mechanisms, and other topics. In future phases, these data platforms will be expanded to include themes such as permitting compliance, safety and emergency response measures, and progress towards J40 goals.

Community Engagement

What we heard: Communities want accessible and ongoing engagement and want to know how they can play a meaningful role in shaping the development of the Hubs.

How we addressed: All H2Hubs are required to develop a hub-level community advisory mechanism by the end of Phase 1 and are committed to best practices regarding by-laws, board structure, member recruitment, and conflicts of interest, among other topics. Additionally, H2Hub projects



will jointly evaluate or pursue negotiated agreements (e.g., Community Benefits Agreements, Good Neighbor Agreements) together with the community during Phase 1 (or after preferred sites are identified), contingent on community interest.

Health and Environmental Impacts

What we heard: Many expressed concerns that H2Hubs could worsen air quality and wanted more details on how the H2Hubs would track and report on air and water impacts.

How we addressed: Each H2Hub prepared lifecycle assessments (LCAs) for criteria air pollutants, greenhouse gases, and water impacts during the application process. An LCA is a modeling technique used to evaluate the environment impacts of a product or process from raw material extraction (e.g., water extraction), to waste treatment (e.g., material recycling). During Phase 1, each LCA and the underlying assumptions will be updated. Additionally, projects with potential impacts on air quality are required to create a plan for air quality monitoring and share the plan with the relevant community advisory mechanism by the end of Phase 1 for input. DOE is also required to assess each Hub's environmental impacts as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, another avenue for community input.

Investing in America's Workforce

What we heard: Labor stakeholders were interested in understanding opportunities for engagement and how projects would affect incumbent workers in existing facilities, as well as the projects' commitments to participate in collective bargaining for construction and operations jobs and hiring and training opportunities for local workers.

How we addressed: All H2Hubs are committed to regular labor engagement and either the evaluation or pursuit of negotiated workforce agreements. They must submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or other documentation demonstrating progress toward collaboration with labor organizations by the end of Phase 1. H2Hubs will also submit ongoing



reporting to summarize progress towards all community benefits activities as part of the project management oversight process.

Safety

What we heard: Hydrogen production, transportation, and use, as well as the transportation and storage of captured CO₂, have safety implications that must be considered in the development of these projects.

How we addressed: Each project is responsible for crafting an initial, comprehensive safety plan that includes regular training and monitoring as well as engagement with local first responders. Each project will also engage with workers in the design, implementation, and execution of the safety plan, which will be reviewed by the DOE's Hydrogen Safety Panel. Additionally, as part of a preliminary J40 assessment and implementation strategy, each H2Hub will proactively identify hydrogen safety risks for workers and communities, CO₂ leakage and transportation risks, and health impacts from all proposed projects—and develop strategies to proactively eliminate, minimize, and mitigate risks.