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EPA Engagement with Energy Communities

The Biden-Harris Administration created the Interagency Working Group on Coal & Power Plant Communities & Economic Revitalization (or Energy Communities IWG) through Executive Order 14008 - Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad [↗](#). This Executive Order recognized and honored the historic role coal mining and power plant workers played in economic growth while providing new federal leadership for the identification and delivery of federal resources to help diversify and revitalize the economies of these communities. In this context, energy communities are places where a significant percentage of jobs and tax revenue come from the extraction, processing, transport, and energy production of fossil fuels. As the nation's energy production and use patterns change and move toward cleaner, less expensive sources, many of these communities seek to diversify their economies.

EPA has been a proud member of the Energy Communities IWG since 2021 and is committed to the mission of ensuring energy communities have both the transportation, water, information and other infrastructure they need, and the targeted place-based investments needed to transition to a more

Energy Communities Interagency Working Group

Want updates from the Energy Communities IWG? Visit energycommunities.gov [↗](#) to sign-up for updates.



sustainable, resilient and equitable economy. EPA provides innovative ideas, strategic guidance and staff capacity to the Energy Communities IWG in its work to support energy communities across the country.

Learn more about the Energy Communities IWG [🔗 <https://energycommunities.gov/>](https://energycommunities.gov/).

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Rapid Response Teams

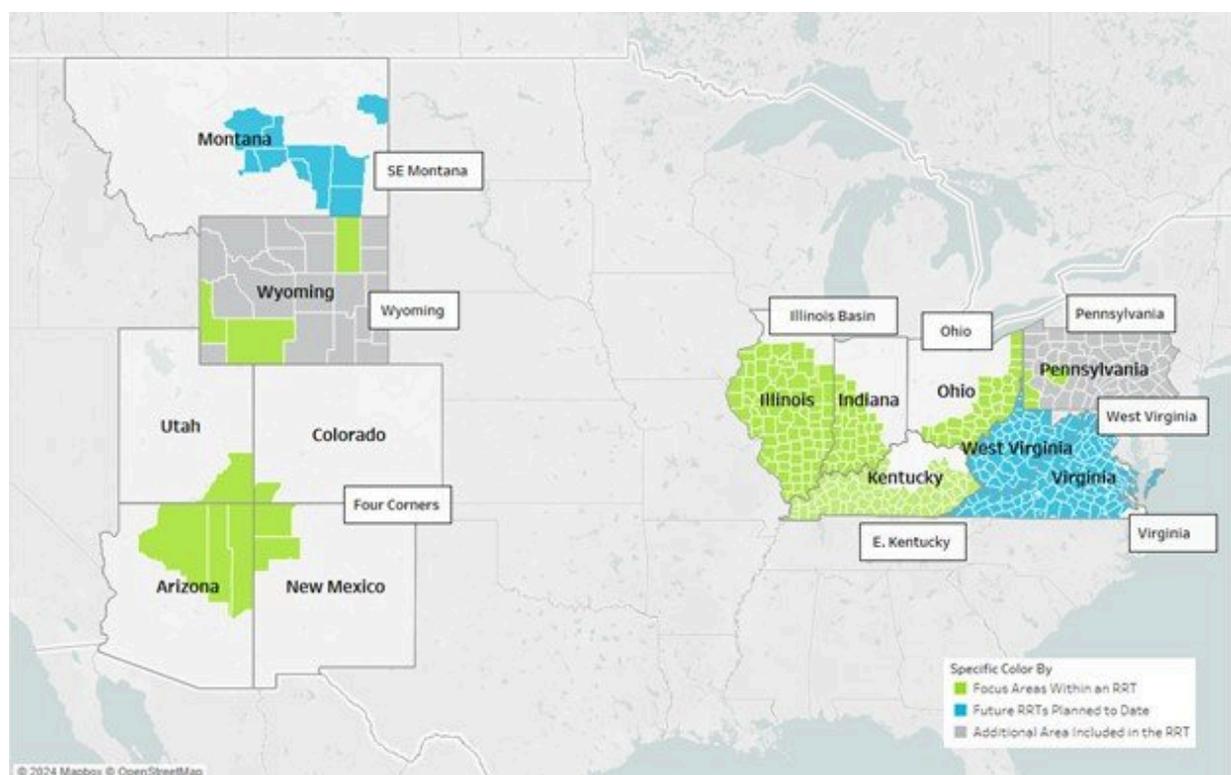
EPA has long-standing methods for providing in-kind technical assistance to communities interested in supporting economic growth opportunities that diversify their economies and support improved environmental outcomes. Through direct assistance and the relationships built with partners on the ground, EPA's participation in the Energy Communities IWG supports energy communities as they make progress on their energy transition goals.



EPA's approach to coordinating resources from across federal, state and local government to proactively address community needs helped catalyze the Energy Communities IWG's Rapid Response Teams [🔗 <https://energycommunities.gov/technical-assistance/rapid-response-teams/>](https://energycommunities.gov/technical-assistance/rapid-response-teams/). RRTs work with energy community members to identify economic transformation and revitalization goals, figure out ways to pursue those

goals, and make the connections between programs across the federal government and up and down levels of state and local government. RRTs aim to understand the needs of energy communities and work to tackle barriers to meeting those needs.

Beginning in fall 2021, EPA – through the Energy Communities IWG – began meeting twice monthly with state officials in the Wyoming Governor’s office, the University of Wyoming, Wyoming Business Council, local officials (including the counties of Lincoln, Converse, Sweetwater, and Campbell), labor organizations, environmental organizations, electric co-ops and others. This group formed the first RRT and demonstrated how the Energy Communities IWG could support Wyoming by employing listening and learning as the foundation for exploring solutions to barriers for economic growth and identifying programs to support expanding the energy sector incentivized by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law <<https://epa.gov/infrastructure>> and Inflation Reduction Act <<https://epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act>>.



This Rapid Response Team model has since been expanded to other coal-impacted areas of the country that have identified a need to support potential pathways for economic growth and the community-based infrastructure to needed to support their further development.

- Current RRTs include Eastern Kentucky, Four Corners, Illinois Basin, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wyoming.
 - Future RRT stakeholder engagement will include Montana, Virginia and West Virginia.
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Energy Communities' Stated Priorities

Many energy communities see improving energy and basic infrastructure as a top priority along with workforce training and housing improvements as identified within the Revitalizing Energy Communities: Two Year Report to the President [↗](#)

<<https://energycommunities.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/iwg-two-year-report-to-the-president.pdf>>.

Energy communities, particularly those with environmental justice concerns, often need support, capacity-building and tools to develop more diversified economies.



The top energy community identified needs, per the Two Year Report questionnaire, are:

- Basic Infrastructure (water, sewer, broadband).
- New drivers of economic diversification.
- Repurposing fossil assets and environmental remediation.
- Clean energy development.
- Displaced worker benefits and workforce development.
- Affordable and attainable housing.

EPA Financial Assistance to Energy Communities

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act allow for EPA to direct billions of dollars in funding to community-based projects and technical assistance across the U.S. to increase the supply of low-carbon and renewable energy generation while enabling environmental regeneration and economic revitalization.

Investments from BIL and IRA are providing critical opportunities for energy communities to redevelop and revitalize. In addition, EPA has many annual financial assistance programs that can help communities address vital needs.

- Find current EPA funding opportunities <<https://epa.gov/invest>>.
- Find other federal funding opportunities that could assist energy communities  <<https://energycommunities.gov/funding-opportunities/all-funding/>>.

Below are some examples of how EPA funding is helping energy communities.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund

The Inflation Reduction Act authorized EPA to create and implement Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund <<https://epa.gov/greenhouse-gas-reduction-fund>>, a historic \$27 billion investment to combat the climate crisis by mobilizing financing and private capital for greenhouse gas- and air pollution-reducing projects in communities across the country. Together, GGRF's National Clean Investment Fund, Clean Communities Investment Accelerator and Solar for All programs will finance clean technology deployment nationally, finance clean technology deployment in low-income and disadvantaged communities while simultaneously building the capacity of community lenders that serve those communities, and spur adoption of clean distributed solar energy that lowers energy bills for millions of Americans in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

Impact in Energy Communities

- **Appalachian Community Capital:** This nonprofit community development financial institution provides a decade of experience working with community lenders in Appalachian communities. Through a \$500 million award from the Clean Communities Investment Accelerator program, Appalachian Community Capital is launching the Green Bank for Rural America to deliver clean capital and capacity building assistance to hundreds of community lenders working in coal, energy, underserved rural, and Tribal communities across the United States.
- **Native Community Development Financial Institutions Network:** This nonprofit serves as national voice and advocate for the 60+ U.S. Treasury-certified native Community Development Financial Institutions, which have a presence in 27 states across rural reservation communities as well as urban communities and have a mission to address capital access challenges in Native communities. It will receive a \$400 million award from the CCIA program.
- **Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority:** Approximately 44 percent of Pennsylvania's population lives within the Appalachian Region – a Department of Energy priority region for communities susceptible to coal-specific job losses. To advance the transition to the clean energy economy in this region, the Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority has created a Solar for All strategy that centers workforce training programs, with the goal of creating and supporting thousands of new jobs in the solar and energy efficiency space over the five-year performance period – many of which will be filled by workers previously employed by the fossil fuel industry. The Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority has extensive experience running programs that emphasize workforce training models that prepare and directly connect individuals from low-income communities to middle-class career pathways in the clean energy sector, drawing on proven outreach strategies and engagement with local labor partners. The Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority will receive a \$156 million award from the Solar for All program.

- **Growth Opportunity Partners, Inc.:** Growth Opportunity Partners, Inc. (the country's first African American-led green bank), is the lead applicant for the Industrial Heartland Solar Coalition, representing 31 communities from eight states across America's industrial heartland and promising to usher in a new era for solar deployment and bring the clean energy transition to communities from the Midwest to the rust belt. Areas served through this program have a legacy of manufacturing and coal production, resulting in long-term economic hardship and environmental harm including brownfields and contaminated lands. For example, the City of Cincinnati, OH is exploring residential-serving community solar on a Brownfield site. The City of Grand Rapids, MI proposes to work with its utility to establish a new five-megawatt solar project that will deliver community solar to low-income residents at a city-owned superfund site that has been fully remediated by EPA. Chosen to receive a \$156 million award from Solar for All program, this collaborative solar acceleration program will drive substantial climate, economic, and environmental justice benefits across America's industrial heartland.
- **Hopi Utilities Corporation:** Hopi Utilities Corporation and partners Arizona State University and Hopi Renewable Energy Office will deploy residential solar and storage systems on the Hopi Reservation because of a \$25 million award from the Solar for All program. The Hopi Tribe is a chronically underserved, disadvantaged, coal-impacted community that suffers from high poverty rates and extreme energy inequity. Thirty-five percent of Hopi households do not have electricity access, and households that are grid-connected suffer from frequent and extended outages. This program will provide direct benefits to low-income and unelectrified households, mobilizing additional financing and tax—all at no up-front cost to residents

Clean School Bus Program

The Clean School Bus program <<https://epa.gov/cleanschoolbus>> provides \$5 billion over five years (FY 2022-2026) to replace existing school buses with zero-emission and low-emission models. Under the Program's multiple grant and rebate funding opportunities to date, the EPA has awarded almost \$2 billion to fund approximately 5,000 school bus replacements at over 600 schools.

Impact in Energy Communities

- **GreenPower:** EPA selected GreenPower to receive nearly \$18.5 million to help purchase 47 clean school buses in nine school districts across West Virginia. By accelerating the transition to low- and zero-emission vehicles, these awards will improve air quality for children and their families and advance environmental justice, all while boosting the economy and creating good-paying jobs.
- **Chinle Unified School District in Navajo Nation:** EPA awarded the Chinle Unified School District in Navajo Nation in the Four Corners region a \$5.9 million grant in 2023 which will help to add 15 additional electric school buses to the fleet.

Resources for Drinking Water

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provided more than \$50 billion [for additional investment in drinking water, wastewater, water reuse, conveyance and water storage infrastructure, including dedicated funding to replace lead service lines and address PFAS \(per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances\).](https://epa.gov/node/276124)

Improvements to water infrastructure are a frequently stated need for energy communities as they look to revitalize their economies. EPA's BIL funded drinking water programs have provided billions of dollars in assistance to states and communities.

Impact in Energy Communities

- **West View Water Authority:** In Allegheny County, PA, West View Water Authority received an \$8 million loan and more than \$5.4 million in principal forgiveness from the BIL through the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund to replace 750 lead service lines at priority lead service line replacement locations. This will help a community identified as low-income and protect drinking water according to the Source Water Protection Plan approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Education.

- **McDowell County, West Virginia:** McDowell County received a 100 percent forgivable \$1.5 million loan from the BIL to eliminate 118 failing septic systems from their community. To ensure impacted residents have access to reliable sanitation services, the funding will be used to construct a new wastewater treatment plant, modify an existing plant and connect the affected homes to the system. Centralizing wastewater services will help prevent septic system backups, leaks, and other environmental and public health concerns that can arise without ongoing maintenance.

Climate Pollution Reduction Grants

The Climate Pollution Reduction Grants program <<https://epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act/climate-pollution-reduction-grants>> provides \$5 billion in grants to states, local governments, Tribes, and territories to develop and implement ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution. Authorized under Section 60114 of the IRA, this two-phase program provides \$250 million for noncompetitive planning grants, and approximately \$4.6 billion for competitive implementation grants.

Impact in Energy Communities

- **Climate Pollution Reduction Planning Grants** <<https://epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act/about-cprg-planning-grant-information>>: Many states, local governments, Tribes, and territories that are home to energy communities received CPRG planning grants and are competing to receive funding from the implementation grants.

Community Change Grants Program

EPA's Environmental and Climate Justice and Community Change Grants program <<https://epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act/inflation-reduction-act-community-change-grants-program>> announced a notice of funding opportunity for approximately \$2 billion dollars in IRA funds in environmental and climate justice activities to benefit disadvantaged communities through projects that reduce pollution, increase community climate resilience and build community capacity to address environmental and climate justice challenges.

Impact in Energy Communities

- **Apply for Technical Assistance** [🔗 <https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/351071>](https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/351071) - Many energy communities also qualify as disadvantaged according to federal statute. Interested communities can learn more about the program and its technical assistance for applicants.

Clean Ports Program

Ports can be a significant source of diesel pollution, and those living near ports that bear the brunt of this pollution are often people of color and low-income families. The Clean Ports Program [<https://epa.gov/ports-initiative/cleanports>](https://epa.gov/ports-initiative/cleanports) provides \$3 billion in funding for zero-emission port equipment and infrastructure as well as climate and air quality planning at U.S. ports. This will ensure that our nation's ports, a critical part of our infrastructure and supply chain, address public health and environmental impacts on surrounding communities.

Impact in Energy Communities

- **Apply for a Grant** [🔗 <https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/352645>](https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/352645) - Many energy communities have port facilities on navigable bodies of water, or host dry-ports such as intermodal truck/rail facilities. Interested communities can learn more about applying.

Standing Grants Program

Every year, EPA awards more than \$4 billion in funding for grants and other assistance agreements. From small non-profit organizations to large state governments, EPA works to help many visionary organizations achieve their environmental goals. With countless success stories over the years, EPA grants remain an important tool to protect human health and the environment. Learn more about grants at EPA [<https://epa.gov/grants>](https://epa.gov/grants).

EPA Technical Assistance to Energy Communities

Energy Communities Technical Assistance Pilot Program

In May 2024, EPA announced two communities to receive technical assistance as part of the Energy Communities Technical Assistance Pilot program

<https://epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-partners-energy-communities-support-community-driven-energy-transition-and>. The program is aimed at supporting community-driven goals toward energy transition, including coal mine and power plant reuse and redevelopment, community revitalization and workforce transition for eligible communities in Energy Communities IWG Rapid Response Team regions. This assistance will provide selected communities planning support that centers around a two-day community workshop, where a team of experts will help community members develop an implementable action plan that promotes environmental and economic revitalization. After the workshop, the community will continue to use their experience to consult with EPA and a team of consultants as they develop a playbook that can assist other communities across the country with similar energy transition goals.

Impact in Energy Communities

- **Webster County, KY** will use the Energy Communities Pilot to empower its community to identify and leverage resources and partnerships to encourage new and diverse economic opportunities. Webster County is still experiencing the economic effects of its last mine closure in 2019 and is home to extensive abandoned mine land which the community would like to see rehabilitated and put to alternative uses.
- **The Hopi Tribe** had an economy centered around coal-related operations but the closure of the Navajo Generating Station in 2019 led to significant job and revenue loss. The Hopi Utilities Corporation was chartered by the Hopi Tribal Council in 2017 to address energy and water issues on the Reservation. The community intends to use the Energy Communities Pilot process to focus on key projects in alignment with its goals of enhancing energy sovereignty and improving energy access and reliability.

Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program

EPA's Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program

<https://epa.gov/smartgrowth/building-blocks-sustainable-communities> provides technical assistance with the goal to build a partnership between EPA and local communities to pursue development strategies that expand upon existing Brownfields (contaminated properties) clean-up efforts and advance clean air, clean water, equitable development and other local goals.

Impact in Energy Communities

- **Cheyenne, Wyoming** - Located within the Wyoming RRT, the City of Cheyenne will use Building Blocks tools to address urban sprawl, housing shortages and affordability issues. Cheyenne has experienced steady growth in recent years and has recently begun to address these issues through proposed and recently passed code amendments. Cheyenne intends to apply a smart growth lens to current codes and identify strategies to foster compact, mixed-use development.

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