



Agenda Date: 4/30/24
Agenda Item: 8J

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 1st Floor
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350
www.nj.gov/bpu/

CLEAN ENERGY

IN THE MATTER OF NEW JERSEY CLEAN ENERGY)	ORDER AMENDING
PROGRAM FISCAL YEAR 2024 COMMUNITY ENERGY)	APPLICATION CLOSING
PLAN GRANT PROGRAM)	DATE ¹
)	
IN THE MATTER OF NEW JERSEY CLEAN ENERGY)	DOCKET NO. QO23090714
PROGRAM FISCAL YEAR 2024 COMMUNITY ENERGY)	
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GRANT PROGRAM)	DOCKET NO. QO23100729

Party of Record:

Brian O. Lipman, Esq., Director, New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel

BY THE BOARD:

By this Order, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (“Board” or “BPU”) amends the program application closing dates for the Community Energy Plan Grant (“CEPG”) Program and the Community Energy Plan Implementation (“CEPI”) Grant Program from the dates originally stated in the Board’s November 17, 2023 Order.²

BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

By the November 2023 Order, the Board approved the third program year of the CEPG Program and establishing the CEPI Grant Program. These programs provide grants to municipalities for the purpose of developing community-level energy plans and implementing projects identified in those plans.

¹ This Order supersedes, in part, the Order entered on November 17, 2023.

² In re New Jersey Clean Energy Program Fiscal Year 2024 Community Energy Plan Grant Program & In re New Jersey Clean Energy Program Fiscal Year 2024 Community Energy Plan Implementation Grant Program, BPU Docket Nos. QO23090714 & QO23100729, Order dated November 17, 2023 (“November 2023 Order”).

Through CEPG, municipalities in New Jersey are eligible to receive grant awards of either \$10,000 or \$25,000 to develop Community Energy Plans (“CEPs”). Pursuant to the November 2023 Order, a total of \$4,574,034 is available in year three of the CEPG Program. The size of the grant awards depends on the overburdened status of each municipality. Overburdened municipalities (“OBMs”) are eligible for the \$25,000 award and priority technical assistance from Sustainable Jersey.³ OBMs are determined using the following criteria:

1. The municipality has more than 50% of its population living in an overburdened community (“OBC”) Census Block, as such term is defined by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (“NJDEP”) pursuant to New Jersey’s Environmental Justice Law, N.J.S.A. 13:1D-157 et seq.;⁴ and
2. The municipality meets one (1) or both of the following criteria:
 - a. More than 35% of the population is living on an income that is an amount that is under 200% of the threshold poverty level income line according to the U.S. Census 2021 American Community Survey census data;⁵ and
 - b. The municipality has a Municipal Revitalization Index (“MRI”) score of 40 or higher.⁶

All other New Jersey municipalities are eligible for the \$10,000 grant award and can receive technical assistance from Sustainable Jersey.

The Board approved several changes to the program in the November 2023 Order. For one, the criteria for determining OBM status was modified with the purpose of maintaining an active pipeline of eligible municipalities. The previous criteria requirement was that a municipality must have a MRI score of 50 or higher; which was changed, as outlined above, to the requirement that a municipality have a MRI score of 40 or higher. Second, the program timeline for awardees was shortened from 18 months to 12 months. This change was implemented to keep municipalities engaged in the process and increase the likelihood that municipalities will complete and return their grant agreements in a timely manner.

The CEPI Grant Program offers each municipality in New Jersey the ability to receive up to \$250,000 in funding to implement clean energy, renewable energy, and energy efficiency projects in their respective communities. The program was designed to complement the work completed through CEPG, supporting municipalities in implementing high-priority, high-impact, practical, and cost-effective municipal projects that were identified in CEPs. A total of \$3,414,180 is available through this program and, of that total, \$2,414,180 is funding received from the United States

³ Through the Board’s partnership with Sustainable Jersey on the CEP Grant Programs, Sustainable Jersey assists with program design and provides technical assistance to awardees selected to participate in the CEP Grant Programs. For more information about Sustainable Jersey, please visit <https://www.sustainablejersey.com>.

⁴ NJDEP, What are Overburdened Communities (OBC)?, <https://dep.nj.gov/ej/communities>.

⁵ United States Census Bureau American Community Survey, Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months (2021), Table S1701, [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2021.S1701?q+040XX00US34\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2021.S1701?q+040XX00US34$0600000). For an example of another program in which poverty level income line is used as a measurement, please see the Comfort Partners program, <https://www.njcleanenergy.com/residential/programs/comfort-partners/comfort-partners>.

⁶ An explanation on how MRI is calculated, as well as the most recent ranking, is available at <https://www.nj.gov/dca/home/MuniRevitIndex.shtml>.

Department of Energy (“DOE”) pursuant to its Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (“EECBG”) Program, and \$1,000,000 in funding from New Jersey’s Clean Energy Fund, as authorized by the Board in the November 2023 order.

Eligible applicants must be a New Jersey municipal government with a completed and adopted community energy plan or equivalent plan. An equivalent plan addresses the same elements as a CEP, including a timeline for each project’s implementation and strategies for implementation as identified using the Community Energy Plan Workplan Template.⁷ If program funds remain after all projects are selected, an applicant may receive funding for one additional project. Priority consideration will be given to OBMs, in accordance with federal Justice40 requirements.⁸

Amended Section – Programs Application Closing Dates

The original order established an application closing date for both programs of January 31, 2024. The following factors support extension of the application window for both grant programs:

1. N.J.S.A. 52:14-34.4 requires that a Notice of Funding Availability (“NOFA”) announcing available funds be published in the New Jersey Register. NOFAs for the CEPG and CEPI Programs have not yet been published in the New Jersey Register, but are scheduled to be published on May 6, 2024. The extension of the application window will provide sufficient notice to eligible municipalities following posting of the NOFA in the New Jersey Register.
2. The extension of the application window will provide more time for applicants to develop thorough, complete applications for both programs.
3. Municipalities will have more time to examine their CEPs to determine which initiatives are most important to pursue, which can then inform their CEPI applications.

Additionally, the November 2023 Order misstated the source of state funding for both of these programs. The November 2023 order incorrectly stated that the CEPI and CEPG Grant Programs were funded using \$5,574,034 from New Jersey’s “Clean Energy Program General Fund.” The correct name of the state funding source for both programs is the “Clean Energy Fund.”

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The Board **HEREBY AMENDS** the November 2023 Order to extend the application closing date for the CEPG and CEPI Programs to May 24, 2024, so that more time is available for municipalities to develop program applications. Additionally, the Board **HEREBY AMENDS** the November 2023 Order to extend the date by which Board Staff is to make recommendations for grant awards from Spring of 2024 to Summer of 2024 to coincide with the new application closing date.

Additionally, the November 2023 Order stated that CEPI was funded, in part, by \$1,000,000 in funds from the “Clean Energy Program General Fund,” which should have instead stated the

⁷ The Community Energy Plan Workplan Template is available at https://www.sustainablejersey.com/fileadmin/media/Actions_and_Certification/Actions/Energy/Community_Energy_Plan_Workplan_Template10_2021.pdf

⁸ Federal Register, Executive Order 14008 (2021) at 7631-7632, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-02-01/pdf/2021-02177.pdf>; US DOE, Justice40 Initiative, <https://www.energy.gov/justice/justice40-initiative>

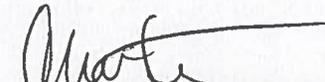
"Clean Energy Fund." Accordingly, the Board **FURTHER AMENDS** the November 2023 Order to reflect the correct funding source for the CEPG and CEPI Programs.

The Board **FURTHER ORDERS** that all the other aspects of CEPG, CEPI, and the November 2023 Order, shall remain in effect, except as otherwise modified by this Order.

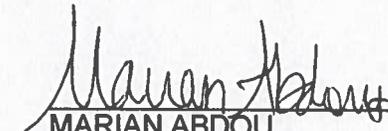
This Order shall be effective May 7, 2024.

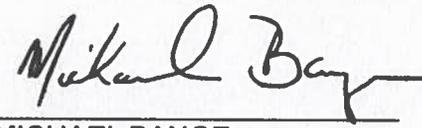
DATED: April 30, 2024

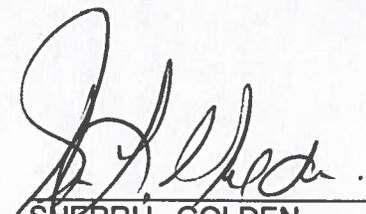
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COMMISSIONER

ATTEST: 
SHERRIL L. GOLDEN
SECRETARY

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the within document is a true copy of the original in the files of the Board of Public Utilities.

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PLAN GRANT PROGRAM
DOCKET NO. QO23090714

IN THE MATTER OF NEW JERSEY CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAM FISCAL YEAR 2024 COMMUNITY ENERGY
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GRANT PROGRAM
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