



CEJA POLICY: WORK-BASED LEARNING

VERSION NUMBER: CEJA 01-PL-26 **VERSION NUMBER:** 1
EFFECTIVE DATE: AUGUST 10, 2026 **LAST UPDATE:** N/A

I. ISSUANCES AFFECTED

References:

Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), Public Act 102-0662 as amended.
Illinois Administrative Code Title 14, Part 820, 840, & 850
Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program Manual (Chapters 1, 3, 7, 8, & 11)
Clean Jobs Workforce Network Hubs Program Manual (Chapters 1, 3, 7, 8, & 11)
Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA), Senate Bill 2814
Future Energy Jobs Act Craft Apprenticeship Program (Chapters 1, 3, 7, 8, & 11)
Future Energy Jobs Act Multicultural Job Program (Chapters 1, 3, 7, 8, & 11)
Future Energy Jobs Act Solar Pipeline Program (Chapters 1, 3, 7, 8, & 11)

Rescissions:

None

II. POLICY

Work-Based Learning (WBL) is a required element of the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program (also known as the CEJA Workforce Hubs), CEJA Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program, FEJA Craft Apprenticeship Program, FEJA Multicultural Job Program, and FEJA Solar Pipeline Program curricula.

Illinois treats Work-Based Learning as a continuum rather than as a single activity. The continuum helps grantees design experiences that grow in intensity and authenticity as participants build skills and confidence. It is not intended to prescribe a fixed sequence for every participant or program. These requirements establish minimum statewide standards for the design, implementation, documentation, approval, and reporting of Work-Based Learning under those programs. The intent is to improve consistency across grantees and align program practice with Illinois career pathways terminology, WIOA work-based training definitions where applicable, and standard Work-Based Learning practices.

This policy supplements—but does not replace—applicable statutes, administrative rules, grant agreements, curriculum frameworks, and program manuals. In the event of a conflict, the applicable statute, rule, grant term, or policy takes precedence over the program manual, in that order of authority.

1. Work-Based Learning Overview

Work-Based Learning is employer-driven training that provides participants with work-based opportunities to practice and enhance the skills and knowledge gained in their program of study or industry training; and develop their employability. It includes an assessment and recognition of acquired knowledge and skills.

NOTE: At the federal level, Perkins V legislation states that Work-Based Learning means sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in each career field and that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.

Lower-intensity WBL activities may be appropriate at the beginning of training or when participants are exploring options. Higher-intensity activities should be prioritized whenever feasible as they provide stronger opportunities to apply technical skills, receive employer feedback, and transition to quality employment or apprenticeship.

Below are definitions of the Work-Based Learning types that may be used within the CEJA and FEJA programs.

2. Types of Work-Based Learning

The goal of Work-Based Learning is to bridge the gap between **academic learning** and **professional practice**, preparing program participants for future employment. It is important to note that Instructional hours are led by training instructors and qualify for participant stipends. This is distinct from on-the-Job training (OJT), which is led by an on-site supervisor or manager.

Opportunities marked with an “” are often best suited to youth program participants between the ages of sixteen (16) and twenty-four (24). If sustained engagement or interaction with an employer on a real job site is not practicable, these activities may be an acceptable substitute. Grantees must request approval from their assigned Grant Manager and Regional Administrator before implementing any of these activities within their program.*

This section defines terms relevant to Work-Based Learning, as addressed in the program manual chapters under I. Referenced above.

- a. **Customized Training** is a business-driven program designed to meet the unique skill requirements of an employer or group of employers. This is separate from the approved CEJA/FEJA Curriculum and would be the result of an employer asking for specific new training. It allows businesses to train new hires or upskill current staff for advanced roles, with a minimum of **50% of the training costs reimbursed**. The employer must commit to employ, or continue to employ, the worker(s) upon successfully completing any customized training. Customized training must enable individuals to obtain industry or employer-recognized skills. Grantees need to receive approval from their assigned Grant Manager and Regional Administrator to utilize additional funding or request a budget modification for this activity.
- b. **Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)** is designed to meet the needs of an employer or group of employers to retain a skilled workforce or avert layoffs. It is designed to increase the skill levels of employees so they can be promoted within the company and create backfill opportunities for new or less-skilled employees. Employers must meet

local eligibility criteria to receive funds for training their workforce. Incumbent workers being trained typically have been employed with the company for at least six (6) months. Employers who receive these funds must meet requirements for providing the non-federal share of the cost for training. The matching requirement is based on the size of the employer and may go up to fifty percent (50%) of the cost. Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) requires an employer match, which varies based on the number of employees. For companies with more than one hundred (100) employees, the employer must match at least fifty percent (50%) of the total IWT grant, while those with fifty-one to one hundred (51-100) employees need a twenty-five percent (25%) match, and companies with fifty (50) or fewer employees require a ten percent (10%) match. Grantees will need to work with their assigned Grant Manager and Regional Administrator, and partner with their Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA) to set up incumbent worker training arrangements.

- c. **Internship/Practicum/Work Experience (WEX)*** is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period. Work experiences or internships may be paid or unpaid, as appropriate and consistent with other laws, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act. A work experience or internship may be arranged within the private for-profit sector, the non-profit sector, or the public sector. For youth, work experiences may also include:
1. Pre-apprenticeship programs;
 2. Summer employment and other employment activities available throughout the school year;
 3. Internships and job shadowing; and
 4. On-the-job training (OJT)

Note: The CEJA Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program has a minimum eligibility age of sixteen (16). The CEJA Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program (CEJA Workforce Hubs) has a minimum eligibility age of eighteen (18) by the time they complete the program.

- d. **On-the-Job Training (OJT)** provides reimbursements to employers to help compensate for the costs associated with skills upgrade training for newly hired employees and the lost production of current employees providing the training (including management staff). OJT training can assist employers who are looking to expand their businesses and who need additional staff trained with specialized skills. OJT employers may receive up to fifty percent (50%) reimbursement of the wage rate of OJT trainees to help defray personnel training costs. Depending on the size of the employer, OJT reimbursement may be as high as ninety percent (90%). This would be separate from their approved CEJA curriculum and would result from an employer asking for a specific new training. Grantees need to receive approval from their assigned Grant Manager and Regional Administrator to utilize additional funding or request a budget modification for this activity.
- e. **Registered Apprenticeship (RA)** is a program that combines on-the-job training (OJT) with related instruction that enables participants to master the practical and technical skills required for a skilled occupation. It must be registered with the U.S. Department of

Labor, meeting the standards defined by USDOL, which include the five (5) required components:

1. Business Involvement;
2. Structured On-the-Job Training;
3. Related Instruction;
4. Rewards for Skill Gains; and
5. Industry Credential

- f. **Pre-Apprenticeship** is limited to the CEJA Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program. It can't be counted toward the ten percent (10%) Work-Based Learning requirement for the Clean Jobs Workforce Program. For Climate Works participants who are not transitioning into an Apprenticeship Program, the grantee is accountable for WBL expectations.
- g. **Transitional Jobs (TJ)** are defined as time-limited, wage-paid work experiences that are subsidized up to one hundred percent (100%) for participants with barriers to employment who are chronically unemployed or have an inconsistent work history. These jobs are designed to enable them to establish a work history, demonstrate work success in an employer-employee relationship, and develop the skills that lead to unsubsidized employment.
- h. **Youth Apprenticeship*** combines paid on-the-job training (OJT) with classroom instruction for ages sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24). They help student participants build skills and earn portable credentials without college debt. In Illinois, state-aligned programs link high schools and employers to address industry talent shortages.

3. Work-Based Learning Curriculum Requirements

Work-Based Learning is a required element of the CEJA and FEJA program curricula. All covered grantees must include WBL as a planned, documented, and supervised part of the curriculum. At a minimum, WBL activities used to satisfy this policy **must**:

- a. Direct participants to Work-Based Learning opportunities during or after finishing formal classroom instruction.
Note: *While WBL can be completed during or after instruction, please be aware that it is a required part of the curriculum and must be fulfilled before participants finish formal classroom instruction.*
- b. Align with CEJA Core Equity Values.
Note: *Detailed information regarding the CEJA core values can be found in Chapter 2: Equity and Program Culture, in the program manual.*
- c. Align to the participant's training pathway, occupational focus, or related employability competencies.
- d. Reinforce foundational professional skills identified in the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework, including communication, professionalism, dependability, teamwork, problem solving, and workplace conduct.

- e. Incorporate construction work at job sites as part of program opportunities while taking instruction or immediately after the instruction component is complete.
- f. Include meaningful interaction with an employer, host, mentor, supervisor, or other industry-connected professional, unless the grantee has obtained prior approval for an alternative activity.
- g. Be supervised by the employer, host, site supervisor, program instructor, or other designated responsible party.
- h. Be documented in sufficient detail to support monitoring, reporting, and validation of completion.
- i. Be completed before a participant is recorded as a program completer, unless an exception is expressly authorized in the applicable program manual or in writing by the Grantees assigned Grant Manager and Regional Administrator.
- j. Provide participants with the opportunity to engage and interact with industry experts (e.g., employers) while learning to demonstrate essential employability and technical skills necessary for the workforce.
- k. Incorporate best practices as they deliver required program elements.
- l. Form Work-Based Learning partnerships with employers where available, from equity investment eligible communities, [equity eligible contractors](#) (CEJA Clean Energy Contractor Incubator, and businesses that are certified through the [Business Enterprise Program](#).
- m. Have strong connections with employers to assist with curriculum development and job placement.
- n. Provide opportunities in partnership with employers or nonprofit organizations in their region.

Note: Detailed information regarding developing partnerships can be found in Chapter 3: Partnerships, in the program manual.

- o. Provide a minimum of **ten percent (10%) Work-Based Learning hours**.
 - A) For the Workforce Hub program, at least ten percent (10%) of the curriculum hours should be Work-Based Learning activities.
 - B) For the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, Work-Based Learning and hands-on activities must be at least ten (10) hours at a worksite. If work site training is not technically possible due to U.S. DOL safety or other regulations that prohibit or limit the access of program participants, an experiential learning opportunity must be pursued.
 - 1) If a program cannot provide a Work-Based Learning experiences for technical or regulatory reasons, job site visits and tours may replace the requirements, with the approval of the grantee's assigned Grant Manager and Regional Administrator.

Note: Grantees are accountable for a minimum of 10% of their curriculum instructional hours to be allocated for Work-Based Learning hours. Work-Based Learning hours must be added to the existing curriculum hour requirement and are eligible for participant stipends.

4. Allowable Cost

Allowable costs are charges incurred by a grantee to support the implementation of a grant award that meets specific criteria for being necessary, reasonable, allocable, and consistently administered.

- a. Grantees are allowed to use grant funds to provide industry-linked skill training and Work-Based Learning to eligible individuals who have been accepted into their training program (e.g., instructor costs, curriculum materials, stipends, etc.).
- b. Documentation is required for Work-Based Learning:
 - 1) Reporting System
 - 2) Written employer agreement (MOU and contract)
 - 3) Participant attendance

III. IMPLEMENTATION

1. Grantees shall review the relevant CEJA Program Manuals, CEJA Legislative Rules, FEJA Program Manuals, and Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA), and Senate Bill 2814 to familiarize themselves with the Work-Based Learning criteria.
2. Administrative Procedures for Allowable Cost
 - a. Grantees shall ensure systems are in place for the review, approval, and payment under the Uniform Administrative Guidelines.
 - b. Staff duties for disbursing payments must be separated so that no one individual has complete authority or control over an entire financial transaction.
 - c. Participant and financial records regarding payments must be available for monitoring.
 - d. Stipends may pay for any Work-Based Learning opportunity that is not paid for by the employer.
 - 1) Barrier Reduction Funds (BRF) can be used if the WBL opportunity is unpaid and part of the participants' Transition Services.
 - 2) Stipends are **not** a wage, even when it is in collaboration with an employer.
 - 3) A stipend is for instructional hours that are **not** paid for by an employer.
 - 4) WBL activities that are part of instructional hours and offered in a classroom setting are considered instructional time.
 - 5) Stipends should not be paid for non-instructional, non-WBL hours (ex: resume prep, job search activities that occur outside the classroom setting).
 - 6) Grantees shall establish and utilize appropriate checks and balances necessary to guarantee the integrity of funding regarding allowable cost expenditures.
3. For funding and reporting purposes, the Reporting System is the official system of record. Grantees that have internal data systems must ensure that all Work-Based Learning activity related to the participant is also accurately recorded in the Reporting System for seamless tracking of metrics.
4. Grantees shall regularly communicate with CEJA Regional Administrators (Northern, Central, and Southern Regions) for any inquiries or assistance with the implementation.

IV. INQUIRIES

Inquiries should be directed to the appropriate CEJA Regional Administrator, Larry Dawson at Larry.Dawson@illinois.gov for the Northern Region, Nate Keener at Nate.Keener@illinois.gov for the Central Region, or Michelle Cerutti at Michelle.Cerutti@illinois.gov for the Southern Region.

V. ATTACHMENTS

None

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julio Rodriguez", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julio Rodriguez, Deputy Director
Office of Employment and Training

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