



# CJC At Work

*December 13, 2023*

## **Happy Holidays to the CJC Community!**

We have officially entered the holiday season and the end of the year is quickly drawing to a close. This hasn't been an easy year and yet, we can remain hopeful. As a global society, wars happening on other continents are deeply affecting our local communities.



It's during times like these that as we endure heartache and pain **as a collective, we continue to create solutions to take care of the most vulnerable.**

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The end of a year is a good time for reflection, while also providing an opportunity to look ahead. It's a time to look back on the year and see what we dared to tackle, what we were able to advance, and determine what more we must do. It's a time to connect and enjoy colleagues and friends we work closely with and those who we didn't see as often as we would have liked.

Since September, I have been a panelist on several occasions and was afforded the right set of circumstances to advocate on behalf of CJC member organizations and in support of jobseekers who face barriers to employment. My consistent message to each audience is that **CJC is keenly focused on honoring the full humanity of workers who are seeking economic security and facilitating transformative relationships to address the larger economic system.**

For far too long, Black and Brown communities have been left behind when planning for economic development and job creation is underway. CJC is closely following the implementation of the Illinois' Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) in support of ensuring that the spirit of the law is maintained and that environmental justice communities are prioritized to meet diversity and equity requirements. **CEJA has the potential to increase racial outcomes in the clean energy economy** with supply and demand by working with contractors and small clean energy businesses, as well as training and developing a career pipeline for the sector.

As we convene a wide range of stakeholders and share our aspirational vision for the workforce system, we acknowledge that the workplace is continuing to evolve. **Relationships of trust are mission critical as expectations from employees and employers are being negotiated from sector to sector with a growing momentum of organized labor unions.** There is an idea that "Rising Tides lift all boats," and if jobs are unionized, that could very easily be the road to improving job quality for workers. Advocates are open to this and want to see the benefits of good theory being put into action.

With more and more federal investments being made to states through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, workforce funding and efforts are

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expanding to a variety of State Of Illinois Agencies. More than ever before, the state of Illinois needs an interoperable workforce system to maximize resources, streamline efforts, and increase efficiencies. From the federal to the state and down to the local level, **we want workforce investments to be felt and realized by individuals who are most in need of being served.** Thank you for what we accomplished together over the last year, and I look forward to your continued partnerships and support as we advance our work in 2024.

**Wishing you a joyous season and a Happy New Year!**



Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones Ed.D.  
CEO, Chicago Jobs Council

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**Welcome to CJC!**

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Kyra Young is the new Operations Coordinator. In this role, she assists with HR tasks and the administrative needs of the organization.

Ignacio Hernandez is the Program Coordinator SNAP E&T. He coordinates training sessions and manages data analysis and evaluation tools.

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# SNAP & TANF Employment & Training Initiative



In 2023, the Chicago Jobs Council, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services, offered **training to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Employment & Training providers in Illinois**. These trainings helped workforce professionals build their capacity to better meet the employment needs of disadvantaged job seekers, low-income workers, and employers, and increased day-to-day engagement with clients.

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**A total of 437 individual providers were trained in 2023 throughout Illinois.**

We launched 41 trainings. These training topics ranged from client services such as *Career Coaching, Recruitment & Referrals, Documentation of Case Notes* and employer engagement training topics such as *Engaging & Deepening Employer Relationships, Job Retention, and Making the Right Employment Match*. The emphasis placed on both client services and employer engagement training topics acknowledges **the importance of employer relationships and partnerships to make employment more accessible to customers accessing SNAP and TANF Employment and Training services**. This makes for a person-centered and well-rounded workforce development approach to SNAP and TANF Employment and Training services.

**91% of those who attended trainings reported they are more confident about performing job duties, and 95% learned (or re-learned) new concepts or strategies to apply in their work.** The need for more convening spaces amongst providers was evident as 91% reported they expanded their knowledge of, or connections with, other organizations in the field. Lastly, 100% reported they would recommend training to a colleague in the field.

**Are you an IDHS grantee/provider? Feel free to check upcoming professional development opportunities made available free of cost via the SNAP & TANF Employment & Training Initiative (only for current IDHS grantees). Click [here](#)!**

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# 2023 Public and Customized Training Wrap-Up



As we look back on 2023 at the Chicago Jobs Council, there's a lot of work to be proud of.

This year we hosted a total of **29 training sessions with 820 workforce development professionals**. We had the opportunity to connect with organizations about their specific needs, and developed and facilitated 20 [customized trainings](#). We also returned to in-person training for the first time since 2020; we were delighted to welcome our colleagues back to the CJC office.

We had another cohort complete the [Chicago College and Career Advising Credential](#), with **18 professionals equipped to coach young people on their**

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**post-secondary trajectory.** The youth coaches in this program dug deep to explore their implicit bias, build their coaching skills, and learn about different pathway opportunities for young people.

After extensive research and development, **we launched the [Career Readiness Curriculum](#).** This free open-source curriculum applies behavioral science, coaching, and a racial equity lens to our traditional work readiness topics. We've already heard from our colleagues in the field that they've begun implementing this curriculum at their agencies and we can't wait to learn more about how folks use this tool.

It's been a big year for us at CJC and we're so grateful for the community of practitioners we work with. As we're looking ahead to 2024, we can't wait to continue this work with you. **We hope to see you soon at an [upcoming training](#).**

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## **Equity Eligible Contractor Roundtable**

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As 2024 approaches, **the rollout of the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) is picking up speed.** Since the close of the application window for the Clean Energy Contractor Incubator program on December 11th, workforce organizations and clean energy contractors across the state eagerly await the release of the Returning Resident Clean Jobs Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Those with extensive capacity and grant management experience are especially well-positioned amid the program announcements. On the other hand, Equity-Eligible Contractors (EECs) and Equity-Eligible Persons (EEPs) – groups whose success is directly linked to CEJA’s overarching goals – may have more difficulties applying for CEJA funding due to being first-time applicants.

**The Chicago Jobs Council recently hosted an event aimed at CEJA stakeholders,** EECs, and EEPs to foster collaboration and advance clean energy workforce initiatives. CJC’s EEC/EEP Roundtable was held on November 20th, 2023, and the event served as a platform for a comprehensive exploration of efforts to strengthen EEC and EEP participation in CEJA programs.

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**State Representative Marcus Evans**, a key participant, shared a legislator's perspective, emphasizing the imperative to bolster clean energy jobs for historically marginalized communities. Representing Illinois' 33rd District, which includes the South Side of Chicago and South Suburban Cook County, Evans also underscored the importance of diversity in clean energy initiatives. In his role as the Vice President of Communications for State Legislators at the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL), **he aims to set an example by proposing the establishment of three highly visible incubator hubs to garner support for clean energy jobs.**

Representative Evans stressed the need for patience in introducing new initiatives, envisioning progress and leadership in clean energy two decades from now. The meeting included insights from participants who discussed the bill's equity requirements, support for EECs in contractor pathways, high interconnection costs in rural disadvantaged communities, and fair loans for EEC equipment, hiring, and training. You can read more about the roundtable and ways to get involved or learn more about CEJA in our newest blog post.

[\*\*Read the Full EEC Blog Post Here\*\*](#)

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## **Our Mission**

Together with community and institutional leaders, Chicago Jobs Council is re-imagining our workforce system so all people can thrive through employment.

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## **Our Vision**

Our vision is to create an anti-racist workforce development system and employment equity so that everyone can realize their unique pathway out of poverty.

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