

Efficiency For All CT Workforce Program (M=Power)

Program Profile

Energy Efficiency Workforce Development

[Efficiency For All](#) (EFA) is a Connecticut nonprofit that was founded in 2017 by a concerned group of minority energy workers and community Environmental Justice advocates. EFA was formed to address the lack of minority representation in the clean energy industry and to address the lack of community access and input related to information and funding in the State of Connecticut's energy plans.

In 2021, EFA's Co-Chair and Executive Director, Leticia Colon de Mejias, created the [Efficiency for All CT Workforce Program](#) (also known as M=Power) to address the lack of diversity in Connecticut's clean energy workforce¹ and the challenge of existing clean energy programs often overlooking disadvantaged communities and communities of color. A private donor provided funding to help launch the program, which seeks to connect underrepresented populations in Connecticut to job opportunities in the clean energy field by providing comprehensive and customized training. Through this work, EFA addresses multiple needs by teaching job skills to underrepresented populations, which provides stability to individuals, fills a gap in the workforce, and paves a way for individuals, families, and communities to build generational wealth.

EFA works with Connecticut contractors in the clean energy and energy efficiency field to identify applicant strengths and weaknesses. The EFA team noted that a lack of soft skills and stability factors (e.g., transportation, childcare, housing) often made it difficult to hire and retain employees. The team used this feedback from employers and contractors to design a curriculum that provides technical training for clean energy and energy efficiency careers. These courses include at least seven nationally recognized [Building Performance Institute \(BPI\)](#) certifications and are offered alongside "agency and prosperity" skills (i.e., soft skills) training, such as time and finance management. The soft skills training helps build individual resilience and has proven to be key to the program's success.

¹ Efficiency for All CT, 2022. [EFA 2022 Career ConneCT OWS M=Power Cohort 1 Presentation.](#)

Fast Facts

Program scope: Clean energy workforce training.

Communities served: Underrepresented populations and environmental justice zones across Connecticut.

Funding: Donations, in-kind support from contractors and partners, federal funding, financial support from community partners.

Key partners: Donors, local utilities, contractors, and nonprofits.

Promising practices: Teaching life skills, addressing individual needs, word of mouth, working with organizations where job placements will be possible.



To qualify for the training program, an applicant must live in Connecticut, have a high school diploma or GED, be 18 years or older, and have a driver's license or be able to obtain one. Additionally, applicants must agree to attend classes and complete all training requirements, and be able to lift 40 pounds, climb ladders, and enter different spaces in homes and buildings.

Community History

Connecticut has some of the oldest and draftiest housing in the nation coupled with one of the highest costs of energy per capita in the nation,² which often leads to high energy burdens for residential customers. Additionally, the entire state of Connecticut is in nonattainment status for EPA's 2015 ozone standard due mainly to energy-related emissions.³

Energy efficiency is the least expensive way to retrofit aging housing, address high energy prices, and reduce carbon emissions. However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a loss of energy efficiency workers across the United States, widening the already growing workforce gap.⁴ The lack of certified workers with hands-on experience has been exacerbated by a need to quickly meet the expanded federal and local investments in clean energy and infrastructure upgrades.

Additionally, there is an outstanding need to connect Connecticut residents located in environmental justice communities to the benefits of the clean energy transition. While implementing activities to meet the state's goal of a 45 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030,⁵ EFA has also prioritized diversity, equity, and inclusion in its workforce development program.

Community Engagement

Community engagement has been essential to program development and implementation. The EFA M=POWER program partners with local nonprofits to provide educational opportunities to the community and has sponsored over 50 education and community engagement events. This community work enables EFA to engage with individuals, families, and organizations to create paths to prosperity and enroll participants in the program. The program has created partnerships with organizations such as [Green Eco Warriors](#), a minority-owned nonprofit organization that provides sustainability education, and has worked side by side with the [CT](#)

² Efficiency for All CT, 2023. [EFA M=Power Cohort 2 Outcomes Report](#) - page 30.

³ 2008 Ozone NAAQS Reclassification.

⁴ E4TheFuture, 2023. [Energy Efficiency Jobs in America](#).

⁵ Governor's Council on Climate Change, State of Connecticut, 2018. [Building a Low Carbon Future for Connecticut](#).



[Park and Forest Association](#) to teach community members about interconnectedness between humans and the environment.

Trainees who complete M=POWER are also able to provide ongoing community engagement by sharing their experience and success with others; this word-of-mouth outreach has resulted in many new applicants to the program. EFA also conducts surveys 3 months, 6 months, and a year after completion of the program. This information provides valuable data about trainees' post-training experience to understand how they feel during and after the program. This data allows EFA to continue tracking the program's impacts and to identify areas of improvement in the program model.

“What sets us apart and why we did this program is because we wanted people of color to see people of color who are already successful in the clean energy and efficiency industry and to be taught by them directly.”

- Leticia Colon de Mejias, Co-Chair and Executive Director, Efficiency for All

Key Partners

The program's objective has been to get cohort members into stable jobs within the clean energy field. To accomplish this, the team worked with a variety of local partners:

- [Capital Workforce Partners](#) – The regional Workforce Development Board for North Central Connecticut that helps individuals overcome barriers to employment and closes the gap between skills and business hiring needs.
- [Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy](#) – An executive branch that serves as the administrative staff for the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC), which sets strategy and policy for the state's workforce pipeline and serves as the prime coordinator for businesses, educators, trainers, state agencies, state workforce boards, and nonprofits.
- [Eversource](#) – A utility company that provides gas and electric service in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, which serves 149 towns with electric and 74 towns with natural gas in CT.
- [Avangrid](#) – A utility company that provides gas and electric serves for approximately 341,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers in the greater New Haven and Bridgeport areas of Connecticut, including 17 towns and cities along or near the shoreline of Long Island Sound.



- [Participating contractors](#) – Various companies that install heat pumps as part of the EnergizeCT program.

Capital Workforce Partners helped administer the pilot program and the Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy helped launch the program. This was done using [American Rescue Plan Act](#) (ARPA) funds to help cover some of the participant’s needs for up to six months, administer the grant, and provide ongoing support. Eversource provided ID badges for program participants working with approved contractors in the EnergizeCT energy efficiency programs.

Additional funding for subsequent training rounds was provided by the Office of Workforce Strategy’s Career ConneCT Training grant, as well as Eversource and Avangrid. These funding sources are braided to provide additional supportive services to program participants and nationally recognized BPI certifications. Furthermore, individual contractors collaborating with EnergizeCT provided in-kind support such as education and on-the-job training. Together, these partners continuously work to ensure that participants have what they need to succeed in their careers inclusive of real-world workforce needs.

Funding Mechanism

A private donor provided the funds to assist in the official launch of the Efficiency for All CT Workforce Development Program (a.k.a. M=Power). Once funding was in place, EFA applied for and received ARPA funding that enabled 10 trainees to complete the program. The program leveraged the ARPA funding, the private donation, and in-kind support from contractors (e.g., mentoring and on-the-job training) to support a total of 15 trainees in the first 12-week pilot program. The second EFA cohort received braided financial support from the Office of Workforce Strategy and local utilities Eversource and Avangrid. EFA seeks additional funding to expand its offerings, build a new classroom space, and develop a “train-the-trainer” program.

Program Impact

More than 42 Connecticut residents from vulnerable communities have already attained nationally recognized certifications through EFA’s supportive programs.⁶ All 42 of these trainees have also been successfully placed in clean energy careers. These individuals are gainfully

⁶ Efficiency for All CT, 2023. [EFA M=Power Cohort 2 Outcomes Report](#) - page 19.



employed in Connecticut and the program anticipates that 95 percent of program participants will continue to work full-time.⁷ EFA has also helped participants open bank accounts, build their credit scores, obtain reliable transportation, secure housing, and strengthen general life skills such as budgeting and time management. Though the end goal was securing careers in clean energy fields, all trainees have also gained stability, hope, and a path to a brighter and more secure future.⁸

“My family is safe and supported... I am so thankful for this program! I have a car, a legal driver’s license, and a career path with a future I can see.”

- **Jawon, Cohort 1**

Barriers and Challenges

EFA was inspired to create a program that would give community members of color the same opportunities in the local clean energy sector as other demographic groups. With help from state agencies and Capital Workforce Partners, EFA was able to develop a few pilot workforce training programs to help achieve that goal, but the greatest challenge continues to be securing adequate funding. Initially, EFA was unsuccessful in securing federal funding and had to rely on funding from a private donor. However, once private funding was secured, EFA was able to leverage it to secure grant funding.

EFA would be able to expand its impact with additional funding. Given the strong interest in the program among potential trainees, M=Power could expand its impact, but the grant process to secure additional funding has proven to be complex and time-intensive. Grant applications can be onerous even for small amounts of funding. Further, a lack of capital results in capacity constraints, which then precludes the program from acquiring more funds. Without sufficient staff to dedicate time to grant applications, funding will remain a hurdle. Additionally, due in part to the program’s funding constraints, the team running the trainings is small and can only reach a limited number of participants.

When developing program requirements, EFA has had to restrict program eligibility in unexpected ways. M=Power trains individuals to become contractors for [EnergizeCT](#), an initiative of utility-led energy efficiency programs across the state, which requires contractors to have a clean criminal record since workers will be entering customers’ homes. This means that the program must turn away formerly incarcerated candidates. Additionally, driver’s licenses and

⁷ Efficiency for All CT, 2023. [EFA M=Power Cohort 2 Outcomes Report](#) - page 25.

⁸ Leticia Colon de Mejias, Efficiency for All, 2023. Personal Communication.



reliable transportation continue to be an issue for program participants. Connecticut high schools no longer offer driver training and the costs to register and insure cars in Connecticut can be seen as exclusionary. Without reliable transportation, participants are precluded from obtaining a job that requires driving or in-office work.

Recommendations from the Field

EFA continues to grow and adapt its workforce program with each passing cohort and provides the following recommendations from its experience to date:

- **Target underrepresented communities.** Meet people where they are—use multilingual formats, simplify messaging, and make the pathway to careers clear. Provide youth and family-based education that speaks to diverse populations by ensuring materials reflect and represent the target populations. Work to address and include reentry candidates.
- **Avoid stops and starts.** Develop a planned schedule to support ongoing enrollments and secure a funding stream that allows for continuity. This will allow the pipeline to keep moving and mitigates the loss of participations, employer interest, and/or trainers.
- **Address individuals holistically.** Include training in basic life skills, which is critical to a successful program and a lasting impact. Allowing participants to find and experience personal success in any industry will create a ripple effect.
- **Build in replication and scalability.** Use a “train-the-trainer” approach and plan for it to build on itself. Though the team running the trainings is currently small, training individuals who can replicate the training helps ensure that others are available to carry on the program’s mission and that the program can be scaled up.
- **Compensate fairly.** Provide compensation to key actors such as contractors, which can improve the training program’s long-term sustainability. Though the EFA team aims to do this for the teams who currently offer their time at no charge, additional funding is needed given that much of the program is funded by donations and in-kind support.
- **Collect and respond to feedback.** Regularly solicit input from stakeholders to adapt and grow the program. EFA has incorporated training modules into the curriculum based on program partner requests and is building a classroom space to accommodate growing interest, which it learned about through post-training surveys to trainees.

For More Information

- [Efficiency for All](#)
- [EFA CT Workforce Program](#)