Powering Up the U.S. Economy

How State Energy Offices and Economic Development Organizations Advance Energy-Based Economic Development

NASEO
National Association of State Energy Officials

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

RESTART INSTITUTE

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Energy plays an inextricable and important role in the U.S. economy. It is an essential input for almost every economic activity — from household and business operations to transportation, logistics, manufacturing, and production. Energy sources and technologies also present significant and wide-ranging opportunities for domestic production, business competitiveness, entrepreneurial innovation, and job creation in nearly every county and state in the United States.

To harness energy-based economic development opportunities, state governments and their regional, local, and private-sector partners have many robust tools at their disposal. This report explores the actions that State and Territory Energy Offices (henceforth State Energy Offices), working in partnership with economic development organizations, can take to advance energy-based economic development. It is informed by the findings of a joint initiative between the National Association of State Energy Officials and the International Economic Development Council, which brought their members together to understand and action-plan opportunities for collaboration on energy tax credits, private-sector power needs, energy infrastructure siting and permitting, project financing, and workforce development.

Using data and stakeholder-informed policy and program development, improved siting and permitting processes, and infrastructure and project investments, State Energy Offices and economic development organizations are uniquely suited to promote economic competitiveness and growth through:

- ***Energy affordability***: Lower energy cost burdens enable businesses to dedicate a higher portion of their revenue toward operations, salaries, and the provision of goods and services. Energy and economic development agencies can help businesses and industry lower energy costs through increased energy generation, energy efficiency, and guaranteed energy saving performance contract programs or by facilitating agreements that enable these entities' access to lower electricity rates and fuel prices.
- ***Energy reliability***: Access to a reliable, readily available supply of energy enables businesses and industries to plan effectively, minimize downtime, attract investment, and avoid costly disruptions from power outages or fuel shortages. State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can conduct analyses, connect businesses with utilities, and facilitate siting processes to co-locate large loads and generation sites and new clean energy resource development.
- ***Energy optionality***: The ability to procure various energy sources and fuel supply options enables businesses to adapt to fluctuating prices and changing consumer preferences. By espousing policies, programs, and initiatives that diversify energy sources, State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can help businesses be better positioned to serve their unique markets and customers.

Specific collaborative actions that State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can take in pursuit of these goals include helping meet businesses' evolving energy needs; accelerating siting and permitting processes; supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and small business growth; addressing capacity constraints; building the workforce; coordinating strategic planning; and facilitating long-term partnerships.

Figure 1. Energy-Economic Development Actions Highlighted in this Report

MICHIGAN
C3 Accelerator
Mobility Plan

MINNESOTA
State Competitiveness Fund
Local Grant Development Assistance Program

NORTH DAKOTA
Energy-Economic Agency Partnership

WASHINGTON
FundHubWA

OREGON
Rural Renewable Energy Development Zones Program

WYOMING
Regional Economic
Coordination Office

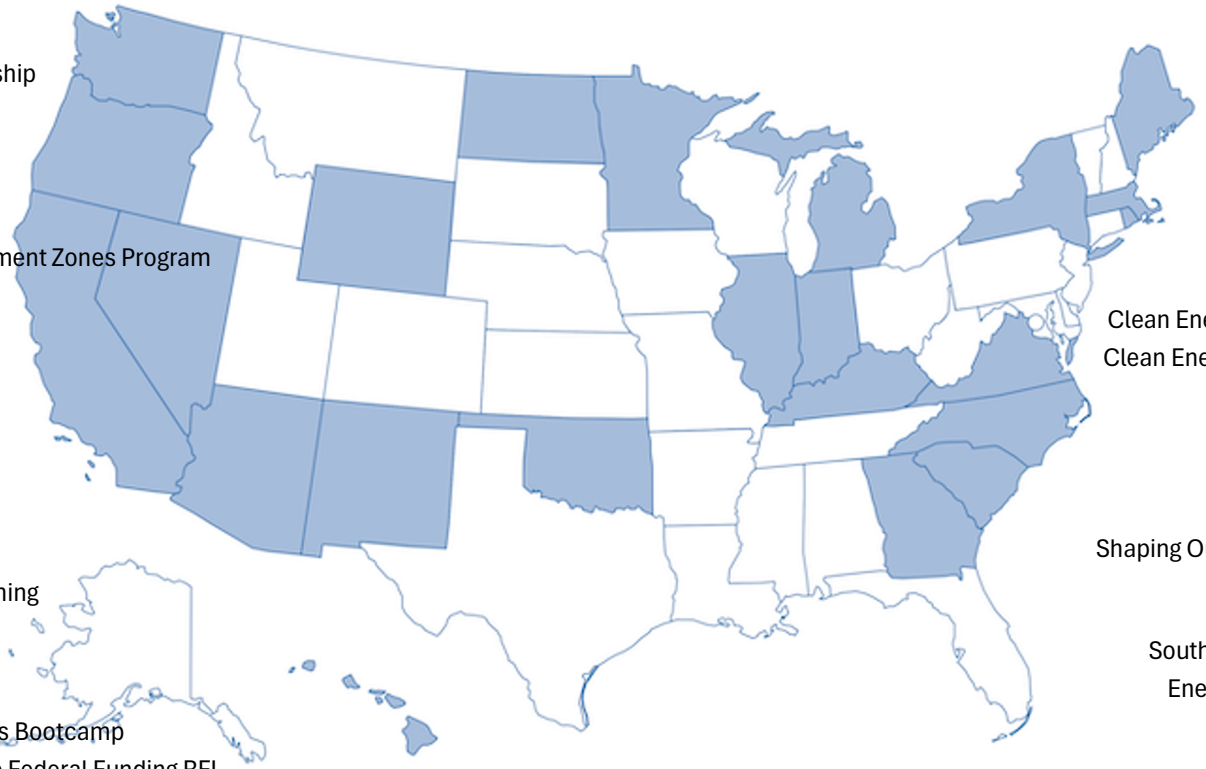
CALIFORNIA
Energy Innovation Ecosystem

NEVADA
Executive Order 2023-07 Establishing
Energy Policies Objectives

ARIZONA
Local First Arizona Green Business Bootcamp
Clean Energy Projects to Leverage Federal Funding RFI

NEW MEXICO
New Mexico 2025 Economic Development State Plan Update
Harnessing Federal Funding Opportunities in New Mexico Stakeholder Roundtable
Leverage Federal Funding Programs for Clean Energy Projects in New Mexico RFI

OKLAHOMA
RSTEP Siting Collaborative



MAINE
Community Energy Redevelopment Program
Clean Energy Partnership
Clean Energy Jobs Network

MASSACHUSETTS
Energy Facilities Siting Board

RHODE ISLAND
Brownfields Solar PV Program
Clean Energy Jobs Report

NEW YORK
Build-Ready Program

ILLINOIS
Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program
Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator

INDIANA
RSTEP Siting Collaborative

KENTUCKY
Shaping Our Appalachian Region Partnership

VIRGINIA
Southwest Virginia DELTA Lab Initiatives
Energy-Economic Agency Shared Staff

NORTH CAROLINA
Clean Energy Youth Apprenticeship Pilot
STEPS4GROWTH

GEORGIA
Georgia Power CARES Program

HAWAII
Clean Energy Sector Partnership

Introduction

Across the United States, new and evolving economic opportunities are catalyzing the expansion of affordable, reliable power and the use of public-private partnerships to advance market-driven technology innovation. Data centers, industrial onshoring, and the need to power buildings and vehicles continue to increase demand for electricity — with peak demand projected to rise by approximately 15% over the next 10 years and some regions at a high or elevated risk of electricity shortfalls.[1] Through their roles leading strategic energy and economic planning and engaging local agencies and businesses, states will be increasingly important venues to facilitate the availability of affordable, reliable, and clean energy and drive innovation in response to economic growth and customer and business needs.

In particular, State Energy Offices, state and regional economic development organizations, and other key stakeholders are uniquely positioned to help their states and regions harness energy-based economic development opportunities. Notably, these opportunities flow in multiple directions — not just in the delivery of affordable, reliable, and clean energy to power business operations and increase market competitiveness, but also in the creation and incubation of businesses that advance innovative energy technologies.

State Energy Offices and economic development organizations have complementary roles and expertise and often share priorities such as job creation, the promotion of business competitiveness and operational affordability, and the advancement of local and regional economic development. State Energy Offices are typically responsible for informing state energy policies and developing strategic energy plans that advance a range of priorities and objectives, such as energy affordability, energy security, economic development and job growth, emissions reductions, environmental stewardship, and resilience. State Energy Offices design and administer energy programs; offer technical assistance and serve as a trusted source of energy information for households and businesses; support energy research, development, demonstration, and deployment; and regularly engage with a wide array of public and private stakeholders.

Economic development organizations, which generally serve either at the state or metropolitan/regional level, and may operate as public, quasi-public, or entirely private-sector entities, engage a variety of industries to support the creation and retention of jobs and promote economic well-being and quality of life. Economic development organizations seek to attract prospective businesses to states and retain and expand businesses that facilitate economic growth, enhance local wealth-building opportunities, and contribute to the tax base. Economic development organizations lead planning in partnership with the businesses they represent, and serve as resource providers, advocates, and liaisons among the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. They often connect businesses with state incentives and resources, help support small business growth and entrepreneurship, shepherd businesses through siting and regulatory processes, and support workforce creation and retention efforts.

Continued growth and technological advancement in the energy sector provides a significant opportunity for State Energy Offices and economic development organizations to secure a range of benefits for their stakeholders, including job creation, increased tax revenue, economic and energy security, and affordability. This report explores the challenges and opportunities associated with efforts to unlock these benefits, such as the need for capacity-building, workforce improvements, and more efficient siting, permitting, and interconnection processes. Collaboration and

coordination among State Energy Offices, economic development organizations, and industry and local partners can harness the benefits of the evolving energy industry.

To help states maximize the economic potential of energy investments, support energy affordability in domestic manufacturing, and foster strategic coordination across energy and economic development activities and planning efforts, the National Association of State Energy Officials and the International Economic Development Council launched an initiative to support collaboration among State Energy Offices and state and regional economic development organizations. NASEO and IEDC conducted one-on-one meetings with over 30 states to help inform the initiative, and launched a working group in the fall of 2023 to bring together State Energy Offices and economic development organizations for regular discussions on topics including energy tax credits, meeting businesses' power needs, siting and permitting of energy projects on underutilized land, project financing, and building the energy workforce including in rural areas. NASEO and IEDC also provided in-depth technical assistance and organized in-person roundtable events with interested states to facilitate connections and support strategic planning. This report offers lessons learned and key examples from the initiative and provides a framework for collaboration, with specific actions State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can take to deepen coordination and drive energy-based economic growth.

The framework for collaboration organizes potential actions states interested in advancing energy-based economic development can take into five categories, with real-world examples for each:

1. **Meeting businesses' evolving power needs:** Supplying businesses, particularly U.S. manufacturers, with sufficient energy to sustain their operations is crucial to foster economic development and, more broadly, ensure grid reliability. State Energy Offices and economic development organizations are uniquely positioned to share data, analysis, and plans that encourage informed development of generation assets and elevate innovative utility procurement options.

2. **Accelerating siting and permitting processes:** The pace of energy project installations and operations relies heavily on siting and permitting timelines. Coordination among State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can help streamline the siting and permitting process for energy projects to assist in meeting the growing demand for power while creating mutually beneficial outcomes for developers, ratepayers, and residents.

3. **Supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and small business growth:** State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can drive energy technology innovation and support small businesses by fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems and collaborating on business incubator and accelerator programs.

4. **Addressing capacity constraints and building the workforce:** State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can help businesses and local governments build their energy sector workforce and expertise by compiling resources, connecting stakeholders, and designing training and education opportunities in response to industry needs.

5. **Coordinating strategic planning and facilitating long-term partnerships:** State Energy Offices and economic development organizations play a pivotal role in energy and economic development planning efforts. By coordinating strategic planning activities and

creating frameworks that facilitate ongoing partnerships, these entities can help synchronize their states' long-term energy and economic goals and enhance the likelihood of success.

Framework for Collaboration

Action 1: Meeting businesses' evolving energy needs

Meeting businesses' evolving energy requirements is crucial to foster economic development and ensure grid reliability in a decarbonized future. Workforce, energy suppy, and the ability of a state or region to meet large energy users' energy needs are among the top factors in site selection decisions for businesses,[2] particularly as U.S. electricity demand is projected to increase significantly over the next decade. In addition to overall load growth, businesses are increasingly looking to power their operations with clean energy. According to a report by the Clean Energy Buyers Association and Wood Mackenzie, Fortune 1000 companies will collectively need 275 GW of carbon-free energy by 2035 to achieve their goals, equivalent to one-fifth of the current total installed capacity.[3]

To meet this challenge, collaboration among economic development organizations, State Energy Offices, investor and consumer-owned utilities, and regulators will be increasingly important to ensure that the power supply aligns with business growth and corporate sustainability objectives. Addressing these needs requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that could include investing in demand-side management strategies to reduce energy consumption, pairing new energy generation with storage technologies to improve grid reliability and resilience, and working with businesses to design solutions that meet their operational and corporate sustainability goals while maintaining affordable electricity costs for ratepayers. States may also focus investments in emerging clean energy technologies that offer stable, zero-emission power, such as geothermal and advanced nuclear. Carbon capture and storage solutions can also make existing and new energy infrastructure more sustainable. By integrating these diverse strategies and encouraging public-private partnerships, State Energy Offices, economic development organizations, and other key stakeholders can support a resilient energy system that meets business demands, attracts investment to states, and supports broader economic and environmental goals.

Co-locating energy hubs near large loads

Siting energy projects and infrastructure alongside large energy users, such as factories and data centers, can reduce grid and rate impacts, speed development timelines, and bolster local economies.

- **Example**: In Virginia, where data center growth could contribute to a 183% increase in electricity demand by 2040,[4] a collaborative effort involving the Virginia Department of Energy, regional economic development organizations, industry partners, and local utilities is working to encourage strategic data center and energy project development to revitalize formerly mined land in Southwest Virginia, create jobs, and meet state and private-sector energy goals. Formally introduced as part of the 2022 Virginia Energy Plan, the Southwest

Virginia Energy DELTA (Discovery, Education, Learning, and Technology Accelerator) Lab initiative offers comprehensive support to help develop clean and innovative energy projects alongside a "Data Center Ridge" site in Southwest Virginia. The proposed Data Center Ridge would allow for data center cluster development on a 450-acre brownfield site with proximity to additional land for behind-the-meter generation projects. The Energy DELTA Lab team is actively engaging with data center developers while supporting a portfolio of energy projects at varying stages of development that would power the data centers and other tech companies. The projects have garnered $10 billion in private investment and include technologies from advanced nuclear and hydrogen, to utility-scale solar and wind, and pumped hydropower storage.[5] The Energy DELTA Lab team leverages the technical site knowledge and energy expertise of the Virginia Department of Energy as well as the business attraction capabilities of InvestSWVA, and has built critical partnerships with local planning districts, the county industrial development authority, utilities, and a local community college, to create a supportive ecosystem for projects. Together, the Energy Delta Lab and its partners aim to meet the evolving energy needs of data centers and other businesses, while fostering innovation, creating jobs, and diversifying the economy in Southwest Virginia.

Innovative procurement and subscription options

Utilities also can work directly with large energy users when planning investments and designing programs to drive new economic development, support their customers' sustainability goals, and protect energy affordability. A noteworthy initiative is the Georgia Power Clean and Renewable Energy Subscription (CARES) Program.

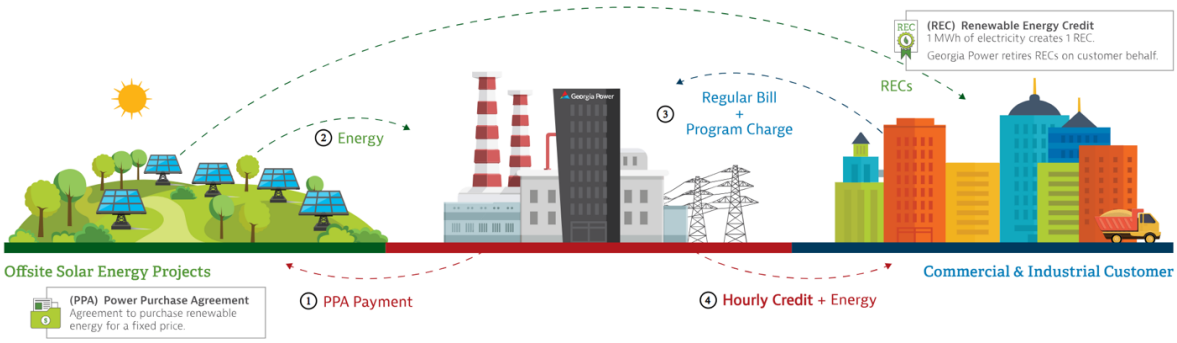
- **Example**: Building on the success of the Renewable Energy Development Initiative and Customer Renewable Supply Program (CRSP), the CARES Program enables commercial and industrial customers to support Georgia Power's procurement of 2,100 megawatts of utility-scale solar through a subscription model in which Georgia Power establishes a power purchase agreement with a developer and the commercial and industrial customer pays a subscription price and receives a kilowatt-hour (kWh) credit and renewable energy credit (REC).[6] This innovative program provides a unique opportunity for commercial and industrial customers to seamlessly incorporate renewable energy into their operations and requires minimal up-front investment, enabling businesses to align their energy consumption with corporate sustainability targets while facilitating Georgia Power's procurement of new renewable energy resources.

  The program is open to the following customer subsets and is designed to cater to distinct customer needs: "Existing Commercial and Industrial Customers" that have an annual peak demand of at least 3 MW or are adding at least 15 MW of new electric load, "Existing Municipalities, Universities, Schools, and Hospitals" with an annual peak demand between 1 MW and 3 MW, and "New Economic Development Customers" adding 50 MW or more of new electric load.[7] The Economic Development customer category was added in response to market feedback and the number of large load requests Georgia Power was receiving from new customers. Georgia Power also offers a Carbon Free Energy – Around the Clock

(CFE-ATC) option for customers with additional load of at least 25 MW.[8] Customers participating in the CARES Program have two pricing choices: the variable price option, which includes a per-kWh charge primarily influenced by the costs outlined in the power purchase agreement, or the fixed price option, which includes a predetermined per-kWh charge reflective of current and projected REC values.

Georgia Power has already seen a robust response to the program, with interest significantly exceeding the 2,100 megawatts of renewable resources the utility is approved to procure by the Public Service Commission. While the CARES Program is still in its early stages, the program's precursor, CRSP, successfully helped large energy users across the state meet their clean energy goals. This includes customers like QTS, which at the time of contracting to participate in the CRSP program had the potential to source up to 90% of its data center power needs from renewable sources.[9] By participating in programs like CARES and CRSP, businesses are empowered to meet their energy and sustainability ambitions while also promoting the broader adoption of renewable energy across Georgia — benefiting from increased predictability, scalability, and the environmental advantages associated with clean energy consumption.

Figure 2. Flow of energy and financial benefits of Georgia Power's CARES Program



Action 2: Accelerating siting and permitting processes

The pace of energy project installations and operations relies heavily on siting and permitting timelines. Coordination among State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can help streamline the siting and permitting process to assist in meeting the growing demand for power while creating mutually beneficial outcomes for developers and host communities. As liaisons between businesses and state government, economic development organizations can support companies in navigating the siting and permitting processes by making connections with key state agencies, setting expectations around timelines and requirements, and shepherding companies through the process. State Energy Offices can offer technical expertise and serve as a trusted source of information. Together, State Energy Offices and economic development organizations may collaborate to inform siting decisions, convene stakeholders, and offer coordinated technical assistance, and partner to encourage energy project development on underutilized sites.

Collaborating to inform siting decisions

State Energy Offices and economic development organizations may lead or serve on committees or working groups to help inform siting decisions and provide relevant data and context related to states' energy and economic development priorities.

- **Example:** The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (the State Energy Office) and the Executive Office of Economic Development both serve on the Energy Facilities Siting Board, an independent entity that evaluates proposals for large energy facilities to ensure reliable power for the state, while balancing affordability and environmental considerations.[10]

Offering technical assistance and education

State Energy Offices and economic development organizations collaborate to provide technical assistance and engage communities on energy project siting issues.

- **Example:** With funding from the Renewable Energy Siting through Technical Engagement and Planning (R-STEP) program, the Oklahoma State Energy Office and Oklahoma Department of Commerce are collaborating with Oklahoma State University and additional partners to convene stakeholders, develop an online resource hub, and provide technical assistance with the goal to "improve decision-making processes for siting solar, wind, and battery energy storage projects."[11]

- **Example:** Similarly, the Indiana Office of Energy Development (the State Energy Office) and the Center for Infrastructure and Economic Development (an economic development organization) are a part of an R-STEP collaborative led by Purdue University Extension to "serve as a technical resource and community engagement hub to assist Indiana communities with renewable energy planning, evaluation, and decision-making."[12]

Facilitating energy development on underutilized and disturbed land

State Energy Offices and economic development organizations are well positioned to partner on initiatives to encourage energy-related economic development on underutilized land such as brownfields and landfills, or already-disturbed land such as former industrial and commercial sites.

- **Example:** In Rhode Island, the Office of Energy Resources (the State Energy Office) and Rhode Island Commerce (a quasi-public state economic development organization) coordinate closely to offer incentives for solar projects sited on brownfields. The Brownfields Solar PV Program is part of the Renewable Energy Fund (REF) managed by Rhode Island Commerce and funded through system benefit charges, alternative compliance payments, repayment of loans made through the program, and payments from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.[13] Depending on whether a project is directly owned or third-party owned, the REF Brownfields Solar PV Program provides an $0.80 or $1.00 per watt (DC) incentive to eligible entities, including business and nonprofits, to install solar on brownfield sites.[14] Selected projects can receive an additional incentive for colocating

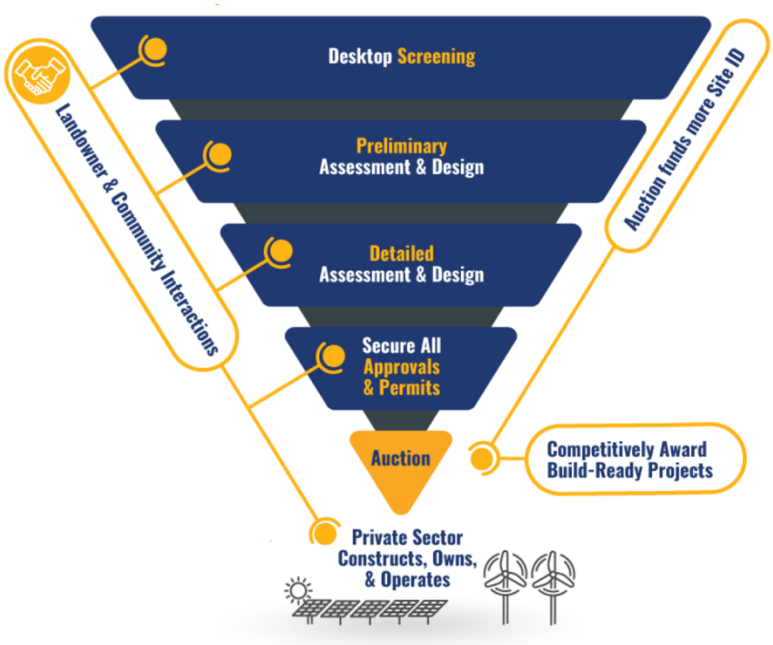
energy storage with a solar project.[15] As part of the application process, applicants must describe how a project will provide economic development benefits to the state.[16]

- **Example:** The Maine Community Energy Redevelopment Program (MECERP), managed by the Maine Governor's Energy Office and the Department of Economic and Community Development, and funded by the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan, offers technical assistance to advance locally driven energy projects on current and former industrial sites. MECERP helps communities with concept development, site planning, community engagement, and action planning to support projects that help revitalize industrial sites, leverage underused or legacy electricity infrastructure, and align with Maine's economic and clean energy goals**.**

- **Example**: Through the Build-Ready Program, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) helps prepare target locations such as brownfields, landfills, former commercial and industrial sites, former fossil [fuel?] generation sites, and parking lots for development by securing necessary permits and approvals, then competitively awards projects to renewable energy developers to finance, build, operate, and maintain them. By aligning the program with existing economic development priorities and collaborating with local economic development corporations and regional economic development councils, NYSERDA (the State Energy Office) works to ensure that the resulting renewable energy projects can create local economic benefits, including job creation, business growth, and increased tax revenue for municipalities. NYSERDA also works closely with local workforce development boards, community colleges, and technical training institutions to help equip people with the skills needed to support renewable energy projects.

  Figure 3 outlines the Build-Ready project development process. Project sites are initially selected based on a nomination or by analysis conducted by the Build-Ready team, which includes NYSERDA staff and consultants. Build-Ready then coordinates with landowners and various state and local authorities to shepherd projects through the design, permitting, and interconnection process, and engages regularly with host communities to develop community benefits packages. Once a site is ready, NYSERDA holds an auction through which private renewable energy developers compete to construct, own, and operate the site.[17]

Figure 3. NYSERDA Build-Ready Process for Preparing Energy Project Sites for Development[18]



Action 3: Accelerating entrepreneurship and technology innovation

Entrepreneurs are at the center of innovation. They drive new ideas, take risks, and make essential connections across public, private, and philanthropic spaces. Small businesses serve as anchors for their communities, and can act as gateways for resources, information, capital, and professional networks to reach stakeholders of all kinds. State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can offer support to entrepreneurs and small businesses by fostering their ecosystems and by keeping entrepreneurs' unique needs in mind when designing services and deploying resources.

Unlike more established businesses, early-stage entrepreneurs and innovators may need customized support throughout the different stages of their growth, such as more flexible loans or specialized training and networking opportunities. In the energy sector, entrepreneurs may need assistance in navigating the various federal, state, and local rules and opportunities that govern power and fuels. Strategies to assist entrepreneurs often include ecosystem-building, business incubators and accelerators, training programs, and funding.

Entrepreneurial ecosystem-building

Entrepreneurial ecosystems are interconnected networks of professionals and supporting institutions such as economic development agencies, community-based organizations, financial institutions, and colleges and universities. State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can partner to support these ecosystems through initiatives that strengthen linkages and expand access to resources. For example, states can support professional networking hubs

that provide open networks for clean energy entrepreneurs, funders, and assistance providers to connect. State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can bring together stakeholders throughout the clean energy ecosystem or launch state-led innovation frameworks that connect entrepreneurs with technical assistance, funding, training, and resources.

- **Example:** The California Energy Commission's (CEC) Energy Innovation Ecosystem was established in 2016 to connect entrepreneurs across the state with resources, training, funding, mentorship and technical assistance for clean energy projects from concept to impact. The program was developed in response to a lack of venture capital support in the cleantech sector and to meet the specific needs of cleantech entrepreneurs, whose projects often require longer timelines and larger initial investments than other technologies. The program includes innovation clusters throughout the state and the California Sustainable Energy Entrepreneur Development initiative, which provides early-stage funding to clean energy entrepreneurs, and the California Test Bed Initiative, which provides vouchers and facilitates connections between entrepreneurs and test bed facilities to enable testing and validation of emerging technologies. The Energy Innovation Ecosystem and its regional innovation hubs bring together state agencies, municipalities, utilities, community-based organizations, foundations, and private businesses to contribute funding, resources, expertise, and market access for the state's clean energy entrepreneurs.

  The CEC provides ecosystem funding through two direct grants to entrepreneurs. The Bringing Rapid Innovation Development to Green Energy grant provides momentum to companies that have received recent funding from eligible public sources and private investment, and the Realizing Advanced Manufacturing and Production grant helps entrepreneurs establish pilot manufacturing lines, demonstrating readiness for mass production and market adoption. Competition for these grants is intense, demonstrating the value of complementary programming to support California's clean energy entrepreneurs.

Business incubators and accelerators

Business incubators and accelerators help entrepreneurs and their startup enterprises grow, often offering technical assistance, capital, and access to facilities, equipment, and other resources. Many states have established business incubation programs through public-private partnerships with universities, private investors, municipalities, local organizations, and others to provide entrepreneurs with a range of resources to catalyze their businesses' growth.

- **Example:** The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity offers two programs to support contractors in growing their clean energy business. The Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program provides eligible contractors with low-cost capital, insurance assistance, vendor registration guidance for state incentive programs, and connections to firms hiring contractors. It also offers training, mentoring, and support to help businesses compete for projects and funding. The Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program provides multi-year one-on-one coaching to help contractors develop five-year business plans, with mentorship, monthly progress reviews, and assistance with

bid preparation and accessing state and federal funding. Contractors are eligible for operational support grants and capital for up-front project costs. Both programs were established by the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act and receive a combined $30 million allocation annually, subject to appropriations.

- **Example:** The Maine Governor's Energy Office (GEO) launched its Clean Energy Partnership (CEP) in 2022 to accelerate the state's clean energy transition while strengthening workforce and economic development. In 2023, Governor Mills announced $1.3 million in awards to three organizations for clean energy and cleantech incubator and accelerator programs.[19] The ClimateTech Incubator at Northeastern University's Roux Institute provides a regional hub for startups working on technology solutions to climate change in Southern Maine, and the incubator and accelerator programs at Dirigo Labs support rural entrepreneurs and startups in Central Maine. By supporting statewide programs like Dirigo Labs and The Roux Institute's ClimateTech incubator, the CEP is helping build a robust innovation infrastructure and workforce pipeline to power Maine's clean energy future.

- **Example:** Michigan's CleanTech, ClimatTech, and Circular (C3) Accelerator represents a collaborative initiative that promotes entrepreneurship and innovation within sustainable technology sectors. This partnership includes the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Centrepolis Accelerator at Lawrence Technological University, and various private-sector stakeholders focused on:
    - Attracting clean technology companies from around the globe to invest in and deploy their products in Michigan.
    - Supporting the development of innovative solutions to enhance renewable energy, energy efficiency, grid resilience, vehicle technologies, recycling, and other advances in clean technology.
    - Ensuring entrepreneurs from underserved communities, including women, people of color, and veterans, have access to resources and opportunities for success.

  The C3 Accelerator provides extensive support services designed to assist growth-stage businesses in achieving their technical and operational goals for six to 12 months. These services encompass dedicated product development assistance, including computer-aided design, finite element analysis engineering, prototyping, testing, and design manufacturability and assembly considerations. A specific focus is on design for failure mode effects analysis, a process used to identify, mitigate, and eliminate product design risks.

  Further, the C3 Accelerator offers manufacturing readiness services, which include product specifications, process failure mode effects analysis, quality process management, and supplier identification.

  The C3 Accelerator employs assessment and milestone planning tools, such as the Commercial Readiness Level, Technology Readiness Level, and Manufacturing Readiness

Level, to facilitate Risk Mitigation and accelerate commercialization and growth. The Accelerator and its partners are committed to supporting businesses in their strategic planning, go-to-market strategies, and fundraising initiatives by providing customized services tailored to each company's unique position and offerings.

In 2024, the C3 Accelerator achieved the following results:

Success Metric	Quantity
Companies Supported	18
Total Revenue	$14,934,539
Capital Raised	$10,262,988
Jobs Created	113
Products Commercialized	41
IP Issued	12
Number of Contracts to Michigan Suppliers	145
Valuation of Contracts to Michigan Suppliers	$2,186,499

Action 4: Addressing capacity constraints and building the workforce

For many communities and businesses, navigating wide-ranging and often complex funding opportunities at the federal and state level can be challenging. These opportunities often require specialized knowledge and experience in grant writing and management and either the internal capacity to pursue and implement these opportunities or the financial ability to bring on additional support to do so. Often, it is the communities and businesses who need resources the most who face challenges on both fronts: they may lack the time, financial resources, staff capacity, or expertise to successfully identify and apply for resources, and these same capacity limitations then hinder implementation if additional resources are received.

Partnerships between State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can be developed with these capacity gaps in mind. Key strategies to address these challenges can include capacity building, knowledge sharing, coordination, and resources pooling.

Capacity building and knowledge sharing

State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can work together to ensure that communities have access to essential technical assistance, financial resources, and expertise to navigate federal and state funding opportunities that work best for their needs.

Online tools to navigate funding opportunities

- **Example:** The Washington State Department of Commerce manages FundHubWA, an online portal that aggregates state and federal funding opportunities for climate and clean energy projects. The hub includes grants, rebates, and other incentives available to individuals, businesses, nonprofits, Tribal Nations, and local governments, and allows users to filter by sector, activity, and applicant type. The portal is funded by the state's Climate Commitment Act and is updated regularly by the Department of Commerce as new funding opportunities are released.

Cost-sharing funds to assist with match requirements

- **Example:** The Minnesota State Competitiveness Fund was established by the Minnesota State Legislature to increase the successful uptake of federal funding through the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for Minnesota-based energy projects. Among other capacity building activities, the grants received through the fund can help offset cost-sharing requirements of federal funding.

Technical assistance and funding for grant-writing, proposal development, and project planning

- **Example:** The Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet Office of Energy Policy (the State Energy Office) is using U.S. State Energy Program funding to partner with Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR), a regional nonprofit working to drive population growth and economic development across Eastern Kentucky, to help communities access state and federal funding for energy projects. As part of this effort, which also includes trainings, listening sessions, and project planning support, SOAR developed a Foundational Guide to Energy Opportunities and Economic Growth in Eastern Kentucky to distill the types of funding and financing opportunities available and the process for applying.

- **Example:** In addition to helping applicants with cost-sharing, the Minnesota State Competitiveness Fund provides grants for project and proposal development, including through the Minnesota Department of Commerce's Local Grant Development Assistance program, which provided $6 million in grant funding to 25 organizations, including the state's 10 Regional Development Organizations, to provide grant writing, planning support, and other capacity building for federal grant applications.

Designations of special zones or identifiers to qualify for specific funds, exemptions, or incentives for under-resourced communities.

- **Example:** Business Oregon, the state's economic development agency, offers three to five-year property tax abatements for certain energy projects in rural areas through the Rural Renewable Energy Development Zones Program.[1] Eligible projects include geothermal, solar, biomass, biofuel and other types of unconventional energy projects. In addition to being located in a rural county or town, projects must meet requirements outlined in the Standard Enterprise Zone property tax abatement program, including employment criteria and agreements with local workforce development boards.

Sustainability and energy conservation training programs for local businesses

- **Example:** Local First Arizona's Green Business Boot Camp, in collaboration with the Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency (the State Energy Office) and the city of Tuscon, provides sustainability training to locally owned businesses and nonprofits. The program helps each cohort take a sustainability project from concept to execution, assisting with

[1] The Oregon Rural Renewable Energy Development Zones Program is authorized by ORS 285C.350-285C.370 and governed by OAR 123-680.

benchmarking, planning and goal-setting around energy and water use, waste, and emissions, and integrating social impact and resiliency. Each participant receives a year of support after completing the Boot Camp, and regularly meets with the full cohort throughout their progress. During fiscal year 2024, the Boot Camp trained 56 organizations, including local governments and nonprofits, and served a total of 287 attendees. Since the inception of the Green Business Boot Camp, graduates have launched over 150 sustainability projects, and an additional 120 businesses have received Arizona Green Business Certifications. To date, graduates have received over $100,000 in low-interest loans to implement their projects through the Green Loan Fund, which is a partnership between Local First, Vitalyst Health Foundation, and Growth Partners, a local community development financial institution.

Coordination and resource pooling

State Energy Offices and state or regional economic development organizations can utilize their comprehensive view of their state or region's stakeholders, resources, and networks to help coordinate between areas facing similar challenges and complementary opportunities.

Partnerships to develop statewide requests for information for energy projects

- **Example:** The Arizona Finance Authority (within the Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity) and the Arizona Office of Resiliency (the State Energy Office) partnered to issue a similar Clean Energy Projects to Leverage Federal Financing Programs Request for Information. The RFI solicits clean energy projects across the state that could leverage federal and state financing.

- **Example:** The Energy Conservation and Management Division of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) released the RFI to Leverage Federal Funding Programs for Clean Energy Projects in New Mexico in collaboration with the New Mexico Finance Authority, the New Mexico Environment Department, and the Economic Development Department. The RFI served as an information-gathering tool to gain a better understanding of upcoming projects meeting New Mexico's clean energy goals, such as technology development, low-emission affordable housing, grid improvement, and more. The RFI helped to inform EMNRD's federal funding strategy, including what types of financial resources would be most useful to New Mexico's prospective clean energy projects.

State or regional stakeholder convenings

- **Example:** The New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD) collaborated with New Mexico's State Energy Office, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department's Energy Conservation and Management Division, and other sister agencies to host an in-person roundtable event with support from NASEO, IEDC, and additional technical assistance partners. Held in Santa Fe, the roundtable event entitled "Harnessing Federal Funding Opportunities in New Mexico" brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to consider federal clean energy funding opportunities and align funding and financing strategies with statewide economic development goals. The event convened state and local government officials, economic development organizations, Tribal leaders, and federal government officials to facilitate long-term collaborative planning and identify how their complementary roles could strengthen economic development initiatives in New Mexico.

The roundtable proved transformative in strengthening connections between economic development, local, state, and federal stakeholders. Through focused breakout sessions with topics including capacity building, tax incentives, grant management, as well as financing and lending, participants shared challenges and strategies for addressing New Mexico's economic development needs. The event exemplified how bridging connections between diverse stakeholders can enhance statewide coordination of energy and economic development efforts from energy affordability to community development and infrastructure access.

Beyond gaining clarity on federal funding opportunities, participants laid the groundwork for continued collaboration. These new relationships, notably between local and Tribal governments and state agencies like NMEDD and EMNRD, are a key driver in maximizing program impacts and coordinating long-term strategic planning efforts. The collaborative planning and implementation of the event also deepened the partnership between NMEDD and EMNRD, which has led to more regular and ongoing coordination and helped shape key initiatives, including NMEDD's State Plan, which emphasizes opportunities to support energy communities and leverage federal energy and infrastructure funding.[20]

Building and readying the workforce

Ensuring that businesses have access to a skilled workforce will be critical in advancing states' economic development and energy goals. State Energy Offices and economic development organizations play a key role in strengthening workforce readiness by partnering with employers, training providers, state workforce and education agencies, and other stakeholders.

Assessing state energy employment trends

- **Example:** The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources and Rhode Island Commerce co-produce an annual Clean Energy Jobs Report, with support from BW Research Partnership. The report tracks employment data across different energy sectors in the state and serves as a resource for policymakers and industry by identifying key growth areas and offering insights on the skills training required to develop a talent pipeline.

Connecting job seekers with training and employment opportunities

- **Example:** In partnership with the Maine Department of Labor and Department of Economic and Community Development, the Maine Governor's Energy Office launched the Maine Clean Energy Jobs Network in 2024 to connect job seekers, employers, and training providers across the state's clean energy sector. The online platform serves as a centralized hub where individuals can access career opportunities, industry resources, and training programs, including pre-apprenticeship and upskilling opportunities, making the resource applicable to individuals of all experience levels. The Jobs Network is an initiative of the Clean Energy Partnership program, a workforce and innovation initiative established by the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan to bring together state agencies, industry, workforce training organizations, and academic institutions to increase clean energy job opportunities and reach the governor's goal of having 30,000 clean energy workers in Maine by 2030.

- **Example:** The South Carolina State Energy Office created a Clean Energy Workforce Development Tool to help individuals and organizations navigate clean energy training opportunities across the state. The tool enables students, job seekers, technical trade workers, and employers to explore a broad range of available training resources, including apprenticeships, certifications, degree programs, and individual courses. The database includes both online and in-person training opportunities. Users can filter by location or by the clean energy sub-sector, such as solar, energy efficiency, HVAC and refrigeration, electrical systems, and electric vehicles. While the tool is not intended to be exhaustive of every training opportunity, the South Carolina State Energy Office updates the database twice a year to coincide with collegiate fall and spring semesters.

Convening advisory groups

- **Example:** Hawaii's Clean Energy Sector Partnership (CESP), one of four sector partnerships launched in 2023 through the Good Jobs Hawaii initiative, highlights the value of community and industry stakeholder collaboration in workforce planning and training. Guided by a steering committee of industry leaders, the CESP is facilitated by the Hawaii State Energy Office, a cabinet-level state agency affiliated with the Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; the Hawaii Chamber of Commerce; and AE Consulting. The CESP is open to interested stakeholders and currently includes over 150 invitees. It convenes representatives from government, industry, educational institutions, and community organizations on a quarterly basis to identify and understand industry and community workforce aspirations and needs, advise on training program design, and ensure that workforce initiatives result in placement of local workers with good-paying jobs and opportunities for career advancement. In addition to providing input on training needs, Hawaii energy sector employers can sign on to the CESP Employer Talent Action Pledge to demonstrate their commitment to training, hiring, and supporting local talent. The CESP offers funding through the Good Jobs Hawaii initiative to help employers upskill current employees and incentivizes employers to provide internships and full-time jobs to training graduates.[21]

  In addition, the CESP actively seeks other public and private resources to support training (e.g., Training for Residential Energy Contractors, Energy Auditor Training Grant) and facilitates partnerships between members. As career awareness has been identified by the CESP as a priority focus area, the CESP facilitated two educator externships at which over 20 educators from Hawaii schools attended two separate two-day sessions to meet employers and learn about the diversity of careers in Hawaii's energy sector. Other CESP focus areas include pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, training, and workforce retention.

Youth and early-career job training

- **Example:** North Carolina's State Energy Office has demonstrated the importance of developing inclusive job training programs that cater to youth and adults. The Clean Energy Youth Apprenticeship Pilot program, funded by the State Energy Office, provides high school and early-career students with hands-on experience in clean energy technologies, preparing them for careers in the field. This initiative aligns educational opportunities with industry needs, creating a seamless pipeline from learning to employment. The program's

success has informed broader workforce development efforts as well, including the STEPs4GROWTH initiative funded by a Good Jobs Challenge grant. The North Carolina State Energy Office also funded an initiative where STEPs4GROWTH partnered with the Kenan Fellows Program at North Carolina State University to develop clean energy-focused curricula for K-12 educators. By equipping teachers with the tools to develop the next generation of clean energy workers, these programs are able to build a foundation for long-term workforce resilience that ultimately can be replicated in other regions across the nation.

Action 5: Facilitating long-term partnerships and coordinating strategic planning

In addition to collaborating on specific programs and initiatives, State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can coordinate strategic planning efforts and create frameworks that facilitate ongoing partnerships. In doing so, State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can streamline processes, better support their respective stakeholders, and achieve their states' energy and economic goals.

Opportunities to facilitate long-term partnerships

States can build lasting partnerships and enhance collaboration in a number of ways. In some states, the State Energy Office and economic development office are housed within the same agency, such as the Department of Commerce, which creates an administrative link that can facilitate regular collaboration. In other states where the State Energy Office and economic development functions lie within separate agencies, some states have established dedicated roles, offices, or task forces that focus on integrating energy and economic development strategies, helping eliminate silos and build relationships across agencies. In most states, holding regular coordination meetings and establishing clear contact points for partnerships are essential to building relationships and reducing barriers to effective collaboration.

- **Example:** In Michigan, the Office of Future Mobility and Electrification (OFME) brings together the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, and the Michigan Department of Transportation to develop a cohesive strategy for advancing mobility and electrification initiatives across the state. The cross-agency collaboration structure enables OFME to access expertise, resources, and networks, facilitating synergies among government, businesses, and academic institutions. By efficiently aligning efforts across labor, economic development, energy, and transportation sectors, OFME plays a key role in forming public-private partnerships, expedites project deployment, and strengthens Michigan's position as a leader in future mobility and clean transportation. The OFME model exemplifies how dismantling silos and encouraging collaboration across sectors can effectively tackle complex challenges, positioning states to lead in emerging industries and driving impactful change in support of Michigan's Mobility Plan.

- **Example:** The North Dakota Department of Commerce houses both the State Energy Office (under the Community Services Division) and the Economic Development and Finance Division, which includes the Energy and Economic Coordination Office. While the Energy

and Economic Coordination Office focuses on energy-related business attraction and expansion, the State Energy Office and Community Services team work to promote community development through energy and community programming that support ongoing and future economic development initiatives. Together, the two offices meet regularly to align community development and economic development strategies, helping ensure localities are prepared for new energy businesses coming into the state (by readying the workforce and investing in community infrastructure and planning) and that businesses understand local assets and needs, such as maintaining energy affordability and providing jobs and tax revenue for rural and remote areas.

- **Example:** The Virginia Department of Energy created a shared staff position between the State Energy Office and economic development arm of the department. The economic development and energy analyst splits time between the two teams and serves as a liaison to help connect related activities, support collaborative initiatives, and engage with key economic development partners and stakeholders, such as the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission. Based in the Southwest Virginia region, the role is focused on supporting energy opportunities that drive economic development in the region.

- **Example:** The Wyoming Energy Authority is establishing a Regional Economic Coordination Office to strengthen the state's economic development efforts by researching opportunities within the energy sector, creating strategies and roadmaps for new energy projects, fostering industry collaboration, and advocating for a fair energy transition that supports inclusive and sustainable energy growth in Wyoming.

Coordinating strategic planning

State Energy Offices and economic development organizations each play a unique role in guiding their states' strategic planning efforts. Economic development organizations often help develop or oversee state and regional economic development strategies, such as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies, which include goals on business attraction, regional growth, and economic resiliency. Economic development organizations also support the creation of more targeted strategic plans related to community, industrial, and workforce development. State Energy Offices often lead the development of comprehensive state energy plans and state energy security plans, as well as technology-focused roadmaps and energy workforce assessments. As a result, both entities have a holistic view of energy and economic development planning activities and engage with a wide spectrum of stakeholders across the public and private sectors. Together, State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can help assess the needs and trends of the business community and then align public-sector strategic planning efforts in order to achieve long-term energy and economic development goals.

Coordination across energy and economic development strategic plans can take several forms. In some states, the governors' offices or state legislatures may provide guidance on incorporating economic development goals into energy planning, and vice versa. States can also utilize the stakeholder engagement process to invite participation from other agencies or departments to ensure coordination.

- **Example:** The Commonwealth of Virginia initiated its 2022 Energy Plan to enhance collaboration among stakeholders, including Virginia's State Energy Office, economic development organizations, PJM, and utilities, to address the evolving energy demands of businesses. This comprehensive plan is driven by five guiding principles: "reliability, affordability, innovation, competition, and environmental stewardship." Key initiatives include modernizing the electric grid, expanding renewable energy resources, and supporting emerging technologies such as energy storage, advanced nuclear power, and offshore wind. The plan offers several recommendations to improve grid reliability, including directing the Virginia Department of Energy and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to "study methods to facilitate improved forecasting in collaboration with PJM, utilities, and industry stakeholders to improve infrastructure planning for future energy needs,"[22]encourage public-private partnerships, and support workforce development and innovation. Under the innovation pillar, the plan specifically directs the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to launch a new focus area that supports companies "developing and implementing emerging energy generation technologies." Additionally, the focus on workforce development and innovation will create clean energy jobs, enhancing Virginia's competitiveness in attracting and retaining business investments. Through this strategic approach, the 2022 Energy Plan aligns state energy policy with business needs, fostering economic growth and sustainability.

- **Example:** Nevada provides another example of how a state can strategically align energy policy with long-term economic development objectives. In 2023, Governor Joe Lombardo issued Executive Order 2023-07, which established Nevada's energy policy priorities with a focus on affordability, reliability, and sustainability. The executive order emphasizes the importance of a balanced energy portfolio and investing in energy infrastructure projects that create jobs, spur economic development, and improve the state's energy independence. By directing energy providers to deliver affordable and reliable energy, while simultaneously investing in workforce training and career development programs, Nevada's approach demonstrates the value of integrating energy planning with broader economic development goals. The executive order also calls on state agencies to collaborate with one another and with the business community to implement the objectives and requires the state climate strategy to be revised to align with the policy priorities.

- **Example:** The New Mexico Economic Development Department released a 2025 update to its State Plan, a forward-looking report focused on the economic development outlook of the state. NMEDD collaborated closely with EMNRD and other state agencies to inform the development of the strategic plan and utilized the joint roundtable event highlighted in Action 4 of this report to bring together a diverse array of stakeholders from across New Mexico to provide input. The new plan outlines several strategies aimed at diversifying the state's economy and driving innovation, including enhancing site readiness (for example, by investing in energy transmission and interconnection infrastructure), supporting extractive communities, leveraging federal funding, and analyzing New Mexico's competitive advantage in advanced energy and eight other target sectors.[23] In support of the latter, NMEDD released a Request for Proposals to conduct an analysis on New Mexico's competitive advantage in advanced energy to better understand the state's strengths across different sectors of the clean energy economy. The analysis will help

inform future iterations of the state plan and guide NMEDD's efforts to diversify the state's economy and capitalize on opportunities for clean energy-based economic development.

Conclusion

As domestic manufacturing and technological innovations continue to drive demand for affordable and reliable energy, coordination between State Energy Offices and economic development organizations will be critical to meeting the energy needs of businesses and households while advancing states' long-term energy and economic goals. By leading strategic energy and economic planning and engaging with businesses and local stakeholders, State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can play a pivotal role in not only increasing the competitiveness of existing American businesses but also unlocking new opportunities for energy-based economic development that create jobs, provide tax revenue, reduce energy costs, and advance economic and energy security. By fostering public-private partnerships, streamlining siting and permitting processes, supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, addressing workforce and organizational capacity constraints, and coordinating strategic planning, State Energy Offices and economic development organizations can help their states and regions harness the economic benefits of the evolving energy sector to promote sustainable economic growth.

Additional Resources

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- Manufacturing and Energy: Advancing Productivity, Prosperity, and the Environment, NASEO, December 2024.
- Realizing the Workforce Potential of Infrastructure Investments: State Strategies to Advance Job Quality and Build Inclusive Workforces in Transportation and Clean Energy, Markle Foundation, NASEO, and the Eno Center for Transportation, 2023.
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