14. Environmental and Climate Justice

Draft New York State Energy Plan

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Key Findings

- **Meaningful community involvement in energy project development is important.** The participation of New Yorkers in shaping the development of clean energy projects that will impact their communities helps make sure local needs and priorities are addressed.
- **Inclusive outreach strategies are important to achieving New York's commitment that at least 35 percent—with a goal of 40 percent—of the overall benefits from clean energy and energy efficiency investments are directed to disadvantaged communities (DACs).** To support strong participation in clean energy programs, inclusive outreach strategies are key to overcoming mistrust, misinformation, language barriers, and low program awareness. Effective outreach needs to be community-oriented and culturally responsive to drive meaningful participation.
- **Procedural equity is grounded in meaningful stakeholder engagement in clean energy planning and program design to identify solutions to multiple burdens and barriers.** Advancing procedural equity under the Climate Act requires substantive participation of DAC stakeholders in clean energy planning and program design. Expanding stakeholder networks in State processes to include community-based organizations (CBOs) and local voices—especially those addressing social determinants of health—will help State clean energy policies be responsive to community needs and contribute to improved quality of life.
- **Clean energy investment presents opportunities for job creation and economic development in DACs.** Procurement and contracting can help increase the participation of Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses (SDVOB) in energy initiatives, while workforce training and unionized apprenticeships can support people living in DACs to pursue green careers. The commitment of directing at least 35 percent of all clean energy investment benefits to DACs should be optimized by configuring programs to capitalize on these opportunities.
- **Clean energy investments aimed at reducing air pollution in DACs are critical to advancing health equity.** Incorporating strategically designed, locally focused air pollution mitigation projects in DACs into broader clean energy investment portfolios can ensure meaningful and equitable health outcomes for New Yorkers.
- **Energy efficiency and clean energy policies should maximize the energy security, safety, health, and comfort of low-income households while reducing their energy burden.** To meaningfully advance energy justice, New York State must prioritize health and energy security, safety, and affordability for low-income households. This includes the strategic deployment of decarbonization measures that lower energy costs, preserve housing for low- to moderate-income (LMI) tenants, and expand access to clean transportation and efficient heating and cooling solutions.
- **Interagency coordination is key to optimizing clean energy benefits for DACs.** Continued and stronger coordination among state agencies, utilities, and nonprofit organizations can support

streamlined applications, better coordinated programs and engagement models, and community partnerships to increase DAC resident participation and maximize the benefits of clean energy programs.

Key Terms

- **Climate Justice:** Justice that links development and human rights to achieve a human centered approach to addressing climate change, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate action and its impacts equitably and fairly.[1]
- **Climate Justice Working Group (CJWG):** This body was created by the Climate Act and is composed of representatives from environmental justice communities across the state, including three from New York City, three from rural areas, and three from urban communities in upstate New York. It also includes representatives from the New York State Departments of Environmental Conservation (DEC) - which chairs the CJWG - Health (DOH), Labor (DOL), and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA).[2] The Climate Act requires the CJWG to establish criteria to identify DACs for the purposes of: (1) emissions reductions (greenhouse gases and co-pollutants), (2) regulatory impact statements, and (3) the allocation of investments related to the Climate Act.[3]
- **Community Air Monitoring (CAM) Initiative:** The Climate Act required DEC to develop a CAM program to identify and measure air pollution in priority DAC locations that have the highest potential exposure burdens to air pollutants.[4] DEC used mobile air monitoring to conduct street-by-street assessments in 10 DACs. Using these results, community input, and other data, DEC is identifying air pollution sources and prioritizing areas of concern near sensitive sites such as schools and nursing homes. To guide this process, DEC established Community Advisory Committees (CACs) in each of the 10 DACs. These CACs will collaborate with DEC, the CJWG, and other state agencies to develop strategies aimed at reducing air pollution in DACs.
- **Disadvantaged Communities (DACs):** The Climate Act defines Disadvantaged Communities as communities that bear burdens of negative public health effects, environmental pollution, impacts of climate change, and possess certain socioeconomic criteria, or comprise of high-concentrations of low- and moderate-income households. DACs are identified using criteria as established by the Climate Justice Working Group.[5] On March 27, 2023, the CJWG voted to approve the DAC criteria.[6]

[1] Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, *Principles of Climate Justice*, Principles 1, quoted in "Principles of Climate Justice," *Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice*, accessed via mrfcj.org.
[2] New York State, *Environmental Conservation Law* § 75-0115 (2019).
[3] New York State, *Environmental Conservation Law* 75-0111(1)(b).
[4] New York State, *Environmental Conservation Law* § 75-0115 (2019)
[5] New York State, *Environmental Conservation Law* § 75-0101(5) (2019).
[6] New York State Climate Act, *Disadvantaged Communities Criteria*, https://climate.ny.gov/Resources/Disadvantaged-Communities-Criteria.

Key Terms

- **Distributional Equity:** Refers to the fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of energy policies and programs. In an equitable energy system, all communities receive a fair share of clean energy investments, job opportunities, cost savings, and pollution reductions.[7]
- **Energy Burden:** The percentage of gross income that a household spends on energy. It is calculated by dividing the average housing energy cost by the average annual household income. When a household is described as energy burdened, that generally means that it spends more than 6 percent of household income on energy.[8]
- **Energy Justice:** Refers to the goal of achieving equity in both the social and economic participation in the energy system, while also remediating social, economic, and health burdens on those communities historically disadvantaged by the energy system. Energy justice in New York centers the concerns of disadvantaged communities and aims to make energy more accessible, affordable, clean, and democratically managed for all communities. The practitioner and academic approaches to energy justice emphasize these process-related and distributive justice concerns.[9]
- **Environmental Justice:** The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.[10]
- **Priority Populations** (consistent with NYSERDA's Workforce Development and Training definitions) include: Veterans; Individuals with disabilities; Low-income individuals, whose household's total income is below or at 60% of the State Median Income, or whose household has been determined eligible for or is receiving assistance through the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or other human service benefit programs; Incumbent or unemployed fossil fuel workers; Previously incarcerated individuals; 16- to 24-year-olds who are enrolled in or have completed a comprehensive work preparedness training program such as those offered by Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), technical high schools, Conservation Corps, YouthBuild, and AmeriCorps; Homeless individuals; and Single parents.
- **Procedural Equity:** This refers to fair and transparent processes used for decision-making, resource allocation, and policy development. Decision makers create inclusive and accessible

[7] American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. "Energy Equity: Conceptual Framework." ACEEE. https://www.aceee.org/research-report/e2101.

[8] U.S. Department of Energy, *Low-Income Energy Affordability Data (LEAD) Tool*, https://www.energy.gov/scep/low-income-energy-affordability-data-lead-tool.

[9] Initiative for Energy Justice. "Section 1 – Defining Energy Justice: Connections to Environmental Justice, Climate Justice, and the Just Transition." *Initiative for Energy Justice*, n.d. https://iejusa.org/section-1-defining-energy-justice/.

[10] New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), *CP-29 Environmental Justice and Permitting* (Albany, NY: DEC 2009), https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/permits_ej_operations_pdf/cp29.pdf.

Key Terms

processes for developing and implementing clean energy programs such that all stakeholders have equitable access to participate.[11]

[11] American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. *Energy Equity: Conceptual Framework*. January 2021. https://www.aceee.org/research-report/e2101.

1. Overview

The benefits and burdens of energy systems, as well as the impacts of climate change, are experienced differently across communities. The concept of energy justice recognizes these disparities and aims to address the social, economic, environmental, and health burdens faced by those communities historically disadvantaged by energy systems. The climate justice provisions of the Climate Act[12] are drivers to help advance equity, focused on delivering benefits of clean energy investments to disadvantaged communities (DACs).

1.1. Environmental and Health Burdens

Past policies and land use practices have contributed to persistent environmental and health burdens in DACs that will require significant effort to address. These burdens are evident in climate and environmental data, population and health characteristics, and the infrastructure and sites linked to energy production and consumption.

Additionally, careful consideration and a deep commitment to government-to-government consultation is needed for any new or existing energy infrastructure near or likely to impact Indigenous Nations to avoid any disproportionate impacts.

Now-shuttered coal-fired power plants, as well as other industrial facilities pocketed across the state, have often left behind hazardous waste contamination. This legacy endures in the form of brownfields, Superfund sites, and coal ash disposal sites, many of which are in or adjacent to DACs.

Furthermore, fossil power plants, which in many cases are many decades old, continue to emit harmful air pollutants, compounding the health risks for DACs located nearby. Freeways and land uses such as waste transfer stations, bus depots, and warehouses and logistics centers have all disproportionately been sited in low-income communities and disadvantaged communities, attracting heavy bus and truck traffic to those neighborhoods and resulting in high concentrations of vehicle emissions.[13,14] Exposure to these pollutants are associated with risks of respiratory and cardiovascular conditions and may be correlated with elevated rates of asthma and heart disease in disadvantaged communities.[15]

1.2. Energy Insecurity and Energy Burdens

Energy injustice also manifests through financial burdens. For example, approximately 1,666,593 households, or about 23 percent of households statewide, may currently have difficulty paying their utility bills.[16] These households are often already struggling to meet the costs of other essentials like

[12] For example, provisions related to DACs (Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) 75-0101(5)), CJWG (ECL 75-0111), Section 7(3) (Laws of 2019, Chapter 106), and Bond Act (ECL 58-1101).

[13] NYC Mayors Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. EJNYC: A Study of Environmental Justice Issues in New York City. Accessed June 2025: https://climate.cityofnewyork.us/ejnyc-report/history-of-environmental-injustice-and-racism-in-nyc/.

[14] Haley M. Lane, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Julian D. Marshall, and Joshua S. Apte. "Historical Redlining Is Associated with Present-Day Air Pollution Disparities in U.S. Cities." Environmental Science & Technology Letters 2022 9 (4), 345-350

[15] American Lung Association. *Health Risks of Ozone and Particle Pollution*. Accessed June 23, 2025. https://www.lung.org/research/sota/health-risks.

[16] U.S. Department of Energy. "Low-Income Energy Affordability Data Tool (LEAD Tool)." State & Community Energy, U.S. Department of Energy. https://www.energy.gov/scep/slsc/lead-tool.

food, healthcare, and housing, increasing the risk of utility shutoffs. In 2024, over 237,000 New York households experienced disconnection from their energy services due to non-payment of utility bills.[17]

Climate change is deepening these disparities as well as making energy insecurity more life threatening. As extreme temperatures become more common, access to reliable energy for heating and cooling is increasingly critical. Low-income and DAC residents often live in older housing with inadequate heating and cooling systems and poor insulation, which exacerbates energy burdens and poses serious health risks during periods of extreme cold or heat.

1.3. Clean Energy as a Tool for Justice

Residents of DACs face multiple environmental stressors and clean energy initiatives can help advance progress in several ways, including to:

- Alleviate household energy costs through weatherization and efficiency programs.
- Reduce fossil fuel combustion in buildings, transportation, and power generation to improve air quality.
- Promote economic development through green job creation.
- Advance community priorities through meaningful collaboration in planning clean energy programs and projects.

Clean energy delivers local public health benefits and job opportunities, as discussed in the Public Health Impacts Analysis chapter of this Plan.

2. State of the Sector

This section provides a high-level overview of ongoing policy and programmatic initiatives aimed at advancing energy justice across New York State. The first three parts focus on key Climate Act targets: addressing barriers and opportunities to expand clean energy access and resilience, identifying DACs, and tracking the clean energy benefits accruing to DACs. The fourth part examines energy affordability and quality of life considerations, with cross-references to discussions in other chapters of this Plan. The last section elevates the distributional and procedural equity mechanisms that facilitate DAC inclusion in decision-making and implementation. While not exhaustive, the examples highlighted illustrate significant efforts underway to promote equitable outcomes.

[17] Proceeding on Motion of the Commission to examine the collection practices of the major gas and electric utilities in New York State to identify ways to reduce losses due to uncollectibles while maintaining a high level of customer service, Case 91-M-0744

2.1. Disadvantaged Communities Barriers and Opportunities Report

The Climate Act directed the New York Power Authority (NYPA), DEC, and NYSERDA to produce a *Disadvantaged Communities Barriers & Opportunities* report.[18] Released in 2021, the report identified four overarching categories of barriers that hinder equitable community access to clean energy.

1) **Physical and Economic Structures and Conditions:**
    - Aging housing stock requiring structural repairs before energy upgrades can be completed.
    - Deferred maintenance resulting in health hazards like lead, mold, and asbestos.
    - Economic and social structures that create barriers, such as the split incentive in rental properties where landlords must initiate upgrades, but tenants bear the utility costs.
2) **Financial and Knowledge Resources and Capacity:**
    - Limited time, personnel, and data systems for community-based organizations to pursue clean energy opportunities.
    - Diminished access to credit and financing options in DACs.
    - Funding constraints for government agencies, limiting the scope of publicly financed clean energy programs.
3) **Perspectives and Information:**
    - Community mistrust of utilities and state agencies due to historical experiences of neglect and discrimination.
    - Climate denial and misinformation that lead to skepticism of clean energy programs.
    - Insufficient community campaigns, bureaucratic complexity, and opaque processes curtail awareness and participation.
4) **Programmatic Design and Implementation:**
    - Gaps in information when establishing program benchmarks and objectives.
    - Complex eligibility requirements that exclude vulnerable populations.
    - Insufficient emphasis placed on community centered design.
    - Limited scope of interagency coordination.

The report also identified key opportunities to overcoming obstacles, organized into three strategic themes:

[18] New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and New York Power Authority (NYPA). New York State Disadvantaged Communities Barriers and Opportunities Report. NYSERDA Report 21-35, December 2021. https://climate.ny.gov/-/media/Project/Climate/Files/21-35-NY-Disadvantaged-Communities-Barriers-and-Opportunities-Report.pdf.

- **Ensure Processes are Inclusive:** Increase community engagement in decision-making processes.
- **Streamline Program Access:** Simplify applications and reduce barriers to access.
- **Address Emerging Issues:** Enhance adaptive capacity for climate and energy risks.

As outlined in the following sections, New York State has begun implementing solutions aligned with these themes. Additional recommendations for consideration can be found at the end of this chapter.

2.2. Directing Benefits from Clean Energy Investments to DACs

Under the Climate Act, State agencies, authorities, and entities direct at least 35 percent, with a goal of 40 percent, of the overall benefits from clean energy and energy efficiency investments to DACs. This includes energy investments across key focus areas: housing, workforce development, pollution reduction, low-income energy assistance, energy, transportation, and economic development—all guided by the DACs' criteria established by the CJWG.

The Climate Act established the CJWG to identify DACs across New York State that should be prioritized for targeted GHG emissions and co-pollutant reductions, clean energy and energy efficiency programs, projects and investments, and the prevention of disproportionate burdens. This 13-member body combined subject matter expertise with community-knowledge and lived experience to develop the DAC criteria through a three-pronged approach:

- **Data-Driven, Ground-Verified Burdens:** Indicators were evaluated based on data quality, statewide coverage and granularity, accuracy, and correlations to other indicators. Every census tract in New York State is ranked based on 45 indicators, spanning environmental and climate burdens, population health, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. The top 35 percent of tracts with the highest burdens across these critical quality-of-life indicators are designated as DACs.
- **Inclusion of all Federally and/or State-Recognized Indigenous Nations that Co-exist with New York State:** This acknowledges the history of displacement and forced removal from Indigenous ancestral lands, as well as contemporary evidence of socioeconomic, public health and environmental vulnerabilities.[19]
- **Inclusion of all Low-Income Households:** All households earning at or below 60 percent of the statewide median income are included for the purpose of DAC investments and benefits accounting to ensure low-income households across the state remain a priority for program investment, regardless of the census tract they are located in.

Following input from New Yorkers on draft criteria, the CJWG voted to approve the final DAC criteria in March 2023. The CJWG is required to convene at least annually to review and, if necessary, adjust the criteria based on new data and scientific findings. As part of its annual review, in February 2025, the

[19] New York State Governor's Office. *"Thomas Indian School Citation 2025."* Albany, NY: Office of Governor Kathy Hochul, May 2025.

CJWG voted to update the data sources for the DAC criteria. As a result, an updated map is expected to be released in the latter part of 2025. For an interactive map of the DACs across the State and additional documentation, visit the DAC criteria section under the Resources tab of the Climate Act's website.[20]

2.3. Tracking Investments and Reporting Benefits to DACs

New York State has begun and will continue to further develop the tracking and reporting of investments and benefits to DACs. Compliance with the 35 percent minimum investment requirement will focus on place-based investment, i.e., those projects that can reasonably prioritize or target investments to individuals, households, businesses, and other entities within specific geographic areas, or directly serving low-income households, identified by the DAC criteria.

Reporting is underway focusing on ratepayer programs within the New York State Public Service Commission's (PSC) jurisdiction, including NYSERDA's Clean Energy Fund portfolios. Ratepayer-funded clean energy programs are expected to represent a substantial portion of the State's place-based DAC investment. From 2020–2023, 47 percent of place-based ratepayer-funded energy efficiency and electrification related investments were in a DAC or serving low-income households.[21]

NYSERDA and DEC are collaborating with other agencies on guidance applicable to all reporting entities in the State. Statewide DAC reporting is in development to provide a comprehensive understanding of progress and guide investment over future years. For more information, visit the Resources section of the New York State Climate Act website.[22]

2.4. Energy Affordability and Quality of Life

Across the State, low-income New Yorkers have the highest energy and transportation cost burden. On average, New York households in the lowest income earning quintile (the bottom fifth) devote 10 percent of their income to household energy expenses and 6 percent to transportation energy expenses for a total of 16 percent devoted to energy expenses. For comparison, the table displayed below shows the energy and transportation burdens across all income quintiles.[23]

Table 1: New York State 2021-22 Consumer Expenditure Survey

Burden	Lowest income quintile	Second quintile	Third quintile	Fourth quintile	Highest income quintile
Household energy burden	10.2%	5.6%	3.5%	2.4%	1.4%
Transportation energy burden	5.6%	3.5%	2.8%	2.0%	1.0%
Household energy + Transportation energy burden	15.7%	9.1%	6.3%	4.4%	2.4%

[20] New York State Climate Act, "Disadvantaged Communities Criteria," accessed July 1, 2025, https://climate.ny.gov/Resources/Disadvantaged-Communities-Criteria.

[21] See PSC Cases 14-M-0094, 18-M-0084, and 25-M-0249; Order Authorizing Low-to Moderate-Income Energy Efficiency and Building Electrification Portfolio for 2026 -2030; issued and effective May 15, 2025.

[22] Accessed July 5, 2025, https://climate.ny.gov/.

[23] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *New York: Quintiles of Income Before Taxes, 2021–2022: Annual Expenditure Means and Characteristics, Consumer Expenditure Surveys*. March 18, 2024. https://www.bls.gov/cex/tables/geographic/mean/2022/cu-state-ny-income-quintiles-before-taxes-2-year-average-2022.htm.

Disruptions to the continuity of federal funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), and other social safety net programs—by the current U.S. Administration or a future one—would worsen the already significant challenges of energy burden faced by low-income New Yorkers. Recognizing how lowering energy bills can help New Yorkers meet other essential needs, New York State has programs in place to support energy efficiency investments in homes for all consumers, with focused investments in DACs and for LMI households.

Consistent with the Barriers and Opportunities report findings highlighted earlier in this section, DAC residents often face significant hurdles to accessing energy efficiency retrofits and electrification upgrades. These challenges include high upfront costs of clean energy interventions in LMI households, needed repairs before energy projects can start, and complex eligibility requirements for existing programs. A major challenge is New York's aging housing stock. According to the 2021 American Community Survey, New York State has the oldest owner-occupied housing stock in the nation, with a median age of 62 years, much greater than the national median of 40 years.[24] These structures are often poorly insulated with inefficient appliances. Some buildings contain mold, lead, asbestos, and other health and safety risks that need to be addressed before energy efficiency retrofits can start. Additionally, income disparities correlate with the age and condition of housing.

As discussed in the Buildings chapter of this Plan, the clean energy transition offers a transformative opportunity to invest in and expand access to affordable and quality housing that is comfortable, energy efficient, and resilient. Prioritizing State support for LMI households and buildings in DACs to make energy-related upgrades will help make homes and communities healthier places to live.

On May 15, 2025, the PSC issued orders advancing ratepayer-funded energy efficiency and building electrification (EE-BE) programs for 2026-2030.[25] The EE-BE LMI Portfolio and Non-LMI Portfolio orders authorize a total of $5 billion in programs between 2026-2030 and guide investment by the utilities and NYSERDA in the next phase of ratepayer-funded building decarbonization programs. The orders include a focus on ensuring that at least 35 percent, with a goal of 40 percent, of ratepayer-funded investments are collectively made within geographic DACs and require utilities and NYSERDA to engage with stakeholders in the development and performance of programs. This is in parallel with continued investment in LMI housing energy efficiency and electrification outside of geographic DACs statewide.

The Transportation chapter of this Plan considers actions to expand clean transportation options, which also is critical to improving quality of life and reducing pollution and economic burdens in DACs. The Electricity chapter of this Plan speaks to continued investment in clean electricity, which will be the main fuel source replacing fossil fuels currently used in buildings and transportation, as well as State laws that govern the siting and permitting of energy generating facilities, including consideration of whether a facility may cause or contribute to a disproportionate pollution burden on a DAC.

[24] Zhao, Na. "Age of Housing Stock by State." *Eye on Housing* (National Association of Home Builders), February 7, 2023. https://eyeonhousing.org/2023/02/age-of-housing-stock-by-state-4/

[25] See PSC Cases 14-M-0094, 18-M-0084, 25-M-0249, and 25-M-0248; Order Authorizing Low-to Moderate-Income Energy Efficiency and Building Electrification Portfolio for 2026 -2030, and Order Authorizing Non- Low-to Moderate-Income Energy Efficiency and Building Electrification Portfolios for 2026-2030; issued and effective May 15, 2025.

2.5. Procedural and Distributional Equity in Action

Procedural Equity: New York State has undertaken a government-wide effort to strengthen procedural equity across its climate and clean energy policies and programs by fostering meaningful public engagement. Examples include DOL's outreach to outdoor workers in shaping extreme heat guidance; DOS's engagement of communities in brownfield revitalization paired with renewable energy; DEC's Community Air Monitoring and other initiatives to improve access to public comment periods; and the PSC's Energy Policy Planning Advisory Council (EPPAC), which strives to advance inclusive decision-making in grid and transmission planning. DEC also prioritizes transparency through hybrid meetings under the Open Meetings Law and asynchronous communication that enables meaningful participation. These procedural equity efforts extend to DPS's forthcoming work to engage DAC stakeholders in designing programs to fulfill the EE-BE order.

These agencies also participate in NYSERDA's Energy Equity Collaborative (EEC), a key interagency and community partnership co-designed with New York-based DAC-serving organizations to ensure meaningful input in shaping energy and related infrastructure decisions. The EEC centers the voices of disadvantaged communities in clean energy planning. A 13-member Steering Committee of CBOs co-leads the EEC with NYSERDA, guiding its structure and advising on early-stage planning. Members participate in one of four topic-specific working groups, listed below, that meet regularly with NYSERDA and other agency staff to co-develop strategies on policy, program design, and outreach.

- **Energy Transition:** Focuses on inclusive co-design and accountability for renewable energy projects and clean transportation initiatives, disseminating accessible program information, and facilitating novel community ownership options for clean energy projects.
- **Housing and Building Efficiency and Electrification:** Aims to improve outreach to DAC renters and homeowners, enhance collaboration with state agencies, and remove barriers to accessing NYSERDA resources for home and building electrification.
- **Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities:** Works to create pathways into energy sector careers, ensure community benefits from clean energy projects, and boost MWBE and SDVOB participation in energy initiatives.
- **Engagement and Access:** Develops frameworks for engagement and governance to improve procedural equity, transparency, and accessibility in NYSERDA and State climate and energy programs.

The PSC-issued EE-BE Orders for 2026–2030 ratepayer funding provide continued support for the EEC and more generally for DAC stakeholder engagement in building decarbonization programs. The Orders set expectations for early engagement to inform program design, and for ongoing engagement of stakeholders in program implementation and to provide visibility into program performance.

Distributional Equity: New York State is implementing enhanced outreach strategies to more effectively engage every New Yorker, especially those living in DACs, in the development of a resilient and transformative clean energy economy. The goal is to ensure widespread public awareness of State

climate and clean energy policies and make programs easily accessible so the benefits of the transition are equitably distributed, and all New Yorkers can enjoy a decent quality of life. Achieving this requires deliberate, sustained outreach in DACs where barriers to program uptake are often the greatest. Fundamental to this effort is the formation of strong partnerships with community leaders, local businesses, and institutions. Government-wide, this approach extends to targeted efforts by AGM and the Soil and Water Conservation (SWC) Committee to expand program access for beginning and first-time participating farmers through elevated communication and outreach to underserved agricultural communities. County SWC Districts have played a crucial role in reaching DAC farmers with a greater emphasis on projects within watersheds that serve these communities. A strong example of climate, environmental, and energy justice combined, this effort reduces emissions from food production and transport while bolstering resilience through a local, healthy food system.

A key initiative of New York State's work to build a thriving and inclusive clean energy economy is the Regional Clean Energy Hubs (Hubs) established by NYSERDA in 2022. Twelve Regional Clean Energy Hubs are located in each of the ten Economic Development Regions of New York State, with three Hubs in New York City to reflect its population density. Each Hub is made up of trusted, community-based organizations that are embedded in the regions they serve and bring experience spanning clean energy, energy efficiency, workforce and economic development, education, health, and housing. The Hubs assist individuals, small businesses, and affordable housing owners by providing information about clean energy benefits, ways to reduce energy use and costs, and how to make more informed energy decisions. Through multidisciplinary partnerships, Hubs deliver on several key areas of work:

- **Outreach & Awareness:** Hubs focus outreach and marketing on DACs to increase access and participation in clean energy programs. Messaging centered on affordability and bill savings has proven most effective for engaging DAC and LMI customers.
- **Energy Education:** Hubs offer energy literacy sessions and distribute self-install kits with items like low flow shower heads and LED bulbs. Follow ups after 60–90 days assess usage and program interest.
- **Partnerships:** Hubs leverage existing and new relationships with organizations in DACs to extend program reach and speed adoption.
- **Project Coordination:** Hubs help residents apply for programs and loans, refer them to partners, and align NYSERDA -funded projects with other local, state, and federal programs.
- **Equitable Engagement & Regional Capacity Building:** Hubs develop Regional Assessment and Barriers Analyses (RABAs) and Outreach and Equitable Engagement Plans to guide outreach and ensure funded efforts yield tangible benefits for DACs.
- **Workforce and Small Business Development:** Hubs work with local trainers and clean energy companies to expand career pathways and business opportunities for DAC residents.
- **Local Project Support:** Hubs pilot innovative strategies to reduce engagement barriers–like murals in the Southern Tier and contractor training in the North Country.

- **Community Campaigns:** Hubs lead targeted community campaigns to promote clean energy solutions, such as community solar campaign underway in Western New York.

As of June 2025, more than 60 Hub organizations are working across New York State to ensure that LMI households and DACs, who often face the highest energy burdens, are prioritized in clean energy participation and benefit from clean energy programs. In just over three years the Hubs have supported more than 7,000 customers, made over 13,000 program referrals, and organized or participated in more than 6,000 outreach events, including at food pantries, festivals, career fairs, and housing expos.

3. Recommended Actions to Accelerate Progress Towards an Equitable and Just Energy System

This section presents six themes with recommendations consistent with the chapter's key findings, each accompanied by a non-exhaustive list describing relevant past and ongoing initiatives for context. These initiatives expand on or are supplementary to those described in the previous section. While each initiative is listed once, under the theme to which it is directly relevant, it may also serve as a meaningful example for several other recommendations.

In recognition of Indigenous Nation sovereignty, please refer to the Local, Regional, and Federal Government Collaboration chapter of this Plan for discussion of New York State's engagement with Indigenous Nations and inter-government consultation.

3.1. Improved Engagement

New York State is committed to advancing equity in the energy sector by fostering community engagement and creating more opportunities for DACs to help shape policies, programs, and projects at every stage, from early ideas to implementation. In turn, this input can help improve access to clean energy services and benefits in DACs. Community-led and community-involved processes offer a key avenue to support the tangible growth of a local clean energy economy within DACs, yielding cost savings, good green jobs, lower pollution, and small business development.

Major Initiatives: Procedural Equity

- **Community Air Monitoring (CAM) Initiative:** To ensure meaningful community involvement in the CAM initiative, DEC established Community Advisory Committees (CACs) in each of the 10 DACs selected for mobile monitoring. These CACs serve as platforms for local stakeholders to engage with CAM results and contribute to the development of community-guided mitigation strategies to reduce air pollution. DEC outlined a collaborative framework to facilitate this engagement, appointing a trusted community representative, or "co-convener," for each CAC. These co-conveners gather input, discuss findings, and identify priority areas for pollution reduction. Collectively, the CACs collaborate with the DEC, CJWG, and other state entities to prioritize recommendations and identify responsible parties for implementing actions.

- **Disadvantaged Community Consultant Pool**: NYSERDA has established a program for CBOs serving or representing DACs to apply to be paid for time dedicated to informing NYSERDA initiatives as part of the DAC Consultant Pool of qualified organizations. A range of CBOs are eligible to apply, including grassroots advocacy organizations, faith-based groups, environmental

and climate justice organizations, as well as individual nonprofits, coalitions, and for-profit firms based in and with a substantial connection to those residing in DACs. Qualified applicants in the pool are available to work with NYSERDA staff through a variety of paid services. These focus on helping NYSERDA alleviate obstacles for DAC representatives to participate in and inform how DACs can receive an equitable share of the benefits from clean energy investments and programs.

- **EPPAC:** Established by the PSC in August 2023, this council was intentionally designed to include DAC representatives as essential stakeholders in decision-making processes. EPPAC is structured to ensure that participants have a designated role and a strong platform to offer input during deliberations. Their inclusion exists at every stage of the EPPAC's grid and transmission planning work, from conducting initial assessments and scenario modeling to evaluating bulk power needs. The Council provides a model for meaningful participation, where DAC representatives can actively shape processes, co-create criteria, and access the same information as all other stakeholders.

- **Offshore Wind Environmental Justice Technical Working Group (OSW EJ-TWG):** In 2023, NYSERDA established the OSW EJ-TWG, joining the four OSW TWGs established in 2017 under the New York State OSW Master Plan. The OSW EJ-TWG is an independent advisory body led by NYSERDA to directly engage environmental and climate justice organizations, Indigenous Nations, OSW developers, federal agencies, workforce development organizations, and other stakeholders committed to a just transition who have an inherent interest and ability to develop the OSW industry in New York State. The OSW EJ-TWG provides a forum for discussion between key parties working on New York State OSW projects that supports transparency, collaborations, data sharing, advice, and guidance to help steer New York State's efforts in ensuring OSW development prioritizes and benefits DACs.

Major Initiatives: Distributive Equity

- **DEC EJ Grants:** DEC's Office of Environmental Justice offers competitive grants to support and empower communities as they develop and implement solutions that significantly address environmental issues, harm, and health hazards, build community consensus, set priorities, and improve public outreach and education. Since 2006, DEC has awarded nearly $17 million in Community Impact Grants, with an additional $5.9 million made available in May 2025. Recent awardees included the GreenTech HVAC Training Initiative, which trains residents of the Rockaway Peninsula in the installation, maintenance, and operation of energy efficient HVAC systems. In the Binghamton region, the clean Energy Empowerment project is helping residents understand clean energy career opportunities and how energy systems in their homes function, how to navigate energy improvement programs, and how to advocate for themselves with a utility. The New Rochelle EJ Initiative is amplifying two key programs that support air and water quality by educating the public on findings, raising awareness, and developing solutions for clean and green infrastructure.

- **Inclusive Solar Adder, Community Benefit Projects:** For community solar, NYSERDA provides a bonus incentive for project developers who undertake a combination of the following qualifying activities: offering bill discounts, providing workforce training and making hiring commitments of priority populations, demonstrating a close partnership throughout the project's development process with CBOs and stakeholders who represent the community where the project is sited, establishing community based or participant ownership models, prioritizing customers in DACs with Limited English proficiency, and siting the project within a DAC that serves eligible subscribers within the surrounding community.
- **NYSERDA Climate Justice Fellowship:** This workforce development initiative provides professional development training/mentoring to support full-time, year-long Climate Justice Fellowships for individuals from disadvantaged communities and/or priority populations to advance climate justice and clean energy priorities for disadvantaged communities.
- **NYSERDA's Clean Mobility Program:** This program, which focuses on DACs, helps communities plan and implement zero-emission transportation options such as bike share, bike ownership programs, microtransit, and EV car share. It provides funds for a planning track that supports local governments, transit agencies, and CBOs in evaluating needs and developing transportation solutions that match local priorities. Program funds are also awarded to projects on a demonstration track that expands mobility services and provides a model for replication elsewhere in the State.

Recommendations

- **New York State should sustain and expand the capacity for agency staff to support DAC stakeholder engagement in the early-stage design of clean energy programs** as well as in energy-related regulatory and public comment processes. This should include efforts such as ensuring language access through translation and interpretation, providing plain language explanations, conducting supplemental outreach during public comment periods, and increasing overall efforts to actively engage DAC stakeholders in decision-making processes.
- **New York State should expand and increase participation in energy planning and regulatory processes from more frontline nonprofits, faith-based institutions, and CBOs** that reflect the full spectrum of DAC needs, characteristics, and health vulnerability indicators.
- **New York State should support technical and operational capacity-building among CBOs that have a proven track record of serving or representing DACs.** This would:
    - Increase program participation among residents and small businesses within DACs.
    - Enhance local engagement and support planning, including the provision of legal and technical expertise, to facilitate community-led or community-owned clean energy projects.
    - Identify opportunities to improve CBO business models, securing additional revenue or funding to sustain their mission.

  - Reduce administrative burdens related to grant applications.

- **New York State should continue to support Indigenous Nation consultation for all energy generation and storage projects that are 25MW or greater in size which may affect Indigenous Nation interests,** through existing regulations and new regulations forthcoming pursuant to the Renewable Action Through Project Interconnection and Deployment (RAPID) Act. The RAPID Act includes requirements for proof of consultation with local governments and Indigenous Nations, and the proposed regulations require meetings with community members, including specific requirements for projects located in disadvantaged communities. These siting processes should include inclusive, culturally competent processes for community participation.

3.2. Inclusive Outreach

Findings from the New York State DAC Barriers and Opportunities report and recent insights from the Hubs RABAs highlight that inadequate outreach by program implementers remains a persistent barrier to DAC participation in clean energy programs. Failure to meet communities where they are and build meaningful local presence has left knowledge gaps and lowered participation rates and benefits. Bridging these gaps through intentional, inclusive, creative, and culturally competent outreach is critical to maximizing the full potential of well-designed, justice-aligned clean energy efforts.

Major Initiatives

- **NYSERDA's Clean Transportation Prize Initiative:** This supports projects that enhance mobility and cut emissions in DACs. For example, in Buffalo's lower east side, an area with high energy burden and dependence on public transportation, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation leveraged prize funding to engage the residents in the participation of an E-bike program, thereby increasing the mobility options for commuters in the area.

- **NYPA's Environmental Justice Program:** This program provides tools, resources, and educational programming to communities near NYPA's statewide facilities and assets. Its Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education initiative offers energy-related, age-appropriate programs for students in Grades 3–12. NYPA's Adult Energy Literacy Program empowers residents to make positive energy choices for their families and communities, while also funding the retrofitting of old shipping containers into indoor hydroponic gardens. This food production system increases year-round access to organic fresh fruits and vegetables, using energy-efficient LED lighting in a controlled environment that significantly reduces energy, water, and land use compared to conventional farming. NYPA also provides weatherization workshops to community organizations that host indoor food production systems.

- **DEC's Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program:** This helps local governments take action to reduce GHG emissions and adapt to a changing climate. The Program offers grants, leadership recognition, and free technical assistance. Communities with a high proportion of low-income households or geographically designated DACs are eligible for 'no match' grants for EV charging stations from DEC's Municipal Zero Emission Vehicle Program. The Central NY Regional Planning & Development Board has partnered with DEC to develop regional maps that show EV charging

station deserts in DACs and reveal the best locations for new EV charging stations, an example of targeted technical assistance and outreach through the program.

Recommendations

- **New York State should work proactively to address language barriers that may hinder participation in beneficial programs and regulatory processes by developing, regularly reviewing, and improving language access plans.** Building on the progress of New York State's current language access policy,[26] which took effect in 2022, State energy agencies and authorities that interact with the public should continue exploring ways to expand service provision through enhanced language access. Beginning with the 12 most spoken non-English languages in the state, efforts may include:
    - Regularly reviewing and improving language access plans and materials considered vital documents under the State's Language Access Law.
    - Translating outreach materials into languages commonly spoken in the communities served.
    - Hiring multilingual staff fluent in the primary languages spoken in target areas.
- **New York State should consider opportunities to leverage the forthcoming EHAP's urban heat island map and DEC's Community Air Monitoring results to assist in conducting additional targeted customer outreach for clean energy programs such as weatherization, clean heating and cooling, and solar + storage.** These technologies can offer critical protection from extreme heat events and improved air quality, especially in neighborhoods with high vulnerability, offering compelling reasons for community engagement.
- **New York State should prioritize expanding community-based outreach and engagement strategies,** including culturally relevant communication, face to face engagement, and stronger partnerships with schools, community and health centers, and local businesses.

3.3. Air Pollution Reduction

Air pollution from fossil fuel combustion can disproportionately burden DACs, leading to health, social, and economic costs. Section 7(3) of the Climate Act requires that, "in considering and issuing permits, licenses, other administrative approvals and decisions, including but not limited to the execution of grants, loans, and contracts, pursuant to Article 75 of the Environmental Conservation Law, all state agencies, offices, authorities, and divisions shall not disproportionately burden DACs" and "shall also prioritize reductions of greenhouse gas emissions and co-pollutants in DACs." Major in-state sources of air pollutants include diesel and gasoline-powered vehicles, onsite combustion of oil and natural gas in residential and commercial buildings and industrial facilities, and fossil fuel-fired power plants. While

[26] New York State Office of General Services (OGS), *New York State Language Access Law*, https://ogs.ny.gov/new-york-state-language-access-law.

important programs are already underway, there is a critical need for more targeted strategies to reduce exposure to fossil emissions.

Major Initiatives

- DEC has issued a **"Peaker Rule"** to reduce harmful NO_x emissions from fossil-fuel fired simple cycle combustion turbines. As of May 1, 2025, 37 "peaking" units have retired. The retired units represent one gigawatt (GW) of older fossil fuel-fired generation and a significant reduction of pollution. In addition to shutdowns, additional emission controls were installed on 43 units totaling about 1.27 GW. Implementation of the rule is ongoing.

- DPS and NYSERDA launched the **Energy Storage Roadmap** in 2024 to deploy 6 GW of energy storage capacity by 2030 and an interim target of 1.5 GW by 2025. Energy storage systems will have a pivotal role in replacing fossil-fuel-fired peaking power plants statewide with renewable energy, reducing emissions from units which are disproportionately located in or nearby DACs.

- **PSC's Coordinated Grid Planning Processes:** Initiated in August 2024, this initiative charged utilities with identifying and implementing electric grid upgrades to support electrification in transportation and buildings and to address future capacity bottlenecks. To date, this pro-active funding has been meaningful in the South Bronx, which has some of the highest asthma rates in the U.S. This includes the Zerega Avenue Expansion, a Con Edison project designed to enable fleet electrification through improved grid capacity, and the Hunts Point Upgrade, a targeted pollution reduction strategy addressing a geographic area with elevated air pollution levels through electrification.

- **NYPA's Decarbonization Leadership Program:** New York's 2023–2024 Enacted State Budget authorized and directed NYPA to develop decarbonization action plans for 15 of the highest emitting State facilities. The decarbonization action plans will be developed with a focus on detailed investigation of large energy systems, analysis of energy efficiency measures, and the feasibility of using clean energy and thermal energy networks. The plans will evaluate the condition of existing systems, identify barriers to implementation, and consider the impact on maintenance costs and customer operations. The assessments will explore additional decarbonization measures, such as electrifying transportation resources and installing on-site distributed energy resources. NYPA expects to complete the Decarbonization Action Plans for all the identified state facilities by January 31, 2026. In a notable example, NYPA and OGS released an Energy Master Plan in May 2024 focused on decarbonization for the Empire State Plaza's 98-acre government complex in Albany. The multi-phased approach aims to transform the complex from utilizing an inefficient fossil fuel system into becoming a model of energy efficient clean energy infrastructure. Located in a DAC, the decarbonization of the Empire Plaza will not only save New York State money through modern energy efficient infrastructure but also deliver significant health improvements and economic opportunities to the surrounding community.

- **Deactivation of small NYPA plants in New York City and Long Island:** The 2023-24 Enacted State Budget requires NYPA to deactivate its small plants in NYC and Long Island by 2030, provided this

will not cause more than a de minimis net increase in emissions in DACs and that the plants are not needed for emergency or reliability purposes. On May 9, 2025, NYPA released its *Small Natural Gas Power Plant Transition Plan* in consultation with the PEAK Coalition, outlining its approach to analyzing emissions and grid reliability on a plant-by-plant basis. NYPA will assess potential emission increases and determine whether each plant is essential for reliability or emergency power. If not, NYPA will proceed with deactivation, gathering public input and coordinating with DPS, NYSERDA, the New York Independent System Operator, and other stakeholders. For plants that cannot be retired without harmful impacts, NYPA will revisit the decision every two years. NYPA is also exploring repurposing sites for energy storage and has entered into four non-binding agreements with developers to build storage facilities.

Recommendations

- **NYSERDA, in coordination with State and local agencies, should continue to advance retrofit offerings for homes and multifamily buildings that improve indoor air quality and address existing health and safety needs**, with particular emphasis on advancing these measures for projects located within DACs, and for LMI households.
- **New York State should explore all pathways to accelerate the deployment of medium- and heavy-duty electric trucks and buses, along with charging infrastructure, to maximize health benefits for populations living near high-traffic roadways in DACs.** See the Transportation chapter of this Plan for more detail.
- **To advance the benefits from electrification and clean energy, New York State should pursue strategies to reduce GHG emissions and air pollutants—with particular consideration to projects across the energy, building, waste, and transportation sectors that are identified or informed by the CJWG and the DAC Community Advisory Committees of the CAM Initiative.** This approach will help ensure air pollution reductions and equitable investment outcomes.

3.4. Clean Energy Affordability and Security

For many households, upgrading building envelopes and installing efficient appliances results in improved health, safety, and comfort in the home, and lower energy bills. Utilizing clean and efficient modes of transportation, such as public transit and electric vehicles, can also help households manage transportation costs. Removing barriers to clean energy technology adoption is essential to advancing both energy affordability and quality of life, by expanding access to energy services, enhancing comfort, and improving financial stability.

As New York State transitions to clean energy, ensuring affordability for LMI and DAC households is a central priority. The state has made important progress through weatherization and efficiency programs, utility bill assistance, and clean energy deployment paired with utility bill credits, such as the Statewide Solar for All program.[27] These efforts provide crucial support for the longer-term affordability benefits of energy efficiency improvements and reducing the use of fossil fuels. As fossil fuel price volatility

[27] Office of Governor Kathy Hochul, *Governor Hochul Announces Statewide Solar for All Program* (Albany, NY: Office of the Governor, January 24, 2024), https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-statewide-solar-all-program.

continues to burden New Yorkers that pay directly for the use of fossil fuels in their homes and drive internal combustion engine vehicles, bill assistance programs remain critical for low-income households.

Major Initiatives

- **NYSERDA's Empower+ Program:** This assists low- and moderate-income households in saving energy and money by funding energy improvements to their primary residences, starting with comprehensive home energy assessments that inform customized energy plans. The Empower+ Program team collaborates with the Regional Clean Energy Hub Program to recruit local contractors into the Program's network, including to expand the pool of contractors available for implementation in DACs. Comparable energy efficiency assistance is available through the **Long Island Power Authority's Home Comfort Plus Program** which serves income eligible households in Long Island with similar energy-saving and electrification solutions.

- Administered by New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), the **Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)** delivers energy saving enhancements at no cost to income eligible households across the state. By sealing the building envelope, installing high efficiency lighting and appliances, and upgrading aging HVAC systems, WAP cuts energy usage while improving indoor comfort. Coupled with lowering utility bills, WAP retrofits reduce exposure to extreme indoor temperatures and environmental pollutants – thereby reducing energy insecurity and enhancing the health and safety of homes in DACs.

- **The PSC's Energy Affordability Policy (EAP),** established in 2016, sets a goal to ensure that low-income households will pay no more than six percent of annual household income toward energy bills. The Energy Affordability Program supports this goal and is administered through major electric and gas utilities to provide low-income customers with energy bill payment assistance through monthly tiered discounts. As part of this, the PSC's Statewide Solar for All Program provides added utility bill discounts to customers taking part in its EAP program that live in a DAC, which increases the equitable distribution of solar power generation and simplifies the process for community solar project developers to secure customers. In July 2025, the PSC adopted an **Enhanced Energy Affordability Policy** to extend energy bill discounts to additional households below median income.

- Through the **PSC's Energy Affordability Guarantee Pilot**, a first-in-the-nation pilot program, low-income home heating and cooling equipment will be fully electrified through NYSERDA's EmPower+ Program. Participating households will pay no more than six percent of their annual income on electricity. For more information, refer to the Impacts of the Energy Affordability Impacts chapter of this Plan.

- **NYPA's Renewable Energy Access and Community Help (REACH) Program:** Set up in conjunction with the PSC in 2024, this initiative enables low-income EAP electricity customers in DACs served by the six major investor-owned electric utilities to receive bill credits through the production of renewable energy products. NYPA will develop a portfolio of renewable energy generation projects and distribute a portion of the revenue from these projects, along with third-party

contributions, to the state's participating investor-owned utilities, who will generate bill credits for REACH beneficiaries. Bill credits will start to flow to REACH beneficiaries when funds become available from new renewable energy generating projects and other sources. Several projects have already been identified to be developed under NYPA's REACH Program, with estimated completion dates as early as 2027.

Recommendations

- **New York State should increase outreach within DACs** to ensure residents who are eligible for bill assistance can participate in available programs.
- **Relevant New York State agencies should continue prioritizing weatherization and efficiency retrofit programs** as foundational strategies for affordability. Greater emphasis should be placed on integrating funding for deferred maintenance into whole-home upgrade strategies that improve health, comfort, and lower energy burdens. This should include exploring funding options to address structural issues that often prevent home energy improvement projects from beginning. See also the Buildings chapter of this Plan.
- **New York State should explore and pilot holistic decarbonization interventions within DACs.** A multi-disciplinary approach that combines transportation decarbonization, building energy retrofits, onsite renewable energy, and relevant non-energy programs - such as health and housing - can generate greater beneficial impacts than if these interventions are pursued separately.
- **New York State should adopt a strategic approach to address transportation deserts that most severely impact commuters in LMI households and DACs.** This includes scaling successful models from the Clean Mobility and Transportation Prize Programs and expanding access to a range of transit options and active transportation. See also the Transportation chapter of this Plan.

3.5. Clean Energy Investment and Jobs

Clean energy investments can be a powerful engine of economic growth across New York State, particularly in DACs. These investments should promote education, create quality jobs with opportunities for career advancement, and catalyze development for businesses that have historically faced unfair barriers to competition.

Major Initiatives

- **Tier 1, On-Shore Large Scale Renewables (LSR):** In awarding renewable energy certificates, NYSERDA solicits proposals from project developers. The solicitations invite bidders to state incremental economic benefit dollars or spending in New York State, including how much of their proposed spending will be realized in DACs. In evaluating bid proposals, NYSERDA assigns a higher weight in scoring for spending that is focused on benefiting DACs. Funds can be invested in job training, partnerships to promote STEM education, and improvements in local infrastructure such as schools, roads, and community centers, among other commitments.

- With an emphasis on equity and inclusion, **NYSERDA's Energy Efficiency and Clean Technology Training Program** expands New York State's training infrastructure and capacity to strengthen the pipeline of skilled talent for the energy efficiency and clean technology labor market. Projects funded through this solicitation develop and deliver technical training, relevant education, and hands-on experience to ensure that new and existing workers, apprentices, journeypersons, and students have the skills and qualifications required to meet industry demand. Preference is given to projects that include or are led by MWBEs or SDVOBs; projects that are focused on DACs and/or priority populations; and qualifying union-led and pre-apprenticeship projects.

- Through the **P-12 Schools Initiative**, NYSERDA provides support for New York State's schools to reduce their energy use and emissions while introducing students to sustainability careers at a young age. These programs include the On-site Energy Manager Program, Flexible Technical Assistance Program, Electric School Buses, Building Operations and Maintenance Training and the Large-scale Thermal Program, and the Clean Educators Workshop. These programs create healthier learning environments and model sustainable energy. In addition, the Clean Energy for Educators Workshop provides teachers with no cost training on integrating clean energy into their curriculum; priority to attend the workshops is given to teachers who teach in DACs.

Recommendations

- **NYSERDA (including the Clean Energy Hubs), NYPA, DOL, the State University of New York (SUNY), and Empire State Development should further synchronize workforce development programs** to close equity gaps in job access for priority populations. See the Clean Energy Jobs and a Just Transition chapter of this Plan for further detail.

- **New York State should continue to integrate on-the-job training opportunities,** and strong labor standards into transportation infrastructure and clean energy projects, to expand quality workforce opportunities in DACs.

- Building on proven models, **New York State should explore expanding renewable energy and energy efficiency retrofit programs** that procure goods and services from MWBEs and SDVOBs.

3.6. Interagency Coordination

To improve how DAC stakeholders and residents experience State clean energy programs, agencies and authorities need to strengthen coordination across programs, engagement efforts, services, and partnerships with external organizations. A more unified and strategic approach would lead to programs that better address persistent problems while delivering multiple benefits. This could include developing simplified, cross program application processes and coordinating public engagement efforts to reduce duplication, avoid scheduling conflicts, and prevent stakeholder fatigue.

Major Initiatives

- The **Extreme Heat Action Plan (EHAP)**[28] Working Group for New York State brings together staff experts from 25+ state agencies to address the impacts of extreme heat. Led by DEC and NYSERDA, the EHAP Working Group coordinates the development and implementation of commitments across the Plan. This interagency effort focuses on protecting vulnerable populations, particularly in DACs, and building community resilience. Refer to the Climate Change, Adaptation, and Resilience chapter of this Plan for a further description of EHAP.

- **New York State Healthy Homes Value-Based Payment Pilot:** This is a joint initiative of NYSERDA and DOH intended to develop a framework that allows New York State's managed care organizations to fund residential healthy homes interventions as part of their value-based payment arrangements with healthcare providers within the Medicaid Healthcare Delivery System. The Pilot aims to implement 300 healthy homes interventions in the homes of eligible Medicaid members, intended to reduce energy use and utility costs; improve asthma-related health outcomes; reduce unintentional household injury; improve occupant comfort and safety; and reduce Medicaid utilization associated with avoidable urgent care, emergency department visits, and hospitalizations. It demonstrates interagency collaboration toward shared goals.

- Established by a PSC order in 2016, the **New York State Low-Income Energy Task Force (LIETF)** promotes interagency coordination with the goal of streamlining services, reducing administrative burdens, and ensuring programs reach the low-income households they are intended to serve. LIETF focuses on publicly funded low-income programs, including Empower+, the Weatherization Assistance Program, and utility run affordability programs. Comprised of NYSERDA, DPS, HCR, & OTDA, the task force collaborates with the steering committee members of EEC and other community-based organizations to discuss strategies to improve program access and lower energy burdens.

Recommendations

- Through LIETF, **New York State should support cross-agency efforts to streamline application processes and create universal applications for programs serving overlapping populations**.

- **New York State should pursue more consolidated funding applications for communities and local governments**—where doing so would streamline processes and better leverage resources for clean energy.

- **NYSERDA should continue expanding the interagency membership and collaboration within the Energy Equity Collaborative (EEC) to strengthen cross-sector planning.** This should support more coordinated stakeholder engagement and strengthen interagency involvement across all EEC working groups, including Energy Transition, Workforce and Economic Development, Housing and Buildings, and Engagement and Access.

[28] NYSERDA, *Extreme Heat Action Plan*, accessed July 5, 2025, https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Extreme-Heat-Action-Plan.