

Environmental Justice Questionnaire for State Agencies

When answering the questions below please note if your answers are agency or program specific

- 1. Do you consider environmental implications when working on an issue in your agency? For example, air, noise, and/or water pollution; soil contamination; nuisance odors; greenhouse gases; etc. If yes, please explain.**

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is the state’s primary economic development agency, awarding grants and other forms of incentives to businesses, communities, and individual across the state through a broad array of program areas.

DCEO Mission Statement:

To raise Illinois’ profile as a premier global business destination; and to provide a foundation for the economic prosperity of all Illinoisans, through coordination of business recruitment and retention, provision of essential capital to small businesses, investment in infrastructure and job training for a 21st century economy, and administration of state and federal grant programs.

As articulated in its mission statement, DCEO works to provide a foundation for the economic prosperity of all Illinoisans, which requires addressing gaps in advancement opportunities due to environmental and health disadvantages. Environmental justice considerations impact the programs, policies, and activities of multiple offices under DCEO. Many of these programs specifically address economic, health, and environmental disparities that disadvantaged communities and individuals experience.

<i>Office/Bureau</i>	<i>Description</i>
Business Development	The Office of Business Development administers job creation/retention grants, loans and tax credit programs, including EDGE. The Office’s Enterprise Zone program and New Markets Development program specifically target economically depressed areas of the state and low-income census tracts to encourage business activity and job creation in those areas.
Coal Development	The Office of Coal Development supports the state’s coal industry through financing of technology research and conducting awareness campaigns. The Office coordinates with IEPA to provide funding to those coal projects that have received permits and cleared IEPA’s environmental justice review. The Office also funds programs to improve the safety, health, and environmental conditions for coal mine employees.
Community Development	The Office of Community Development utilizes federal HUD funding to administer community infrastructure, housing and disaster recovery funding programs. The Office administers the Illinois Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP), which is primarily aimed at helping communities with substantial low to moderate-income populations. CDAP funds projects including water and sewer infrastructure upgrades to ensure safe and reliable drinking water supplies; expansion of businesses in the

<i>Office/Bureau</i>	<i>Description</i>
	community; and improvements to public infrastructure and elimination of conditions detrimental to public health, safety, and public welfare, particularly in emergency circumstances. The Office also administers several other programs described in great detail later in this document.
Employment & Training	The Office of Employment & Training oversees statewide workforce training system (Illinois workNet Center), and promotes and coordinates initiatives to bridge skills gaps. The Office administers workforce programs including the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) or the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (Trade).
Energy & Recycling	The Office of Energy & Recycling promotes investment in Illinois' green economy, and creates energy and recycling policies for state facilities. The Office provides funding for energy efficiency, renewable energy, recycling, and alternate fueling infrastructure. The Office administers programs that reduce the cost of making energy efficient building upgrades for low-income residents. Low-income residents spend a relatively high proportion of their income on utility costs. These energy efficiency programs greatly reduce or eliminate the cost of retrofits that help lower utility bills, increase the comfort and safety of homes, and improve indoor air quality for low-income residents in Illinois.
Energy Assistance	The Office of Energy Assistance enables low income households to maintain utility services through LIHEAP and PIPP, and reduces low income families' energy costs through improved residential energy efficiency, both single-family homes and multi-family buildings.
Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology	The Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology catalyzes local, national and global partnerships—including the Small Business Development Center network and the Advantage Illinois program—that strengthen Illinois' competitive advantage. Within DCEO's suite of small business assistance programs, the Environmental Assistance Program serves as resource, housed within a non-regulatory agency, specifically for small businesses addressing and complying with environmental obligations. The program provides free confidential information, advising, guidance materials, training, and workshops to help small businesses understand environmental regulations, including permitting, testing and reporting requirements. DCEO coordinates closely with IEPA to offer this program.
Regional Economic Development	The Office of Regional Economic Development coordinates economic development activities and outreach across the state.
Urban Assistance	The Office of Urban Assistance manages the Urban Weatherization Initiative, targeting homes in disadvantaged communities and training home energy technicians, and the Employment Opportunities Grant program, which trains participants in the construction trade industry.

2. How do you determine or define the extent of environmental impacts on the community? Please provide examples.

DCEO relies primarily on the environmental science, health, and engineering expertise of partner agencies and organizations to assess and address environmental impacts prior to awarding funding to projects. For example, the Offices of Business Development, Coal Development, and Energy and Recycling rely on IEPA permitting and enforcement to guide whether the agency awards funding to projects.

Under some of the Office of Energy and Recycling programs, grant applicants must quantify project benefits based on performance metrics including savings of kWh of electricity and therms of natural gas, avoided emissions of CO₂e, and avoided consumption of fossil-based fuels.

The Offices of Energy and Recycling, Energy Assistance, and Urban Assistance (administering the Urban Weatherization Initiative) all consider potential exposure to lead, asbestos, and other environmental contaminants prior to performing building energy efficiency retrofits or weatherization.

3. Do you have an environmental justice mandate for your agency? Yes/No. If yes, please explain.

No, DCEO does not have an environmental justice mandate for the agency.

4. Do you assess the impact of projects on low-income and minority communities? If so, how?

For all grant programs, DCEO requests information from grant applicants regarding the number of individuals of different races/ethnicities served by the proposed project, and the number and type of jobs created by the project (full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary/construction). Where state or state federal guidelines require eligible communities or individuals to

5. Does your agency have programs that address the issues of handicapped and/or elderly populations?

The Office of Community Development administers several programs that offer housing support including rental assistance, housing rehabilitation, housing rehabilitation assistance for occupancy by persons with disabilities, and Section 8 housing choice vouchers. Assistance is offered through a variety of programs listed below and must be accessed either through a participating community action agency, other not-for-profit organizations, or a unit of local government.

- Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG): Through the CSBG program, community action agencies can offer rental assistance for income eligible families seeking housing. Typically, CSBG funds are being used for the following types of programs:

education and training, employment promotion, emergency services, health, housing, personal financial management, nutrition, and coordination of services.

- Emergency Solutions Grants Program (ESG): Through the ESG program, not-for-profit organizations or units of local government can offer rental assistance to those seeking housing or temporary shelter for homeless individuals and/or families.
- Housing Rehabilitation Program: Through the Housing Rehabilitation program, low-to-moderate income communities can apply for grants to improve housing and rehabilitate and retrofit properties. A non-entitlement unit of local government can apply for a maximum of \$350,000 in grant funds to improve the homes of its low-to-moderate income residents of owner occupied single family housing units. Grants help provide residents with safe and sanitary living conditions and help to stabilize low to moderate income neighborhoods and affordable housing in the community.
- Mobility and Accessibility Rehabilitation Supplement (MARS): The MARS component helps provide safe and accessible housing for low-to-moderate income residents who have physical disabilities. Up to \$100,000 can be requested by CDAP communities looking to rehabilitate and retrofit properties for occupancy by disabled persons. Applications are accepted on a first come – first serve basis as funding is available.
- Section 8: Very low-income individuals and households can apply for monthly rental assistance through HUD’s Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, administered by DCEO. The Section 8 HCV program operates in approximately 25 Central and Southern Illinois counties. The Section 8 HCV program serves approximately 145 families.

The Illinois Energy and Recycling Office suite of energy efficiency programs includes a programs that funds energy efficient building retrofits and appliance upgrades for residents of Public Housing Authorities, including many low-income seniors.

Seniors comprise a significant portion of the individuals who receive utility bill assistance from the Office of Energy Assistance’s LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) and PIPP (Percentage of Income Payment Plan) programs.

6. Identify staff positions that work with low-income; minority; elderly and/or handicapped populations and communities.

The majority of DCEO positions work with low-income, minority, elderly and/or handicapped populations and communities – too numerous to list individually.

7. Does your agency have a community involvement/community engagement plan? If yes, explain the plan and specify whether it is general or project specific.

Currently, DCEO is conducting workshops throughout the state to gather input on the development of a statewide Economic Development Plan to help guide the state over the next five years. This plan will address such items as job creation, workforce development, our business environment, poverty reduction, regional needs, and business attraction, among others. In the process, the agency is soliciting recommendation from economic developers, elected officials, businesses, and individuals around the state.

DCEO's Office of Regional Economic Development has offices and staff located in ten regions across the state. The Regional Economic Development Team recognizes that the best economic development ideas often come through two-way communication with local elected officials, business owners and managers, and residents in their own cities, towns, and neighborhoods. Utilizing an innovative regional approach to economic and workforce development, state economic development reps reach out every day in each of the ten regions of Illinois to provide businesses and communities with better access to state services.

DCEO's Office of Community Development manages the Illinois Main Street program. The objective of the program is to revitalize Illinois' traditional downtowns, neighborhood business districts, and urban corridors. Illinois Main Street gives value as it works with Illinois' communities to provide technical and consultative assistance, training and resources to improve the economic, social, cultural and physical aspects of each unique commercial area.

8. How does your agency accommodate communities that are non-native English speakers? For example, providing an interpreter at a community meeting, translating documents, etc.

DCEO provides program information in different languages, employs staff members who are able to communicate in clients' (program participants') own native languages, and awards grants to service providers who are able to communicate in clients' (program participants') own native languages. For example, the Office of Employment & Training's website, www.illinoisworknet.com, provides an option for translation into Spanish, Polish, Korean, Russian, or Chinese.

9. Does your agency partner with community interest groups, if so who are they?

Yes, DCEO partners with many community interest groups – too numerous to list individually – primarily through its programming and outreach under the Office of Community Development and the Office of Regional Economic Development.

10. The Mud-to Garden project is an example of how state agencies can work together to address an environmental justice concern. Can you give an example of an opportunity where your agency could partner with one or more agencies on the EJ Commission to address an environmental justice concern?

DCEO already partners with agencies on the Commission to address environmental justice concerns and will continue to do so. For example, the Office of Coal Development will continue to work with IEPA and IDNR to review project permitting – and support community involvement in those permitting processes – prior to funding a project. The Office of Business Development will work with IDOT to support community involvement in decisions concerning development and repair of transportation infrastructure (e.g., highway access points, rail spurs) that serves industrial facilities receiving DCEO incentives.