



The Consortium for
Worker Education

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Robert G. Callender
NYSERDA
17 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203
Sent via: rggiprograms@nyserda.org

Re: RGGI Operating Plan comments

Dear Mr. Callender:

Thank you for inviting the Consortium for Worker Education to be a member of the Advisory Group for RGGI. CWE represents a broad consortium of union training funds, community based organizations, workforce development specialists, schools and educators throughout the state, all dedicated to training and educating adults to improve their work lives. The goals of 15 x 15 are large. The efforts to meet these goals must be bold as well. The job of educating New Yorkers about carbon reduction and creating a trained workforce to accomplish the task is fundamental to assuring that New York State can attain its goals for reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

To this end, the RGGI funds should support workforce and community education. Both youth and adults, when engaged in educational activities, are positioned for learning new information that can benefit themselves, their community and our planet. There is no question that in this era of burgeoning awareness of climate change, carbon reductions can be attained by educating the populace. There should be no wrong door for education in energy reduction strategies. Just as we saw personal computers become ubiquitous in our lifetime, we need to see sustainable practices enter the mainstream.

RGGI funds will need to enhance education and workforce training funds to accomplish this outcome. In 2006 the New York Association of Education and Training Professionals, (NYATEP) assessed the funding sources for workforce development and training throughout the state. They identified 31 sources. This is not to say that there are plenty of resources, (because the funding is insufficient for the needs,) but to say that the funding is disparate. Usually, when organizations design and implement training they are pulling from several of these sources. RGGI can be an added source that allows these

organizations to train and educate their constituencies with added measures; energy, carbon reduction and sustainability. The resource can be inserted into existing training platforms and will be able to expand their efficacy in this area. Community Based Organizations and Environmental Justice Organizations can be very effective at rolling out education programs in this arena. As the CBO's now help low-income New Yorkers understand filing for tax credits and food stamps, they can, likewise, help New Yorkers understand their energy bills and how to reduce them. Much like how the NYSEDA Energy Smart Schools program is bringing awareness to school-age children, awareness brought to adult education can result in changes in homes across the state. Energy bills can become a learning tool in adult education classes and energy reductions something that adults can value and track.

The US Green Building Council- NY Chapter, is currently designing curriculum and certifications for the building trades in order to enhance their understanding of how their labor can serve the greater goals for sustainable building practices. This model, of training and certification for existing workers, is the way institutional changes occur, one certified worker at a time. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has seen this with a dramatic reduction in workplace accidents over the last 30 years as education and awareness has increased. The NYS Department of Health, Hazard Abatement Board funds workforce health and safety training through many unions training funds and organizations. This funding enhances what these organizations are able to deliver to workers with concrete outcomes of less workplace accidents. One can see that if energy reducing education and training is supported, reduced carbon emissions can result. The new challenge here will be establishing the measurement mechanism to quantify the success of this service. Objective measures to gauge success might include how many people received related instruction and how much less energy was used in a geographic region where heavy training occurred.

The new and expanding businesses engaging in energy efficiency and renewable energy will need trained and certified workers to meet the challenge. The businesses that create these jobs will need workers they can rely upon. The current workforce training platforms to bring people into these industries and to advance incumbent workers are, unfortunately, under funded. RGGI funds could offer support to the range of training needed to strengthen the workforce to contribute to the State's goals. Energy efficiency and building retrofits measures can be ramped up substantially with broad education of the populace and the workforce. As new technology comes on line, training incumbent workers to install and maintain new equipment can be integrated into existing training arenas to assure a capacity for rapid roll out and expansion.

RGGI funding criteria, as outlined in the Operating Plan, identifies an interest in promoting economic development, creating jobs, advancing health and environmental benefits and reducing the cost burden and environmental impacts on low-income families and Environmental Justice communities. All of this can be well served through education that enhances the skills of both the workforce and the residents of the state. Training and education must be a clear and distinct objective of RGGI funds.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Lurie