

NYCHA Clean Energy Academy: A Place-Based Model for Advancing Equity in the Clean Energy Workforce

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ABSTRACT

Clean energy is a high-growth industry with thousands of new jobs opening each year. However, access to these growth opportunities remains inequitable. This paper explores how the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Clean Energy Academy seeks to fill this gap by offering pathways for underrepresented communities to receive robust training, professional development, wraparound services, and direct employment in the industry.

In New York State, nearly 55,000 clean energy jobs can be found in disadvantaged communities, accounting for 31 percent of the total (NYSERDA, 2025). Unfortunately, the demographics of the workforce do not reflect the racial, ethnic, and gender demographics of these communities. This is not by chance, as there are many barriers to entry into the Clean Energy workforce, including inaccessibility to training opportunities, lack of community engagement, and high-barrier certifications.

The NYCHA Clean Energy Academy offers a pathway for NYCHA residents to access robust training and career support, helping them transition into this high-growth field. This program addresses the lack of representation in the industry by opening the door for BIPOC and members of underserved communities to gain in-demand skills, certifications, and hands-on training in sustainability, building efficiency, and workforce readiness. Graduates of the program are placed in Clean Energy Internships and gained full time employment, where they work directly with partners actively decarbonizing the neighborhoods they live in.

Clean Energy Sector in New York

In 2025, NYSERDA published its ninth annual clean energy industry report, which together provide a wealth of information about the distribution and character of clean energy jobs throughout New York. Employment in New York's Clean Energy sector has steadily increased from 145,778 jobs in 2016 to 184,537 jobs in 2024, with a slight dip in 2020. This growth ranks New York state's clean energy industry as the 15th highest in the country in 2024 and even outpaces growth in most other workforce industries such as finance and insurance, accommodation and food services, and educational services. More granularly, downstate New York leads the state with New York County (Manhattan) having the most clean energy jobs of any county, followed by Suffolk and Nassau counties (Long Island). This continued growth points to a need for continued training and recruitment in this industry (NYSERDA 2025).

Clean energy employers have cited an increased need for insulation workers, energy auditors, HVAC workers, plumbers, cost estimators and sales, and electricians. Employers also report difficulty in hiring for these occupations and cite a need for better access to trained talent and workforce development support (NYSERDA 2025). Participation in workforce development opportunities such as those offered by the Board of Cooperative Education Services, the Conservation Corps, YouthBuild, and AmeriCorps are a key entry point to clean energy careers and participation in these programs have increased from 53% to 72% (NYSERDA 2025).

While this sector continues to grow, its diversity has not. As of 2024, women only comprise 26% of the clean energy workforce, compared to comprising 49% of New York’s labor force. People of color (Hispanics/Latinos, Black, Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander) only comprise 28% of the workforce, compared to 42% of the New York labor force. Women are particularly underrepresented in building trades, where they hold less than 2% of jobs, as well as in design and engineering jobs. The existing Clean Energy workforce does not reflect the communities being served by these professions and are likely perpetuated by the lack of access into the development needed for hiring (NYSERDA 2025). Table 1 below shows a breakdown of the Clean Energy workforce in New York.

Table 1: New York State Clean Energy Workforce Demographics (NYSERDA, 2025)

	Overall Clean Energy				T&D and Traditional Energy Workers, 2024	New York’s Labor Force, 2024
	2019	2022	2023	2024		
Women	26%	26%	26%	26%	20%	49%
Men	73%	74%	74%	74%	80%	51%
Hispanic or Latino/a	12%	15%	15%	15%	19%	19%
White	75%	72%	72%	72%	78%	58%
Black	9%	9%	9%	9%	11%	14%
Asian	2%	8%	8%	8%	6%	9%
Native American	4%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%

New York City Housing Authority

NYCHA is the largest public housing authority in the nation. In 2025, it was home to 1 in 16 New Yorkers, providing affordable housing to over 500,000 residents. Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Act of 1968 requires that recipients of certain HUD financial assistance, to the greatest extent feasible, provide economic opportunities for low- or very low-income residents in connection with projects and activities in their neighborhoods (NYCHA 2018). As a part of its daily efforts, one of NYCHA’s aims is to connect residents to quality social services, programs, and economic opportunities that strengthen communities and enhance quality of life.

One of the ways these programs are successfully deployed is by connecting with qualified non-profits engaged with the NYCHA community. The Public Housing Community Fund (PHCF) is one of the non-profit community-based organizations NYCHA works with closely to support its residents. PHCF’s goal is to engage people and partners to build a stronger, more equitable New York City by investing in public housing communities. (PHCF, 2026) PHCF raises funds to invest in programs focused on community health, financial empowerment, leadership development, and workforce training for residents of the NYCHA community. One of

their workforce training programs, the NYCHA Clean Energy Academy, is an example of this investment that provides residents with direct access to opportunities in a sector in which they are underrepresented.

NYCHA residents make up a huge part of New York City’s diverse make up. In 2025 – families served by public housing were overwhelmingly BIPOC individuals. Table 2 below shows the 2025 Demographic breakdown of public housing residents:

Table 2: Racial Composition of Public Housing Residents in NYC (New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), 2025)

Racial demographic	Total residents	Percentage distribution
Black	129,803	43.53%
Hispanic	134,185	45.00%
Asian	18,860	6.32%
White	10,893	3.65%
Other	4,465	1.50%

NYCHA residents are the ideal candidates to target for this workforce development opportunity. Engaging with NYC’s public housing residents will capture trainees in the demographic currently underrepresented in the Clean Energy workforce.

NYCHA Clean Energy Academy

The NYCHA Clean Energy Academy is a workforce development program that seeks to meet the hiring needs of NYCHA’s energy efficiency and renewable energy contractors by connecting resident trainees with an equitable and robust training program. This program relaunched in 2025, in partnership with NYCHA, Kinetic Communities Consulting, Solar One, HSBC, and the New York Power Authority, to create and deploy an all-new curriculum and services package for NYCHA trainees. In its previous iterations, the NYCHA Clean Energy Academy was hosted in partnership with Laguardia Community College as a 16-week intensive course for NYCHA residents to gain sustainability fundamentals. Based on feedback from past cohort members, the NYCHA Clean Energy Academy was relaunched in 2025 with a focus on much needed support and wraparound services. The training was changed to an 8-week course now delivered by Solar One, a skilled not-for-profit organization whose mission is to design and deliver innovative education, training, and technical assistance that fosters sustainability and resiliency in diverse urban environments. The curriculum covers a multitude of subjects, including:

- Sustainability & Building Science Fundamentals – How to see buildings differently and understand foundational strategies that make them efficient, healthy and resilient. How heat, air, and moisture move inside and outside a building’s envelope. How the envelope addresses all the above through barriers. How to name common hand and power tools and how to use them. How to measure materials with accuracy.
- Green Construction, Carpentry – Learn the basic concepts involved with designing and constructing high performance buildings. Topics include thermal bridge free construction, wood framing, sheeting, drywall installation and repair, as well as hands-on activities. Understand three foundation types and components. Identify layers of a high-

performance foundation, become familiar with building materials that go into building a high-performance concrete foundation.

- Green Construction, Electrical - How to visually identify electrical hazards, recognize different electrical tools and their uses, wire devices such as lights, switches, outlets, GFCI, Circuit Breakers, and fuses. How to follow electrical diagrams and electrically retrofit old or damage circuits.
- Plumbing & Heating – Understand how and why sustainability is important to plumbers and their work, understand the water-saving and energy efficiency principles used in new green systems, and understand how green and conventional technologies, products, and installation practices differ. Learn how to interpret the energy guide and water-use rating systems shown on new products, be aware of the primary maintenance issues on common green fixtures, appliances and systems. Learn the common retrofit options and issues. Understand the different applications for pipes, fittings, & valves, explain the science of what makes good vs bad combustion. Determine the health of combustion equipment and performance.
- HVAC – Learn the different types of refrigerants, their properties and how they impact the environment. Learn the refrigeration cycle and the role of each component. Understand the Clean Air Act and EPA regulations regarding refrigerant management. Learn the requirements for recovery, recycling, and reclaiming refrigerants. Understand record-keeping requirements and reporting of refrigerant use. Understand proper safety measures when handling refrigerants (use of personal protective equipment, avoiding exposure, etc.). Understand potential health risks associated with refrigerants. Learn safe techniques for refrigerant recovery and charging system. Cover the equipment and procedures for recovering and recycling refrigerants.
- Solar PV – Learn the principles of solar energy, how photovoltaic (PV) systems work, and the components of a solar power system (solar panels, inverters, charge controllers, batteries). Perform a site assessment to determine if a location is suitable for solar panel installation, considering factors like roof angle, shading, orientation, and space. Mount Solar Photovoltaic modules, wiring PV components. Recognize workplace hazards, implement hazard communication, and apply safety standards to specific hazard.
- OSHA - Understand safety procedures for specific environments. Conduct safety inspections and risk assessments and prevent workplace injuries and illnesses. Comply with OSHA Reporting and Recordkeeping Requirements. Understand the importance and components of good fall-protection.

Upon completion of the program, trainees also receive a list of recommended certifications to enhance their professional profiles. These include:

- EPA 608
- Site Safety Training
- GPRO Mechanical Systems
- OSHA 30

This curriculum built out by Solar One gives foundational knowledge and necessary certifications to allow trainees to be competitive job seekers.

Professional Development and Assistance

In addition to the technical curriculum, the relaunch of the training highlighted the need for professional development tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of the trainees. In particular, the curriculum lacked soft skills development to build the confidence needed to thrive in these roles. A robust professional development curriculum was designed specifically for NYCHA residents entering the Clean Energy field. For most participants, the Clean Energy Academy is their first experience with workforce training. Training focused on communication norms and roleplaying common workplace scenarios to provide trainees with the confidence they need to show up professionally and navigate this space successfully for the first time. This professional development training was expanded in the pre-internship training. More information on what's covered by the curriculum can be found in the 'Program Design and Infrastructure' section below.

This training is an 8-week commitment and is a requirement to be eligible to participate in the Clean Energy Internship (see below). Participants were each given a \$1,500 stipend upon completion of the program and other support measures including travel and lunch on any in-person training days. This helped alleviate any barriers to attending the program daily. To further prepare them for the workforce, the program also provided Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) packages for each graduate. This included steel-toed boots, hard hats, work gloves, safety glasses, over earmuffs, respirators, and masks. This allows graduates to immediately apply for any jobs that may require them to already own these materials, removing another barrier to entry. Our team also offered help with other wrap-around services, providing work verification forms for childcare, referring to mental health services when needed, and offering one-on-one meetings with our Human Resources and Professional Coaching team. Each of these offerings allowed participants to be supported through the program financially, professionally, and mentally; alleviating the stressors of a career change by addressing the needs of trainees to be able to complete the program.

NYCHA Clean Energy Academy Application Insights

The application for the training presented another opportunity to reduce barriers to participate in Clean Energy workforce development. The application was developed to make it accessible for anyone to complete easily without other necessary documents. The application was hosted online via Typeform and was estimated to take less than 5 minutes to complete. The application collected contact information, demographics, and insights into why participants wanted to join the program. Overall, the applications gave our team information on the demographics of people interested in joining the Clean Energy workforce and what support may be needed. In total, the application for the Clean Energy Academy generated:

- 6,021 Views
- 2,490 Starts
- 828 Submissions

Application Funnel

Views → starts → completed submissions



Figure 1: Application Funnel

We received applications from 145 different NYCHA developments (around 60% of all developments in the city) including from the prioritized NYCHA developments with clean energy projects. After reviewing all the applications submitted, we were able to collect insights on motivation for joining the industry and demographics that need to be considered when expanding the workforce.

Demographics To Consider as the Workforce Expands

The 25-34 age group was the largest at 299 applicants (36%), followed by 35-44 at 222 (27%). Together those two groups made up nearly two-thirds of all submissions, which tells us that a lot of people applying are in the middle of their working lives and looking to switch directions. At the same time, 160 applicants were under 25 and 60 were 55 or older, which shows the program is pulling interest from across the full age range.

Age Distribution

All 828 applicants, ages 16 to 75, mean age 34.8

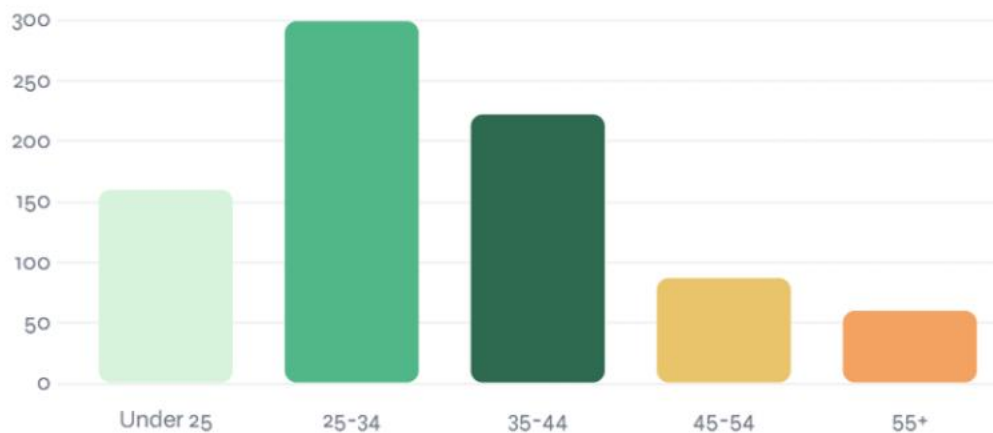


Figure 2: Age Breakdown of All Cohort Applicants

Each of these age ranges allowed our team even more insight into what further support applicants would need to successfully complete the program, shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Cohort 1 Application Age Demographic Info and Insights

Age Range	# of Applicants	Insights and Support Needed
16-22	88	- Applicants in this age range were enthusiastic to learn more about Clean Energy after learning about it in school and deciding what schools to attend and what to major in. - Many want to build their resume by gaining certifications and having hands-on experience. - Some applicants shared that they have completed similar programming with other partners in the field, like Green City Force, and would like to continue training in sustainability. - Any applicants under 18 did not meet eligibility requirements and were referred to partner organizations.
23-29	126	- Applicants in this age range were most interested in shaping their future. Many have worked in entry-level positions in customer service, facilities, and other places but is now looking to begin a career in a new field. - Some applicants shared that they had some relevant experience that sparked their interest in applying – including completing past certifications, owning energy efficient equipment, or working in adjacent fields like agriculture. Through this experience, some have already received certifications like OSHA 30 and SST and would like to pursue more to continue to build their resumes.
30-39	212	- This was the most common age range for applicants for the Clean Energy Academy. Applicants in this age range applied to the program most interested in making a career switch. They want to solidify meaningful employment in a high growth industry. - Many applicants expressed that they have also had relevant experience but would like to explore a new career path to be able to provide for their families and expand their opportunities.
40-49	110	- Applicants in this age range for similar reasons as the previous two. Many have already had hands-on training and trade positions and would like to explore other career opportunities. They have had various experiences in maintenance, HVAC, and solar and would like a better chance at growth. - There was a highlighted need for professional development – resume support, mock interviews, and networking tips.
50+	71	A substantial number of applicants between 50-75 applied to the program. While their reasons for joining the program were similar to other age ranges, there were other support needs highlighted. There was an emphasis on wanting to catch up with knowledge on

		new systems and technology. Many applicants are retirees looking to continue their education and keep their schedules busy.
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Of the 828 applicants, 55.4% identified as She/Her (459), 42% as He/Him (348), and 0.8% as They/Them (7). For a program that covers trades like electrical, HVAC, and solar installation, this is a notably balanced split. Fields like these have historically skewed heavily male, therefore a majority of applicants identify as She/Her speaks to how the program was positioned and who the outreach actually reached.

Motivation for Joining the Industry

One of the questions asked in the application was ‘Why are you interested in joining the Clean Energy Academy?’. Three common themes from the answers on the submissions:

- **Career growth and job opportunities:** applicants noted they were interested in the Clean Energy Academy for a career change, long-term employment opportunities, and financial stability.
 - “Because I wanted to go to trade school for electrical engineering so this is definitely an opportunity I love to have and take it as a new career path which involves clean energy”
 - “Ultimately I see this program as a steppingstone toward a career where I can make a tangible impact whether through installing renewable energy systems, supporting policy development, or working in sustainability-focused engineering.”
 - “To further my career and to better my opportunities for employment”
- **Learning new skills and hands-on training:** applicants noted they were interested in the Clean Energy Academy to learn new skills, expand their knowledge, and gain certifications.
 - “I am interested in joining the clean energy academy because I’m always looking to learn something new and a good opportunity to better my future. I tried college felt like I needed more on hands on learning. I tried working a job but I just felt like it wasn’t enough and with the information I got from the zoom this looks like the best place for me to start and learn a skill that can take me into a career and help me and my family. I’m not here for 1,500 stipend I’m strictly here to learn and better my future to take care my family.”
 - “I am interested in joining the clean energy academy to learn new skills and expand my experiences with hands on training I’m also looking forward to any career opportunities.”
- **Interest in clean energy and helping their communities:** applicants noted they were interested in the Clean Energy Academy to learn more about sustainability, healthier communities, and improving their NYCHA communities.
 - “I want to learn everything I can in the renewable energy industry because it’s the future and I want a career in this industry”
 - “I want to join the Clean Energy Academy because I’m passionate about combating climate change and believe renewable energy is key to a sustainable future. The academy’s focus on education and innovation inspires me to learn cutting-edge solutions and contribute to my community’s efforts in building a greener world.”

- “I believe a cleaner environment creates a better community. And I think I can help achieve that goal by joining your academy”

NYCHA Clean Energy Academy Program Outreach

When conducting outreach for the program, our team shared information through different channels and tracked how people got into contact with the program. It was important to expand our outreach to connect with NYCHA residents at different touchpoints where they are most likely to submit an application. We coordinated with NYCHA Resident Services to share the application and program information, hosted virtual and in-person sessions, shared flyers in-person at NYCHA developments, and shared information via email and social media. In the application, most residents indicated hearing about the program from the NYCHA Resident Association. This emphasizes the importance of the partnership between our team at KC3 and NYCHA, to continue sharing information with their residents and assisting answering questions. Most other applicants were able to find information about the program via social media, email blasts, and word of mouth. This emphasizes the importance of creating content that is easily shareable, accessible, and relevant. Figure 3 below shows an example of one of the flyers we shared in NYCHA developments, by email, and via social media.



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Figure 3: NYCHA Clean Energy Academy In-Person Info Session Flyer

Graduation and Networking Support

A total of 75 trainees were placed over three cohorts of the NYCHA Clean Energy Academy, with 45 graduating with full certifications from the course. After each training session is completed, a graduation session for each cohort was planned as a capstone to their experience. This session focused on career support – assisting graduates with resume building, LinkedIn, and interview prep. Our team reviewed:

- Green Job Pathways – define ‘Green’ terms, explore workplace styles, and career growth opportunities
- Professional Toolkit – review points to build a resume and LinkedIn profile with one-on-one working sessions
- Networking Skills – connect on best networking practice to prepare for upcoming networking session and future interviews

Each graduation ended with a certification distribution and a Speed Networking/Career Talk session. Individuals from various employers, including for profits, non-profits, and government agencies were invited to speak one-on-one with graduates where they had the opportunity to ask questions about their work experience and history. This allowed new graduates to meet with industry professionals and potential employers to discuss their career plan and have questions answered by people in the field. This gave them insight into the different careers in sustainability to help guide their path.

NYCHA Clean Energy Academy Internships

To assist these graduates in their transition into new careers in clean energy, the program was expanded to include funding for internships. Graduates can gain real world experience in these internships as they plan their new career paths. KC3 was contracted to set up the internship design and infrastructure, conduct outreach to the trainees and potential employers, manage payroll and documentation, and provide continued case management support for the intern for the duration of their employment. The following support items were created to facilitate this:

- Intern selection rubric
- Employer matching criteria document
- Employer job description template
- Internship application form and submission
- Centralized tracking for intern status and program milestones

The intern selection rubric was created to identify the trainees with the highest probability of being successful in an internship and matching them to the position that they desired most. 7 categories of criteria were identified to score trainees and then ranked their weighted totals. The following categories were identified:

- Availability
- Resume quality
- Interest alignment
- Interview/Classroom Conduct/Attendance
- Awareness of Needs
- Motivation/Why this Program
- Full certification completion

Intern availability, interests and resumes were the criteria weighed higher when determining the best placement for each person. This is important to make sure interns were all set up for success with a position that best matched their current skills, career goals, and schedule. Interns chosen for the opportunity were provided an additional week-long pre-internship training that covered day-to-day workflow, workplace culture, conflict mediation, and communication. Interns were paid \$23/hour for a 3-month full time schedule and received travel stipends using MetroCards. Employers were required to download a time-tracking app, Hubstaff, to record the timesheet of the interns. Data from this app was then used to review timesheet and compensate interns for their time.

Employer Selection

Potential employers were identified using partner relationships to connect with Community Based Organizations. Employers were asked to first provide signed commitment letters agreeing to the following activities:

- Host a Clean Energy Academy graduate for a 3-month internship
- Submit a clear internship role description outlining responsibilities and schedule
- Designate a staff supervisor or mentor to support the intern
- The designated supervisor will attend a 30-minute virtual Employer Roundtable
- A representative from our team will attend a 30-minute Employer Orientation before the cohort begins
- Confirm intern hours biweekly using the timesheet or digital process
- We understand that the program will provide professional development, wraparound support, and program coordination

Pre-Internship Professional Development

Once interns were successfully placed, the program provided an additional week-long pre-internship training that covered day-to-day workflow, workplace culture, conflict mediation, and communication. The professional development training was expanded to cover:

- Foundational Skills and Level Setting – Understand and review program and expectations. Review SMART Goal setting for the program and future jobs. Understand employment life cycle, support needs at each step, and highlighted resources. Understand professionalism and key workplace norms. Review workplace rights, human resources, anti-discrimination laws, and OSHA guidelines. Understand simple budgeting, financial planning and direct deposits.
- Effective Communication and Relationship Building – Review effective communication practices and how to build the skill. Understand culture informed communications and differences. Review different digital communications tools, their uses, and fixes if needed. Defining workplace bias, code-switching, and tools to advocate for themselves and others. Practice setting and keeping professional boundaries. Understand giving and receiving constructive feedback.
- Navigating Conflict and Problem Solving – Navigate conflict healthy and skillfully. Review conflict scenarios and consequences of unresolved conflicts. Understand problem solving in the workplace and using emotional intelligence to navigate difficult situations. Review interpersonal skills and defining strengths. Understand intern schedule and best approach for 3-month placement. Understand prioritization methods and time management tools.
- Green Sector Overview and Long-Term Planning – Explore career planning and understand the difference between job, career, sector and industry. Learn career mapping and transferable skills for jobs in the green sector. Build out professional toolkit, including resumes, LinkedIn profiles, and elevator pitches. Learn about digital presence and understand digital bias. Conduct mock interviews to prepare for future opportunities and review networking tips.

After each training day, participants were sent a survey to capture feedback to continuously improve the training. One question asked, “How confident do you feel applying what you learned today?”. The average score from applicants was a 9.28/10. Applicants noted the following content made the greatest impact were:

- “Learned a lot about EQ, different forms of working in an office and or group setting being collaborative, Compromising and accommodating, etc.”
- “Meta skills was a new paradigm for me. I enjoyed learning the structure of it and how it get applied.”
- “I learned what my internship position entails and I now feel better prepared to take on the endeavor. The insight into the company and the employees allowed me to feel more comfortable and I’m extremely excited to get started on this journey”
- “Identifying and answering questions that may be asked on an interview”

The training was adjusted in real-time to meet the needs of trainees as they were elevated. For example, trainees requested more time to work on resume building and LinkedIn profiles. The team assisted incoming interns with adding their new placements to their resumes, crafting messages to new coworkers on LinkedIn, and best practices when networking. An assessment was also created to familiarize incoming interns with Microsoft 365 programs. Many expressed apprehension with these tools and our team sent each incoming intern a task to help them practice their skills transcribing meeting notes in Microsoft Word and synthesizing data from Microsoft Excel. Many expressed having more confidence after these exercises and could refer to them throughout their internship for support:

- “I learned the importance of LinkedIn and how it can be implemented in and boost my professional life”
- “Ways to improve my resume; using AI. I was worried about it not sounding like me; but the information was accurate.”
- “Updating my LinkedIn profile. It's been inactive for years lol, I think it's a great reason to update all of my skills and qualifications”

To continue to support interns in their role, the program provided one-on-one case management for interns for the duration of their internships. This included connecting them to “wraparound services” or programs or opportunities that can support the interns outside of workforce development. This includes services such as childcare, social services, and further career development. The case management consisted of hosting bi-weekly check ins where interns were asked about their experience, and we received feedback and determined if there were issues to troubleshoot or escalate.

Internship Placements and Insights

A total of 26 interns were placed with 11 Clean Energy partners over the course of 3 cohorts. Each cohort had a mix of part-time and full-time positions that were in-person, hybrid, or virtual. Applicants ranked each position available and the program matched applicants with the opportunity that best fit their interests, needs, and preferences. Roles covered a real range of work including field crew, energy efficiency auditing, community engagement, advocacy, and policy research. The variety in work demonstrates how many different directions a career in clean energy can take for NYCHA residents coming out of this program.

Biweekly check-ins with interns were conducted during their placements to identify support needs and gather feedback on how to continue improving the program. Overall, interns reported positive experiences with both program administration and their job sites. Key takeaways included:

- Payroll was reliable and well supported: Interns consistently reported that payroll was handled reliably and on schedule. Many also appreciated the finance team's responsiveness in addressing payment-related questions or concerns.
- Most workloads were manageable and engaging: Most interns felt their workloads were appropriate and included meaningful work that kept them engaged. A small number shared that they would have benefited from additional assignments, more structure, or clearer guidance from their supervisor or job site.
- Field-based placements required some adjustment: Interns placed in field-based contractor roles occasionally faced challenging job site conditions, especially when work took place in multiple buildings or physically demanding environments. For some participants, these conditions were unexpected and required an adjustment period.
- Interns built transferable professional skills: Beyond exposure to the clean energy industry, interns gained confidence with skills such as Microsoft Office, data collection and reporting, cold calling, social media posting, and understanding workplace operations. Many also valued opportunities to build their professional networks through coworkers, supervisors, and industry events.
- Internships increased confidence in clean energy careers: Participants shared that they were searching and applying for jobs in the clean energy sector after their internships. This indicated that the combination of industry knowledge, hands-on experience, and workplace exposure helped interns feel more prepared to pursue careers in a new field.

Employer Feedback and Insights

It's important for feedback from all stakeholders to be collected and considered to continue to improve the program. The program connected with the 11 different employers to gather insights and recommendations to better support them throughout the program to create the smooth transition into the workforce for the interns. They provided great recommendations for program improvements and better insights on the interns' workforce readiness:

- Program support was helpful, with opportunities to strengthen communication: Most employers found the program support to be helpful. More touchpoints with program admins, clarity on their organizational point of contact, and the opportunity to meet with the intern before they started were identified as areas for improvement.
- Employers understood the process and wanted more visibility: Most employers found the process to be clearly explained and knew what to expect. A few employers recommended more visibility into how interns are selected and matched with a host site.
- Employer referrals became a strong recruiting tool: Most employers responded that they would refer other employers as host sites. This eventually became one of the program's strongest employer recruiting tools.
- Host sites saw strong full-time hiring potential: Most employer host sites indicated they would have loved to hire their intern full time if they had the funding. One host site offered an intern a full-time job after the conclusion of the 13 weeks. This speaks to the success of the pairing process overall.
- Employers were willing to support interns' next steps: Most employers indicated they would serve as a reference for their intern as they searched for their next opportunity. This again speaks to the success of the pairing process.

Key Findings and Future Recommendations

Trainees from the program have continued on to more trainings in sustainability to further their education and have gone on to gain full time employment as auditors, community organizers, and certifying their own contracting business with partner programs. Based on the full applicant dataset, trainee feedback, employer feedback, and intern check-ins gathered across three cohorts, the program can consider the following for future iterations of the NYCHA Clean Energy Academy and Internship Programs:

- Build a Waitlist and Reengagement System for Oversubscribed Cohorts - Cohort 1 drew 456 applications for 25 seats, leaving many qualified candidates unselected. A structured waitlist, regular communications, and proactive outreach to shortlisted applicants could help maintain interest and make it easier to fill future cohorts without restarting the full outreach process each time.
- Prioritize Outreach Channels that Generated the Strongest Applicant Pool - Email outreach through NYCHA and partner networks was the strongest application source, and virtual information sessions significantly outperformed in-person sessions. Future outreach should preserve a steady email cadence, continue virtual information sessions as the primary information-session format, and use in-person outreach more selectively at priority developments or community events.
- Strengthen Low-Cost Social Media and Peer Outreach - Social media and word of mouth generated meaningful interest but appear to have room to grow. Future outreach should invest in simple, shareable content such as short videos, graphics, alumni testimonials, deadline reminders, and “day in the life” content so residents can more easily share the opportunity within their own networks.
- Keep Professional Development as a Core Part of the Academy - Trainees responded positively to the pre-training professional development sessions, especially content on communication, time management, workplace rights, boundaries, and conflict management. Future cohorts should continue treating these sessions as core program infrastructure rather than supplemental support, particularly because many participants are entering workforce training or a new industry for the first time.
- Grow and Diversify the Employer Pool - The internship program recruited 11 employers across three cohorts, which is a strong base for future growth. Building Efficiency Services demonstrated the potential of a repeat, multi-cohort partnership model. Future iterations should add at least five new employers per year, prioritizing NYCHA sustainability contractors, Local Law 97-related firms, and organizations able to host a mix of field-based, office-based, hybrid, and remote roles.
- Build More Structure into Intern Workplans and Supervision - Most interns reported meaningful workloads, but some wanted more assignments, clearer structure, or additional guidance. Each host site should submit a basic internship workplan before the placement begins, including likely projects, supervisor check-in cadence, learning goals, and backup assignments for slower periods.
- Budget for Internship Technology Needs - Remote and hybrid placements can become inaccessible if interns do not have laptops and host organizations cannot provide them. Future program budgets should include a small technology fund, device lending option, or employer mini-grant to ensure technology access does not limit the range of placements available to interns.

Conclusion

The experience of the NYCHA Clean Energy Academy reinforces that workforce equity requires intentional design, community trust, and direct employer engagement. As climate investments accelerate, models that embed workforce development within historically excluded communities will be essential to ensuring that the clean energy transition delivers shared economic benefits. This training expands opportunities for communities that are directly affected by the impacts of climate change. We aim to increase the diversity of the clean energy industry in New York City and continue to provide a needed pipeline.

The NYCHA Clean Energy Academy offers a scalable and replicable model for utilities and housing authorities seeking to align decarbonization goals with equitable workforce development. Addressing inequities in the clean energy workforce requires more than training programs; it requires integrated, community-anchored models that align recruitment, supportive services, and employer demand. This program model demonstrates that workforce initiatives rooted directly in public housing communities are more effective at addressing systemic barriers than traditional workforce development models that operate outside the communities they seek to serve.

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