

November 18, 2024

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Acadia Center Comments on the Community Resource Hubs Draft Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Dear Commissioner Dykes,

Acadia Center thanks the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (“DEEP”) for the opportunity to submit written comments on the Community Resource Hubs Draft Request for Qualifications (“RFQ”). Acadia Center is a regional environmental advocacy non-profit organization with a mission to support Connecticut and the northeast transition to clean and renewable energy and meet climate goals for a safe and clean environment. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments for the proposed Community Resource Hubs intended to serve environmental justice populations and communities.

The provision of Community Resource Hubs is a step in the right direction. Environmental justice communities, communities with residents of low-income, and other disadvantaged communities have historically faced underlying issues that often prevent them from utilizing programs and supports that would benefit them. Acadia Center believes that this avenue—Community Resource Hubs—will support these communities and offer an improvement for DEEP in supporting and partnering with communities across the state through the scope of services outlined in the Request of Qualifications. Following the request for written comment on the RFQ, Acadia Center is encouraged to submit a few recommendations to help shape the hubs to better serve and meet the needs of environmental justice communities:

1. Continued engagement: We would like to advise that the department follow this pattern of continued engagement with the public to shape the ongoing implementation of the program and to ensure that the program is continually revised to meet the needs of environmental justice communities across the state. As the needs of the communities evolve, we recommend that a periodic assessment of the services provided through the community resource hubs be conducted and the program refined to ensure it is effective for the purpose for which it is intended.
2. Dedication to funding the programs: We are glad to see that one of the outlined services of the proposed program is to work with communities to increase access to funding from the state and federal grants and other assistance programs that DEEP spearheads. Consistent funding for energy programs and other environmental protection considerations that flow directly to environmental justice communities have not been sustained for years. We, therefore, recommend a durable commitment and outlined principle/metric to financially support the program as more grants are made available at this initial stage of the implementation of the program.
3. CEEJAC’s role in Community Resource Hubs: We hope that CEEJAC will play a central role in advising DEEP in the implementation of the Community Resource Hubs. CEEJAC members should be invited to participate in

the evaluation review committee as well as other opportunities for engagement in the implementation of the hubs.

4. Technical assistance: Acadia Center recommends DEEP provide technical support to organizations receiving funding, such as computer technology and digital literacy resources for residents to apply for green jobs, project development, and capacity building.
5. Community-based organization (CBO) network: Acadia Center suggests DEEP establish a connected network of CBOs from other DEEP programs such as the Community Partnership Initiative through the EnergizeCT, CEEJAC, GC3, and UConn CIRCA to ensure recipients of Community Resource Hub funding are supported in program development through collaborative opportunities and a community of practice, and to help ensure siloing and duplication of efforts.

As an environmental nonprofit working deeply on environmental and energy issues in Connecticut, we see firsthand the progress that DEEP and other state agencies are making in the fulfillment of their mission for the state's energy and environmental priorities. The creation of the Community Resource Hubs will of course not relieve agencies of their commitment to uphold environmental justice principles and support environmental justice communities in their day-to-day work. On the contrary, we envision that these hubs create a platform for DEEP and other agencies to be more in sync with environmental justice communities across the state. We note that outside New England, New York has also led a new similar initiative creating "[Regional Clean Energy Hubs](#)" to connect and work directly with the communities across the state. If it has not done so already, we advise that the Department reach out to New York and seek any lessons learned from its years of implementation to create refined community resource hubs for our state.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments on the Request for Qualifications. Acadia Center remains committed to our mission and to supporting the Department meet its goals for equity and environmental justice. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information or feedback.

Sincerely,

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