



**INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL
WORKERS®**

900 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202.833.7000
www.ibew.org

KENNETH W. COOPER
International President

PAUL A. NOBLE
International
Secretary-Treasurer

September 18, 2023

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Gayle Manchin
Federal Co-Chair
Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20009

Re: IBEW Support for Heartland Capital Network's Appalachian Sustainable Finance Hub ARISE Application

Dear Federal Co-Chair Manchin:

On behalf of the more than 820,000 active and retired members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, I write in support of the Heartland Capital Network's application to Appalachian Regional Initiative for Stronger Economies (ARISE) for a planning grant to develop an Appalachian Sustainable Finance Hub for the five-state region that includes Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia and Maryland. These states are some of the hardest hit by deindustrialization and the decline of the coal industry, and this application seeks to rebuild communities and economic development by creating coalitions to leverage federal resources and private capital to promote new opportunities in a diversified energy economy.

The IBEW represents members in a wide variety of fields, including utilities, construction, telecommunications, broadcasting, manufacturing, railroads and government. As the largest energy union in the world, IBEW members support the ever-increasing demand for power and are at the forefront of advancement in new power sources. In the Appalachian region alone, the IBEW and our employer partners at the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) operate 45 training centers, work with hundreds of electrical construction and maintenance contractors and include nearly 70,000 active members working in the construction industry. The IBEW is well-positioned to support an economic resurgence in Appalachia, which in recent decades has suffered mightily in terms of job loss, long-term unemployment and lack of good jobs.

IBEW members understand the challenges this grant seeks to remedy all too well. Generations of IBEW members spent successful careers at coal-fired plants, which fueled the grid and powered factories and modern life. As plants close and renewable energy technologies and other forms of fossil fuel generation emerge, left in the vacuum are communities suffering from lack of high-quality jobs and little economic diversification. Decent pay, benefits, healthcare and retirement are integral components of a good life. The high cost to communities when these key qualities are missing can be measured in unemployment, poverty, illness, addiction, and despair.



**INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL
WORKERS®**

Federal Co-Chair Manchin
September 18, 2023
Page 2

The Appalachian Sustainable Finance Hub seeks to create an investment clearinghouse that will partner with stakeholders to promote new employment and increase training opportunities and economic development in these communities through responsible investment and procurement and fair labor practices across the region.

This grant will enable community partners, including the IBEW and NECA, to explore funding for predevelopment for identified projects in clean energy, transportation, renewable energy, microgrids and new manufacturing. These will include rural and urban projects, capitalizing on the recent release of significant federal resources toward cleaner sources of energy. Importantly, the projects will include the pro-worker, pro-union, pro-registered apprenticeship language in the Biden administration's clean infrastructure programs.

The Heartland Network is a program of the Steel Valley Authority, which has been an established partner in Pennsylvania's ARC communities for more than 35 years. This crucial funding, much of which is targeted toward electrification, has the potential to significantly expand union employment across the region; a coordinated effort to understand the pipeline of projects will help align apprenticeship and training programs in advance to meet demand. It will also encourage the creation of new jobs across the industrial and transportation sectors. The IBEW joins the Heartland Capital Network's commitment to ensuring that these jobs are family-sustaining, community-supporting union jobs.

As the Appalachian Regional Commission weighs the importance of directing its resources to the greatest benefit, this proposal provides the promise of a hopeful future not only for IBEW members but to their employers and communities. I look forward to working with ARC and other community partners to help build a foundation for growth and new opportunity in Appalachia.

Sincerely yours,

Kenneth W. Cooper
International President

KWC:jrm