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Local Clean Energy Coalition Named 2nd Place Winner in National Energy Competition

MISSOULA, Montana [Date] — Missoula's Clean Energy Workforce Coalition (CEWC) took second place in the American-Made Community Clean Energy Coalition Prize and received another \$50,000 to develop a new, supportive pre-apprenticeship training program for low-income women and women of color in the clean energy sector in Missoula County. CEWC consists of four core partners: Climate Smart Missoula, Missoula County, Missoula Economic Partnership and Mountain Home Montana.

"This prize is validation that engaging women in skilled labor workforce development is not only critical to building Missoula's infrastructure, but also an integral part of the clean energy transition," said Missoula Economic Partnership's Deputy Director and CEWC founding member Nicole Rush. "We've learned that women, especially moms, face a lot of barriers to entry in the trades. We're committed to removing those obstacles and giving women the best chance of success in an apprenticeship or entry-level trades job."

The CEWC will use the new prize funding to help launch Missoula's first pre-apprenticeship program focused on engaging women in the trades.

The innovative program is slated to launch in 2024 and will bridge the gap between existing trades curriculum and formal apprenticeship programs, providing women with a solid foundation in the construction trades, as well as opportunities to learn about weatherization, energy auditing, and other clean energy careers. CEWC plans to provide program participants with stipends for childcare and transportation, two issues that are well known barriers to economic development, as well as with mentorship and job support.

"What makes our coalition unique is that we look at sustainability in two ways. We're developing a diverse workforce to help Missoula transition to clean energy and at the same time creating stable, family-supportive careers for the women in those jobs," said Erin Scoles, director of supportive employment and education of Mountain Home Montana and CEWC founding member. "By including mentorship and supportive services in our program, we're truly building a sustainable future for low-income women in Missoula."

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced the coalition as one of 10 winners in the [Community Clean Energy Coalition Prize](#). During a two-day summit in Atlanta, Georgia, in December, teams presented their progress on the plans they created in the first two phases of the prize. After the pitches, [all 10 competing teams were awarded an additional \\$25,000](#) for successfully completing all requirements

in the third and final phase of the prize, and three teams, including Missoula's Clean Energy Workforce Coalition, were awarded a supplementary prize.

The 2nd place win brings the total DOE prize amount directed to the Missoula coalition to \$230,000 over the past year.

"It was wonderful to convene with nine other fantastic teams and share the impactful work we are all doing in our communities. We're thrilled that the Department of Energy recognized the past work and future potential of our coalition in Missoula," said Caroline Bean, Missoula County's climate action manager and founding CEWC member. "We'll put that extra \$25,000 to good use in our pre-apprenticeship program."

Leading up to the Atlanta summit, the coalition met with more than 60 employers and potential partner organizations, added more members to their core coalition, and piloted a series of clean-energy workshops aimed at increasing awareness about livable wage careers in fields such as efficient building design, deconstruction and solar. A total of 40 people attended the workshops, with nearly 80% of participants having never heard of a clean energy job before.

"To meet our climate goals, it's essential that we electrify our buildings to get off of fossil fuels, while also greening our grid," said Amy Cilimburg, executive director of Climate Smart Missoula, and CEWC founding member. "There's a boom in the clean energy trades and we need to scale up our local workforce to meet current and projected demand. It's important to all of us that we do so in a way that builds community equity and empowers women to enter these trades."

The American-Made Community Clean Energy Coalition Prize is part of a larger DOE initiative to prepare the country for a clean energy transition, with the goal of helping underrepresented communities address local energy challenges using clean, sustainable solutions in alignment with the White House's [Justice40 Initiative](#). Learn more about other [American-Made prizes](#).

For more information on this initiative, visit missoulaclimate.org/workforce-coalition.

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Link to video of award ceremony (3:51): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOrYldwaSXQ>

Link to pitch presentation to DOE panel (1:11:51): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m19ObcFIPU0>

About the American-Made Community Clean Energy Coalition Prize

The \$2.1 million Community Clean Energy Coalition Prize was designed to help community coalitions—made up of nonprofits, city governments, school systems, and other community organizations—come together to develop a strategy to address a local clean energy opportunity or inequity. Strategies included everything from student education to workforce training to implementation of new technologies that align with the goals of the White House’s Justice40 Initiative.

The Community Clean Energy Coalition Prize is directed and administered by DOE’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory and is funded through the DOE’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

Climate Smart Missoula builds and accelerates climate solutions for Missoula and beyond, through collaborative programs, advocacy and catalyzing diverse climate leadership. Since its inception in 2015, Climate Smart Missoula has collaborated with government entities, community groups, individual advocates, and grassroot organizations to create crucial networks, fostering a resilient Missoula and Montana, for this generation and the next.

Missoula Economic Partnership works to foster economic development, create job opportunities, and enhance the quality of life in Missoula. Through innovative strategies and collaboration with community stakeholders, MEP strives to build a sustainable and vibrant economy that benefits all residents.

Missoula County is committed to addressing climate change and building resiliency in government operations and throughout our communities. The Missoula County Climate Action program was created in 2017 to advance climate action and resiliency work, and has several bold initiatives, including a 100% Clean Electricity by 2030 goal and the Climate Ready Missoula plan.

Mountain Home Montana provides a safe home and nurturing community where young mothers can discover their strengths and where their children can thrive. We provide holistic, two-generational programs, including a place to live while families access mental health care, education and employment support, a community center, and trauma-informed childcare. Through these programs, Mountain Home gives families the resources and skills to overcome generational poverty and trauma to build safe, stable homes of their own.