

***CLEE has just released a new report, Offshore Wind & Community Benefits Agreements in California: CBA Examples, detailing the CBA and other community provisions in California's offshore wind leases, as well as examples of CBA precursors and models from other industries. Read it [here](#).***

As California offshore wind moves forward, there are opportunities for underserved, environmental justice, and tribal communities to secure benefits and community investment (if communities are interested in negotiating with developers). This is because California's current offshore wind leases contain different types of community-beneficial measures, including Community Benefits Agreements, or CBAs, which will be developed, negotiated, and signed by California offshore wind lease holders and impacted communities, tribes, and/or stakeholder groups. But for CBAs to result in meaningful benefits and long-term positive change, communities must have opportunities to learn more about what's possible and funders and others must invest in capacity building and technical assistance for involved, impacted communities. And to allow enough lead time for CBA development before the deadline, that support must occur in the very near future.

In 2023, California offshore wind developers signed leases with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), the federal agency charged with regulating offshore wind in the US, which specify that developers who received a bidding credit execute one or more CBAs with stakeholders, tribal nations, and others who will be impacted by offshore wind development.

In the community-labor realm, CBAs are legally binding, enforceable contracts negotiated and signed by project developers and impacted community groups and stakeholders. CBAs can include specific material benefits for communities, such as affordable housing, as well as procedural benefits, such as regular report backs and data from project developers. In the offshore wind space, this means that communities can think broadly and creatively about the measures they would like to see included and build coalitions to advance those priorities.

Many communities are currently asking, "What should we try to negotiate for?" Each offshore wind CBA will be the product of local needs, but effective CBAs should reflect local goals, vision, and priorities; leverage, build, and sustain community capacity, expertise, and knowledge over the long-term; and support transparency and accountability.

Optimal CBAs will not just be pass-through mechanisms for distributing funding, but instead should help create community-responsive organizations with local governance that lead to long-term community improvements and a community voice in offshore wind project monitoring and adaptive management – perhaps even [co-management](#). CBAs should also

establish conditions to support these community institutions over the long term to help break the boom-and-bust cycle of development that has occurred in some California regions. By structuring CBAs in this way, these agreements can not only lift up communities through long-term, sustainable investment but also lead to more effective, efficient offshore wind development.

Existing CBAs from the community-labor movement offer useful examples. The [Staples CBA](#), for instance, was negotiated around the development of a hotel and entertainment complex adjacent to the Staples Center in Los Angeles. The final agreement included measures such as a developer commitment to construct 20% percent of residential units as affordable housing and an advisory committee (composed of coalition and developer representatives) to meet and discuss progress on CBA goals each quarter. The [New Flyer CBA](#), negotiated between an electric bus manufacturer and community organizations, contained a commitment that 45% of new hires (including job offers) and 20% of promotions at each plant come from Historically Disadvantaged Groups.

CBAs, as negotiated, enforceable agreements, can be a tool to help communities achieve benefits. However, as just mentioned, CBAs are negotiated—meaning that the resulting agreements will depend on what community groups and coalitions are able to achieve through talks with offshore wind developers. This in turn requires that community groups and coalitions have support in the form of technical assistance and capacity building, including such measures as additional staff and professional development, consultation with technical experts, negotiation training, budgets for community and coalition meetings, legal assistance to help negotiate the CBAs, and funding for outreach and engagement efforts within communities.

Currently, California lease holders are in the survey plan and site assessment phase of the [offshore wind development](#) process, and final, signed CBAs are potentially six or more years away. The benefit of this timeline is that it permits enough time to enable a robust CBA process. However, it will be imperative to begin early to:

- Identify local goals, vision, and priorities
- Support transparency and accountability
- Leverage, build, and sustain community capacity, expertise, and knowledge

Environmental justice organizations such as the [Greenlining Institute](#) and the [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) have outlined effective strategies for community outreach and engagement that can be applied to the pre-work—the civic infrastructure building—necessary to produce community-supporting offshore wind CBAs. In addition,

[Transformative Climate Community](#) projects like East Oakland's provide [models for local governance and equity](#). These frameworks and others can provide templates for the pre-negotiation phase of CBAs.

That work should begin in an expeditious manner. Now is the time to build strong coalitions and community anchors with local governance and participation. Effective CBAs have the potential to help communities benefit from offshore wind in California and provide models for other renewable energy projects. But funders, government agencies, and others must invest in the necessary civic infrastructure and technical assistance as soon as possible to ensure that California offshore wind CBAs truly sustain and transform communities.