

The Administration Announces \$66 Million in Department of Energy Funding Toward Climate Change and Environmental Justice

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On September 6, 2022, the United States Department of Energy (DOE) announced that it will designate \$66 million in funding toward evaluating how climate and weather events impact urban systems. The DOE plans to develop Urban Integrated Field Laboratories (UIFLs) as pilot projects in Baltimore, MD; Chicago, IL; and Beaumont, TX. DOE will use data obtained from the pilot projects to develop tools and methods to aid cities in minimizing damage from extreme weather events and speed up the recovery and rebuilding process following such events. As such, DOE's efforts will later be expanded to other U.S. urban communities.

The UIFLs will operate as organizational hubs, bringing together scientific and sociological experts from local institutions to engage in "field observations, data assimilation, modeling, and model-data fusion" with the purpose of "study[ing] the environmental, ecological, infrastructural, and human components of their selected urban regions," according to a [press release by the DOE](#). This information will be used in forming "equitable climate and energy solutions, strengthening community scale resilience in urban landscapes, and addressing climate change impacts on underrepresented and disadvantaged communities."

According to the press release, in selecting the three locations for the UIFLs, the DOE took into account their unique environmental and climate hazards, along with their diverse disadvantaged populations. Their respective urban landscapes, both demographically and in terms of environmental and climate-induced stressors, each merit their own initiatives, but are also representative such that the lessons learned will apply to other urban communities. Thus, they are perfectly situated to serve as scientific hubs for the community, and as cities worthy of the DOE's investment.

Each of the three UIFLs will have a different focus. Baltimore's focus will be on "aging infrastructure, increased heat and flood risk, and inequitable burdens of air and water pollution." These issues are commonplace in urban communities in the Eastern and Midwest United States. Chicago, on the other hand, will use modeling techniques to explore issues ranging from climate change mitigation to community-driven decarbonization efforts—all plausible initiatives in major American cities. In Beaumont, UIFLs will focus on how industrialized, medium-sized port cities will be impacted by climate change, and how urban communities respond to urban flooding and air quality issues.

This funding is yet another tool employed to advance the Administration's goals of more fully addressing climate change and environmental justice. It is also a step toward the Administration's

goal to achieve a [net-zero carbon emission economy by 2050](#), as “addressing environmental justice and energy equity [is] integral in meeting” the Administration’s climate goals.^[1] This funding also falls within the Administration’s [Justice40 Initiative](#), under which 40% of the overall benefits of Federal investment flow into marginalized communities.

Of the \$66 million, \$18 million has been appropriated and awarded for fiscal year 2022. The DOE expects to award additional funds for fiscal year 2023, so long as funds remain available. Businesses, research institutions, and local governments should be on the lookout to apply for 2023 funding. A list of currently funded projects can be found [here](#).

^[1] See U.S. Department of Energy, *Industrial Decarbonization Roadmap* (Sept. 2022), available at <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/Industrial%20Decarbonization%20Roadmap.pdf>