

2023 Annual Report



President's Perspective

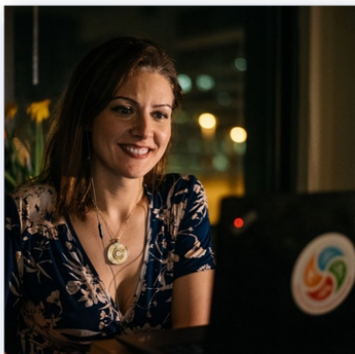
The problem first came up as part of the annual Clean Energy Business Network small business dial-in to Congress in March 2023. On a call with a New Jersey congresswoman's office, one of the business constituents mentioned he had recently learned of a change to the tax code that had dramatically increased his federal tax liability.

Similar stories began to flood in over the next few weeks—from a panicked startup owner in Arizona, a family-owned business in Florida, and many more. At issue was the Section 174 tax deduction for research and development (R&D) expenses. An under-the-radar “pay for” (a kind of budgetary parlor trick) tucked in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act had repealed immediate expensing of the R&D deduction starting in 2022. This change required companies to start amortizing the deduction over five years instead of taking the full deduction in year one. Small businesses were caught completely off guard as they began filing their tax returns in early 2023.

Although this issue hadn't been a historic policy priority for CEBN, we saw the real and urgent need to engage. We launched into action, exchanging intel with partner organizations, mobilizing sign-on letters and Hill meetings, and securing press coverage in Politico and the Washington Post. By the end of 2023, a legislative fix had won the support of 263 bipartisan cosponsors across both chambers of Congress and was incorporated into a tax package that passed the House with a vote of 357-70 and awaits a vote in the Senate.

This story exemplifies the unique role and value that CEBN offers in the clean energy ecosystem: amplifying the voices of small business and community leaders across the nation who otherwise lack representation in Washington, D.C. We highlight authentic, local examples of the impacts of policy on the ground. We also provide thought leadership on niche issues impacting small businesses and underserved communities, such as reducing barriers to federal grants, financing for pilot demonstration projects, improving equitable access to clean energy, and restoring Sec. 174.

We not only bring these voices to Washington, but also bring Washington to communities across the nation. In 2023, we provided 1:1 technical assistance to more than 230 applicants to federal funding opportunities—many of whom hailed from minority or female owned firms, or from rural or marginalized communities. Through these efforts, we strive to democratize access to the clean energy economy. We break down barriers by demystifying government policies and programs, building bridges among organizations, and connecting stakeholders to policymakers.



The leaders in our network are the heart of what it means to be American—entrepreneurial and courageous, doers and changemakers. They are building the technologies and economies of the future. We're here to put the wind in their turbines.

Lynn Abramson
President, Clean Energy Business Network

Clean Energy Business Network AT A GLANCE

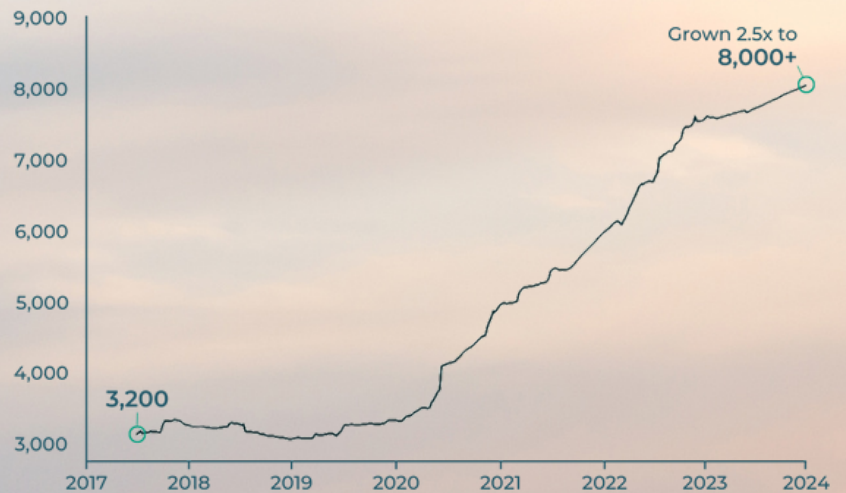
OUR REACH

8,000+
Business & community
leaders across the U.S.

6,920+
Social media
followers

300+
Allied organizations

Expansion of Network Since 2017



2023 HIGHLIGHTS

350+
Policy advocates

1,700+
Event attendees

17
Mária Telkes Fellows
supported

230+
Applicants assisted from
underrepresented communities



CEBN Team (left to right): Eric Foster, Lynn Abramson, Allie Judge, Andy Barnes, Awa Darboe

Policy Support & Advocacy

In 2023, CEBN amplified the voices of small business leaders to advocate for robust funding for cleantech R&D in the FY24 budget, ongoing support for Inflation Reduction Act programs, rural clean energy investments in the Farm Bill, and restoration of the tax deduction for research and development (R&D) expenses. Small business leaders are powerful advocates with authentic voices that resonate across partisan lines, but all too often, they are not heard in Washington, D.C. CEBN serves to fill this void, showcasing the impacts of federal policy on the ground.

Inflation Reduction Act & Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Implementation

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), enacted in 2021 and 2022 respectively, represented historic landmarks in climate and clean energy investment. IRA allocated nearly \$370 billion in funding for climate and clean energy through tax credits, grants, loan authority, and other mechanisms over the next decade while BIL included over \$69 billion in funding for cleantech deployment.

CEBN has worked to stave off efforts to repeal these programs by demonstrating their impacts to lawmakers as well as building new champions through stakeholder assistance navigating these opportunities. CEBN has also worked with Department of Energy (DOE) offices to promote new opportunities and, in July, **provided feedback on the need for funding for pilot-scale demonstration projects** as part of a Request for Information from the new Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations.

CEBN in the News (2023)

The Washington Post **POLITICO**
RealClearEnergy



Sec. 174 R&D Tax Deduction

One of CEBN's top policy priorities in 2023 was restoring immediate expensing of R&D expenditures under the Sec. 174 tax deduction.

Thousands of innovative companies are at risk of bankruptcy due to a change in the tax code that went into effect in 2022, which forces firms to amortize R&D expenses over at least five years instead of taking the deduction upfront in year one.

- ▶ **210 business leaders** signed onto a letter urging Congress to restore Sec. 174.
- ▶ **30 innovation and small business organizations** backed CEBN's coalition letter.
- ▶ **60 participants** attended a Sec. 174 advocacy webinar, co-hosted with the Small Business Technology Council.
- ▶ **214 Representatives and 43 Senators** supported a bipartisan standalone bill.



WOW, CEBN has done an amazing and impressive amount of work on this issue! We welcome the opportunity to tell our Congressional offices firsthand how devastating it would be for our businesses if this tax change remains in effect. Thanks for all you're doing on behalf of small businesses across the U.S."

-Sue Easter, Owner, Semplastics



Sec. 174 Hill Briefing: In early December, CEBN partnered with the bipartisan House Climate Solutions Caucus to produce a panel discussion featuring four small cleantech businesses. In front of an audience of congressional staffers representing ten offices, the panel discussed how the Sec. 174 issue had impacted them as well as ways the federal government has supported the commercialization of their respective technologies.



TAX WIN FOR CLEANTECH: The [bipartisan tax deal released on Tuesday](#) includes a restoration of the research deduction, a potentially major win for small clean energy businesses that had [struggled under the sudden loss of the tax write-off](#). The Section 174 deduction [lapsed in 2022](#) due to a provision in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

[Tuesday's framework](#) would restore the deduction through 2026 and allow businesses to claim it retroactively for 2022 and 2023. But the bill still faces a steep path to passage, especially with the tax filing season beginning on Jan. 29.

Lynn Abramson, president of the Clean Energy Business Network, said in a statement that the package would provide "immediate relief to small businesses working in innovation that have been hit with devastating tax liabilities." She called on Congress to pass the deal "as soon as practicable before the 2023 tax filing season begins."

Left: CEBN promotional image for a webinar on Sec. 174 that provided an overview of the issue and how stakeholders can take action. Right: Coverage of CEBN's advocacy for restoring Sec. 174 in Politico's Morning Energy newsletter.



Small Businesses Sign On!

In 2023, CEBN sent two business sign-on letters to Congress—collectively attracting 371 signatories—which advocated for robust FY24 funding at the DOE and the restoration of the Sec. 174 R&D tax deduction, respectively.

Appropriations

CEBN mobilized small business voices to support robust funding for DOE programs. While the FY24 appropriations process was significantly delayed due to political dynamics, DOE has continued to roll out BIL and IRA programs.

- ▶ **40 innovators** met with **37 congressional offices** to share the impacts of DOE-funded projects.
- ▶ **161 business leaders** signed onto a letter supporting robust FY24 DOE funding.

Dial-ins & Fly-ins: Bringing Small Business Voices to Washington

For the fifth consecutive year, CEBN convened a series of advocacy meetings, bringing 40 business leaders to meet with 37 Republican and Democratic congressional offices. Business leaders advocated for continued robust funding for cleantech programs in the federal budget, rural energy investments in the Farm Bill, and restoration of the Sec. 174 R&D tax deduction.

They also provided real world examples of how their companies have leveraged federal funding from IRA, BIL, and grant programs to develop and commercialize new cleantech innovations, create jobs, and modernize infrastructure in communities across the U.S.

▼ *Small business leader, Roelof Versteeg, Owner of Subsurface Insights, visits staff from Senator Shaheen's office during CEBN's Appropriations meetings.*



Business Development Assistance

CEBN strives to be a “first stop” point of entry for small clean energy businesses. We demystify federal grant programs, provide opportunities for exposure and networking, and promote connections to potential partners.

Partnerships with the Department of Energy

One of CEBN's primary objectives is helping entrepreneurs from early-stage companies navigate energy innovation and deployment programs. Since late 2020, we have served as a Power Connector for the DOE's American-Made Challenges (AMC) and supported other programs such as DOE's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant program. In the last 3+ years, we have supported 15 different prizes and grants by conducting outreach to new applicants, providing feedback and direct application assistance, and developing workshops, programming, and events for awardees as they advance through prize phases.



In 2023, CEBN:

- ▶ Engaged more than 2,400 potential applicants.
- ▶ Provided 234 applicants with 1:1 support.
- ▶ Held 9 events, attracting 552+ attendees.
- ▶ Intentionally engaged entrepreneurs from underrepresented demographics.

U.S. Cleantech Funding Database

CEBN's [Cleantech Funding Database](#) streamlines the process for small businesses and community organizations to find funding. Since 2018, it has aggregated information on federal and state grants, prizes, incubators and accelerators, fellowships, technical assistance opportunities, and other resources into one easy-to-navigate repository. The database also includes funding for nonprofits, local governments, HBCUs and MSIs, students, and more.

In 2023, CEBN:

- ▶ Added \$63 billion in funding across 455 opportunities.
- ▶ Grew database reach to 2,300 users.
- ▶ Added new categories for manufacturing, climate science and mitigation, student/collegiate opportunities, and Inflation Reduction Act implementation.



CEBN's cleantech funding database is most definitely the best resource I have seen so far to track clean energy funding resources. It is vital for my firm.

- Suman Sinha Ray, Founder & CEO of Cabomba

Events

CEBN convened 12 events in 2023, providing platforms to help small businesses and community organizations engage, connect, and learn. Over 1,700 stakeholders, business and community leaders participated. Several key events are summarized below:

EPIC Showcase

- ▶ Virtual **pitch competition** featuring **24 cleantech startups**.
- ▶ **\$150,000+** in DOE prize money awarded.
- ▶ Attracted **284 participants**.



Investing in Innovation (webinar)

- ▶ Explored how innovators can tap into **federal funding** and **IRA opportunities**.
- ▶ Convened in partnership with **Environmental Defense Fund**.
- ▶ Attracted **215 participants**.

Sec. 174 R&D Tax Deduction (webinar)

- ▶ Highlighted **changes to the Sec. 174 R&D deduction** and proposed policy solutions.
- ▶ Convened in partnership with **Small Business Technology Council**.
- ▶ Featured guest speaker from **Senator Young's office** discussing policy developments.
- ▶ Attracted **60 participants**.

Community Clean Energy Coalition (CCEC) Prize Summit

In December, CEBN and the Department of Energy co-hosted the CCEC Summit at the Atlanta University Center—a consortium of leading HBCUs. The summit showcased the ten winning teams of the CCEC Prize and celebrated opportunities to create a just and equitable clean energy economy in communities across the nation. Highlights included:



^ CCEC Prize Summit (December 2023)
Credit: Just Eldredge Media

- ▶ In-person and virtual participation from nearly **300 clean energy leaders**, community organizers, investors, and government leaders.
- ▶ **\$335,000 in DOE prizes** awarded to the 10 winning winning teams.
- ▶ Workshops on **funding resources** with speakers from the GA state energy office, Department of Energy, NREL, and green banks.
- ▶ Workshops on **stakeholder engagement** with speakers from the Partnership for Southern Equity, Prosperity Now, and the DOE Office of Energy Justice and Equity.

Demystifying Government Programs Blog Series

CEBN produces a series of blogs that demystify federal policies and programs to make opportunities more accessible for small cleantech businesses and other stakeholders.

Insight into the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

- ▶ Launched in 2023, this series unpacks programs from the IRA, including tax credits and funding.

Breaking Down the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

- ▶ Breaks down new programs arising from implementation of BIL.

Insight into Federal Programs

- ▶ Explores other federal energy programs, tax incentives, and energy offices.



Mária Telkes Fellowship for Underrepresented Leaders

The **Mária Telkes Fellowship** champions rising cleantech stars from underrepresented demographics on a path to executive leadership. Founded in 2021 by CEBN and Cleantech Leaders Roundtable (CTLR), the program, which was named in honor of solar energy pioneer Mária Telkes, welcomed its second cohort of fellows at the end of 2022, for a total of 17 fellows to date. Fellows are matched with mentors to receive guidance to advance professional growth and opportunities. They also receive two years of complimentary CEBN and CTLR membership, and benefit from positive exposure through events and communications such as CEBN's *Faces Behind the Facts*.

CEBN and CTLR co-hosted a **virtual Telkes Showcase in February**, which invited cleantech professionals from across the industry to learn about the fellows and engage with them in networking breakout rooms. The showcase attracted 108 registrants and 52 attendees.



^ Left: Telkes Fellows and CEBN and CTLR staff meet with staff from the Office of Energy Justice and Equity. Right: Fellows participate in the virtual Telkes Showcase.

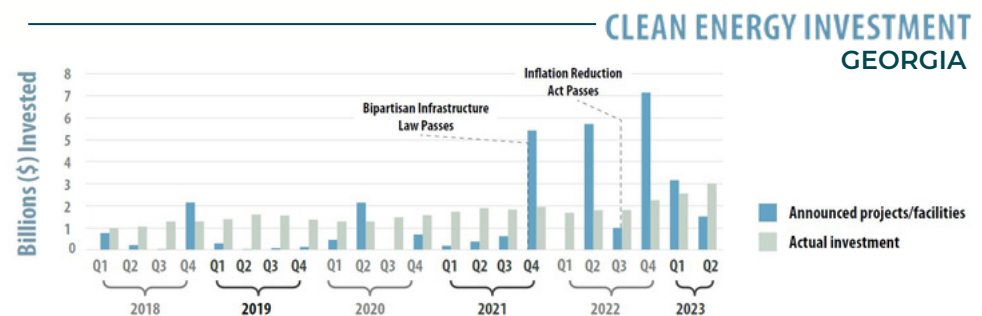
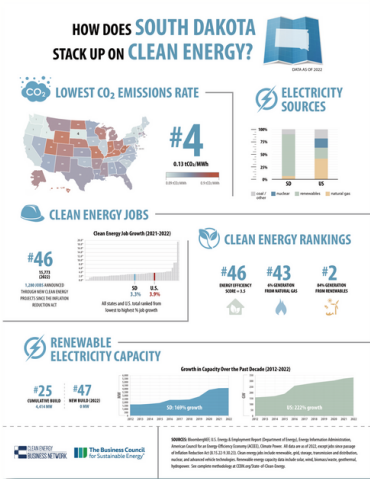
Market and Technology Education

CEBN produces a number of flagship communications campaigns bringing the clean energy economy alive through data and case studies. While primarily geared for public and policymaker audiences, these products also promote the exchange of market and technology information within the clean energy industry.

State of Clean Energy

In 2020, CEBN launched **The State of Clean Energy**, an interactive series of infographics providing data and rankings on clean energy jobs, renewable energy deployment, power sector emissions rates, and federal R&D investments. CEBN shares these resources with public and industry stakeholders, and uses them to communicate with congressional offices about the unique clean energy trends and economic opportunities in their states. The 2023 project incorporated new data, including:

- ▶ **Investment data** for clean energy projects from 2012-2023.
- ▶ **Cumulative renewable energy capacity growth** since 2012.
- ▶ **Announced jobs** since the **Inflation Reduction Act** passed.
- ▶ Comparisons of **clean energy job growth rate** between states and U.S. overall from 2021-2022.



Clean Energy Email Series

In January 2023, CEBN launched **two bi-monthly email series** providing more intentional focus on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) and innovation/R&D in cleantech.

Inclusive Energy Economy Update

- ▶ Highlights funding opportunities, events, and resources at the nexus of economic opportunity, clean energy, and JEDI.

Energy Innovation Update

- ▶ Highlights funding opportunities, events, and resources for entrepreneurs, startups, and energy professionals in the energy innovation space.

Newsletter

CEBN's weekly newsletter is our most essential tool for reaching our network of small clean energy businesses, nonprofits, and other clean energy advocates, offering the latest updates from Washington and across the country.

In 2023, CEBN's newsletter:

- ▶ Reached a weekly audience averaging 5,601 contacts.
- ▶ Achieved average open rate of 34.04%.
- ▶ Was sent 49 out of 52 weeks of the year.



Since 2017, we have:

- ▶ Shared over 321 newsletters featuring federal, state, and international policy updates, events, funding opportunities, and news.

Powering Forward into 2024

CEBN is committed to building on the past year's successes by:

- ▶ Promoting a just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive clean energy economy.
- ▶ Engaging small businesses in policy advocacy and market opportunities.
- ▶ Demystifying federal programs and resources with the support of ecosystem partners.
- ▶ Ensuring small businesses and communities can access benefits from BIL and IRA.

Visit www.cebn.org to join our community of business leaders, partners, and changemakers across the country.

Together, we can build a more resilient, equitable, and innovative clean energy economy.





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Report designed by:

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Front: The Community Clean Energy Coalition Prize winners celebrate at the CCEC Summit in Atlanta, GA
Credit: Just Eldredge Media



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