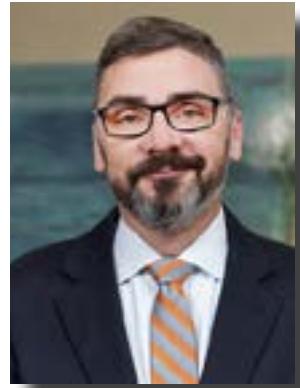


Clean Energy in New Jersey: How Healthcare Facilities Can Save Money and Save the Environment



By: Kenneth Sheehan

It doesn't have to be about politics; it doesn't even have to even be about the environment. But the development and implementation of clean energy for medical or healthcare facilities remains a valuable and reasonable goal, based just on the dollars and cents.

Hospitals, long-term care facilities, and outpatient clinics are, by their nature, energy-intensive operations. Whether it's high intensity treatment and imaging equipment, or the simple 24 hours a day load for heating and cooling, kitchens, sterilization needs, hot water, and laundry services, this consistent and significant energy usage makes health care facilities of all types ideal for adding or retrofitting energy efficient and renewable-energy options, using New Jersey's portfolio of clean energy programs.

The benefits? Reduced operating costs, enhanced energy resilience, and improved employee and patient environments – all while being able to tell yourself, your employees, your customers and patients, and the world that your organization is doing its part to reduce energy usage in an environmentally sound and friendly manner.

Two entities in the State of New Jersey – the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) – have available an array of programs aimed at adding or modernizing high-efficiency HVAC systems, installing backup power generation, or transitioning healthcare facilities to renewable energy sources. These take multiple forms, including grants, loans, and technical assistance, as well as possible property tax credits for those entities that can benefit from them.

What programs can a New Jersey based healthcare facility take advantage of?

- Energy benchmarking – with the NJBPU's Commercial Existing Buildings Program, hospitals and other large-scale facilities can access free tools and professional audits to identify where energy is being lost and where upgrades will have the most impact, both in terms of energy savings and cost-efficiency.
- The Large Energy Users Program (LEUP) – this NJBPU program relies upon self-investment in energy efficiency and on-site generation such as combined heat and power

or fuel cell projects with incentives of up to \$4 million. These make the most sense for those buildings and facilities with significant load and significant energy costs.

- The New Jersey Clean Energy Loans (NJ CELs) program, offered by the NJEDA, provides long-term, low-interest loans ranging from \$250,000 to \$10 million, available to healthcare facilities undertaking clean energy installations, electrification upgrades, or EV infrastructure projects.
- The Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program, run through the NJEDA, enables health-care facilities to fund clean energy upgrades through a property tax assessment repaid over 20 to 30 years. That allows healthcare facilities with property tax liability to undertake deep and far-reaching retrofits, such as whole-building electrification or solar-plus-storage systems, without dipping into capital reserves or incurring significant debt.
- The Combined Heat and Power (CHP) program through the NJBPU allows healthcare facilities to build, own, and operate on site backup or even primary energy production. CHP systems are particularly well-suited for healthcare facilities as they produce not only electricity, but also thermal energy – basically steam or hot water – that can be used for heating and cooling, hot water production, and other valuable 24-hour energy needs. Couple this with the confidence that comes from having an off-grid, independent electric source that can provide power needs for a hospital or other facility with 24/7/365 uptime, and the program makes quite a bit of sense. This incentive program offers up to 30% of project costs to support on-site energy generation systems.
- For those facilities located in one of the over 300 New Jersey municipalities considered to be “environmental justice” communities, the NJEDA's NJ COOL grants—ranging from \$50,000 to \$1 million—will support HVAC modernization, weatherproofing, and building electrification.
- Finally, the NJBPU's Community Solar Energy Program (CSEP) allows those facilities that cannot install solar

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to continuous learning and engagement.

Conclusion

Kaitlyn and Nishat's journeys from uncertain college sophomores to engaged early careerists offer a blueprint for anyone entering healthcare finance—or any complex professional field. Their success stems not from exceptional luck or connections, but from a strategic, intentional approach to professional development that leverages both practical experience and professional association involvement from the earliest possible stage.

Their stories reveal several powerful truths: that confidence comes from engagement, not from waiting until you feel ready; that professional associations provide not just education but community and identity; that mentorship accelerates development in ways that independent work never can; and that the path to leadership begins with showing up, volunteering, and continuously learning.

For HFMA and similar professional organizations, Kaitlyn and Nishat represent the return on investment in student and early careerist programming. By welcoming these young professionals when they were still forming their professional identities, HFMA didn't just gain members—it gained passionate advocates who are now actively contributing to the organization's mission and inspiring others to follow their path.

Their message to students and new graduates considering HFMA membership is unequivocal: "Get involved the moment you hear about HFMA. I had no idea how much this association would influence my career when I first joined, and now it's become an essential part of my professional journey."

As they continue developing as healthcare finance professionals, both remain committed to the principle that shaped their own development: paying forward the mentorship, support, and opportunities they received. "I'm excited for the day when I can share my own knowledge with new members, just as HFMA leaders have done for me," Kaitlyn reflects—a commitment that ensures the cycle of mentorship and development will continue.

Their journey from interns to coordinators and analysts, from uncertain students to confident professionals, from passive members to active contributors, represents more than personal success stories. It demonstrates the transformative power of intentional professional development, the compounding benefits of early association involvement, and the enduring

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panels on-site to essentially "subscribe" to off-site solar projects and receive credits on their utility bills. No need for capital outlay and no need for long-term development and investment.

Clean energy adoption is no longer just an aspirational or stretch goal; it has become an important need, a cost-savings, and a strategic advantage. No reason exists not to take full advantage of the State's resources when looking to buy, build, renovate, or expand healthcare facilities of all types and all sizes here in New Jersey.

importance of mentorship and community in building not just careers but careers with meaning.

For the next generation of healthcare finance professionals reading their stories, the message is clear: your career begins not with your first job, but with your first intentional step toward engagement with your professional community. The resources, relationships, and opportunities you need are available now—not someday when you feel ready, but today. The only question is whether you'll seize them.

In healthcare finance, as in healthcare itself, timing matters. Kaitlyn and Nishat understood this intuitively, and their early action has positioned them not just to succeed in their careers but to shape the future of healthcare finance in New Jersey and beyond. Their full-circle return to Saint Peter's represents not an ending but a new beginning—one in which they'll mentor the next generation of interns who, inspired by their example, will discover that the path to impact in healthcare finance begins with a single decision: to get involved, to show up, and to commit to becoming not just better professionals but better leaders who lift others as they climb.

In an industry where experience is often gatekept and opportunities hoarded, Kaitlyn and Nishat's journeys break the myth that young professionals must wait their turn—showing instead that early investment in emerging talent, genuine mentorship, and opening our professional communities to those still finding their footing can do more than just develop better careers; it can improve the healthcare system itself. Their transformation from uncertain interns to confident leaders in just a few years isn't only inspiring but also a call to every HFMA member to ask: Who are we mentoring today? What doors are we opening? Are we fostering a profession that welcomes ambition and nurtures potential, or one that requires credentials before community? The future of healthcare finance isn't waiting in some graduate program or entry-level role—it's already here, eager to contribute, hungry to learn, and ready to lead. The only question is whether we'll recognize it, invest in it, and make room for it. -Fatimah Muhammad, FHFMA

About the author

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