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Request for Explicit Inclusion and Continuation of Funding for Regional Energy Innovation Clusters (REICs) in the Electric Progr

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

June 17, 2026

401 WEST A STREET
SUITE 200
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101
858-568-7777

cleantechsandiego.org

MISSION:
To accelerate clean technology innovation and promote the equitable deployment of sustainable solutions across the San Diego region for the benefit of the economy, the environment, and all members of the community.

California Energy Commission
Docket Unit, MS-4
Docket No. 25-EPIC-01
715 P Street
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Request for Explicit Inclusion and Continuation of Funding for Regional Energy Innovation Clusters (REICs) in the Electric Program Investment Charge 2026–2030 Investment Plan (EPIC 5)

Dear EPIC Program Team:

On behalf of Cleantech San Diego and the Southern California Energy Innovation Network (SCEIN), I am writing to strongly urge the California Energy Commission (CEC) to explicitly include the continuation of funding for Regional Energy Innovation Clusters (REICs) in its Electric Program Investment Charge 2026–2030 Investment Plan (EPIC 5). Continuing the vital work of the REICs across California should be a top priority for the CEC, given the proven success of the program to date and the specialized jurisdictional expertise these clusters have established over the past decade.

REICs perform indispensable work within California's clean energy innovation ecosystem. By serving as a nimble, localized, and essential bridge, REICs connect energy entrepreneurs with immediate resources, utilities, investors, government agencies, community-based organizations, labor, and academic institutions. This regional stewardship ensures that electric ratepayer dollars are reinvested directly back into the communities that provide them. This model empowers local experts to source, vet, and scale the precise technologies needed to solve both unique regional challenges and statewide grid infrastructure needs, effectively turning foundational research into a functioning clean energy economy.

The quantifiable impacts of the REIC model demonstrate an unparalleled return on investment. According to the CEC's 2024 EPIC 4 report, REICs collectively achieved remarkable statewide success, which is further mirrored by the specific achievements of SCEIN:

Statewide REIC Impact (Since 2021)

- Supported 440 clean energy companies
- Attracted $5.5 billion in public and private follow-on funding
- Employed 6,500 persons across California

SCEIN Specific Return on Investment (Since 2016)

- Supported the scaling of 82 clean energy startups
- Startups raised $727 million in follow-on funding
- Startups deployed 673 pilots and secured 494 approved patents
- Program delivered a massive 80:1 return on the CEC's investment

While the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) did not mandate the continuation of REICs in its recent *Decision Adopting Electric Program Charges* (R.19-10-005), it explicitly expressed in writing an understanding of the critical value of entrepreneurship in driving innovation. The CPUC specifically noted that the CEC could approach the funding of innovators via REICs as a mechanism to achieve the five EPIC Goals and 13 Strategic Objectives, stating: *"The CEC may propose an entrepreneur strategy in its Strategic Initiatives and Research Topic Areas in achievement of the five EPIC Goals and 13 Strategic Objectives..."*

Given this clear alignment, Cleantech San Diego encourages the CEC to formalize this connection and expand its incubator and accelerator focus beyond just traditional grid technologies, focusing instead on the full spectrum of technologies required to address all 13 EPIC 5 strategic objectives. REICs are perfectly positioned to act as the primary "on-ramps" to vet local startups and seamlessly connect them with later-stage EPIC funding opportunities.

At a time of profound federal funding uncertainty, California must maintain its nationwide leadership in climate and energy market dynamics. Other states are currently utilizing the CEC’s blueprint as they attempt to stand up their own regional innovation hubs. By formalizing the continuation of REICs in EPIC 5 the CEC is not merely maintaining a successful program; it is reinforcing a national competitive advantage and ensuring the creation of thousands of high-quality jobs. We must remain committed to supporting energy innovators through proven, regional programs that deliver verifiable results.

Thank you for your continued dedication to building an accelerated, equitable, and resilient clean energy future for California.

Sincerely,

Jason Anderson
President and CEO
Cleantech San Diego