

Offices for Clean Energy Break Up in an Overhaul

By BRAD PLUMER

WASHINGTON — The Energy Department is breaking up or rebranding several offices that played key roles in the Biden administration's push to develop clean energy technologies that could help address climate change.

A revised organizational chart posted by the agency on Tuesday no longer shows the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations, the Office of Manufacturing and Energy Supply Chains, or the Grid Deployment Office. Those offices had overseen billions of dollars in funding for batteries, hydrogen fuels and electrical grids, among other projects.

Also gone is the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, which has played a major role in promoting technologies like solar power. That office has been rebranded as the Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation.

It is not yet clear how much of the work in these offices may be preserved or transferred elsewhere. But the overhaul reflects the priorities of the Trump administration, which has sought to dismantle Biden-era efforts to tackle global warming and encourage renewable energy and has instead focused on expanding fossil fuel production and prioritizing technologies like nuclear power.

"The Energy Department is aligning its operations to restore common sense to energy policy, lower costs for American families and businesses, and ensure the responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars," Chris Wright, the energy secretary, said in a statement announcing the overhaul.

The Trump administration has already frozen or canceled large amounts of Biden-era clean energy funding. In May, the Energy Department announced it was terminating \$3.7 billion in awards to companies trying to demonstrate technologies that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That included natural gas and cement companies trying to capture and bury the carbon dioxide put out by their smokestacks.

In October, Mr. Wright announced he was canceling an additional \$7.5 billion for hundreds of projects, mostly in states run by Democrats. That included funding for hubs to produce clean-burning hydrogen fuels as well as efforts to upgrade electrical grids and reduce methane leaks from oil and gas operations.

An internal document has been circulating among lawmakers suggesting that the agency is considering terminating \$12 billion more, including funding for two large projects in Louisiana and Texas that aimed to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Mr. Wright has said that he does not consider climate change one of the nation's most pressing

problems, as the Biden administration did. Instead, he has said he wants to prioritize energy sources that can run around the clock and help power data centers for artificial intelligence. That includes technologies like coal, natural gas, nuclear power and geothermal energy, as well as nascent fusion technology.

The reorganization reflects that shift.

For the first time in decades, the agency will no longer have an Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, which was established in its current form in the 1990s and had overseen efforts to increase the energy efficiency of appliances and drive down the cost of solar panels.

The office will instead be renamed the Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation, which is expected to absorb some of the functions of the now-disbanded clean energy offices, according to two people familiar with the plans who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The reorganization also eliminates the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations, which was established by Congress as part of the bipartisan infrastructure law in 2021 and focused on scaling up emerging technologies, such as advanced nuclear reactors or hydrogen fuels. That office had already lost the vast majority of its staff under the Trump administration.

Other Biden-era offices that were disbanded include: the Grid Deployment Office, which worked on upgrading the nation's network of power lines; the Office of Manufacturing and Energy Supply Chains, which had been working to establish a domestic battery industry; and the Office of State and Community Energy Programs, which helped support state efforts to improve energy efficiency.

The Trump administration is creating several new offices instead, including the Hydrocarbons and Geothermal Energy Office as well as the Office of Fusion.

The agency's high-profile Loan Programs Office, which provides billions of dollars in loans for promising technologies, will be renamed the Office of Energy Dominance Financing. Mr. Wright has said he mainly wants that office to bankroll new nuclear plants.

It is unclear whether the reorganization will lead to additional layoffs. Over the past year, the Energy Department has lost roughly 20 percent of its work force — or 3,500 employees — amid a wave of firings, layoffs and incentives for retirement.

As part of a deal to end the government shutdown this month, congressional Democrats secured a provision that barred further work force reductions at federal agencies until Jan. 30.