

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Grants Committee
July 22nd, 2020 - MEETING MINUTES

Committee members present: Jeff Moreland Jr., Michael Edden Hill, Ranfis Villatoro, Robin Wang, Maria Sipin, Shanice Clarke, Megan Horst, Faith Graham, Andrea Hamberg

PCEF staff present: Sam Baraso, Cady Lister, Jaimes Valdez, Janet Hammer

MEETING DECISIONS/ACTION ITEMS

- Committee accepted July 15th Meeting Minutes.

MEETING SUMMARY NOTES

Comments by Commissioner Hardesty

Commissioner Hardesty opened the meeting with thanks to the Committee for their work and effort to keep the commitment to benefit the communities the program was designed to benefit. Commissioner Hardesty notes that she attended last week's Energy Trust of Oregon meeting focused on potential PCEF applicants and was concerned about the lack of focus on ensuring that the program was driven by these communities. She expressed appreciation for the Committee slowing down and providing resources and technical assistance to small, community-based organizations to be able to successfully apply. Encouraged Committee to maintain inquisitiveness regarding folks that want to partner with the program and with communities of color. Hoping that you will see proposals from BIPOC, frontline communities and not folks that traditionally get the money and don't deliver results to communities of color. Help communities know they are in the lead; they may not have expertise in clean energy but what those frontline BIPOC communities do have is people who have been left out. We were intentional in advocating for the program in leading with race and ensuring the public knew that. As you know, the industry is white and male and if we wait for them it will be another 20 years. Your job is essential to ensure that proposals you see truly benefit BIPOC communities. Thank you for slowing down, thank you for your intentionality. Be aware that some proposals will look better than they are; folks have experience putting together proposals that look better than they are. Reach out if you need; my staff is here for you.

Public Comment

Anissa Pemberton – PCEF Coordinator at Coalition of Communities of Color

Thank you for your work. Thank you to Commissioner Hardesty's highlight. Impressed by dedication and care to this work by you. Have appreciated the opportunities to engage in scoring discussion. Respect both sides of conversation on workforce and contracting and recognize the tensions being held. Consider the value of keeping large grants simpler for this year. There is a sense of urgency – we did say take time if you need it but balance how much time; how much will that be pushing off getting dollars out the door. Happy that community feedback being is considered. Consider what information you want, need. How is the information being used? What is the additional value of the information? Think creatively. Maybe there are ways to meet the needs of the Committee in ways that are less burdensome. Happy to be a resource if you have any questions.

- Ranfis – Thank you for joining us. Any specifics that raise to the top of the Coalition's concerns? Approaches to applying a BIPOC lens have we sufficiently met?

- Anissa – My questions on community benefits agreements (CBA) – how many nonprofits does this impact and what info are you looking for. Re: BIPOC workers – too much detail doesn't seem to work for contractors; don't think they will necessarily know.
- Maria – have been asked why is PCEF Coalition fundraising and how that fits with Committee. Would be helpful to communicate to public.
 - Anissa - PCEF Coalition worked to pass initiative and exists to implement as a key stakeholder with City. A lot of white dominant orgs are funded to do this work and don't have to worry about other issues like housing, justice, etc. We are seeing in our Coalition a need to resource BIPOC communities so they can participate and be successful in their participation. There is a role for community-based organizations that the City can't do; us as a watchdog organization. Note also that the PCEF Coalition does not and will not receive any funds from the PCEF Grant Program.

Randy Ramos – RJ Ramos Construction/Electrical

Want to share a few things. Love what PCEF is doing and stands for. Would love to help. That being said, there may be a bit of a bumpy road in the starting process. Recently worked on Portland Building. In meeting requirements for women and minority workers, was able to hire 100% minority, but had trouble getting female with electrical – they wanted to fine me \$25,000. But women electricians are not readily available. Like the idea of having requirements of what you want to see, but at the same time it needs to be realistic. My goal is to train people and hopefully the PCEF training programs will bring folks through the door. I am glad to be involved. Also, re LCP Tracker – I think you should have a low threshold for use. It is a bit of a pain, but the point is to help train contractors and help them compete in other spaces. You might get pushback from smaller contractors, but it is important. Provide admin help or something to bring them along but require its use. Finally, there should be requirements for safety training and posting. It's going to make them better contractors.

- Ranfis – We don't have a percentage for worker utilization goal; were you suggesting that we have a requirement.
 - Randy - Like the idea of a requirement as something to strive to but, someone can say on the application what they will do, and it might not be realistic.

Update on Engagement and Timeline: PCEF Staff

Traditionally we have had public comment at front of meeting and then not again. We would like to have a conversation about other ways to create dialogue after the RFP is released. We will need to be thoughtful about who is able to participate and how much we elevate those voices over others.

Adjustments to timeline have pushed RFP release to September 14th (about 5 weeks beyond what originally thought). Slide presents the milestones and timeframe.

- Robin – Any other shifts beyond release date?
 - Sam - City Council needs three weeks with packet and we bump into holidays.
- Robin – With shift from application into grant agreement what does that mean for Committee role in grant agreement creation?
 - Sam – Some will be detailed in the RFP, and some things that get developed for individual applicants. Not envisioning all agreements to come to Committee but the items that get included in RFP will be signed off on.
- Robin – Can you explain the Applicant response to questions?

- Cady – Scoring Panel average score gets sent to applicant along with any clarifying questions – and they have the opportunity to respond. With shifted timeline, that bumps into holiday season; part of the reason the review extended from 4 to 6 weeks. Assuming little travel due to COVID so hoping folks are around.
- Ranfis – Where in timeline will reporting documents/expectations come? Will we see a final document – before RFP goes out?
 - Cady – All reporting documents will be included in RFP and will be discussed.
 - Sam - It is a busy schedule; fall will let up once the 60 days open up.

Large grants — application and scoring criteria overview

Staff provided a high-level overview of the scale of the effort of a large grant and the distribution of points (\$200k to \$1m in year one). References documents posted on website.

- Robin – Regarding 8 to 15 pages of narrative; do what can be done to simplify the application process. Just looked at two grant applications I submitted over \$200k to private foundations and they were about 10 pages. Any way to scale that back a bit and ensure it doesn't creep up.
- Megan – appreciate your breaking this down to make it clear; big picture. Was pleased to see that half of our points are about going to organizations serving our priority populations. That felt like a good number. Echo Robin's point; reviewing grants for really big money and this seems a bit long even for federal government. Substance over length. 8 feels reasonable; 15 feels a bit long.
- Andrea – From my perspective of writing and reviewing a lot of applications, where strict limits are there – those applications take a lot to write as you try to try to agonize and make Haiku. Acknowledge that is a different labor while trying to make it shorter but allowing for people who need more space.
- Shanice – Reflecting on the breakdown, seems more reflective of what we were wrestling with.
 - Sam notes there are not minimums or maximums – these are suggestions, though suggestions do send a signal.

Large Grants – workforce and contractor benefits section

Staff introduced recommended changes to this section of the application and scoring. A lot of work on this section; the most daunting element of this program. To get here we have hosted design sessions, had convos with city partners and other jurisdictions, 1-1s, and we have plans to create a High Road Committee. There's been a lot to get to here and more ahead. Changes to this section in document. Main elements include:

- Removed information related to contracts not related to construction (simplifies and focuses).
- Increased thresholds from \$350k to \$500k for what triggers more detailed questions
- Removed questions about workforce utilization for projects that don't have single site \$500k – as it may not be possible for orgs to answer this especially if they don't have contractor already. This instead will be tracked as part of grant agreement.
- Removed details about subcontractor utilization for projects less than \$500k at single site. Difficult to meaningfully answer.
- Faith – Difficult to know what our role is in responding to changes in the grant. See my role as making sure that staff are listening to public and responding reasonably.
- Ranfis - Also reflecting on role and expertise. We have really been getting feedback from NGOs and contractors; worried that we are not hearing enough voices of workers in this process. For instance, Latinos are often in the construction industry, but not as much representation in Licensed Trades. How is BIPOC priority being elevated as a framework, and how is BIPOC framework different than POC focus?

Still not sure that it creates the kind of changes needed in the industry, and there is a need to uplift the voices of workers. Challenge to staff and Committee to do that together.

- Michael – Reiterate Ranfis’ perspective. Have heard a lot from contractors, but not workers. Would like to put a focus on workers as the program continues to develop. An important voice that we are missing.
 - Sam – those most impacted are often hardest to reach. We have connected with unions but that doesn’t always directly reflect all workers.
- Robin – Did you get pushback on assumption of using \$500k as a threshold which triggers greater detail in the application?
 - Sam – started with running numbers by groups. Other programs use a higher numbers (\$750k) but acknowledgement that it is imperfect, but something that folks felt they could meet.
- Michael – May look to raise that in future years, but since our max cap for funds is \$1 million, \$500k seems reasonable.
- Ranfis – There is already guidance from BOLI on apprentice utilization. There are complexities to getting those ratios, and the rates that people are paid. If people are working and learning, but if the ratios of journey level to apprentices, there are mechanisms to help balance wages.
- Michael – From experience, contractors tend to maximize use of apprentices. It is law, so this may be more of an informational point than a question that is scored. This utilization often happens anyway.
- Jefferey – This is self-regulated. For example, currently on a project where we are paying apprentices journey rates – part of the problem is lack of diversity in the trades at the journey level. Get diversity numbers through using more apprentices.
- Ranfis – For journey and apprentice questions in the application, it is in a POC framework, not necessarily BIPOC values. What is the difference? There are unique challenges for Black and Indigenous community members, different than POC generally.
 - Sam – The discussion here is about hours to People of Color. We could break this down further and have Black and Indigenous hours. What kind resolution is knowable at the time applying for grant? On the back end, in reporting we will disaggregate the data.
- Michael – We do want to ask the question, but do we want to include table 1C, or just include question 4 in a more general way, with a narrative of commitments?
- Shanice – Supportive of removing table 1C and instead asking a broader question but making it clear that there is an expectation of utilization.
- Robin – Thinking as a grant writer, the project is going to be about 6 months out from the time of application. That gap will make it difficult to nail down numbers due to time and variables. Support keeping this higher level.
- Maria – Grant recipients should receive capacity building resources. We should not use BIPOC and POC interchangeably, if we are seeking outcomes for certain communities, we may need to name that. Lots of groups are calling for more specific focus on Black communities, for example.
- Ranfis – In terms of what projects we fund, is it likely that projects are 6 months out, or also ones in progress. RFP doesn't discuss whether it is shovel ready, 6 months, or ongoing.
- Ranfis – If you don’t respond to all the questions, will the application still be accepted regardless?
 - Sam – generally yes, but if you didn’t name your contractor, it would miss a lot of points.
- Michael – Would like to see question 4 as “describe your workforce utilization for BIPOC people for project, and how those estimates were generated.”
 - Sam – Challenge is that initiative calls out specific broader communities. We can say BIPOC, but we also need to include women, other priority populations. That is at the level of the code.

- Janet – Yes reporting is disaggregated, but also wanted to shine a light on the fact that we will get info on an ongoing basis. We can withhold payments if orgs are not making targets, and performance can impact future grant awards. There are tools for moving us to the outcomes we want to see.
- Michael – Not so worried about punishment for not making utilization commitments that are required. Communities of color have been punished enough, but if they are not meeting utilization, we should ask what they can do to improve, and track their progress over time.
- Megan – Not likely that most urban ag projects will be more than \$500k and wanted to note that the words of apprentice/ journey do not really apply to urban ag, which is much less formal. Can we have other words too?
- Michael – Every trade has different requirements for what apprenticeship looks like. JATC exists and reports available workers to BOLI for what is currently available.
- Ranfis – from my perspective, not forcing any particular goal, but seeking systems change and control what we can control. Contractors and unions set a lot of the practices to the industry, and PCEF can provide some of the framework.
- Jeffery – Usually contractors are looking for the best people to get the work done and hire journey level. My point of view might be a little skewed based on the experience.
- Ranfis – Ratios are important but does not need to be scored.
- Michael – Often come to worksites where there are too many apprentices rather than not enough. Have had up to 6, when 2 is the max legal limit. In electrical trade, rarely working without an apprentice.
- Ranfis – Happy to revisit this for another week. As looking at this, we have 3 different score.
 - Sam – Propose sending out the budget section and get feedback via email.
- Michael – Could there be three options presented, and then select an option.
 - Sam – yes, we can do that.

Closing comments - Staff

- In next couple weeks, committee member recruitment for Indigenous member and continuation of discussion on bylaws.
- Letter to City Council was received well, and there will be a response soon
- Application Support Grants are closing July 31st

Meeting adjourned 9:10 p.m.