



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

Date: September 8, 2021  
To: Portland Clean Energy Fund Committee  
From: PCEF Staff  
Subject: PCEF draft RFP #2 public comment summary

The PCEF staff and [Committee](#) are charged with designing a program that meets the goals of addressing climate change while advancing racial and social justice. Public input and feedback is a critical component in implementing the PCEF program in a manner that is accountable to its climate, racial and social equity goals. In preparation for the release of PCEF's second request for proposals (RFP), staff solicited public comments on the draft applications and scoring criteria from August 16<sup>th</sup> through September 3<sup>rd</sup>.

It is important to acknowledge that this public comment period builds on significant public feedback that has shaped the PCEF program to date, including [public input and feedback](#) received leading up to the inaugural RFP in September 2020 and the [subsequent evaluation](#) of the inaugural RFP.

The public feedback received on the draft applications and scoring criteria will be used to inform changes that improve program design to meet the intent of the program. Solutions may fall in one of three categories: changes to grant application(s), changes to scoring criteria, and/or improved clarity and accessibility to increase understanding.

## How public input was collected

PCEF staff solicited public comments via online survey, email, a PCEF hosted webinar, a focus group meeting, and public testimony. Nearly all public feedback shared was provided via online survey (49) and email (45).

Of the 49 total online survey responses, only 8 respondents indicated an intent to apply in the next funding round, while 9 were undecided. The remaining and majority of online survey comments came from individuals (not affiliated with an organization) who do not appear to be either past applicants or potential future applicants. Of the 45 public comments by email, a vast majority repeated or referenced points from the [8/31/21 Oregonian op-ed by Angus Duncan and Steve Novick](#). However, several commenters offered substantive feedback and recommendations that were unique from the op-ed.

The remainder of this memo summarizes high level take-aways from the on-line survey as well as the emailed comments.

## High level take-aways/thoughts

- A number of detailed questions and suggestions were shared by organizations that have read both this year's draft application and last year's application, including WorkSystems, Innovative Housing and Community Energy Project. These are being reviewed for implications/recommendations and will be shared in the 9/8 Committee meeting.
- A majority of comments repeated or referenced points from the [Oregonian op-ed by Angus Duncan and Steve Novick](#). Some comments included inaccurate statements (e.g., stating there is no calculation of greenhouse gas [GHG] reduction potential) or offer ideas that are not feasible given the code (e.g., do not fund regenerative agriculture).
- There is a strong theme regarding strengthening the emphasis on GHG reduction and ensuring accountability. Several commenters felt there should be increased weight placed on cost effectiveness. Some comments offered alternative scoring/weighting.
- Many commenters felt there was too much weight placed on the demographics of the organizations that are applying. Several comments suggest (sometimes explicitly) that the purpose of program with regard to social benefit was that priority populations should be the recipients of project benefits (e.g., get their homes weatherized) but that organizations with "technical expertise" and "experience" should be prioritized for implementation of these projects.
- There is a continued tension between making a simple application that works for small organizations and having a rigorous application that ensures the selection of strong, high impact projects.
- There were concerns raised about the difficulty of achieving workforce equity goals (i.e., apprenticeship, diverse workforce, and diverse contractor goals), particularly for affordable housing projects which may only apply for funds to complete a portion of a project already under construction with existing contractors and subcontractors.
- There was feedback from organizations serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities that the criteria evaluating how an organization reflects the community they serve is problematic for their organizations due to systemic limitations around the employment of people with disabilities by the Office of Developmental Disabilities Services.
- There was not sufficient information from the public comment materials to report on the demographics of those responding since this was not collected for email submissions and over half of those completing the online survey left the demographics questions blank.
- The materials released for public comment focused on the application and scoring criteria. This is only a subset of content that will be in the final request for proposals, which will include information on eligibility criteria, technical review, grantee reporting requirements, and other critical information. As a result, clear and effective messaging

regarding the following will be critical moving forward given some of the comments provided:

- GHG reductions are addressed in numerous ways including an initial screen that filters out projects that do not address climate change. Estimates of GHG calculations are performed and conducted in house to facilitate accuracy and consistency (e.g., not having applicants use different models).
- The GHG impact criteria is actually a cost effectiveness measure. However, cost effectiveness is only one GHG-related criteria that is balanced by others such as the utility bill reduction criteria. A heavy focus on cost-effectiveness on either GHG investments or workforce investments would exclude many important and impactful projects (i.e., investing in deep energy retrofits, training chronically underemployed populations that may require greater support and resource investment).
- Robust reporting is required by each grantee, quarterly and at the close of grant. This ensures that programs are on track and also documents project outcomes. In addition, Committee and staff are developing high level metrics for reporting programmatic outcomes.
- Selecting grantee organizations that reflect the communities they serve is one way of increasing a projects likelihood to succeed. The program is intended to benefit priority communities and organizations that reflect them have expertise in these communities that mainstream organizations often do not, as evidenced by abundant past poor performance in this area.
- A clean energy workforce market study and engagement process will be under way soon that may be used by applicants and the Committee to further identify priorities.
- Climate action has typically excluded communities most impacted by climate change. PCEF is designed to be led by and serving communities with unique expertise pertaining to the challenges of and appropriate responses to climate change.
- The law specifies PCEF funding areas; transportation was not a defined funding area. The Committee is aware of the climate impacts of transportation and specifically set aside funds for transportation in the draft RFP. Further, Committee can recommend changes to the code in the future, if appropriate (e.g., revisit type and amount of allocations), to improve the effectiveness of the program meeting its intent.