

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Grants Committee

September 8th, 2021 MINUTES

Committee members present: Ranfis Villatoro, Maria Sipin, Faith Graham, Robin Wang, Jeffrey Moreland, Megan Horst

Committee excused: Amanda Squiemphen-Yazzie, Michael Edden Hill, Shanice Clarke

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

Public comment:

Anissa Pemberton, Coalition of Communities of Color/PCEF Coalition

Good evening everyone. For the record, my name is Anissa Pemberton, I use they/them pronouns, and I work at the Coalition of Communities of Color. Today, I am representing the PCEF Coalition.

I appreciate you all being open to more feedback so soon to my previous comments. I wanted to speak in support of the heatwave RFP that you all are voting on today.

First, I wanted to address the complicated dynamics of responding to the most recent heatwave. I support a hybrid approach to this topic, that both responds to the immediate needs of community members who are especially vulnerable to heatwaves. Unfortunately, Oregon faced the second worst natural disaster during the heatwave in July.

I know that the climate crisis demands an intersectional approach, and so I want to encourage you to connect to the most recent research that suggests we need hybrid approaches to the crisis. I know that air conditioners are not a long-term solution, and I think there's a lot of promising opportunities in ductless heat pumps. But I come here today to ask you to know that our communities need these resources now to survive, and know that the additional solutions have pathways to follow. My suggestion is to have both ductless heat pumps for long-term retrofits as well as air conditioners for immediate relief.

Second, I want to speak to the acknowledged limitations of this effort. While we have won many bold energy fights in the last few years, there's a lot of advocacy left to do. But we have some promising mechanisms emerging from the same movement that has championed PCEF:

- Energy Affordability will allow major utilities to establish a low-income rate payer class, ensuring that bills will be mitigated in the future for the most vulnerable.
- Healthy Homes established a statewide program that mimics PCEF in providing home upgrades to low-income people. This is an exciting start to the work of transitioning the state - I hope we can obtain more funds to support that program in the future.
- Finally, 100% Clean Energy will transition the state to clean energy solutions by 2040.

All of these solutions are currently going towards rulemaking, and I would like to talk more with you all about the systemic barriers you are seeing in the program, and what could be helpful to advocate for in that process.

I bring up these policy solutions because I am the advocate for the program and for you all. My role is to defend, protect, and advocate on behalf of all of you. So if there's any advocacy related efforts that could be helpful for me to advocate for in coordination with you, please know that I am here to be the best advocate I can be for you all. I think that the Energy Affordability rulemaking may particularly benefit from our collaboration.

This is a role that the Grant Committee simply cannot fill, and frankly, shouldn't fill. I encourage you all to focus on what you can do, and not on what you can't, and work with the PCEF Coalition collaboratively to find solutions to any barriers that you may experience due to the current system and the needs for further advocacy. I think this will be the best way to have you all engaged in any advocacy related matters that relate to PCEF, and I think it will help you all focus on the program.

Please feel free to follow up with me if you have any concerns or questions. Staff can serve as a liaison if you have not contacted me before. I'm collaborating with Michael and Maria directly on some of these ideas and thoughts, and I'm looking forward to fruitful outcomes.

Timeline/program updates:

September 28 RFP launch, will be open for 60 days, in the future there will be an RFP two times per year. We are getting a better handle on what it means to operate within our 5% administrative cap. Recruiting for four new positions. In process of contracting with consultant to support internal work on strategic management, looking for interest from committee members to works with this consultant

Summary of public comments received on draft RFP 2 material

[Memo summarizing public comments](#)

Staff gave a presentation summarizing public comment:

When the first RFP went out for public comment we ran a robust outreach effort to get feedback about the draft, we took public comments via an online survey, through email, through one-on-one meetings, and by attending community meetings.

We also ran a robust evaluation process after the fact to look at what worked and what didn't in RFP 1. We heard from applicants, both those who were awarded grants and those who were not. We heard from everyone involved in all parts of the evaluation process.

For RFP 2 we took a different, more focused approach. We checked in with a handful of groups on criteria and areas we knew needed attention. Most input came in via email, with some via online survey, most comment was in direct response to the Opinion piece published in the Oregonian. Most of these comments related to how we address GHG emissions reduction and indicate they believe we are not prioritized in the scoring criteria.

The program screens every project for alignment with goals of addressing climate while advancing racial and social justice. That means that all of our projects, with the exception of workforce and contractor development, are the kinds of projects that reduce greenhouse gasses.

Technical screening makes sure a project can realistically happen. Many comments indicate a desire to see cost effectiveness be heavily weighted, it is important and exists in our criteria but is balanced with other criteria to incentivize deeper investments. There were also comments advocating for funding transportation – this will be a perennial conversation, it will also take greater investment than what PCEF has to invest.

As drafted 25% of total score for large grants is directly impacted by GHG reduction. An additional 18% of the total score is impacted by GHG reduction through health benefits, climate resiliency and alignment with guiding principles. Equity is prioritized in 34% of the total score. Four criteria share both equity and GHG impacts and account for 26% of the total score.

- Ranfis: Good reminder of the process, encourage that we continue to show folks what is behind the curtain, appreciate these slides, Anissa did a really good job discussing how the systems that we have in place have created huge disparities, appreciate how cost effectiveness is balanced with other elements.

- Robin: I would put the guiding principles score in the first slide as it is directly related to GHG. The low-income criteria might belong to the equity side, could imagine a project which does have cost reduction for low-income but no GHG impact.
- Megan: on the GHG slides we might interpret those as direct connections but I think it could be clearer to the average reader. “intended outcomes” could be further defined, may need to add additional language on the maintaining useful life criteria, agree with Robin’s comment as well.
- Sam: there is concern about accountability to outcomes, will be an ongoing challenge of communication, we expect rigorous reporting from our grantees which will lead to GHG reduction estimates from the work they have done and estimates of jobs that have been created. How we share out this information is important, we need to pick back up with the reporting and evaluation subcommittee. Given the diversity of projects PCEF can support, we will need to continuously engage in what it means in the market to meet contractor equity goals.
 - Cady: Feedback we got was that the goals we were putting out would be very difficult to hit and suggestion that they be reduced. These were comments from larger multifamily developers.
- Ranfis: there is no excuse to see disparities in key trades and we do want to continue to push institutions.
- Megan: looking to hear more on comments regarding serving people with disabilities, expansive conversation around what the issues are and what the work-arounds are, want to push on the importance of that.
 - Cady: we have been learning a lot about the systemic barriers, the people from the disability community that we connected with said that they like the spirit of the representation criteria but may need some changes to accommodate specific barriers organizations that serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities face.
- Sam: will bring adjustment to language to you on Friday, this will be an ongoing conversation. We are also working on launching a market study, building up our sector knowledge so we can push from a more informed place.

Discussion of potential changes to RFP 2 material

- Ranfis: Regarding the “good faith effort” to hire and retain and inclusive workforce on PCEF projects. Documentation is needed, good faith is not enough, we don’t have diverse businesses or workers that want this work, this needs to be backed up, good faith has not been documented previously, need to get details of how it will be executed.
- Megan: simpler and clearer communication is always a challenge, I think we can do better in our application materials, we have a lot of criteria, robust but can we edit down, I think we could do better on the 26% for GHG, we are pushing for climate in other criteria or we could be.
- Cady: question for committee, if the outcome that we are after is increasing GHG emissions reduction within our scoring criteria, what ways can that be done other than prioritizing larger projects or increasing the weight of cost effectiveness? What is the outcome that we think we might not be getting? How can we better incentivize that in the scoring criteria related to GHG?
- Sam: there is no proposal that gets past eligibility that doesn’t align with our funding categories, so would you rather see a greater emphasis on GHG reduction? Cost reduction? What do we give up?
- Ranfis: do not want to add another layer of complexity on GHG and cost effectiveness, what we are being presented are projections on GHG reductions, what actually happens on the backend, history of performance, really matters in EE space.
- Robin: what I want to see is an intentional balance, we might end up skewing in one direction or another but I want it to be intentional.

- Faith: I am really happy with intentionality that is here, concern is valid, we heard that the public didn't know where the GHG was counted and we provided a thoughtful response, like the idea of a visual, we should be looking at what projects get funded, that is how we are going to test that what we have is the right criteria, the examples will be very helpful, we don't have to send all the money out the door if we don't see applications that meet the criteria.
- Megan: maybe we need to make the connection between lowering costs and GHG savings for the public, regenerative agriculture world is harder to measure, cannot be held to same measurement standards.
 - Sam: we do have quality assurance/control and other standards, you all have given us a good amount to think about, is there a project outcome that we are afraid of? That we can work back from. Reflecting on projects that rose to the top in last round in implementation grants. What would you be concerned would elevate to the top?
- Faith: cost effectiveness in EE/RE programs is part of what created need for PCEF. The project I am afraid of seeing is the business as usual project that can be funded by other sources.

8:30

Meeting close