

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Grants Committee

August 4th 2021, 6:00 to 8:30 pm

Committee members present: Michael Edden Hill, Ranfis Villatoro, Maria Sipin, Shanice Clarke, Faith Graham, Robin Wang, Jeffrey Moreland, Amanda Squiemphen-Yazzie

Committee excused: Megan Horst

PCEF staff: Cady Lister, Janet Hammer, Jaimes Valdez, Angela Previdelli, Jason Ford

Decisions made: July 21, 2021 meeting minutes approved

Public comment

Stephen Achilles, Exceed Enterprises: Shared thoughts via email regarding PCEF and working with people with disabilities. Appreciate the work of PCEF and opportunity to address systemic issues. As we think about next round, want to consider PCEF's ability to support people with disabilities. First – representation. To our knowledge, no staff or evaluators with disabilities and not much outreach to our community. We stand ready to assist with that outreach. One in four Oregonians has a disability, 1 in 8 is a cognitive disability. People of color are over-represented in the disability community and people with disabilities are more likely to be low income. Important intersectionality. Expressed concerns about evaluation of applications and shared possible solutions in email to Cady and Sam. Compensation – SSDI (social security disability insurance) limits how much income a person can make before loss of benefits. Can take years to get back on SSDI. Would like to offer expertise to help address this. Very supportive of the PCEF program. This community has been ignored. We see an opportunity to get dozens of people off of SSDI. But we need to work with you and help you work with the community. *Comments submitted via email are attached at the end of this document.*

Ranfis: Thanks to Steve and would like staff and Committee follow up to this important issue.

Timeline/program update

Committee added a listening session on September 1st and agreed to meet two days the week of September 8th to review public comment and workshop changes, with a goal to release RFP September 28.

Mini-grant update: application closed August 1st. Received 85 applications requesting \$400k (\$100k available). 14 were asking for grant-writing support and the remainder were for small projects, events. Good demand for low burden, small applications

Heat response update: Have been in conversations with various folks. Consistent interest but need additional information. Will create a survey to community and partners, bring back on September 8.

RFP 2: Staff provided a presentation on the RFP 2 to be released for public comment. The accompanying memo is posted here [PCEF Grant Committee Meeting – August 4, 2021 | Portland.gov](#).

Staff question to Committee – are there particular groups of people to engage and/or particular questions that are critical to get feedback on?

- Robin: from applicant perspective appreciate different formats; from reviewer perspective concerned about challenges of many types of files/formats.

- Faith: transportation allocation; did that get a specific dollar amount and if so why/how? Is that in the notes? Understand separating different funding areas into different applications but what happens when we get some that have components of both funding areas.
- Cady: Most applicants who selected multiple funding areas last round were actually primarily one thing. More specific questions this time get the portion of budget allocated to different areas without too much burden. There will be a guided decision to get to the right application and forms within that will be completed if there is \$100k or more that goes to any other funding area.
- Michael: would like to get feedback from anyone that had a hard time with the last application process.
- Ranfis: would be great to ask folks about what applications they feel are user-friendly or inclusive and what makes them user-friendly from their perspective. Per testimony today, engage with disability community. Would add reach out to apprentice programs and unions.
- Cady: How comfortable are you with staff moving forward with getting the draft out for the three-week public comment?
 - Michael: Comfortable. Would like to see the draft going out a day or two before so can see and give quick feedback, but really comfortable.
 - Robin: ditto
 - Amanda: comfortable
 - Jeffrey: comfortable
 - Maria: yes, let's continue to move these forward to public comment.
 - Shanice: comfortable. Sitting with connecting with folks about our previous RFP. There might be some data. How might that support and complement our goals here.
 - Ranfis: I support moving these documents forward. Be clear what we are seeking. More pointed questions. Be clear to public what the goal/outcome is.
 - Faith – agree.

Discussion of items that are not bring addressed this RFP 2 but is future work – short/mid/long term

- Robin: This is an important question to have. As we think mid/long, we need to have a collective vision. What do we want to see long term? Deep convo, rooted in community.
- Shanice: Remember as we started as Committee, we had a well facilitated equity training. Strategic plan sounds formal, but vision/goals time based – could be a cool exercise to go through together.
- Amanda: Ditto what Shanice said. Bring someone to work us through a conversation about what this would look like for PCEF and our communities. And thinking about Steve's comment and how to bring in people with diverse abilities. There is no way to look at the website in another language. We're missing a whole group of people that are important to our values. How to make a priority in upcoming public comment round? Bringing in people that can support us with their knowledge of bringing in people with diverse abilities and language abilities. We're already going into our second RFP and leaving out a whole community that is valued and needs to be heard and seen.
- Michael: Also want to remind us all that we still have a lot of work to do. Working agreements. An Equity Plan. Things that have been on the back burner. But echo Shanice and Amanda.
- Ranfis: Would love more open conversations with staff and committee. Format serves a purpose to get from A to Z but challenge to get open conversations about things. We don't get the ability to hear from multiple perspectives and would like creative ways to do that.

7:40

Meeting close

Memo to: Sam Baraso, Program Manager PCEF and Cady Lister, PCEF Deputy Program Manager

From: Stephen Achilles, CEO of Exceed Enterprises

Date: August 4, 2021

RE: Thoughts on PCEF and People with Disabilities

Exceed Enterprises greatly appreciates the work of the Portland Clean Energy Fund. This is an exciting opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of Portlanders who have and continue to face significant challenges in America's whitest city. The PCEF projects that were approved will have a positive impact for everyone in our community.

As you begin the next round of funding, I wanted to take a moment to discuss our continuing concern about the PCEF's ability to engage with and support people with disabilities.

Our first concern has to do with the lack of representation.

1. To our knowledge there are no evaluators or staff members with a disability and specifically with an intellectual or developmental disability.
2. To the best of our knowledge there has been little to no outreach to the disability community. Last fall PCEF staff acknowledged the lack of outreach, but it does not appear to have improved. We stand ready to help PCEF reach into the disability community.

Here is some information that I hope will encourage you to meet PCEF goals by reaching out to our community. The following information is from annual studies completed by the Oregon Office on Disability and Health and Oregon Health Sciences University, the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. The information below clearly shows the intersection of people with disabilities and all of the groups that PCEF is supporting.

1. One in four Oregonians has a disability. Below is the disability by type:
 - a. 12.9% mobility
 - b. 12.5% cognitive
 - c. 7.6% independent living
 - d. 7.1% hearing
 - e. 4.4% visual
 - f. 3.8% self-care
2. 29% of women have a disability and 26% of men have a disability
3. Disabilities have a significant impact on the BIPOC community.
 - a. 28% non-Hispanic white
 - b. 24% non-Hispanic black
 - c. 23% Hispanic
 - d. 29% non-Hispanic all others
4. People with disabilities have a very limited employment opportunities. Only 33% of Oregonians with disabilities are employed.
5. Sixty one percent of Oregonians with disabilities have an income of less than \$25,000 per year.
6. Oregonians with disabilities are three times more likely to have diabetes than those without disabilities.

People with disabilities are a significant part of all PCEF priority groups.

When I gave testimony last November, I said that the proposed evaluation system worked against people with disabilities. We continue to believe that. We saw this in two ways. First, lack of representation. It appears that only one organization focused on disability participated. Second, the evaluation system worked to eliminate people with disabilities from participating in the PCEF program by creating significant barriers.

Here are specific concerns about the current evaluation system.

PCEF Small Grants: It appears to Exceed that the following items appear to place people with disabilities at a 12-15% disadvantage in the current scoring system.

1. Criteria #3: Staff (including leadership) and board of the organization reflect the community their proposed project is intended to benefit.
Issue: An intellectual or developmental diagnosis is based, in part, on IQ. As a result, it is difficult for this population to take on certain roles, despite being great workers.
Possible Solution: Give full credit for organizations whose staff and Board who have a disability or have a family member with a disability.
2. Criteria #12: Project reduces cost for people with low income and/communities of color.
Issue: There are two issues here. First, why are people with disabilities being excluded? There is nothing in the original initiative to justify this exclusion. Second, due to the high level of poverty among people with disabilities and the fact that most people receiving state supports for intellectual or developmental opportunities live in group and foster homes this appears to exclude people with disabilities.
Possible Solution: We suggest two revisions. First, include people with disabilities which is the original intent of the legislation. Second, equate disability and low-income in the scoring.
3. Criteria #13: Project provides health benefits to PCEF priority populations.
Issue: This population has significantly lower lifespan and greater health issues than other PCEF priority communities. However, because our population lives almost exclusively in group and foster homes, we can only do this indirectly.
Possible Solution: Give full credit to enhancements for group and foster homes for people with disabilities.
4. Criteria #14: Project improves resiliency by 1) addressing the harm to frontline communities caused by climate change, and/or 2) improving ability to withstand and adapt to existing and future climate impacts.
Issue: Again, our clients generally do not have employment and almost exclusively reside in group and foster homes.
Possible Solution: Give full credit for improvements changes at group and foster homes and places of employment.

PCEF Planning Grants: It appears to Exceed that these items place people with disabilities at a 10-15% disadvantage in the current scoring system.

1. Staff (including leadership) and board of the organization reflect the community their proposed project is intended to benefit.

Issue: In intellectual or developmental diagnosis is based, in part, on IQ. As a result, it is difficult for this population to take on certain roles, despite being great workers.

Possible Solution: Give full credit for organizations whose staff and Board who have a disability or have a family member with a disability.

2. Criteria #6: Applicant is a small or emerging organization.

Issue: We support this in concept but again this results in a bias against people with disabilities. To our knowledge there is no agency serving the Portland area that provides full employment services that meets this requirement. The state requirements to provide services are such that we must have staff, greater than the existing requirement, to meet the contractual requirements of the state of Oregon.

Possible Solution: Wave the size requirement and keep the emerging business requirement for people with disabilities.

3. Criteria #8: Scope of process is clear manageable and likely to succeed.

Issue: When working with people with cognitive disabilities there are a variety of regulations that impact our clients that lead to unusual items in the scope of work. People may have limited hours they can work, unique learning requirements and must have unique support they need to be successful. We are not able in the application to explain all these supports that we provide making the scope of work unusual and less clear than a traditional scope of work.

Possible Solution: Have disability representation in the selection process. As other groups are represented, we should have people who understand the lived experience of our clients.

We also have two general concerns.

1. In speaking with PCEF staff following the first round of funding I expressed concern about the lack of energy expertise in the evaluations. The Exceed proposal brought two of the leading west coast energy industry experts of color to the proposal. One of them led the most successful energy job development program on the west coast. There appeared to be no recognition of this unique expertise. The PCEF evaluation team may benefit from having individuals with greater energy expertise to accurately evaluate the likelihood of success of projects.
2. Compensation is a major issue for the thousands of individuals with disabilities who rely on SSDI for income and healthcare. SSDI limits not only the amount of money an individual can earn but also their total assets. If a person crosses those lines, they are subject to significant fines and the loss of the health care. Most of our clients believe that it could take years to get SSDI reinstated if they leave the program due to excess earnings. Given that the majority of individuals with cognitive disabilities have significant physical issues this is a HUGE ASK for our clients and others. This issue alone is a major barrier for people with disabilities and must be addressed to achieve the inclusive goals of PCEF.

Exceed Enterprises is very supportive of the PCEF program and recognize the positive impact the program is having on individuals and our city of Portland. It is helping to address major historical issues and a system that has been damaging to our BIPOC community. The history for people with disability is the same and different. In many cases disability victims cannot testify making them targets of predators. More commonly we are simply being ignored, treated like children and placed in housing with little community access.

We ask that PCEF not follow this historical pattern of ignoring people with disabilities. Please engage with our community and together let's help PCEF meet its goals for all populations. People with disabilities need to be a part of the PCEF team.