

## Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Grants Committee

January 5, 2022 Meeting Minutes

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

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

**Public comment:** None

### Program updates

- Amanda Squiemphen-Yazzie has tendered her resignation due to outside commitments. Staff will schedule an exit interview and appreciation.
- High Road Advisory Council (HRAC) recruitment is open, seeking 7 to 11 members to advise on workforce study(ies), agreements and goals. Applications due January 27<sup>th</sup>. Seeking Committee members to assist with review and recommendations.
- Council today awarded contract to Earth Advantage for Heat Response.
- Threshold review of applications will be wrapping up January 21<sup>st</sup>.

### Reporting and evaluation subcommittee presentation from Megan Horst

- Subcommittee members are Megan, Ranfis, Faith, Anissa. Staffed by Janet and Cady.
- Presentation provided an overview of work to date, timeline for completion and current draft performance metrics. Full committee asked to consider information and provide more detailed response/feedback at the January 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

#### *Committee discussion*

- Michael - Love all the graphs and numbers. Want to make sure there is a place for stories as well.
- Robin – Great start, great work. On implementation, this is a lot of data and can be a lot of work to collect, maintain and share. We should keep that in mind, this all takes staff resources, IT resources, etc. Also interested in how flexible the data being shared is, are there plans to revisit at a future date? You don't always know how you will use data until you start working with it.
- Maria – Thanks to staff and subcommittee. Started thinking about some areas of interest and where they fit in, e.g. transportation and planning projects and how we measure them. Or maybe those are some of the stories if they don't fit it. Is performance of staff and Committee part of program stewardship?

### Review of the existing application evaluation process

- Presentation provided an overview of the existing evaluation process including eligibility, technical, financial and scoring review.

#### *Committee discussion*

- Robin – question re: financial review. In light of what happened recently, should a red score warrant some additional scrutiny. Should that be revisited?
  - Currently financial review informs grant management if application is awarded funds.
- Megan – Does this process carry across all grants (other than mini) including the heat response program?

- There were different criteria scored for the heat pump proposals. This is for the main grants. But overall, we haven't had a different level of review by size of grant or organization. We take info provided with follow up only for clarifying questions; they attest and sign that the information is true.
- Ranfis – How do we protect people, organizations, workers in a holistic way and steward relationships and dollars? Not just here but all government programs. And what happens after the dollars go out? There will be areas of refinement and need level of humility as we approach this. The framework is on the organization but potential for fraud exists on the back end – the CBO and contracted businesses. How do we protect them? What are best practices. See the challenge before us. This will require more staff, perhaps than we have at this moment. Some failed logic to just focus on the organization.
- Maria – Concern and care about staff health and capacity. Let us know how to help, advocate for resources for staff to take on this amazing charge.
- Megan – Based on what we've learned; some concern that our past practices need to be more robust, particularly with new organizations and large amounts. Also, if meet a minimum threshold then what? And this is pre-award what do we do after? E.g., one lump sum or a process along the way. Extra layers of checking in some cases.

#### **Future application risk assessment and evaluation**

- Staff presented information about potential additional review to implement for this round of applicants.
  - RFP 2 closed November 30, staff threshold review will be complete January 21st. The revised schedule that includes additional review will have awards delayed until May 2022. If it takes longer to agree on additional review framework then the award date will be further delayed.
  - Three potential scenarios and types of risk identified. 1) New or emerging org in which individual staff have experience implementing similar projects. 2) Established org requesting funds but with limited or no experience with similar projects. 3) Established org with relevant experience but funding request is X times greater than annual budget.
  - Draft application risk assessment and evaluation approach would include:
    - Additional review if: grant request exceeds x times average of last 3 years of revenue; org and/or key staff with limited experience; nonprofit less than 3 years old; financial review with significant concern.
    - Request additional information depending on relevant risk, as objective as possible.
    - Staff propose risk mitigation options including down scoping; shift to planning grant; require 3<sup>rd</sup> party oversight for grant; require firm stage gates that include performance review before proceeding; prohibit or reduce advance payments.
  - Staff are available for 1-1 or small group convos between this meeting and the 19<sup>th</sup> if committee members have more questions. Goal is to get to refined process approved on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

#### *Committee discussion*

- Robin – In community lending many of these risk factors applied. Good job identifying the potential risks and ways to avoid/mitigate. Concern about X times past revenue for projects that are capital intensive; could disadvantage those projects.
- Michael – notes that we came into this wanting to be a different kind of funder that could include Black and Brown people and new organizations. Concerned that we are moving away from that.
- Robin – would like more clarity on the decision being made, a lot of subjectivity into the questions and options. How it fits into the process and decision making.

- Faith – Awkward that we are in the middle of reviewing while revising. What percentage of the pool would we require this additional level of review. How does that impact applicants who do not need additional review.
  - Nothing will go to scoring panel until additional review is done so impacts all applicants. Estimate an additional 6 weeks for this process.
- Megan – Offer a reframe from risk and fraud, while this extra step is a lot, and can be off-putting, some may benefit from this extra level of review. Saw that potential in last year’s review. Share concerns about subjectivity. But think reframing can be valuable. And a beneficial step to support organizations.

### **Committee communication to public/stakeholder groups**

- StaffL: the committee expressed a desire to have communication to public/stakeholder groups. Would like to hear thoughts about pros/cons of communication now vs when we get to funding award. If committee does want to draft some communication, they can have a small group draft something and bring to committee or empower a small group or co-chairs to write on behalf of committee if you want to move faster.

### *Committee discussion*

- Maria - recall pressure on co-chairs to respond, but space needed to coordinate a more organized and cohesive message and strategy for communicating what we do. That could be another subcommittee.
- Michael – for the sake of time, can we send out a questionnaire to see what folks want and bring that back. Have a lot of ideas and questions. Was deeply dissatisfied with how it went last time. Was foreseeable and should be prepared.
- Ranfis – this is a longer convo than we have time for tonight. Sometimes we just need to listen and not respond. Understand comms is important. Being reactionary won’t bring the best.
- Megan – Like Michael’s idea. Glad some communications went out to our grantees; clarity of impact to the process. And fan of being accountable to the public. Responding at some point to the Oregonian piece on what we have done to change.
- Michael – This last month has felt like White Supremacy is winning again and the response will once again put priority populations behind. Call out and defense to placate white supremacy and continue to tell BIPOC communities how they need to run themselves. If it’s what we have to do, it’s what we have to do, but it’s deeply angering.
- Robin – To Michael’s point, there is a way to respond that does not come across as defensive. When an event is thrust on us and we’ve never done this before- we want to ensure we’re all on the same page and have a strategy to respond when critiques happen. It will continue to happen. Need to figure a way to respond in a way that is true to our guiding principles. For a subcommittee to look at this and address.
- Sam – If there were a survey I’d ask folks on what that should look like. Not hearing urgent comms need before the 19<sup>th</sup>. Would also need to define charge of subcommittee if that is what comes to be.

**8:00 Meeting close**