

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Grants Committee

March 17th, 6:00 to 8:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members present: Michael Edden Hill, Faith Graham, Maria Sipin, Ranfis Villatoro, Robin Wang, Megan Horst

Committee Members not present: Jeff Moreland Jr., Shanice Clarke

PCEF staff present: Sam Baraso, Cady Lister, Jaimes Valdez, Angela Previdelli, Janet Hammer. Magan Reed BPS communications.

Public comment

- David Snyder expressed support for the program and the way the committee was approaching the work.
- Ranfis – appreciation for David’s comments. The program needs community support and feedback.

Program updates

- Recruitment update – Mid-March admin specialist. Clean energy project manager and community engagement support position in process.
- Grants are active and we are moving forward with the current grant reviews.
- Heat response – 1,200 secured heat pumps and up to 3,000 secured for the coming summer.

Communications

Magan Reed, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability Communications Manager, provided the committee with thoughts and discussion around media coverage and response and general communications.

- Hired as BPS Comms Manager in January. Media coverage over the last week is not accurate nor complete. False narrative and false flags. We need to strike delicate balance, which can be frustrating. Want you to know we are working on a response. Recognize it is frustrating to not see that immediately.
- As a program, lean on the honesty of the great work being done. The measures in place for accountability, transparency. Lean on the truth.
- BPS in general has been understaffed in communications. Some PR work that should have happened in a normal circumstance with capacity did not happen. Will build a more accurate, fair, and just tale of the program through media and outreach with the community.

Discussion

- Megan – Important to share the stories of all we have done, including the engagement. Want to see more proactive strategy moving forward. Responding to current situation, sometimes it is ok to let it play out and let truth stand – but there is a lot of untruthfulness in recent coverage on basic facts. A lot of ways the headlines could have gone. E.g. “Audit said strong initial foundation, some areas for improvement.” We can tell a more truthful story.
- Ranfis – believe in critical feedback and its role in building a good program. Haven’t seen a program get it right overnight. We should expect critical feedback and be responsive. I think the story to be told will

be the story of the grantees. The actual projects, career pathways, and transformation that voters wanted to see.

Audit Next Steps – staff provided an overview of deliverables in response to the audit recommendations (listed below). Next meeting we will outline workplan to get recommendations to Council fall 2022. Will require brick pace for Committee work.

- Define performance metrics by July 2022 and establish performance goals by July 2023.
- Develop recommendations to Council offering clearer strategic direction on climate goals
- Options for Council to clarify and amend program budgeting requirements and admin cost limits by December 200.
- Clarify, define, and establish goals for PCEF's capacity building efforts by December 2022.
- Continue to assess the Committee's governance structure to ensure clear roles and effective oversight responsibilities and potentially suggest changes or clarifications by July 2023.
- Much of this has been underway. Much dovetailed with what we were thinking about.

Discussion

- Megan – re climate goals, how would PCEF define climate goals and relationship to other City goal setting. And on admin cost – want clarity on how things are defined.
 - Sam – re climate goals, 2030 and 2050 goals that were updated in climate emergency declaration. Re staffing – based on current staffing levels and hires budgeted we will hit the admin cap in about 4 years. For the level of work we do, 5% is likely not adequate.
- Faith – Yes, we are building a program and this is a great time to get feedback on how to do better. Agree we should have recommended changes by Fall; hard given round of grants to get out.
- Michael – We know funding is high given different things in the current economy, when sales drop what does that mean to staffing levels.
 - Sam – that is exactly what we are trying to figure out and smooth out that variability.
- Ranfis – Many are beginning to recognize these caps are a detriment. Programs like this require many hands, the type of engagement to reach folks historically not reached. Staff has gone above and beyond to address that, with limited resources compared to larger institutions. Need boots and eyes on the ground to ensure workforce and business equity are realized.
- Robin – Piggyback on what Ranfis said. When doing community engaged work, that will be much more expensive. Suggest 5% cap be increased. Requires more boots on the ground to do this work right and get the money out faster.
 - Sam – to Ranfis and Robin. We absolutely will be coming back with request for increase cap but will be aligned to structural changes to have to move resources.
- Michael - Audit was overall positive. Things to improve on as with any, some things others need to address such as climate policy. Was taken aback by the gap between that and the reporting.
- Robin - Need to be more anticipatory of things like this. Anticipate the critics that will focus on any negative points. We are set up in reactionary mode.

Mini grants program evaluation presentation – Angela Previdelli, PCEF Mini grant and Internal Systems Project Manager, provided an evaluation of the first three rounds of the mini grant program including characterizing the

types of grantees and grant activities in year one. Presentation also included recommendation by staff to reduce annual funding amount from \$400,000 to \$200,000 due to lack of staff capacity for higher number of grants and leveling off of demand for the program from priority groups.

Discussion

- Megan – what makes an applicant not eligible?
 - Angela - Most often that the project lacks a connection to climate work.
- Michael – reduction due to prediction on demand or staff?
 - Angela - Combination of both. Note that we've built the system and are seeing it working. We can tweak it now. The system is in place and can adjust with demand and capacity.
- Megan – didn't see such a large drop in demand. Not understanding the drop. Can we keep it \$400k and see how the outreach goes? Curious if more info on the BIPOC led applicants.
 - Angela - The way we collect the info does not disaggregate for this program. Trying to balance simplicity of application and info. Will get disaggregated info on the back end in grant reporting.
 - Sam – the program is a tremendous amount of work and significant amount of Angela's time. Future conversations will explore what other structures for administering this program could be.
- Robin – Would you say the reduction is more influenced by capacity than demand.
 - Cady – yes, this is definitely a staff capacity issue.
- Ranis – Appreciate all this work. PCEF at critical juncture; how to spend the time that we have. Some hard decisions. The good work on this program recognized. Echo that this is a valuable program and also recognize the capacity. Continue to evaluate consider how to make the application more accessible.
- Megan – Note some of us are resistant to cutting and this convo is showing the reality of the staff capacity limits. Don't want capacity to be the reason we don't do something useful in the community.
- Ranis – Exemplifies need for organizations capacity building grant. Thinks orgs cost/balance on whether to apply for a \$5k to get help with grant writing. Awesome to see folks apply but there is a need we are not filling. Look forward to staff thoughts on capacity building.

Committee member comments

Ranis – Exciting work and great lessons learned; a testament to staff and continuous refinement of the program. Kudos to the Committee as well. Not perfect but when feedback has been provided that has shown up in the audit. Proud of who is here and how we balance staff and hold each other accountable. Rough patches are to be expected. When we hand over the keys to the next cohort of Committee members want to be sure we are creating solid footing. Hope you are in it with me for the long haul. Need to recognize and thank everyone.

Michael – Continuing what Ranis said. This is the first time we got a lot of criticism. Our first was when community gave feedback on our first RFP and we needed to improve. Set aside ego and put together something more equitable, fair, and accessible to priority communities. Very responsive to input. And in these hard times appreciate the Committee for taking time to answer questions and take interviews and all the work staff has been putting in. Doing amazing work; constantly amazed how you do it all at the staffing level.

Meeting close