

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Roundtable

Key Takeaways

Equitable Tree Canopy Meetings #1, #2 and #3

January 18, 2023, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

January 25, 2023, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

February 1, 2023, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

The following document summarizes feedback from participants from PCEF's roundtable discussions held on Equitable Tree Canopy in January and February 2023.

Key Takeaways

- Provide establishment care for yard trees to remove barriers for the elderly and folks with disabilities.
- Prioritize planting and establishment in low canopy areas that have high percentage of low income and BIPOC residents
- Include a 15% minimum workforce goal for funds to go towards priority populations.
- Balance the funding allocated for the maintenance of street trees and yard trees.
- Include assurances and don't overpromise to the community about what support/maintenance for existing trees PCEF can provide.
- Meaningfully include and be explicit about how PCEF plans to engage the disability community.
- Ensure the structure for tree maintenance is not a siloed program that hinders community members.
- Break up the work by Residential (including street and yard trees), Commercial, and workforce.
- Prioritize the public education component.
- Support Native farmers/culturally specific producers.
- Consider community pilot programs.

Existing Conditions

- There aren't enough arborist companies overall/lack of businesses to hire labor.
- General understanding is that Portland's tree canopy is lacking in East Portland and industrial areas.
- The 2018 Citywide planting strategy, 'Growing More Equitable Forests' is a great resource on existing conditions.
- The city is losing canopy overall.

Desired State

- Funding for training culturally specific organizations to do outreach and conduct tree planting to build relationships with BIPOC communities.

- Training in workforce development should also include cultural training for equity.
- Depave sections of parking lots, sidewalks, etc. and planting trees to combat heat islands.
- Improve livability and growth of Portland's tree canopy

Additional Opportunities/Strategies

- Track every time a person rejects a new tree explicitly based on the lack of a maintenance program to highlight for the city.
- Combining sidewalk replacement and tree planting is a good idea for the investment of public funds. It reduces disproportionate impacts and provides green jobs and workforce development opportunities.
- It would be nice to calculate the amount of money from energy being saved in buildings and lack of erosion as a measure for canopy benefits.

Barriers

- Planting 40,000 trees identified in initial draft is an ambitious goal – need to leverage agreements with nurseries in partnership with Urban forestry and the Portland Fruit Tree Project.
- Planting numbers sometimes sound very impressive but the number that matters more is the survival after 3 years. It's becoming harder to establish new trees with our increasingly hot summers.
- An issue in the workforce side of planting and maintaining tree canopy is there aren't enough pathways for entry-level apprenticeships like there are in other trades.
- Planting trees: people worry about tree maintenance responsibility and trees breaking their sidewalks.

Program design elements/suggestions to prioritize for further exploration

The following suggestions for measures of success for program:

- Increase long-term workforce development opportunities through capacity building for local businesses.
- Opportunities to provide support beyond the 3-5 year establishment period to make planting more equitable (alleviate costs of water, sidewalk repair etc.)