

# Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Roundtable

## Key Takeaways

### **Small Commercial Meetings #1 & #2**

February 9, 2023, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

February 23, 2023, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

### Key Takeaways

- Define community.
- Consider what incentives would appeal to a business owner vs a building owner.
- The need is to serve priority populations rather than a specific industry.
- Defining a small commercial business could be determined by how many kilowatt hours a building could receive. (LRT of 50KWh)
- Defining a small commercial business could be determined by a building with a square footage of 20,000 feet or smaller, 20 employees or less and include community service providers.
- For hard-to-reach communities, a concierge approach would be important.
- A lot of information is shared mainly through personal connections and word of mouth.
- Consider cost-effectiveness and how much-deferred maintenance will be needed such as electrical upgrades and roofs.
- Prioritize areas by highest need and a strategy for distribution of funds. This could also include multi-use hubs and consider where programs can be combined to get the most reach.
- Consider indoor air quality and how it impacts the health of people operating the business. It was suggested that if a structure uses energy in a way that is detrimental to health there is an urgency to improve those conditions and decrease carbon output.
- Program must be flexible to address culturally specific equipment and businesses that serve culturally specific communities.
- To rectify disinvestment, energy efficiency and usage may increase.

### Existing Conditions

- Freestanding buildings are more likely to be owned by a national chain and more likely to have a business in them that is a national chain.
- Data currently published by the Energy Information Authority energy (CBECS) does not provide granular data that characterizes small commercial businesses operating in small commercial spaces.
- There is a vast discrepancy between minority-owned and white-owned commercial buildings.
- Small businesses and restaurants that don't have high-profit margins often purchase second-hand equipment.
- There are many small businesses that are operating in spaces that are below code.
- Small business owners have limited capital and resource constraints.

- Businesses want low-cost solutions that don't take time away from their business.
- The majority of small businesses and entrepreneurs do not own their buildings.

## Desired State

- Newer equipment needs to be affordable for people to transition to.
- Education opportunities to understand the benefits of energy efficiency by discussing its utility savings.
- Improve indoor air quality and building quality.
- Provide tenant benefits through investments in insulation, ventilation, heat pumps, lighting and HVAC
- Workforce development opportunities with BIPOC businesses
- Increased workforce training opportunities for trade programs. This can include partnerships with schools and community organizations.
- Transparency and honesty about program expectations will be important to building trust with community members.

## Key opportunities

- For implementing the program out in the community, use a threshold people are familiar with. It was suggested that the Energy Trust threshold or Energy Benchmarking Ordinance threshold might be good options to use because building owners are familiar with it.
- PCEF can create a list of design principles that have natural points about priorities and guiding principles to guide through conflict.
- Leverage other resources. Requirements should also be simple and similar to other energy efficiency program eligibility requirements.
- Conduct an analysis of a segment of a commercial street in a priority area to understand the business and building ownership landscape in Portland.
- Consider the information that assesses the impact of COVID-19 on small commercial businesses.
- Suggestion to not only consider building loads and building types. Look at the building systems and how the building is controlled. There are lots of energy efficiency opportunities for older buildings.
- Consider collaborating with the Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative and business corridors.
- Direct installation program - This program provides the funding to make the upgrades to code and Energy Trust can partner with them through a single delivery channel.
- Provide incentives for 1st generation business owners; use the Dictionary of COBID firms to identify emerging small businesses and disadvantaged and minority enterprises.
- Get cohorts together from different industries to learn from each other about how to reduce energy consumption.