

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Roundtable

Key Takeaways

Unregulated Multi-family Meetings #1, #2 and #3

February 2, 2023, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

February 16, 2023, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

March 8, 2023, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Key Takeaways

- A lot of naturally occurring affordable housing comes from disinvestment. Remediation of disinvestment in deficient buildings needs to be addressed.
- A custom formula may work best for larger properties. Mom-and-pop duplexes need something more prescriptive and easier for people to join the program.
- Support for prioritizing funding for projects in East Portland/82nd Ave
- The ideal scenario is that affordable housing developers buy and retain affordable units.
- Provide tenants with education for using new energy efficiency technology.
- Support for a community benefits agreement that includes a right of first refusal if owners desire to sell but may not be legally feasible. Make sure investments in buildings survive a sale to ensure long-term impacts.
- Affordability agreements may not be an effective tool to maintain affordability alone.
- PCEF funding also needs to go towards health and safety measures/deferred maintenance that would not be covered by everyone else.
- Suggestion that the segment of unregulated that PCEF can focus on include multifamily buildings with 20 units or less.
- Prioritize money going to priority populations and low-income residents.
- Suggestion to braid in other program funds with this PCEF money like the Oregon rental low-income bill tariff.
- Use short-term rental assistance program data instead of utilities to better count impacted people/buildings because subsidized housing is tied to people rather than the property. Parallel investments in infrastructure and impacted communities is what can set this program apart from previous projects that contribute to gentrification.
- Concern 25% and 30% match requirement is too much.

Existing Conditions

- Unregulated housing owners are usually resource constrained and don't have time or money to work with an energy efficiency contractor to conduct an audit or research these programs.
- This segment of landlords includes 'mom-and-pop' properties, and they have the fewest resources.
- There is an assumption that older buildings likely have poor envelope conditions.

Desired State

- Links between training programs and jobs. Training for the right things at the right time
- Energy-focused multi-family building operator certification to target large market-rate buildings.
- Remove fossil fuels from buildings.
- Measures that increase tenant benefits like high-efficiency ventilation, heat pumps, space conditioning.

Barriers

- Barriers to collaboration with city 'silos'.
- Landlords may not want to sign agreements with government agencies.
- Non-profit capacity barriers.
- Ability to communicate with energy efficiency subject matter experts. Building owners need a translator to bridge the divide, almost like a healthcare system navigator.
- Owner reluctance, lack of interest and time. Even if upgrades are paid for it takes time to do. People aren't incentivized if the benefit doesn't flow to them directly.
- Filing permits is time-consuming and complicated if owners are unfamiliar with the process.
- Multnomah County has trouble getting people to provide their income to their landlords for eligibility.
- Identifying owners to engage. Unregulated housing is not organized like regulated affordable housing.
- The right of first refusal for people who do not have the means to purchase is meaningless and may not be legally feasible.

Key opportunities

- Support for central administrators to hire construction contractors.
- Provide a concierge approach for building owners and offer a no-cost free audit.
- Income documentation is a major hurdle; PCEF should partner with community organizations and trusted partners to get this information and can identify properties that house people who are highly rent-burdened, energy burdened, and living in poor conditions.
- PCEF could create informal weatherization apprenticeships so as not to ignore smaller buildings.
- Auto-enroll in other programs if building owners are eligible for one program.
- Involve community organizations to be implementers of the programs, whether that means accessing current conditions, or connecting people to services.
- It may be helpful to have two or three covenant tiers and tiered grant incentives to keep it simple for the owner and administrator.
- Community ownership of assets
- An evaluation or benchmark period after one year once administrators are selected.
- If administrators have to do program building after selection give them reasonable time to meet performance objectives.
- Consider the end of the program building phase before the implementation phase and give administrators a year to do outreach and find the right building owners.
- The program should include solar. Ideally, it would be great to maximize EE upgrades and then install solar.