

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Grants Committee
July 15th, 2020 - MEETING MINUTES

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

Excused absence: Faith Graham, Andrea Hamberg

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

MEETING DECISIONS/ACTION ITEMS

- Committee accepted July 8th Meeting Minutes.
- Committee accepted draft letter, with proposed changes, regarding racist incident at Montgomery building construction site.

MEETING SUMMARY NOTES

Opening inspiration: Sam shared quote from Brene Brown regarding uncertainty and vulnerability.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Discussion of improvements to application and scoring criteria to address public input: Staff has been working on suggested edits based on the public comment.

Organizational Capacity

- Robin: how will small grants application be modified?
 - Cady - the focus with stakeholder outreach was on large grants, though there are many similarities with small. Once we refine large we will scale down, committee will have opportunity to review.
- Robin - Question O.8 regarding management and accounting of grant funds. Would like to see how they will scale up if this grant is much bigger than what they have navigated before. Speaking from experience, have dealt with situations where an organization did not anticipate the challenges of scaling up and it caused problems. Would like a better sense of how they will scale if it is a big jump.
- Jeff - From a contractor perspective, ramp up is more about having the people to do the work. More about the admin to manage the people.
- Robin – Agrees that the challenge in scaling up is often with admin capacity. Not advocating for a cap but want to think through.
- Jeff – suggests that the proposal will make it apparent if they have the capacity, in the org capacity and team experience sections.
 - Cady – in this section and/or description of team (applicant and others) we can call that out specifically in guidance. Even if it's not scored can be useful to staff to inform how we manage the grant if funds are awarded.
- Sam – Questions that came up about DEI in this section and how the first draft actually made it more difficult for BIPOC organizations to respond. Shifted to put more priority on organizational composition, who they serve, experience serving. The way the application is structured, it is going to make more sense for BIPOC-led organizations to be in the driver seat (applicant). Therefore, removed some of the

DEI questions that were there before. We also recognize that this may need to be revisited next year when more dollars being moved.

Project Scope Section – Summary of discussion:

Staff provided recommended changes to application questions and scoring criteria in this section. Summary of discussion:

- Ranfis – question on 6, does that mean even having a community benefits agreement in place wouldn't help score. Balancing BIPOC and small organization needs but large organizations should be demonstrating community support. Wants to demonstrate shared accountability and power, regardless of the amount you apply for.
 - Sam – notes that this is for the \$8 million. We are leaning on the organization reflecting the community they serve, does that create the trust for year one. Agree revisit in future years. Does that change it to frame it for just this year?
 - Ranfis – want to be as forward thinking as possible. Ensure that clean energy jobs will reach the intended beneficiary population.
- Shanice – Want to hear from other Committee members. If this is for white serving organizations, pose the question, we're talking about BIPOC organizations being prioritized in this version. Including all the DEI questions and points was creating a way to defend awards to large organizations not led by people of color. How are we engaging? I don't want to say they won't be considered but if you are the primary application can we just say those aren't the kinds of folks we're looking for as primary applicant and want to see in a supporting role.
- Robin – The community engagement is a strong part of our guiding principles. If these questions are removed, are there other ways to assess the community engagement. Yes, we can use some of the other items as proxies. I get that letters of support don't really mean anything; a "loose currency" that goes around in the nonprofit world. If someone is willing to have a CBA, maybe that is a deliverable. Don't want to lose sight of the community engagement support.
- Jeffrey – re the community support thing, feedback we are getting is that this gets used as a way to hide what you are really doing. Like hiring an organization diversity manager to get the project and use them and keep the status quo. We don't want to give them that as a way to get the grant. What is more empowering – what does your staff and management team look like, your bench, who you are mentoring. More powerful than a diversity manager to get letters saying there is community support.
- Michael – regarding the comments about community engagement in our guiding principles; these are about how we engage with community, not necessarily how community engages. We are trying to prove and walk; not have a small organization prove that their engagement is up to our standards. Also, when I got the first draft of this it was overwhelming. Didn't understand some of the language and concepts. As we go through this, accessibility isn't accessibility in post-grad level, expert in nonprofits for 20 years level. I want something I could apply for.
- Ranfis – Agree with Michael on the importance of simplifying language. Regarding engagement, on some of the comments, noticed comment about how MRG phrased some of the questions. A format some groups are familiar with and wonder about application here. Not to harp too much on demonstration of community support; more about community partnership. Agree with Jeffrey about namedrops and being hired to make a project work. Often community groups and businesses get name dropped.
- Ranfis – desire to not make too onerous for frontline but also not make it easy for fraud.

- Michael – POC often don't get experience because not given the opportunity. So, when ask for resume asking have you done this before, I worry that means you won't get the opportunity.
- Megan – Regarding the comments on language, sometimes when you say it out loud it sounds simpler. As Shanice said, often we need the context and why we need the question. And to reassure applicants they will not get cut out. Might be easier once we have final content of full draft and then write it in easier language. And frame that we intend to support your success and not try to be a barrier. Clear that we want organizations to be able to grow; they might not yet have the experience.
- Megan – Regarding the points, I know there are things we want to weight but can we simplify?
- Robin – Second what Megan said regarding simplifying language. Reflecting on what Michael said, I understand there are some capacity resources available to help folks that might not have all the experience; can we be sure that folks know that resources are available to help them.
 - Sam – yes, we have application support and workshops, but it will be awhile before we are fully resourced to deliver portfolio of resources to match the need. Next week, we'll have an exercise to see things like if you are fully BIPOC focused how does that impact the points.
- Michael – a parable/story. Just hired the second Black electrician in the history of Multnomah. Application needed experience driving service van; but utilities don't hire brown people – that requirement meant Multnomah never got applications from Black, Brown, or women because they just don't get hired in the industry. Consider how much we are expecting in experience and the impact.
- Shanice – resonate with Megan's comments. Resonate with Michael's comment and how we perpetuate norms. Maybe there is another way we can talk about experience and expectations.
- Michael – White organizations are allowed to fail, and it's not held against them; our communities are not. I hope that as we read these that we really take the time to look at aspiration and potential beyond just past success and experiences that may not exist.
- Jeffrey – Is there a way for us, if team does not have representation of community, to incentivize them mentoring and bringing up the next generation - to ensure the status quo does not continue. Would help to alleviate some of those concerns if we could find a way to ensure folks aren't being excluded that don't have the experience. How to ensure that they are getting experience.
- Ranfis – I think it would be good to take a step back and look at what a full application, what we evaluate and score, what is it holistically incentivizing. With this piece as well, if the industry is not diverse how are we incentivizing, sending that signal that is important. Line by line there is always concern for a specific stakeholder, but as a whole how do we bridge? I think it would be helpful to not just respond to fears of specific stakeholders but to see holistically where we are going.
 - Sam – acknowledge the signals you are sending are coming through; folks that are paying attention, these conversations are important.
- Maria – We have to weigh intent vs outcomes. We are having to figure out if their intentions will get the outcomes we desire. Engagement, accountability, transparency – how much do we demand in the application vs build into the program after they get the funds. What recourse is available to ensure steps are being followed. What can we do over the course of the project or program to support grantees and hold them accountable to progress in the intended way.

Environmental Benefits Section - Summary of discussion:

- Michael – what if they don't recognize additional benefits but we know they are there?
 - Cady – balance between providing extensive examples and keeping it simple, this is a good question, we want to make sure that folks can see all benefits of what they are proposing

- Meghan – appreciate the effort in simplification, GHG analysis is complex and not agreed upon, how will we handle that on the backend? Currently we are not requiring them to comment directly on GHG, criteria has 8 points coming from it, is there a worksheet?
 - Cady – Appendix A in project scope asks for these inputs
 - Sam – Clean energy projects are cleaner cut, follow up work on green infrastructure and sustainable agriculture sections, technical questions around what model
- Meghan – balance the need to do climate work when the science of measurement is debatable
 - Cady - most important to be consistent across projects
- Ranfis – committee of experts could help us flesh this out more, this section wants more, great system is making sure we have a sub-committee informing on how better to inform this section, comparing landscaping project to ee, will there be funding buckets, will have questions about how my project will measure up in an apples to orange comparison.
 - Cady – In this initial year, unless committee has desire to make allocations, the committee will use portfolio balancing to ensure that projects in different funding categories receive awards.
- Ranfis – orgs reviewing how their projects will score, that is the context for some of the responses, we need to be clear/transparent, find some better solutions moving forward
 - Cady – Committee determined allocation amount for planning grants (\$1.5 M). Committee could consider saying each year we will meet at least 50% of the allocation target noted in the code for each funding area. This allows some flexibility and also provides some assurance to applicants that their area will be funded every year.
- Sam – In meeting with stakeholders, there was generally support for changes to this section but there was a lot of discussion around the GHG impact criteria since it is leveled by budget (GHG/\$ invested) and felt like a cost effectiveness test.
- Ranfis – agree with harm of cost-effectiveness but would be more concerned if it was worth more than only 8 points. I’m comfortable keeping it on here, it should be explicit, need to help folks calculate this, PCEF needs to provide the solution, we have to report to voters the true GHG savings for the initiative
- Shanice – resonate with the notion of letting the orgs weigh in on how this might be defined. GHG emissions is a critical component, there are other ways to contextualize a positive impact for enviro, like regenerative ag, conditions of workers, explicit and indirect connection to our enviro, etc.

Social Benefits Section – Summary of discussion

- Ranfis – curious about diversity of feedback? Affordable housing advocates?
 - Sam – affordable housing provider and a group that does tenant advocacy and anti-displacement work in the city
- Shanice – thinking in the process has shifted after hearing from community, who we might be framing this work for, BIPOC, women led orgs we are trying to reach, how I might talk about a commitment to anti-displacement effort is different, feels like somebody is responsible for displacement and it’s not BIPOC people, applicants should not have to defend that, I resonate with it being taken off, if it doesn’t make sense for us, who is having access to go through this process?
- Robin – not a displacement expert, there are forces that may cause displacement other than increased rent, can happen for businesses, needs to be fully thought out and not just limited to rent, 5 years after project complete, displacement happens, no enforcement mechanism

- Meghan – I agree with Robin, if it doesn't come until later it's not front of mind and ends up being a box to check, maybe we could incorporate in app in a way that is not a check box, still is anti-displacement work that can be done by black led orgs and there is some skill sharing that could happen
 - Sam – this is an area that we talked quite a bit about and re-emphasize, smaller pool, we will learn, we can still cause harm but will need to get our arms around this.

Social Benefit Section – Summary of discussion

- Robin – if the project doesn't have cost reduction element like workforce dev, less likely to be funded?
 - Sam – They are skipped, points apply to clean energy, capital improvement projects, second and middle tiers provide partial points for cost savings to the housing provider creating more resiliency, deeper savings is direct to residents.
- Michael – trying to remember that this is our chance to take chances on orgs, can't fall into paranoia of failure, providing resources to try and succeed, we want to build trust with community orgs, we have to have trust that communities can handle this and will fulfill grants, we have to allow for failure, trap of trying to deliver perfection, can't shut people out in pursuit of perfection, I remember this and this is what I am really excited about this, taking a chance on people who have not had access to these resources before.
- Maria – think back to our exercises when developing values, trying to create opportunities, first round will not be perfect, what's more important is the engagement we are doing or the engagement they are doing. Would like to think about allowing people who attend the meetings to contribute ideas outside public comment time. Can we hear from them, intermittently?

Response to racist incident at Montgomery building construction site

Ranfis shared draft letter and opened discussion.

- Jeffery – beautiful, said everything that needed to be said with sincerity and urgency which is needed
- Maria – moved by the letter, remember when you brought it up, this is one piece of action we can take, reading a lot about this here and in LA, these incidents are hate crimes and threats of violence, can we name it what it is and not soften what happened, a form of violence and a way to create terror among black people, any language that brings up that urgency and that hurt needs to be communicated to the mayor and council.
- Robin – great letter, would like to sign our names and cc Anderson Construction and TCM to send a signal, money talks, this is being watched.
- Michael – I brought this up at electrical minority workers meeting, had six noose incidents since the beginning of the year just in the electrical trades, didn't even know which one this is, I am willing to put my name on this.
- Shanice – I resonate with what's been shared, this is not a unique incident, grappling with the notion that this happened in our society, sitting with the realness is definitely an impact
- Ranfis – Oregon Tradeswomen had specific asks; do we want to make specific asks of council? Or do we want to refer to any of theirs?
 - Michael – can we get OTW permission to attach their letter with this letter?
 - Ranfis – will follow up tomorrow
- Ranfis – Propose that I will facilitate the question of checking in with Oregon Tradeswomen, attaching their letter to ours and acknowledging their leadership, adding names/signatures of committee member with Faith/Andrea consent, adding explicit language about the hate and violent intent of the incident.

- All Committee members present approved the proposal.

Application Support Grants

Jaimes gave an update on the launch of the application support grants, approved by committee and council, opened on Friday, available up to 5k to help with capacity building and grant writing, prioritizing service to BIPOC orgs, seeing grant applications coming in, engaging in outreach to networks and through staff. Webinar will be announced next week on QA for Application Support Grants

Meeting adjourned 9:10 p.m.