

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Grants Committee

March 31st, 2020, 7:00 – 9:00pm

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members present: Jeff Moreland Jr., Michael Edden Hill, Ranfis Villatoro, Robin Wang, Shanice Brittany Clarke, Megan Horst, Andrea Hamberg, Faith Graham, Maria Sipin

Committee Members not present: None

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

MEETING SUMMARY NOTES

Opening Inspiration: Jaimes Valdez shared a poem by Pablo Neruda, *“Keeping Quiet.”*

Public meeting called to order.

- Sign up for public comment available by sending message to staff in the chat box. Phonenumber will be open to public comment as well. Chat box can also be used to report technical issues.
- Sam provided some reflections on doing this work during the COVID pandemic. Notes that PCEF is also an economic development tool, focused on disadvantaged and marginalized communities. Acknowledge impacts of COVID to these populations. PCEF will be relevant to recovery. Request that the committee refrain from COVID related discussions this evening as staff will be better able to support that conversation at a later date. We are also asking the committee to consider more frequent, though shorter meetings to stay on track to respond to urgency and accommodating the shift in platform during this time. There will be changes to public comment period timeframe and method in order to continue responsiveness to community; these changes may require more time than planned and needs to be balanced with the reality that moving quickly to get grant funds to frontline serving non-profits is critical.

Approval of meeting minutes: Minutes from 3.10.20 approved with no edits.

Public comment: No public comment provided.

Committee membership and nomination process update

Reminder of Andrea’s offer to resign from Committee in order to open a space for an individual bringing perspective from the Indigenous community. Staff is aiming to bring a recruitment plan to the committee at the April 9th meeting. Items may include: the formation of a nomination subcommittee for which Laura John, the City’s Tribal Liaison, has volunteered, and review of the solicitation material.

Grant review process presentation

Subcommittee Presentation. The subcommittee working on Application Process and Review Criteria includes Ranfis Villatoro, Faith Graham, Megan Horst and Robin Wang. Subcommittee members presented their work to date including specific recommendations and asked for feedback from committee members. Both the presentation and the associated handout are available online

<https://beta.portland.gov/bps/cleanenergy/grant-committee/events/2020/3/31/pcef-grant-committee-meeting-march-31-2020>.

After the presentation the committee members were asked to offer a temperature check to indicate if they felt the subcommittee was heading in the right direction. Poll results and related committee member comments are summarized below.

Slide 13 comments:

- Andrea: Did the subcommittee consider just funding one category in year one? Wondering whether there is some benefit to choosing one bucket. Would like to consider mini-grants in year one that might help to do some of the planning work that doesn't rise to the level of a planning grant. Funds to support organizations developing their ideas for a subsequent application.

Slide 14: Ease of application process

- Strongly on track = 5, somewhat on track = 4
- No comments

Slide 15: Types of eligible funding requests

- Strongly on track = 4, somewhat on track = 4, some reservations = 1
- Comments:
 - Andrea: consider different process in future under which successful projects/programs could reapply for funding.
 - Ranfis: concerned about year one in the context of COVID-19. Will groups be focused on capital grants, or will they need operating grants. This is a question for other committee members and community.
 - Megan: did think about whether more consideration for planning grants. Didn't really talk about collaboration and/or network building grants. Particularly around social movement building and/or political advocacy. Could be worth further discussion.
 - Michael: have we received feedback from coalition members and/or other nonprofits serving front line communities?
 - Staff has had limited communication with potential applicants since social distancing has been in place but will be ramping up outreach efforts in the coming weeks, recognizing that many frontline community serving non-profits are very busy.

Slide 16: Size of grants

- Strongly on track = 8, somewhat on track = 1
- Comments:
 - Andrea: clarifying question, what do we mean by mini-grants, small grants, large grants. Talking about size of grants but not length of time. Those need to be hand in hand. For example, does a mini-grant need to be spent in six months, but a \$2MM grant needs to be spent in 2 years?
 - Michael: how are we defining small, medium, and large. Would like to see rough numbers.
 - Cady: even within subcommittee, there were different ideas about the definitions of small, medium, and large.
 - Affirm there was an appetite for different sizes of grants and those different sizes would have different reporting criteria.

Slide 17: Scoring

- Strongly on track = 2, on track = 6, some moderate revision = 1
- Comments:
 - Michael: indicated that he believes there are things that should have minimum scores, like DEI, but not necessarily in technical review as groups may have great ideas, but doesn't have in-house technical know-how, but can outsource that part of the project.
 - Andrea: never been in a position where we might not run out of money before we run out of projects. We could be in a situation that we have projects that don't make sense to fund because DEI is lacking or technical is lacking. Support minimum score.
 - Faith supported Andrea's comment.

Slide 18: Review process

- Strongly on track = 3, somewhat on track = 5, some moderate revision = 1
- Comments:
 - Michael: mini-grant making process: likes that staff has the discretion over this. Committee could review them in bulk every six months. My concerns are going to appear in slides 21 and 22. The workload, who is doing what work. And who's got 48 hours to put in over a two-week period, who's got 20, who's got 10, what that means for the makeup of the scoring panel.
 - Shanice: resonating with where Michael is at. Questions coming up around thinking about allocating different amounts for different types of grants. How much time the scoring takes. Resonating with the idea of understanding the letter of intent. Recognizing that LOI process may take longer but might get better applications. Folks may only apply for one in the first year. That should be something that we revisit. In addition to what we are trying to accomplish this year. If we go for small grants, are we going to use it all.

Slide 19: Decision and Portfolio balance

- Pretty close = 8, some moderate revision = 1
- Comments:
 - Megan: still thinking about the applicant response idea in principle. Worry about it in practice. Concern if we have uneven responses or different applicants with different abilities to respond quickly.

Slide 20: Eligibility Screening

- Strongly on track = 4, somewhat on track = 4
- Comments
 - Michael: on wage requirements, would like to see state licensed employees get prevailing wage.

Estimated workload, committee member interest/ability in being on scoring panels. Discussion summary

- Maria: overall curious about other ways we can reduce the mystery around how many applications we might receive. Then we can have a better estimation of workload. If build in things beforehand to create clarity. Find a way to entertain the most applications in the end that are the most competitive. Think there are adjustments at the front end to make applicants feel supported. Also ways to take temperature checks early on. Maybe spend more time on an LOI.

- Jeffrey: what is the timeline of these applications and reviews. Obviously depends on how much we can stretch this time. How much time would we give Committee members to review applications.
 - Staff answer: conceptually would be three to four weeks.
- Shanice: in a similar place to Maria. Visioning my time and commitment for this work. Would be willing to take vacation to make this happen. Having clarity on timelines would be helpful. Application review as it stands seems to make sense.
 - Staff note that another way to have more clarity about time commitment is to use a threshold review to reduce the number of applications that go to a scoring panel, regardless of the number of applications received.
- Committee members were asked to send a chat to staff to give a general indication of the amount of time they could commit, if any, to being on a scoring panel. Staff reminded committee members that serving on a scoring panel is not required and that they have all already given a lot of time and energy to this process and program.

Committee members were asked to raise their virtual hands if they would be able to accommodate additional meetings (more than two per month) during this time (i.e., more frequent but shorter). All committee members indicated a willingness to try to make this work with the caveat that work situations could change for some.

9:00 pm Meeting adjourned