

Energy Trust Board of Directors' Workshop

May 17, 2022

Energy Trust of Oregon Board of Directors' Workshop Webinar Materials Packet May 17, 2022

Register in advance for this webinar:
[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/
WN_lbg7TFO2RgaxqYDU1R7LTA](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_lbg7TFO2RgaxqYDU1R7LTA)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

If you have questions about this meeting contact cheryle.easton@energytrust.org.

198th Board Meeting
Board Workshop
May 17, 2022



Agenda		Packet Tab	Purpose
1:00 p.m.	Welcome and Open the Workshop (Henry Lorenzen, 5 minutes)		
1:05 p.m.	Strategic Plan Progress Update (Hannah Cruz, Lizzie Rubado, 45 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff presenting on progress toward the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan	Tab 1	Info
1:50 p.m.	2021 Annual Results (Michael Colgrove, 45 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michael Colgrove presenting the 2021 annual results	Tab 2	Info
2:35 p.m.	Discussion of Strategic Direction of 2023 Business Plan and 2023-2024 Action Plans and Budgets (Michael Colgrove and Business Planning Subgroup, 60 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solicit Board input on strategic guidance for staff as they develop the 2023 business plan and 2023-2024 action plans and budgets	Tab 3	Info
3:35 p.m.	Outreach and Marketing Overview (Sue Fletcher, Susan Jowaiszas and Sloan Schang, 30 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation and discussion of Outreach and Marketing overview	Tab 4	Info
4:05 p.m.	Adjourn Workshop (Henry Lorenzen)		

**The regular meeting of the Energy Trust Board of Directors will be a
Wednesday, May 18, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. virtually on Zoom.**

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- Strategic Plan Year 2 Progress Presentation Summary
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- Board Briefing Paper for Strategic Guidance Discussion
- Summary of Market Intelligence
- Summary of Customer Insights
- Local Government Research Report
- Small Business Study on Black Businesses
- Latinx Business Owner Focus Group Summary

Tab 4 Outreach and Marketing Overview

- Board Briefing Paper for Outreach and Marketing Overview

Tab 1

Presentation Summary

2020-2024 Strategic Plan Progress Update and Board Discussion—Year 2

May 17, 2022

Presentation Summary

Staff will present an update on the progress made in Year 2 of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. Staff provided quarterly Year 2 progress updates in 2021 to the board Strategic Planning Committee. In 2022 and beyond, with the revisions to board committee structures, guidance will be sought from the board Finance and Audit Committee.

The 45-minute agenda topic will include a presentation by Hannah Cruz and Lizzie Rubado on Year 2 status and time for questions and discussion by the board. Opportunities for further discussion on the strategic considerations for the organization will be available later in the meeting, as well.

Through this presentation, staff seek to:

- Inform the board that the organization is on track. No changes are needed to the plan and the organization is making appropriate progress to the plan's focus areas.
- Inform the board that the plan's underlying strategies remain valid. The board developed and approved a plan expecting a dynamic future with many unknowns. The framework of the plan incorporates elements to be adaptable to changes, like the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple natural disasters that impacted the state in 2020 and 2021.
- Provide time and opportunity for the board to share its perspective on the organization's progress and create shared understanding of strategic issues the board would benefit from exploring, particularly related to Energy Trust's role, direction and unique role of value in the current/future landscape.

The presentation will focus on areas where Energy Trust's progress for Year 2 was characterized as "*on-track—managing*" in the Strategic Plan progress appendix to the 2021 Annual Report (web link below). Staff will also present three issues that are having a growing impact on the organization's planning and may be strategic considerations for the board as it looks to the future.

Resources

To prepare for the discussion, the following resources may be valuable:

- 2021 Annual Report to OPUC and Board of Directors—includes Appendix 4 "Progress to 2020-2024 Strategic Plan" (p. 58), link at <https://energytrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2021-Annual-Report.pdf>
- 2020-2024 Strategic Plan—full document, link at https://www.energytrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2020-2024_StrategicPlanGuide_Final.pdf
- 2020-2024 Strategic Plan at a glance (follows this page)

PINK PAPER

2020-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

FOCUS AREA 1

Engage customers with relevant energy efficiency and renewable energy programs, information and services, including information and services specifically for underserved customers.

STRATEGIES

- Continue to provide services and incentives to spur customer investment in their next energy project.
- Deliver cost-effective programs designed specifically to engage underserved customers.
- Serve customers through distributors, suppliers, retailers and other mid- and up-stream market actors.
- Evaluate new energy technologies in development and incorporate into program offers when they are cost-effective and ready for the market.

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- We achieve our annual savings and generation goals, and continue to use multi-year planning processes to identify ambitious longer-term energy targets that incorporate emerging sources of savings.
- We meet or exceed the goals we establish to increase the diversity of program participants.

FOCUS AREA 2

Strengthen the value we deliver to customers by linking energy efficiency and renewable energy to the approaches utilities are using to meet changing customer energy needs.

STRATEGIES

- Improve our ability to quantify and value the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy to electric and natural gas utility systems.
- Educate, encourage and enable customers to install and realize benefits from clean energy projects that also help utilities efficiently operate their systems.

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- We develop a framework to value, deliver, report and evaluate energy efficiency and renewable energy resource opportunities in targeted locations in collaboration with utilities.
- We implement and evaluate initiatives designed to drive customer adoption of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in targeted areas.

FOCUS AREA 3

Provide objective information and analyses to support development and implementation of energy policies.

STRATEGIES

- Work with the Oregon Public Utility Commission to provide technical support and advice on energy policies and dockets.
- Support energy-related policy initiatives, objectives and complementary programs led by local, state, regional and federal governments.

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- We establish a system for monitoring regulatory and policy initiatives. We contribute data analyses and technical expertise during policy development and participate in policy implementation when there is potential customer benefit related to energy efficiency and renewable energy.



2020-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

FOCUS AREA 4

Maximize the effectiveness and reach of public purpose charge funding by leveraging additional funding to advance clean energy investments that deliver multiple benefits.

STRATEGIES

- Leverage outside funding to help customers complete projects with both energy and non-energy benefits.
- Coordinate with communities to help integrate energy efficiency and renewable energy into climate change and resiliency plans or to accomplish other community energy goals.
- Collaborate with utilities on carbon reduction strategies.

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- We acquire more energy savings and renewable generation than would otherwise be achieved with only public purpose charge funding.
- We coordinate with more organizations and communities where their additional resources help accomplish mutually supportive objectives.
- We establish a concept agreement with the Oregon Public Utility Commission and at least one natural gas utility to assess a joint carbon reduction effort.

FOCUS AREA 5

Enhance our ability to quickly and effectively respond to changes, needs and new opportunities.

STRATEGIES

- Intentionally cultivate diversity in our board of directors, advisory councils, executive leadership, staff, delivery contractors, trade ally contractors, program allies, partners and vendors.
- Foster and retain talented staff skilled in innovation techniques and adapting to change.

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- We achieve diversity, equity and inclusion goals for employee hiring and recruitment, and for the board of directors.
- Annual surveys indicate that staff are significantly aware of how annual goal setting, business planning and prioritization enables flexible resourcing of existing and new initiatives.



Tab 2

2021 Energy Trust of Oregon Annual Results

Energy savings and generation results

⚡ Electric efficiency



🔥 Natural gas efficiency



🌿 Renewable energy



Energy efficiency results by utility

⚡ Portland General Electric



⚡ Pacific Power



🔥 NW Natural



🔥 Cascade Natural Gas



🔥 Avista



aMW: average megawatts; MMTh: million annual therms

💰 Financial highlights

Revenues totaled:

\$190.4 million
3% over budget

Expenditures totaled:

\$180.2 million
13% below budget

Delivered

\$101.8 million
in incentives

💰 Levelized costs

Levelized cost is Energy Trust's total cost to save or generate each unit of energy over the life of an upgrade, which can range from one to more than 20 years. Efficiency is one of the lowest-cost energy we can buy at just a fraction of the cost utilities would otherwise pay to buy energy from other sources.

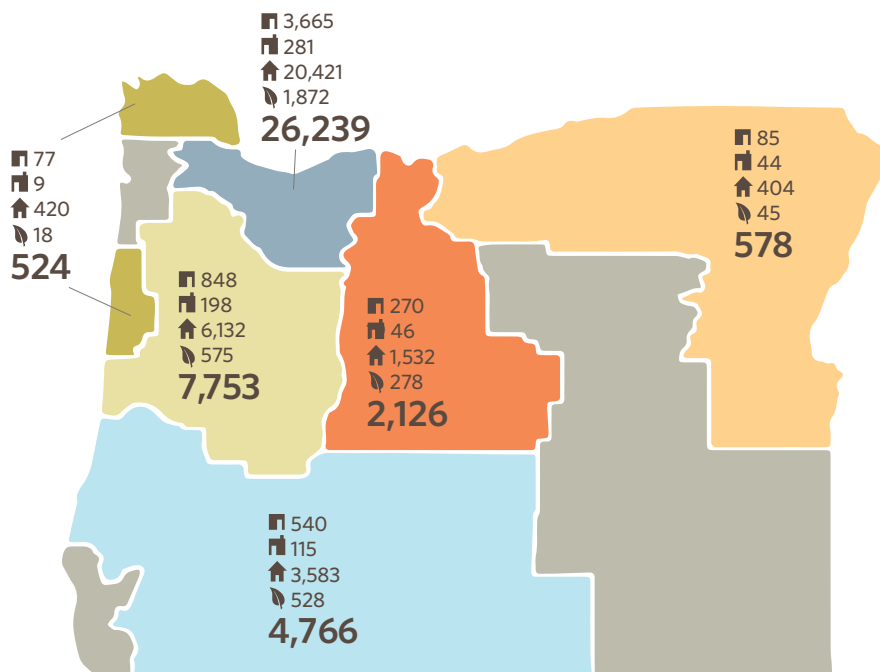
3.4 cents/kWh

37.5 cents/therm

Responding to emerging needs

The June 2021 heat wave brought temperatures to historic-and deadly-highs, driving up demand for cooling equipment. To help customers choose energy-efficient equipment, Energy Trust promoted incentives for air conditioners and heat pumps that cool spaces, explored potential offers for cooling equipment, and established research needs to better understand the benefits of portable cooling technologies. Energy Trust provided no-cost and low-cost cooling tips throughout the summer on its website, blog and through news outlets, including in Spanish.

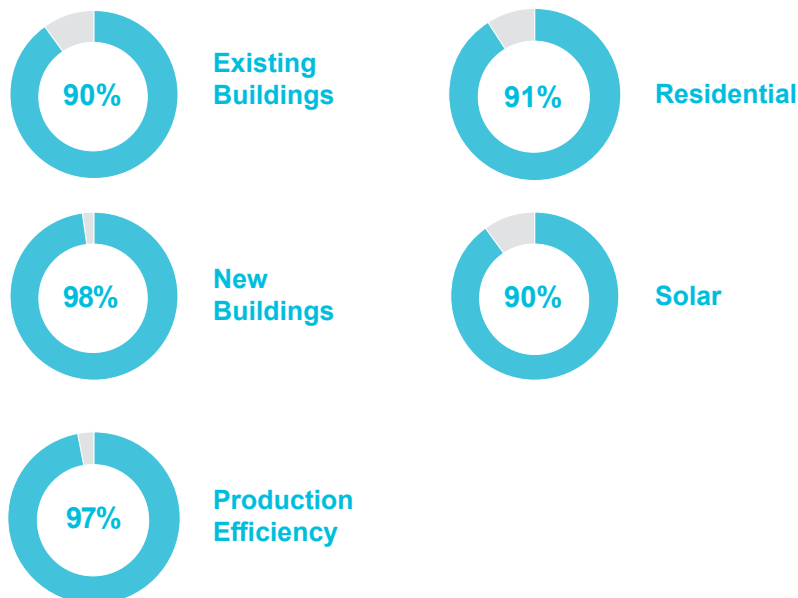
Sites served by region



■ Commercial ■ Industrial and Agriculture ▲ Residential ▼ Renewables

Customer satisfaction

Percentage of customers satisfied overall



To see more of our achievements, visit www.energytrust.org/reports

Serving customers of: Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural, Cascade Natural Gas and Avista. 4/22

Sites served

41,986

SITES SERVED TOTAL

5,485

BUSINESSES

693

INDUSTRIAL BUSINESSES, FARMS AND RANCHES

32,492

HOMES

3,316

RENEWABLE SITES

Key accomplishments



LAUNCHED WORKING TOGETHER GRANTS FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS



TRANSITIONED MANUFACTURED HOME REPLACEMENT FROM PILOT TO STANDARD OFFER



20,000 SOLAR SYSTEMS INSTALLED ON OREGON HOMES AND BUSINESSES SINCE 2002



HIRED TWO OUTREACH STAFF FOCUSED ON SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR



DEVELOPED ONLINE HOME ENERGY ASSESSMENT TOOL



MET 17 OF 22 DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION PLAN TARGETS

Tab 3

Board Briefing Paper

Strategic Guidance Discussion – Summary of Stakeholder Input

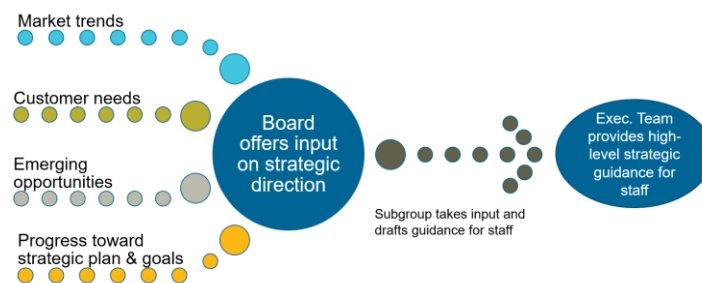
May 17, 2022

Summary

This year, our New Budgeting and Planning Process team is piloting changes designed to improve the experience of staff and stakeholders in our annual planning and budgeting process. These changes address feedback received from key stakeholders involved in the process. Stakeholders expressed a desire to be engaged earlier in the process. Board members in particular expressed a desire to stay at the strategic level, to better understand the context and challenges behind major tradeoff decisions and to have opportunities to provide high-level strategic guidance for staff.

Action-Planning and Budgeting Process Overview	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Step 1 - Assess the market, identify opportunities and set high-level strategic priorities												
Step 2 - Action Planning (operational)												
Step 3 - Budgeting (financial)												
Step 4 - Finalize action plans and budgets												

Staff have taken the first step of gathering input from stakeholders on market trends, customer needs and emerging opportunities to inform development of the 2023/2024 Budget. This graphic summarizes the next steps in the new process.



This briefing paper contains a summary of market intelligence gathered from our gas utility partners, our three Advisory Councils, customer surveys, focus groups and community engagement conducted over the past 12 months. This information is intended to help prepare the board to advise the Executive Team on strategic priorities for 2023/2024 as we kickoff the next planning and budgeting cycle.

Stakeholder Input

The input we received from the board and our stakeholders can be broadly categorized into the following themes: market trends, customer needs, emerging opportunities, and strategic priorities.

Market Trends

All stakeholders highlighted these three large macro-economic trends:

- Inflation
- Supply chain issues
- Labor shortages

These macro-economic trends are having a significant impact on business operations and driving increased costs for business and consumers.

There is an increasing and widespread call for equitable access to the full suite of clean energy incentives and services Energy Trust offers. The desire for greater equity in program participation, and expectations that Energy Trust invest more to reach low-income, Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), and rural customers, is a recurring theme heard from utilities and community organizations, and those expectations are also reflected in recent legislation and OPUC policies.

Resilience is another priority for customers, particularly those in rural communities, to mitigate the impacts of earthquakes, wildfires and extreme weather events such as ice storms and heat events like the 2021 heat dome. Energy Trust commercial cooling offerings, while still desired, are not as effective when increasing numbers of Oregonians are working from home due to COVID-19.

The energy policy landscape is proving to be dynamic, as anticipated in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan:

- Energy Trust is now adapting to new legislative requirements featured in HB 3141, including targets for low-income funding for solar, joint budget and action plan development with utility partners and the requirement to gather input from communities through a public process.
- State and Federal funding is in the pipeline to support communities wishing to implement clean energy programs to offset carbon emissions.
- HB 2021 provides for an unprecedented investment in distributed renewable energy allowing communities to specify specific renewable resources for their jurisdictions.
- New regulations on carbon emissions are significantly impacting gas utilities increasing demand for energy efficiency.
- Responding to citizen input, local governments in Oregon are considering restricting or prohibiting new natural gas hookups.
 - Advocates continue to push policy makers to support incentives for fuel-switching.
 - The state of Washington recently banned gas in new commercial construction, and it is expected that advocates will push for a similar ban on new residential gas in Washington.

In the Renewable Energy sector, the [US Commerce department investigation](#) into solar imports from Southeast Asia is having an immediate and dramatic impact on the solar industry. The outcomes of this investigation are unknown yet have already caused significant delays, interrupted project completion, blocked access to equipment and increased costs.

There is heightened interest in battery storage, now authorized for Energy Trust programs under HB 3141, and “smart” distribution system connected technologies, even while funding for them remains flat.

Climate change, with sustained high temperatures in summer months, is significantly increasing demand for cooling. Drought is having a direct impact on the agricultural sector in rural areas, particularly in southern Oregon. The risk of wildfires remains a high concern in rural communities.

Customer Needs

COVID-19 and the high cost of housing have caused financial hardships for many, including BIPOC and low-income communities around the state over the past two years. Customers experiencing high “*energy burden*” and “*financial hardship*” was a recurring theme heard from all stakeholder groups. Despite clean energy being a pathway to reducing energy costs in homes and businesses, significant barriers were surfaced which prevent or restrain customers from directly and fully benefiting from Energy Trust programs, services and incentives, including:

- Lack of awareness and/or capacity to take advantage of Energy Trust offerings
- Renters (homes and small business customers) lack funding necessary to support cost-effective efficiency measures and generally have limited control over the facilities they inhabit
- Access to capital
- Language and cultural barriers
- Access to contractors is a statewide issue
- Distance, isolation and access to contractors and technology are barriers for customers in remote rural areas

Increasingly, through legislative policy, regulatory developments and best practice recognition, state agencies, utilities and Energy Trust are increasingly partnering with and relying on Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to reach specific customer groups, deliver program offerings and co-create new solutions for their constituents. All groups expressed concern that this increased engagement with CBOs is becoming a burden to them within their limited budgets and that new resources, including technical support, staffing and additional funding, are necessary to build capacity within these organizations.

Emerging Opportunities

Stakeholders noted that demand for core energy efficiency and renewable energy programs remains high across all sectors and suggested several opportunities for staff to consider, including:

- Expand delivery of existing programs through mid-stream support, co-funding with other providers and on-bill financing
- Explore doing deeper/custom work with individual customers (e.g., whole home retrofits, custom offerings for large data centers, etc.)
- Provide sales incentives to contractors to incentivize trade allies to promote the highest efficiency products

- Pursue opportunities to support Community Energy Planning as municipalities strive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience at a more aggressive pace
- Develop tailored service offerings for customers working from home

The availability of Federal funding to mitigate climate change is expected to expand in the coming years. Transportation electrification through electric vehicles (EVs) is expanding rapidly and vehicle-to-grid storage and demand response may be emerging opportunity areas for Energy Trust.

Raising awareness of Energy Trust while addressing customer barriers represents a significant opportunity to expand participation in Energy Trust programs, meet regulatory requirements related to serving low-income customers and exceed DEI goals. These ideas related to brand awareness and program participation surfaced during discussions with utility partners and advisory council members:

- Workforce development—both as strategies to mitigate labor shortages and improve equity
- Marketing and outreach focused on increasing awareness and overcoming the language barrier
 - Bi-lingual marketing materials
 - Culturally relevant outreach
 - Help for new customers to navigate service offerings
 - Education and training to improve understanding of the value of EE/RE
 - E.g., Education programs in public schools
 - Increasing the diversity and multi-lingual capacity of our contractor network
- Pursuing co-funding opportunities with CBO partners (e.g., SB 1536 cooling funds)
- Partnering with CBOs to build capacity in homes and businesses
- Partnering with CBOs to engage customers and deliver programs
- Coordinating with utilities and CBOs when doing community outreach
- Collaborating with landlords to extend services to renters

Strategic priorities



Utility partner input on strategic priorities . . .

Energy efficiency is a driver of carbon/greenhouse gas emission reductions, which is a high strategic priority for all utility partners. It is a strategic priority for utilities to align energy efficiency with carbon reduction goals. Gas utilities are looking to Energy Trust to ramp up residential and commercial programs to more aggressively acquire energy savings (therms) even if this slightly increases program costs, and consequently, rates in the short term. PGE would like to explore new models of collaboration and partnership with Energy Trust ([A Roadmap for Climate-Forward Efficiency | ACEEE](#)). In addition to carbon reduction, balancing rate impacts without excluding customer groups and while meeting carbon goals remains a strategic priority for utility partners. They have all expressed a desire to collaborate with Energy Trust in marketing and community outreach activities, including closer coordination when engaging and collaborating with community-based organizations.

Advisory Council input on strategic priorities . . .

These high-level strategic priorities surfaced from discussions with Advisory Councils:

- Equity—prioritize expanding awareness and participation among low-income, BIPOC and rural customers
- Reparations—allocate funding and deliver programs designed specifically for BIPOC customers to address institutional and historical exclusion and inequity
- Align community interest in resilience with the energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives and services that Energy Trust provides
- Prioritize outreach to tribal communities
- Explore co-funding opportunities
- Deliver services in partnership with CBO's

Insights from Customer Surveys, Focus Group Studies and Community Engagement

Key takeaways drawn from customer information gathered over the past 12 months reinforces many of the themes raised by our Advisory Councils and utility partners. The following is a list of customer insights gathered from surveys, focus group studies and in-person community engagement.

- Low awareness of Energy Trust and our offerings is a recurring theme
- General distrust of institutions, including utilities and Energy Trust
- Low-income, BIPOC and rural customers experience significant barriers to directly benefiting from Energy Trust incentives and programs, including up-front costs, reliance on property owners to invest in efficiency upgrades, language barriers, cultural differences and access to contractors
 - Customers in many communities we have underserved in the past are more likely to do repairs themselves than to hire contractors
- Workforce development, especially in the trades, is a critical long-term need in our industry
- Meaningful community engagement starts with listening
 - Focus on addressing the needs of the community
 - Take the time and invest in creating trusting relationships
- Program design and delivery is hindered by lack of diversity in the industry
- High energy burden is experienced by many consumers
- Rural customers have a high concern for power outages

Opportunities identified for Energy Trust to consider pursuing:

- Provide affordable financing for projects
- Provide utility incentives that can subsidize the majority of a project's cost
- Provide services agreements for small businesses that do not require upfront capital
- Deliver professional development/education to build understanding of energy efficiency
 - To bridge the gap in education, collaborate with community organizations to provide workshops on energy savings and cash incentives
- Conduct outreach in person or through direct interaction with small business owners
- Work with developers and landlords who work closely with BIPOC business owners
- Offer language accessible information and education

Discussion Questions

There are numerous trends and market effects that might impact the development and implementation of our budget in 2023. Some of these may have substantial impacts while others may be negligible. **Of those identified by our stakeholders and those you are familiar with, which would be the most important trends staff should pay attention to or be aware of?**

Our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan envisions a future role of value for Energy Trust. Across five focus areas within specific strategies and progress indicators, the Board has established the characteristics of this “future” Energy Trust. **Given our progress towards that future state, where do we need to focus or what do we need to accomplish in 2023 to stay on track to realize what the board envisioned for Energy Trust?**

There is clearly strong alignment that we need to keep getting savings and generation at the same rate or even at increasing rates (e.g., for the gas utilities related to decarbonization goals), but we need to rethink how we get them (e.g., more community engagement, new delivery channels like CBOs, focusing on customers we have historically underserved). These efforts require more staffing and program implementation resources than we currently have. **With our current limitations on staffing costs, administrative costs and program and portfolio cost-effectiveness, how do we accomplish both goals or how do we prioritize efforts in either or both?**

Energy Trust currently operates with boundaries set by the legislature, the OPUC and the Board. For example, our programs must be cost-effective after including all costs incurred by Energy Trust, the OPUC has established specific performance measures related to our administrative and staffing costs, and the energy efficiency we acquire needs to be the least-cost resource. **Given the changing clean energy landscape, what new boundaries does the Board want to consider providing for staff as we navigate the challenges and opportunities we’re likely to encounter in 2023?**

Next Steps

Hear the board’s thoughts on priorities, focus areas and key considerations to provide input to Energy Trust’s Executive Team as they finalize the strategic guidance to staff. This discussion will occur during the board’s workshop on May 17, 2022. Following the workshop, the board’s input will be combined with the market intelligence and customer insights summarized in this memo and drafted into strategic guidance for approval by the Executive Team. This strategic guidance will aid staff as they identify key projects and initiatives for 2023 and develop next year’s budget and action plans. The final version of the strategic guidance will be presented to the board during the July board meeting for awareness and potential impact on the development of the budget.

PINK PAPER

Summary of Market Intelligence – Advisory Councils

Renewable Advisory Council (4/12/2022)

Industry Trends

Economic, social, policy, environmental, technological

- Increased market demand for solar
- [Inflation] increased costs of equipment, delivery and installation
- Supply chain issues – raw material shortage causing equipment shortages
- [Commerce department “green tariffs” investigation](#) having significant impacts on solar industry
- Skilled labor shortages (e.g. contractors)
- Equity – Increased call for equitable access to renewables from communities and legislators
- High priority on reducing carbon emissions
- Strong interest building resilience into the built environment (especially rural communities)
- Policy changes – HB3141, HB2021, REC grants
- Technology – Battery storage

Customer Information (Barriers/Needs)

- Equitable access to solar across all communities
- Language barriers

Opportunities

- Industry leadership role in workforce development.
- HB 2021- massive & unparalleled investment coming in distributed renewables
- CREP (HB 2021 - ODOE) grants
- How to take advantage of “all this federal funding” coming in?
- Lack of capacity & coordination to use the money
- Convening & coordinating role for Energy Trust

Strategic priorities

Where should Energy Trust focus over the next 12-18 months?

- Resilience
- Green tariff

Conservation Advisory Council (4/12/2022)

Industry Trends

Economic, social, policy, environmental, technological

- Inflation – increased costs of equipment, delivery and installation
- Supply chain – raw material shortage causing equipment shortages
- Skilled labor shortages (e.g. contractors)
- Electrification/decarbonization (priority for electric utilities, impacting gas utilities)
- Code changes
- Drought reducing viability of agricultural land – fewer farms and increased fire hazards

Customer Information (Barriers/Needs)

- Equitable access to solar across all communities
- Language and culture barriers
 - need to engage customers in culturally relevant ways
 - help new customers navigate our service offerings and take advantage of them
- Access to contractors
- Renters lacking autonomy and financial incentive to invest in EE property upgrades
- Connectivity – access to Wi-Fi, comfort level using smart technology and security concerns
- “Cost-effectiveness” paradigm is an institutional barrier for CBO’s serving low-income customers

Opportunities

- Support Community Energy Planning as municipalities strive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience at a more aggressive pace
- Culturally competent marketing and outreach
- Co-funding to address building readiness
- Workforce development
- Mid-stream support
- Stacking incentives
- Green tariffs
- On-bill financing
- Collaborate with landlords to extend services to renters
- Doing deeper work with fewer customers (as a program model)
- Sales incentives (SPIFF’s) to incentivize trade allies to actively promote highest efficiency products

Strategic priorities

Where should Energy Trust focus over the next 12-18 months?

- Equity
- Resilience
- Explore new models of collaboration and partnership ([A Roadmap for Climate-Forward Efficiency | ACEEE](#))

Diversity Advisory Council (4/19/2022)

Industry Trends

Economic, social, policy, environmental, technological

- Equity – Increased call for equitable access to renewables from communities and legislators
- Financial crisis – for small businesses, efficiency is low on list of priorities
- Financial crisis – due to rent increases (housing affordability, high energy burden)
- More people working from home
- Increasing concern about resilience, especially wildfires

Customer Information (Barriers/Needs)

- Language barrier
- Low awareness of Energy Trust offerings
- Education – understanding the value of EE/RE
- Lack of capital to invest in EE/RE
- Lack of awareness and/or capacity to take advantage of Energy Trust offerings
- Access to technology
- Renters lack control over property
- Need for training and education
- Challenges navigating “silos” to access our services
- Rural – overcoming distance and isolation in remote rural areas
- Rural – lack of access to natural gas for heating

Opportunities

- Culturally relevant education and training
 - Provide “Living Wise” kits for public schools
- Culturally responsive outreach; bi-lingual marketing materials
- In general, raising awareness of Energy Trust around the state
- Partnering with CBOs to engage customers
- Providing tailored services to “work from home” customer segment

Strategic priorities

Where should Energy Trust focus over the next 12-18 months?

- Reparations to address institutional exclusion and inequity
- Prioritize outreach to tribal communities

Summary of Market Intelligence – Gas Utilities

NW Natural (4/12/2022)

Industry Trends

Economic, social, policy, environmental, technological

- Carbon regulation of gas utilities
- New technology – gas heat pump water heaters and combination systems (gas and electric heat combined; electric heat pump operations most of the time and then gas back up for colder time periods)
- Climate change – makes efficiency savings more important
- Increased interest in resilience to extreme weather events

Customer Information (Barriers/Needs)

- Supply chain - equipment supply is a challenge
- Workforce issues affect all customer groups - agencies don't have enough people to provide weatherization services (auditors, admin, delivery)
- CBO partners having staffing challenges (no one to do the energy education)
 - Even with funds available, if don't have staff then it's a barrier
- Customer interested in clean energy; may be willing to pay more for it
- NW Natural wanting to get input from diverse voices; in alignment with Energy Trust on this
- Serving rural communities is different than urban; access and other issues; community affairs managers help guide how they serve rural communities
- Still working to get better at serving diverse people – community equity advisory group

Opportunities

- Making communication materials more accessible
- Transport customer sector is a big opportunity
- Emissions compliance requirements – might provide opportunity to provide larger incentives to meet those goals
- Starting industrial in WA
- Pilots like Geo Tee offering offer targeted incentives to increase EE in given area where distribution system is constrained.
- Gas and electric companies should work together to reduce energy consumption – Energy Trust could take leadership in this effort and it could benefit everyone

Strategic priorities

- Carbon reduction is high priority - deliver as much EE savings to customers as possible
 - Do this in an expansive way - ramp up programs for residential and commercial
 - NW Natural willing to entertain greater tariff increases and accelerate the savings adoption timeline to support carbon reductions
- Navigating a new policy and awaiting guidance from direct regulator

Avista (4/13/2022)

Industry Trends

Economic, social, policy, environmental, technological

- Supply chain issues causing delays
- Skilled labor shortages (backlogs with contractors)
- Climate change and need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- More people are falling into low income or poverty categories, across rural and urban areas
- Unspent money for gas utilities with Community Action Agencies each year
 - they are trying to balance spending lots of different funding
 - preference for electric customers because they tend to have a higher energy burden than gas customers

Customer Information (Barriers/Needs)

- It's been hard to do community outreach during the pandemic
 - Community outreach for Avista works best in conjunction with other groups at different types of events
- Housing affordability
- Latinx community in Southern and NE Oregon are a priority for Avista

Opportunities

- Technology - looking to expand natural gas heat pumps and
- Work with manufacturers to bring back old dual-fuel products
- Whole home retrofits; whole home approach
- Leverage trade allies to help more customers
 - There is room for Energy Trust to do more through community-based orgs or trade allies to help low-income customers
 - Avista engaging in a low-income needs assessment and will bring this to Energy Trust and discuss at some point in the future
- Partner with CBO's and Community Action Agencies to address home readiness
 - Finding orgs that can help with structural repairs of homes.
 - Rogue Community College
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Easing energy burden for moderate and low-income customers is important for Avista

Strategic priorities

- Focus on where we can partner with other orgs to keep the cost of overall programs low
- Remember that having more programs has a rate impact; be mindful of where to focus, what to prioritize, but don't exclude customer groups; find a balance

Cascade (4/19/2022)

Industry Trends

Economic, social, policy, environmental, technological

- Decarbonization and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is the main driver
- Code changes for new construction significantly reducing demand for natural gas solutions
 - New construction seeing 80-90% decreases in natural gas furnaces and water heaters
- Supply chain issues delaying installation
- Skilled labor shortages (e.g. contractors) impacting customers and CNG program performance
 - Low-income groups are having trouble getting contractors to give bids
 - Not enough labor to do the jobs
- Increased focus on energy burden and determining what that means for CNG
 - They want to re-evaluate their low-income program based on some investigation on energy burden
- Climate change/extreme weather events – heat; fire; drought
- Be cognizant of our stakeholders' time
 - Leverage existing meetings so that we get as much out of them and we're using everyone's time efficiently; avoid silos

Customer Information (Barriers/Needs)

- Majority of CNG territory is rural; need additional contractors who can serve the territory
- Customer in CNG territory focused on recovery from flood damage
- Need to expand low-income offerings
- CNG needs help getting weatherization dollars to customers

Opportunities

- Assessing/understanding the territory now, post Covid; identify new customer needs?
- Energy Trust collaborating with regional agencies to see where we can collaborate and pool dollars to help customers; can also see where we can partner/collaborate with CNG

Strategic priorities

- Drive energy efficiency offerings to customers and make sure high-efficiency solutions are in the market for customers

Summary of Market Intelligence – Energy Trust

Programs Group Market Intelligence

Market intelligence gathered continuously through surveys, market data, input from PMC's and other sources.

Industry Trends

Economic, social, policy, environmental, technological

- Inflation - cost increases are eroding cost-effectiveness
 - High-cost increases for Heat Pump Water Heaters (HPWH)
 - Rising gas/freight costs impacting all customers
 - Cost estimates only good for ~24 hours
 - War in Ukraine
 - Driving increase in gas prices
 - Impacting availability of neon and other raw materials
 - Aggravating semi-conductor shortage
- Inflation – energy costs straining agricultural producers
- Drought - straining agricultural producers
- Supply chain issues (scarcity of supplies, long delivery lags) delaying projects and driving costs
 - Eg. Minimum orders of aluminum cans imposed on brewers
 - Microchip shortage impact EE products
 - Supply chain issues impacting rural customers to greater extent
 - Long equipment lead times impacting large Industrial projects
 - Forced shut downs due to COVID-19 in China impacting supply
 - Long lead times for gas fryers (and EE savings)
- Skilled labor shortages delaying completion of projects and constraining capacity of businesses
- Latent demand for EE incentives, once caps are lifted
- Demand for new home construction remains high

Customer Information (Barriers/Needs)

- Increased customer interest in heating AND cooling/HVAC
- Societal attention focused on drought, fire and other climate change related issues (diverting attention from EE)

Opportunities

- Federal funding for irrigation projects in the Klamath basin
- Custom offerings for large data centers

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Summary of Customer Information

Community Summits (2021)

High-level takeaways:

- **Low awareness** of Energy Trust and our offerings, especially in BIPOC, low-income and rural communities
- **Workforce development**, especially in the trades, is a critical long-term need in our industry
 - Need to diversify procurement; contract with more minority firms
 - Need to create pathways for BIPOC to enter the trades and join the green economy
- **Certification** has value but may also be a barrier for minority firms (Hispanic firms in particular)
- **Aligning offerings** is an opportunity
 - Eg. Collaboration between Energy Trust and PCEF
- Meaningful **community engagement** starts with listening
 - Focus on addressing the needs of the community
 - Take the time and invest in creating trusting relationships
- **Program design** and delivery hindered by lack of diversity in the industry
 - Need to build CBO/contractor capacity to access larger incentives
 - Need to reduce barriers experienced by minority contractors
 - Need to be patient and calibrate reasonable time to expect results

Customer Insights Survey (2020 – results reported in 2021)

Key Questions:

- Are Energy Trust's programs reaching/serving different demographic groups equally (proportionally)?
- How should Energy Trust focus its program development, marketing and outreach investment to reach underserved ratepayers?

High-level takeaways:

- Low awareness of (or familiarity with) Energy Trust
 - Particularly low for non-participants, low-income, renters, rural residents, and people of color
- Significant barriers to participation persist
 - Lack of awareness the largest barrier to participation
 - Much bigger barrier for people of color
 - Many customers outside Portland Metro believed they were not eligible
 - Renters have less autonomy/control to upgrade property
- Many homeowners do their own maintenance (not through contractors which is our primary business model)
- Energy burden is real for many consumers
- High motivation to save energy, and willingness to pay
- Comfort more important than efficiency for many
- High concern for power outages, especially rural customers

Local/Municipal Government Market Study (Nov. 2021)

High-level takeaways:

Four areas emerged as the top issues cities and counties will focus on in the next three to five years:

- **Lack of affordable communities, especially housing costs**, is the top area of focus. Every respondent participating in this study included it as one of their top three issues.
- **The need to improve infrastructure** is a second area of focus and is more salient for Medium/Low Involvement respondents who tended to be from smaller, more remote communities with fewer resources.
- **Building the workforce and economy** is a third area of focus, which again looms larger for Medium/Low Involvement respondents.
- **Climate change and resiliency** is a fourth area of focus and will likely to be more salient in communities that already have High Involvement with Energy Trust.

High level summary of findings from all community engagement in 2021-2022

High-level takeaways:

- We need to focus on the *how* (ways we engage people) rather than the *what* (program offers)
- Community Engagement/Participation
 - Start with the community need (rather than the Energy Trust offer)
 - Building relationships with communities takes time; we need to engage frequently and over an extended period
 - Low awareness and lack of information are top barriers to participation, especially for renters, those in rural areas, low-income, and communities of color
 - Different demographics likely require different tactics
 - Start with people rather than programs – become a partner and focus on human needs and values rather than transactions
 - Incorporate family and friends in messaging and outreach, and target youth for education and engagement
- Program Offers
 - In many underserved communities, residents are more likely to do repairs themselves than to hire contractors
 - Affordability and comfort are key concerns
 - Upfront cost is a barrier

Focus Group Discussions with Latino/a/x Business Owners

High-level takeaways:

- COVID19 heavily impacted small businesses; relying on financial aid for the first time
- Low awareness of EE services and offerings
 - Many do not understand benefits and have little time/expertise/capital to invest in EE
 - Many believe Energy Trust services are inaccessible to their communities, despite programs geared towards helping business owners
 - Business owners have paid into PPC but have not received benefits
- Cost is a barrier
 - Lack time or capital to invest in EE to produce long terms savings
 - Concern that savings will not outweigh investment in time and installation costs
 - Inflation is driving costs
 - High rental cost for small business owners
 - Short term cost to invest in solar outweighs long term benefits
 - Pay up to \$700 a month on energy
 - Air conditioning and heating are the biggest operating expenses
- Rental boundaries a barrier
 - Unable to access EE options directly; decisions left up to property owners
 - They operate out of rental properties fitted with outdated equipment
 - Benefits flow to the property owner (not the renter)
 - Decisions often left up to building owners
- Linguistic/cultural differences is a barrier
 - Marketing targets property owners not renters
 - Many do not use Energy Trust to access contractors for installation or service/repair
 - Lack of Latino/a/x service providers significant barrier
 - Many seek Hispanic contractors or do the work themselves
 - Lack of online presence a barrier to hiring contractors
- Recommend deeper engagement with the Latino/a/x business community
 - In person or direct interaction with small business owners
 - Offering language accessible information and education
 - Continue to assess and address barriers to participation
- Top five things Energy Trust can do to support businesses in becoming more energy efficient:
 - Provide affordable financing for projects
 - Provide utility incentives that can subsidize the majority of a project's cost
 - Provide services agreements that do not require upfront capita/arrangements that impact profit
 - Provide energy efficiency professional development/education
 - Support with lighting

Roundtable Discussions with Black Businesses in the Portland-Metro

High-level takeaways:

- COVID19 restrictions significantly impacted Black businesses
 - B2C businesses struggling to remain profitable during the pandemic
 - Needed to rapidly alter business practices, high workload for owners
- Low trust
 - General distrust of institutions, including Utilities and Energy Trust
 - Did not receive aid during COVID19
- Low awareness and participation; most had little or no familiarity with Energy Trust
 - Many associated Energy Trust with a utility company or with utility bills
 - Interest in becoming more energy efficient yet low awareness
 - No access to culturally responsive outreach and EE education
 - Best way to engage the Black business owner community, particularly B2C, is through personal contact and connection and not through digital methods
 - Influencers in the community can help with this effort

Conclusions:

- Personal contact and connection best way to reach Black business owners (not digital)
 - Collaborate with Black community groups to co-deliver offerings
 - Building relationships with smaller companies would increase access to other Black-owned company leader networks
 - Focus on helping them thrive, not making a sale or meeting our own goals
- Energy Trust needs to invest in bridging gap in education – provide workshops on energy savings and cash incentives using community organizations and support
- Make Energy Trust marketing more approachable for Black business owners
- Work with developers and real estate landlords who work closely with Black business owners
 - The majority of Black business owners lease their space
 - The first contact for repairs is often the landlord/property owner
- Share out these findings with other Energy Trust program managers, program implementers and utilities so they can make connections to their own work

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ENERGY TRUST OF OREGON LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESEARCH REPORT

November 16, 2021

Prepared for:

Susan Jowaiszas

Prepared by:

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Portland, Oregon

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Energy Trust of Oregon (Energy Trust) wants to work more closely with Oregon's 377 cities and 36 counties, from Grants Pass, to Portland, to Bend, to Umatilla, to Lakeview. They sponsored this research to discover how well the high priority needs of these jurisdictions align with the energy-related services and products they offer or could offer. Findings and insights from this research will be used to further develop tools to engage with local governments in energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

This research is qualitative and based upon 23 in-depth interviews with directors and managers from cities and counties across Oregon (see **Error! Reference source not found.** in Chapter 2) conducted during July, August, and September of 2021. We used a list of 52 contacts Energy Trust provided and were able to complete interviews with 44% of them. Based on guidance from Energy Trust staff, we divided respondents into two groups: those who had **High Involvement** with Energy Trust, and those who had **Medium/Low Involvement** with Energy Trust. We used respondents as the unit of analysis.

The study addresses these questions:

1. What are the top issues for Oregon's cities and counties?
2. What barriers do they face in solving those issues?
3. How can energy efficiency and renewable energy help them address those issues?
4. What Energy Trust services do cities and counties want the most?
5. How can Energy Trust best work with Oregon's cities and counties?

Conclusions and Recommendations

The body of this report provides further data and insights to support these conclusions and recommendations.

Differences Between the Groups

Respondents in High and Medium/Low Involvement groups were qualitatively different in two key respects:

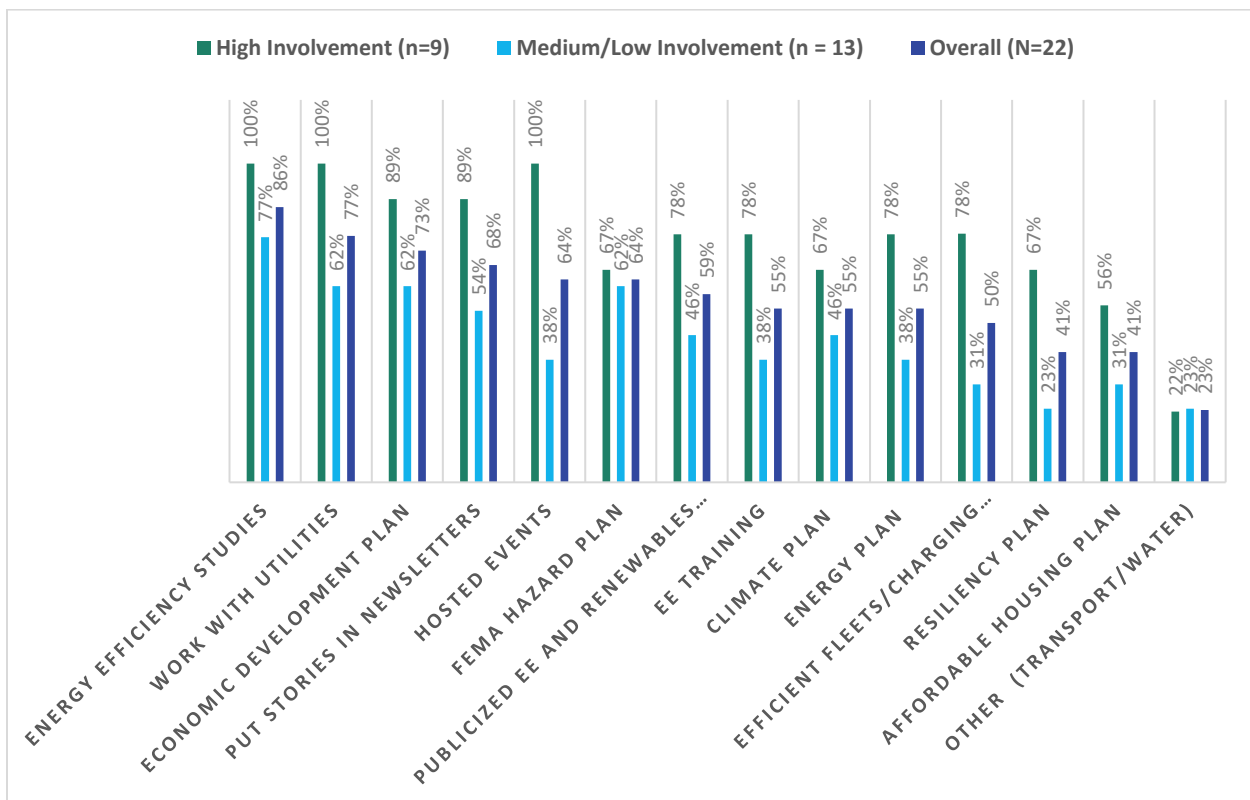
- High Involvement respondents tended to be in or near Oregon's larger cities, while the Medium/Low Involvement respondents tended to be in more remote areas.
- High Involvement respondents had energy on their minds more often than those in the Medium/Low Involvement group. When asked about fourteen energy-related activities, more respondents in the High Involvement group had engaged in each of them, often by a margin of twenty-five points or more, as shown in Figure 1.

Energy Trust actions likely influenced both differences. The first difference coincides with respondent perceptions in this and other research that Energy Trust is city-centric and needs to further its reach, something the organization is already working on.

The second difference suggests high involvement with Energy Trust is related to local governments taking desired energy-related steps beyond specific projects. Notably more High Involvement respondents reported they do the following:

- Work with their utilities on energy efficiency and renewable energy issues, including collaborating on projects and programs, serving on advisory boards, and discussing carbon reduction.
- Educate citizens and staff on energy-related topics, including hosting events, publicizing accomplishments, and training workers.
- Develop plans for a clean energy future, including energy and resiliency plans.

Figure 1 Energy Related Activities by Level of Involvement with Energy Trust



Top Issues for Cities and Counties

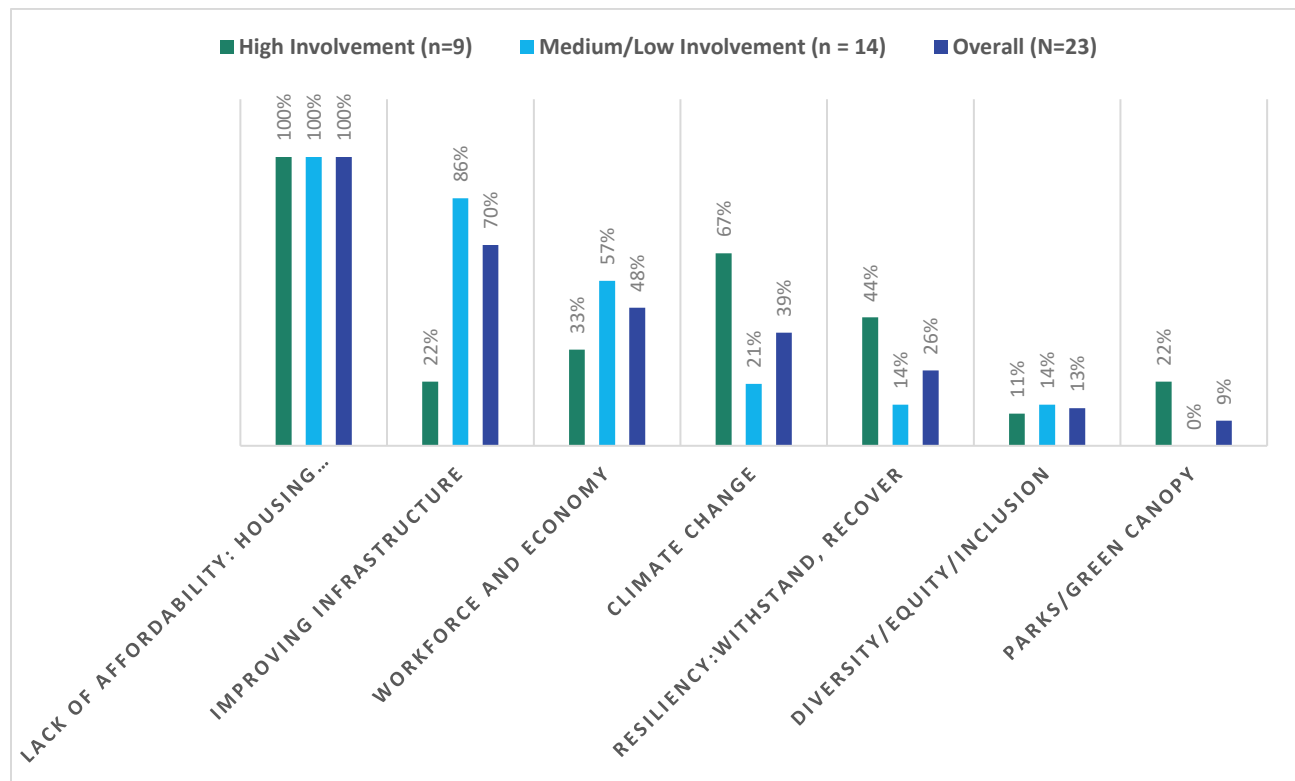
Four areas emerged as the top issues cities and counties will focus on in the next three to five years (see Figure 2):

- **Lack of affordable communities, especially housing costs**, is the top area of focus. Every respondent participating in this study included it as one of their top three issues.

- **The need to improve infrastructure** is a second area of focus and is more salient for Medium/Low Involvement respondents who tended to be from smaller, more remote communities with fewer resources.
- **Building the workforce and economy** is a third area of focus, which again looms larger for Medium/Low Involvement respondents.
- **Climate change and resiliency** is a fourth area of focus and will likely to be more salient in communities that already have High Involvement with Energy Trust.

Further discussion of these issues, the barriers to solving them, and the potential for energy-related solutions, can be found in Chapter 2.

Figure 2 Top Issues



Recommendation

Energy Trust should frame its program and service offerings for cities and counties around these three issues:

- **How to achieve more affordable housing**, using energy efficiency, solar energy, and other renewable resources, such as bio-digesters to lower wastewater treatment costs and bill increases. Services should address new and existing, owned and rented, single and multifamily homes.

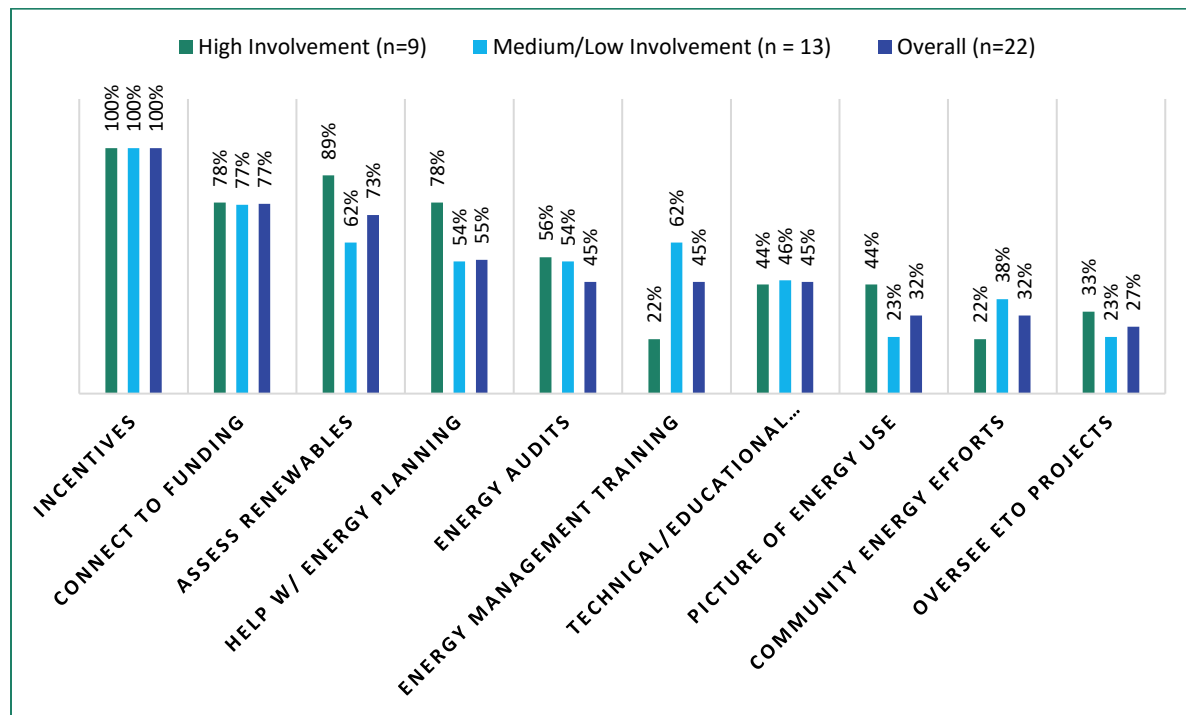
- **How to improve infrastructure**, using energy efficiency and renewable energy, including those for water and wastewater treatment plants, public buildings, and, if possible, transportation.
- **How to be more resilient to climate change**, including increased temperatures and other weather events, and wildfires.

We do not suggest framing program and service offerings with workforce and economy themes because Energy Trust has limited ability to support direct activities in these areas. However, the workforce and economic benefits of working with Energy Trust on these issues should be woven in wherever possible.

Top Products and Services

Figure 3 shows the level of *high* interest that respondents had in ten Energy Trust products and services.

Figure 3 Level of “High Interest” in Ten Product and Services



These four products and services received the highest level of interest from respondents.

1. Incentives for investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy (100%).

Respondents said incentives had made the difference in getting a project accomplished. They said it was a “*huge priority*” to obtain them because it was the “*best way to get a project to “pencil out.”*”

Respondents emphasized that the incentives reduce two key barriers to completing projects: paybacks that are too long and upfront costs that are too high.

2. Connection to other sources of funding for energy-related projects. (77%)

Over three-quarters of respondents thought that help with identifying further funding sources for energy projects would benefit them. Some envisioned it as a “one-stop shop” or clearinghouse that would help them evaluate options and determine “if the money is worth going for” given its reporting and other requirements. Many cited good past experiences with Energy Trust, with one saying staff are “very easy to work with and the paperwork is not difficult (*Willamette Valley*).” One respondent from a rural town suggested Energy Trust should help them develop projects, “*not just funding advice.*”

3. Assessment of renewable energy opportunities. (73%)

Respondent enthusiasm for exploring renewable energy opportunities was palpable. Some said their elected officials “wanted to look at solar.” Others asked if they could speak with someone at Energy Trust about a particular project or with specific expertise to help them think through a project.

“This is very beneficial. Every city should have that information. Many are looking at sustainability and energy. . .but don’t have the human capital.” – Southern Oregon

4. Expert help for energy-related plans, such as energy, climate, and resiliency plans. (55%)

While the high interest ratings for this service were lower overall, 78% of those in the High Involvement group were very interested in using Energy Trust’s expert staff to advise them on the energy portions of key planning documents. This group’s higher interest reflects their positive past experiences receiving expert help from Energy Trust staff – experience that those in the Medium/Low Involvement group did not have.

“This would be great. . .it would ensure we would look at the energy piece. We tend to focus on structure but need resiliency with power. Engineers like structure.” – Portland Metro

Recommendation

Based on these findings, Energy Trust has some developmental work to do, including:

1. Analyzing how current products and services can best be used to help address the top three issues for cities and counties (housing, infrastructure, climate change).
2. Identifying and fleshing out new products and services that should be developed to help cities and counties address these issues. The development of new offerings should keep respondent product and service preferences in mind (incentives, funding clearinghouse, renewable energy opportunities, expert help). It should also include research on city and county-based programs that might offer opportunities for collaboration. While Energy Trust does not serve the City of John Day, it has a program ripe for piggybacking with efficiency and solar incentives: The John Day Urban Renewal Agency & Housing Incentive Program is offering builders incentives to build

and remodel homes (<https://www.cityofjohnday.com/planning/page/john-day-urban-renewal-agency-housing-incentive-program>).

3. Identifying which staff can serve as experts on each of the three key issues: affordable housing, infrastructure improvements, and climate change resilience.
4. Developing a targeted issue-based menu of products and services for each key issue.
5. Communicating with cities and counties about the new issue-based menus, including how to easily access them. An early step in communicating with these audiences would be to send out a summary of this research to all respondents, since all were interested in seeing the results.
6. Assessing the results of this new approach.

Advice to Energy Trust

This section is based upon advice respondents gave to Energy Trust in how to best approach and serve them.

1. Keep doing what you're doing: Don't hold your light under a bushel basket.

Those who know Energy Trust value their staff and services. As one respondent simply put it: "We hold Energy Trust in high esteem around here." Continue to build upon your good reputation.

2. Use Benefits Messaging: Show me the money and then everything else.

The strongest benefits are financial: incentives, lowering upfront costs (and payback for businesses); saving money over time; lowering utility bills; making homes and businesses more affordable, freeing up money for other uses, creating jobs, and spurring the economy.

Non-financial benefits are also persuasive, including helping communities preserve quality of life, keeping people in their homes, and improving comfort, resiliency, and independence. Most respondents said that using the term "climate change" is usually acceptable but tread carefully.

3. Focus on Relationship Building: Find out more about the community and audience.

Before approaching local government contacts, learn more about how their organization is structured what their community values, and what they've been doing lately that might relate to energy efficiency and renewable energy. Use Energy Trust's local representatives and the city and county websites to help with this.

Use that intelligence to help build connections during initial and ongoing conversations. Listen to the stories that your contacts tell and connect them to what Energy Trust can offer. For instance, several respondents told "origin stories" about their towns, such as that they are rooted in timber and ranching (Wallowa), or that they "are not your grandpa's ag town." (Eastern Oregon)

4. Use Multiple Points of Entry: Start at manager and director levels, develop relationships with more than one contact, and ask about presentations to upper management and elected officials.

The director and manager level respondents interviewed for this research appear to be a good place to foster relationships: they are the ones most likely to have a stake in energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. If possible, develop multiple points of contact to become more embedded in organizational memory.

Many of these respondents also suggested Energy Trust work through them to determine if informational sessions for upper management and elected officials would be useful. Several noted that these groups would benefit from knowing more about Energy Trust, especially since they often needed to approve projects. They advised including a peer-level person from Energy Trust in these presentations to convey the importance of the relationship to Energy Trust.

5. Communicate: Stay in regular touch (but not too often)

Several respondents suggested meeting with them regularly (1-4 times a year) to ensure clients know the services available from Energy Trust and that Energy Trust knows about upcoming opportunities to provide services. These interviews, for instance, turned up several potential projects and requests.

Several respondents said they wished they had a more shorthand way to connect with the services Energy Trust offers. Consider whether a display-worthy directory with key links could be developed to help these clients find the resources they need.

6. Use Influencers: Let others work on your behalf.

Respondents indicated that they rely upon and are in touch with their peers for support and guidance: In particular, several public works directors, wastewater treatment facility operators, and town managers said they talk regularly with one another. Cities and counties also rely upon state, regional, and local non-profits (for instance, Solar Oregon and The Environmental Center); schools and universities (for instance, the Oregon Institute of Technology); and local chapters of national organizations (for instance, the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies [ORACWA]), to provide information and do projects.

A list of the organizations mentioned in the interviews is being provided to Energy Trust in a separate database. Energy Trust should take advantage of these peer networks and support professional associations to get energy more regularly on the agenda.

Memo



To: Energy Trust

From: Susan Jowaiszas

cc:	Tracy Scott, Amber Cole, Steve Lacey, Michael Colgrove
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Date: November 22, 2021

Re: Local Government Qualitative Research

The report's conclusions provide valuable input for program and outreach teams to help develop and deliver products and services that meet customer needs. Top issues for these communities include lack of affordable housing, need to improve infrastructure, addressing impacts of climate change and resiliency, and supporting the workforce and economy of the local area. There were significant differences in how different communities set priorities on these topics.

The report surfaced some key opportunities to increase the value that local communities can receive from Energy Trust. Program and outreach managers will be taking steps to address opportunities and needs:

- Analyzing current products and services that are available now to support communities. Program staff and outreach team members will coordinate to match current offerings with priorities for communities. Energy Trust has already begun developing focused offerings to support community needs. New and manufactured home incentives in areas impacted by wildfire is one example.
- Identifying new opportunities for products and services that could expand the scope of offerings that support communities and are consistent with Energy Trust's areas of expertise and resources. Findings will inform measure development and diversity, equity and inclusion efforts that could expand Energy Trust's portfolio of products and services.
- Developing staff expertise on how energy and our programs and services related to the top priority issues for communities.
- Developing and providing easier-to-access tools for communities to use to connect with Energy Trust and other related resources. This work has already started at Energy Trust with the development of Community Engagement Guidelines in 2020. The Wallowa County energy planning process currently underway will also produce lessons that can be applied when developing resources.

- Expanding outreach to communities with less exposure to and history with Energy Trust to begin to develop trustful working relationships. Energy Trust's regional outreach team will be a key link to share information about local needs with staff and to introduce products and services with communities in ways that are responsive to and respectful of their interests. A smaller number of relatively urban communities have established strong links to Energy Trust and built upon those links to benefit their communities. Smaller, more rural communities also need support. Energy Trust will need to demonstrate that staff understands their needs and values. This will be a high priority task for Energy Trust outreach staff and program managers who can begin to develop more contact points within these communities.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Approach

Context

From Klamath Falls to Portland to Wallowa, Oregon's 377 cities and 36 counties grapple every day with a host of thorny issues, including affordable housing, disruptions related to a changing climate, population and cultural shifts, and aging infrastructure. The research reported on here is part of an ongoing effort to inform Energy Trust about the top concerns of cities and counties and how best to work with them on the energy-related components of those issues at the community level.

Over the past decade Energy Trust has increasingly worked with local governments to support locally led efforts. They train facilities staff in strategic energy management, advise on energy components of climate and resiliency plans, foster the availability of qualified contractors, and provide incentives for high efficiency and clean energy public buildings and facilities, such as the state-of-the-art net zero energy wastewater treatment plant in Gresham. This research shows these customers appreciate the services they have received:

"Energy Trust is already doing a good job – our relationship with them is phenomenal and we're using their resources a lot." – Southern Oregon

At the same time, many communities have been less engaged with Energy Trust for a variety of reasons. Current and past research suggests these communities are more likely to be smaller and more remote, have fewer resources, be skeptical of outside or "big city" help, think Energy Trust does not understand their community's unique circumstances, or may not know how their needs fit with what Energy Trust can provide.

"What if a customer calls and they want to know what the city is doing for energy savings and climate change – 'how do I do my part?'. . . I don't know where to send them. If Energy Trust could have that for cities – some type of flow chart or simple list. . ." – Central Oregon

Energy Trust would like to build more long-term relationships at the community level to ensure their resources are equitably distributed across all customers. They believe local governments, and their citizenry, will benefit through reduced energy costs and carbon use in their buildings and facilities. They also believe city and county leaders influence community action, both through example and policies. Finally, they hope these relationships will allow them to communicate with cities and counties about energy-related issues of mutual interest, such as carbon reduction, energy resiliency and environmental justice.

Research Goals and Methods

The overall goal of this research is to discover how well the high priority needs of local governments align with the energy-related resources available – or could be available – from Energy Trust. The desired outcome of this research is for Energy Trust to use this information to develop useful and cost-effective tools to engage with a wide array of cities and counties on projects that will reduce energy use or make use of renewable energy resources. The study builds upon previous work Energy Trust has conducted and addresses these research questions:

1. What are the top issues for Oregon's cities and counties?
2. What barriers do they face in solving those issues?
3. How can energy efficiency and renewable energy help them address those issues?
4. What Energy Trust services do cities and counties want?
5. How can Energy Trust best work with Oregon's cities and counties?

Research Approach

This research is qualitative and relies on a small number of interviews. While the data are rich, often convergent, and suggest issues and pathways for Energy Trust to focus on in serving local governments, they cannot reliably represent all cities and counties. In a few summary tables we have used percentages to allow useful comparisons, but we ask readers to keep the small number of respondents, and the qualitative nature of the research, in mind throughout.

The findings presented here are based on 23 in-depth Zoom interviews lasting forty-five minutes to one hour during July, August, and September 2021, with twenty-four directors and managers¹ at local governments and non-profit regional agencies serving local governments. Pivot Advising worked iteratively with Energy Trust stakeholders to develop an interview guide that addresses the research questions. The resulting guide (see Appendix A) is largely open-ended and conversational.

We took in-depth notes during the interviews, which we also recorded for reference. We entered the responses into a database and content analyzed their themes. We have not used respondent names in reporting but have identified the source of quotes by location; quotes may be edited for length and clarity. We offered respondents a summary of the findings from this research and all respondents said they would like to receive the summary.

Energy Trust provided a spreadsheet of their city and county contacts and Pivot Advising worked with them to refine the list and develop a qualitative sampling approach. We considered three variables to group the respondents: geographic region, urban versus rural location, and the level of involvement of each respondent with Energy Trust (High, Medium, and Low/No), based upon the judgment of Energy Trust staff members. We chose the level of involvement with Energy Trust as the variable most relevant to the research goals and most likely to reveal differences between groups.

¹ One interview had two participants. We have counted this as one interview.

Table 1 shows the sampling frame and the completion rate by respondent and unique organizations at each level of involvement. Overall, the completion rate was robust – 44% – especially given the limited sample. Our goal was to complete interviews with at least twenty-two respondents, spread evenly across the three levels of involvement. However, as the table shows, we had much greater success engaging respondents that Energy Trust had worked extensively with in the past, compared to those who had not, despite peer referrals and persistent attempts to reach them.²

Clearly, an existing relationship between Energy Trust and these customers was important to gain their cooperation for this research. We combined the Medium and Low/No groups for analysis purposes given the wide range of association with Energy Trust in the Medium group and the small size of the Low/No group.

Table 1 Qualitative Sampling Frame and Completion Rate

Level of Involvement	Number of Interviews	Total Number of Contacts	Completion Rate	Number of Organizations Represented	Total Number of Organizations	Completion Rate - Organizations
High	9	14	64%	7	10	70%
Medium	10	18	56%	9	14	64%
Low/No ³	4	20	20%	4	16	25%
Totals	23	52	44%	20	40	50%

Report Organization

The following chapters in this report address the research questions an include:

- Chapter 2: What are the Top Issues for Cities and Counties? (combines Research Questions 1-3)
- Chapter 3: What Services Interest Cities and Counties the Most?
- Chapter 4: What Advice do Cities and Counties Have for Energy Trust?
- Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

² While very few people refused to participate outright, they did not answer messages sent or left for them.

³ One respondent in this category lived in an area not served by Energy Trust due to an “instant” referral from another respondent. While this respondent was not asked all questions, particularly about preferred Energy Trust services, the interview was still very helpful.

Chapter 2. What are the Top Issues for Cities and Counties?

Who is Speaking in this Report?

Location of Respondents

Portland Metro/Columbia Gorge	5 respondents
Central Oregon	3 respondents
Southern Oregon	6 respondents
Eastern Oregon	5 respondents
Willamette Valley	1 respondent

The locations are both urban, sub-urban, and rural and have populations ranging from ~1,700 to ~650,000.

Unit of Analysis

Respondents are the unit of analysis for this report. The contact list often included several respondents from one jurisdiction, each with a different title and sometimes different levels of involvement with Energy Trust. Due to the limited sample, and the challenges in reaching people, in several cases we interviewed multiple people from the same jurisdiction (although that wasn't our original plan). This happenstance produced an important insight: respondents from the same jurisdiction knew about different topics and had different perspectives based upon their positions. Some also referred us to a co-worker for a better answer, saying the topic was "outside of their wheelhouse."

Respondent Titles and Responsibilities

Participants had a variety of titles including public works and facilities directors; sustainability, energy, and environmental managers; managers of water and wastewater treatment plants; policy and management analysts; and city and town managers. In larger cities, their responsibilities tended to be more focused, while in smaller ones they often carried a wide range of responsibilities. As one town manager said he "wore many hats – police, fire, public works, city administration, permits, and broadband."

Level of Involvement with Energy Trust

Respondents in High and Medium/Low involvement groups were qualitatively different in two key respects.

- The High Involvement group tends to be in or near Oregon's larger cities (78% of respondents), compared to only 31% of those in the Medium/Low Involvement group.
- As in particular, the High group had more often taken actions directly related to the services Energy Trust provides or encourages, including:
 - Working with their local utilities on energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, serving on their advisory boards, and collaborating on carbon reduction.
 - Having staff participate in long-term strategic energy management (SEM) training.
 - Undertaking energy-related planning, such as energy a
 - Engaging in outreach and various types of communications activities with their citizenry.
- Figure 4 on the next page shows, High Involvement respondents had energy on their agenda more often than Medium/Low Involvement respondents. More had engaged in each of the fourteen energy-related activities we asked them about, often by a margin of twenty-five points or more. While the underlying number of respondents is small, the pattern is clear.

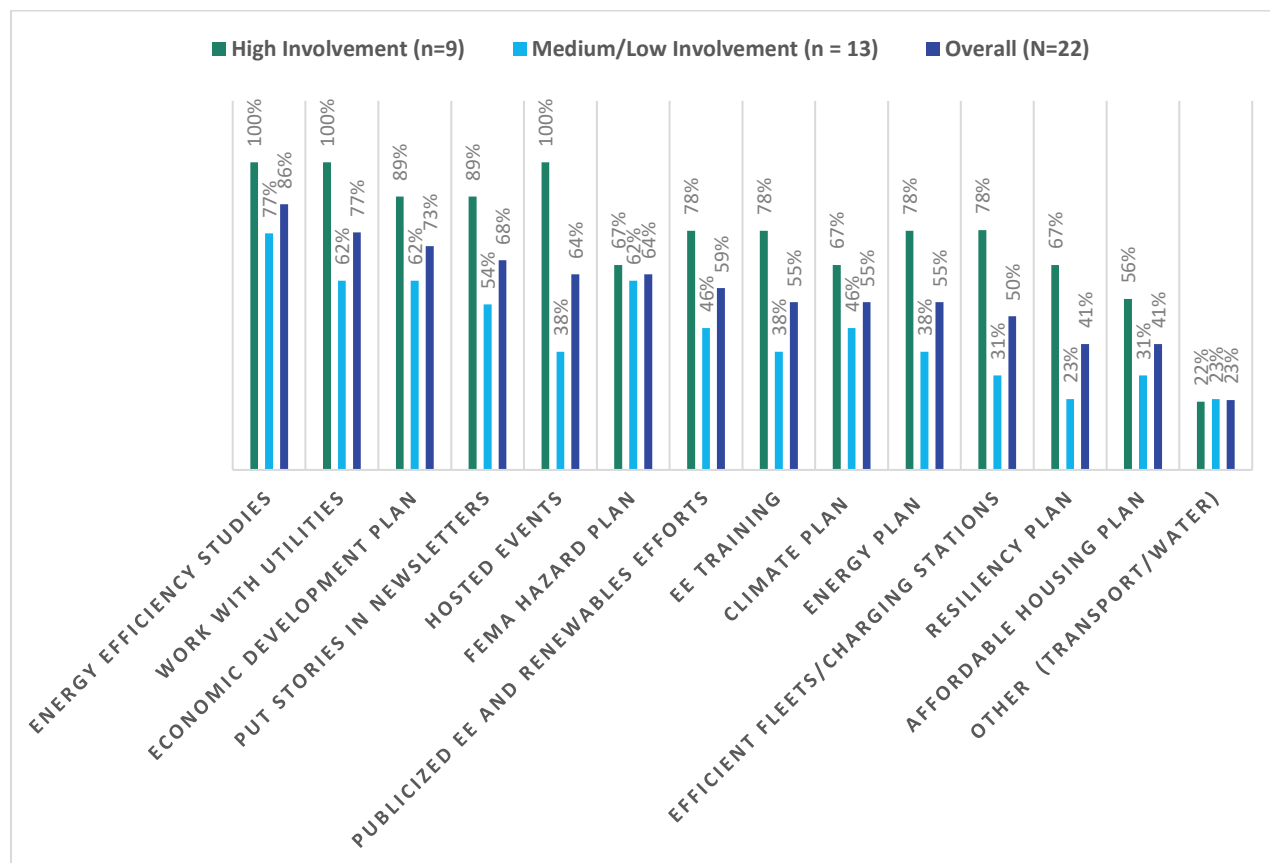
We asked these questions, in part, to qualitatively explore our hunch that the High involvement group had taken more energy-related actions than the Medium/Low group. These results suggest that while many factors likely influenced both patterns, it is also likely that Energy Trust's actions affected the areas served and the level of pro-active energy-related activities beyond specific incentivized projects.

In particular, the High group had more often taken actions directly related to the services Energy Trust

provides or encourages, including:

- Working with their local utilities on energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, serving on their advisory boards, and collaborating on carbon reduction.
- Having staff participate in long-term strategic energy management (SEM) training.
- Undertaking energy-related planning, such as energy a
- Engaging in outreach and various types of communications activities with their citizenry.

Figure 4 Energy Activities by Level of Involvement with Energy Trust



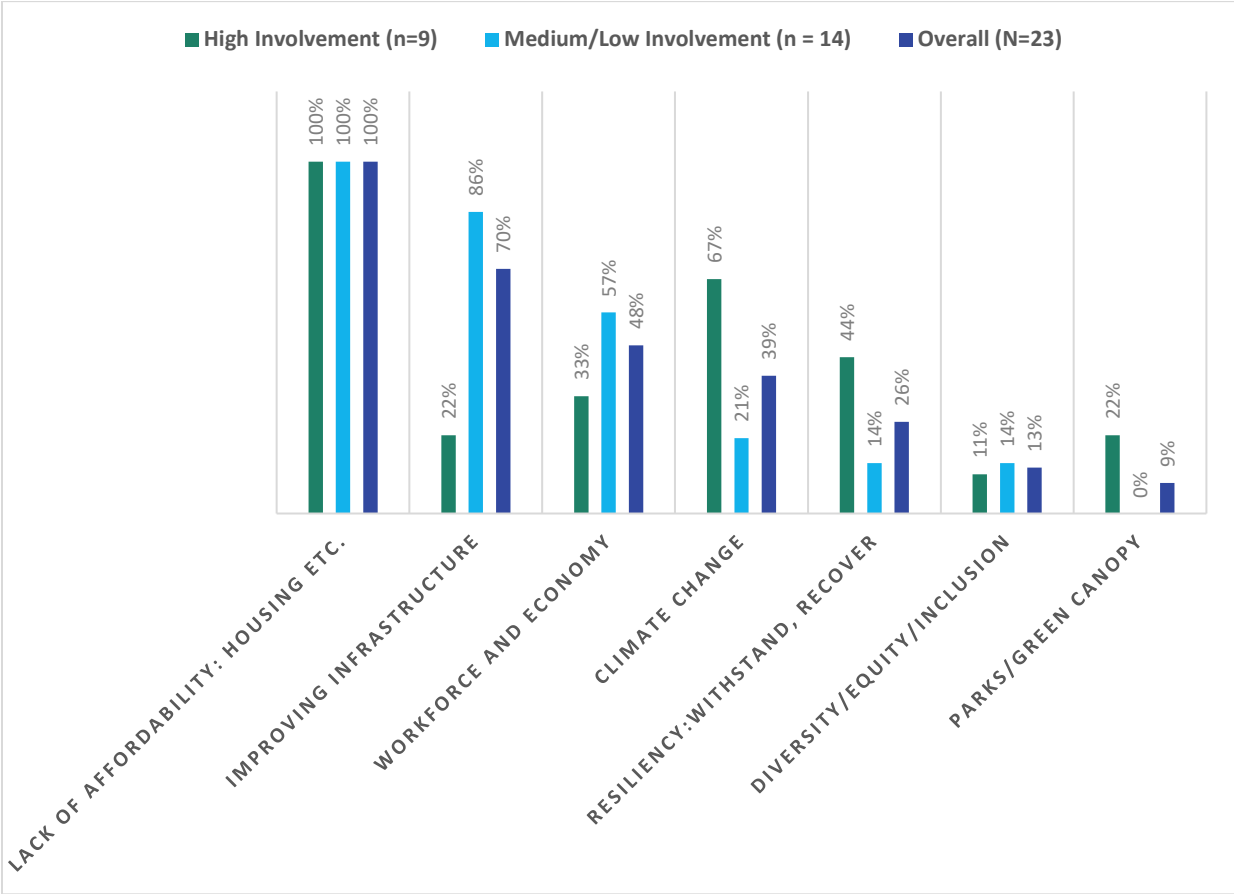
As subsequent sections of this report will show, differences persist between the groups in terms of the top issues for their communities and the types of services they are most interested in receiving from Energy Trust.

Top Issues for Oregon’s Cities and Counties

Figure 5 shows the seven areas respondents identified as one of the top three issues their communities will focus on over the next three to five years. Notably, many respondents described complex issues, combined issues, and switched back and forth from a broad lens to a narrow one. We have tried to stay true to the flavor of their descriptions but bear in mind that the issues are not mutually exclusive.

One hundred percent of respondents said their communities were becoming less affordable, or viable, especially due to the high cost of housing; none of the remaining issues came close in universal concern.

Figure 5 Top Issues for Cities and Counties by Level of Involvement with Energy Trust



After affordability, differences emerged between High and Medium/Low Involvement groups. A greater proportion in the High Group named climate change and resiliency as top issues, while many more in the Medium/Low group mentioned the need to replace infrastructure, maintain or create jobs, and fund

public services and maintain buildings and facilities. Smaller and similar proportions in both groups singled out Diversity/Equity/Inclusion⁴ (DEI) and ensuring green spaces as top issues.

In the next sections we use respondent input to describe the top issues of concern and how energy solutions might help.

Lack of Affordable Communities

The Problem

Respondents say they face several intertwined affordability issues in their communities. Most were related to the cost of housing but they alluded to other rising costs, such as transportation, food, the lack of living wage jobs, and the high cost of doing business. However, they largely focused on housing costs and unavailability, since it takes up a large share of household budgets and has cascading effects in other areas.

Respondents mentioned these housing challenges:

- Inadequate existing affordable housing for “working wage” households.
- Lack of existing affordable housing for low-income households.
- Not enough new housing units to keep up with demand.
- Lack of affordable utility bills.
- Houselessness.⁵

Many of the respondents we talked with said their housing markets have tightened significantly in recent years, and they’ve seen a leap in the costs to build (including buying land and construction), buy, rent, operate, and maintain single and multi-family homes. Respondents in many areas say they are experiencing these barriers to affordable housing:

- Significant growth coupled with limited supply of housing.
- Limited land available for development due to zoning boundaries.
- Inability to secure affordable building materials, some of which are related to the COVID-19 Pandemic supply chain disruptions.
- Difficulties in attracting developers, builders, and tradespeople to their areas, especially if the areas are remote.
- Rising utility bills, making housing less affordable, especially for those with less income.

We did a quick Internet search on this issue and found many articles that cited a growing “housing crisis” in Oregon. An article in *Oregon Business* <https://www.oregonbusiness.com/article/opinion/item/19280-policy-brief-housing-crisis-at-a-tipping-point> (March 21, 2021) states Oregon’s housing shortage is the “worst in the nation as a percentage of existing stock, and the number of people experiencing homelessness was climbing daily.”

⁴ More respondents mentioned DEI are a part of other issues, such as housing and environmental equity.

⁵ Respondents often grouped houselessness with other housing issues, although housing for this population carries with it special challenges.

The guideline for both renters and buyers is that they should spend 30% or less of their gross income on housing costs. Oregon's median household income is around \$60,000, meaning that households should spend up to \$1,500 per month on rent, mortgage payments, and other expenses, such as utilities. Our quick glance at houses to buy or rent in several of the areas included in this research showed many households would likely need to spend much more, and that few choices existed within affordability guidelines.

This disparity between income and housing costs especially affects lower income households, leaving them with less money to spend on other essentials and making budgets tight. These more vulnerable households are just the ones that local governments want most to protect, such as those with disabilities, the elderly, and even college students.

One respondent said some people move further away from their jobs to find affordable housing but that, in turn, creates other problems, including the costs and time for travel.

It's a battle between affordable housing and jobs . . . people can't live here on normal paying jobs. It's insane. We have a joke that all the people who lived in Bend moved to Redmond and Redmondites have moved to Prineville, but they still have to have everyday jobs here. Not everyone can work remotely." – Central Oregon

Another described the crisis this way:

The market is absolutely crazy. There are not enough houses, people can't afford to get a house (personally, his own son) for less than \$350,000 - \$400,000. Development costs [are high], we maybe have one year of inventory [of lots]. . . all of the easy properties have been built out [so remaining lots] are more expensive to build on and more expensive houses go up." - Southern Oregon

Some respondents emphasized that rising housing costs in their communities is due to an influx of people who can spend more to buy or rent than local "working wage" and agricultural households. The housing situation becomes more dire for those with even lower incomes and impossible for some who may become houseless. Some respondents added that lack of affordable housing also threatens the traditional fabric and culture of their communities, so that, for instance, ranchers can't continue, in part because they can't find affordable housing for their workers.

"There is an ongoing diaspora from larger cities to rural communities where richer people are coming in and buying up big chunks of property [displacing] hard-working multi-generational ranchers." – Eastern Oregon

Other respondents said housing stock is limited and developers aren't building enough affordable new single and multifamily homes. The availability of affordable homes appears to be especially challenging in more rural areas where respondents say developers believe the costs and risks to build are high and their profits will not "pencil out."

“We have to get a developer to make the leap of faith in Pendleton . . . make a huge investment in building homes. . . that’s a hard sell.” – Eastern Oregon

“High cost of building; people charge more to come to them.” – Southern Oregon

Other respondents emphasized their concerns about how to make utilities more affordable for the more vulnerable populations in their communities:

“How to get people in older homes with low incomes supported and interested in energy efficiency when it's not a high priority for them. There’s a lack of awareness - I don't think folks keep up on Energy Trust incentives and what programs they have.” – Portland Metro

Respondents said local governments have few direct levers to control soaring housing costs and shortages, but are intent on finding ways to affordably and equitably house people in their communities.

Suggested Energy-Related Solutions

Respondents saw the potential for energy efficiency and renewable energy to help lower monthly utility costs and make homes more affordable, but some were unsure how much relief they could provide compared to the up-front high costs of buying and renting homes.

“Water and sewer bills can be mitigated. . . and energy bills. . . can be lowered, but it’s modest.” – Southern Oregon

“Yes, I can see how energy efficiency and renewables [would help.] Would love to have new housing have access to geothermal to heat. . . and use solar to energize.” – Southern Oregon

Still, many felt that everyone should live in efficient homes, and homes in some areas are very inefficient.

“A third of our homes were built just after World War II – a midnight special at the mill – and we are greatly in need of revitalized housing.” – Eastern Oregon

“Our last homes were built in 1990.” – Southern Oregon

Here are the energy related solutions to housing issues that respondents mentioned:

- **Ensuring high efficiency and solar powered homes (both new and retrofit, single family and multifamily) to lower occupant utility bills.**

Some pointed out that Energy Trust offers incentives to make homes more energy efficient or to use solar power, and others suggested supporting community solar projects. Some respondents hoped that Energy Trust could help attract developer and builders to their areas. The respondent from Eastern Oregon noted he has developed a successful new home incentive program to attract developers and has

attracted interest from other rural Oregon towns. He was open to the idea of energy incentives being added to the program.

Some respondents were concerned that building highly efficient and/or solar homes might increase up-front costs and make homes appear less affordable.

“We haven’t had a lot of success on the housing side. We tried to get the main contractor interested in ETO programs . . .but it didn’t pencil out to do more energy efficiency.” – Eastern Oregon

One respondent suggested sponsoring community-based solar approaches that could both power homes and provide energy to sell. Another hoped energy efficiency and renewable energy sector would bring better paying jobs, help their economy, and make housing more affordable.

Several respondents suggested Energy Trust could do more to emphasize the savings from living in a highly efficient or solar powered home, especially over the long term:

“Energy Trust needs to tell these stories: how do energy efficiency and solar . . .fit into affordable living.” – Central Oregon

“We don’t always think about the life cycle of a home; it’s important to have an energy efficient house and lower utility bills.” – Central Oregon

- **Lowering the cost to operate municipal facilities and utilities through efficiency and renewable energy to keep down utility costs.**

Some respondents who operated wastewater treatment plants mentioned how efficiency and renewable energy can lower utility costs and these savings can be passed onto customers and provide another avenue to make housing more affordable.

- **A change in policies, codes, regulations, and laws at the state and local level.**

A few respondents mentioned more “market transformation” actions, including stricter building codes for energy efficiency at the State level; State laws that allow individual jurisdictions to adopt “reach” codes require greater efficiency; and the adoption of Home Energy Score by jurisdictions. Some respondents said they did not know if Energy Trust were allowed to influence these types of activities.

One respondent said a greater focus should be put in multifamily affordable housing. She had heard that programs exist for landlords to receive tax credits and other benefits when they build and install efficient equipment in multifamily homes.

Replacing/Improving Infrastructure

The Problem

About 70% of respondents overall said their towns, cities, and counties are growing rapidly, want to grow, or have a more robust economy, but they face a variety of issues related to inadequate and out-of-date infrastructure, including those for water, wastewater, transportation, and connectivity. Those in the Medium/Low Involvement group were more likely than those in the High Involvement group to mention this issue (86% to 22%). Even if communities have adequate funding for these projects – and many do not – they find it challenging to plan and manage new infrastructure projects.

Some jurisdictions have substantial infrastructure plans but their towns – or the facilities -- may not be in Energy Trust territory. In addition, some respondents feel their infrastructure needs do not fit Energy Trust's services. The following quotes illustrate various challenges that cities, towns, and counties face in replacing and upgrading their infrastructure.

"We are managing an historic level of growth in the past three years. We are in full master planning mode. We have construction on two Amazon sites, and then a third site and fourth site. We will have 250,000 new square feet and \$4.4 billion of development. We are redoing the water system plan and being proactive to have inventory for future industrial development." – Eastern Oregon

"We are at capacity at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. [But] Our new facility is not in Energy Trust territory." – Central Oregon

"We lack broadband. . . if we can get broadband, people could work from anywhere." – Southern Oregon

"All our emissions are rising in transportation. . . the revenue source is freight and broken. We have a goal to quintuple the number of EV chargers by 2025." – Portland metro

"[Currently] we can't get our cogeneration engine running due to the power company needing to upgrade the substation." – Southern Oregon

Suggested Energy-Related Solutions

- **Some respondents were at a loss to say how energy-related solutions could help them with some of the infrastructure challenges they face.** For instance, they were unsure how Energy Trust services could help them with their broadband and transportation needs.

"Don't know. [regarding broadband and energy solutions]" – Eastern Oregon

"On the transportation side . . . we are continuing to grow carbon emissions. It's a big ship to turn in a new direction. . . Even the governor supports expanded freeways." – Portland Metro

- **Others saw several energy-related solutions related to infrastructure needs, through rehabbing, tweaking, and constructing buildings and facilities to be more efficient or to use renewable energy.**

Some respondents had partnered in the past with Energy Trust for key pieces of infrastructure equipment, including blowers, LED streetlights, sensors in buildings, solar panels on fire and police stations, and cogeneration at wastewater treatment plants.

Respondents also mentioned the Strategic Energy Management (SEM) program had helped facility staff look for efficiency and renewable opportunities in their buildings and facilities.

Finally, some respondents saw the energy savings or generation potential in new facilities.

Workforce, Economy, and Funding Issues

The Problem

About one-half of respondents overall (48%) talked about the ongoing challenges they have in balancing their funds with the services they can provide to their communities, with more in the Medium/Low group (57%) than in the High group (33%). Cities, towns, counties, and non-profits mentioned this balancing act and the effects limited funding can have upon keeping a skilled workforce, having a robust economy, and pursuing public projects.

Even when they get added funding, some were concerned about their ability to manage it well, given limited staff and funding requirements. As a respondent from a county in the Columbia Gorge described: *“It’s going to consume a lot of the Board’s time to spend \$5 million in stimulus funding for certain eligible projects.”*

Several respondents talked about the history of their economy being agriculturally based in timber or ranching, but with changes in those industries, they need to rebrand themselves. The following quotes describe the intersections between workforce, economic, and funding issues.

“This ain’t your grandpa’s ag town – we have state of the art water and wastewater, the most solarized array – think there is value to attract a workforce, especially young techies.”—Eastern Oregon

“Finding a balance between the resources County has and the level of service they can provide. We have an historical lack of funding, [challenges in} staffing and retaining staff.” - Columbia Gorge

“Twenty-five years ago, the lumber mills closed, bringing fear, chaos, and anxiety. Thirty percent of the county lost their jobs overnight. We came together to maintain employment, but it’s not the highest paying. We say our most valuable export is our children.” – Eastern Oregon

“We are creek intensive communities – a lot of bridges; our utilities need constant reinvestment; our parks are tired. We have property tax limits. . .and general obligation bonding which goes to voters.” – Willamette Valley

"We want to diversity our economy, develop [our town] as a recreation and tourism hub." – Eastern Oregon

"It is hard for people to stay here. We used to be the timber capital of the world, but don't have a lot of other industries. We need more employers that have family wage jobs." - Southern Oregon

Suggested Energy-Related Solutions

Like infrastructure improvements, several respondents didn't see how energy-related solutions would help them address workforce, economy, and funding challenges.

"Not off the top of my head what could be offered in terms of efficiency." – Southern Oregon

"It's political and needs a legislative fix (property tax limits)." – Willamette Valley

Other respondents saw the potential to mitigate utility costs through efficiency and take them off the grid with renewable energy. These actions, they hoped, would help make budgets go further, reduce costs for residents, and improve the appeal of their areas for economic development.

"If every sewer and water facility did generation, that would that affect rates." –Southern Oregon

*"Efficient energy use goes hand in hand with water treatment... to reduce [costs] and carbon emissions."
– Southern Oregon*

"If Energy Trust could help with solar panels for pedestrian safety lights. . .that would be great. Would have to have solar be reliable 24/7." – Willamette Valley

Climate Change

The Problem

Those in the High Involvement group mentioned this issue more often than those in the Medium/Low group (67% to 21%). Respondents who chose climate change as a top issue described it as being multifaceted, unsettling, and challenging.

"Climate issues include transport, buildings, energy. . .the goal is to have good answers. . .a bunch of services. . .a way to comply. (Portland)."

They said a key challenge is to secure the unflagging attention and commitment of government, communities, and individuals to take action to reduce emissions:

"Through the lens of a small community. . .we have limited resources. The big thing is to decarbonize industry, transition away from natural gas."

“There are different levels of understanding and commitment... [climate action requires] community involvement and individual commitment.” – Portland Metro

“I don’t know how concerned the City Council is compared to other concerns of livability, safety, economic recovery, and policing.” – Portland

“Bend has a good climate action plan. . . getting them to follow through will be challenging.” – Central Oregon

Some respondents focused on the horrific climate-related events in their own communities, including heat waves, wildfires, ice storms, and decreasing water levels.

“Climate change is showing up in a real way – radically reducing flow out of reservoir – stopping the water for key ag production – all about climate and the drought, wildfires, heat waves – all very real.” – Central Oregon

“Climate Change has brought catastrophic wildfires and ice storms, drought, low water levels in rivers. What can we do to reduce emissions and reach carbon neutral by 2050 – but also what can we do today?” – Portland Metro

Respondents also connected climate change to the need to be more resilient and adaptable, and to the need to protect the most vulnerable populations in their communities.

More broadly, we need to talk about equity and racial justice, education, food systems and security – all really important. And not what we work on every day.” Portland Metro

Suggested Energy-Related Solutions

Respondents see direct connections between reducing carbon emission and the energy-related solutions that Energy Trust has long offered, including a renewed and expanded focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy in the built environment. They also pointed to the need to pay attention to reducing natural gas use and improving the electric vehicle infrastructure.

Some were not sure of the role Energy Trust is playing and will play regarding climate change and some expressed concern that actions to reduce carbon need to go more quickly and need more aggressive action:

“The energy efficiency system is too weak . . . the transition away from natural gas too slow, and the uptake of rooftop solar and storage systems needs to be improved.” Portland Metro.

“Rome’s burning here. How can the Energy Trust really play a role, be more responsive? Can they offer a revolving loan fund?” – Central Oregon

One respondent suggested Energy Trust become more involved with energy conscious landscaping, such as help getting the “right trees for shading – to work with the changing climate and replace dying beech trees with climate friendly ones like black oak.”

Resiliency – Withstand, Recover, Adapt

The Problem

A small portion of respondents overall (26%) mentioned resiliency – the ability of a community to withstand, recover, and adapt after disruptions -- as a top issue. But resiliency issues were often embedded with other issues, particularly climate change and economic well-being. More in the High group (44%) than in the Medium/Low group (14%) individually termed it a top issue. In general, many respondents mentioned a bumpy road ahead for their communities, especially given the past few years with the Pandemic and rising climate change issues.

One respondent described economic resilience or “business resiliency” in this way:

“Business resiliency is being able to sustain disruptions whether from a forest fire or a medical disaster like COVID. Some businesses were able to pivot and keep going. A local company pivoted quickly and set up their outdoor/takeout delivery – a young couple changed their menu, found a new hot sauce maker, got caps to their plastic bottles.” Eastern Oregon

More generally, some local governments – even small ones in more remote areas – are focused upon developing ways to survive disruptions from natural, medical, and other disasters, keep their economies afloat, and keep serving the basic needs of their communities, from food security to having independent power sources to ensuring wastewater treatment continues to becoming tourist destinations.

They are taking some surprising steps. For instance, one city is rebranding itself as a gateway to an area of natural beauty, has a hydroponic solar greenhouse that raises and sells food (including melons!) to the grocery and hospital, and a state-of-the art wastewater treatment plant, where the processed effluent is used to fertilize commercially grown trees nearby. Another example is one community’s idea to expand upon geothermal resources to heat homes and businesses and to develop a one-million-acre night sky sanctuary and geothermal spa for rejuvenation and healing. And another city is building its reputation as the “most happening ag town in the country with arts and music.”

Suggested Energy-Related Solutions

Respondents see direct connections between resiliency, sustainability, and efficiency and renewable energy solutions. The respondent from city which endured wildfires in 2020, described how Energy Trust helped them rebuild homes above code and how the community is paying more attention to solar options and climate change.

“People (here) are climate focused – they want to rebuild to be more sustainable.”

A few respondents mentioned that Energy Trust could help create solar plus storage resources at the neighborhood level to power emergency centers for cooling during high temperature days and to provide staff and communications nodes in the aftermath of natural disasters, such as earthquakes.

“Is anyone providing technical support and an incentive package for solar + storage resiliency hubs?” – Portland.

Diversity/Equity/Inclusion (DEI)

The Problem

A small proportion of respondents named DEI specifically as a top issue, but quite a few referenced the need to pay attention to less represented, more vulnerable portions of their citizenry in the context of other issues such as houselessness and, in one case, energy inequity. One respondent talked about how, in the energy efficiency industry, middle to higher income households have been better served with programs and incentives, while lower-income households that are strapped for cash and live in households that need the most energy upgrades, are often underserved.

In general, the respondents who talked about DEI said it is a huge and newly rising issue, difficult to even find good help on how to proceed.

“Equity/inclusion. . .housing is a big piece. How do we really make that meaningful. . .similar to homelessness, no one knows, still trying to figure out how to do it.” – Central Oregon

Suggested Energy-Related Solutions

One respondent suggested that more efficient housing makes it more affordable for vulnerable populations and that better jobs may become available if the energy efficiency and renewable resources industry expands. A second respondent asks how programs can provide equitable incentives and motivations for low-income households to pursue energy efficiency and solar

Parks and Green Canopy

Problem

Only two respondents in the High Involvement group mentioned the need for parks and preserving tree canopies as a top issue. In one case, the growth in the community had taken down many trees and they had not been replaced, making the city realize they had not done a good job of enforcement around tree removal. In the second case, the respondent said park space was limited and enhancements were needed, but resources weren’t available to expand parks.

Suggested Energy-Related Solutions

One respondent suggested Energy Trust could consider supporting an increased tree canopy to shade homes and reduce load during peak demand periods. The second respondent suggests that parks would be a good place to generate solar power and to use solar to power park needs.

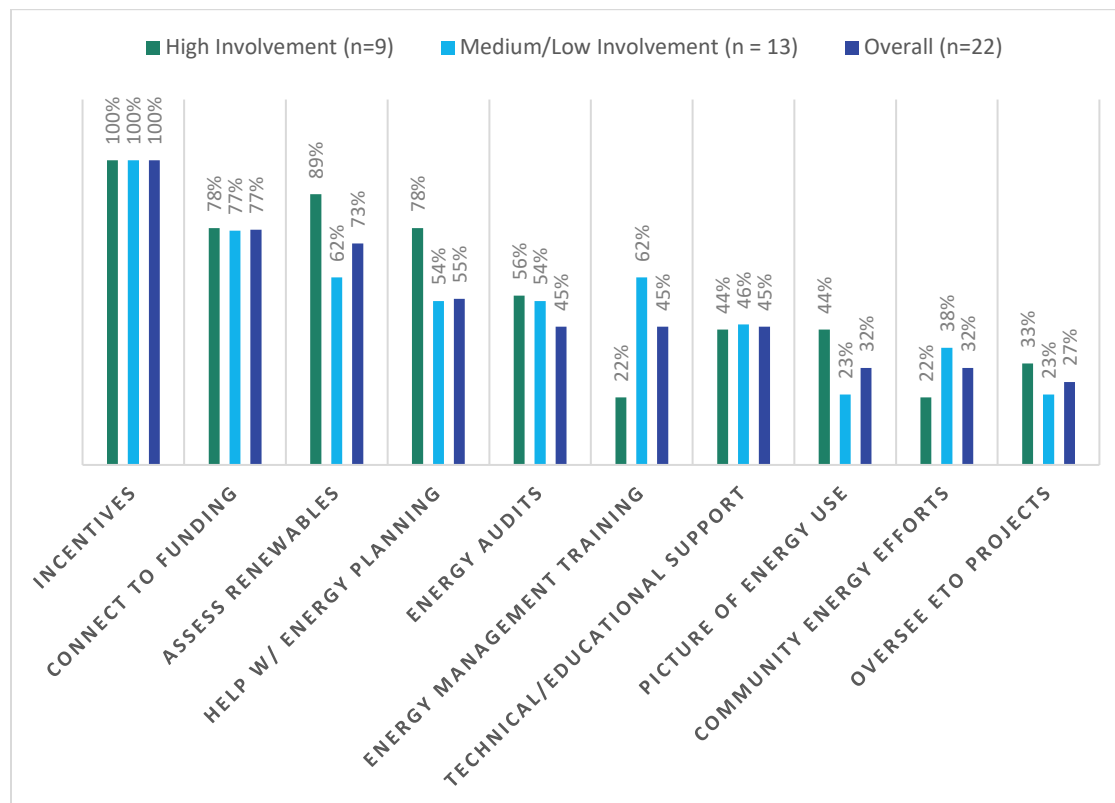
Chapter 3: What Energy Trust Services Interest Cities and Counties the Most?

Introduction

Energy Trust staff developed short descriptions of ten current and potential services and asked respondents to say how interested they were in each service. The goal was to do a “quick take” on which services interested city and county respondents the most and why.

Figure 6 shows the proportion of respondents, overall, and by group, and the proportion of respondents who said they were very interested in, or highly enthusiastic about, the service. Some ratings for services varied by group. We have found that singling out high interest is the best method to “predict” respondents’ likelihood of to give an offering consideration. High interest responses, however, do not guarantee people will follow through and act upon their interest.

Figure 6 Percent of Respondents “Very Interested” in Ten Energy Trust Services by Level of Involvement



Groupings of Very Interested Ratings

The ratings, while qualitative and based on a small number of respondents, fell into three rather neat categories:

- High Level: 55% or more of respondents were highly interested in the service (n = 4)
- Mid-Level: 45% of respondents were highly interested (n = 3)
- Low Level: 27% to 32% of respondents were highly interested (n = 3)

High Level

The four services that rose to the top of the very interested responses included:

1. Incentives for investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy (100% of all respondents).

Given all the input from respondents about the need cities and counties have for funding, it is not surprising that incentives have universal appeal. Those who had taken advantage of Energy Trust's incentives in the past highly valued the incentives and said Energy Trust have been "great partners"

Respondents pointed out incentives made the difference in getting a project accomplished. They said it was a "huge priority" to obtain them because was the "best way to get a project to "pencil out." Respondents emphasized that the incentives reduce two key barriers to completing projects: paybacks are too long and upfront costs are too high.

2. Connection to other funding sources for energy-related projects. (77%)

Respondents often had questions about how this resource would work, and we typically described it as a clearinghouse. As indicated, over three-quarters thought that help with identifying further sources for financial help with energy projects would benefit them, especially if it would save them time and help them evaluate potential opportunities. Many had had good experiences with Energy Trust staff as "very easy to work with." Some emphasized that they were "leery of chasing grant opportunities," that "money is never free" and that "federal money is the most expensive."

"We had a stretch of road that would cost \$1 million. [An elected official] found us the million. . .but federalized it cost \$2 million."

One respondent expanded on this idea saying they wanted "soup to nuts . . .not just on funding but planning and preplanning. . . rural people are not dumb, but they haven't been exposed to the scale of thinking in urban areas."

3. Assessment of renewable energy opportunities. (73%)

Respondent enthusiasm for exploring renewable energy opportunities was palpable for many. Some said their elected officials "wanted to look at solar." Others asked if they could be put in touch with someone at Energy Trust about a particular project ("*we are interested in putting hydro in our pumps*") or that they needed the expertise of someone at Energy Trust to help them think through a project.

“This is very beneficial. Every city should have that information. Many are looking at sustainability and energy. . .but don’t have the human capital.” – Southern Oregon

4. Help from Energy Trust’s experts with energy aspects of various plans, such as energy, climate, and resiliency plans. (55%)

While the proportion of high interest ratings were lower overall, 78% of those in the High Involvement group were very interested in making use of Energy Trust’s expert staff to advise them on the energy portions of key planning documents. The higher proportion of interest in the High Involvement group may be due to this group, in general, having progressed further with these types of planning efforts.

“This would be great. . .it would ensure we would look at the energy piece. We tend to focus on structure but need resiliency with power. Engineers like structure.” – Portland Metro

Mid-Level

5. Energy audits (45%)

Those who were very interested had a variety of reasons, including that they:

- Were “always interested in doing deeper dives in buildings.”
- Thought it was the “first step to see what’s going on and what to do about it.”
- Would “like it coupled with training.”
- Would be “absolutely interested in free engineering” from Energy Trust.
- Had gotten “a lot of value out of that [before] and found a whole lot of things that could be improved, operations and maintenance staff really enjoyed it and learned a lot.”

6. Energy management training (45%)

Several respondents were already participating in the Strategic Energy Management (SEM) program, and everyone said they had gained a lot from participating in it. Some said that after a number of years, they wondered when the SEM training would no longer be needed. Others said they wished they had more capacity to work on SEM but still greatly appreciated it. For some respondents, staff responsibilities are too high, or they have too few staff, to take part in SEM training.

7. Technical and educational outreach support (45%)

Respondents were interested but some had questions about what this would entail. Several said they valued Energy Trust’s technical and communications expertise and could imagine this working in several ways. Some said outreach and community involvement was “outside their wheelhouse” and Energy Trust would need consult others in their organization.

Low-Level

8. Picture of energy use in their buildings and facilities (32%)

Quite a few respondents asked for more detail about what this service would provide and we did not have more details to give them. While some were clearly interested, others were already tracking their use or confused this service with an energy audit. Several who were interested said it would be very important to be able to easily interpret the data, or to get help or training from Energy Trust in making sense of it.

9. Support community efforts to develop energy plans (32%)

Those in the Medium/Low Involvement group were more interested than those in the High Group. Some were already in the process of preparing an energy plan and thought Energy Trust financial support or expertise would be helpful. Others were already done with their plan and didn't think they needed more help. One very interested respondent said they would like to use Energy Trust as a "third party validator" of their plan.

10. Help oversee Energy Trust Funded Projects (27%)

A few respondents said they would unilaterally welcome an extra eye on Energy Trust funded projects; this was usually the case when they had very few or no staff to take on an oversight role. Most said they had enough adequately trained staff to do the job, would hire professionals to do the work, or that they would be open to such help depending on the project.

Chapter 4: What Advice do Cities and Counties have for Energy Trust?

Toward the end of the interview (and often short on time), we asked respondents to tell us about any others energy-related organizations that they work with and to advise Energy Trust on the best way to approach and talk with their organizations about the services and benefits of working with Energy Trust.

Other Energy Related Organizations

Most cities and counties did have other partners they worked with on energy projects. Some worked with non-profits and grass-roots local organizations on a regular basis and hired them to manage projects and deliver services. We interviewed three of those organizations and found them very insightful and helpful. And connected! In one case, the director of a non-profit connected us on the spot, via email, with three or four contacts to interview, several of which resulted in interviews.

Advice to Energy Trust

This section combines both conclusions and recommendations since it is based upon advice respondents gave to Energy Trust in how to best approach and serve them.

1. Keep doing what you're doing: Don't hold your light under a bushel basket.

Those who know Energy Trust highly regard their staff and services. Several respondents went out of their way to compliment Energy Trust, saying that the staff they work with have got a "lot of good expertise, and even if they don't know something, they will help them figure it out...they are very approachable." Another said "we hold Energy Trust in high esteem around here. They communicate that they want to roll up their sleeves or provide training and we can jump to that because we have a long relationship." A third said "they are already doing a good job and my relationship with Energy Trust is phenomenal."

2. Use Benefits Messaging: Show me the money and then everything else.

The strongest benefits are financial: incentives, lowering upfront costs (and payback for businesses); saving money over time; lowering utility bills; making homes and businesses more affordable, freeing up money for other uses, creating jobs, and spurring the economy.

Non-financial benefits are also persuasive, including helping communities preserve quality of life, keeping people in their homes, and improving comfort, resiliency, and independence.

Most respondents said that using the term "climate change" is usually acceptable but tread carefully in more rural or conservative areas.

3. Focus on Relationship Building: Find out more about the community and audience.

Before approaching local government contacts, learn more about how their organization is structured what their community values, and what they've been doing lately that might relate to energy efficiency and renewable energy. Use Energy Trust's local representatives and the city and county websites to help with this.

Use that intelligence to help build connections during initial and ongoing conversations. Listen to the stories that your contacts tell and connect them to what Energy Trust can offer. For instance, several respondents told "origin stories" about their towns, such as that they are rooted in timber and ranching, or that they "are not your grandpa's ag town."

4. Use Multiple Points of Entry: Start at manager and director levels, develop relationships with more than one contact, and ask about presentations to upper management and elected officials.

The director and manager level respondents interviewed for this research appear to be a good place to foster relationships: they are the ones most likely to have a stake in energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. If possible, develop multiple points of contact to become more embedded in organizational memory.

Many of these respondents also suggested Energy Trust work through them to determine if informational sessions for upper management and elected officials would be useful. Several noted that these groups would benefit from knowing more about Energy Trust, especially since they often needed to approve projects. They advised including a peer-level person from Energy Trust in these presentations to convey the importance of the relationship to Energy Trust.

5. Communicate: Stay in regular touch (but not too often)

Several respondents suggested meeting with them regularly (1-4 times a year) to ensure clients know the services available from Energy Trust and that Energy Trust knows about upcoming opportunities to provide services. These interviews, for instance, turned up several potential projects and requests.

Several respondents said they wished they had a more shorthand way to connect with the services Energy Trust offers. Consider whether a display-worthy directory with key links could be developed to help these clients find the resources they need.

6. Use Influencers: Let others work on your behalf.

Respondents indicated that they rely upon and are in touch with their peers for support and guidance: In particular, several public works directors, wastewater treatment facility operators, and town managers said they talk regularly with one another. Cities and counties also rely upon state, regional, and local non-profits (for instance, Solar Oregon and The Environmental Center); schools and

universities (for instance, the Oregon Institute of Technology); and local chapters of national organizations (for instance, the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies [ORACWA]), to provide information and do projects.

Energy Trust should take advantage of these peer networks and support professional associations to get energy more regularly on the agenda.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter offers conclusions and recommendations based on the findings presented throughout the report and mirrors those presented in the executive summary.

Differences Between the Groups

Respondents in High and Medium/Low Involvement groups were qualitatively different in two key respects:

- High Involvement respondents tended to be in or near Oregon's larger cities, while the Medium/Low Involvement respondents tended to be in more remote areas.
- High Involvement respondents had energy on their minds more often than those in the Medium/Low Involvement group. When asked about fourteen energy-related activities, more respondents in the High Involvement group had engaged in each of them, often by a margin of twenty-five points or more, as shown in Figure 1.

Energy Trust actions likely influenced both differences. The first difference coincides with respondent perceptions in this and other research that Energy Trust is city-centric and needs to further its reach, something the organization is already working on.

The second difference suggests high involvement with Energy Trust is related to local governments taking desired energy-related steps beyond specific projects. Notably more High Involvement respondents reported they do the following:

- Work with their utilities on energy efficiency and renewable energy issues, including collaborating on projects and programs, serving on advisory boards, and discussing carbon reduction.
- Educate citizens and staff on energy-related topics, including hosting events, publicizing accomplishments, and training workers.
- Develop plans for a clean energy future, including energy and resiliency plans.

Top Issues for Cities and Counties

Four areas emerged as the top issues cities and counties will focus on in the next three to five years (*See Figure 2 Top Issues*):

- **Lack of affordable communities, especially related to housing costs**, is the top area of focus. Every respondent participating in this study included it as one of their top three issues.
- **The need to improve infrastructure** is a second area of focus and is more salient for Medium/Low Involvement respondents who tended to be from smaller, more remote communities with fewer resources.
- **Building the workforce and economy** is a third area of focus, which again looms larger for Medium/Low Involvement respondents.
- **Climate change and resiliency** is a fourth area of focus and will likely to be more salient in communities that already have High Involvement with Energy Trust.

More detail about these issues, barriers to solving them, and the potential for energy-related solutions, can be found in Chapter 2.

Recommendation

Energy Trust should frame its program and service offerings for cities and counties around these issues:

- **How to achieve more affordable housing**, using energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. Services should address new and existing, owned and rented, single and multifamily homes.
- **How to improve infrastructure**, using energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, including those for water and wastewater treatment plants, public buildings, and, if possible, transportation.
- **How to be more resilient to climate change**, including increased temperatures and other weather events, and wildfires.

We do not suggest framing program and service offerings with workforce and economy themes because Energy Trust has limited ability to support direct activities in these areas. However, the workforce and economic benefits of working with Energy Trust on these issues should be woven in wherever possible.

Top Products and Services

Four products and services, out of ten discussed, received the highest level of interest from respondents. *See Figure 3 Level of “High Interest” in Ten Product and Services*

1. Incentives for investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy (100%).

Respondents said incentives had made the difference in getting a project accomplished. They said it was a “*huge priority*” to obtain them because it was the “*best way to get a project to “pencil out.”*” Respondents emphasized that the incentives reduce two key barriers to completing projects: paybacks that are too long and upfront costs that are too high.

2. Connection to other sources of funding for energy-related projects. (77%)

Over three-quarters of respondents thought that help with identifying further funding sources for energy projects would benefit them. Some envisioned it as a “one-stop shop” or clearinghouse that would help them evaluate options and determine “if the money is worth going for” given its reporting and other requirements. Many cited good past experiences with Energy Trust, with one saying staff are “very easy to work with and the paperwork is not difficult (*Willamette Valley*).” One respondent from a rural town suggested Energy Trust should help them develop projects, “*not just funding advice.*”

3. Assessment of renewable energy opportunities. (73%)

Respondent enthusiasm for exploring renewable energy opportunities was palpable. Some said their elected officials “wanted to look at solar.” Others asked if they could speak with someone at Energy Trust about a particular project or with specific expertise to help them think through a project.

“This is very beneficial. Every city should have that information. Many are looking at sustainability and energy. . .but don’t have the human capital.” – Southern Oregon

4. Expert help for energy-related plans, such as energy, climate, and resiliency plans. (55%)

While the high interest ratings for this service were lower overall, 78% of those in the High Involvement group were very interested in using Energy Trust’s expert staff to advise them on the energy portions of key planning documents. This group’s higher interest reflects their positive past experiences receiving expert help from Energy Trust staff – experience that those in the Medium/Low Involvement group did not have.

“This would be great. . .it would ensure we would look at the energy piece. We tend to focus on structure but need resiliency with power. Engineers like structure.” – Portland Metro

Recommendation

Based on these findings, Energy Trust has some analytic and developmental work to do, including:

1. Analyzing how current products and services can best be used to help address the top three issues for cities and counties (housing, infrastructure, climate change).
2. Identifying and fleshing out new products and services that should be developed to help cities and counties address these issues. The development of new offerings should keep respondent product and service preferences in mind (incentives, funding clearinghouse, renewable energy opportunities, expert help). It should also include research on city and county-based programs that might offer opportunities for collaboration.
3. Identifying which staff can serve as experts on each of the three key issues.
4. Developing a targeted menu of products and services for each key issue.
5. Communicating with cities and counties about the new “issue-based menus,” including how to easily access them. An early step in communicating with these audiences would be to send out a summary of this research to all respondents, since all were interested in seeing the results.
6. Assessing the results of this new approach.

Advice to Energy Trust

This section summarizes the advice respondents gave to Energy Trust in how to best approach and serve them. More detail on their advice can be found in Chapter 4.

1. Keep doing what you’re doing: Don’t hold your light under a bushel basket.
2. Use Benefits Messaging: Show me the money and then everything else.
3. Focus on Relationship Building: Find out more about the community and audience.
4. Use Multiple Points of Entry: Start at manager and director levels, develop relationships with more than one contact, and ask about presentations to upper management and elected officials.
5. Communicate: Stay in regular touch (but not too often)

6. Use Influencers: Let others work on your behalf.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Energy Trust of Oregon

Final Municipal Energy Planning Research Interview Guide

7-14-2021 [Interviewer: Fill in background information about respondent below]

Name *Organization*

Date *Telephone* *Email*

Table 2 Correspondence Table of Research Topics, Questions, and Interview Items

Project Goal: To discover how well the high priority needs of the targeted organizations align with the resources available from Energy Trust

Research Topics	Research Question (these are high-level questions, not exact questions that will be asked)	Interview Items
6. What are the most important issues that local governments face?	Who is speaking? What are the community's highest priority issues? Why?	1 2
7. What are the key barriers to solving their high priority issues?	What are the biggest challenges municipalities face in addressing their high priority issues? Are these challenges present? (team assumptions): <i>Lack of time/resources; inability to convene the right entities; lack of policy; departmental siloes; rising energy costs</i>	3 4
8. How do local governments think about energy improvements (including energy efficiency and renewable energy) as a strategy to help them address high priority issues?	Do municipalities view energy improvements as part of the solution to some of their high priority issues? How? What connections can respondents make between energy improvements and high priority issues? What energy improvements have they previously taken? Are they planning any further efforts?	6 7 8
9. How can Energy Trust services help local governments?	How interested are municipalities in services and/or programs from Energy Trust? Why or why not?	9 10 11 12 13 14
10. How can Energy Trust best work with communities to pursue energy improvements?	What advice do municipalities have for Energy Trust to work with them effectively? Would they like someone to contact them about services?	15 16 17 18

Introduction

Hi. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. As I mentioned, I'm an independent consultant working with Energy Trust of Oregon. We are interviewing representatives of about 20 municipalities across Oregon to learn more about community priorities and challenges for the next few years and how Energy Trust might help better serve your community.

I have a series of questions to ask you. If you have any questions of me as we go along, please ask. If you don't know the answers to any question, just let me know, and we will move on. Also feel free to refer me to others in your organization who may have more to add about any topic we discuss.

Our talk will take 45-60 minutes; your name will not be used in any reporting. To thank you, we are offering all participants a summary of our findings about the priorities and challenges Oregon communities are facing, and the services Energy Trust can offer. Would you be interested in receiving a summary?

I'll be taking notes as we talk, but I'd like to record this conversation to ensure my notes are accurate. Is that okay with you?

Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

Part 1: Community Priorities and Energy Improvements

1. First, please briefly tell me your title and your job responsibilities.
2. Like most communities I'm sure yours has struggled, and still struggles with, the fall-out from the Covid-19 pandemic. Today I'd like you look ahead and tell me about the **top three issues** or concerns your (town/city/county/area) will likely **focus on the most** in the next three to five years. *(Note: Steer them away from short-term Pandemic-specific issues. **Probe:** Can you prioritize those issues for me – first, second, and third? Why are these issues so important to the future of your community? Probe for specifics. Listen or prompt for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion concerns)*

3. What are the biggest roadblocks to making progress on [first issue]? (*Probe as needed: Lack of time/resources; inability to convene the right entities; lack of policy; departmental siloes; rising energy costs*).
 - a. To what extent could energy improvements – such as making businesses, homes, and municipal buildings and facilities more energy efficient, or developing renewable energy resources like solar power – be part of solving [first issue]?
4. What are the biggest roadblocks to making progress on [second issue]? (*Probe as needed: Lack of time/resources; inability to convene the right entities; lack of policy; departmental siloes; rising energy costs*).
 - a. To what extent could energy improvements – such as making businesses, homes, and municipal buildings and facilities more energy efficient, or developing renewable energy resources like solar power – be part of solving [second issue]?
5. What are the biggest roadblocks to making progress on [third issue]? (*Probe as needed: Lack of time/resources; inability to convene the right entities; lack of policy; departmental siloes; rising energy costs*).
 - a. To what extent could energy improvements – such as making businesses, homes, and municipal buildings and facilities more energy efficient, or developing renewable energy resources like solar power – be part of solving [third issue]?
6. Has your organization been involved with any of these energy-related activities in the past five years for your own buildings and facilities – including water and wastewater treatment plants? (*Probe for specifics – why, who, outcomes?*)
 - a. Conducted studies of to see if your buildings and facilities could reduce energy use or install renewable energy?
 - b. Publicized any efforts your organization has made to reduce energy use or install renewable energy?
 - c. Hosted events in your community about sustainability, energy efficiency, or renewable energy?
 - d. Worked with any utilities in your community to promote or help customers learn more energy efficiency or renewable energy options?
 - e. Included any stories in your newsletters or other community communications about energy efficiency or renewable energy?
7. Has your organization in the past five years participated in or supported any of these other activities related to managing energy use in your community? (*Probe for specifics – what, why, who, outcomes?*)
 - a. Had the staff at your building or facilities attend training to help them better manage energy use and costs?
 - b. Upgraded your buildings or facilities to be more energy efficient or to run on renewable energy?

- c. Improved the fuel efficiency of your fleets or converted fleets to cleaner fuels?
 - d. Upgraded the energy efficiency codes for buildings and facilities?
 - e. Created a plan to address climate change?
 - f. Developed an energy plan?
 - g. Created a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan?
 - h. Developed a plan to address resiliency?
 - i. Created an economic development plan?
 - j. Created a plan to address affordable housing in your community?
 - k. Undertaken any other type of planning effort that includes components related to energy use? _____
8. What energy-related efforts, if any, does your organization plan to undertake within the next three to five years?

Part 2: Energy Trust Services and Resources

Energy Trust of Oregon wants to understand the types of energy-related support that would best meet your community's needs. I'd like to run some ideas by you about support and services Energy Trust offers now or *may offer* in the future. These *potential* services are in four areas: Planning; Training and Education; Assessment services; and Financial.

9. First, planning. How interested are you in having Energy Trust . . . (*Probes: Why do you give that rating? Would you like someone to follow up with you about this service?*)
- a. Provide you with a picture of the energy use across your own buildings and facilities, (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)
 - b. Support community-wide efforts to create an energy vision, goals, and plan, including help to engage and coordinate stakeholders and creating the plan? (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)
 - c. Help you with the energy aspects of other planning efforts, such as plans to address resiliency, climate change, economic development, or affordable housing? (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)
10. Second, training and education. How interested are you in...? (*Probes: Why do you give that rating? Would you like someone to follow up with you about this service?*)
- a. Technical experts and educational materials to help with outreach to schools, homes, and businesses about energy-saving or renewable energy opportunities? (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)

- b. Training for your building facilities staff to better track and manage energy use, and to recognize and prioritize energy efficiency/renewable energy projects? (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)
- 11. Third, assessment services. How interested are you in... (*Probes: Why do you give that rating? Would you like someone to follow up with you about this service?*)
 - a. Energy audits that show you where the best opportunities are to reduce energy use in your buildings and facilities, including water and wastewater treatment plants? (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)
 - b. Assessments of renewable energy opportunities, such as solar plus storage, biopower at water resource recovery facilities, or hydropower production at a drinking water treatment plant. (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)
- 12. Fourth, financial support. How interested are you in these types of services?
 - a. Helping you obtain Energy Trust incentives to offset some costs of energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements? (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)
 - b. Helping you oversee projects that receive Energy Trust incentives? (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)
 - c. Helping your organization connect to other funding sources for energy improvements? (Very, somewhat, not too, not at all)
- 13. Based on your ratings, it looks like your highest rated services were (X, Y, Z) – is that accurate? Why are these services highest on your list?
- 14. Are there any other types of support or services you would like to receive from Energy Trust that we haven't talked about?

Part 3. Partnering with Outside Organizations

- 15. In what ways has your organization coordinated with your [electric] [gas] utility on issues related to energy planning and use?
- 16. Are there any other organizations that you work with on energy planning and use?

17. What advice do you have for Energy Trust in approaching your organization with potential services like the ones we've just discussed? Who should be contacted? What types of benefits or words would get their positive attention? (*Probe: Are there words they should avoid?*)
18. Would you be interested in having someone from Energy Trust contact you **(or others in your organization)** about the services and resources they can offer, especially those where you have the greatest interest?

Thank you so much!

PINK PAPER

Final Report

Small Business Study on Black Businesses in the Portland-Metro Area

October 21, 2021

Funded By:
Energy Trust of Oregon

Prepared By:
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Executive Summary

This report describes the results of a qualitative research study that Nathan Webster and Associates, LLC (NWLLC) conducted for Energy Trust of Oregon (Energy Trust) that explored the awareness of energy use by Black owned businesses and the methods around energy conservation and best practices through Energy Trust. Those interviewed identified as Black and/or African American small business owners within the greater Portland-Metro area. The emphasis was on their businesses and their energy use awareness. Energy Trust sponsored this research study to gather insights on how they can better serve the community.

This research explores the following areas:

- Awareness of energy and energy programs by Black owned businesses and their views on energy cost
- Interest in improving energy use and receiving information on how to do so
- Knowledge of business space, energy use, and related expenses
- Reasoning of when to upgrade equipment and spaces
- Operations of Black owned businesses regarding the impacts of COVID-19, as well as available financial incentives utilized

This study includes two data collection sets due to COVID-19 delays; the first set was collected between March-April 2020 when lockdown restrictions for safety went into effect and the research project was postponed, and the second was in 2021 following the approval to resume the study from Energy Trust using alternative collection methods, such as video conferencing.

Data collection activities included surveys and interviews through telephone, video conferencing, and in-person methods. All respondents were previously reviewed and approved to be contacted for this study by Energy Trust.

Of those contacted, 28 agreed to participate and completed the in-depth interview. However, one respondent's data was removed due to disqualification from the study.

We will refer to the group of respondents as "respondents" and each respondent was assigned a designation to maintain anonymity.

Each research question lists key findings summarized for review. The report first presents key findings and then the overall conclusions and recommendations.

Memo

To: Energy Trust Evaluation Team
From: Ashley Bartels, Susan Jowaiszas
cc: Tracy Scott

Date: October 29, 2021
Re: Staff Response: Black Businesses / Qualitative Market Research

Knowledge about businesses owned by Blacks in Portland and Vancouver has been particularly challenging to find. These customers have not participated in our programs in substantial numbers, represent a fairly small proportion of businesses in general, and general distrust of institutions, including utilities and Energy Trust, is high, particularly in the Portland metro area. This is a barrier to identifying, let alone gaining trust with, Black customers.

To enable Energy Trust to be more successful in reaching and connecting with Black businesses, Energy Trust retained the services of Nathan Webster & Associates. Nathan attends meetings of Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME) and met Energy Trust's Sr. Manager of Customer Service, Cameron Starr, who referred him to the program marketing team.

Program marketing staff worked closely with Nathan to orient him to Energy Trust's mission and programs, develop an interview guide for qualitative interviews, and identify businesses to be interviewed for the research study. Nathan started the study in spring 2020 with qualitative in-person interviews, and we made the joint decision to suspend the work once businesses were temporarily shut down due to the rise of COVID-19. The work was revived in Spring 2021 and Nathan completed the interviews mostly via Zoom.

The research provides valuable insights into how Black businesses operate and how they think about energy. The biggest issue boiled down to trust. These business owners had a very skeptical view of Energy Trust based on their own experiences but were intrigued by the idea of becoming more energy efficient if trust could be established.

Energy Trust can build on the outreach and insights from this research to begin to address these barriers:

- Create a cohort of Black businesses from interviewees. The research scope had its limits but there are natural follow-up questions that could be answered. Building trust within the Black business community will happen customer by customer. Building off this group of interviewees to create a kind of "cohort" of Black businesses could be an effective way to build this trust. While some of respondents know each other, some could make new connections through this cohort. In this way, Energy Trust could support the Black business community in a material way.

- Look for opportunities to collaborate with Black community groups to co-deliver offerings. The report mentioned several community groups that could be great community partners for businesses and for residents.
- Deliver benefit to the Black community. As one example, the Business Lighting direct install offering will be directly presented to interviewees as just one way to demonstrate that Energy Trust heard Black business owners and wants to deliver benefit to them.
- Share out these findings with other Energy Trust program managers, program implementers and utilities so they can make connections to their own work.

Key Findings

Finding #1

Black businesses are struggling to make a profit during the Pandemic. During the interviews, the business-to-consumer (B2C) companies struggled to ensure their businesses stayed open during the time of this study, due to the restrictions placed on businesses related to COVID-19 safety. It was not until businesses reopened that interviewees could speak during business hours.

There was no theme to the reasons why other companies did better than others. The largest number of respondents represented in the interviews was Health and Beauty businesses.

Finding #2

The business owners interviewed noted either a significant increase, or drastic stop, in business compared to last year.

For the B2C companies, COVID-19 restrictions caused many businesses to rapidly alter their practices in order to keep their doors open during the pandemic. While many business-to-business (B2B) companies found different methods to increase their customer base via their social media feeds, various business owners had to step in and field calls with the shift from in-person to virtual/remote work. Several restaurants modified their hours, which included not being open seven days a week.

Three construction companies that were contacted struggled to reply to our communications via email or phone due to the high volume of contacts they were receiving. The receptionists documented the phone calls and took voicemails. They all said the workload was high and couldn't promise a call back.

Finding #3

Black business owners often associated Energy Trust with a utility company or with utility bills. When the interviewees were asked about Energy Trust, they most commonly associated Energy Trust with utility bills and not opportunities and bill assistance programs like the residential programs. Several interviewees volunteered information that their electric bill was behind at the time of the interview. Several businesses found creative ways to pay utility bills off, including support from their local community members via large donations.

Initially, those unfamiliar with Energy Trust thought the interview request was regarding an unpaid bill. The vast majority needed more than a brief description before they agreed to do the interview. After Energy Trust's role in the community was described, the interviewees wanted to learn more.

Finding #4

The best ways of reaching Black owned businesses, particularly B2C, isn't through digital methods. The best way to engage the Black business owner community is through personal contact and connection. There are known influencers in the community who can help with this effort.

This research began with in-person interviews. Communications to businesses via email, phone, and social media received a lower response rate, which encouraged in-person meetings,

some impromptu following an initial in-person visit. In person interviews would have been the preferred method of interviewing however COVID-19 restrictions forced interviews to go completely digital and made it more difficult to communicate with the business owners during the study.

1. Introduction

In 2019, Energy Trust and Nathan Webster & Associates, LLC agreed to complete a study with the purpose of learning about the energy conservation habits and sustainability practices of Black owned businesses. This research report summarizes 28 (27 following a participant's ineligibility) in-depth interviews conducted for Energy Trust in early 2020 and 2021. These interviewees were identified as Black and African American (Black) small business owners within the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area.

The goal of this research was to learn more about the business and business owner. These interviews sought to learn more about the participant's business, their operational habits, understanding of energy costs, and knowledge about Energy Trust. A list of potential businesses was created. After Energy Trust approved the list, the initial contact was made in person, by email and by phone.

This research explores the following areas:

- Awareness of energy and energy programs by Black owned businesses and their views on energy cost
- Interest in improving energy use and receiving information on how to do so
- Knowledge of business space, energy use, and related expenses
- Reasoning of when to upgrade equipment and spaces
- Operations of Black owned businesses regarding the impacts of COVID-19, as well as available financial incentives utilized

To answer these questions, the research team at Nathan Webster and Associates, LLC (team) conducted qualitative interviews with 28 Black business owners who operate a business in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. Participants received a \$50 gift card for their participation in the study.

Additional sections in this report include:

- Program Data, Targets, and Completed Interviews
- Findings
- Conclusions and Recommendations

2. Program Data, Targets, and Completed Interviews

The research plan required Nathan Webster & Associates, LLC team members to connect directly in a one-on-one setting with the respondent (business owner). This allowed for each respondent to have time to consider the question and reply with more detail and accuracy.

- Interviews completed with 28 business owners who identify as Black or African American
- 27 interviews used as one respondent's responses were removed from review due to the participant no longer being eligible for the study (leaving 27 responses)
 - 11 were conducted over video conferencing (Zoom)
 - 11 were conducted in-person
 - Three were conducted over the phone
 - Two were conducted through a survey
- Timing of interviews includes 2020 prior to COVID-19 restrictions and 2021 after restrictions were in place.
- The researcher contacted 41 Black-owned businesses and was able to complete interviews with 27 for a 66% response rate.

Table 2-1 Interview Data

Characteristic	Count	Percent
Interview Year		
2021	21	77.78%
2020	6	22.22%
Interview Method		
Video Conferencing (Zoom)	11	40.74%
In-Person	11	40.74%
Telephone	3	11.11%
Survey	2	7.41%

2.1. Methods

Interviews were conducted in 2020 prior to COVID-19 restrictions and during various phases of reopening in 2021, with data collection completed by June 2021. Interviews ranged from 30-60 minutes and some over an hour. During the interview, the researcher took notes using a worksheet. Interviews were primarily done over the phone, in-person, and using video conferencing, but two were completed using a survey. Several respondents required multiple methods or attempts to contact to complete the interview. COVID-19 restrictions required a lot of change and adaptation for businesses during the duration of the study.

There were difficulties during the study related to the lack of time and COVID restrictions. Many interviewees declined to participate out of caution or fear. Some expressions of why included:

- Interviewer was seen as a stranger with no direct relationship to the community
- Energy Trust of Oregon was seen as a foreign entity
- Businesses were operating virtually and hesitant to meet or answer questions remotely
- Business were unable to make or have time for an interview
- Racial tensions were at an all-time high during the study which made discussing Black topics difficult for some

Several interviewees also expressed being “tired” at having to explain the “plight” of the Black person to “white people” (large entities like The Energy Trust) and didn’t see how vocalizing or responding would help improve the situation. For example, one potential interviewee stated:

“I appreciate you reaching out. Honestly, I am tired of companies asking about this topic without any results. To me it is them and other companies checking a box. I would be more impressed if they came out with what they have done and what they plan to do with measurables connected to it such as the CEO, President, VP's, Directors and Managers compensation connected to the success. If I see this in writing I would be willing to speak to them about this otherwise I know they are not serious.

We need change and action. No more words...

Sorry, I cannot help you with this but I am tired bro!”

The largest obstacle was that most interviewees did not know who Energy Trust is or what their business is. So not understanding how Energy Trust could help their business posed a problem for business owners.

3. Findings

Below you will find demographic data related to the participants in this study. Table 3-1 shows that most business owners identified as Generation X. This data point was an important component because it was a driver for some of the respondents' answers with other questions behind their why, location, and future succession.

Data shows that most participants seek to provide for their family, set their family up for the future, expand and franchise their business, dominate their sector/specialty, and survive the effects of COVID-19.

Most businesses settled their businesses in Portland-Vancouver because they consider it their community and/or were born and raised in it. Some spoke very passionately about staying in Portland, even in spite of the heated protests and uncertainty of COVID-19.

Most businesses interviewed can be categorized under Health & Beauty or Cafe/Restaurant sectors.

The majority of these businesses did not acquire a loan or financial assistance of any kind during COVID-19. They also report struggling and not knowing of financial incentives like those available through Energy Trust.

Table 3-1: Participant demographics and characteristics: Generation Identifier

Characteristic	Count	Percent
Generation Interviewee Identifies as		
Baby Boomer (1946-1964)	6	22.22%
Generation Z (1997-present)	1	3.70%
Millennial (1981-1996)	4	14.81%
Generation X (1965-1980)	16	59.26%

The majority of business owners interviewed are Generation X with ages between 41 to 56 years old. There was only one who didn't want to provide their actual age.

This question was typically asked first.

Table 3-2: Participant demographics and characteristics: Primary Business Info

Location of Primary Business		
Portland	19	70.37%
Vancouver	6	22.22%

Beaverton	1	3.70%
Salem	1	3.70%
Number of Businesses Owned		
More than One	3	11.11%
One Reported	24	88.89%

Table 3-3: Participant demographics and characteristics: Business Ownership

Business Ownership in Years		
0-2	3	11.11%
3-5	3	11.11%
6-10	4	14.81%
11-20	12	44.44%
21+	5	18.52%

There was only one interviewee who started their business within the 2021 calendar year, and the other two started 2020 and earlier under the two-year mark.

These business owners favored entrepreneurship over being an employee for someone else. They seek to find ways to be more competitive in their sector. In spite of the pandemic, none of them wavered on the professional decisions and their business was treated as their retirement.

Table 3-4: Participant demographics and characteristics: Business Goals

Business Goals
Provide for their Family
Pass the Business to Their Family in the future
Expand/Franchise
Take Over the World/Their Sector
Help Others in the Community
Still Exist/Make it through the pandemic

Table 3-5: Participant demographics and characteristics: Business Area Reason

Reason for Operating a Business in the Area		
Acquired Business in the Area	1	3.70%
Fell in Love with Area After Visit/College	5	18.52%
Fit Business Needs	3	11.11%
Moved for Family	1	3.70%
No Answer	5	18.52%
Considers it their Personal Community/raised here	12	44.44%

A theme amongst interviewees showed that although many may have started a business to make money for practical reasons, the owners were sustaining their business for some sort of altruistic reason, beyond themselves, such as community health.

From March 17 to May 24, 2020, the Oregon and Washington Stay Home Order and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act were two significant events. However, those two events took a back seat on May 25, 2020, because the world witnessed George Floyd's death by a Minneapolis police officer. This caused an uproar in every metropolitan city in the United States, and Portland, OR's demonstrations and protests brought international exposure and prompted federal intervention by Homeland Security.

By day, Portland had peaceful demonstrations to show support for George Floyd's life and the others who were Black, unarmed, and killed by police. By night, violent protests erupted for over 150 days altering Downtown Portland's buildings, businesses, and culture. The Black community responded in different ways. The most recognized movement during this time was Black Lives Matter, but Portland has many other Black activist organizations and leaders.

One interviewee has been one of the most vocal business activists and has received death threats but hasn't stopped her desire to help the Black community via her newest organization. The organization's goal is to help educate the mindset of systemic racism's oppression and how it impacts the growth of a person of color.

Table 3-6: Participant demographics and characteristics: Business Category

Business Category		
Art Gallery	1	3.70%
Automotive	1	3.70%
Business Services	2	7.41%
Cafe/Restaurant	5	18.52%

Clothing	1	3.70%
Construction	2	7.41%
Education	1	3.70%
Health & Beauty	5	18.52%
Landscape	1	3.70%
Manufacturing	1	3.70%
Media	2	7.41%
Medical	2	7.41%
Production	1	3.70%
Transportation	2	7.41%

These categorizations are not the best representative of the business owners, but its industry specific to the conducted work. Also, there are some niches.

Table 3-7: Participant demographics and characteristics: Worker Type

Number of People Employed or Subcontracting		
1-10	19	70.37%
11-20	2	7.41%
21-30	1	3.70%
31-40	0	0.00%
41-50	0	0.00%
51-100	1	3.70%
100+	1	3.70%
No Answer	3	11.11%

Over 70% of the owners have less than 10 employees on staff. One research respondent employed the highest number of Black or African-American workers in Oregon state with over 300+ individuals.

Table 3-8: Participant demographics and characteristics: Business Funding Source

Source of Funding		
PPP Loan	5	25%
Used Other Forms of Funding	2	1%
Did not receive funding from outside sources	13	65%
There were (7) companies interviewed in 2020 when PPP was issued.		

All respondents stated they didn't receive any of the initial Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). During the time of the interviews, the second round was open and several made connections with a local program or their financial personnel was assisting them with completing the application before the deadline.

Again, there is no theme to connect all the dots with these businesses. Each of them had a different path for startup funds and supplemental funding during the pandemic.

This question was answered in various ways due to the type of business and different funding. A few businesses were funded under the Oregon Cares Fund, which was Oregon's effort to specifically assist Black-owned businesses.

According to *Oregon Cares Fund aids Black-owned businesses* article by Pamplin Media's Ray Pitz, the Oregon Cares Fund distributed \$62 million to businesses, organizations, families, and individuals. "As of November 23, 2020, \$29.7 million has been awarded and is in the bank accounts of those who applied. That includes \$13.1 million distributed to businesses and organizations and \$16.5 million given to individuals and families" (Pitz, 2020). For Black Oregonians, this was a big deal.

The Oregon Cares Fund was administered by Oregon non-profit, The Contingent. Other interviewees mentioned the City of Portland's Proper Portland and Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO). Although the interviewees made mention of these groups, not all of them received funding.

At the current moment, as this report is being produced, the COVID-19 pandemic is still in effect, but restrictions are being lifted in Oregon and Washington. During summer 2021, companies are opening their doors.

Table 3-9: Energy Use and Energy Trust Familiarity

Characteristic	Count	Percent
Reported Annual Energy Costs		
Do Not Know	13	48.15%
Never Thought About It	1	3.70%
Included in Cost of Business Space	4	14.81%

Less Than \$1000 a Year	4	14.81%
Over \$1000 a Year	3	11.11%
No Answer/Declined to Answer	2	7.41%

For almost all the interviewees, energy was not a primary concern. Some businesses should have considered it to be the primary focus depending on the industry, but they hadn't heard of Energy Trust or its energy programs.

Table 3-10: Energy Use and Energy Trust Familiarity

Familiar with Energy Trust of Oregon		
Yes	6	22.22%
No	21	77.78%

Most interviewees had no knowledge about Energy Trust programs. Out of the 27 business owners interviewed, only five (two in 2020 and three in 2021) knew of the programs. That's a ratio of approximately 1:6 or 18%.

The three with knowledge didn't give specifics on how they knew because it was referred to them from another source. Only one of the five interviewees have ever spoke directly to Energy Trust representatives. That one business owner was aware of the organization but wasn't current with the recent program offerings.

When the question was asked, here are some of the responses the interviewees gave:

- *"Nah. I've never heard. I've never heard of it."*
- *"Uh, never heard of them...Not until you, uh, mentioned something."*
- *"I know some of the programs. I say that I think that there was some transition that occurred. Um, so I'm not, I know that, for example, I know that certain incentives kind of show up and go away and then show back up. So, I can't really say I have my finger on the pulse of what programs are currently being marketed and, um, the return on that."*

The three companies who knew of Energy Trust had participated in a program.

Table 3-11: Energy Use and Energy Trust Familiarity

Can Recall Interacting with or meeting an Energy Trust Representative		
Yes	1	3.70%
No	26	96.30%

Table 3-12: Business Square footage and Energy Use

Business Square Footage

0-999 sq ft	6	22.22%
1000-1999 sq ft	6	22.22%
2000-2999 sq ft	3	11.11%
3000-3999 sq ft	1	3.70%
4000-4999 sq ft	0	0.00%
5000-5999 sq ft	2	7.41%
6000-6999 sq ft	0	0.00%
7000-7999 sq ft	1	3.70%
8000-8999 sq ft	0	0.00%
9000-9999 sq ft	0	0.00%
10,000-49,000 sq ft	1	3.70%
50,000-99,999 sq ft	1	3.70%
Square Footage Unknown	6	22.22%

Approximately 25% of the interviewees didn't know the square footage of their business. They all offered to follow up but didn't know off the top of their heads. Most interviewees (29%) had office spaces averaging 1,000 to 2,499 square feet.

Table 3-13: Business Square footage and Energy Use

Owner Belief that they are Maximizing Space Efficiency for Energy Use		
Yes	1	3.70%
No or No Answer	26	96.30%

All companies wanted to learn more from Energy Trust. This is an opportunity for outreach as the recommendations are implemented.

Table 3-14: Business Square footage and Energy Use

Have You Thought about ways to reduce operating costs by changing how you use energy?		
Yes	12	44.44%
No	15	55.56%

One salon owner expressed the need to have a commercial space for her growth fulfill the new needs of her company. During the interview, she spoke to some preliminary work before reaching out to the Energy Trust.

An overwhelming majority requested resources for how to start the process as they were unsure where to start.

Table 3-15: Interest in Learning More About Energy Trust of Oregon

Interested in Learning More from the Energy Trust of Oregon		
Yes	15	55.56%
No	2	7.41%
Maybe	2	7.41%
Owner Is Not In Control Of Energy Use	1	3.70%
No Answer	7	25.93%

All welcomed the idea of a focus group without any declines. They all wanted to learn more about Energy Trust and their programs.

For those that didn't have an answer about who the Energy Trust was or what they had to offer, they stated a want to conduct their own research before giving an answer.

Table 3-16: Repairs Information

When repairs are done, who does them?		
Landlord/Building Owner (if not business owner)	8	29.63%
No Answer	7	25.93%
Outside Vendors (get quotes)	3	11.11%
Business Owner	6	22.22%
In-House (employee)	2	7.41%
Depends on the Maintenance Need	1	3.70%
Themes for how business owners Determine Updates		
Do Research		
When Necessary Only		
Consult Vendors and Specialists		

Look for Deals
Consider Cost vs Need
Not Sure / Had No Plan or Ideas

This question regarding repairs created a myriad of answers, but it was very evident no company had a specific contractor or seasonality to updates. The only exception was that leased machinery is on a maintenance schedule and was conducted by the company.

Table 3-17: Interviewee Questions

Questions or Comments
What can be done with windows for the storefront to conserve energy?
People like us exist and deserve help
No Answer
Energy is a very important piece of their business and they would like to know everything they can.
If companies can connect hungry businesses to resources (instead of expecting the businesses to find them) then it will be more effective.
What does the Energy Trust do?

3.1. Business Operations

This section describes how business owners obtain information regarding project improvements and equipment purchasing.

The standard seems to be that they replace and update when it is necessary, meaning that their business operations are disrupted or equipment is no longer operational. This is all dependent on the need vs cost and whether repairs can be done in house.

3.2. Awareness of Energy and Energy Programs

Six respondents recalled having any interaction with Energy Trust or their representatives during their business ownership. This may be a result of a lack of projects on their part that would qualify for Energy Trust incentives, but most business owners interviewed were not familiar with the Energy Trust as a business entity.

For most interviewees, energy use was not a primary concern. Some businesses suggested they should be more aware of their energy use, but they hadn't heard of any organizations or energy programs to reach out to prior to this study.

3.3. Opportunities for Engagement

Most of the business owners interviewed expressed an interest in learning more about programs that would reduce energy use and potentially provide a financial incentive. Some also expressed a desire to spread awareness in the community, however, they were still unclear about the programs and offerings from Energy Trust.

Energy was not a concern until the idea that using it wisely would save money and benefit their business. Some interviewees mentioned the idea to partner with larger Black owned businesses and inspire other businesses to adopt the same habits. One interviewee remarked:

“And if they are interested in diversity and inclusion, it's not free and the best way to do it. That is by aligning themselves with entities that represent that, which they want to improve upon. So if you, if they're looking at getting information out to Black people, then maybe you need to be working with us and serve as Black people, but that ain't free. You know, we get these calls from folks and say, you know, we have this program.”

“Do you have some Black folks? Well, yeah, but, but if you got money, then why aren't you paying us? Cause we're basically doing recruitment for you. And for you and we're doing it free.”

“So, if you have resources and you bring resources to the table, because my people already got a job, it ain't, they job to run around and find people to put in your program, even though it might benefit them.”

“But if you've got resources, then we can actually either hire or identify somebody and give them resources to go do that work. Uh, and then it becomes a win-win for everybody.”

Conclusions

Conclusion #1

It will take an investment of time and hours on the part of Energy Trust within the Black community to establish trust

There is an adage that goes “people do business with people who they know, like, and trust.” To build trust, Energy Trust will need to engage, educate, and commit to this community in order to gain their support. Engaging and educating through an organization like the Life Change Church and Self Enhancement Incorporated would mean reaching a good portion of the Black community in Portland, as they have been located in and serving the Black community for over 20 years. They have already built the relationships and know the key players, which makes them perfect for partnerships.

One of the best ways to gain trust in the Black community is to work side by side with the community members. Working with these organizations would involve collaborating with their programs and services. All the interviewees expressed an excitement to be on the cutting edge of technology and spoke to optimizing their operations to support initiatives like renewable energy.

Without the details articulated and laid out, there will be hesitation due to the unfamiliarity with Energy Trust. Some Black business owners need to feel seen and understood before they can agree to understand and participate in a program that might change how they do business operations.

Black is a culture with a specific language to navigate. There is a difference between Black Africans and Black African-Americans. Another element to consider are the Black leaders with decades of experience capacity building within the Portland-Vancouver Metro area.

Energy Trust could focus on the smaller B2C businesses which would gain the trust of the community because the more time and effort that is spent working with these small businesses generates word-of-mouth buzz. After enough business is helped in a particular industry or sector, other companies in the Black community will follow suit, provided the results are positive. Building relationships with smaller companies would also increase access to other Black-owned company leader networks.

Incentive programs that assist Black businesses in their efforts to not only survive, but thrive, was mentioned in several interviews. It is not about sponsorship, but rather a diversification of resources available to that business and awareness of and access to programs that can make a difference in their bottom line.

The focus should be to serve Black businesses within the network, geographic area, and industry to the best of Energy Trust’s capacity, rather than to make a sale.

Creating the opportunity for trust starts with Energy Trust being the actor and not the reactor who waits for the community to engage with the Energy Trust. If the business owner is unaware of the organization’s existence, how would they be expected to seek out the organization. A

welcome packet to new businesses that outline money saving options would get people aware and planning for future phases of their business.

Conclusion #2

Energy Trust will need to provide educational workshops on energy savings and cash incentives using community organization and support.

Educational workshops do not have to be significant endeavors or grand events. Depending on the number of personnel supporting this endeavor, staff can provide different modalities of workshops via technology used for webinars and learning management systems. Energy Trust currently has over 20 different offerings on their site related to businesses, however, there are limited offerings related to training events for businesses. While it is important to acknowledge the limitations of educational events during a pandemic, there are virtual options for education and videos or pamphlets that could be run through for new businesses on a regular basis.

Provide free classes on energy improvements, energy savings, and cash incentives for businesses. Every industry will provide a list of different opportunities. This shouldn't be a broad stroke.

For example, Health & Beauty firms stated the following could be upgraded:

- air-conditioning units
- air flow (design)
- overhead lights
- blow dryers (wall outlet & sitting)
- heating for retail spaces with windows surroundings

The Health and Beauty companies expressed the difficulties working with landlords, tenant improvements, and lack of vendors who understood their businesses.

Due to all the various companies, the classes should have some virtual component. The newest technology platforms allow for the live events to be replayed for those who cannot to attend in-person. This fills the void of lack of classes, even if they're more explainer videos to build upon Conclusion #1.

The pandemic has also created a different norm for creating safe spaces. As Energy Trust ramps up an opportunity to serve a bigger and more diverse pool, these classes will provide the initial investment for building trust and gaining support for programs. Providing resources is essential but providing equitable access is paramount; that starts with education.

Since the pandemic, virtual meetings and working-from-home have changed the dynamics of the workplace environment. However, some Black businesses haven't used some of the virtual tools. As two companies didn't use Zoom until the interview, finding the right virtual platform for levels of users will be paramount.

A more concentrated and intentional effort on those able to participate in the virtual learning can be made while still providing proper assistance for those with technical difficulties. The outreach would require a customer management system (CMS) of some kind for optimal efficacy.

Conclusion #3

Make Energy Trust marketing more approachable for Black business owners.

Energy is in every facet of residential and commercial property, but there isn't a difference between the utility companies and Energy Trust. Paying the electricity bill isn't glamorous, as it is commonly seen as just another bill. The problem with energy is that it isn't viewed as a company asset and instead as an expense. Almost all the interviewees didn't consider the benefits to doing business with Energy Trust before the interview, but they all wanted more information afterwards.

Ultimately, Energy Trust is a best kept secret within the Black small business community and that needs to change. This will be a heavy lift because it's based on recommendation one.

Black businesses along with other entities have a lot on their plate in addressing their outreach efforts since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, the pandemic compounded with gentrification for the last 20+ years, Black businesses have needed to change how they conduct their operations which includes technology infrastructure and marketing efforts. This is a good time for those brick-and-mortar businesses who are reevaluating commercial space and overhead expenses.

Being the priority is to keep the doors open with the revolving pandemic regulations, businesses investing in energy with Energy Trust need to have a return on investment sooner than later.

Another approach within the campaign is to embrace volunteers for this heavy lift and potentially other endeavors. For those seeking to reduce the carbon footprint, they can be mentors for the smaller business. As the public entity is seen as the energy authority, an inference of one's opinion suggests the organization is the thought leader in helping with innovative technology, policies, and resources.

Conclusion #4

Energy Trust will need to seek out and follow up with research respondents and provide education.

An overwhelming amount of the participants in this study wanted to be followed up with. The interviewer asked if a focus group would be of interest, and all welcomed the idea without any declines.

A significant investment in the Black community would start with inviting the interviewees for an in-person focus group. This focus group will take a deeper dive into the questions asked and continue the work from this study. Recommendation #1 building trust throughout their companies could lead to something bigger.

Each one of these companies has specific communities that they serve. Some of these business owners do not know each other because their work doesn't cross or intersect with one another. So even though it may not lead to an immediate Energy Trust business transaction, the opportunity will increase hope and camaraderie amongst the Black business community to build the critical component of trust, which is currently missing.

In fact, most participants cited wanting to set their children and families up for the future as a reason for starting and investing in the Portland-Metro area for business.

Conclusion #5

Energy Trust should follow up with developers and real estate landlords who work closely with Black business owners, because COVID-19 has changed the landscape of NE Portland.

A few of the interviewees' stated their ability to do any improvements heavily relied upon the owner. The majority of Black business owners lease their space and their first point of contact for repairs is their landlord, the property owner. Reaching out to these property owners, especially if they are also Black business owners, could be a good connection to expand the awareness of energy efficiency as a business asset.

Appendices

Appendix A: Communication Templates for Potential Interviewees

Appendix B: Discussion Guide Used in Interviews

Appendix A: Communication Templates for Potential Interviewees

Email Request

Hi [name of respondent],

My name is Nathan Webster. I called earlier today and was given your email. I'm a certified minority business in Washington and Oregon. As I mentioned earlier in my call, the reason for this email is because the Energy Trust of Oregon recently hired me to help the leadership learn more of how to serve Black leaders and businesses, and I put you all on the list to be a contributor.

It's 30 minutes of me asking some questions to help their leadership serve our community better. My goal is to make it a quick conversation, because I know you're busy. When the interview is completed, you will be blessed with a \$50 gift card anywhere of your choosing. Here's the scheduling link: [link].

All smiles,
Nathan

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Social Media Request / Text Message

Hey [name]! I'm working on a project the Energy Trust of Oregon recently hired me to help the leadership learn more of how to serve Black leaders and businesses, and I put you all on the list to be a contributor.

It's 30 minutes of me asking some questions. My goal is to make it a quick conversation, because I know you're busy. When the interview is completed, you will be blessed with a \$50 gift card anywhere of your choosing.

If you're interested, let me know and I can send my scheduler. Or, you can lemme know when's a good time.

Appendix B: Discussion Guide Used in Interviews

Business Ownership: (baseline of who they are)

1. How long have you been a business owner?
2. What industry would you consider your business in?
3. What Generation category do you fall in?
 - a. Gen Z (born between 1995-2015): 4-24 yrs. old
 - b. Millennial (born between 1980-1994): 25-39 yrs. old
 - c. Gen X (born between 1965-1979): 40-54 yrs. old
 - d. Baby Boomer (born between 1944-1964): 55-75 yrs. old
 - e. Choose not to say
4. How long have you been an Oregon business?
 - a. 0-2 years
 - b. 3-5 years
 - c. 6-10 years
 - d. 11-20 years
 - e. 21+ years
5. Why did you choose this community?
6. What's your long-term plans for business?

Operations: (needs assessment of pains and gains)

7. Tell me about your business operations pre-COVID and over the last 12 months?
8. Did you receive business assistance from any organizations – chambers, start-up money or low-interest loans, better business bureau, small business assistance providers like? If yes, which organizations or programs?
9. Do you know how much money you spend annually on energy costs?
10. What do you know about Energy Trust of Oregon's programs for businesses?
11. Have you been able to maximize your square footage profits and savings? (need to know size & ownership/lease)
12. Have you thought about ways to reduce operating costs by changing how you use energy?
13. Do you have any other locations?
14. Do you use subcontractors, employees, or interns? (If so, how many do you use and what is their position-subcontractor, etc.)
15. How do you handle building maintenance? (Outsource, in-house, etc.)
16. How do you decide what equipment to buy? And when to install it? Who installs it? (each industry will vary on season and cost)
17. If interested in learning more about energy efficiency cash incentives from Energy Trust for your business, would you like to be contacted in the future?
 - a. If so, how do you wish to be contact (e-mail, phone, etc.)

Feedback

18. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your business, energy in general, or about Energy Trust?

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PINK PAPER



Latino/a/x Business Owner

Focus Group Summary



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Executive Summary

Objective

To understand Energy Trust's target audiences more deeply, Lara Media Services (LMS) conducted market research with Latino/a/x small business owners about their business needs around energy, utilities and equipment.

Note: See Appendix for focus group discussion guide and survey questions.

Methods

Lara Media Services (LMS) screened more than 30 Spanish-speaking Oregonians from diverse regions across the state. A total of 15 survey participants and 10 virtual focus group participants were recruited. All participants identified as Latino/a/x and Non-native English speakers, and market research was conducted in Spanish.

Topline Focus Group Findings

Key discussion topics included: Location; Support Programs; Equipment; Energy Efficiency; and Small Business Support from Energy Trust.

Location

When it comes to deciding on a business location, many participants choose areas that best cater to the community and clientele they wish to serve—and to bridge gaps in the available service sectors.

Latino/a/x small business owners have been adversely affected by the housing crisis and gentrification, both personally and professionally, across all Oregonian locations. All of the participants rent their places of business and do not own the buildings. Some participants noted the dual complexities of tourism: while it fuels gentrification causing rental prices to rise, tourism also helps keep businesses running.

Support Programs

COVID-19 has heavily impacted most small businesses, causing owners to rely on financial aid for their continued survival during the pandemic. None of the participants had ever received financial aid before, and felt it was unfair that it took a pandemic for the government to take an interest in the wellbeing of small business owners. Unfortunately, undocumented businesses owners did not received the help and support they needed.

Equipment

When asked about service providers for equipment installation and repair, only two participants had hired a company or service before. Most participants seek help from personal connections or handle it themselves. The Latino/a/x community prefers to work with Latino/a/x contractors as a means of supporting their community. Yet, participants noted that many Latino/a/x vendors lack an online presence, making it challenging to work together.

Cost and language barriers have heavily prohibited small business owners from getting the information, services, and equipment they needed to grow and improve their businesses. The lack of Latino/a/x service providers significantly limits Spanish-speaking business owners' ability to gather information. Participants felt stifled: these barriers have caused them to miss opportunities that are widely accessible to others.

New equipment is a highly desired commodity. However, many Latino/a/x business owners don't have the funds to acquire any. Moreover, as they operate out of rental properties, these spaces are fitted with outdated equipment and they cannot make modifications until the building owner decides to do so.

Energy Efficiency

There is no doubt that energy usage is essential to any business. The most significant source of energy expenditure for many small businesses, besides equipment, is air conditioning and heating. Participants pay up to \$700 a month on energy. While only four of the participants knew about clean energy, three participants had independently looked into renewable energy. Most others were receptive to the idea of becoming more energy efficient. Yet, many suspected that switching to renewable energy may not be cost-effective; that the installation costs and process would not outweigh the savings. Although there are programs and organizations geared towards helping business owners install energy-efficient equipment, many participants believe they are inaccessible to their communities.

Since many Latino/a/x business owners are property renters, they are unable to access energy efficiency options directly. Even if they are interested, these decisions are often left up to building owners.

Small Business Support from Energy Trust

While none of the participants had heard of Energy Trust, when they learned about Energy Trust's Small Business Offering, many participants wanted more information about the services and would be willing to trust Energy Trust if there was more substantial presence in their community. Latino/a/x business owners suggested direct in-person contact, email, and social media as the best methods for connecting with their community.

As renters, participants also suggested tailoring the offering—such as installing equipment for lower prices—so they can reap the benefits without needing to own the building.

Topline Survey Findings

- Top five things Energy Trust can do to support businesses in becoming more energy efficient:
 - Provide affordable financing for projects.
 - Provide utility incentives that can subsidize the majority of a project's cost.
 - Provide services agreements that do not require upfront capital/arrangements that impact profit.
 - Provide energy efficiency professional development/education.
 - Support with lighting.
- Two biggest barriers that prevent respondents' business from participating in energy efficiency: not having the time/expertise/capital to invest in it, and not understanding energy efficiency or its benefits.
- Top three resources that businesses need to be successful: funding/economic aid, access to information in their language, and opportunities for business growth

Conclusion

Energy Trust can build stronger relationships with this target audience through deeper community engagement, offering language-accessible information and education, and providing cost-effective services.

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Introduction

The Latino/a/x community in Oregon is environmentally conscious because of its outlook on generational families. The Hispanic community wants to protect the environment to provide a better world for their future generations. To the Hispanic community, addressing climate change is something many Latinos/as/x take personally, with many who have or know someone who has migrated due to climate shifts back home. According to the Pew Research Center, 81% of U.S. Hispanics say addressing climate change is a top concern or one of several personal concerns, compared to 67% of Non-Hispanics believing the same (Mora & Lopez, 2021). Hispanics are also more likely to say that there are considerable environmental problems in their communities than Non-Hispanics (Mora & Lopez, 2021). To the Hispanic community, clean energy and climate change have a deep connection.

Energy Trust of Oregon (Energy Trust), which began operation in March 2002, is in charge of delivering energy efficiency resources and renewable energy initiatives to meet the energy needs of Oregonians with the cheapest and cleanest options available (Energy Trust of Oregon). Oregonians who are customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural, Cascade Natural Gas, and Avista are funding Energy Trust through their utility bills. Lara Media Services' (LMS) expertise and deep understanding of Latino/a/x culture helped Energy Trust understand their target audiences more deeply.

Storytelling highlights opportunities and challenges for clients to reach multicultural communities better. LMS uses a dynamic storytelling approach to improve receptivity and increase emotional connection across cultures. The vision of LMS is to create an equitable world where everyone can be seen, heard, and treated as a valuable and necessary member of society. LMS is an MBE/WBE/DBE certified firm with more than twenty years of experience.

Goal

Energy Trust seeks to understand how to help small businesses better meet their energy, utilities, and equipment needs.

To meet the goals, LMS and Empress Rules partnered together to conduct a series of discussion groups; two in English and one in Spanish. The findings from the two English groups are in a separate report.



Objective

LMS conducted a statewide search for Latino/a/x small business owners to gauge their knowledge of Energy Trust, their small business energy, utilities, and equipment needs, and how best Energy Trust can effectively engage and provide resources to the Latinx community. Ten participants were recruited from diverse areas in Oregon, including participants living in Albany, Bend, Clackamas, Hood River, Lincoln City, Medford, Portland, and Salem. LMS organized, coordinated, and facilitated a virtual focus group in Spanish to capture the sentiments of Spanish-speaking Oregon residents who identified as Latino/a/x and Non-native English speakers.



Methodology

The focus group was held on December 16, 2021. With over 30 people showing interest in participating, LMS screened and confirmed ten virtual participants and fifteen survey participants. Participants were required to have access to an electronic device with a camera and microphone to participate in the focus groups. LMS offered to lend tablets to participants in need of electronic devices; none were requested. LMS also offered Zoom Video conferencing training to all participants who requested assistance; two participants requested and received training.

LMS gathered qualitative and quantitative data through dynamic virtual focus groups and survey questions. The discussion guide consisted of nineteen questions about how small businesses relate to their needs for energy and resources. Discussion topics included: Location, Support Programs, Equipment, Energy Efficiency, and Small Business Support from Energy Trust. Each participant also filled out a survey, plus five additional small business owners that did not participate in the roundtable conversation, with questions on participant demographics, small business priorities, trusted information sources, and understanding about the use of clean energy. The conversation was 120 minutes long. All participants were compensated \$150 for their time, and all surveyed participants were compensated \$20 for their time.

30

Spanish speaking
Oregonians
from diverse
regions

15

Survey
participants

10

Focus Groups
Participants

Findings

Location:

Gentrification and Housing:

The housing crisis and gentrification have greatly affected the Latino/a/x Community, including small business owners, both personally and professionally.

Many Latino/a/x have been adversely affected by gentrification in their neighborhoods regardless of geographical location. The majority believe that this crisis has been caused by the increasing cost of living in highly frequented tourist areas and widespread urban development in larger cities such as Portland and Bend, making it difficult to find and afford housing.

Others have also been affected by natural disasters, such as the Oregon Wildfires, which have burned down many homes and businesses, making it difficult for the affected communities to find jobs and housing. Most small business owners know the widespread housing crisis and have first or second-hand experience with it. One participant's sibling was forced to sell their house, and they moved to Texas after not being able to afford rent. Two others were rendered homeless for a short time and lived out of their business.

These issues have also affected the rent of many business owners, specifically with one commenting that even though their space was relatively small, they stayed at that location due to the affordable rent. Only two said they had enough space; most commented that they would like more room for their business to grow and larger locales, even if that was not currently possible. One participant commented that the rent had gotten so high in their previous location that they moved their business across Portland. But, although the effects of gentrification have been felt, several business owners commented that they depend on the constant flow of tourism to keep their business running, making it possible for their businesses to survive.

“Aquí en Portland nos ha afectado bastante. Si antes una casa valía \$2,130 [por mes] ahora va estar en \$5,600. La renta está super mal, y la gente vive en hoteles porque no hay apartamentos de renta, o están en lista de espera. Está muy difícil en este lugar también.”

Translated: “Here in Portland, it [the housing crisis] has affected us a lot. If a house was worth \$2,130 [a month] before, now it will cost \$5,600. The rent is really bad, and people live in hotels because there aren't apartments to rent or because they are on a waiting list. It's a really difficult situation around here, as well.”

“Yo digo que me ha afectado [el alto costo de las casas], porque todos los costos [de mi trabajo] se han ido para arriba. Y, en un caso personal, mi hermana se ha tenido que mudar a Texas porque con el sueldo que tenía aquí su esposo y ella no pudieron acceder a comprar una casa.”


Translated: “I say that [the high cost of housing] has affected me because all the costs [of my business] have gone up. And, in my case, my sister had to move to Texas because, with the salary she had here, she and her husband could not afford to buy a house.”

Location Selection:


- Most have opened business in areas that best cater to the community or people they wish to serve.

The placement and reasoning differ significantly among the focus group members as to why each business opened when and where it did. Many have opened their businesses in strategic areas to attract business to their establishments, whether from the local community or the clientele they wish to target. However, this strategic positioning also seems to overlap with a solid mutual need to help the communities around them.


While need and familiarity with the type of business they own contribute to most of the participants' decisions to open a small business, 5 out of 7 claimed to have opened their businesses to fill holes in the service sector in their community. One participant, for example, opened their business to help the Latino/a/x community obtain hairdressing services in their language. Another opened an art gallery to help stabilize his income and help provide space for the artistic community he was a part of. He now helps more than 70 artists around Oregon sell their artwork. While the specifics of where and when businesses opened changes, the common rationale is overwhelmingly one of social benefit.

 “Yo soy artista ... Entonces yo llevaba muchos años vendiendo mi arte en festivales y llegó el momento en que ya no quería viajar tanto, y la comunidad de artistas que había creado y conocido a través de 12-14 años de artista fue creciendo. Para mí, abrir una galería era la forma más práctica de seguir trabajando en el arte y a la vez representar a los artistas; en la galería tenemos 75 artistas de todo el mundo.”

Translated: “I am an artist... I traveled for many years selling my art at festivals, and there came a time when I didn't want to travel as much, and the community of artists that I had known and created over those 12-14 years had been growing. For me, opening an art gallery was the most practical way to keep working in art and at the same time represent those artists; in the gallery, we have 75 artists from all over the world.”

 “Yo vine de California y ahí trabajé por 15 años en un salón de belleza.... Como aquí casi no había salones de belleza, cuando vine aquí hace 15-17 años, no había quien cortara el pelo y hablara Español; y yo no hablo Inglés pero puro Español.”

Translated: “I came from California where I worked for 15 years at a beauty salon... since there were barely any beauty salons here, when I moved here 15-17 years ago, there wasn't anyone who could cut hair and speak Spanish; and I don't speak English, just Spanish.”

 “Yo abrí la guardería por necesidad. Lo habrí donde estoy, en White City... porque había la necesidad de cuidado de niños y siempre he trabajado con niños... y así fue como empecé este viaje.”

Translated: “I opened the daycare out of necessity. I opened it where I am, in White City... because there was a need for daycares, and I have always worked with kids... and that was how I began this journey.”

Support Programs

Covid-19 Impact and Support:

- The COVID-19 epidemic has heavily impacted most businesses, but effects vary by business. Notably, businesses whose owners are undocumented were more affected and haven't received the help and support needed.

Many small businesses have been harshly affected by COVID-19 in the past years. One participant in particular recalled how the lockdown meant little to no customers coming to their business and that even now, their business has not fully recovered. The fear of COVID in customers/clients is a challenge that many have seen endure and still foresee enduring in the long. Luckily, not all businesses have been hit as hard as they might have been. Several restaurant owners noted that their saving grace during the pandemic was the use of a drivethrough and food delivery system that even now remains popular. One participant even noted that COVID helped expand their business. With cleaning services being in such high demand, they could expand their clientele and hire more teams, raising wages and providing a steady flow of work and income for their employees.

“Desde que empezó la pandemia no hemos podido abrir al público por que es pequeño [nuestro espacio] y para mantenernos seis pies [es difícil].”

Translated: “Since the pandemic started, we haven’t been able to open to the public because our building is small and it is difficult to maintain six feet apart.”

“Nosotros adaptamos un tipo ‘drive-thru’ y eso es lo que nos ha permitido seguir trabajando.”

Translated: “We adapted a type of drive-thru, and that was what has allowed us to keep working.”

“Nos encerraron por dos meses a lo mejor un poquito más, y después la gente temerosa. Casi no había clientes.”

Translated: “They isolated us for two months, maybe a little more, and after everyone was scared. There were barely any clients.”

Financial Aid:

- Most small businesses have relied on receiving financial aid to stay open.

Monetary aid was an essential part of many small businesses' continued survival. Most participants sought financial assistance from the government, their local counties, or thirdparty organizations/non-profits and were provided with enough help to keep their business afloat. One participant, however, was forced to withdraw a Small Business Administration loan, as seeking help from third-party organizations such as the Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Prosper Portland failed to produce any results. Additionally, none of the participants had ever received financial aid before. They felt it was unfair that it took a pandemic for national and local governments to take an interest in the wellbeing of small business owners. One participant noted that many small businesses, particularly restaurants, were having trouble with the rising costs in their areas

“Sí, me ha afectado bastante [COVID-19], y gracias a Dios sí recibe una ayuda del gobierno.”

Translated: “Yes, it [COVID-19] has affected me a lot, and thank God I received some help from the government.”

“Antes de Covid no habíamos recibido ninguna ayuda financiera de ningún tipo.... Después de eso, sí obtuvimos una ayuda financiera; era la primera ayuda que dieron, y solamente una vez.”

Translated: “Before Covid, we had never received financial aid of any type... After we did get financial aid, it was the first help they were giving out, and we only received it one time.”

“Nosotros no recibimos ayuda del gobierno ni antes, ni después de Covid.”

Translated: “We did not receive any help from the government, not before nor after Covid.”

“Desgraciadamente todas las personas que nos dedicamos a lo que es cuestión de alimentos no nada más eso [COVID-19] nos ha afectado, sino también que los costos se nos han aumentado... y la única ayuda que nosotros hemos recibido fue de una organización, pero no del gobierno.”

Translated: “Unfortunately, all the people that work in the food industry have not only been affected by that [COVID-19], but also the augmented costs... and the only help that we have received was from a non-government organization.”

Equipment

Service Providers:

- Most Latino/a/x business owners seek help from people they have personal connections with rather than large companies.

When asked about their service providers for equipment installation and repair, only two participants mentioned having hired a company or service to do so. Of those, only one participant had a constant service provider, Hobart Services, to find information on how to install and service their equipment. Most other participants either took it upon themselves or had trusted connections that would help them do so; most commonly listed were acquaintances or family members who had a background in construction, equipment repair, or some knowledge of equipment installation. Several other participants have used more commercial services, but infrequently. They attributed increased comfort in catering to or using businesses run by those with similar ethnicity and background to themselves, with one participant stressing the importance many of them felt in creating a tight-knit Latino/a/x community to help each other succeed in their business endeavors.


The Latino/a/x community prefers to work with and support Latino/a/x contractors. They have noticed that many Latino/a/x contractors do not have a solid online presence and wish to know who from their culture can be contracted that can help with their projects.

“Si se nos descompone un refrigerador nosotros contamos con un señor americano. Cosas por ejemplo de construcción o pintura mi cuñado nos ayuda. Tenemos un conocido que tiene su compañía de luz entonces él ha venido a cambiarnos un ‘heater’ y cosas así. Él también se ha portado muy bien y es accesible, entonces gracias a Dios en ese sentido si hay personas que si nos ayudan.”

Translated: “If a refrigerator breaks down, there’s an American we count on. If something has to do with construction or painting, my brother-in-law helps us. We have an acquaintance who has a lighting business, and he has come to help us change the heater and things like that. He has also been good to us and is accessible, so thank God that in that sense we do have people who help us out.”

“Nosotros tuvimos que cambiar todo nuestro sistema de aire acondicionado y ventilación.... entonces yo agarre una compañía que se especializa en poner air conditioners y calentones ... Claro que nos costó caro, el equipo nos costó más o menos \$5,500 - \$6,000 pero ahora yo estoy bien contenta.”

Translated: “We had to change our air conditioning system and ventilation... so I picked a company that specializes in installing air conditioners and heaters... of course it was expensive, the equipment cost us around \$5,500-\$6,000, but I’m very happy with it.”

 “Es muy importante crear un directorio de negocios Latinos para que nos podamos apoyar entre nosotros. Creo que eso es elemental en nuestra comunidad... porque me he encontrado con muchos Latinos y me he dado cuenta que muchos negocios Latinos no están [en línea]... Y no se trata de racismo sino de favorecer a los Latinos.”

Translated: “It is very important to create a directory of Latino businesses so that we can support each other. I believe that this is an essential need in our community... because I have encountered a lot of Latinos, and I have noticed that many Latino-run businesses aren’t there [online] ... and it’s not about racism but about supporting Latinos.”

Barriers:

- Cost, rental boundaries, and linguistic/cultural differences all provide barriers for the community to get the equipment or information they need to help improve and grow their businesses.

New equipment is one of the most wished-for commodities for Latino/a/x business owners, although the type of equipment varies by business type. Whether it be refrigeration equipment, water pipes, or stovetops and grills, one thing that most of these businesses had in common was that their equipment was old, and one of the most common barriers was cost. Many small businesses simply don’t have the money to buy new equipment, use available equipment for long periods, or buy used equipment to save on costs.

Another prominent reason behind this phenomenon is the issue of rent. Most, if not all, the focus group participants do not own the building their business is based in but rent them. While a few are working towards buying their own building, their situation predominantly affects their access to new equipment. Several had their equipment come with their building, and since it was old/pre-used, they have been stuck using it until the proprietor decides to replace it. This also limits their ability to handle utility issues such as broken water pipes and faulty electrical boxes. Those issues fall under the landowner’s responsibility, and renters are not usually allowed to touch/fix that equipment. One participant expressed that this was a big issue for them, especially at the beginning of the project. These restrictions left them unable to install filters to keep with the new COVID regulations.

Finally, many participants felt that the language barrier and lack of Latino/a/x presence in other companies also stifled their ability to get good service and better equipment. It significantly limits their ability to gather information. Many feel that these barriers often cause their community to miss opportunities that are widely accessible to others or be brushed aside. One participant recalled their business was explicitly excluded from a discount on gas prices when the gas in their neighborhood had been out for a week. Most believe that having more Latinos/as/x involved in the community outreach and services or information provided in their native language would help increase the trust and awareness of these services within the Latino/a/x Community, especially direct outreach Latino/a/x business owners.

“Desgraciadamente la propiedad [que rentamos] tuvo un problema con la caja de la luz entonces cuando nosotros hablamos con el dueño, nosotros quisimos arreglarlo. Entonces él dijo no, que yo no lo puedo arreglar. Okay. Entonces vendieron la propiedad y el nuevo dueño ya está viniendo a revisar, pero eso no ha provocado que varios aparatos electrónicos se nos hayan descompuesto.”

Translated: “Unfortunately, the property [that we rent] had a problem with the electric box, so we called the owner wanting to fix it. He said no, that I could not fix it. Okay. Then they sold the property, and the new owner is now visiting to inspect it, but this [issue with the electrical box] has caused several pieces of our equipment to break down.”

“El costo de todo lo que es todo de restaurante, estufas, mixers, y cosas así, es muy elevado para poder comprar cosas así. Todo ese equipo es muy caro, y obviamente la barrera es el dinero de comprar equipo nuevo. Hay la fortuna de que hay lugares donde venden maquinaria usada en buen estado.”

Translated: “The cost of restaurant equipment like stoves, mixers, and other things like that, is very high for us to be able to buy those things. It is all very expensive equipment, and obviously, our barrier is having the money to buy new equipment. Fortunately, there are places where they sell pre-used equipment that is in good shape.”

“Obviamente cuando no hablas inglés la primera barrera que te topas es el inglés.”

Translated: “Obviously, when one doesn’t speak English, the first barrier that you’ll run into is the English language.”

“A mi me encantaría si nos dijeran cómo podemos ahorrar energía. Cuando yo compro algún aparato siempre trato de que sea para salvar energía. Pero muchas veces la información es en inglés y mucha información no viene cien por ciento en español. Entonces esa es una barrera para nosotros.”

Translated: “I would love it if they told us how to save energy. When I buy equipment, I always try to make sure it’s energy-saving. But a lot of times, that information is in English, and a lot of information is not fully translated into Spanish. That is a barrier for us.”

Energy Efficiency

Clean Energy:

- Only four participants knew what clean energy was. One participant described it as reusing energy, not wasting energy or energy that comes from renewable sources like solar panels.

Cost of Energy:

- The most significant source of energy expenditure in many small businesses, besides equipment, is their air conditioning and heating.

The participants pay from \$125- \$700 a month on energy expenses, depending on the season and whether or not utilities are included in rent payments. Most, however, do stress that energy usage is essential to their business, primarily those who work with a lot of equipment on-site or those whose customers stay in the building for extended periods. Both drive up power usage, especially in the winter when customer-heavy businesses need to provide a more controlled and comfortable environment for their clients. One participant, in particular, noted that without electricity, they have no business.

Some, however, are taking steps to try and reduce energy usage in their jobs. Three participants have independently looked into renewable energy, and most others were receptive to the idea of becoming more energy efficient.

“Nosotros tenemos incluido parte de la energía en nuestra renta, pero es super importante para nosotros, no podemos trabajar sin electricidad... Normalmente [el costo] es entre \$300- \$400 [al mes].”

Translated: “We have part of the energy bill included in our rent, but it’s super important to us, we can’t work without electricity... normally [the cost] is between \$300-\$400 [a month].”

“[A]quí en Hood River los que es en tiempo de verano es un poquito más baja. Nosotros no tenemos aire acondicionado porque tenemos un patio y la gente prefiere salir al patio. Pero en invierno el costo de la luz es increíblemente alto, a veces hasta \$500-\$600 [al mes]... Entonces mantenerlo agradable [la temperatura en el edificio que rentan] es muy complicado y ha representado para nosotros un costo elevado.”

Translated: “Here in Hood River, it [the cost] is a little lower in summer. We don’t have air conditioning because we have a backyard, and people prefer to go out there. But in winter, the cost of light is incredibly high, sometimes up to \$500-\$600 [a month]... so maintaining it comfortable [the temperature in their building] is very complicated and has been very costly for us.”

“Nuestro costo aproximadamente [de electricidad y gas] al mes es como alrededor de \$700...y obviamente necesitamos todo eso. Aunque nuestro espacio es pequeño, la gente cuando entra necesita un lugar cómodo; en caso de que haya calor, que esté fresco, y si está frío afuera, que esté caliente.”

Translated: “Our approximate cost [of electricity and gas] a month is around \$700... and obviously we need all of that. Although our space is small, people enter with the need to be in a comfortable environment; when it’s hot out, it should be cool, and if it’s cold outside, it should be warm.”

Barriers:

- Barriers that many Latino/a/x business owners face when wanting to become more energy efficient include cost and reliability of equipment, rental oversight, and accessibility.

The cost mentioned previously is a significant factor in providing a business with equipment. Although many participants have been receptive to energy-efficient equipment, many feel that most options that would allow them to do so would not be cost-effective; the financial cost of switching to renewable energy outweighs the benefits. Solar panels, in particular, are considered an unreliable source of energy by several participants due to Oregon weather, and the cost of installation only adds another barrier. Many participants worry that the energy-efficient equipment they could afford would be of lower quality and ultimately lead to a slight difference in saving.

Although there are programs and organizations geared towards helping business owners install energy-efficient equipment and transition towards renewable energy, many participants find them inaccessible to their communities; both through a lack of awareness and information and the type of aid provided. Since many Latino/a/x Business owners are property renters, they have little oversight over the equipment and amenities. Conversely, most of the benefits of energy efficiency are offered/ geared towards building owners leaving many business owners unable to access them even if they are interested in the benefits provided.

“Realmente no siento que tengo muchas opciones en Oregon ... y cuando comparo lo que cuestan los equipos en los Estados Unidos y lo que cuestan en México, es diez veces más caro haya [en los Estados Unidos], menos garantía, y encuentro mejores equipos acá [en México*].”

Translated: “I really don’t feel like I have a lot of options in Oregon... and when I compare what the equipment costs in the United States and what it costs in Mexico, its ten times more expensive over there [in the US], has less guaranteed it will work, and I can find better equipment over here [in Mexico].”*

*Note: The business owner was visiting Mexico during this focus group.



“Nada más quiero establecer que si quiero [poner todo de energía renovable], pero es extremadamente caro, y no es accesible si no implica incluir el banco en el trato.”

Translated: “I only want to establish that I do want this [run their business on renewable energy], but it’s extremely expensive, and it’s not accessible if you aren’t involving your bank in the deal.”



“Normalmente cuando estamos hablando de instalar equipo estamos hablando de calificación, y buenos paneles solares no es posible en Oregon porque la cantidad de sol que recibimos al año es muy baja. No conviene la inversión a largo plazo, especialmente por los altos costos.”

Translated: “When we speak of installing new equipment, we are speaking about A/C units. A high investment in solar panels does not seem like a good investment, due to the low amount of light we receive during the year.”

Small Business Support from Energy Trust

Business Recognition:

- None of the participating business owners knew of Energy Trust prior to this research project.

Participant Feedback:

- When confronted with the description of Energy Trust’s “Small Business Offering,” many participants requested more information, communication, and services applicable to their community.

Since most business owners are renters and most energy-efficiency/renewable energy resources are aimed towards proprietors, many participants have recommended that Energy Trust target renters. They suggest tailoring their programs so that business owners can reap the benefits without needing to own their building, like installing equipment for lower prices.

Many would also be more willing to trust Energy Trust if they had a more substantial presence in their community and provided them with more information about their services. Participants want clear descriptions of the benefits this program will have, especially longterm benefits, and more information on the services they are offering. If Energy Trust were to identify themselves to the public, it would make them and the opportunities they are offering more accessible. Participants believe that many business owners would be willing to engage with them. However, by limiting their outreach, they are only making it harder for themselves.

“La mayoría de los Latinos somos renteros y... sería viable explorar cómo se puede beneficiar uno como rentero. Tal vez si consultamos el “lease” o lo que nos queda de renta o en la instalación, porque al final del día el beneficio es para el dueño del edificio. ... [Y]o soy rentero pero [yo necesito saber] como me puedo beneficiar yo de eso?”

Translated: “The majority of Latinos live in rental housing... a topic to explore is how will tenants be supported; perhaps by consulting the lease, we can determine what we are allowed to install. At the end of the day, the beneficiary is the proprietor. As a tenant, I need to know how to take advantage of this.”

“Tuve que ir a wikipedia a buscar la organización. Voy a su website y esta un poco flotante la idea. No estoy muy seguro realmente que el mensaje es claro, a qué se dedican, oh cuál es su función como organización.”

Translated: “I had to look up the organization on Wikipedia. I visited their website, and their mission statement was unclear. I am not sure what they do or what their purpose is.”

Community Outreach:

- Latino/a/x business owners suggested direct in-person contact, email, and social media as the best methods of contacting/connecting with their community.

Most participants believed that the best way to promote Energy Trust’s offerings would be in person or direct interaction with business owners. One participant recalled that another clean energy group had once inspected their business and shown them the best ways to make their business more energy-efficient, such as giving their opinion on one’s equipment and how to renew it. They believed that a similar tactic could benefit Energy Trust and make more business owners receptive to their offerings. Another participant believed that Energy Trust should present itself to participants in partnership with electric companies. When getting their electricity installed or looking at utility options, they can receive all the information Energy Trust offers and best put it to use.

Other participants believe that a professional and informative email sent directly to business owners or advertising Energy Trust’s offering on social media, such as Facebook, could also be beneficial. Not only are those sites highly trafficked by a wide variety of people, including Latino/a/x business owners, but those types of advertisements have also proven effective at drawing people in and spreading awareness of other programs and products.

While some participants also advocated for sending information through the mail or over the phone, many believed this would not be helpful. Several noted that they often did not consider most things sent through the mail and that most of it often ends up in peoples’ trash. Similarly, some would not answer phone calls if they did not recognize the caller. One participant commented that if Energy Trust claims to be environmentally conscious, they should represent their message, and sending information through the mail would not achieve that.

“Nosotros somos un negocio ecológico, para nosotros es todo eléctrico; solo abrimos correspondencia si viene oficial de la ciudad, del estado, o del gobierno federal. Pero si viene en papel y especialmente una promoción automáticamente es basura.”

Translated: “We are an eco-friendly business; all our correspondence is online; we only accept mail from the city, state, and federal government. All other paper mail, especially advertisements, are automatically dismissed.”

“Porque mejor no nos dicen cuando firmamos un contrato con la luz, que este es Energy Trust, y estas son sus opciones. Entonces ya me están empapando de información al momento que haga uno la cuenta; y por lo tanto soy un consumidor y soy un cliente informado.”

Translated: “Why doesn’t Energy Trust inform us of our options when we are signing the contract with the electric company? This way, I will have enough information when creating an account and will be a well-informed consumer and client.”

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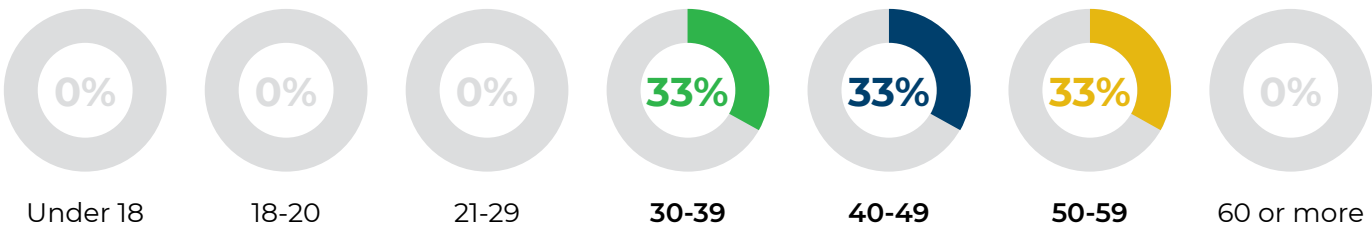
Energy Trust of Oregon. About Us; Funding. Retrieved December 2021, from Energy Trust of Oregon:

<https://www.energytrust.org/about/>; <https://www.energytrust.org/about/explore-energytrust/mission-approach/funding/>

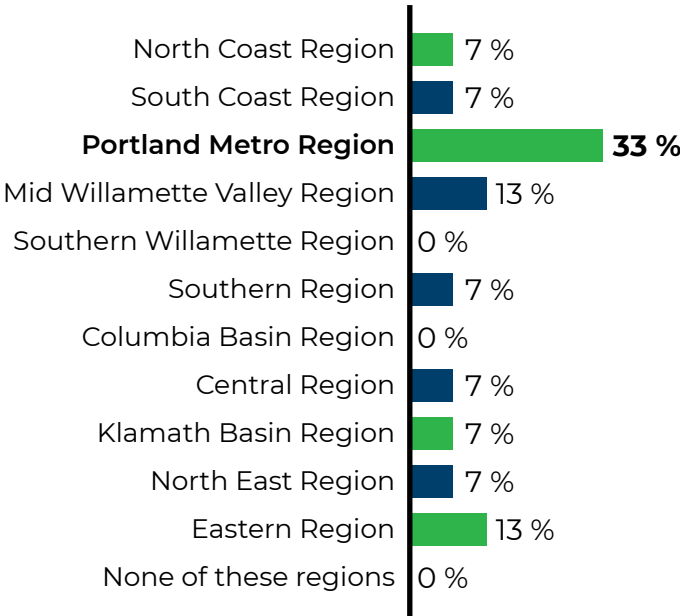
Survey Results

The following results were acquired from fifteen (15) Latino/a/x small business owners of Oregon:

Which category below includes your age?



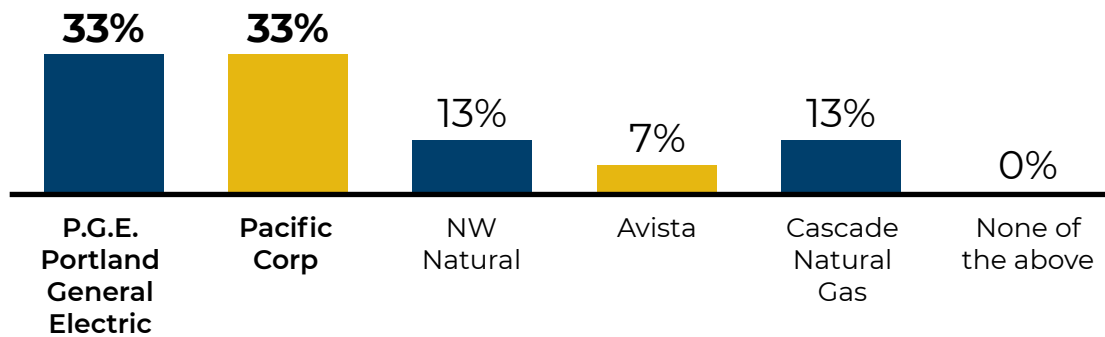
Where is your business?



What is the zip code for your business?

ZIP code				
97045	97501	97322	97005	97503
97756	97838	97031	97701	97367
97123	97031	97206	97301	97211

Which of the following Energy providers provides the utilities for your business (Select all that apply)?

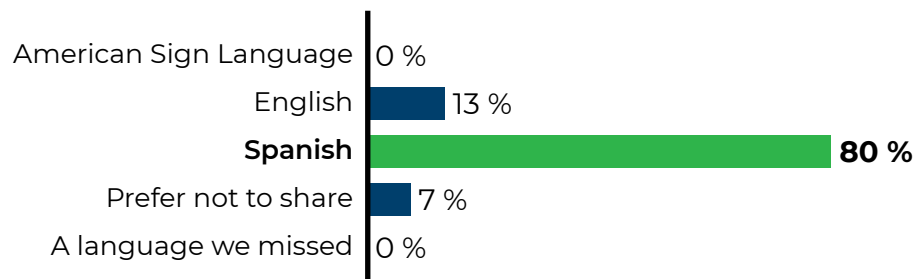


Are you a small business owner?

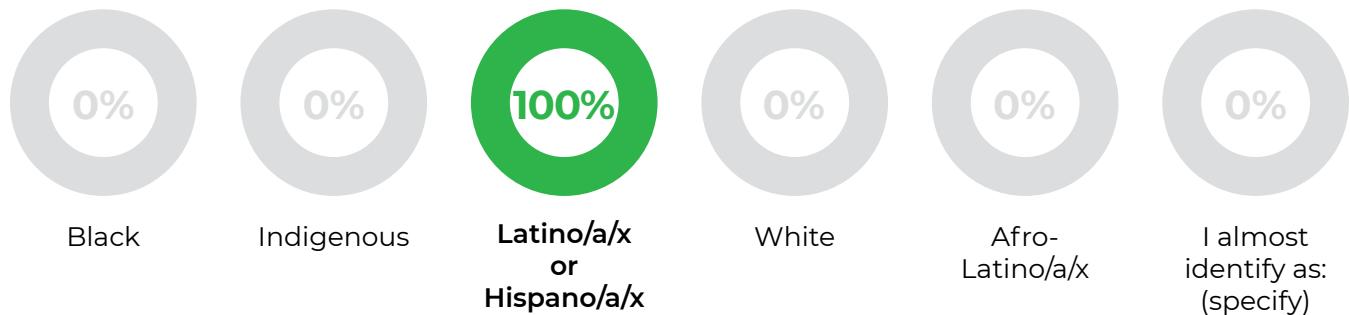


YES 100%

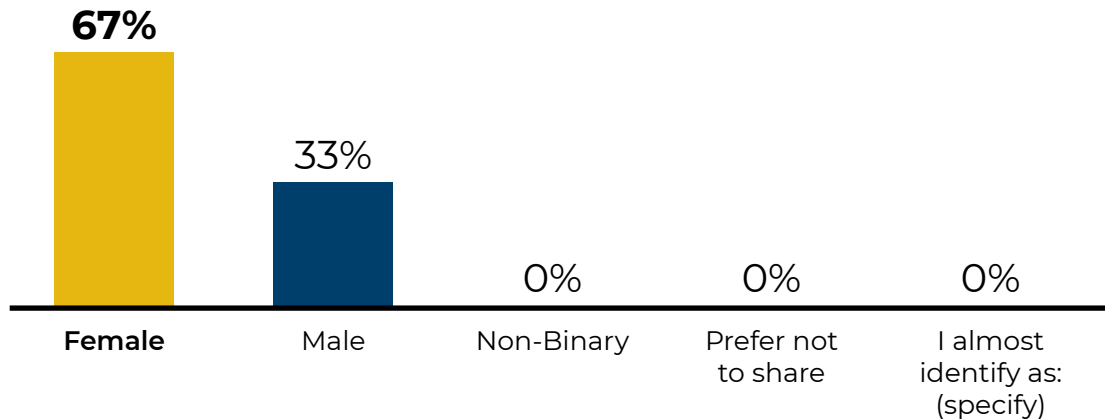
What is your preferred language?



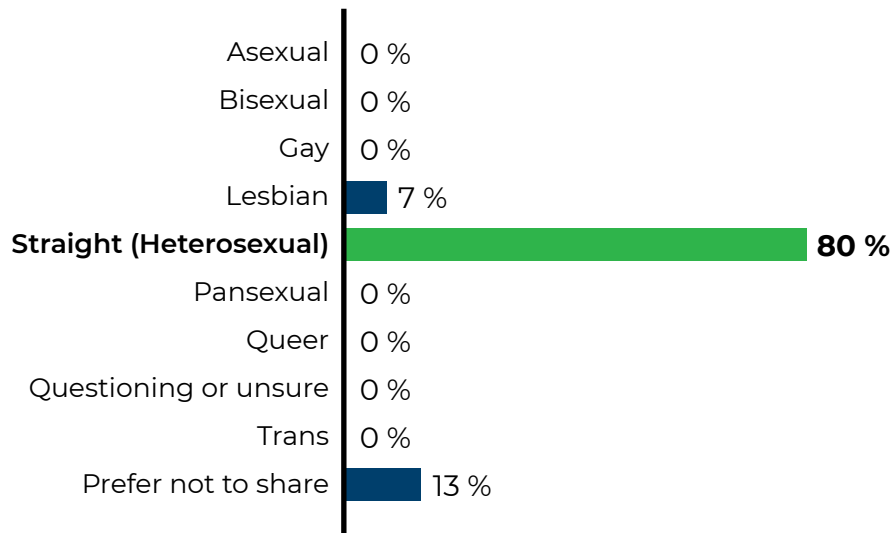
Which of the followings best describes you?



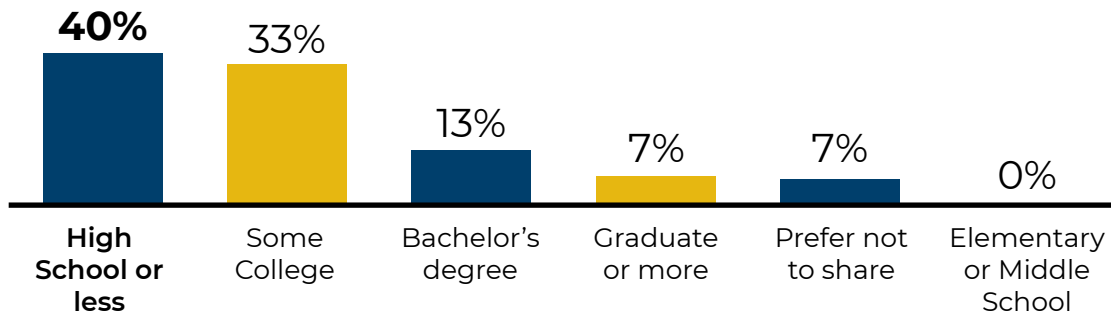
What gender do you most identify with?



I consider myself to be...



What's your highest level of education?

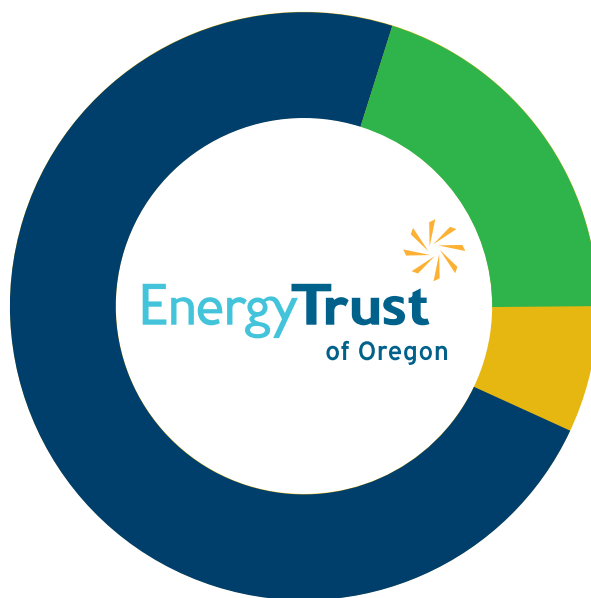


Are you impacted by a disability?



Are you familiar with Energy Trust? Have you utilized their services before?

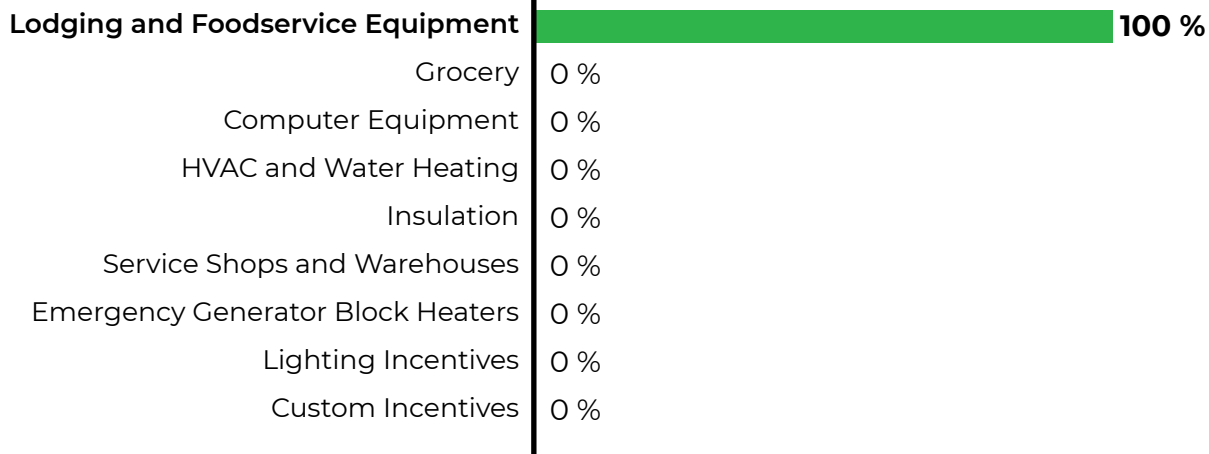
73%
NO,
I am not familiar with
Energy Trust.



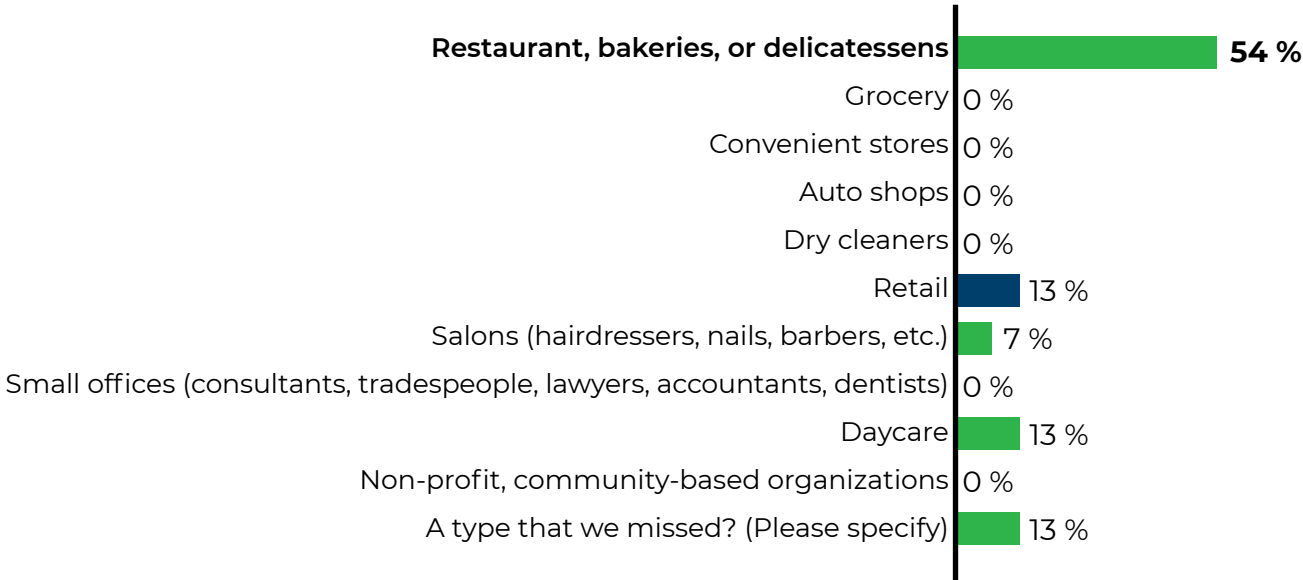
20%
YES,
I am familiar with Energy
Trust and have used their
services before.

7%
YES,
I am familiar with Energy
Trust, but I have not used
their services before.

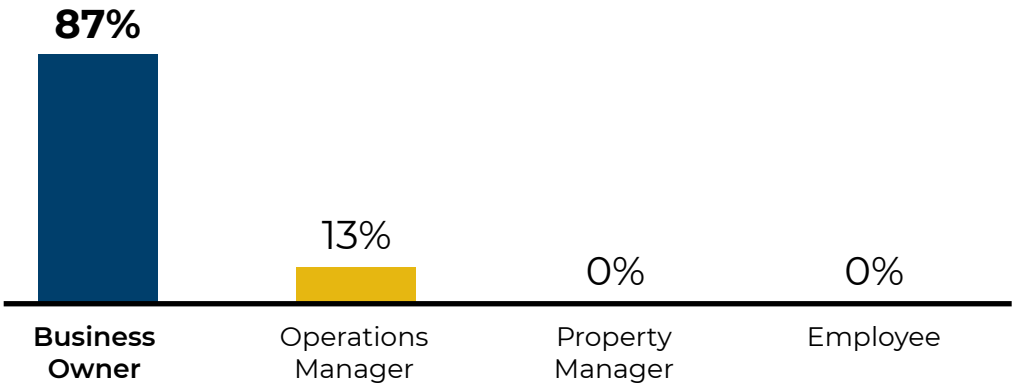
How have you interacted with Energy Trust?



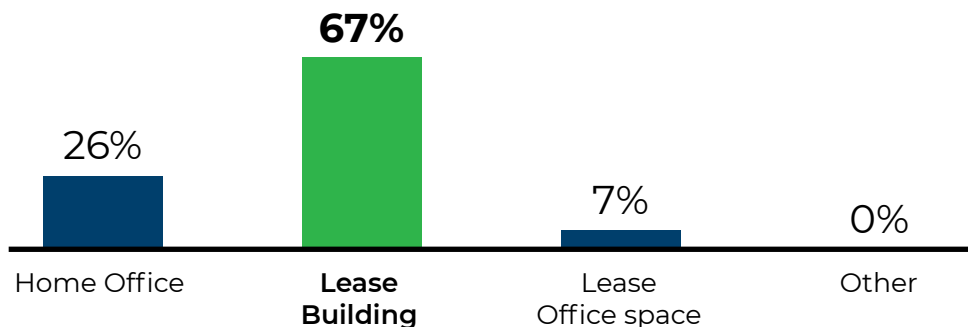
Which entity type best describes your business?



What is your role in your organization?



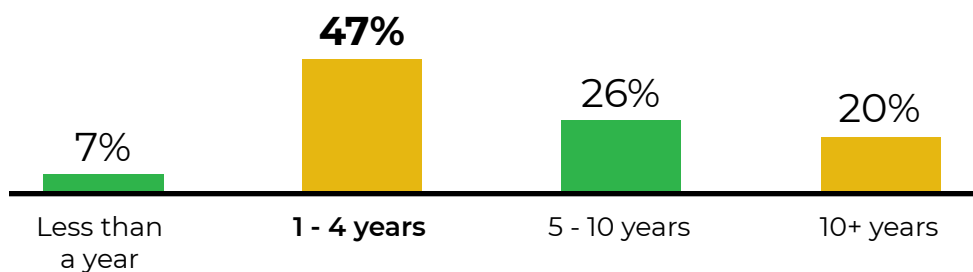
Where do you operate your business?



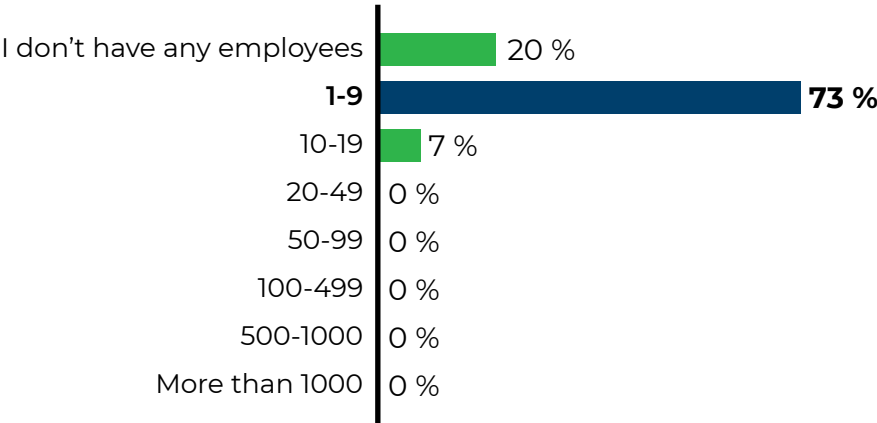
What is your ownership model?



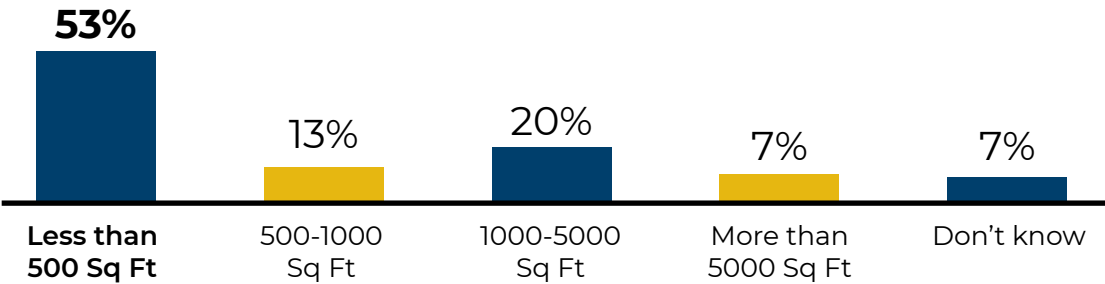
How many years have you been in this role?



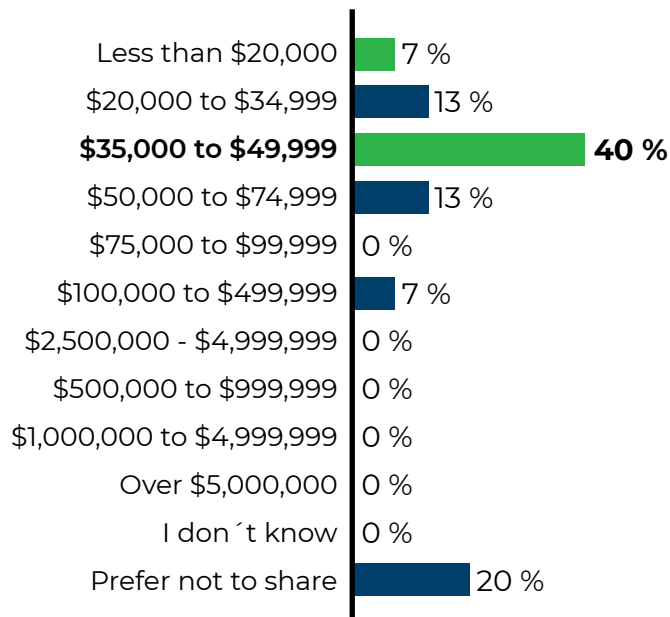
How many employees do you have?



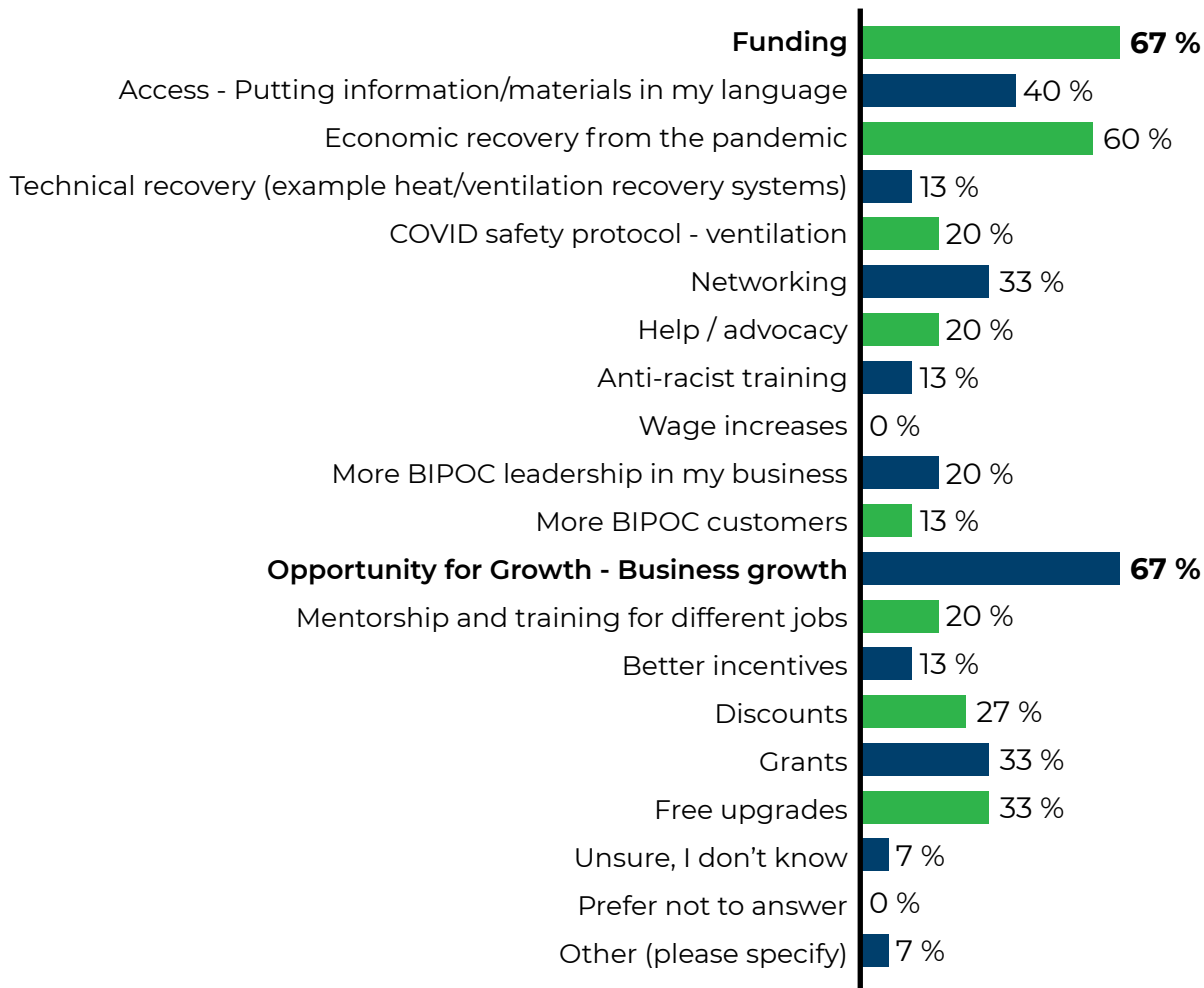
Business Size (Square Feet)



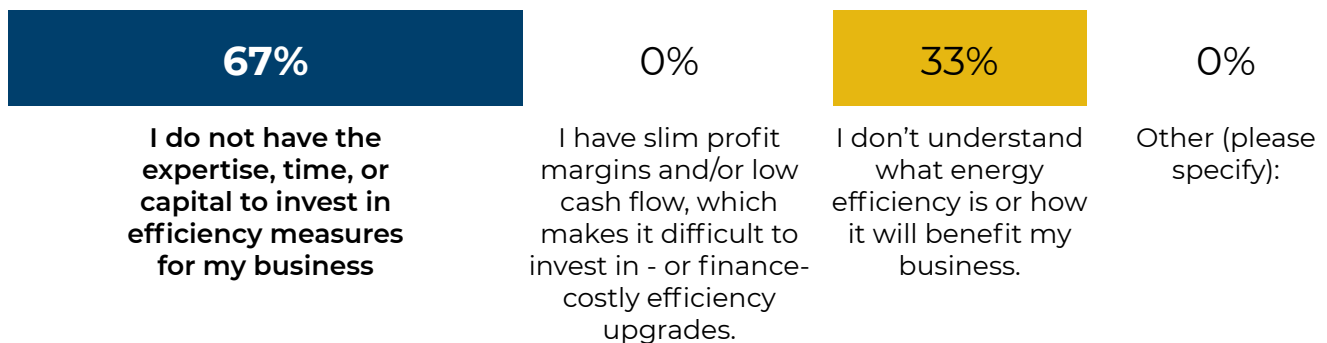
What was your approximate business revenue for 2020? (gross, or before deductions)



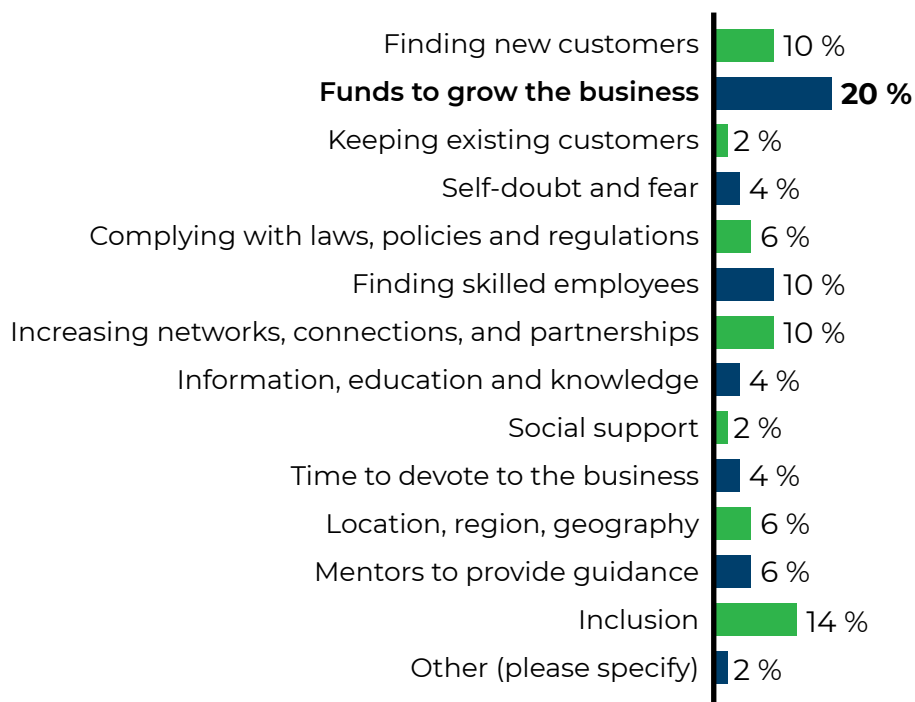
Energy Trust wants to understand what resources businesses like yours need to be more successful. What are the top 5 resources that your business benefits from?



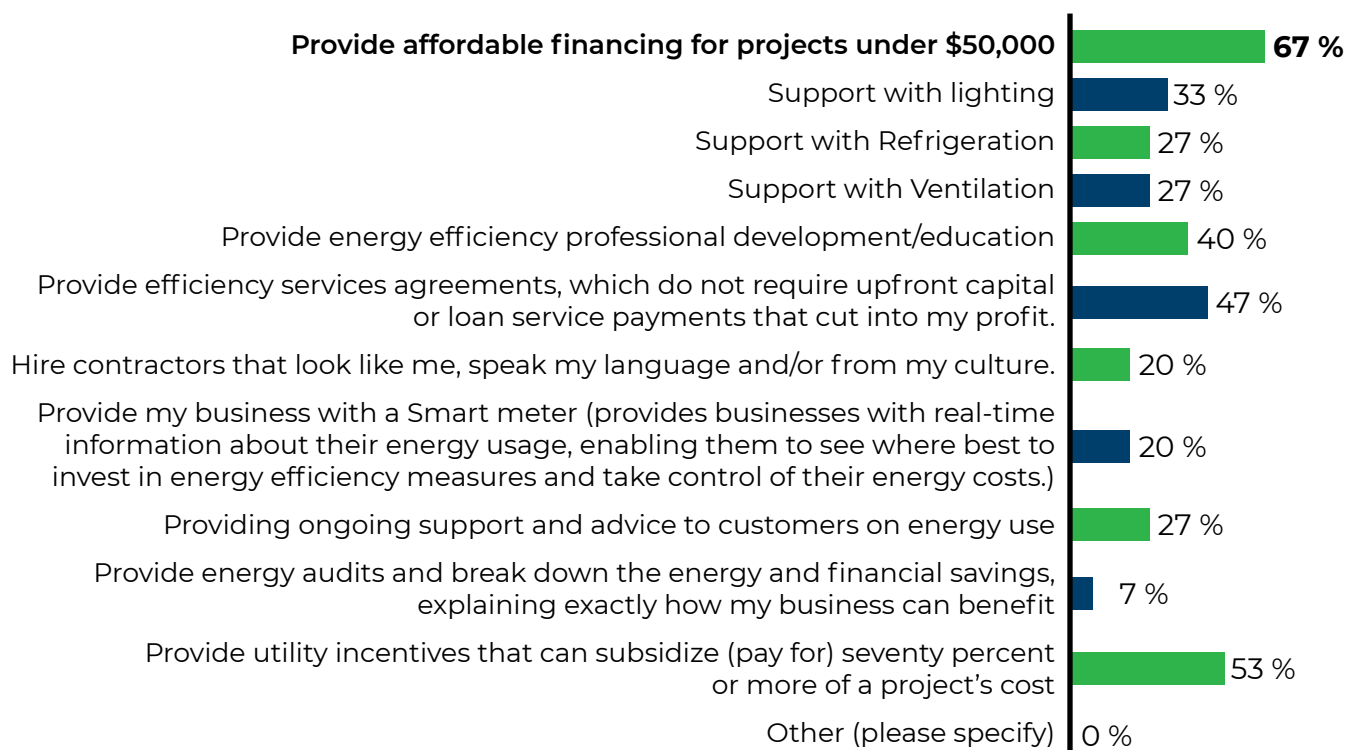
In your opinion, which of the following barriers prevent your small business from participating in energy efficiency? (Select all that apply)



Which of the following barriers would you agree that your business has faced during the pandemic? (Please select all that may apply)



The top 5 things that Energy Trust could do to support my business in becoming more energy-efficient are: (please select your top 5)



In your opinion, what are the most effective and most needed energy efficiency services and support for BIPOC Small Business Owners and why?

- Ofrecer programas más accesibles para poder obtener los servicios.
Translation: Offer more accessible resources to be able to obtain services.
- Acceso paneles solares para su negocio y refrigeración, sólo que es muy caro.
Translation: Access to solar panels for businesses and refrigeration, it's just too expensive.
- Get a better average on power consuming though the year and seasons.
- Not sure.
- Información, dinero, incentivos. La gente quiere saber porqué, cómo lo van hacer y qué reciben a cambio.
Translation: Information, money, incentives. People want to know why, how they would go about it, and what they're going to receive from the program.
- El idioma.
Translation: The language.
- No lo sé!
Translation: I don't know!
- El idioma.
Translation: The language.
- Apoyo con educación y capacitación en nuestro idioma.
Translation: Educational support and training in our language.
- En mi caso como este edificio es viejo se podría proporcionar el cambio de iluminación a LED. También un mejor sistema de aire acondicionado para que en tiempo de calor los refrigeradores no tengan que forzarse mucho para mantener la temperatura. Creo que muchos negocios se beneficiarían de cosas así.
Translation: In my case, the building is old. The resource to change the lighting system to LED could be provided. Also a better air conditioning system so the fridges don't have to work so hard to maintain temperatures during hot weather. I think many businesses would benefit from things like this.
- Muchos de nosotros no tenemos mucho acceso a los recursos para imponer servicios de eficiencia energética en nuestros trabajos y muchos de nosotros no tenemos los apoyos necesarios para poder implementar estos cambios. Cualquier recursos o apoyos que puedan ofrecer a la comunidad para ayudarnos a implementar estos cambios en una forma sana para nuestros negocios, estaría agradecida.
Translation: A lot of us don't have access to the services and resources to establish energy efficiency in our businesses and a lot of us don't have the financial support necessary to implement those changes. Whatever resources or support that can be offered to help our community to implement changes in some healthy way would be appreciated.
- Creo que no lo podría definir, ya que no tengo conocimiento sobre el tema.
Translation: I don't think I can determine how since I don't know have knowledge of the subject.

- Me gustaría saber más de la eficiencia energética y cómo me puede ayudar en mi negocio.
Translation: I would like to know more about energy efficiency and how it can help with my business.
- Apoyo.
Translation: Support.
- Saber más de como ser eficientes con la energia del negocio en el área de iluminación y ventilación.
Translation: To know more about how to be energy efficient with lighting and ventilation for my business

Appendix

Small Business Offering Discussion Guide:

Small business description and characteristics

1. What business do you have? How did you first get into starting a business?

Location

2. Why did you choose the community you are in? How gentrification has impacted you:
 - a. Your choice on where to establish your business?
 - b. Your clientele
3. How does the space you currently have work for you? Too big? Too small?
4. What impacts does the use of energy have on your business? Do you know how much money you spend annually on energy costs?
 - a. Prompt – is it a large or small part of your operating costs

COVID

5. Tell me about your business operations pre-COVID and after
6. Before COVID, did you receive support from any organizations – chambers, start-up money or low-interest loans, better business bureau, small business assistance providers?
 - a. If yes, which organizations or programs?
 - b. After COVID?
 - c. Which organizations?

EQUIPMENT

7. How do you decide when to buy equipment? Who installs it? (each industry will vary on season and cost)
 - a. Prompt – are you the one that decides to buy equipment? Or does your property manager or landlord does?
8. What's the most significant barrier to moving forward with buying new equipment?
9. If money wasn't an issue, What type of energy efficiency projects would you like to do with your business?
10. Who are your trusted advisors when making decisions for your business, like energy equipment upgrades?

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

11. What does energy efficiency mean to you? And how do you think energy efficiency can save you money?
12. Have you thought about ways to save money by changing how you use energy?

ENERGY TRUST AND SMALL BUSINESS

13. What do you know about Energy Trust of Oregon's programs for businesses?
 - a. Prompt – Have you worked with Energy Trust before?
 - I. If so, how?
 - II. If you work with one of these utility companies, you are paying them —_---- % every month. This amount goes to ETO. Why do you think you don't know ETO?
 - Portland General Electric (PGE)
 - Pacific Corp
 - Northwest Natural
 - Avista
 - Cascade Natural Gas

Energy Trust of Oregon and Small Business Offering Description

Energy Trust is developing a new offering specifically for small businesses. A small business is defined as a business with 20 employees or fewer or in a space of 20,000 sq ft or less.

- ETO offers a list of qualified contractors who would come and do a free assessment of your space and give you a report on potential energy projects. Energy Trust would give extra cash incentives to cover the equipment cost and an instant cash discount.
- You would then work with a qualified, experienced contractor to install your project. Energy Trust would verify it was installed.
- The cash incentive would get discounted on the project's total cost and reduce the amount you would pay to the contractor.

14. What resources or additional information do you need from Energy Trust to start a relationship/trust them/allow them to engage with you?
15. Would you trust a contractor selected by Energy Trust to come to your space and do a free assessment?
 - a. Prompt – if not, who would you trust?
16. Would you be interested in an offer like the one described? Why or why not?
What questions do you have about the offer?
If not, what changes could we make that you would be interested in the offer?
17. What is the most valuable information to share if Energy Trust was marketing this offering? And what is the best way to communicate?
 - a. Prompt – is written or media communications better?

Feedback

18. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your business, energy in general, or Energy Trust?
19. Would you like to participate in future engagements with Energy Trust?
 - a. If so, how do you wish to be contacted (e-mail, phone, etc.)?

Tab 4

2022 Outreach and Marketing Overview

May 17, 2022

Background

Energy Trust outreach and marketing activities drive awareness of and participation in efficiency and renewable energy programs, support savings and generation acquisition and help the organization accomplish other important objectives, such as those relating to diversity, equity and inclusion—all of which helps cultivate trust with customers and communities. Staff resources and budget for this work are located in two areas, Energy Programs and the Communications and Customer Service Group.

Program Marketing is designed to generate awareness and demand for Energy Trust program offerings. Staff set the overarching program marketing strategy to ensure consistency across programs and manage marketing activities of Program Management Contractors and Program Delivery Contractors. The Program Marketing team also leads market research and plans and implements integrated marketing campaigns (advertising, public relations [PR], social media, direct marketing and other channels) that build program awareness in support of program savings and generation goals.

Communications and Customer Service Group staff provide brand management and leadership, deliver centralized support services for program marketing (web site development, social media, targeted email, advertising, and PR support), conduct outreach to communities throughout our service area, respond to information requests from communities, customers, stakeholders and policy makers, continue to grow and support a statewide network of trade ally contractors with a focus on recruiting rural and COBID¹ certified women- and minority-owned businesses, and implement public relations communications to support a trusted brand while promoting customer benefits from energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Staff manage several contracts to support outreach and marketing, two of which are large enough to be reviewed and considered for approval by the board. They are multi-year services for public relations and media buying. Smaller contracts include market research on specific customer segments, targeted email services, creative services (writing, photography, videography, others), web site development, and additional support for community engagement through sponsored events and outreach activities, particularly in rural areas.

2022 Context and Key Strategies

Context

Just as program approaches are evolving to reach customers Energy Trust has not served, outreach and marketing approaches are also changing. We are developing new approaches to reach and serve customers who are racially and ethnically diverse, live in rural communities and have low to moderate incomes. At the same time, we are continuing to engage with customers who are active or past participants to support their efforts to implement energy efficiency and install renewable resources. Industry and technology changes, COVID-19 and related market conditions, wildfires, and economic uncertainty are affecting customers' ability to invest in projects in 2022.

In this context, Energy Trust outreach and marketing staff are engaging and re-engaging customers in new ways and relying on market research and community engagement to become more aware of their needs. Our outreach and marketing approaches are evolving to engage customers and communities

¹ COBID certified contractors are certified by the State of Oregon's Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID).

with little to no prior knowledge of the benefits of saving energy and installing solar and little to no awareness of Energy Trust. Outreach and marketing staff are forming new relationships with communities, leveraging partnerships, utilizing a broad range of technologies and techniques to hear from, engage with, and reach customers who are new to Energy Trust.

Key Program Marketing Strategies

- Develop and implement marketing strategies to advance diversity, equity and inclusion objectives, including supporting collaborations with community-based organizations, highlighting community voices and expanding program reach and participation in culturally and economically diverse and rural areas.
- Apply best practices for multicultural and inclusive marketing to strategic planning, project scopes, solicitations, creative development, and execution of marketing initiatives. This will include applying Energy Trust's DEI Lens, working with minority-owned firms or in-culture subject matter experts on market research and creative projects, soliciting input from community members, and working with multicultural marketing specialists.
- Seek insights and input from a variety of sources to develop and inform marketing plans and activities. This could include conducting market research with rural and Black, Indigenous, Latino/Hispanic, Asian American and Pacific Islander customers and businesses, for example, and engaging community-based organizations, cities and counties.
- Create marketing that reduces barriers to customers who have not worked with our programs before. This means integrating program information from a customer's perspective, rather than focusing on individual programs. Examples are presenting small business offerings together for Business Lighting and Existing Buildings and including Solar in home retrofit marketing.
- Evolve residential cross-cultural and multicultural marketing and PR to become more inclusive of and better deliver Energy Trust program offerings to individual customers and communities, particularly communities of color, rural and low-income communities. Examples include expanding program awareness campaigns to be more inclusive of rural, Latino/Hispanic-owned and Black-owned media, engaging diverse community or social media influencers, and evaluating and refining marketing assets to more respectfully represent, resonate with and celebrate the audiences and cultures we serve.
- Collaborate with utilities' marketing staff to engage in work that supports complementary goals.

Key Outreach, Public Relations, Brand Marketing and Marketing Support Strategies:

- Learn from and engage customers and stakeholders through outreach activities, including identifying and aligning with community priorities, developing skills in community engagement, supporting implementation of 2022 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and working with communities impacted by natural disasters.
- Work with community-based organizations and municipalities in their efforts to maximize energy efficiency and renewable energy to reach community goals, including with Grants Pass, Gresham, Salem, Tigard and Willamette County. Support community-led energy, sustainability, or climate plan development processes to ensure inclusion of energy efficiency and renewable energy strategies.
- Develop relationships with community-based organizations and provide information, resources, or offers that expand local capacity and enable connections to Energy Trust programs and services. This includes the *Working Together Grants*, a small grant offer for nonprofit organizations, and support for communities bringing on additional capacity through the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments program (RARE).
- Produce organizational communications and public relations content that informs stakeholders and the public about the value of clean energy, how Energy Trust helps meet customer and community needs, and our organization's progress toward diversity, equity and inclusion objectives.
- Provide information to support state and local policymakers as they develop and implement energy-related policies that touch on or leverage cost-effective energy efficiency, renewable energy, and equity in related areas.

- Provide strategic management of digital channels, including website and social media, to support program and organizational marketing activities and ensure positive customer experiences and effective outreach and service to populations Energy Trust has underserved.
- Develop and begin implementing a brand marketing plan to generate awareness and build trust with customers--particularly in communities of color and rural areas, and with those experiencing low income --through marketing activities in advertising, public relations and social media and with marketing support for outreach and events.
- Conduct customer insights research to better understand customer motivations and barriers and optimize program and brand marketing strategies.
- Support an improved customer experience and expanded reach to diverse populations through management of creative services, including translation support, and leadership on efforts to diversify the trade ally network to include more COBID-certified women- and minority-owned contracting businesses.

Highlights from 2021 and 2022 Activities Completed

- Hired two new outreach staff focused on communities of color, including a senior outreach manager and a community outreach specialist, and established new relationships and approaches including simultaneous interpretation at outreach events.
- Staff continued to support communities and customers recovering from wildfires and preparing for future wildfire seasons through direct outreach to affected communities and by developing new materials such as indoor air quality tips on the website, blog and through news outlets, including in Spanish.
- Launched first round of *Working Together* grants to provide funding for nonprofit organizations pursuing activities to help diverse customers and communities learn about Energy Trust offers or take steps to save or generate energy. Of 21 applicants, 13 proposals received funding.
- Completed and applied insights from the Customer Insights Survey, Small/Medium Black Business Research, Municipal community market research, Brand audit and diverse customer focus groups.
- Completed development of a Multicultural Marketing Guide with best practices that will shape all Energy Trust marketing going forward, whether delivered in-house or through program management contractors or other marketing contracts. The guide was co-created with a diverse cohort of eight experts in multicultural marketing and community engagement.
- Conducted staff engagements to communicate brand audit findings and connect internal work to a more inclusive brand that builds trust with customers.
- Expanded marketing in other languages and received high levels of website engagement from Spanish-language marketing campaigns. Of visitors to our web site selecting a language other than English in their web browser, Spanish was the most selected language.
- Continued to build on the business customer engagement campaign, *Run Better*, in both English and Spanish, to create a strong link between the needs of small and minority-owned business customers and Energy Trust offers. Establish Energy Trust as a go-to resource for businesses, particularly those located in rural or low-income areas or owned by people of color. Tap into public relations and social media strategies to extend the impact and reach of advertising investments.
- Designed and preparing to launch, *Mi Comunidad*, a Spanish-language Residential program advertising campaign to promote enhanced incentives for residents of Woodburn, Hillsboro and Salem, which have large, established Hispanic/Latino communities. The offer will be delivered by Spanish-speaking trade ally partners to better engage audiences and offer a complete participation experience.
- Completed statewide brand advertising campaign with a focus on priority communities in urban and rural areas and an increased investment in Spanish language channels

- Completed public relations and worked with reporters to accomplish 200 media articles on Energy Trust programs, services and customer benefits. Proactive content development and public relations prior to June's historic heat wave led to significant coverage of Energy Trust's cooling tips, including in Spanish-language outlets.
- Redesigned the website home page to create a more accessible page for visitors. Energy Trust's website received more than 600,000 visitors in 2021, generating 1.6 million pageviews. Top landing pages for new visitors were the homepage and the residential incentives page. Several do-it-yourself resources were also common entry points to the website, including energy-saving tips.

Challenges and Opportunities

The overarching challenge to Energy Trust's outreach and marketing teams is to help move Energy Trust toward a more trusting and collaborative relationship with customers, communities, and stakeholders, particularly those we have not served or effectively engaged previously. This is where outreach and marketing intersect and where the insights and learning gained through direct outreach, community engagement and market research are critical for shaping our approaches going forward.

As we learn more about new customers and explore new ways of engaging in the community, we will also continue assessing how outreach and marketing must evolve further and what new resources may be needed to implement more specialized strategies and tactics. We look forward to expanding the reach of our programs and services to create a welcoming path for customers we have not yet reached. And we look forward to supporting re-engagement of past participants that have additional opportunities for saving energy and generating renewable energy.