

Diversity Advisory Council Meeting Notes

January 18, 2022

Attending from the council:

Dolores Martinez, EUVALCREE
Indika Sugathadasa, PDX HIVE
Cheryl Roberts, African American Alliance for Homeownership
Huong Tran, Bend small business owner
Susan Badger-Jones, special projects consultant
Rebecca Descombes, Native American Youth and Family Center
Oswaldo Bernal, OBL Media
Kheoshi Owens, Empress Rules
Terrance Harris, Oregon State University

Attending from Energy Trust:

Emily Findley	Jay Lazzaro
Elaine Dado	Amanda Thompson
Cheryle Easton	Tracy Scott
Elizabeth Fox	Quinn Parker
Laura Schaefer	Tyrone Henry
Michael Colgrove	Mana Haeri
Marshall Johnson	Greg Stokes
Emily Estrada	Lenora Deslandes
Bayo Ware	Kenji Spielman
Mia Deonate	Julianne Thacher
Debbie Menashe	Emma Clark
Karen Chase	Ryan Crews
Kyle Morrill	Kirstin Pinit
Caryn Appler	Amber Cole
Phil Degens	Steve Lacey
Amanda Potter	Taylor Navesken
Kate Wellington	Sue Fletcher
Ashley Bartels	
Wendy Gibson	

Others attending:

Mark Kendall, Energy Trust board	Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility
Lindsey Diercksen, LD Consulting	Commission

1. Welcome, Agenda Review and Group Reflection

Tyrone Henry, Energy Trust diversity, equity and inclusion lead, convened the meeting at 9:11 a.m. The agenda, notes and presentation materials are available at Energy Trust's website at <https://www.energytrust.org/about/public-meetings/diversity-advisory-council-meetings/>.

Tyrone Henry lead the group in reflection on a quote from Dr. Anastasia Karklina Gabriel about how terms that explicitly acknowledge oppression like "anti-Blackness" and "white supremacy"

are critical because using them creates discomfort and can expose the source of racism within a workplace or organization by challenging power structures.

Several council members noted that on a personal level, they learn the most when feeling uncomfortable or challenged. The diversity, equity and inclusion space calls upon everyone to step out of their comfort zones, and that challenge also needs to happen internally. One member shared that a client who had contracted her DEI consulting services had terminated the contract because they were too fragile to confront the uncomfortable truths the process was forcing them to face (Kheoshi Owens). Everyone has their own personal baggage, but DEI consultants are not able to do their job if clients cannot acknowledge their own anti-blackness and tokenism (Kheoshi Owens).

Staff shared an observation that decolonization is not a metaphor, but many companies treat it this way by coming out with land acknowledgement statements without doing the work to include indigenous people and their voices (Mia Deonate).

A council member pointed out that it is also necessary to acknowledge that some companies and systems don't want to change because they realize centering diversity and equity would mean giving up power and privilege (Terrance Harris).

The council discussed attachment theory, a term introduced by one of the members, which is the theory that explains why Black people remain attached to areas they've been gentrified out of, even against their own best interest if the areas have poor air quality or are undesirable (Kheoshi Owens).

2. Updates from Tyrone

Topic summary

Tyrone Henry shared a series of updates regarding ongoing projects that are of interest to the council. A supplier diversity initiative created last year to help Energy Trust become more inclusive with contracting is being put into use with two large program management and delivery contracting opportunities beginning in March and April.

Tyrone announced an upcoming networking session for minority- and women-owned small businesses (MWESB) and prime majority contractors to explore opportunities to team up. The initiative includes a tracking system to monitor the financial contracting opportunities with MWESBs, which will be reported to Oregon Public Utility Commission starting later this year.

Tyrone shared that Energy Trust is hiring a DEI specialist, which is a new position created to assist him as the DEI lead on diversity-related initiatives. The job posting will be shared with culturally-specific organizations, and council members are invited to help get the word out or suggest organizations to reach out to.

Lastly, Tyrone announced that his Diversity First Thursday event would return on February 3 and be focused on the contributions of Black inventors.

Discussion

There was no discussion.

Next steps

Tyrone will continue sharing relevant updates about his ongoing work with the council.

3. Update on board member recruitment

Topic summary

Tyrone Henry shared that the board nominating committee has received applications to fill two open positions on the board of directors, which will be reviewed in coming weeks. The nominated committee will present its recommendations at the next board meeting in February.

Discussion

There was no discussion. *Next steps*

The board nominating committee will present its recommendations at the February board meeting. Council members can reach out to Greg Stokes with any questions.

4. Community grant funding responses

Topic summary

Staff presented a progress update on the new Working Together Grants, which launched its application period in December 2021 and will be open through the end of January. Grants of up to \$10,000 will be awarded to organizations that serve priority diversity, equity and inclusion audiences to help bring energy benefits to customers Energy Trust has not yet served. There will be two funding cycles in 2022. The grants are competitive and awarded by a selection committee that includes DAC members Huong Tran and Terrance Harris along with internal staff.

Community outreach specialist Mia Deonate provided an update that to date: Energy Trust has received 11 applications requesting more than \$100,000 dollars. The proposals vary, but one theme is curriculum and education. The awards will be announced in February, with organizations required to complete their projects by September.

Discussion

There was no discussion.

Next steps

The Working Together grant opportunity is posted on Energy Trust's website, and council members are encouraged to share the opportunity with their network.

5. 2022 Industrial RFP webinar and Networking Session Update

Topic summary

Kirsten Pinit provided an update on a contracting opportunity to manage and deliver programs in Energy Trust's Industrial and Agriculture sector, which serves manufacturers and agricultural producers of all sizes. In December, Energy Trust hosted an informational webinar for potential bidders to learn about the opportunity, which was well attended with almost 70 attendees. Staff also offered a networking session for minority- and women-owned firms and prime contractors to connect and explore opportunities to team up. That event attracted a diverse group of attendees from all over the country. Of the 39 firms represented at the event, 30 were identified as being certified by COBID or a similar designation.

The contracting opportunity is designed with three options for firms to bid on in different permutations, including a standard incentive program, a custom incentive program or both components. There is a goal to increase the diversity of the implementation team by requiring at least 20% of the contract value to utilize minority- or women-owned firms that are certified by the Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID). Proposals may include firms that have started the application process, and firms must have completed the certification process before the contract is awarded in July 2022 to be counted toward the 20% requirement.

Discussion

A council member pointed out the administrative burden of obtaining certification through the COBID office and suggested it would be helpful if Energy Trust created a video breaking down the steps (Kheoshi Owens).

A staff member asked why Energy Trust would not accept a federal certification. Tyrone Henry explained that COBID, which is a state certification, has different criteria and a more rigorous vetting process compared with the federal designation. He also mentioned that Energy Trust has contracted with trade organizations to provide support and resources for diverse firms to get certified. Tyrone provided context that there are firms that misrepresent themselves to obtain the certification, and that's a real issue we want to avoid.

An attendee asked what would happen if a firm in the application process was selected, but there was a delay in the certification (Mark Kendall). Tyrone shared that he has relationships with the certification office and could offer support in expediting the process if needed.

A council member said that the certification process is challenging even for an experienced applicant and reiterated the suggestion for self-service resources that firms could use without having to contact anyone (Kheoshi Owens). Michael Colgrove said that was a great suggestion that Energy Trust could explore, but the resources would need to be created jointly with the COBID office.

A council member suggested that learning about Energy Trust and its offers should be a part of the onboarding process when new businesses register with the state. Energy Trust should create a culturally responsive video that introduces renewable energy, since the current resources center white voices (Kheoshi Owens).

Next steps

Staff will keep the council updated as the contracting process moves forward. Recordings from the webinar and networking event are available on Energy Trust's website.

6. 2022 Residential RFP webinar update*Topic summary*

Marshall Johnson presented an in-process update on another contracting opportunity to manage and implement Energy Trust's residential programs. The programs include offerings for single-family, manufactured and some multi-family housing types, and offer some enhanced incentives based on income. The contracting opportunity also has a requirement that at least 20% of the funds need to be spent with minority- and women-owned firms.

Discussion

A council member asked Marshall to explain the term "non-traditional firms," which he used to characterize potential sub-contractors (Kheoshi Owens). Marshall clarified he was referring to firms that did not specialize in energy efficiency but had relevant skills. The council pointed out that using that term in this context is racist because it implies that diverse-owned firms do not have applicable skills. They suggested using the term "bridgeable skills" instead to represent the idea of thinking outside the box to include smaller firms outside the energy space that have flexible skillsets. These firms may be ready to take on bigger contracts, but can't demonstrate prior energy experience, which can put them at an unfair disadvantage (Kheoshi Owens). Tyrone Henry added that the 20% contracting requirement is a "floor" and not a ceiling, and we hope to see proposals that go beyond that.

The council asked about the trade organizations that Tyrone mentioned, and if they can also help coach firms that submit a proposal that is not accepted on how to better their chances in future opportunities (Oswaldo Bernal). Tyrone indicated the organizations could support that.

The council and staff further discussed how firms who don't traditionally specialize in energy services can be considered if they have strong transferrable skills. Staff said there are multiple components to delivering energy programs, such as digital marketing services, community engagement, customer service or data analysis. Firms with skillsets that can cross multiple industries can be part of a program delivery team.

A council member cautioned that we should look out for chambers showing favoritism and helping those in their network and who they have personal relationships with (Oswaldo Bernal). Tyrone invited council members to bring any specific concerns to us for awareness.

Next steps

Energy Trust will host a networking session on January 20 for potential bidders to connect and explore opportunities to team up. Staff plan to post the request for proposal in April and accept applications until mid-June. After evaluating proposals and making a selection, staff will share its recommendation with board in September and the new contract will begin in January 2023.

7. New requirement to spend 25% of renewable energy funds collected to benefit low- and moderate-income customers

Topic summary

Michael Colgrove and staff from the solar team shared an update about a new requirement that Energy Trust must spend 25% of renewable energy funds to benefit customers with low and moderate incomes. This requirement is an outcome of House Bill 3141, the legislation that shifted Energy Trust's funding on the electric efficiency side from the public purpose charge to a tariff structure, although renewable energy is still funded by the public purpose charge.

Oregon Public Utility Commission is charged with defining the specific terms to describe the customers intended to receive benefit. It provided an interim definition late last year for Energy Trust to use in its budgeting process, but it will facilitate a fuller public engagement this year to refine the definitions.

Staff shared that the solar team is developing an income-qualified offer expected to launch this year that would specifically serve low-income customers, which is defined as 80% or below average median income. Staff are also working to bolster existing services and exploring if Oregon's Community Solar Program could be leveraged to help satisfy the requirement. Oregon Public Utility Commission liaison Anna Kim added that creating the definition won't limit more targeted opportunities from being incorporated into the goal.

Discussion

A council member relayed a question on behalf of the BIPOC community about whether an equity lens is being used by Oregon Public Utility Commission in its decision making. Since Black and brown customers pay into the public purpose charge that funds renewable energy programs, they should be represented in the process of determining who the funds benefit (Kheoshi Owens). Anna Kim said they don't currently have a DEI lens included in the process, but they are figuring out how to expand overall outreach and representation. The organization's DEI lead or director would be a better resource to address that question. The council cautioned that if the organization moves forward without an equity lens to guide its strategy, there is a high probability that no significant change will happen, which will continue perpetuating historical

injustice and harm. Tyrone Henry stated he will contact the relevant decision-makers at Oregon Public Utility Commission and share the council's concerns.

Next steps

Staff will continue sharing relevant updates with the council as the refinement process moves ahead.

8. Announcements

Tyrone reiterated his announcement about the upcoming Diversity First Thursday event and shared the marketing flyer. He added that children are welcome to attend the event, as it's a great opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the heritage and contributions of Black people.

Other council members shared event opportunities through their organizations. Terrance Howard announced that Oregon State University will have many events related to Black history month coming up for students, alumni and community members. This year's programming will focus on Black excellence.

Dolores Martinez gave an update that her organization EUVALCREE is doing a lot of vaccination events and outreach in Eastern Oregon.

Cheryl Roberts announced that African American Alliance for Homeownership will be hosting a bus tour of homes for sale for their clients.

Kheoshi Owens mentioned that Empress Rules is planning four talks for BIPOC community members to come together and have a space to process and share experiences. The first talk will focus on eliminating whiteness. She also shared that Empress Rules will convene different cohorts of community members to help forge connections.

9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m. The next council meeting is scheduled for February 15, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.