



Clean Power, Healthy Communities 2017

Background Information for the *Local Economic Development Breakout Session*

Energy is one of the necessities of life, like clean air, water, food, shelter and healthcare. For more than 100 years control and ownership of energy resources has been in the hands of large corporations -- Shell, Chevron, PG&E -- you get the picture.

The ability to produce electricity using wind and sun, with wind turbines and solar panels has opened up the possibility that all of us, as communities, could generate our own electricity; we could take control and ownership of that essential resource away from corporations and put it in our hands. This is what we mean when we talk about energy democracy.

Communities that own and/or control their own energy resources can get many benefits. There are direct benefits such as switching to cleaner, renewable energy and getting rid of polluting power plants, addressing the urgent crisis of climate change, and lowering energy bills by eliminating the need for huge profits.

But there are other benefits such as creating jobs and increasing business activity that result when we decide to develop those clean energy resources right in our communities, through rooftop solar, community-scale solar projects and wind farms. There are programs such as community shared solar that offer opportunities for everyone to be part owners in these clean energy projects, and profit from the electricity they produce.

Many cities and counties in California, including Alameda County, are setting up public not-for-profit Community Choice energy programs as alternatives to private, for-profit utilities like PG&E. Because these public agencies are governed by elected officials, community members can push for programs and policies that increase local control and ownership of energy resources and address pressing issues such as skyrocketing rents, unemployment, and systemic poverty in low income communities and communities of color--those that have been most harmed by the fossil fuel economy.

Alameda County is launching its own Community Choice energy program, East Bay Community Energy, next year. It's up to us to make sure it serves our community.

The purpose of this breakout session is to brainstorm ways in which local clean energy projects can spur local economic development. The following questions are provided to help guide the discussion, but we encourage you to come up with your own.

Local economic development question

- Developing clean energy resources locally can create jobs. But what are the different ways in which clean energy development can stimulate the local economy? How can we make sure the local economic benefits from clean energy projects and programs are equitably distributed?
- Why is it important to prioritize local small businesses, especially women and minority-owned businesses, in the development of clean energy projects? What are some benefits of contracting with small, local business that can be cited to counter the argument that big corporate entities offer economies of scale?

- Developing local clean energy resources will require financing. How do we avoid using extractive kinds of financing, such as big corporate banks and Wall Street investors to develop local renewable resources? What role could a public bank play?
- A public energy services agency, like East Bay Community Energy, could spread out the costs of programs and policies designed to address systemic inequity in low income communities and communities of color such as community shared solar projects, low interest/ no interest loans for rooftop solar, energy efficiency improvements, or a no-shut-offs policy. What are the important economic, social welfare and health benefits that we can cite in advocating for such programs and policies?
- Distributed energy resources are particularly well suited to neighborhood organizing to take advantage of opportunities such as community shared solar projects, aggregation of rooftop solar opportunities, aggregation of energy efficiency projects. How could your organization utilize these opportunities to galvanize neighborhood organizing?