

Promoting a Labor-friendly Alameda County Community Choice Energy Program



The East Bay Clean Power Alliance, like the Alameda Labor Council, calls for creation of a labor-friendly Community Choice energy program for Alameda County. We support a program that prioritizes the development of local renewable resources, creates unionized clean energy jobs, and provides many other community benefits.

We concur with advancing union labor, as called by resolutions of the Alameda Labor Council over the past two years.

In particular, we advocate that a Community Choice energy program should be designed to:

- maximize union jobs
- build local renewable energy projects that utilize project labor agreements wherever possible
- prioritize local hire
- support pathways out of poverty for disadvantaged workers in the communities being served
- benefit working-class and low-income communities by providing electricity rates that are lower and more stable than those of PG&E

How can a Community Choice program be labor friendly?

A Community Choice energy program that invests in the development of local renewable resources, including electrical generation and energy efficiency projects, can be an engine for local economic development. As a public program, it can prioritize public good over profit, and work with unions to generate high-road, family-sustaining jobs, utilize union apprenticeship and other entry-level job programs, and offer pathways out of poverty, especially in low income communities.

The Community Choice program serves as an energy service provider for its customers by prioritizing energy demand reduction while developing *local* renewable energy resources to meet remaining demand. The development of such community-based energy resources would take place over a number of years, accelerating as the program advances.

A Community Choice energy program can be a unique vehicle for opening up the largely non-union community-based energy sector to union employment. This is possible because of the program's ability to set work standards and also to aggregate smaller installation projects into larger projects more amenable to union labor agreements. Projects sited within the communities served make local hire and local construction policy more practical and beneficial.

By investing locally, a Community Choice energy program retains energy wealth within the community. By creating good paying jobs, the program can increase spending in the community and decrease safety net costs. Over time, the program's system wide energy savings can be passed on as lower and more stable prices for electricity, benefitting all in the community.

How Can a Community Choice Energy Program Help Create Family-Supporting Union Jobs?



What is a Community Choice Energy Program?

Community Choice energy, provided for by AB 117 (2002), enables cities and other jurisdictions to choose where the electricity provided to their residents and businesses will come from. This means that local communities can decide to procure their electricity from renewable energy sources: either by purchasing renewable electricity on the market, or more importantly, by developing local renewable energy resources in the community.

Why develop local renewable energy resources in the community?

Developing local renewable resources means an investment in our community. Whether the investment is in energy saving measures or in new electricity generation, it means new business opportunities and creation of new jobs within our community. It can also mean greenhouse gas reductions and electricity prices that are more stable and lower than PG&E's.

What kind of jobs can a Community Choice energy program create?

Energy investments in our community can create many kinds of jobs. Some are in the direct installation of energy efficiency measures or installing new energy generating capacity, such as on rooftops, parking lots, brownfields, and so forth. Some of the jobs are in supplying materials for construction or in designing or financing projects.

How can a Community Choice program spur union jobs?

Many of the local renewable energy installation jobs are currently on small projects in a highly competitive non-union business sector. A Community Choice program can change all that. By forming a public energy services agency that organizes the development of local energy resources, the program can set labor and quality requirements that meet union standards. It can also aggregate many individual small projects into large union-scale projects that can be managed under project labor agreements. In fact, a public Community Choice energy program is about the only way this growing non-union sector can be organized to create family-sustaining clean energy jobs.

What is the role of unions in a Community Choice program?

Unions can play a crucial role in designing a Community Choice energy program that prioritizes local clean energy development, sets labor standards, organizes the training of workers from our local community, and assures quality work that benefits our community. Unions can be an important partner in addressing historic inequities in the benefits of renewable energy development and in charting the path to a clean energy future. Nevertheless some unions support the traditional centralized energy model of the utilities and oppose the kind of community-based energy development—and the environmental and economic benefits that Community Choice can provide.

Join us in calling on Alameda County Board of Supervisors to prioritize development of local clean energy resources in launching an East Bay Community Choice energy program!

Community Choice energy enables cities and counties to choose where the electricity will come for their homes and businesses. This means that local communities can decide to get their electricity from renewable energy sources: either by purchasing renewable electricity on the market, or even better, by developing local renewable energy resources in the community.

Under a Community Choice energy program, the incumbent investor-owned utility company (PG&E) continues to deliver electricity and service customers.

Climate Justice, Clean Energy Jobs and Community Benefits

Community Choice energy is a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the impact of climate change by cutting energy consumption, switching to renewable energy sources, and building local renewable electricity generation.

By developing local clean energy resources, Community Choice programs can spur local economic development in the community, provide family-supporting union clean energy jobs, offer competitive electric utility bills and price stability, reduce pollution, and provide other community benefits.

Now Is The Time To Act

Alameda County is moving forward to establish a Community Choice energy program, but with no clear commitment to prioritizing the community benefits mentioned above or including community representatives in the governance of the program.

The Local Clean Energy Alliance is reaching out to community organizations to call on County Supervisors to make sure that community benefits and community involvement are at the heart of an East Bay Community Choice program.

This campaign is being organized by the Local Clean Energy Alliance to help promote the equitable development and democratization of local renewable energy resources as a way to address climate change and build sustainable and resilient communities.

For more information contact Local Clean Energy Alliance organizers:

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