

Clean Power to the People

December 8th 2016:

How can we make Community Choice benefits real for our community?



The Clean Power to the People event on December 8, 2016, was the fourth in a series of campaign updates/strategy sessions on efforts to implement a Community Choice energy program in the East Bay that advances economic, environmental and racial justice.

Participants/ Attendees

Representatives from 30 different community organizations¹ attended the Oakland workshop organized by the Local Clean Energy Alliance. Participants included members of labor unions, workforce development organizations, environmental justice organizations, faith communities, renewable energy businesses, environmental organizations, and progressive political organizations.

Purpose/ Goals

The goal of the fourth Clean Power to the People gathering was to hear directly from community representatives about what it will take to make East Bay Community Energy (Alameda County's Community Choice energy program) work for our communities. Community Choice advocates have succeeded in getting community benefit goals and a local development business plan included in the Joint Powers agreement that will guide the program's governing board. As the program readies for launch over the next year, how can we shape it to ensure that it benefits our communities—so that low income communities, people of color, and longtime residents actually see the benefits from local renewable energy projects? How can local control of energy resources and the wealth they generate be utilized to address issues like chronic unemployment, displacement, and poverty?

Program/ Discussion

Following a lunch that included Everett & Jones barbeque and tamales from Masa P'a La Raza, Jessica Tovar of the Local Clean Energy Alliance provided a brief update on Alameda County's progress toward launching its Community Choice program and introduced the format for the workshop.

The main discussion—how can we make Community Choice benefits real for our communities—was broken down into four topics covering different types of community benefits; labor standards, workforce development, mitigating the housing crisis and displacement, and community-driven economic development.

The format featured four “fishbowl” discussions: for each topic, a few, pre-selected participants from especially relevant organizations sat together in the center and began the discussion by answering questions posed by the moderator. The rest of the workshop participants surrounded the “fishbowl,” and frequently engaged in the lively examination of the issues.

The resulting conversations went deep into issues and solution-oriented proposals regarding each of the topics. Below is a summary of the main points raised.

Making Benefits Real: Labor Standards

- Labor standards mean good jobs with fair and family-sustaining wages. These are jobs that lead to career paths. There are training opportunities for union jobs and it will be important to get the word out about training programs for those jobs. We need to foster the connection between healthy jobs and a healthy environment.
- To achieve effective labor standards will require continual lobbying efforts with the board for the Community Choice program, particularly on projects for the local renewable build out. It has been critical to be there from the beginning to impact the foundational documents, but a continued, strong community presence will be necessary, including labor unions, as the program takes shape.
- Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) are a way to enforce labor standards. PLAs can require local hire. With Community Choice there is the potential to aggregate work by city, district, or neighborhood, and therefore utilize PLAs, but that requires strong organizing.
- It will be important to commit to and demand a just transition for any displaced PG&E workers.
- There needs to be some re-branding of unions so they are seen as partners with the community. It is also important not to require that All jobs be unionized, as this requirement could delay or put the program at risk.
- Inclusion of carbon costs would strengthen the economic argument for local build out and sourcing.



Making Benefits Real: Workforce Development

- There is a need to focus on employing people with barriers to entry-level jobs and on retaining trainees/apprentices through mentoring programs, including 2-way mentoring and other support. There are roles for unions, employers, public partners, etc. in ensuring these programs exist and are effective.
- Barriers to entry and retention in apprenticeship/training programs include being formerly incarcerated, lack of affordable housing security, and exposure to trauma, among others. IBEW cannot find enough local workers who can afford to live in this area. Employers need to consider these issues, creatively address them, or find others to support trainees in wraparound services.
- There are many community partners for training/apprenticeship opportunities. Laney College offers good preparation in math and other subjects. They also get equity funding, which could be used on training programs for the 1400 jobs promised by Alameda County for formerly incarcerated people.
- The Black Workers' Center and Ella Baker also offer good re-entry programs for previously incarcerated people. There is some job training in Alameda County jails.
- There was recognition of the complications of local hire provisions in rapidly gentrifying area. We need to be creative, think more broadly about how to define local, based on roots, generations in the area, etc.
- It has been found that union jobs are one of best career opportunities for previously incarcerated people.



Making Benefits Real: Addressing the Housing Crisis and Displacement

- Many communities don't know about Community Choice and assume it's not for them, nor understand how such a program could benefit them. We need to present information to our communities with outreach that is inclusive and accessible, and talk about what this program could mean for the people in those communities.
- We need to keep up community advocacy for community benefits. We should ensure that developers pay towards these benefits, require local hire and affordable housing in developments. Requiring solar in new developments could extend the savings and make units more affordable.
- The program needs to go beyond simply offering lower rates. We should envision and advocate for a program that subsidizes low income rate payers and doesn't turn people's power off for inability to pay. We need to think creatively about compassionate solutions such as a Community Care Fund/on-bill donation, batteries at meters, more customer service specifically for low income customers, etc.
- We need to advocate for programs and financing for low income communities, and design program to shift ownership options to renters and others who have not benefitted typically from solar. Long-time community advocates should lead these efforts.
- Community shared solar programs can increase self-sufficiency for neighborhoods by creating local storage and local blocks of solar for neighborhoods. Aggregating small projects can make renewable projects more affordable by through economies of scale.
- It is important to incorporate the benefits of energy efficiency programs. Tenant/Landlord Partnership agreements can ensure that the savings from energy efficiency are shifted to tenants. There are currently such programs in Alameda County.
- We need to keep in mind all the issues that keep local economies from thriving.
- We need to advocate at the state level to prevent policies that particularly impact the most vulnerable people.



Making Benefits Real: Community-Driven Economic Development

- We need to advocate for a Community Choice agency that brings community benefits, and ensure that it doesn't operate in a vacuum. We should try and put people on planning commissions, bank boards, etc. that have same values around equitable economic development. People who want to run/get appointed to boards and commissions can utilize Alameda Labor Council training program for people.
- Energy can offer a model for neighborhood-by-neighborhood organizing. Engaging neighborhoods in designing and advocating for renewable energy projects could lead to organizing to address other specific community needs. A regional cooperative could coordinate these neighborhood organizing efforts, and identify communities particularly in need of resources.
- There is a need to address/prioritize low income communities for infrastructure improvements.
- This community-driven model would create job opportunities for solar installers, energy efficiency workers, etc, but also for community organizers, policy makers, program designers, etc.
- It is important to examine and learn from the structural, institutional barriers and incentives that have determined how renewable development has happened as it has so far. Community Choice should provide a new model that can avoid those same barriers and incentives from the past.
- Community Choice offers a vehicle to diversify who (both residents and businesses, i.e. worker-owned cooperatives) benefits from renewable energy and energy efficiency.



Outcomes: Ideas for Action

All of the benefits discussed at this workshop are only possible if we as a community step up, advocate, and organize to make them real.

This will require active engagement by community stakeholder organizations in shaping and participating in the Community Advisory Committee called for in the Joint Powers agreement that will guide the program's governing board. Formation of the Community Advisory Committee is high on the agenda when the East Bay Community Energy governing board is seated at the end of January/beginning of February 2017.

The East Bay Clean Power Alliance has [proposed criteria and a selection process](#) for choosing the nine-member Community Advisory Committee to ensure that the Committee represents the main stakeholder constituencies in Alameda County and that it operates independently of the governing board. Stakeholder organizations are encouraged to weigh in on [this proposal](#).

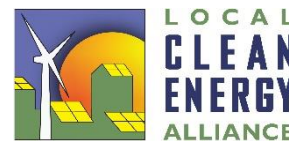
Also it is very important for the community to have a strong presence at the first meeting of the East Bay Community Energy governing board to demonstrate that our community intends to be engaged in the shaping of the program right from the start—that *we are the community* in this *Community Choice* program.

Organizations that are interested in becoming more involved are invited to request presentations for membership, executive boards, or other bodies within your organization.

Please direct any inquiries about this effort or for presentations to:

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Jessica Tovar: jessica@localcleanenergy.org 415-766-7766



Available Resources

- [Community Choice Victory in Alameda County](#)
- [Proposed Advisory Committee Criteria and Selection Process](#)
- [Community Choice, Community Power video](#)
- [Program Vision: East Bay Community Energy](#)
- [East Bay Community Choice Energy: from Concept to Implementation](#) (in-depth 34-page report)
- [Community Choice: Economic Development Clean Energy & Jobs](#) (two-page handout)
- [Community Choice and Union Jobs, August 2016](#)



¹ Participating organizations included: IBEW 595, SEIU 1021, CWA 9412, CNA, Bay Labor Committee for Peace & Justice, Oakland Rising, Rising Sun, Laney College, Local Clean Energy Alliance, Planting Justice, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Communities for a Better Environment, Energy Solidarity Cooperative, Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter, Berkeley Ecology Center, Alameda Interfaith Climate Action Network, Allen Temple Baptist Church, Kehilla Community Synagogue, Rooted in Resilience, Wellstone Democratic Club, Sun Light and Power, Sustainable Economies Law Center, Energy Conservation Options, RIC and Pollination projects, Citizens Trade Campaign, East Bay Clean Power Alliance