

ECPAC Clean Energy Infrastructure – Stakeholder Sessions

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Formerly called Smart Grid Grants for Utilities and then Grid Modernization, this Clean Energy Fund pathway has invested in new technologies that assist with the integration of intermittent renewables onto the grid. Investments were initially focused on helping larger electric utilities with implementing field demonstrations of emerging and promising grid-scale battery energy storage technologies to support the integration of intermittent renewable energy. Subsequent programs have included projects to combine emerging energy storage technologies with distributed generation (mostly PV solar). Most of these also included advanced microgrid controls, providing resiliency benefits and higher levels of integration into utility operations. For purposes of the stakeholder review, this program was considered to include the ETS and solar deployment grants.

The Clean Energy Infrastructure stakeholders convened for two virtual workshops on June 26 and July 9, 2020 to brainstorm ideas around how best to focus CEF funds in the future.

Stakeholders

About 20 individuals attended one or both of the stakeholder sessions for this program area. Participants included representatives from large and small utilities, research institutions, and community advocates. Participants in one or both sessions included:

- Jack Newman and Stephen Paget - Sazan
- Jennifer Harper - Energy Northwest
- Russell Guerry - OPALCO
- Jeremy Twitchell - PNNL
- Daniel Kirschen - UW
- Tanya Barham - Community Energy Labs
- John Gibson - Avista
- Elaine Markham - PSE
- David Logsdon - Seattle City Light
- Lisa Rennie - Tacoma Power
- Scott Gibson - Snohomish PUD
- Schuyler Burkhart - Grays Harbor PUD
- Colin Young - Clallam PUD
- Bryce Yonker - Grid Forward
- Mikhaila Gonzales - Spark NW
- Stephanie Bostwick - NW Indian College
- Roz Jenkins - Emerald Cities Collab.
- Eleanor Bastian - WEC

Questions Considered

The following is a summary of the questions used to guide the Clean Energy Infrastructure stakeholder discussions. The stakeholders had the opportunity to dive more deeply into these areas with a focus on the current economic environment and Washington's goals for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

1. What investments should be made to best foster our information and technology strengths to develop, demonstrate and deploy new clean technologies to respond to needs created by the state's recently-adopted electricity and emissions targets?
2. What technological questions should be considered regarding specific use cases?
3. How can the program be better structured to incorporate equity and environmental justice?
4. Are there changes that could be made to the appropriations process to provide more flexibility, better assist and include a broader range of applicants and projects, and better leverage private, utility and other public sector funding?
5. How can the CEF program be used to modernize the transmission and distribution systems to increasingly: Integrate renewables; enable demand response, management, and other distributed energy resources; cost-effectively and efficiently electrify transportation and buildings; and maximize grid efficiency and resilience?
6. What investment strategies should the state adopt to direct or support accelerated grid modernization consistent with meeting CETA targets?

Ideas

- ***Eligibility and Program Scope: Expand the range of applicants and allowable technologies.***
 - The programs shouldn't specify particular technologies. Let applicants decide.
 - Challenges with getting smaller organizations into programs. Widen range and increase outreach. Most small utilities are risk adverse. Identify and help them overcome barriers to transition.
 - Consider what other states (e.g., OR) have done with programmatic structure, streamlining the process, allowing for broader inclusion of smaller projects across a larger number of applicants.
 - Expand eligibility. Should not be based on any particular technology. Need to be of a certain scale and scope for general alignment. Allow groups to come together to apply as a group to overcome limitations.
- ***Program Scope: Less emphasis on innovation.***
 - Innovation is viewed differently depending on type of organization and history.
 - Focus more on system reliability, resilience, replacing aging infrastructure/a healthy system.
 - Adjust project funding and match requirements to encourage more participation by organizations with less capacity.

➤ ***Outreach and Technical Assistance.***

- More outreach is needed. Other organizations already involved could help new entrants.
- Provide up-front technical assistance to applicants like design standards, sample past projects, and project templates
- Extend event horizon along with assistance to engage stakeholders earlier.

➤ ***Budget and Funding Barriers.***

- Allowable “Capital” assets for cost share and match due to the funding source are not well understood by all parties
- Consider using project plans/templates
- Upfront assistance, feasibility, developing a roadmap for obtaining grant \$\$ and complying with CETA.

➤ ***Equity and Inclusion.***

- Consider using the roadmap of ETS and Low Income Community solar for encouraging equity.
- Need to hear more from those not well represented and engaged thus far.
- The above mentioned efforts for improved outreach and assistance are critical.