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Docket Number:	18-IEPR-08
Project Title:	Energy Equity
TN #:	222991
Document Title:	Tyrone Roderick Williams Comments Suggestions and comments related to some of the Energy Commission Low-Income Barriers Study Recommendations
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	Tyrone Roderick Williams
Submitter Role:	Public Agency
Submission Date:	3/16/2018 7:43:24 PM
Docketed Date:	3/16/2018

Comment Received From: Tyrone Roderick Williams

Submitted On: 3/16/2018

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Suggestions and comments related to some of the Energy Commission Low-Income Barriers Study Recommendations:

We are encouraged to see the CPUC and CEC focusing on issues facing disadvantage communities. The comments below are provided to increase the possibility of success in achieving the goals and objectives.

The following are suggestions and comments related to some of the Energy Commission Low-Income Barriers Study Recommendations:

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

We are encouraged to see the CPUC and CEC focusing on issues facing disadvantage communities. The comments below are provided to increase the possibility of success in achieving the goals and objectives. We see the value of a state wide coordinated effort to align all of the private sector, nonprofit and government programs and resources supporting clean energy.

We assert that this can best be done by delegating full-time staff to manage the programs and activities targeting disadvantaged communities across the state. We recognize that this is a major endeavor and it requires adequate personnel and financial resources. However, the initial investment will have substantial returns over the next decades.

The following are suggestions and comments related to some of the Energy Commission Low-Income Barriers Study Recommendations:

Formulating a statewide clean energy labor and work force development strategy

We have to be deliberate about identifying and publicizing the jobs and career potential with clean energy jobs. Most residents in disadvantaged communities have no idea what the jobs are and how to access them.

The development of the workforce should start in elementary school and proceed through high school, college and career. Strong emphasis should be placed on STEM (science, technology engineering and math) as a fundamental element for developing and preparing the work force. Grant funding should be made available to support STEM, evidence-based enrichment programs. The funds should be set aside on a regional basis to ensure equal access and distribution across the state. Special funding consideration should be granted to cities that have federal or state Promise Zone designations.

Cross-sector collaborations with, high schools, work force training organizations, community colleges and in the communities they serve should be strengthened. Partnerships with employers should be established so a work force pipeline could be established. Intensive marketing and communication strategies should be developed to target disadvantaged communities, especially individuals 18 to 25. This would include funding for special events, radio, television, print and social media campaigns. We also recommend that a "Clean Energy Online Job Center" be established so that clean energy employers can post available positions.

The most effective programs provide a training stipend and assists with transportation, child care, books and equipment costs. It may be possible to collaborate with other state funding sources to provide supplemental funding for program participants.

We have also observed that training programs that include effective life skills and work place skills training tend to have the best sustainable outcomes. Therefore, we recommend that any and all work force funding include costs associated with these aspects of training programs.

Expanding funding for photovoltaic and solar thermal offerings for low-income customers

We support the expansion of funding. We suggest that regional or community marketing strategies be developed to effectively inform customers of the availability of funds. Often this message is best communicated through organizations that already have credibility in the community rather than an outside firm or organization. We suggest that schools, libraries, community centers and places of worship be engaged as partners in disseminating information about the programs. Marketing would include funding for special events, radio, television, print and social media campaigns.

Enhancing housing tax credits for projects to include energy upgrades during rehabilitation

We suggest that extra points be added to the scoring of projects that include energy upgrades during rehabilitation and new construction, particular those projects that partner with utility companies that offer special energy discounts and rebate programs.

Additionally, a separate pool of funds could be created to fund a “Sustainable Grants” program to provide additional funding to cover a portion of the rehabilitation costs of energy upgrades on a per unit basis. These funds should be set aside on a regional basis to ensure equal access and distribution across the state. Special funding consideration should be granted to cities that have federal or state Promise Zone designations.

Encouraging collaboration with community-based organizations in new and existing programs.

We believe this is absolutely essential to achieve this goals. We also suggest that a formalized process or plan for engaging a cross-section of local community-based organizations be submitted and approved prior to any funds being disbursed for projects and activities. When awarding funds to community-based organizations one should consider the following:

- The staff capacity of the lead organization and collaborating organizations
- Past performance with managing grants and cross-sector programs
- Financial strength of the organizations
- The composition of the board of the organizations
- Supporting partners (community, city, state and federal)

It is important to note that if an application for funding is involved, the application should not be so cumbersome that it requires a team of technical consultants to complete the application.

We suggest that the submission of a funding application should not cause a substantial financial burden to the organizations applying for funds.

Funding for new or existing programs should be set aside on a regional basis to ensure equal access and distribution across the state. Special funding consideration should be granted to cities that have federal or state Promise Zone designations.

Conducting a follow-up study for increasing contracting opportunities for small businesses located in disadvantaged communities.

We strongly encourage collaboration with training organizations, colleges, Small Business Administration, Go Biz Office, Minority Business Centers, and ethnic chambers of commerce to assist individuals seeking to start or expand clean energy businesses. We suggest setting aside funds for establishing lines of credit, bonding capacity and insurance requirements.

Each business that is created or expands provides new jobs and contributes to the economic vitality of the targeted communities.

Funding for new or existing programs should be set aside on a regional basis to ensure equal access and distribution across the state.

Special funding consideration should be granted to cities that have federal or state Promise Zone designations.