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Comments on Fresno REAP Workshop and REAP Guidelines

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

Asian Business Institute and Resource Center

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1/29/2019

Andrea Hoppe
Commission Agreement Officer
California Energy Commission
1516 Ninth Street, MS-18
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Dear California Energy Commission:

My name is Dao Lor, Program Assistant for a local 501(c)3 in the City of Fresno, Asian Business Institute and Resource Center (ABIRC). I want to thank your organization on putting up a truly beneficial program for not just the community but the future generation (California Renewable Energy Program – CAREAP). I was given the opportunity to sit through one of the workshops on January 28, 2019, at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and understand the scope of work of your mission. I would like to offer comments and suggestion on behalf of our organization that has been working with *low-income* and *disadvantaged communities*; and currently, assisting small farmers including Southeast Asian Farmers.

On the GFO booklet, on page 4 of 31, it specifies that at least 35% of the fund shall proceed in benefiting low-income communities and disadvantaged communities. However, it seems that there is a lack of representation from the *disadvantages* and the *low-income community* at the workshop. Here are our initial concerns:

1. **Outreach:** The Central Valley, especially Fresno County is home to over 100 different ethnic communities – a true melting pot. The Southeast Asian Group is the second largest ethnic minority, behind the Hispanic. In the Central Valley alone, there are over 2,000 Small Southeast Asian Farmers, age ranging 40 and over, who has *little-to-none schooling*. During the workshop, there were only three participants of SEA background. Two represented organizations, including myself, and other was possibly a farmer. The lack of participation from a large disadvantage community raises concerns over impactful outreach for this important program.
2. **Culture and Language Barriers:** Many of the SEA farmers that ABIRC worked with, English is not their primary language. Translating or interpreting English to a SEA language is difficult, especially Hmong, where the Hmong Language is still new and limited in terms of terminology. Add cultural barriers to the language issue, this now creates a two-prong barrier that the service provider will have to

consider. The issues are not new within in the Central Valley, just new when providers have not worked here in the Central Valley.

3. **Technical Barrier:** Sitting through the workshop, I believed it takes a person who at least has gone through a few years of college to understand:
 - a. technical terms
 - b. how to put the budget plan packet together
 - c. how to operate a computer and the programs necessary to complete the application: Excel and Words. *For example, the input of numbers to generate Kilowatt-hours (kWh) on the excel form.*

Southeast Asian farm businesses are likely operated by a mom-and-pop. Often, they rely on their young children to help during harvest season and in providing translation and interpretation in time of need. The question remains, “*how exactly do we plan to serve the disadvantaged and low-income communities*” when our activities and efforts do not represent some of our “disadvantaged communities.”

Suggestion: *Community Based Organization (CBO)*. There are many CBO in every community that exists to serve their own community; who are well established, connected, and known within their own community. If the mission and goal are to help the disadvantaged and low-income; it is wiser to connect with these organization who will then connect to their constituents. True partnership should be established, not “in-kind” support. Our communities have seen enough of these efforts.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If there is a need to clarify, please do not hesitate to contact myself; or, ABIRC’s Executive Director, Blong Xiong, at his cell phone, [559-906-4331](tel:559-906-4331) or by email – blongxiong@sbcglobal.net.

Thank you,

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