

Diversity Advisory Council Meeting Notes

November 16, 2021

Attending from the council:

Charity Fain, Community Energy Project
Dolores Martinez, EUVALCREE
Indika Sugathadasa, PDX HIVE
Cheryl Roberts, African American Alliance for Homeownership
Sherry Tran, Bend small business owner
Susan Badger-Jones, special projects consultant
Rebecca Descombes, Native American Youth and Family Center
Oswaldo Bernal, OBL Media
Terrance Harris, Oregon State University

Attending from Energy Trust:

Emily Findley	Alex Novie
Elaine Dado	Tracy Scott
Cheryle Easton	Quinn Parker
Elizabeth Fox	Tyrone Henry
Laura Schaefer	Betsy Kauffman
Michael Colgrove	Greg Stokes
Marshall Johnson	Mayra Aparicio
Emily Estrada	Lenora Deslandes
Bayo Ware	Jessica Kramer
Brigid Gormley	Melanie Bissonnette
Debbie Menashe	Hannah Cruz
Kyle Morrill	Kenji Spielman
Scott Clark	Julianne Thacher
Dan Rubado	Mackenzie Kurtzner
Kate Wellington	Emma Clark
Ashley Bartels	Shelly Carlton
Abby Spegman	Naomi Cole
Wendy Gibson	Thad Roth
Hannah Levy	Ryan Crews
Lizzie Rubado	Kirstin Pinit
Sloan Schang	Amber Cole
Mia Deonate	Sletsy Dlamini
Susan Jowaiszas	Sue Fletcher
Adam Bartini	Amanda Zuniga
Amanda Thompson	

Others attending:

Mark Kendall, Energy Trust board	Knowledge Murphy, Multnomah County
Jake Wise, Portland General Electric	Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility
Jenn Latu, Portland General Electric	Commission
Alder Miller, CLEAResult	

1. Welcome, Agenda Review and Group Reflection

Tyrone Henry, Energy Trust diversity, equity and inclusion lead, convened the meeting at 9:11 a.m. The agenda, notes and presentation materials are available at Energy Trust's website at <https://www.energytrust.org/about/public-meetings/diversity-advisory-council-meetings/>.

The council reflected on a quote from Maya Angelou that spoke to overcoming painful and unjust history through the practice of love and forgiveness. Council members discussed how this mentality has been an important tool to reframe and foster empathy around early life experiences. Viewing them through this lens allowed them to realize that parents and others were entrenched in challenging circumstances beyond their control. Some members noted the importance of applying forgiveness to themselves and releasing feelings of guilt and speculation about what could have been, especially when it seems like change is not happening fast enough. Being gentle with others is part of self-care and is a reminder of how love can lead us forward. Council members expressed appreciation for each other and Tyrone for providing a space to share meaningful experiences and feelings.

2. Staff Liaison to the Energy Trust board of directors

Topic summary

Greg Stokes, Energy Trust organizational development manager and board liaison, discussed two vacancies on the Energy Trust Board of Directors and invited Diversity Advisory Council members to help promote this opportunity within their networks. The positions have been posted online and shared with all three advisory councils by email. Greg reviewed the core attributes required of all board members and the specific areas of expertise being sought in candidates this round. In addition to an overall aim to increase diversity within the board, the search committee is seeking one candidate with subject matter experience in the industrial and manufacturing sector and one candidate with experience working with culturally and ethnically diverse communities.

Discussion

Committee members asked if the board has allocation for specific racial identities within its membership, pointing out that the last round of board recruitment resulted in two new members who were white. Committee members asked if Energy Trust plans to institutionalize racial equity on the board and intentionally keep positions open for Black or ethnically diverse members (Kheoshi Owens). Staff noted the feedback and stated there is more visibility now due to a self-identification process that informs the work of the nominating committee. The council raised that not much progress has been made to diversify board membership in recent years. Members acknowledged the need to recruit members with specific skill sets, but the nominating committee needs to adopt an intersectional approach and work harder to seek candidates who have those skill sets and are also racially diverse. Committee members advised that this process should be built into the bylaws and vacant positions should be left open until a suitable candidate is found. A minimum standard of 40% people of color should be adopted (Kheoshi Owens).

Council members added that since creating this new standard would likely increase the time needed to identify candidates who have the desired skill sets and are also racially diverse, the selection committee should begin the recruitment process sooner (Cheryl Roberts). The council expressed Energy Trust also needs to address term limits to create quicker turnover to result in more opportunities to add diverse members (Cheryl Roberts, Indika Sugathadasa). One committee member shared that she has experienced similar challenges on the board of her own organization and delayed the recruitment process until a diverse candidate pool was available (Cheryl Roberts). Staff noted that the committee is proactively seeking diverse candidate

applications in its current selection process and outreach. A council member expressed hesitancy to share the opportunity with people in their network due to the risk of exposing them to a toxic experience. They do not yet feel confident the culture of the current board has changed (Kheoshi Owens). Staff noted that every open position is an opportunity to increase diversity on the board. A current board member stated that the incident being referenced was a wake-up call, and the board is working on growing by intention instead of merely by attrition (Mark Kendall).

Next steps

Board members and staff will share the feedback with the nominating committee to inform its selection process. Council members are encouraged to suggest candidates and share the posting.

3. In-Progress Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan for 2022

Topic summary

Mike Colgrove, Energy Trust executive director, presented the ongoing work to develop a new diversity, equity and inclusion plan for 2022. He provided an overview of the project team's initial thinking with the aim of soliciting the council's feedback with enough time to incorporate it into the final plan. Based on learnings from the diversity, equity and inclusion summit events, the 2022 plan will be more focused on community engagement and will be structured as a living plan that has flexibility to evolve during its implementation period. The initial structure of the plan includes the history of and learnings from the prior plan, a summary of who Energy Trust will be engaging with and how, metrics and reporting and a timeline for implementing activities laid out in the plan. Mike also introduced Quinn Parker, a new staff contractor who is managing the plan's development and has extensive relevant experience in this area.

Discussion

The council questioned the presence of images of Black individuals in the presentation slides, stating it is unnecessary and misleading. The photos imply Energy Trust is currently serving the Black community adequately when in reality that is the aspirational future state envisioned by the plan (Cheryl Roberts). The council discussed the overall role of metrics within the plan, given that input from the summits revealed a common perception that Energy Trust hides behind data (Tyrone Henry). Staff stated that at least some metrics are needed in order for the organization to hold itself accountable, but the new plan aims to strike a better balance by including more relationship-building and meaningful engagement with communities that need our support (Mike Colgrove).

The council asked for more detail about what community engagement will look like and how it will create desire to participate (Terrance Harris). Staff explained that specific activities have not been identified yet, and that we are inviting input from the council at this early stage in order to give room for its ideas to be incorporated into the strategy (Mike Colgrove).

Council members expressed concern about the overall idea of a diversity, equity and inclusion plan as a guiding strategy because it creates a risk of compartmentalizing this work instead of institutionalizing equity into all aspects of the organization (Kheoshi Owens). The council also identified accountability for individual staff as a gap, urging Energy Trust to address this by introducing third-party accountability and writing equity expectations into position descriptions (Kheoshi Owens).

The council advised Energy Trust to ensure that the needs of rural communities are adequately addressed within the plan. While communities of color exist within rural areas, those

communities often have special challenges. Groups advancing racial equity may have different political leanings than the rural community more generally, and it is challenging to get critical mass within a more dispersed population (Susan Badger-Jones).

Council members suggested re-imagining the language used to define diversity, equity and inclusion to go beyond awareness and address decolonization and intersectionality, creating space to reflect those with compound trauma and barriers. Additionally, Energy Trust should be more transparent in defining whiteness, how it shows up in the workplace and that it includes elements that are inherently inequitable (Sheri Tran). The council also called out the hiring process as an area of opportunity, given that some positions continue to attract primarily white male candidates (Sheri Tran).

Next steps

The project team will continue developing the plan over the next few months before submitting to the Board for approval in February 2022. Council members are invited to share additional feedback as the plan is finalized.

4. Supplier Diversity Initiative Key Points

Topic summary

Tyrone Henry presented key points of Energy Trust's new supplier diversity initiative; a process created to support priority diversity, equity and inclusion communities by providing contracting opportunities. Tyrone explained that this strategy provides value by supporting innovation and helping build stronger community relationships. The program works by building diversity, equity and inclusion requirements into contracts to ensure that a set percentage of funds are allocated to minority-owned businesses. Tyrone reviewed a roadmap for implementing this program, which includes building a tracking system, creating contracting goals and hosting trainings for staff and contractors.

Discussion

The council asked if a minority-owned firm bidding as a primary implementer on a contract needs to submit a hiring and contracting plan. Staff clarified that would not be required, and the firm may be scored higher than a white firm in that situation (Tyrone Henry).

Next steps

Staff will continue considering the Diversity Advisory Council's input while continuing to develop and implement the plan following the timeline shared by staff in the presentation.

5. 2022 Residential Program Management Contract Request for Proposal

Topic summary

Staff presented details of upcoming request for proposal to manage and implement the residential energy efficiency program beginning in 2023. Staff gave an overview of the residential program, how it is structured and the customers and building types it serves, including diversity, equity and inclusion objectives and initiatives designed to reach target audiences. The new contract includes community partnership objectives, and the request for proposal has diversity-related requirements built in as part of its scoring criteria.

Discussion

A council member relayed their organization's positive experience with the residential program and asked if attached units like condos and townhomes are included in the residential scope. Staff said the residential program is expanding its scope to include attached dwellings.

Next steps

Staff will host an informational webinar for potential applicants in early 2022. Energy Trust will release the request for proposal on the timeline included in the presentation, and the firm selected to implement the program will begin its contract in 2023.

8. Announcements

No announcements were shared due to lack of time.

9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m. The next council meeting will take place in 2022.