Better Buildings  Workforce Peer Exchange  and Green for All High Road Affinity Group

“Listening to your Workforce”: Lessons from Pilot Programs and Other Approaches for Workforce Feedback

Call Slides and Discussion Summary

October 6, 2011
Agenda

• Welcome from Green for All and Better Buildings
• Call Logistics and Introductions
  ▪ What questions do you have about “listening to your workforce”? 
• Featured Guests:
  ▪ Jeff Acklen, Workforce Development, Austin Energy
  ▪ Sammy Chu, Director, Long Island Green Homes, Babylon, NY
  ▪ Pam Fendt, Green Jobs Marketing Representative, LIUNA Great Lakes Region Organizing Committee (working with programs in Wisconsin)
• Discussion:
  ▪ What are programs doing to create a dialogue with contractors, trainers, and job seekers about program design and implementation?
  ▪ What are some the key insights and/or program designs that have resulted from workforce feedback?
• Future Call Topics
Participating Programs

- Austin, TX
- West Babylon, NY (Long Island Green Homes)
- Baltimore, MD
- Chicago, IL
- Cincinnati, OH
- St. Lucie County, FL
- Kansas City, MO
- Madison, WI
- Milwaukee, WI
- Montgomery, AL
- Los Angeles County, CA
Insights from Presenters:
Austin Energy

**Presenter: Jeff Acklen, Workforce Development, Austin Energy**

- Austin Energy conducted a pilot project to refine the program’s contractor engagement approach
  - Determined how approach was working with the workforce
  - Focused on fall season—a traditionally slow time for contractors; three month fall period saw uptick in work equivalent to summer
  - Case study published in fall 2011

- Lessons learned:
  - Meet face-to-face work contractors
  - Link energy efficiency program offerings to other customer interactions (e.g. failed equipment calls from customers)
  - Target slower contractor work times, not peaks
  - Focus on streamlining procedures (in Austin, got feedback that procedures for licensing/certification and quality assurance were inefficient)
Presenter: Sammy Chu, Director, Long Island Green Homes, Babylon, NY

- Workforce development and contractor development are related, but separate efforts
  - They need one another but should both get focused attention

- Lessons Learned (workforce development):
  - Partner with local building trades and other workforce programs (e.g. Youth Corps program)
  - For “survival employment,” put people on the public works department payroll to provide basic income while they go through training programs
  - Host job fairs and use referral services to place trained workers
  - Use the program to serve as a reference for prospective employers (often the first reference on their resume)
Lessons learned (contractor development):

- Consult with contractors at program start-up and for major changes; ask about their needs, concerns, current state of their business

- Establish contact with a core group of contractors that you trust and have past history of performance.

- Create a project pipeline and lead referral service: once the program creates value for contractors, it is in a better position to ask contractors to employee people from the community (e.g., Portland) and meet other workforce standards

- Make sure program requirements (e.g., local hiring, trainings) are easy for contractors

- Make sure program offerings adds value for home performance industry
Presenter: Pam Fendt, Green Jobs Marketing Representative, LIUNA Great Lakes Region Organizing Committee

- LIUNA Works with labor unions in WI as a liaison between contractors and programs and to promote energy efficiency markets generally
  - Has talked to about 60 contractors to promote the opportunities that exist in the BB program in Madison and Milwaukee
  - Believes that the more contractors are engaged, the more work gets done, and the more opportunities there are for workers to retrofit homes
Insights from Presenters:
LIUNA, con’t

• Lessons learned (contractor development):
  ▪ Provide technical assistance; LIUNA helps contractors fill out paperwork and refers them to programs
  ▪ Help contractors with marketing; LIUNA has used its funds to hire canvassers to generate leads
  ▪ Provide upfront, clear messages to contracting community; set clear expectations about wage floors, certification requirements, and other standards they need to meet

• Lessons learned (workforce development):
  ▪ Once contractors have partnered with the program, make sure they have a trained and safe workforce available to do the job; for example, LIUNA partners with stressed communities for worker recruitment, puts workers through 80-hour training program, certification programs (e.g. OSHA)
Discussion

- What are programs doing to create a dialogue with contractors, trainers, and job seekers about program design and implementation?
- What are some the key insights and/or program designs that have resulted from workforce feedback?
Discussion Themes

• Communicate early and often at the beginning of programs, and keep the dialogue going, especially when making major changes to the program. Strategies include:
  ▪ Host monthly open meetings for contractors and programs to talk about what is working well and what can be improved (Austin Energy)
  ▪ Established a core group of trusted contractors; for example, Austin Energy meets quarterly with a group of key contractors in a board-type forum to regularly review program status and direction.
  ▪ Attend contractor association meetings (Long Island Green Homes)
  ▪ Host contractor breakfasts (LIUNA)
  ▪ Issue surveys of contractors (LIUNA)
  ▪ Use training programs as an opportunity for dialogue and feedback

• Be clear about program requirements
Discussion Themes

• Create opportunities and value for trained workers and contractors by building markets
  ▪ The value proposition for contractors is the project pipeline
  ▪ The value proposition for the workforce is jobs
  ▪ The value proposition for programs is being in a better position to meet program goals and workforce standards

• Make training and certification available and efficient
  ▪ It is tricky to get supply and demand right; try to train where contractors need it
  ▪ Help with skills transitions (e.g., train weatherization workers to transition into broader energy efficiency market)

• Facilitate linkages between contractors and suppliers of qualified workers
Potential Future Calls Topics

Better Buildings Peer Exchange:
• Quality Assurance Strategies
• Contractor Coordination Strategies
• Training Curriculum and Examples

High Road Affinity Group:
• Designing Contractor Friendly Programs
• Tracking Contractor Compliance
• Phasing in High Road Standards
• Marketing: Helping High Road Contractors Compete