



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 with 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)

Insights from Presenters: Long Island Green Homes



*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)

Insights from Presenters: Long Island Green Homes, con't



- 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 employ 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

Insights from Presenters: LIUNA



*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