

PORTLAND CLEAN ENERGY FUND

A BREAKTHROUGH FOR CLIMATE AND JUSTICE



IN NOVEMBER 2018, RESIDENTS OF PORTLAND, OREGON, MADE HISTORY BY PASSING THE PORTLAND CLEAN ENERGY FUND (PCEF), a breakthrough initiative that will raise an estimated \$44-\$61 million annually to support local clean energy and economic justice initiatives. The fund passed with 65 percent of the vote and support from a long list of local businesses and community organizations, including faith leaders, labor unions, and more.

INTRODUCING THE PORTLAND CLEAN ENERGY FUND

With PCEF, large corporations that generate over \$1 billion in annual gross revenue and at least \$500,000 in Portland-based sales contribute 1 percent of annual gross revenue to a locally-managed fund to support local clean energy, energy efficiency and climate justice projects. The fund is managed by a committee of nine local experts and community members appointed by city commissioners. To ensure funds are used to support those with the greatest need, PCEF

prioritizes grants for projects that serve low-income communities and communities of color.

The success of PCEF demonstrates to communities around the country what is possible when local leaders representing frontline communities are in the driver's seat. In the face of climate change and widening economic disparity, PCEF offers a community-led vision, grounded in justice and collaboration, to advance clean energy and energy efficiency while creating good local jobs in underserved, low-income neighborhoods that have endured a long legacy of disinvestment and exclusion. ■

“ Just 1% from billion-dollar corporations to invest in a prosperous, clean energy future for communities who have long experienced environmental racism. Just 1% for social, racial, and economic justice. Who wouldn't want that?”

—PORTLAND CITY COMMISSIONER JO ANN HARDESTY

PCEF: FROM VISION TO REALITY

PCEF’s success is notable given a long history of gridlock over environmental and climate initiatives in Oregon and elsewhere. Below is a recap of some of the core elements of success.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS: LEADERSHIP OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Unlike most climate policy solutions—which have been largely conceived of and led by mainstream white-led environmental organizations—from the earliest whisperings of an idea, PCEF has been led by local leaders representing communities of color in the Portland area.

Many predominantly white groups, including Portland Audubon, 350PDX, the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club, Columbia Riverkeeper, and Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, lent critical capacity and support to the initiative, but leadership stayed in the hands of leaders from Verde, the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC), NAACP Portland Branch,

OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, and the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA).

Frontline leaders who represent communities most impacted by climate change focused the initiative on climate solutions that provide direct community economic benefits. The resulting framework promised benefits for a broad range of Portland organizations, which was critical to assembling the incredibly broad and diverse coalition that led to success.

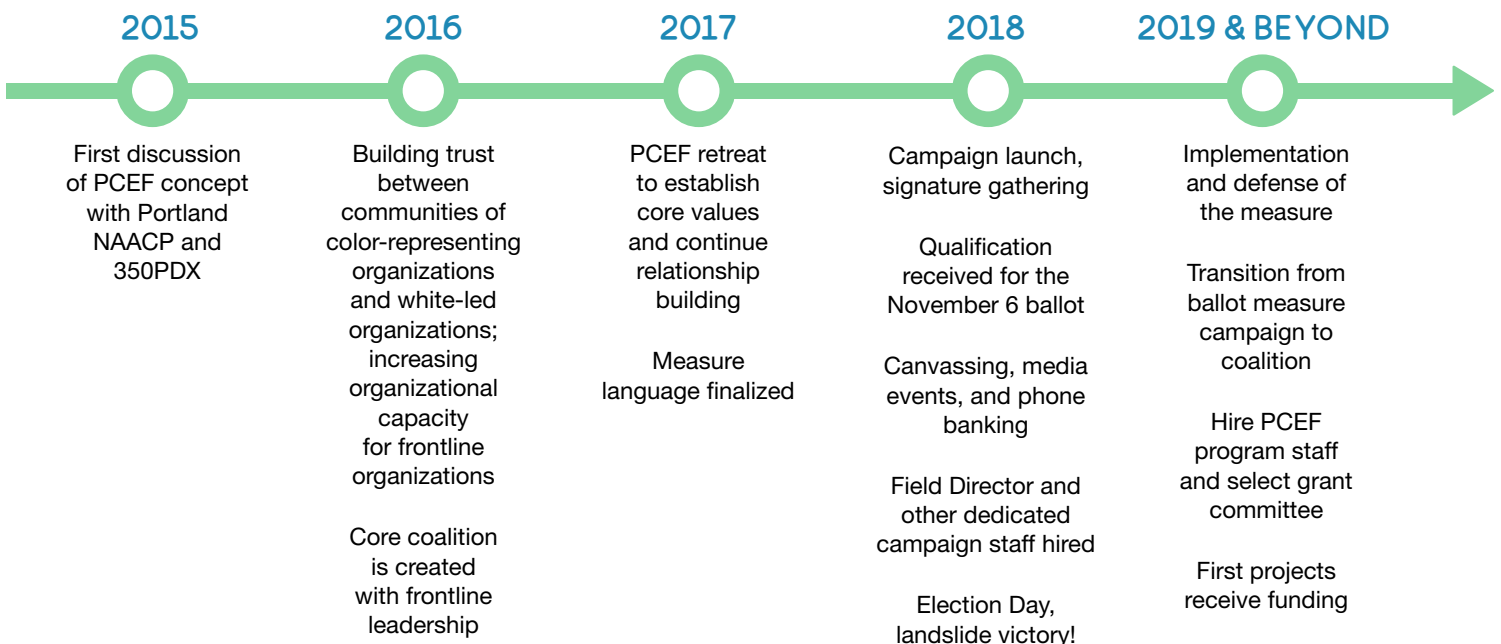


“ We have a choice between a clean energy future that continues a legacy of racism and one where Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, and people living in poverty get the benefits of green jobs and energy retrofits. Portland voters spoke loud and clear: we choose a just transition with benefits for all of us on the frontlines of the climate crisis.”

—REV. E.D. MONDAINÉ, PRESIDENT, NAACP PORTLAND BRANCH 1120



TIMELINE OF KEY MILESTONES





ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS: MOVING AT THE SPEED OF TRUST

Relationship-building and mutual trust were foundational pillars of PCEF’s success. The early PCEF core team agreed to be open and willing to explore what it means to center frontline leadership. They invited leaders from communities of color to help draft policy language to ensure it was rooted in racial and climate justice. Many mainstream environmental organizations who were unaccustomed to playing a supporting role were not added to the coalition until later, after the initiative was finalized.

A long history of divisions and siloed priorities meant that building trust between communities of color and white majority organizations took time and deliberate steps to change the cultural norms around policy campaigns. Meeting locations rotated between the offices/ spaces of the various member organizations, and included sharing a meal culturally specific to the host organization and prepared by neighborhood vendors. A



PHOTO: Rick Rappaport

“ Leaders met for years before getting anywhere close to developing a public campaign. We had to build trust across green groups and frontline groups. Once the trust was built, we were then able to leap forward with a very aggressive timeline and take really big risks together.”

—LAURA STEVENS, PCEF FIELD VOLUNTEER ORGANIZER

“ It was about relationship building, laughter, and getting to know each other as human beings.”

—KHANH PHAM, OPAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE OREGON



PHOTO: Verde

communities of color-led strategic planning retreat created space for members to share individual stories and life experiences with one another, time to walk through the origin story of the initiative, and a way to come to an agreement on the core values that would guide the coalition's work going forward.

In addition to prioritizing internal relationship-building, the PCEF campaign focused on securing endorsements from over two hundred community organizations, businesses, politicians, and faith leaders. Often organizations and community leaders were initially very cautious and it took multiple conversations with trusted spokespersons to garner endorsements. Outreach included building relationships with an unusual ally when it comes to environmental policy: the Building Trades Council. Given the impact of refineries and export terminals on frontline communities, core PCEF members had long opposed fossil fuel infrastructure projects backed by the Building Trades. PCEF members took time to get to know union leaders and engaged in deep listening to understand what was important to them. These conversations led to robust pre-apprenticeship and workforce standards in the initiative, and eventual endorsements from the majority of the organized labor community in Portland.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS: DIVERSE VOTER OUTREACH

To advance the campaign's equity-centered values, there was targeted outreach to voters in ethnically diverse neighborhoods with historically lower voter turnout, in contrast to mainstream campaigns who typically neglect these voters. Culturally-specific organizations led volunteer trainings, many voters received follow-up visits from canvassers in their preferred language, and translated campaign materials were provided where possible. Because of this, the campaign made close to 60,000 contacts and delivered over 500,000 mailers.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS: COORDINATING WITH LIKE-MINDED INITIATIVES

Another successful campaign strategy was partnering with other campaigns to build movement solidarity. PCEF partnered with other ballot measures including the No on 105 campaign, which was focused on protecting Oregon's landmark sanctuary law forbidding racial profiling by state and local police agencies using public resources. By combining canvassing efforts, each campaign was able to reach people more efficiently, and volunteers could talk about the synergies between the climate crisis, forced migration and immigration policy. ■



“The level of gratitude we experienced from non-native speakers gives more than lip service to engaging frontline communities.”

—JESSICA BECKETT, PCEF FIELD DIRECTOR



FONDO DE ENERGÍA LIMPIA

Empoderar Portland: Vote SI por Empleos Verdes y Hogares Saludables

¿Qué es el Fondo de Energía Limpia?

WHAT OTHER CAMPAIGNS CAN LEARN FROM PCEF

Without question, PCEF was a success at the ballot box, and it now stands to benefit many in Portland who are feeling the worst impacts of the climate crisis. The following reflections provide a pathway for others to learn from PCEF's successes and benefit from our hindsight.

LESSONS LEARNED: BALANCE DONATED STAFF TIME AND STAFF HIRED BY THE CAMPAIGN

From the beginning, PCEF worked in a collaborative manner and demonstrated that it was possible to run a successful grassroots campaign with relatively little money. To do this, the campaign relied heavily on staff from member organizations donating their time, which provided many benefits, including natural integration and continuity across the different campaign phases, as well as building organizational capacity for those new to campaigns. However as the campaign moved

into the frenetic phase of signature gathering and get-out-the-vote efforts, an earlier shift in campaign structure to add some dedicated, paid staff capacity to supervise volunteers and track data from canvassing and phone banking would have been helpful.

LESSONS LEARNED: EQUITY IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

PCEF sought to create a campaign rooted in equity, justice and the leadership of communities of color. Even as this structure was implemented from the beginning, issues did arise. For example, the campaign came across situations where white members were hesitant to speak up or take up space, even when their knowledge and input was needed to address the challenge at hand. Feedback revealed that better internal communications and personnel management was desired. Part of doing the hard work of changing the status quo towards equity is accepting that it is a never-ending journey with no arrival: There is always more work to do. ■



“To win the best results you’ve got to work together. Patience, determination, and collaboration are essential. Every chapter of this journey has been a team effort, and we know that our win belongs to all of us.”

—JENNY LEE, ADVOCACY
DIRECTOR, ASIAN PACIFIC
AMERICAN NETWORK OF OREGON



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)

Coalition of Communities of Color

Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)

NAACP Portland Branch 1120

OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon Verde

350PDX

Audubon Society of Portland

Columbia Riverkeeper

Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS INCLUDE:

Oregon Latino Health Coalition

Urban League of Portland

League of Women Voters of Portland

Oregon Food Bank

National Association of Minority Contractors Oregon

Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

Columbia Pacific Building Trades (27 trade union affiliates)

Oregon Tradeswomen

IBEW Local 48

Portland Association of Teachers

SEIU 503

Community Alliance of Tenants

Hacienda CDC

Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives

Business for a Better Portland

Beneficial Bank

Los Mayos Taqueria

Equal Exchange

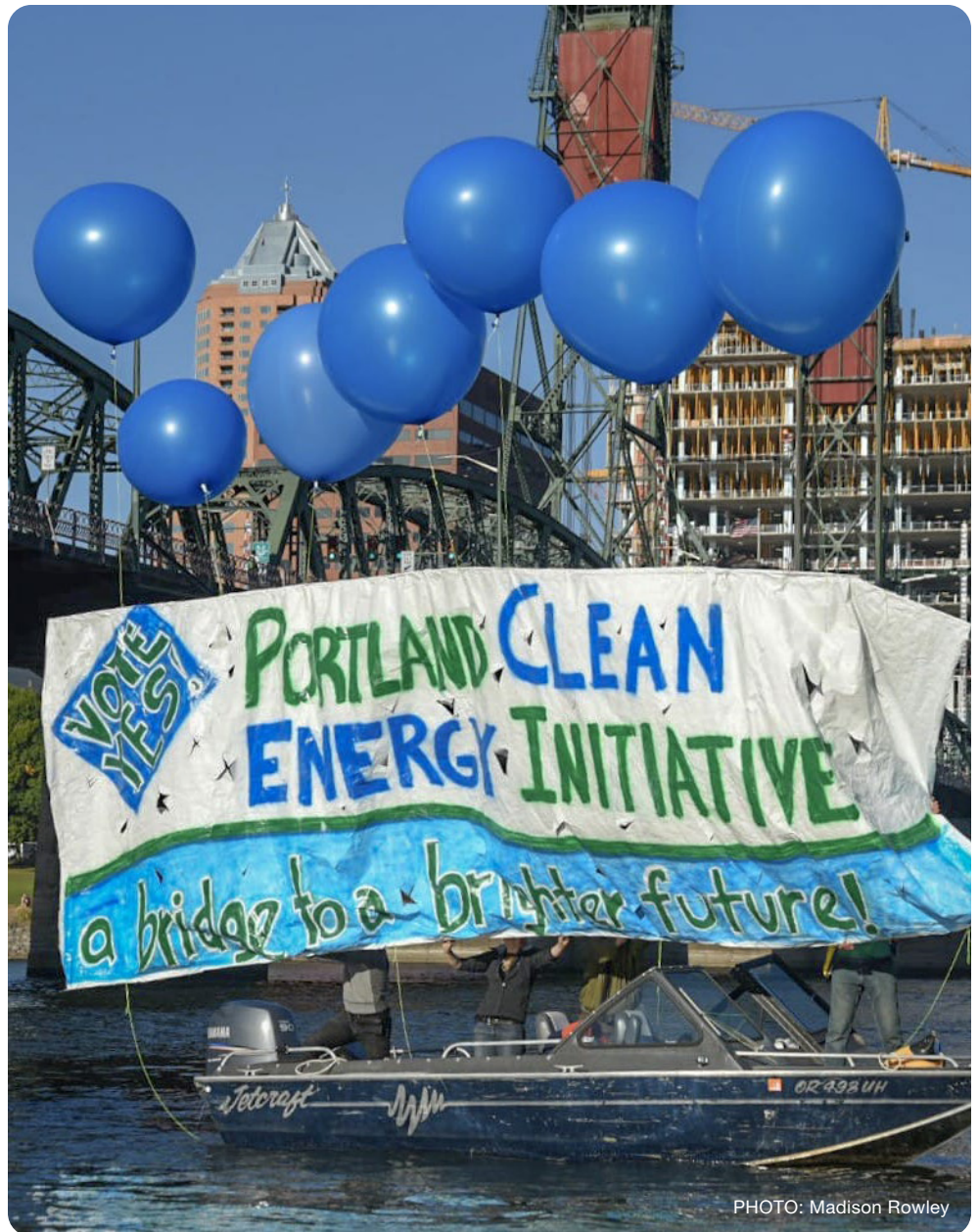
Sunbridge Solar

Friends of Family Farmers

Zenger Farm

Friends of Trees

Food & Water Watch



CONCLUSION

PCEF is a breakthrough campaign whose success was reliant upon the leadership of communities of color, deep relationship building, and a diverse coalition of supporters. Even though the initiative passed, the work of implementation and continued defense against its opposition stretched far beyond election night.

PCEF has received some financial support towards implementation, but ongoing financial and public support is needed to ensure PCEF's promised benefits materialize in Portland's most under-resourced communities. It is our hope that other initiatives like PCEF succeed, as progressive and equity-based policies are won through grassroots organizing and local movement building. ■



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