



## 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

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- 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
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## *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)

# 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

*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?

- 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