BRITE ENERGY INNOVATORS + CEIP Warren

Building an Equitable Community-Based Clean Energy Transition

Developing Clean Energy Ecosystems in Disadvantaged Communities

Clean energy is happening right now.

The **Made in America** clean energy boom is happening all across the country, already creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs and investments in local communities. A transition to clean energy not only addresses environmental challenges but also offers opportunities for economic growth and social resilience in communities. By focusing on a community-centered approach, local leaders can ensure that clean energy initiatives serve as vehicles for equitable development, bringing job opportunities and sustainable practices to underserved areas.

Key Points:

- *Clean energy fosters economic stability and resilience.*
- *Localizing clean energy initiatives helps address specific regional needs.*
- *A community-based approach supports equity, especially in underserved regions.*

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Common Challenges

- **Workforce gaps:** Low educational attainment, lack of technical training, disconnect between employer needs and community programs

- **Political and economic barriers:** Local policies, underinformed leaders, and scarcity mindset inhibit local clean energy growth.

- **Community alignment:** Distrust in the promises of clean energy jobs and their longevity, disconnects between training programs and actual employment,

Strategies for Engagement

Building effective partnerships is essential to creating a supportive environment for clean energy growth. The team identified three key areas of focus for success:

Diverse Representation

The people and organizations selected to build an ecosystem and process for clean energy growth are critical. Select those who are well-known and respected by the groups they represent.

Community Engagement

The only way to understand the needs of your community is to engage them in frequent, meaningful conversation with trusted partners. You will need the community's support, so bring them in early.

Tangible Results

Maintain trust and a steady flow of activity with tangible results that people can see and feel. This helps reinforce that the outcomes are real and the project is moving forward.

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Diverse Representation

- **Represent**. In demographics, sectors, and issues addressed, represent the community you serve.

- **Engaged trusted leaders.** Across sectors, especially nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and social service organizations that already work in disadvantaged communities.

- **Bring sectors together.** Convene sectors that don't usually talk, especially manufacturing companies.

- **Set a vision and goal.** Focus on a simple, achievable, agreed upon vision and goal for the team.

- **Accountability is key.** Meet frequently and hold each other accountable to your success.

Community Engagement

- **Build trust.** Meet people where they are in their knowledge of clean energy, and utilize trusted sources to convene important conversations.

- **Frequent, meaningful conversations.** Address challenges with empathy. Engaging openly about barriers fosters understanding and collective problem-solving.

- **Open doors and minds.** Having the right people around the table to discuss issues is key to finding workable solutions. Utilize the expertise, particularly of the boots on the ground organizations.

- **Promote inclusivity.** Inclusive representation in planning empowers underserved communities.
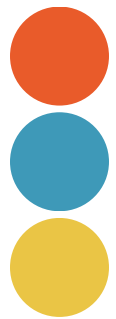
Tangible Results

- **Turn conversations into action.** Ensure there are tangible action as a result of most conversations.

- **Take it slow & keep it simple.** Don't try to solve every challenge all at once. Tackle some small challenges or break big challenges into smaller, actionable items that can be addressed quickly.

- **Close the loop on success.** Dig in to understand where roadblocks are within the programs that exist and work to solve those challenges alongside community leaders.

- **Communicate often.** Ensure the communication of successes and challenges is relayed often, and in multiple ways for every kind of learner.

Hiring and Training Events

Offer residents access to high-demand jobs and opportunities for continuous skill improvement.

Examples

Youth STEM Programs

Promote awareness through early clean energy education in schools and community centers.

Community Roundtables

Encourage resident participation and support for workforce development initiatives.

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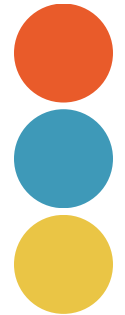ENERGY INNOVATORS

Case Study:
Ultium Cells

Collaborating with key industry partners like **Ultium Cells** and **Foxconn EV Systems**, we helped facilitate hiring events that directly connected local talent with manufacturing opportunities.

These events have successfully engaged disadvantaged communities, providing immediate job prospects and strengthening the foundation for long-term workforce development.

Sustained Funding

Where do we go from here?

- **Scaling Community Economic Development:** Align on regional economic opportunities, support local businesses in accessing funding, and develop frameworks for community benefits.

- **Deepening Community Engagement:** Create structured community benefits plans that encourage local companies to engage more meaningfully with residents and address specific needs.

Ex: BRITEnetwork - working towards building an ecosystem that is self sustaining. The broader community funds these initiatives because they see and feel the value of connectivity and shared progress.

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Key Takeaways

- **Build trust.** Visibility through events, grassroots efforts, and media creates credibility and trust within disadvantaged communities.

- **Address challenges with empathy.** Engaging openly about barriers fosters understanding and collective problem-solving.

- **Promote inclusivity.** Inclusive representation in planning is key to empowering underserved communities.

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