

Recommendations from Task Force Member Cyrus Reed

I want to echo sentiments made by fellow members Dan Pruitt and Chris Strand that it is early to be making recommendations, given we have not fully addressed all issues, or even fully heard from Austin Energy on some of their ideas. That being said, I am viewing the “homework” assignment – and I am late so I can only earn a B as a maximum – and our discussion March 27th as a preliminary discussion that can be changed as we get more into the details.

Low-Income Weatherization Program Budget and Policy Issues

1. I am in favor of working toward a reasonable annual budget that serves our most vulnerable population. The number I have been using is \$3.7 or \$3.8 million which is in alignment with the maximum amount spent in the ARRA period averaged over the time period in which ARRA funds were spent.
 - a. At least \$1 million would continue to come from the CAP program
 - b. \$1.5 to \$2.0 million would come from the low-income weatherization program
 - c. Up to \$1 million would actually be from the commercial multi-family building program (see below)
2. True-up Process
 - a. Austin Energy is put in a difficult spot because they have to estimate their revenue for the energy efficiency programs in June and a budget is adopted in September but they don't really know how much revenue they have and how much is being spent in each program until the Spring. There should be a six-month check on the programs and the opportunity to shift program dollars from one program to another in April. So some kind of a True-up Process in April period for the remainder of the year.
3. Repair and replacement of air-conditioners and furnaces in certain circumstances
 - a. To Assure that the funds are used as cost-effectively as possible, Austin Energy should generally fund basic weatherization services and window AC units
 - b. However, AE and the Task Force should come up with criteria by which air conditioners can be replaced under the program. Age, whether the unit is functioning and the difference in SEER value, whether Texas Gas Service was already replacing the furnace, could provide basic criteria
 - c. AE should also consider expanding the program to cover cleaning, maintenance and repair of existing AC units.
 - d. For those qualifying for new AC units, education should be required on how to use and maintain it.
4. Consider expansion of 200% level to some other criteria like 60% figure cited by some neighborhood folks

Low-Moderate Income

1. In addition to expanding the multi-family program to better incentivize folks, consider rebates at a slightly higher level for those in the 200 to 400% level under the home performance program.
2. Look at various schemes for financing energy efficiency for this population as well as those at higher incomes including
 - a. Commercial PACE
 - b. Creating a loss-loan reserve fund either to expand Velocity Credit Union and other banks/credit unions separate program or more of a formalized WHEEL program
 - c. Look at on-bill repayment if on-bill financing is not possible – make sure customers are protected from cut-offs from electricity if they have trouble paying off loan
3. Lower Credit Score required to qualify for Home Energy Performance loans

RENTERS

I support the three bullets on the list

SOLAR

I support Foundation Community idea to allow a different interpretation of solar on multi-family buildings so low-income folks can gain better access to solar. I do not support an extra incentive beyond what they would get under PBI or upfront solar rebate.

Need to continue to look at solar leasing as well as Austin Energy owning solar through Community Solar options

Financing programs discussed above should also be available to solar.