Compiled at the November 10, 2026 HREC Meeting

Human Rights and Equity Commission Feedback on Climate Pollution Fee Revenue Use Options

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- To be able to effectively choose the best option for Bend, especially how an option could impact marginalized groups, our suggestion would be that every option needs more detail prior to recommendation, such as how is “low income” defined, what nonprofit programs are successful, how many community members will be impacted by each option? These details will help the ECC determine a clear choice to recommend.
    - We need concrete info on cost of each option, hard numbers on who will be impacted and by how much before an option should be selected to pursue

- How many members of ECC are property owners? How many members of City Council are property owners? How many members of ECC and/or Council have said on the record that they have installed solar or bought high-efficiency appliances or otherwise electrified their own property, etc? How might this reality / this privilege bias option narrowing, option choice, and option selection? Has AHAC been given a chance to weigh in on these options as well? How are property owners being overly weighted in these options instead of renters?

- One of my main concerns is how electrification initiatives may affect utility prices for the many households that are already struggling to make their monthly payments. I would like to better understand how the City plans to ensure these programs don't unintentionally increase the financial burden on low-income residents.

- Most renters do not have any decision-making authority on the appliances they have or improvements that can be made to the property where they live

- Any program funded needs to be deployed in multiple languages to allow everyone access

- The less technicism and the less technical to access, the better/preferred

- Consider that more than 60% of immigrant / Latine population in Bend are renters and thus face barriers to decision-making in the house where they live

- Seriously consider any choice that might raise utility costs for low-income/Latine/immigrant households, because federal changes are coming for SNAP (food stamps) and Oregon Health Plan/Medicare/Medicaid; we expect cuts to services and financial supports that will mean these households will already by burdened beginning in January 2027

- Consider a mixing of options/approaches

- Consider incorporating data that we have already received from the city and the organizers that have supported the community and/or have been funded by the City to evaluate impact

- What do the statistics/historical data over last 5 years tell us about how many households have replaced/installed an appliance that could have triggered a fee? This will help determine who will benefit, who will be impacted, and to whom extra support is necessary.

- I would like to see electrification efforts designed in a way that doesn't just benefit homeowners or households with the financial means to invest in these improvements. It is important that the residents who may be most impacted by energy costs, extreme weather, and infrastructure changes are also able to access the benefits of these programs.

- Utility affordability: How will the City address potential increases in utility costs for households that are already struggling to afford their monthly bills?

- Emergency preparedness and resilience: How will the City support low income households and renters who may be disproportionately impacted by power outages during extreme weather events? Are there plans to ensure these households have access to cooling, heating, charging, and other essential resources during prolonged outages?

- Defining low income eligibility: How will the City define low income households for these programs? Will eligibility align with existing state or federal assistance programs, or will the City establish its own income thresholds?

- Renter protections and accessibility: How will the City ensure renters can participate in these initiatives, particularly when electrification improvements require landlord approval or investment?

OPTION 1 and OPTION 2 are least-preferred by majority of HREC Members; several HREC members recommended combining OPTION 4 and OPTION 5.

OPTION 1-Specific Feedback

- Will disproportionately benefit homeowners who own their appliances; the majority of renters (who are middle/low class) do not own their appliances. Fewest benefits to low-income people
- Leaves out many low-income households who cannot afford incremental difference and increased electric bills

- While this could help increase participation and direct more funding toward individual households, I have concerns about its accessibility for low income households and renters who may not own property or have the financial resources to take advantage of the incentives.
- 25-35% going to administrative costs seems wasteful

1. Affordability and accessibility

- **Upfront costs:** Are we assuming that low-income households can afford and prioritize the incremental costs of purchasing and installing heat pumps, induction stoves, solar panels, etc., even with incentives?
    - The September 2026 ECC presentation estimated an incremental cost of $10,601 for a heat pump, with a $3,750 incentive for low-income households (35%), leaving $6,851 in incremental costs.
    - For solar, a $4,000 incentive against a $29,500 total system cost would leave $25,500.
    - Even with additional utility incentives, substantial out-of-pocket costs remain.
- **Community survey findings:** The Energize Bend survey found that 67.1% of respondents facing barriers to home improvements identified cost as a barrier.
- **Question for ECC:** How is “low-income” defined, and have we evaluated whether these remaining costs are realistically affordable for households meeting that definition?

2. Equitable access and energy insecurity

- **Renter exclusion:** Renters and residents without the financial resources to fund home improvements are largely excluded from this option.
    - The 2026 Energize Bend Community Input Survey found that 73.3% of renters reported concerns about paying utility bills, compared with 38.1% of homeowners.
    - Renters were also more likely to experience energy burden (24.4% versus 17.8% of homeowners).
- **Question for ECC:** Are these incentives reaching residents experiencing the greatest energy burdens, or could they disproportionately benefit homeowners who already have the financial resources to make improvements?

3. Historical utility costs and measuring outcomes

- **Rising electricity costs:** We should evaluate historical gas versus electric utility costs, particularly given recent increases in electricity prices.
    - According to the Central Oregon electricity cost analysis, Pacific Power's estimated monthly electricity costs for a 3-bedroom, all-electric home with a heat pump increased 66% between 2023 and 2026, from $124 to $206 (an additional $984 annually).
    - By comparison, estimated natural gas costs for a 3-bedroom home increased 16% over the same period, from $82 to $95 per month, and actually declined in 2026.

    - While these are utility allowance estimates rather than directly comparable household bills, they highlight the importance of evaluating long-term operating costs. Electrification does not necessarily translate into lower utility bills.
- **Measuring financial outcomes:** The AIM assessment proposes tracking reductions in energy burden among participants.
    - Shouldn't we also compare participants with similar non-participating households to understand whether the program is actually improving affordability?
    - We should also track total household energy expenses before and after electrification, along with emissions reductions.
- **Question for ECC:** Have we evaluated whether transitioning to electric appliances will provide long-term financial savings for low-income households, particularly given rising electricity costs?

OPTION 2-Specific Feedback

- Leaves out many low-income households who cannot afford incremental difference and increased electric bills
- My concern with this option is that it places significant emphasis on new construction and homeownership, potentially leaving out many existing households, particularly low-income residents and renters, who could benefit from electrification.
- 25-35% going to administrative costs seems wasteful
- **Distribution of financial benefits:** This option allocates 50% of the incentive to contractors, reducing the direct financial assistance available to homeowners. Given the affordability concerns identified in Option 1, could this further limit participation among low-income households? How would we ensure contractor incentives translate into more affordable installations rather than simply increasing contractor compensation?
- **Equitable business opportunities:** This option could benefit local small businesses, including minority-owned and historically underrepresented contractors. How would we ensure these incentives are accessible across the contractor community?

OPTION 3-Specific Feedback

- -Utility affordability: How will the City address potential increases in utility costs for households that are already struggling to afford their monthly bills?
- -Emergency preparedness and resilience: How will the City support low income households and renters who may be disproportionately impacted by power outages during extreme weather events? Are there plans to ensure these households have access to cooling, heating, charging, and other essential resources during prolonged outages?
- -Defining low income eligibility: How will the City define low income households for these programs? Will eligibility align with existing state or federal assistance programs, or will the City establish its own income thresholds?
- -Renter protections and accessibility: How will the City ensure renters can participate in these initiatives, particularly when electrification improvements require landlord approval or investment?

- Supports dense housing while still giving access for renters to clean energy savings
- Could fund additional low-income-facing options
- Partnering with established community organizations could help expand the capacity and funding of organizations already doing this work. These organizations have existing relationships with underserved populations and are better positioned to connect resources with households that need them.
- **Equitable access and participation:** This option could provide benefits to renters and low-income households who cannot afford or independently install energy-efficient equipment. However, how would we ensure that income-qualified residents can easily enroll? We should consider language accessibility, digital access, program awareness, utility eligibility, and potential upfront costs, particularly given the community survey's findings that 38.6% of respondents facing home-improvement barriers cited confusion about rebate programs.
- **Actual financial benefits:** The proposed low-income subscription discounts could help reduce ongoing electricity expenses. However, we should understand the actual dollar savings households would receive, rather than relying solely on the advertised discount percentage. Would those savings meaningfully reduce energy burdens for participating households?

OPTION 4-Specific Feedback

- Sounds interesting and necessary at some point for the future: impact on environment
- Could be a really interesting option *if* options enable low-income participation
- This option creates opportunities for renters and households who may not own their homes to participate in energy programs. Expanding access beyond homeowners is an important equity consideration.
- Will this be easy for people to join? Will all materials/promotions/marketing be in multiple languages?
- Community solar construction/installation is costly and takes time - will an install at the new Public Works campus really only serve 150 households? According to last census, there are 44,436 households in Bend. This install at Public Works Campus would thus support only 0.3% of Bend households. This is not a strong ROI.

OPTION 5-Specific Feedback

- Expanding grant opportunities could make electrification more accessible to low income households and renters who may otherwise be unable to afford the upfront costs associated with these improvements.
- Nonprofits get some help; feels like “betting on your local winners” and reinvesting dollars to grow the scale and impact of local organizations (and thus benefitting local workforce/jobs)
- Needs guidance to ensure focus toward low-income renters/low-income households
- **Reaching underserved communities and addressing immediate needs:** Expanding funding through established community organizations could help reach residents excluded from traditional homeowner incentives. The community survey identified

wildfire smoke entering homes (37.7%), fear of power outages during extreme weather (32.5%), and uncomfortably hot homes during summer (27.8%) as significant concerns. Grants could address these immediate health, safety, and affordability needs alongside long-term climate goals, particularly for renters and low-income households.

- **Accountability and measurable outcomes:** How would we ensure that grant funding reaches historically marginalized and underserved communities? Rather than simply measuring dollars awarded to organizations, we should track households served, direct financial benefits, improvements in housing conditions, and reductions in energy burden.

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