

Direct-to-Renter: Locally Grown Energy Equity Solutions for Renters
Breakout Session 3

Speakers: Felicia Frederico, Chelsea Kirk, Ashley Mercado, Lina Mara, Julie Castro (Moderator)

- How do we get everyone equitably engaged in climate action? Renters are often not brought in when working on these issues
- A Renter's Right to Cooling Report
 - Mostly includes long-standing tenants that are lower-income
 - Heat is making them sick, mentally and physically
 - Leaving the house to stay cool is even more expensive than buying A/C
 - Landowners are blocking renters from cooling their homes, even residents they offer to pay for it themselves
- Tenants don't want to violate lease agreements, which prohibit alterations to the unit
- Landlords have to apply to subsidy programs, renters cannot do it themselves
- Tenants can be evicted for remodel work
 - Landlords are abusing legal loopholes to do this
- Lots of limitations make it hard to rent a new place (e.g. credit reports) and competition with other families, and cooking centers were not available as an alternative during the early pandemic
- Many renters that experience language barriers can be susceptible to fraud, so having existing relationships with community organizations helps to build trust and ensure program success
- TEC Direct-to-Renter program = brings appliances directly to renter households for their ownership and use
 - Long-term investments in buildings still need to happen, but this program addresses immediate health and safety needs and fills an equity gap
- 5 main benefits:
 - Resilience during outages
 - Affordability and efficiency
 - Ability to manage energy use and bills
 - Indoor air quality improvements
 - Reduce GHG
- Received pilot funding through Department of Energy to develop the program
- Defined incentive structure, with a goal of \$0 out of pocket for people and have people select their desired appliances totaling up to \$2500 per household
- Streamlined the sign-up process and used mapping tools to see whether residents lived within certain census tracts
- Partnered with trusted CBOs who have worked for years with residents in the city of Pomona in order to make this program a success
- Created a community engagement strategy with very digestible, fun materials ("Be the hero of your own home") and an easy sign-up form, to reach people at community events they were already attending (meeting people where they were)

- Due to such high demand, a raffle drawing was done on Instagram live in multiple languages, with appliances being delivered directly to households within 3 weeks of them signing up
- Had a debrief with the community members that were selected, to learn about the positive impacts (e.g. not having to refill a child's inhaler as often due to improved indoor air quality)
- Q&A
 - Extreme heat and indoor air quality are things people felt so it was easier to have conversations with people about the tangible impacts
 - In reality, people are going to seek out cooling systems regardless, but having programs like this supports the usage of more energy efficient systems and aids in GHG reduction
 - Having programs like Direct-to-Renter helps to meet the moment in the event of a mandate or any legislation that comes up
 - Reaching out to participants in accessible ways (calling elderly people instead of emailing) and having someone in the home to support (to install smart plugs)
 - The bill might be someone else's name and they may not have access to certain information when trying to sign on for this program