CivicSpark Powering Regional Leadership - Justin Skootsky

Moderator
Melanie Peck - Program Officer USGBC

Programs
- IREN Energy Fellowship and CivicSpark (largely marketed broadly across building, housing, energy, climate, etc.)
- Energy Academy

Energy Academy Deep Dive
Brenda Castruita - SD Region Climate Collaborative
- Energy Academy initiative provides many benefits to the San Diego region (e.g., fills knowledge gaps in energy through education)
- Energy Academy is completely free for participation, CCA fully funds the program, which lasts 4 days
- Each cohort is designed to bring diverse groups of people together who might otherwise not share the same room

Story Spotlights
Experience in the Energy Academy - Brenda Garcia Millan
- Hired as an environmental justice liaison
- Then supported SDREN application process, which led to a REN in San Diego
- Assigned a special project to work on emergency air quality relief for 6 months
- Joined energy academy to prepare to work in energy post-approval from CPUC to establish SDREN
- Established advisory committees and working groups, and continues to apply learnings

IREN Energy Fellowship - Why it was formed - Tyler Masters
- Local government partnerships pre-date RENs and the Energy Fellowship pre-dates IREN
- Partnered with civicspark to provide this fellowship, launched in 2023
- More focused on early professional opportunities to move forward energy initiatives
- No cost to host agencies and fellow numbers are growing from 11 in the first year to over 30 in the current cohort

Jillian - IREN Energy Fellow Experience
- Studied Political Science, but wanted to get involved in the energy space
- First fellow placed at the CJUSD school site
- Contributed to energy initiatives that were stalled due to resource capacity constraints

- Cleaned up energy reporting and participated in school communications and marketing efforts
- Fellowship allowed for tangible impact on community

Panel Discussion

Panelists
Calli O'Neal - IREN Fellow and Cohort Lead
Brenda Castruita - Program Manager - San Diego Region Climate Collaborative
Bill Sadler - Executive Director CivicSpark
Lee Friedmann - Assoc. Director - San Diego Community Power

Sound bites:
The more people that raise the energy IQ, the better outcomes can be generated with the networking and connections that are created from the niche energy space that interacts with so many facets of communities.
The main funding source of CivicSpark is through Americorps funding and is in year 12.

Impacts of Programs:
- Energy knowledge increase out of a self-assessed IQ score 1-5 shows 1-1.5 points average increase of the programs
- Local hiring of program graduates
- $2.2M dollars of program dollars that have come from fellow support to get these funds
- Going from 1 to 29 host sites in the inland empire
- Knowledge provides intangible impact on policy work
- There is some attrition, but oftentimes due to people finding job positions ahead of time

Americorps requires a report on impacts every 3 years and some initial stats include:
- 91% fellows say the fellowship increased their professionalism
- 83% are still working in the field

Replicable Elements and Scalable Roadmaps:
- Build team and advisory committee early on
- Partner agencies and staff provide a highly interconnected community web
- Support from leadership staff at CCAs and other agencies that can speak to the strength of the program

Powering Regional Leadership: Building Energy Resilience Through Workforce Development in Southern California

CCEC, Sierra Ballroom B, 6/25 @ 10:30 am - 11:45 am

Moderator:

- Melanie Peck, USGBC California, Chief Program Officer
    - Disaster volunteer after hurricane Katrina → found career path, TEC, has designed many types of programs, know how these initiatives change lives

Speakers:

- Brenda Castruita, San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative, Energy Program Manager
- Jillian Dela Cruz, I-REN & Colton Joint Unified School District, I-REN Energy Fellow
- Lee Friedman, San Diego Community Power, Associate Director - Strategic Initiatives
- Brenda Garcia Millan, County of San Diego, Group Program Manager
- Tyler Masters, Inland Regional Energy Network, Program Manager
- Calli ONeal, IREN/SBCOG, IREN Energy Fellow Lead
- Bill Sadler, CivicSpark, Executive Director

Notes

- Important to be inclusive in wealth building, create intentional, successful pathways - it's less important what we build, more important who builds it - need regional investment in skill development
- I-REN Energy Fellowship - Tyler Masters
    - I-REN - 2 counties, 58 cities, larger than South Carolina
    - Regional cohort of CivicSpark Fellowship
    - 11 months of full-time, paid fellowship for energy initiatives and capacity building, no cost support to cities
    - 21 projects, bring $2.2 million to host sites, 7.5% i lifetime utility bill savings, 2.9 million kWh/yr
    - Jillian Dela Cruz - fellow with Colton Unified School District
- SD Regional Energy Academy - Brenda
    - EPIC + SDRCC - collaborative, engaged efforts, program advisory committee
    - 4 full-day learning sessions in-person, elevate energy IQ of SD's community leaders, increase knowledge and literacy of energy landscapes
    - Benefits include networking and collaboration, capacity building, A Just Transition, advancing climate action - free for all participants
    - Starting point - join alumni network → additional learning activities, opportunity to network with pervious cohort participants

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    - Program results: 100% of participants who completed the survey would recommend the EA, 400+ applications for four cohorts → 120+ trained
- Brenda Garcia Millan:
    - County of SD Program Manager, worked with SDREN, AmeriCorps alumni
    - New to Energy, started working with County in 2023, hired as sustainability/EJ liaison, met partners at SD Community Power and supported SDREN application process → now have a REN that provides 10 programs
    - Academy offered energy 101 crash course, networking with other students, field trips
    - 2 years later, still applying what she learned, continuing to use networking connections
        - SDREN Advisory Committee was modeled after SDEA
        - County EJ Workgroup - organized a tour to SDGE Wildfire & Climate Resilience Tour
    - Many people at County have taken course, found very valuable
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