

Key Values and Principles for Community Choice Programs



One of the distinguishing features of the Alliance compared to other Community Choice initiatives is our mission—to support and defend Community Choice programs in California that advance local clean energy for the environmental and economic benefit of our communities—and what we understand that mission to mean in practice.

We assume that Community Choice programs, as public agencies, will practice high standards of good governance, fiscal responsibility, and public accountability. We also assume that they will comply with all state mandates for renewable portfolio standards, resource adequacy, and environmental justice.

The following set of values and principles are the basis of the Community Choice program practices for which we advocate:

1. Distributed Energy Resource (DER) Development:

The goal of a Community Choice program's energy portfolio is to maximize development and integration of local renewable energy resources. These resources include demand reduction, new generation, storage, and other system optimizations, on both the customer-side and grid-side of the meter.

2. Broad Community Benefit Goals:

The purpose of a Community Choice program is to provide a broad range of environmental, economic, and social justice benefits to California communities, beyond the goals of greener and cheaper energy: economic development, local family-sustaining jobs, reduced pollution and improved community health, retention of local energy wealth, equity, and stronger and more resilient local economies—able to withstand the impacts of climate change and both natural and manmade emergencies.

3. Build-out Planning:

To achieve a Community Choice program that can advance local clean energy for community environmental, economic, and social justice benefits, explicit planning and design is needed, preferably before launch; DER development requires explicit integrated resource planning.

4. Asset Ownership:

An important goal of a Community Choice program is to maximize development of community-owned (both private and collective) and publicly-owned local energy assets. Ownership of assets such as renewable energy generation, energy-efficient residences and businesses, storage, microgrids, and so forth, gives the community more control over the use of these assets, more local energy independence, more energy resilience, and more stake in developing beneficial energy and climate policies.

5. Social Equity:

A Community Choice program should include programs and projects that prioritize benefits to low-income communities and communities that have been most impacted, economically and environmentally, by the fossil fuel economy. Programs that address the needs of these communities, in particular, help lift up other communities, strengthen social justice, and build community participation and resilience. This includes increasing energy security by making special provisions for those people unable to afford energy services at normal rates.

6. Job Standards and Workforce Development:

A Community Choice program should encourage new business development, workforce development, and family-sustaining careers. The transition to renewable energy resources needs to provide high standards of work and quality working conditions, union jobs, job training, apprenticeship programs, local hire, and pathways out of poverty. Opportunities should be provided for women and minority hire, veterans hire, impacted community hire, and those formerly incarcerated. The transition should also accommodate workers displaced by new local renewable energy development.

7. Sustainability:

A Community Choice program should respect ecological integrity and the limited restorative capacity of the biosphere, while creating the environmental conditions needed to support present and future generations. This includes accepting that a project, policy, or decision should not be pursued if its impact on human and environmental health is risky or unknown.

8. Community Engagement:

A Community Choice program should provide for all-inclusive community engagement, collaboration, and involvement in decision-making regarding program design and implementation. Making the community a key element of Community Choice, especially those most impacted by the fossil fuel economy and climate change, is essential to building community support and to achieving the community benefit, equity, and resilience goals of the program.

9. Building Internal Technical Capability:

A Community Choice program should strive to develop internal technical capability to run the program for long-term success; when contracting, it should favor contractors who partner with the Community Choice agency to provide management services for a fee and who strengthen the technical know-how of program staff. This long-term approach contrasts with contracting administrators, brokers, or supply contractors who provide short-term services or energy to the program based on maximizing their own financial interests at the expense of the program.

10. Innovative, Transparent Contracting:

A Community Choice program should employ a transparent, competitive solicitation process for hiring any contractors needed to help launch and operate the program. The making of contracts should be free of any conflicts of interest, encourage a competition and innovation, and promote a marketplace of vendors who have the vision, creativity, and experience to advance Community Choice programs.

11. Long-term Program Stability:

A Community Choice program should acquire utility-grade power service capabilities for long-term program stability: load, market price, and DER forecasting; power procurement and 24/7 power scheduling; integrated resource planning (including DER) and portfolio management; financial settlement services; long-term financial planning and risk management, and so forth. These capabilities are necessary in a rapidly changing energy market.

For more information on the California Alliance for Community Energy,
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To join the Alliance, go to: <http://cacommunityenergy.org/#join>