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Comments on Grassroots Education Funding

Regarding the definition of community-based organizations, as set forth in the Long Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan, I am concerned that a number of potentially viable non-profit agencies that provide critical services to low income residents of DuPage County will not meet the strict definition of a community-based organization in that they may not meet all of the criteria, particularly if the community is defined strictly by census tracts. In counties such as DuPage, there are people who have low incomes, may be unemployed or the working poor, may experience hunger, and require a variety of assistance and counseling services. Many individuals and families in need of public services are scattered throughout relatively high income areas, and may be hidden in view. Furthermore, the boards of the organizations that provide critical social services are generally not staffed not by the clients, but by concerned citizens who wish to serve their communities. Members of these communities who are in crisis are not in a good position to serve on executive boards, but may provide some direction to the nonprofit service agencies by describing their personal needs. An exception to this rule may be Immigrant Solidarity DuPage or similar grassroots organizations that represent ethnic groups or other groups that meet certain criteria. In those cases as well, there is no clear correlation with geographic areas, other than that the organizations are based in DuPage County and they serve clients who are also residents of DuPage or northeast Illinois.

Some groups, such as the People's Resource Center, provide services such as food pantries, used clothing distribution, and employment counseling. By partnering with a qualified vendor that understands the solar industry, it is possible that a group such as PRC may provide valuable grassroots outreach for job training opportunities. Some organizations own the buildings in which they operate and may also be candidates for non-profit facility incentives for solar installations. Solar installations and grassroots education programs for solar jobs training may be a potent combination. My only concern is that a scoring rubric be used flexibly to provide various organizations the opportunity to compete for the scarce funding opportunities.