

Meeting Notes

Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing (SOMAH)

Advisory Council Meeting Q3 2021

September 29, 2021

Remote Meeting

Attendees

SOMAH Program Administrator Team

Chris Walker | SOMAH Program Manager

Marisa Villarreal | SOMAH Program Manager

Jae Berg | SOMAH Program Manager

Staci Hoell | SOMAH Program Manager

Srinidhi Sampath Kumar | SOMAH Program Manager

Kajsa Hendrickson | SOMAH Program Manager

Brittany Chenier | SOMAH Program Manager

Sarah Salem | SOMAH Program Manager

Ayesha Abbassi | Asian Pacific Environmental Network (SOMAH CBO Partner)

SOMAH Advisory Council Members

Agustin Cabrera | RePower LA

Allan Rago | Quality Conservation Services

Alma Marquez | Independent Consultant

Andrea Barnier | Self-Help Enterprises

Andres Ramirez | People for Mobility Justice

Carlos Aguilar | Coalition for Economic Survival

Elizabeth C Elliot | Northern Circle Indian Housing Authority

Jakobi Ewart | The Niles Foundation

JB Tengco | BlueGreen Alliance

Kenneth Wells | O&M Solar Services

Nicole Lim | California Indian Museum & Cultural Center

Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome, Introductions, Icebreaker, and Meeting Overview
2. SOMAH & Advisory Council Overview
3. Advisory Council Trivia! & Elections
4. Building a Vision for our Work Together
5. Next Steps and Next Meeting

Meeting Notes

Welcome & Introductions

Marisa Villarreal, SOMAH PA

Marisa facilitated a round of introductions, icebreakers, and reviewed the meeting goals, agenda, and agreements.

SOMAH & Advisory Council Overview

Marisa Villarreal, SOMAH PA

Marisa introduced the SOMAH PA team and presented on SOMAH's history, goals, program areas, impact, and priorities. Marisa also presented on the history and purpose of the Advisory Council, how past cohorts contributed to the development of the SOMAH program, and expectations regarding the Advisory Council's roles, support, and engagement.

Purpose of Advisory Council:

- Ensure community advocates' voices and interests remain at the forefront of the SOMAH program.
- Fore key advocate organizations and stakeholders to contribute to program development and implementation.
- Ensure that SOMAH maximizes benefits to the communities it was intended to serve.

Role of Advisory Council:

- Advise and guide the SOMAH PA on program implementation, to ensure historically-excluded community voices are represented in the development of program strategies.

Q&A/Discussion:

- **AC Member:** Why is the LADWP (Los Angeles Department of Water and Power) ineligible for SOMAH?
- **SOMAH PA:** Municipal utilities do not fall under the oversight of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) - only the five big investor-owned utilities (IOUs) do.

- **AC Member:** Is a property eligible for SOMAH if it has four units plus an accessory dwelling unit (ADU)?
- **SOMAH PA:** The 5-unit requirement is a strict requirement right now. The program is also impacted by contractors' customer acquisition. Large contractors tend to target larger properties and projects. Smaller contractors may target smaller properties. The average system size of current SOMAH projects is about 170kW. The 5-unit minimum is fairly standard across multifamily energy efficiency and renewable energy programs in California. Properties with less units may qualify for certain single-family programs.
- **AC Member:** How do you identify disadvantaged communities (DACs)?
- **SOMAH PA:** Through the CalEnviroScreen indicator framework. There are roughly 19 indicators covering pollution, public health, and economic impacts: <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/indicators>. SOMAH has two tracks for property eligibility: (1) Properties in DACs or (2) properties where 80% of tenants are at 60% or below of the Area Median Income (AMI).
- **AC Member:** If 30% of projects are in DACs, do we have info on where the other projects are located?
- **SOMAH PA:** SOMAH's eligible properties map tool is a good way to identify those projects: <https://calsomah.org/eligible-somah-properties-map>
- **AC Member:** Are tribes included in the DAC analysis? Is there a listing of tribes located within heat zones?
- **SOMAH PA:** We are unsure of how tribes are represented in the CalEnviroScreen framework. CalEnviroScreen 4.0 will use new census data.
- **AC Member:** Using census data will skew the results, especially for Mendocino County. Two of the communities I serve are isolated and not included in the census.
- **AC Member:** I'd be interested to find out how this data is collected to increase accuracy and address users' true needs.
- **AC Member:** A goal of the AC is to help find gaps in the data being used.
- **SOMAH PA:** Next meeting, we can take a deeper dive into the new version of CalEnviroScreen and further identify gaps.
- **AC Member:** To note, census data is routinely under-funded in California tribal communities.
- **AC Member:** Regardless of whether a property is in a DAC or using the 80% rule, it still needs to be deed-restricted, correct? What proof of income is required from tenants to determine if the building meets the 80% rule?
- **SOMAH PA:** Yes, the property must be deed-restricted. The deed restriction includes the breakdown of tenant income levels. No additional information is needed from the tenants.
- **AC Member:** Is it part of the landlord agreement to not increase rent after installation through SOMAH? If so, for how long?

- **SOMAH PA:** The property owner is not allowed to raise rent for 20 years, or the life of the solar system, following the installation. The property owner must remove SOMAH value from rent increases. The property must remain deed restricted, including at least 10 years remaining on the term of the property's affordability restrictions.
- **AC Member:** What's the timeframe for converting a property into a SOMAH project?
- **SOMAH PA:** It takes up to 18 months to complete a project. There have been some delays due to COVID-19.
- **AC Member:** What incentives do we offer besides sustainability to compel government stakeholders to work with SOMAH?
- **SOMAH PA:** The SOMAH PA can do shout-outs to regional energy networks, counties, and local governments. The PA can also comarket programs that pair well with SOMAH, such as other energy efficiency programs and electric vehicle charging station programs. The PA could do a session with the AC on comarketing and stakeholder outreach.
- **AC Member:** What does the 300 megawatts (MW) target look like for SOMAH in terms of number of homes or area covered?
- **SOMAH PA:** Extrapolating from our current pipeline data, 300 MW of solar might mean that 150,000 tenant units across 1,500-2,000 properties will receive SOMAH bill credits. Based on our evaluator's math, the average tenant will save \$33-61/month x 20 years. Since we serve the five largest investor-owned utility areas, projects will be geographically diverse throughout the state.
- **AC Member:** How can we close the data gap for Tribal Communities, especially when utilizing census data? Many of the communities in Northern California are isolated and not included in the census.
- **SOMAH PA:** Digging into this question is why we were clear we needed Tribal perspectives in this cohort, and the CPUC shares our interest in ensuring we're serving Tribal communities through SOMAH. There's lots of work to do to clear the path and we're happy to have you in the mix with us to figure it out.

Advisory Council Trivia! & Elections

Brittany Chenier & Chris Walker, SOMAH PA

Brittany and Chris hosted a game of trivia to test AC members' knowledge of the SOMAH program. They then provided an overview of the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the Advisory Council chair and vice chair. Agustin Cabrera was elected chair and Elizabeth Elliott was elected vice-chair.

Building a Vision for our Work Together

Marisa Villarreal, SOMAH PA

Marisa facilitated a visioning session for AC members to build connections with each other and between their own work and SOMAH, and to help set priorities for the AC. AC members completed individual reflections, discussed their visions in breakout groups, and shared final thoughts and questions with the larger group.

Full Group Share Out

Prompt 1: *What about SOMAH's potential impact matters to you? SOMAH was successful in achieving its greatest aspirations, and California has made incredible strides to building a resilient and just future for all, particularly the communities SOMAH intended to serve. With words or images, describe what this future is like.*

- Less tech, more community.
- A reduction in health disparities.
- Equity for all lives has been established.
- Climate change has been minimized and people focus their attention on solutions as opposed to problems.
- Composting and conservation are active in day-to-day lives.
- Finding electric charging stations is no longer a hunt.
- Everyone working together to fight something that's bigger than our egos, something that if left unattended, can wipe us out all together.
- With experience in connecting, networking and leveraging and envisioning, my strong suit would be to involve more stakeholder and property owners, and to share how this benefits them to start following that initiative. This would allow us to focus on creating more jobs that support green energies and start that dialogue in communities about the importance of sustainability.
- TEK (traditional ecological knowledge) becomes the forefront of environmental stewardship.

Prompt 2: *What policies or priorities in SOMAH do we need to achieve the future we've envisioned?*

- Data sovereignty and equitable data sources that don't "Other" marginalized communities.
- More solar available to broader groups.
- Greater accessibility to the program and assistance with bridging the digital divide.

- Analysis on who is and isn't represented, and who has been turned down from participation in the past.
- A collective data pull on the environmental impact on Rancheria and Reservations in California.

Prompt 3: *Given your role and experience, where do you see yourself having the most interest or impact in the program?*

- Ensuring tenant experience is positive and improvements don't lead to future displacement for profit.
- Connecting Tribal Communities and empowering their data sovereignty as they move toward more green spaces and clean energy.
- Ensuring independent contractors are involved in the process.

Prompt 4: *What would you like to get from your participation on the Council? How might it support your goals?*

- Learn more about Solar Energy initiatives and how they aim to target DACs.
- Learn more about solar energy initiatives and how to drive them in my community.
- How to be an advocate for this program, especially for the hard-to-reach communities.

Next Steps & Wrap-Up

Marisa Villarreal, SOMAH PA

Marisa wrapped up the meeting by reviewing action items for the AC and previewing future activities, including SOMAH's draft 2022 ME&O plan and next quarter's joint meeting with SOMAH's Job Training Organization Task Force.