

## SOMAH Public Forum Notes

**Date:** Sept. 30, 2020

**Time:** 1 - 3:20 p.m.

### Welcome & Introductions

Kajsa Hendrickson, SOMAH marketing, education and outreach (ME&O) manager, gave an overview of the purpose of the forum, as well as the agenda, and introduced members of the SOMAH Program Administrator team (SOMAH PA). Kajsa began by stating that SOMAH stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and with all who are fighting for a just and equitable future, and she additionally acknowledged the profound emotional and practical impacts of ongoing wildfires, the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing economic uncertainty.

### Session 1: SOMAH One Year Later: Building a Resilient CA

Kajsa Hendrickson gave a brief overview of SOMAH and presented a year in review for the program's first funding year. Application statistics are listed in the following table.

Utility Territory	# of Active Applications	# of Waitlist Applications
Pacific Gas and Electric	200	0
Southern California Edison	131	0
San Diego Gas & Electric	58	12
Liberty	1	0
PacifiCorp	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>12</b>

This session also highlighted program handbook updates, including the completion of the second SOMAH Program Handbook in June 2020. Recent actions discussed included a MASH/SOMAH "stacking" resolution and the filing of an advice letter for modification of pipeline management and another regarding progress payments in mid-September.

It was also illustrated how SOMAH sees itself as part of a portfolio of programs with efforts focused on creating communities that are more resilient to the impacts of climate change, with an equity lens and focus.

## Session 1 Q&A

**Q:** Where can we find more information on SOMAH's budget, statistics and reporting?

**A:** SOMAH PA provides a wealth of information at the California Distributed Generation Statistics website, [californiadgstats.ca.gov](http://californiadgstats.ca.gov). The SOMAH PA updates metrics weekly and additionally hosts program documents such as semiannual progress reports, expense reports and marketing plans.

**Q:** Can the SOMAH PA help me identify a job trainee for my project?

**A:** Yes! In addition to using SOMAH's Job Training Portal, contractors who need assistance finding trainees can reach out to [workforce@calsomah.org](mailto:workforce@calsomah.org) for direct support. The SOMAH PA has engaged with more than 80 eligible job training organizations (JTOs) who are available to help provide job-ready trainees.

**Q:** When does the SOMAH PA anticipate being able to offer progress payments?

**A:** The SOMAH PA recently submitted an advice letter for program modification to introduce progress payments. The progress payment offering is contingent on formal approval of the advice letter. If it is approved, the SOMAH PA will proceed with the progress payment offering, noting that there will be a contract update period between the PA and the IOUs to update incentive contracts. At that time, the SOMAH PA would provide education to stakeholders and participants about the progress payment process before an official announcement.

**Q:** Are there any plans for master-metered low-income properties to become eligible for SOMAH?

**A:** No, currently there are no plans for master-metered properties to become SOMAH eligible. Direct economic benefit through credits from virtual net energy metering (VNEM) is the SOMAH program's mechanism for ensuring tenant benefit. Third-party evaluators may address this issue in future SOMAH evaluations.

**Q:** Can a host customer change their project from a host customer-owned system to a third-party owned (TPO) system, such as a power purchase agreement (PPA)? If so, when?

**A:** If a host customer submitted an application with a host customer-owned system, that application can be changed at any time. If the host customer wishes to change to a TPO system before the Proof of Project Milestone (PPM) stage, this is an easy change. If the host customer wants to switch to a TPO system after PPM, the SOMAH PA will need the host customer to update some documentation, since the contract is due at PPM and the contract states whether the system is a host customer-owned or TPO system. Please contact the SOMAH PA with project specific questions.

## Session 2: SOMAH Centers Equity and Environmental Justice in the Solar Industry (Part 1)

Sarah Salem, tenant services and CBO manager, and Staci Hoell, workforce development manager, discussed how and why the SOMAH program was designed to center voices of frontline environmental justice communities in California. SOMAH's DNA is rooted in environmental justice and equity. Examples include the establishment of the advisory council, public forums for community involvement, free technical assistance services to ensure consumer protection, tenant education and job training requirements to grow the solar workforce.

### Session 2, Part 1 Q&A

**Q:** How often are there CBO partner changes?

**A:** CBO partners change on an as-needed basis, and selections are made across the state based on program gaps.

**Q:** How many jobs will SOMAH create?

**A:** Based on the 400+ project applications SOMAH has received since the program launched, the PA projects that there will be more than 760 job training positions. The SOMAH PA also will be surveying contractors and trainees after each project to see how many trainees are hired on to permanent positions after the SOMAH project is completed.

**Q:** Are there any efforts to expand the definition of disadvantaged communities (DACs) and is this topic a part of SOMAH's third-party evaluations?

**A:** The SOMAH program is currently going through its third-party evaluation process. Phase 1 of the evaluation was completed, and Phase 2 is beginning now. This topic may be addressed there.

**Q:** Who is responsible for conducting tenant education?

**A:** The host customer is responsible for meeting the SOMAH tenant education requirements, but there are no restrictions on who can support the tenant education. If tenant education requirements are not met, the host customer will be held responsible.

**Q:** Is job training still required during the pandemic?

**A:** Yes, the SOMAH PA, with support from our program partners and stakeholders, supports that job training can still be completed safely during COVID-19 and paid job opportunities are needed more than ever in our frontline communities most deeply affected economically by the pandemic. Contractors are responsible for following

local public health guidance and adapting worker safety protocols as necessary. The SOMAH PA has instructed contractors to list their COVID-19 safety protocols in every job posting on the Job Training Portal and have encouraged contractors to consider pre- and post-installation job training opportunities that can be performed remotely or at a safe distance. The SOMAH PA has a dedicated COVID-19 task force that has been closely monitoring public health guidance and safety information from state agencies. Important health and safety resources are available on the SOMAH website at [calsomah.org/COVID19](https://calsomah.org/COVID19).

**Q:** How can we meet our tenant engagement requirements during the pandemic?

**A:** Tenant education requirements for the SOMAH program are not substantially impacted during the COVID-19 crisis. The SOMAH PA asks that all host customers continue to refer to the tenant education requirement to inform their engagement with tenants and that they prioritize mailed materials, direct delivery to units and emailed materials in languages accessible by all residents 30 days or fewer prior to the start of construction. The SOMAH PA asks host customers to refrain from in-person community events until such gatherings are deemed safe by state and county officials. Please contact [tenants@CalSOMAH.org](mailto:tenants@CalSOMAH.org) with any questions or concerns.

**Q:** Where does training compensation come from in SOMAH?

**A:** SOMAH job trainees are paid directly by the contractor and not from SOMAH program funds.

**Q:** When submitting an application for a property in a DAC, is low-income proof still needed?

**A:** All SOMAH projects need to be deed restricted low-income multifamily housing and then can either be located within a DAC or have 80% of the units at an income level of 60% of area median income or lower.

**Q:** Has SOMAH leveraged the Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) program contractor network for energy efficiency, especially for the tenants?

**A:** Tenants are given ESA materials as part of their required tenant education materials and are referred to their IOUs for participation in the ESA program, a no-cost service to help with energy savings.

## **Session 2: SOMAH Centers Equity and Environmental Justice in the Solar Industry (Part 2)**

Monica de la Cruz from the Environmental Health Coalition presented on how SOMAH is centering equity and environmental justice through their partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs). The framework of environmental racism was introduced as

the notion that people of color (regardless of income) are exposed to greater environmental hazards due to racist zoning laws and waste facilities sited in Black and Brown neighborhoods. In the San Diego port region, residential solar adoption and location of DACs do not overlap since renter communities have been deprived of the benefits of clean energy. It was also emphasized how Innovative solutions come from those that experience these issues firsthand.

Anthony Samperio from the Rising Sun Center for Opportunity is partnering with SOMAH to create job training opportunities for trainees on SOMAH projects. Rising Sun's role includes confirming SOMAH eligibility of training programs, monitoring the Job Training Portal and connecting with SOMAH contractors with local job training organizations (JTOs) to fill open trainee spots.

## **Session 2, Part 2 Q&A**

**Q:** What are some examples of work outside of SOMAH that CBOs have helped with in the past?

**A:** The California Environmental Justice Alliance has had many wins throughout the years, but more recent examples were led by some of the organizations that are also SOMAH CBOs. The Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) led on AB 423 (Gloria) – San Diego Air District and has advocated for decades to improve the air quality and environmental health of communities impacted by some of the worst air pollution in the state. One of the obstacles has been the current governing board of the San Diego Air Pollution Control District, which is made up of only members of the county board of supervisors. AB 423 changes that by bringing greater representation and creating a path for accountability and transparency. It will also be the first in California to include an environmental justice representative.

Asian Pacific Environmental Network led the creation and passage of AB 1232, or the Healthy Homes Act, which creates and expands anti-displacement protections for state energy efficiency programs serving low-income customers. As our state increases energy efficiency and electrification investments, low-income tenants are placed at risk of rent hikes and displacement by landlords who seek to benefit from these upgrades. AB 1232 guides agencies in data collection to ensure enforceability and to better penetrate the unregulated affordable housing market. The bill would also increase coordination and collaboration between the Low Income Weatherization Program and public health programs addressing health issues in homes of vulnerable residents.

**Q:** How are CBOs positioned to help support tenant education and engagement?

**A:** The SOMAH CBOs hold long-term relationships in and with the communities they serve and live in. CBOs work closely with their members and the broader community

and take the time to understand their needs and concerns, as well as helping brainstorm campaign ideas to help get the resources and changes communities need. All of the CBOs' major campaigns or broader goals require varying levels of political education, which is done in a popular education style. This means CBOs take the time to develop content and practice facilitation in a way that centers on the community members' lives and experiences. The CBO materials are people-guided and people-oriented and are meant to be education and engaging.

**Q:** How can job training organizations (JTOs) find out when and where SOMAH projects are happening in their area?

**A:** All current SOMAH project information, including locations, anticipated construction start date and contractor name, are available on the SOMAH working dataset on [CaliforniaDGStats.ca.gov](https://CaliforniaDGStats.ca.gov). However, the SOMAH PA and its workforce partners at Rising Sun are closely monitoring projects as they move along in the application process, connecting with contractors to see what their hiring needs are for particular projects and reaching out to job training organizations in those locations to identify trainees who are ready to work.

**Q:** Will power purchase agreement (PPA) providers be required to inform property owners about their equity and environmental justice work for SOMAH projects?

**A:** For all SOMAH projects, it is the responsibility of the applicant to inform all of the program participants of all the program requirements. Applicants may be host customer, PPA providers, contractors or the system owner.

## Looking Ahead & Next Steps

Kajsa Hendrickson provided an overview of next steps, noting that the Public Forum slide deck would be emailed to registered participants on CalSOMAH.org. Public Forum notes would follow in a week's time, and information about the Q4 forum will be sent out in the next few weeks. Attendees were given the opportunity to fill out a survey on topics for future forums.

For additional questions and feedback, please contact us:

**Email:** [contact@CalSOMAH.org](mailto:contact@CalSOMAH.org)

**Web form:** [CalSOMAH.org/contact-us](https://CalSOMAH.org/contact-us)

**General hotline:** 858-244-1177 ext. 5

**Tenant hotline:** 800-843-9728