

Industry Engagement on Home Energy Loan Program- Contractor List Requirements

Engagement was temporarily reopened for further feedback on the requirements for the pre-vetted contractor list and to identify education and training resources required for contractors. Survey questions were included within the Renewable Energy Strategy: Options Identification Survey which was open from April 15th, 2020 to May 6th, 2021. The survey was comprised of 5 open- and closed-ended questions and respondents were able to provide explanations for their preferences.

1.1.1 Intended Audience

The survey was sent to Key Stakeholder Groups as well as specific installers, property managers, and industry professionals that participated in previous engagement activities.

1.1.2 Marketing Techniques

A variety of marketing techniques were employed to reach the intended audience.

1. City Website
 - a. Updates to the Engage Page (<https://www.saskatoon.ca/engage>) were made to encourage participation in the online survey.
2. Email
 - a. Personalized emails were sent to past participants and stakeholders asking them to share the information with their members.

1.1.3 Analysis

The proposed changes were analyzed for the following indicators:

- Any red flags or potential issues with the existing program components
- Thematic analysis of reasoning for program component selections over others

Mixed methods were used to analyze the data. Qualitative methods included the thematic analysis and open coding of responses. Data was also contextualized and analyzed according to stakeholder groups.

1.1.4 What We Heard

A total of 58 individuals participated in the survey. The largest group of respondents were those involved in the energy sector (29%), followed by professional or technical consultants (17%), residential or commercial construction (16%), and real estate and property management (10%).

The survey was designed to update specific components of the Home Energy Loan Program, such as training resources for contractors and requirements for the pre-vetted contractor list. Topics that emerged from the online survey are discussed in the section below.

Requirements for the Pre-vetted Contractor List

Out of the suggested requirements for being added to the pre-vetted contractor list, the majority of participants supported providing proof of registration with a third-party warranty organization (61%), proof of safety training through at least one of the courses identified (55%), and

providing a GST registration number (55%). Some support was given to participating in a training course for business fundamentals for the home renovator (36%).

The majority of respondents did not feel that any of the new requirements would be a significant barrier for contractors to be added to the list (72%). The following comments, summarized by theme, were provided:

All are barriers: every suggestion could be a barrier due to the extra effort and costs required for contractors to obtain them if they do not already have them

Responsibility: the responsibility should not be placed on the City to provide a list, rather it should be the due diligence of program adopters or contractors

Safety: good standing with the WSB should be adequate from a safety perspective, requiring proof of training could cause some smaller contractors to lose out on opportunities but this also might weed out those that are inexperienced

Training courses: some respondents suggested the training course seems like a cash grab and is not beneficial for existing businesses, many contractors would find it insulting to need to be trained on how to run their own business, one respondent suggested the training course might be a good way to ensure legit trades are interested

Warranty: if under warranty it should be at the cost for the installer to repair or seek third party warranty regardless

Training and Marketing

When asked what additional training resources are needed for contractors to understand how the program works, respondents suggested the following:

- Providing short webinars
- Ongoing live support to answer questions quickly
- Creating a website that clearly defines terms and conditions as well as the rules
- Have support staff available to field questions and approve applications

Based on previous engagement activities, most industry participants (76%) supported advertising the financing program on behalf of the City to potential new clients if they were provided with appropriate materials. Respondents were asked to rank the following marketing materials in order of being the most to least helpful to contractors:

1. A presentation for contractors to present on the program to homeowners (69%)
2. Physical brochures or a one-page infographic to provide homeowners (52%)
3. Program logo and/or weblink to post on a business webpage (48%)
4. An annual information session for contractors (35%)

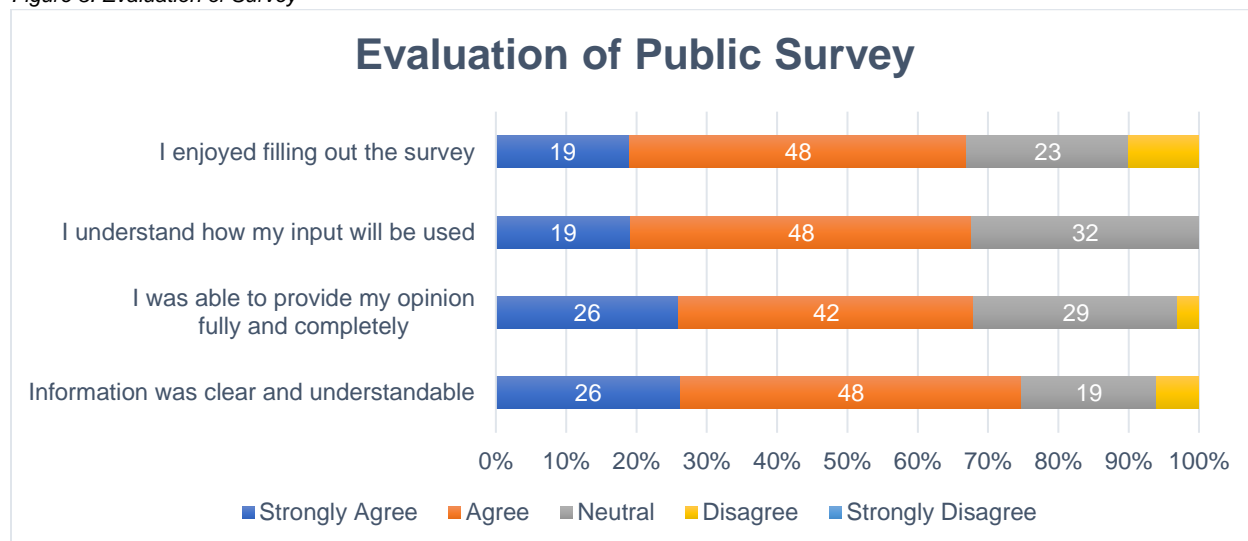
Other suggestions for marketing materials that would be helpful for contractors included:

- Example projects and payback information
- Have companies self-fund their own marketing efforts
- Training on total life cycle
- How to prepare business cases

1.2 Evaluation

Participant evaluation through the survey indicated support for both the level of engagement conducted and the opportunities provided. 74% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the information that was provided being clear and understandable, with 68% feeling they were able to provide their opinions fully throughout the process.

Figure 3: Evaluation of Survey



Comments provided by participants were supportive of the process:

"I think this survey was very well done. It shows the City of Saskatoon is willing to engage with the public."

"We are very excited about topics discussed and programs being developed!"

However, some respondents expressed the need to keep all costs and administration expenses down as best as possible:

"The priority for the city needs to be keeping the costs down. Tax payers can't afford anymore tax increases."

"This was a very pointed survey that has been 'cooked' to obtain the result the bureaucrats want - which is more bureaucracy and bloated costs borne by ratepayers."