

Introduction

Spark Northwest builds clean energy in marginalized communities across our region. We partnered with tribes, people in rural areas and nonprofit groups to install 1.2 megawatts of renewable energy in 2021. These new installations will dramatically reduce carbon emissions and also save folks over one hundred thousand dollars in energy bills each year.

We are particularly excited to be building a pipeline of equity-focused clean energy projects through our technical advice and coaching services. Not all of our consultations have led to completed projects – many are still seeking pathways to funding. But if new infrastructure dollars begin to flow, it will be a huge advantage if small organizations are primed with “shovel-ready” plans to make the switch to clean energy.

How We Partnered with Communities to Build Clean Energy

In 2021 Spark Northwest worked closely with people in underserved areas to realize their unique clean energy goals. This involved coaching, lending technical expertise, and securing funds for fifteen new projects. It is gratifying to see the resulting renewable energy installations come to life and see others in the community become inspired to pursue projects of their own. Here are a few examples.

* Shiloh Baptist Church Models the Way

Shiloh Baptist Church has served as an anchor institution in the Black community of Tacoma’s Hilltop neighborhood since 1953. Shiloh’s pastor and congregation organize campaigns for climate justice and the church is a critical resource to many in need. With planning and grant writing support from Spark Northwest, the church secured a grant from their local utility to install solar.

Now the church uses its new solar array to teach youth and families about the benefits of solar, and inspire other investments in energy efficiency and indoor air quality. Shiloh uses the savings from lower operating costs to pursue their mission of social justice and community service. They are spreading the word to others as well; a second Tacoma church recently worked with Spark Northwest to get a solar grant, inspired by Shiloh’s success.



Ribbon cutting ceremony for Shiloh's solar installation.

* Solar Enhances Latino Preschool in Yakima Valley



La Escuelita under construction and ready for solar.

For Latino families living in the Yakima area, there is one place that always feels like home. La Casa Hogar is a nonprofit organization that offers adult and early learning programs as well as citizenship and immigration support for Latino families. Three years ago the group raised funds to build La Escuelita (the little school), to provide an early learning opportunity for under-resourced children who would otherwise be left out of preschool education.

With Spark Northwest's help to secure a utility grant and donated time from a local installer, the Casa Hogar team was able to add solar panels on the new school last year. With their energy bill savings, the school had additional resources to devote to helping their students thrive.

* Advancing Rural Clean Energy

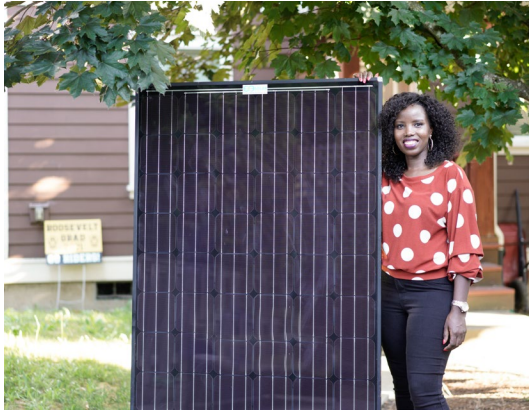
Spark Northwest educated farmers on the benefits of clean energy through online webinars, email, social media, and word of mouth. This year we launched a bilingual webinar in Spanish and English to reach more Latino farmers interested in pursuing renewable energy. We provided one-on-one consultations with dozens of agricultural producers and provided grant writing support to eleven farms. We are still waiting to hear the award results for some of the proposals, but so far we have secured over half a million dollars in federal grant assistance for these projects.

We are especially excited about one innovative idea that received funding. With Spark Northwest's assistance, a blueberry and hazelnut farm was awarded a grant for a new Monarch electric tractor. Oregon State University will be collecting data over two years and sharing results on fuel savings, labor savings, and other lessons learned. Field days will be scheduled to educate local farmers on the technology.



A farmworker with Community 2 Community, which received two solar grants for a cooperatively-owned farm in Whatcom County, Washington.

* Affordable Housing Benefits from Solar



Salome Waithaka's home is now solar powered.

In 2021 we continued our partnership with Proud Ground Community Land Trust to bring fully-funded solar to affordable housing in Northern Oregon and Southern Washington. One of the homeowner participants, Salome Waithaka, was featured in [this Solar Power article](#). In her words: “The addition of solar is one more step to making this an affordable home to own and operate. And there’s the added benefit that beyond offsetting heating costs, solar powers a clean future for the next generation.” We look forward to partnering with more Proud Ground homeowners next year.

How Spark Northwest Makes a Broader Impact

* Policy Advocacy

Our boots-on-the-ground experience informs our systemic advocacy to ensure the clean energy transition benefits people with the fewest resources. In 2021 we advocated for energy justice legislation, such as the Washington HEAL Act, which requires governmental agencies to consider vulnerable communities when designing energy policy. We testified at a hearing to improve community solar outcomes for low- and moderate-income participants. And we advocated for federal solar tax incentives to be expanded to benefit families with low wealth, using our presence in Oregon to urge Senator Wyden to improve the proposed Build Back Better legislation.

* Creating an Equitable Energy Portfolio

One of the biggest barriers to advancing clean energy in marginalized communities is the scarcity of resources available. It takes an investment of time to develop goals, navigate technical requirements, and put together a clean energy proposal. And then, once the plans are ready, it takes even more time to pursue complex financing or grants for the capital funds. Practically, clean energy is out of reach for many community-based organizations who are spread thin dealing with the effects of health and wealth inequality.

Spark Northwest is exploring ways to reduce burdens for small organizations by aggregating projects and seeking support from the public and private sector to fund our Access Solar Portfolio. Currently we have two dozen “shovel ready” projects that we are pitching to large corporate entities with aligned values to fund green energy with a

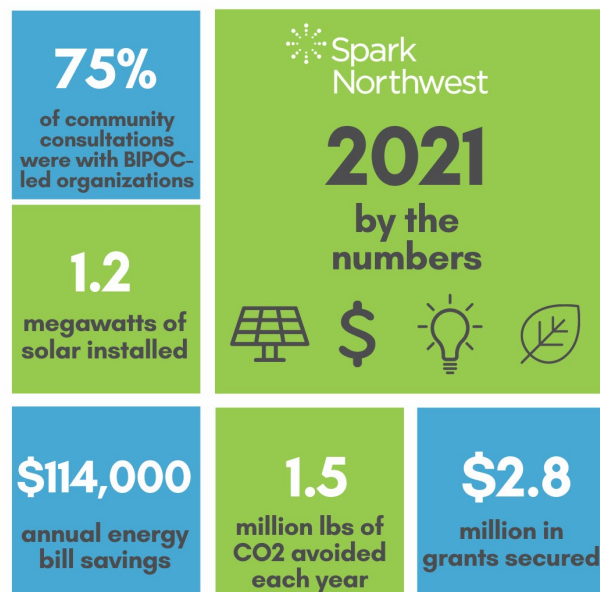
social justice component. So far, several companies with carbon reduction goals have expressed interest in the concept. We will continue to refine and pursue this idea in the year ahead.

* **Community Solar Developers' Insights Report**

Our community partners have valuable perspectives about clean energy and how to structure programs to overcome common barriers. This summer we reached out to over a dozen organizations based in BIPOC and low-wealth communities with whom we have consulted on projects to learn more about what clean energy means to them and their vision for how to advance energy justice. We are compiling their insights into a report, which we will distribute to policy makers and funders in 2022.

Quantitative Results

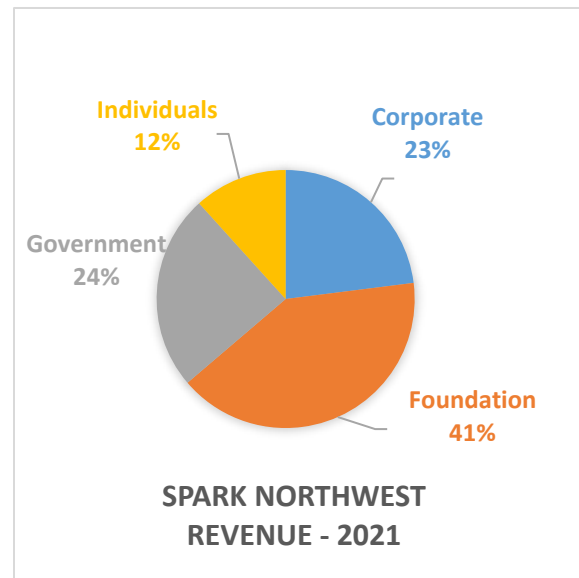
Since 2001, Spark Northwest projects have avoided over 14 million pounds of carbon emissions into the atmosphere. Our systemic advocacy has benefited thousands of people by removing barriers and creating opportunities for equitable deployment of solar. Last year we completed fifteen clean energy projects and provided education and outreach to hundreds of people living in Oregon and Washington. Here is an infographic showing the impact of projects we completed in the past year:



Organizational Health

Spark Northwest weathered the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic by making careful financial decisions and continuing to diversify our revenue stream. We have a comfortable mix of fee-for-service, foundation support and government contracts, as indicated on the chart to the right.

In 2021 we added part-time staff capacity to our team of seven to manage our consulting services for green grant programs. We also added four new board members to expand the board's skills and strengthen our relationships with stakeholders and partners. As a result, we now have 11 board members, over one third of whom identify as people of color.



We were pleased to hit the twenty-year mark as an organization in 2021. We celebrated via “20 Days of Spark Northwest.” Through a combination of community events, webinars, and video content, we engaged over 1,200 folks online and had 116 people join for live events. It was a great chance to celebrate Spark Northwest’s accomplishments so far and to look ahead at the future of equitable clean energy work in the Northwest. Overall, the campaign exceeded expectations and raised over \$57,000 through renewed connections and new supporters.

Our Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, we see increasing needs for energy resiliency, especially for marginalized communities. In 2022, we are excited to serve as the regional outreach partner for the Energy Transition Initiative Partnership Project, linking remote communities to energy resilience planning assistance from our National Labs. We are investigating energy storage solutions that will help communities ride out mid- to long-term power outages due to wildfires and other natural disasters. We are also motivated to help people with low and moderate incomes obtain energy-efficient heating and cooling in their homes. This is of greater urgency in the wake of last year’s dire heat wave in the Pacific Northwest. We are also exploring partnerships with local governments to conduct ductless heat pump pilot campaigns subsidized for people with low wealth. Our many projects continue to work on one common vision: A Northwest region 100% powered by clean energy that shifts power and wealth to marginalized communities.