

VALLEY CLEAN ENERGY ALLIANCE**Staff Report – Item 9**

TO: Valley Clean Energy Community Advisory Committee

FROM: Rebecca Kuczynski, Chief Customer Officer

SUBJECT: VCE Customer Engagement Focus Groups

DATE: August 27, 2026

RECOMMENDATION

Receive an informational overview of VCE's pending efforts related to customer engagement focus groups.

BACKGROUND

Focus groups are a qualitative research tool that provide deeper insight into customer perceptions, motivations, and decision making. Consistent with VCE Strategic Plan goals, the focus group research will help VCE better understand awareness of VCE, perceptions of value and trust, customer communication preferences, and opportunities to improve outreach and program design/participation.

Valley Clean Energy is preparing to engage a professional marketing firm to provide focus group research services. The purpose of the research is to better understand customer awareness, perceptions, motivations, barriers, and communication preferences, and use those insights to inform future marketing, outreach, and customer program strategies.

The research is intended to capture perspectives from residential, commercial, agricultural, Spanish-speaking, CARE/FERA, rural, and other key customer segments across the VCE service area. Focus Group design principles will incorporate important equity concerns, and address potential barriers to participation, including stipends, childcare, and meals. Staff has discussed Focus Group approach with the Programs and Outreach Task Group, and received generally positive feedback.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding is included in the approved Marketing and Customer Engagement budget for these efforts. The final contract amount will be determined through the competitive procurement process.

CONCLUSION / NEXT STEPS

Staff anticipates hiring a firm through a competitive process with a goal of beginning work in late 2026 or early 2027.