



## IREM® From the Front Lines Podcast

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Get EV Charging Help with the EMPOWER Project

Todd:

Welcome to another edition of From the Front Lines, where we discuss both the day-to-day, and one-of-a-kind issues facing real estate managers. In this episode, we talk to Michael Graham, head of the EMPOWER Project, a U.S. Department of Energy-funded program that helps property owners and managers with their EV charging projects. To learn more about the EMPOWER Project, visit [workplacecharging.com](http://workplacecharging.com). Welcome to the podcast, Michael!

Michael:

Thanks, Todd. Really appreciate you having us today.

Todd:

First, can you tell us a little about yourself and the EMPOWER Project?

Michael:

Yeah, absolutely. I'm the Deputy Director at the Columbia-Willamette Clean Cities Coalition, which is the lead on the EMPOWER Project, and I'm the Principal Investigator overseeing the implementation of the EMPOWER Workplace Charging Project. So EMPOWER is a nationwide initiative to educate workplaces around workplace charging. You know, what's the value in installing it? What are some of the one-on-one basics of EV charging, among some other topics. We provide coaching locally through another 30 Clean Cities Coalitions like us across the country, and that coaching is designed to help workplaces navigate the process of installing chargers. And, you know, understand some of the fundamentals, right? Electric vehicles is a new technology. And then finally, the project is recognizing workplaces that successfully install workplace chargers for their employees, expanding EV access for their employees. You know, we really want to highlight those successes and create this positive feedback loop across the country to help motivate more folks to install workplace chargers and show off their leadership in clean transportation.

Todd:

So why is EV charging in demand, and what motivates property owners and managers to install chargers?

Michael:

Yeah, it's a great question. You know, there's numerous forecasts that are showing electric vehicle growth is ramping up in the US over the next couple of years, thanks to several strong federal policy signals from state-by-state initiatives such as 15 state memorandum of understanding. They call these the MOU states, where all these states are requiring a transition to all electric vehicles or zero emission vehicles by, say, 2035 or 2050, I forget the exact date. And then you have private

market investments like Tesla who really made driving electric cool. I think there's a Bloomberg estimate out there that 35% of all new vehicle sales globally will be electric by 2040 which is the whopping 400 million EVs. And ultimately, what that means is that you're going to have a bunch of new EV owners who are going to need a place to charge. And what we've seen for EV owners is that access to both convenient and reliable charging is a prerequisite to EV ownership. And you know, not everyone can install a charger at their home, right? Folks live in apartments and condos, multi-unit dwellings, where it's a little bit trickier to install a charger. And so the next best option to give those respective EV drivers access to driving electric is at their workplace.

Todd:

What type of help does the EMPOWER Project offer?

Michael:

We provide coaching around understanding the basics of electric vehicle technology all the way up to functioning as you know, a sounding board throughout a workplace's implementation of a workplace charging project. There's coaches out there that are helping workplaces identify local, regional, even national, incentives to reduce the cost of installing chargers. And then there's also a lot of support around creating policies for workplaces to implement to really ensure better utilization of their chargers and a more successful project.

Todd:

What are some of the hurdles to EV charging installations that require this help?

Michael:

It could be a variety of questions. What time of day or week will employees most want access to charging, helping kind of ground through that. How many charging stations are needed to meet the anticipated workplace's demand? Should employees pay a fee for workplace EV charging? What's the payment structure look like? Should charging stations be acceptable to the public, in addition to just workplace employees? Will the amount of chargers installed be enough to satisfy the employee demand? What's the cost? How long will a project take? What equipment should someone consider purchasing? Is there a local electrician that could qualify to help me install chargers? So the EMPOWER Project is helping folks navigate those variety of questions and at least give them an easier path to finding answers. A lot of folks that start their workplace charging journey, they just get, I think, mired in the variety of questions and not knowing where to start to even look for the answer. So our local coaches, these coalitions, they've been doing this for 30 years in the alternative fuel and clean transportation space, and they know all of the local partners to help folks get closer to those answers, and just you know, function as a sounding board. Everyone needs an ally as they go about something new, like installing chargers.

Todd:

What value do EV chargers provide to tenant companies and their employees?

Michael:

Yeah, it's a great question. Our project sees a couple of different values. I mean, the first being that, as a workplace installing EV chargers, you're demonstrating climate leadership, right? You're a forward thinker, you're a first mover in adopting a new, innovative technology. We also have seen workplaces that have reported some additional attraction and top talent retention because of having EV chargers, because you are installing a new amenity for your employees. And it's especially valuable if you have employees that don't have access to a charger at their home. There's

also some indication that it improves employee satisfaction having this new amenity. I mean, what's easier than coming to work to fill up your car, so to speak, versus having to stop at a gas station every couple of days on your way home? It's just so convenient. Comparatively. There's also some benefits to workplaces to earn certification points for local or national programs such as a LEAD certification. And then we've also seen a little bit more signal from workplaces that the chargers are helping coax employees back to the office, which, of course, has been a big issue since the pandemic, because, again, I mean, you're providing access to charging at your workplace to help employees, and if you're operating for free, I mean, what's better than filling up your car for free?

Todd:

Now, Michael, can you tell us a little more about these EV charging coaches? Who are they and how do you find them?

Michael:

Yeah, through our program, we're working with these 30 Clean Cities Coalitions across the country. And what a Clean Cities Coalition is, is it's an organization that has been a part of the US Department of Energy Clean Cities and Communities Program, which was created back in the early 1990s. And these organizations are local, well-connected and trusted allies in folks trying to navigate the cleaner fuels and technology space. And then their whole mission is to help connect folks reduce barriers, and really just help them adopt a cleaner fuel or technology, as opposed to say, traditional gasoline or diesel.

Todd:

What do our listeners need to do to get started with an EV charging coach?

Michael:

That's a great question. It's really simple. Visit our website, [workplacecharging.com](http://workplacecharging.com). If you don't already have chargers and you're interested in learning more about workplace charging, sign up by signing our pledge. Visit the "Get a Coach" button on our website, and you'll be connected with a local workplace charging coach to help you get started, and if you already have chargers, we want to hear from you. We want to hear your success story. So consider participating in our nationwide competition to get recognized, and the winner of our competition will have their story featured on a full-page local newspaper ad and a short film that we will produce with your work.

Todd:

Great. Thanks for joining us, Michael.

Michael:

Thank you very much for having me, Todd.

Todd:

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