



## EQUITY WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

**Monday, December 5, 2022**  
Virtual Meeting: Zoom

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**Equity Working Group Members Present:** Charlie Harak, Margie Lynch, Brooks Winner (representing Cammy Peterson), Mary Wambui, Maggie Downey, Ruth Georges, Brian Beote, Cindy Luppi, JoAnn Bodemer, James Collins, Maggie McCarey, Autumn Snyder (representing Stephanie Terach), Steve Menges, Melanie Coen

**Equity Working Group Members Absent:** (None)

**Other Attendees:** Adrian Caesar, Max Halik, Sandra Alvarado, Zack Lippert, Danilo Morales, Nina Mascarenhas, Leah Cohen, Anxhela Mile (representing Caitlin Peale-Sloan), Alissa Whiteman, Mary Downes

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### 1. Call to Order

McCarey, acting as Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:04 AM.

### 2. Language Access Plan and Workforce Development Updates

#### *Language Access Plan and Mass Save Support for Language-Isolated Customers – Overview*

Georges, on behalf of the program administrators (PAs), provided an update on the Language Access Plan. Georges summarized current language access support strategies that are delivered through the Mass Save website, PA staff, and program vendors. Georges also described the project timeline and deliverables for the Language Access Plan through mid-2024.

McCarey asked when the language access accommodations for virtual and in-person home energy assessments (HEAs) would be launched. Georges replied that the listed strategies should be deployed by the second quarter of 2023.

Luppi asked if the PAs and Language Access Plan vendors would allow community members performing outreach, such as Community First Partners, to review language access strategies. Luppi said technical terms and concepts can be difficult to communicate in any language. Georges responded that the Language Access Plan vendors would host focus groups to

understand how bilingual customers translate energy efficiency-related terms and determine whether certain terms will require alternative translation methods. Georges said the PAs will leverage existing Community First Partners to engage with non-English-speaking customers. In addition, Georges said the PAs will collaborate with bilingual energy specialists to understand how they communicate energy efficiency services with customers. Luppi supported the involvement of Community First Partners in implementing the Language Access Plan. Georges said that the PAs will facilitate continued follow-up with community members to ensure language access strategies are successful.

### ***Limited English Proficiency and English-Isolated Customer Journey Mapping and Barriers Study***

Lynch announced that a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and English-Isolated Customer Journey Mapping and Barriers Study launched in the summer of 2021 to understand the LEP customer experience and barriers to participation in residential programs. Lynch said that the study included surveys, interviews, and workshops as primary research activities and a final report should be released in April 2023.

McCarey asked how the PAs would apply results of this study to the Language Access Plan. Georges said that all results would be shared with Language Access Plan vendors.

Wambui hoped that cities with diverse groups and languages aside from Spanish and Portuguese, like Lowell which has a large Cambodian community, would not be left behind in language access efforts. Wambui said that language-access work is time sensitive, so there should be no delays in deploying strategies to increase program access.

Winner commented that accessibility for public meetings is an adjacent resource to inform PA language-access efforts. Winner encouraged the PAs to implement lessons learned throughout Language Access Plan development. Georges responded that Sway B. Access was selected as a Language Access Plan vendor because they performed a clean-energy-related language-translation plan for the city of Boston. Georges said the PAs continually enhance program processes to reach more customers, but the Language Access Plan will standardize language-access provisions across the state. Georges also said that some applicants for the Mass Save Energy Efficiency Education Grants, community education grants for increasing energy efficiency literacy and program engagement, sought funding to serve bilingual customers.

## **3. Equity Targets**

### ***Consultant Team and Program Administrator Presentation***

Lynch, on behalf of the EEAC Consultant Team, described the background and methodology of environmental justice municipality targets for investment and participation, as well as key quantitative findings from the proposed PA targets. Following Lynch's presentation, each PA presented baselines and targets for participation and investment across the Residential, Income Eligible, and Commercial & Industrial sectors.

McCarey said that the proposed targets for participation and investment in environmental justice municipalities align with the approved 2022-2024 Plan.

### ***Equity Working Group Discussion***

Harak asked if the environmental justice municipalities in Cape Light Compact's service territory represent places that require targeted investment. Downey responded that the data supports targeting the selected towns, such as Chatham, Falmouth, Barnstable, and Aquinnah. Harak asked if neighborhoods within target municipalities are addressed directly. Downey said that Cape Light Compact targets specific neighborhoods to support environmental justice, but this varies across PAs. Harak asked if all PAs have the discretion to target neighborhoods like Cape Light Compact. McCarey replied that they have the ability to target within environmental justice municipalities, and while this targeting is not required it would be difficult to meet increased participation and investment goals without prioritizing underserved neighborhoods.

Harak asked how some of the National Grid baselines were calculated. Menges stated that certain data points in the benefit-cost analysis model were erroneously calculated, but National Grid committed to the filed numbers when setting targets.

McCarey asked why the 76% increase for investment greatly exceeded the 20% increase in participation for the Eversource Electric Residential sector. Beote replied that the difference in magnitude is caused by the need for large investments to drive smaller increases in participation, particularly for moderate-income customers who receive higher incentives than market rate customers.

Luppi suggested that the PAs leverage the Equity Working Group to close gaps in community member engagement. McCarey said there was a large outreach effort prior to the release of the 2023 Community First Partnership applications, so the PAs could provide an update at the next Equity Working Group meeting. McCarey recommended that future presentations highlight which municipalities are not Community First Partners. Georges said that new 2023 Community First Partners should be selected by the end of 2022.

Beote clarified that the gas Income-Eligible participation baseline and targets for Eversource were calculated differently, due to legacy system limitations. McCarey stated that the target metric in the 2022-2024 Term Sheet included a percentage point increase in investment and participation, but the target or baseline should be adjusted for accurate comparison. Beote clarified that this data inconsistency only impacts the baseline and target for participation.

Winner asked if participation in Lawrence was impacted by enhanced incentives and outreach delivered in 2019-2021. McCarey said that the Columbia Gas explosion settlement and Merrimack Valley Renewal Fund, managed by the Department of Energy Resources, the Office of the Attorney General, and Eversource, resulted in higher program participation in Andover and North Andover but not Lawrence. McCarey said that barriers to weatherization and heating equipment replacements impacted Lawrence more than Andover and North Andover, so DOER released a Program Opportunity Notice for a customer support facilitator for Lawrence residents, as well as low-income customers and moderate-income customers in Andover and North Andover. McCarey added that additional support for Spanish-speaking customers and pre-weatherization barrier incentives would be provided.

Wambui said that the lessons-learned from Lawrence should be publicly presented, since there is large public interest. Luppi agreed that updates from Lawrence are important and relevant. Luppi said the Green Justice Coalition has identified significant pre-weatherization barriers in communities like Lawrence, so the PAs should assess the degree of funding required to mitigate these barriers. Beote said the PAs can provide more information on Lawrence in the future.

Snyder stated that reduced spending on gas incentives has impacted Liberty's targets more than other PAs. Harak hypothesized that customers were paying into energy efficiency programs without receiving program benefits, but now these underserved customers are receiving targeted investments. Wambui suggested that equity efforts should address the historical underinvestment in certain communities and the narrative around equity should emphasize this historical gap in program delivery.

Wambui asked how the PAs aim to effectively engage communities like Fitchburg. Downes replied that Unitil wants to develop and support effective means to motivate customer engagement in energy efficiency programs, like Community First Partnerships in Fitchburg. Fitchburg has significant customer turnover which limits customers participation, so Unitil faces challenges in customer engagement. Turnover limits participation since short-term residents have a lower propensity to invest in energy-efficient measures. Downes said Unitil has a key account manager that collaborates with the city of Fitchburg, the community action agency, and community housing organizations to drive customer participation.

McCarey announced that the PA environmental justice municipality targets would be presented to the EEAC for review and approval.

#### **4. Workforce Development**

##### ***MassCEC Presentation***

MassCEC presented updates on its workforce development efforts, including state and federal grants, MassCEC funding resources, minority- and women-owned business enterprise support grants, workforce training grants, a MassCEC Internship Program, and a \$10 million equity-workforce training implementation fund which prioritizes workforce barrier mitigation.

##### ***Program Administrator Presentation***

Georges, on behalf of the PAs, provided status updates on the Massachusetts PA Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Study, supplier diversity summits, Workforce Partnership Grant, and Clean Energy Pathways internship and job placement program. Georges stated that there were 157 attendees across two supplier diversity summits and over 17 applications requesting \$1.4 million in Workforce Partnership Grant funding.

##### ***Equity Working Group Discussion***

McCarey appreciated the level of transparency and detail included in the PA workforce development updates presentation.

#### **5. Adjournment**

McCarey announced that the Equity Working Group Co-Chairs and PAs would develop a 2023 meeting topic schedule and the EEAC would vote on the Equity Working Group charter in January 2023.

McCarey, acting as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 1:04 PM.

**Meeting Materials:**

- December 5, 2022 Equity Working Group Meeting Agenda
- Draft EEAC Equity Working Group Charter
- Program Administrator Presentation on Limited English Proficiency and English-Isolated Customer Journey Mapping and Barriers
- Statewide Language Access and Workforce Development Updates Presentation
- Massachusetts Clean Energy Center Workforce Development Updates Presentation
- Equity Targets for Environmental Justice Municipalities Presentation