



## EQUITY WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

**Monday, November 6, 2023**  
Virtual Meeting: Zoom

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**Equity Working Group Members Present:** Brooks Winner, Mary Wambui, Alexis Washburn, Stephanie Terach, Margie Lynch, Kyle Murray, Sonakshi Saxena, Jo Ann Bodemer, Cindy Luppi, Doug Quattrochi, James Collins, Charlie Harak, Mary Wambui, William Rose, Jhenny Saint-Surin, Maggie Downey

**Equity Working Group Members Absent:** Ben Cartwright

**Other Attendees:** Adrian Caesar, Alissa Whiteman, Ina Dasso, Anxhela Mile, Benjamin Silverman, Bob Eckel, Danilo Morales, Degen Larkin, Emma Zehner, Jayne Lino, Joe Nunley, Leah Cohen, Meg Lusardi, Sam Nigro, Susan Mlodozeniec, Theodore Love

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### 1. Call to Order

Bodemer, acting as Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:01 AM.

### 2. Equity Working Group (EWG) Updates

There were no updates from the EWG.

### 3. EWG Recommendations for the 2025-2027 Three-Year Plan

Bodemer reviewed the updated EWG recommendations for the 2025-2027 Plan, which included tracked changes and additional recommendations provided during the EEAC workshop focused on equity.

Downey and Saint-Surin joined the virtual meeting at 11:06 AM.

#### ***EWG Discussion***

Quattrochi commented that the modification to Recommendation B on page 10 regarding income-verification suggests strongly that the Plan needs to bar market-rate customers from moderate-income incentives, so the word “need” should be replaced with “desire”.

Harak suggested that the PAs should conduct a pilot for self-attestation of income in Lawrence. Lynch indicated that such a pilot is included in the EWG recommendations.

Harak suggested clarifying that the recommendation that heat pumps (installed to serve individual units) be placed on the property owner's electrical panel applies to buildings where the heating system before the installation is a central heating system.

Winner said that EWG recommendations for new methods of income-verification should describe current processes to enable easier comparisons.

Rose asked if Cape Light Compact is the only program administrator (PA) that cannot provide pre-funded accounts for vendors that can pay for program services, which Bodemer confirmed. Downey added that setting up different payment streams can create confusion for vendors. Rose said that the pre-funded accounts would protect vendors from floating costs incurred by providing customers with instant rebates.

Lynch asked if the modified recommendation to encourage contractors to build partnerships with other contractors needs to call out non-home-performance contractors. Washburn replied that the intent of the recommendation is to improve customer experience by connecting customers with contractors who provide services outside of the scope of Mass Save programs. Washburn said such partnerships are in place in some trades but lacking in others. Lynch proposed that the recommendation should also encourage retail-HVAC contractors to build partnerships with other contractors, particularly insulation contractors. Washburn said the language should reflect that customers may require several types of services from providers, which includes contractors without direct connections to Mass Save that provide complementary services. Bodemer agreed that the recommendation should explain that these partnerships should include the full suite of services that a customer may need to implement comprehensive upgrades.

Bodemer indicated that the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) implemented significant changes to the recommendation on distributive justice such that the language better embodied and described the concept.

Harak stated that the PAs distribute program investments based on percentage of population living in poverty, while the Low-income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN) spends money based on customer demand. Harak asked if the PAs allocate planned budgets based on geography at the front end of three-year plans. Bodemer responded that market-rate and moderate-income budgets are grouped within the budget for the residential sector. Lynch said that allocating budgets based on demand is a reasonable approach for income-eligible customers but not wealthier, market-rate customers. Lynch explained that the primary allocation of budgets is largely based on PA territory, but the PAs build budgets by planning individual measures in each sector and spend budgets wherever there is customer demand. Downey confirmed Bodemer and Lynch's explanations and added that contracts with income-eligible-program vendors include specific budgets and goals. Harak emphasized the need for additional, targeted marketing in order to drive demand.

Winner said that in addition to the PAs presenting a summary of equity investments prior to submission of the March 31 Draft 2025-2027 Plan, the EWG should recommend that the PAs explain how those investments will achieve distributive justice. Downey asked if the PAs should add expository text for each equity investment. Winner suggested that the PAs add qualitative descriptions of strategies tied to each investment that will lead to distributive justice.

Wambui asked for the context around equity investments. Lynch explained that for the 2022-2024 Plan, the PAs developed and filed an outline of budgets, participation, and savings sorted into different categories like renters, and moderate-income customers, small businesses, and language-isolated customers. The EWG viewed these breakouts as a positive change but did not discuss whether the level of investment in each area was appropriate. Wambui recommended that the EWG, DOER, and PAs discuss how to set equity investments in order to achieve distributive justice, and that the budgets be informed by data as opposed to professional judgement. Bodemer asked when the group should discuss calibration of the equity investments. Wambui suggested that the EWG should discuss equity investments before March so the PAs can identify priority populations and set equity investments appropriately. Bodemer said that the PAs will identify, and overweigh investments toward priority areas. Harak added that the PAs should allocate more spending to marketing which targets underserved populations.

**Commented [AW1]:** Read again bc there's a lot here!

Quattrochi commented that Google Translate is not an effective tool and the programs require staff that can actually communicate in non-English languages.

Washburn noted that the PAs were concerned about the feasibility of implementing language access for all languages simultaneously and asked if the recommendation should include the provision of language-support services and on-demand translation. Washburn also asked if these services are included in the Language Access Plan. Saxena replied that on-demand translation is included in the Language Access Plan, which the PAs are still developing.

Luppi asked if providing tailored, high-quality interpretation should be the focus instead of auto-generated translation, because program materials and information are hard to process even in English. Murray and Quattrochi agreed, and Quattrochi reiterated that Google Translate can misinterpret messages during translation.

Washburn suggested that the EWG provide context on background checks and drug-testing requirements for Mass Save contractors in its recommendations. Harak added that the recommendations should describe requirements for returning citizens and those with minimal criminal history. Harak said that Chris Porter from National Grid indicated that revised requirements for returning citizens are more favorable.

#### **4. Next Steps**

Bodemer stated that DOER will refine the draft EWG recommendations on the 2025-2027 Plan, present the EWG recommendations at the November EEAC meeting, and finalize the EWG recommendations in December. Bodemer also listed upcoming 2024 tasks for the EWG, PAs, DOER, and EEAC Consultants.

## **5. Adjournment**

Bodemer, acting as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 12:00 PM.

### **Meeting Materials:**

- Official Meeting Notice
- Meeting Link
- Agenda
- EWG Recommendations for the 2025-2027 Plan (Tracked Changes)
- EWG Next Steps Table