Massachusetts Energy Efficiency Advisory Council: 2025 Priorities

December 2024 – Draft

In 2025, the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (Council or EEAC) will collaboratively support the Program Administrators (PAs) and monitor implementation of the 2025-2027 Plan. The Council will give special attention to new initiatives, and program enhancements that are foundational to achievement of the Commonwealth's energy efficiency, greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction, energy savings, and equity goals.

The Council looks forward to a continued and collaborative working relationship with the PAs during this transformational 2025-2027 Plan. Given the importance of successful implementation of electrification, equity, and workforce development initiatives early in the 2025-2027 term to ensure that the three-year goals are met, the Council underscores the importance of the PAs proactive engagement with the Council, relevant working groups, and the Council consultants, during development and implementation of the key initiatives outlined below.

The Council appreciates the PAs redesign of the Quarterly Reports and revamp of the key performance indicators (KPIs) into a user-friendly data workbook that the PAs will provide to the Council quarterly. The Council understands that the data workbook will help track progress toward Council priorities in several ways, including but not limited to 1) maintaining the level of detail that some stakeholders have requested; 2) introducing data filters, so users can isolate specific outcomes (e.g., renters served, moderate-income heat pumps, etc.); 3) tracking GHG emissions reductions to plan; and 4) tracking equity achievement, based on plan targets.

Finally, the Council expects the PAs to provide regular updates on progress of the new working groups with DOER and the AGO, related to: 1) streamlining and improvement of data accessibility and the development of a statewide database; 2) identifying non-ratepayer funding to support the 2025-2027 Plan; and 3) reviewing administrative functions to assess opportunities and cost savings.

The Council sets forth the following priorities for 2025:

1. Monitor 2025-2027 Plan and ensure overall progress toward three-year goals and commitments

The Council recognizes that the 2025-2027 Plan includes ambitious GHG emission reduction goals, as well as the implementation of new program initiatives to support the Plan's equity and climate priorities. The Council recognizes that the PAs have agreed to significant improvements to quarterly reporting and KPIs to improve the value of reports to the Council and other stakeholders. To the extent this improved reporting does not already aid the Council in monitoring progress to 2025-2027 goals and commitments, the Council requests the PAs to provide the Council with:

- quarterly updates on overall progress toward the 2025-2027 Plan goals, with specific updates on new programs and strategies, including but not limited to the statewide call center, residential turnkey services and other new moderate-income and renter initiatives, HEAT Loan redesign, and new commercial and industrial (C&I) initiatives;
- specific updates on any measures that are consistently underperforming compared to the approved Plan, so that the Council and Council Consultants can engage with the PAs in timely solution-based discussions in a collective effort to increase performance of the identified measures;
- specific updates on new working group initiatives to consider program cost efficiencies, data accessibility and transparency, and further HEAT Loan redesign; and
- specific updates on the PAs efforts to coordinate with related and complementary state building-decarbonization initiatives, including but not limited to: 1) Clean Heat Standard; 2) Energy Saver Home Loan Program (the Climate Bank); 3) the Mass Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) navigator and 4) any other new state or federal program.

2. Affordability and Ratepayer-Impacts Remain Paramount in the Delivery of the Statewide Plan.

The 2025-2027 Plan includes an increased focus on balancing competing priorities and mitigating ratepayer impacts. The Council recognizes the PAs' continuing commitment to identify and pursue funding sources outside of the Energy Efficiency Surcharge to reduce ratepayer funding required to achieve energy efficiency savings and GHG reductions The PAs also commit to engage with the EEAC, DOER, and Council Consultants to explore additional administrative efficiencies to reduce Plan costs. As part of this effort the Council requests the following:

- explore non-ratepayer funding sources and funding model changes, to offset ratepayer impacts. The Council understands that this is a process that may serve to only inform the next three-year planning process;
- pursue and secure additional funding for barrier mitigation, especially that of pre-electrification. (The Council notes that building electrification often raises issues around utility infrastructure , which are being addressed in different forums. To the extent this work is relevant to plan implementation, the PAs should provide updates to the Council as needed);
- monitor and ensure that adjustments to cost-effectiveness test, if approved by the DPU, are fully implemented across all programs, and monitor downstream effects of these changes; and
- continue working with the Equity Working Group (EWG) to explore additional protections or actions to protect customers from any potential increase in energy burden resulting from electrification.

3. Ensure that equity commitments and initiatives are on track, with a focus on increasing participation of historically underserved populations.

The Council supports the equity commitments and targets adopted by the PAs in the Final Plan, including a focus on moderate-income customers, renters and landlords, language other than English (LOTE) populations and small businesses. The Council will closely monitor these equity efforts and urge the PAs to continue to collaborate closely on the development of key implementation strategies in 2025. To assist the Council in monitoring progress toward the equity goals and commitments, the Council requests quarterly updates on the success of equity programs and measures, and the equity targets included with these 2025 priorities. To the extent not included in the quarterly/bi-annual data workbook and quarterly reporting, the Council requests the following:

- monitor and ensure that equity commitments and initiatives are meeting the Plan outcomes, specifically tracking participation of historically underserved populations, including moderate-income customers, renters and landlords, LOTE populations and small businesses; specifically
    - track the rollout of offers in the Designated Equity Communities, including the launch of residential turnkey services for moderate-income customers, and other equity initiatives in the 2025-2027 plan
    - provide updates on improved data access for Community First Partners
- continue to work with the EEAC and EWG to ensure the data used to measure progress toward equity goals is sufficient and easily accessible. This could include ways to make data information more accessible on the EEAC website or massavedata.com.

4. Monitor and support planned energy savings, GHG reductions and equity goals in the Residential/ Income-Eligible sector.

To assist the Council in monitoring progress toward the residential and income-eligible sector goals, program enhancements, and initiatives the Council requests updates on the following (to the extent not already included in the quarterly/bi-annual data workbook and regular quarterly reporting):

- Changes in low-income participants' program experience resulting from the Statewide Plan focus on increasing the delivery of weatherization and heat pumps;
- Any impacts to federal funding streams (specifically incorporated into the delivery of income eligible programs) that may result from a shift in federal energy policy;
- Changes to streamline and improve the customer experience; (The EEAC and EWG will continue to work with the PAs on new approaches.);

- Communication and tracking systems to ensure timely delivery of comprehensive services, prevent interruptions in services, and actions to meet income-eligible and residential sector goals; and
- Operational costs for heat pump cooling customers to assist in understanding potential impacts to household energy burden.

5. Monitor the development and launch of new C&I programs and enhancements.

To assist the Council in monitoring the PAs progress toward the C&I Plan goals, programs, and enhancements, the Council requests updates on the following (to the extent not included in the quarterly/bi-annual data workbook and quarterly reporting):

- Development and launch of new programs and enhanced initiatives, including reports on market response to assist the EEAC in evaluating success of new program designs or offers;
- New efforts to support small businesses; and

6. Reporting

The Council prioritizes transparency and reporting as critical to monitoring progress toward the transformational objectives and equity priorities of the 2025-2027 Plan. The Council looks forward to receiving regular updates from the PAs utilizing the newly revamped Quarterly Reports and redesigned data workbook (providing quarterly and bi-annual progress in key plan areas).

The Council appreciates the PAs commitment to improve data reporting and transparency and recognizes the need to balance customer privacy with accessibility. The Council looks forward to interacting with, and providing feedback on, the proposed redesign of MassSaveData, and other data improvements that may result from the PAs continued collaboration with the Council and other stakeholders.

The Council requests regular updates on the following:

- Development and implementation of improved, streamlined, transparent data reporting, with planned opportunities for the Council to provide feedback on proposed approaches and redesigns
- Development of a statewide database in concert with other related state building decarbonization efforts;
- Embedded evaluation results to support program delivery, with updates as soon as possible after the evaluation is complete; and
- quarterly reporting on the rollout and market response to the expanded Home Energy Assessments

7. Cultivation of a diverse and highly skilled workforce to meet the aggressive energy savings and GHG emission reduction goals of the 2025-2027 Plan.

Recognizing the importance of workforce development in achieving Plan goals, the Council will monitor the PAs progress on their workforce development commitments and requests regular updates on the following:

- MassCEC workforce development efforts, consistent with the agreed-upon target metrics (Appendix M to the Statewide Plan); and
- Monitor and report on the achievement toward the aspirational benchmark of 15% supplier diversity.

8. Support and develop collaborative and solutions-based discussions of the EEAC and stakeholders.

In developing the Council's 2025 plan-year priorities, several councilors highlighted the beneficial collaboration between the Council and the PAs during the 2025-2027 planning cycle. The resulting Statewide Plan balanced the various Councilor interests and reflected stakeholder input. The Council looks to build upon this foundational dynamic throughout the 2025-2027 term, and notes the following areas for continued discussion, consideration, or joint action:

- Enhance and encourage public engagement with Council, build public understanding of the benefits and costs of energy efficiency programs;
- Discuss further streamlining of services, including improved customer communications;
- Capture and reflect upon lessons-learned during the 2022-2024 term to inform implementation of the 2025-2027 Statewide Plan;
- Continue active evaluation and reporting on the impact of the programs (i.e., Is the delivery and design working for homeowners, renters, business owners, contractors, Community First Partners, etc.?);
- Continue to prioritize relationships with key stakeholders, such as MassCEC and CFPs, and provide regular opportunities for their participation at Council meetings;
- Coordinate efforts to achieve a holistic view, interacting with state agencies and other actors to monitor developments in existing and newly developed programs e.g. Energy Saver Loan, as well as the roll out of utility infrastructure e.g. advance metering
- ~~Monitor and report on opportunities to provide tailored programs to unique segments in the C&I sector (e.g., Life Science commercial segment)~~ Monitor and report on offerings tailored to meet the needs of unique C&I market segments such as health care, life sciences, industrial, commercial real estate."; and
- ~~Monitor and report on any instances of heat pump refrigerant leak across all sectors.~~