August 7, 2023

Setting the Context: Community First Partnerships & Language Access

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Community First Partnerships

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Community First Partnerships

Evolution of the Program

- Prior to 2019-2021 term, the PAs engaged in various community-based efforts, such as the Efficient Neighborhoods+ Initiative, to target underserved areas and provide more tailored outreach and support to these areas

- Formally launched "Municipal and Community Partnership" program during 2019-2021 Plan term to more closely partner with municipalities and community-based organizations in engaging and serving their residents and businesses
  - Initially focused on historically underserved communities and on reaching renters and language-isolated residents
  - Provided funding for staff, check-in calls, training, and co-branded marketing materials

- Significant expansion of the Community First Partnership Program during 2022-2024 Plan term
  - Increased focus on environmental justice communities and underserved populations (e.g., renters, moderate income, small businesses, english isolated)
  - Added Lead Vendor All-In Energy to support program participants
  - Increased funding to hire energy advocate and provided more in-depth training

Partner Communities

- CFP now covers 29 programs representing 52 communities, including
  - 28 of 61 DPU “Hard-to-Reach” (HTR) Communities
  - 73% of population lives in Environmental Justice Communities
  - 52% of units are occupied by renters
  - 36% of households speak a language other than English at home, 10% “Limited English Speaking” households which represents 75% of the state’s population of English Isolated Households

Partnership Details

Community Partners receive:

- Up to $60,000 per year to support project costs, including to hire a part-time Energy Advocate
- Comprehensive training in energy efficiency offerings, especially residential weatherization, residential heating and cooling upgrades, and Small Business Turnkey program
- Co-branded multilingual marketing materials designs (printed by communities)
- Program participation guide
- Best practices to encourage program participation, training; and
- Local event support, such as guest speakers for local events

Community First Partner Activities

- All partners are required to commit to participating for two years with annual program progress review.

Partners engage in a variety of activities, including but not limited to:

- Collaborating with participating Mass Save Program Sponsors (Local utility companies)
- Including a member of your Community First Partner team to work 10 hours a week as an Energy Advocate to help residents and r each program goals (depending on your community's goals, you may want to consider a 19+ hour a week position)
- Working closely with Community First Program Manager and team of coordinators to create a robust strategy to reach customers, with a focus outreach in Environmental Justice census blocks among renters/landlords, low and moderate income residents (at/below 80% state median income), English isolated residents, and/or small businesses
- Actively tracking participation barriers and program performance
- Engaging in community based social marketing
- Participating in trainings and monthly calls, and submitting monthly activity reports
- Creating innovative strategies and initiatives to engage residents

List of CFP Communities

1. Adams ±
2. Andover (EJC)
3. Aquinnah ±
4. Arlington (EJC)
5. Attleboro ±
6. Beverly (EJC)
7. Boston ±
8. Brockton ±
9. Cambridge (EJC)
10. Chelsea ±
11. Chilmark
12. Edgartown (DPU HTR)
13. Everett ±
14. Fall River ±
15. Falmouth ±
16. Framingham (EJC)
17. Gloucester (EJC)
18. Great Barrington ±
19. Haverhill ±
20. Lawrence ±
21. Lanesborough (DPU HTR)
22. Lee ±
23. Lowell ±
24. Lynn ±
25. Malden (EJC)
26. Melrose (EJC)
27. Methuen ±
28. Natick (EJC)
29. North Adams (EJC)
30. North Andover (EJC)
31. Norwood (EJC)
32. New Bedford ±
33. Oak Bluffs ±
34. Pittsfield ±
35. Quincy (EJC)
36. Randolph ±
37. Revere ±
38. Salem (EJC)
39. Shelburne (EJC)
40. Springfield ±
41. Swampscott (EJC)
42. Taunton ±
43. Tisbury ±
44. Wareham (EJC) *
45. Watertown (EJC)
46. West Springfield ±
47. Westport ±
48. Westborough (EJC)
49. West Tisbury
50. Williamstown (EJC)
51. Winthrop (EJC)
52. Worcester ±

± Denotes municipality with both EJ populations, as defined by EEA, and meets DPU definition of "hard-to-reach" community

(EJC) Denotes municipality with EJ populations, as defined by EEA.

(DPU HTR) Denotes municipality or neighborhood that meets definition of "hard-to-reach" community. A Targeted Hard-to-Reach Community must: (1) be served by an electric and/or gas Program Administrator; (2) contain at least one environmental justice population as defined by the EEA Environmental Justice Policy, and (3) have historically low participation rates. 3YP Order at 97.

* Wareham previously participated but is no longer part of the program

We look forward to hearing from the panelists on ways the PAs can better support their efforts

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Language Access

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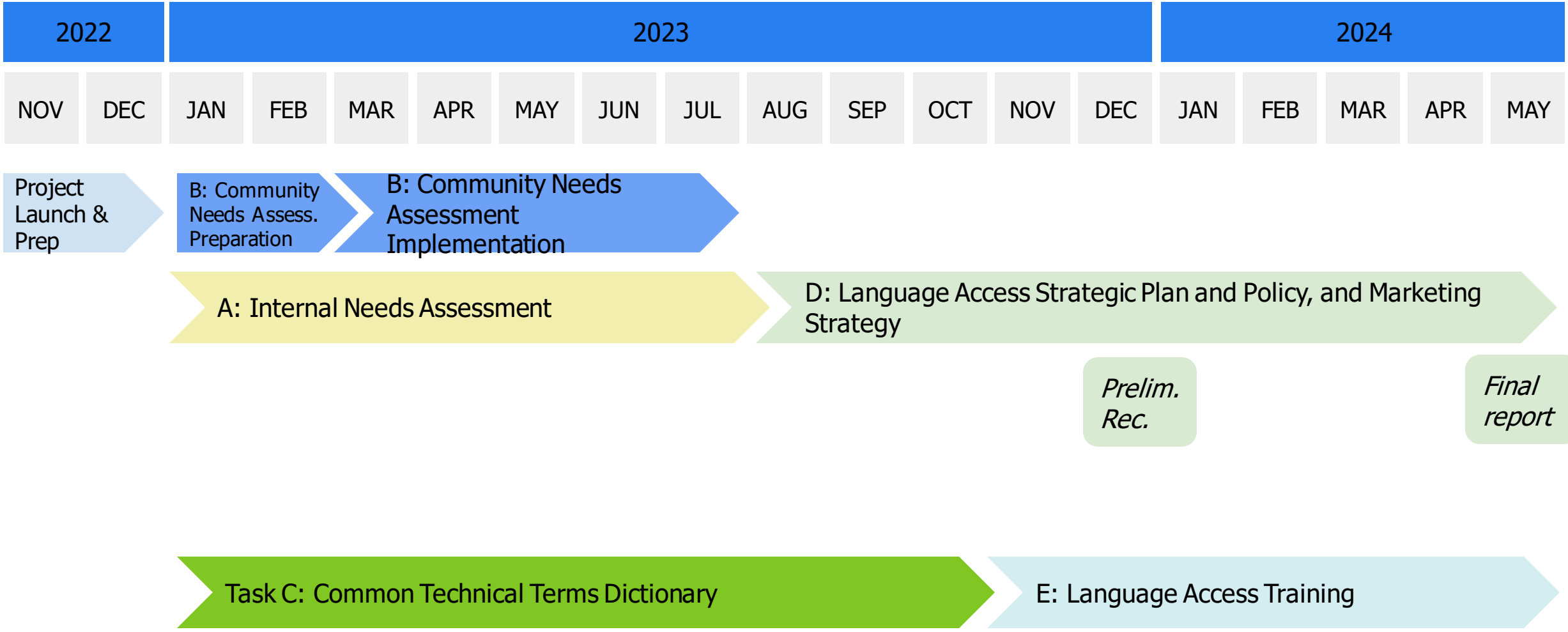
Current Status of Language Access

- Online Assessment available in Spanish and Portuguese, some energy specialists and ABCD/ Action field staff are bilingual (primarily Spanish and Portuguese)
- Low-Income Client Service Center staff speak Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, French, Haitian Creole and conduct outreach to clients in preferred languages
- Other residential customers also now have access to streamlined call center support at intake in Spanish, Portuguese, and Mandarin
- Significant PA-specific marketing campaigns in Spanish and Portuguese underway
- ABCD and other residential lead vendors working to recruit and retain bilingual staff

Partnership Efforts

- 144 outreach activities targeting limited English-speaking populations executed by Community First Partner participants so far in 2023
- Customers responding to co-branded, multi-lingual letters have expressed preferred languages other than English at rates commensurate with the number of “Limited English Speaking” households in the communities

Language Access Plan: Project Timeline



Community Needs Assessment

32 Focus Groups Conducted to Date – examples:

Haitian Community Partners

Cape Verdean Association of Boston, and of Brockton

Chinese Progressive Association

Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers

Brazilian Worker Center

Brazilian Women's Group

Lawrence Partnership

Latinos Unidos

Nueva Esperanza

Community Needs Assessment

Preliminary Summary of Focus Group Findings from Community Needs Assessment

1. Mass Save's Offerings are not well-known
2. When some of the benefits of Mass Save programs are described, there is excitement and a general desire to learn how Mass Save can help them save money
3. Saving money is very important to these communities as most participants are "struggling" economically
4. For those who have heard of Mass Save and have tried to participate, the customer journey is frustrating as in-language services are not provided much past the initial stages of engagement with Mass Save
5. For those who have requested home energy assessments, etc., the waiting period is so extraordinarily long that many believe they have been ignored and quit the process
6. For those who received energy assessments, some find the assessment to be invasive; especially since they had no in-language documentation informing them of what to expect
7. Fraud and distrust is rampant due to negative experiences with third-party energy providers whose services significantly increase energy expenses despite claims to the contrary
8. Business Owners want to be engaged on the business case of how Mass Save can help them decrease energy expenses and increase their profits
9. Business Owners belong to informal and formal associations–information distributed by them is trusted
10. Be mindful of which CBOs you work with–participants do not believe that the money the CBOs receive has an impact in the community