

EEAC Equity Working Group Meeting #4

August 18, 2020 12:00-2:00PM

Introductions

- Today the working group was joined by Eugenia Gibbons of Healthcare Without Harm/ Green Justice Coalition/ GWSA IAC Climate Justice Working Group.
- Ruth Georges was absent.

Timeline

- Current working group schedule is timed to align with fall EEAC workshop schedule and the three year planning process. The working group will continue to meet in 2021 but on a less frequent basis.

External Stakeholders

- External stakeholder poll results are as follows:
 1. Alex Papali
 2. Eugenia Gibbons
 3. Mariama White-Hammond
 4. Gregory King
 5. Jessica Bergman
 6. Shalanda Baker
 7. AT Desta
 8. Matt Rusteika
- The DOER will reach out the stakeholders who did not make the list of the top three to join future topic based discussions.

Working Group Framework

- Maggie M. reviewed edits working group members provided on the framework document and will circulate an updated version with changes incorporated before our next meeting.

Provisional Recommendations for Moderate Income Discussion

- GJC and CJWG have both recommended that the income level for moderate income be increased to 120%
 - This income group typically doesn't have the expendable income to make EE improvements. An expanded definition of moderate income or low-income would help this customer group be able to access EE.
- It's possible that by increasing the income limit to 120% SMI we could be reducing the resources available to the most vulnerable customers.
- There is serious concern about the impact on ratepayers if the income level is increased.

- There may be another way to serve these customers that is not income based, which would result in a smaller customer pool.
 - It is also possible that increasing the income cap to a number below 120% SMI would also help moderate income customers.
- How would the bill impacts be distributed? Would this be a burden on the electric rates or on the gas rates? If on electric rates only, it could be a “significant” burden to customers.
 - EE costs on utility bills are still much less than transmission and distribution charges.
 - A minor cost increase in EE still delivers significant benefits.
- CLC staff are brainstorming a wish list of program improvements
 - Reaching new customers could be a multi-year journey
 - As an example they may give 100% incentive for strategic electrification or 80-100% and 100-120% could be eligible for a sliding scale of incentives
 - Serving all 61-80% SMI could take several years
 - PAs need to be able to claim benefits. Cannot expand programs if they are unable to claim benefits.
- 61-80% has always been the moderate income group. This income group is actually not that big. However, the number of customers who move on and off of the moderate income rate is significant each year.
 - Under the LEAN pilot many of the moderate income customers had already been served by the LI program or by the market rate program.
 - LEAN: serving the moderate income population should be doable because it is not that large.
 - Aligning the verification process for LI and MI is important since many customers move between the two groups from year to year.
 - Heating systems at no cost for 61-80% should be doable from a PA cost perspective.
- Enhanced incentives and an implementation structure to deliver those measures is needed to serve customers beyond 80% SMI
- If the certification is not income based how does a customer know that they are eligible for the program? Would this cause more confusion?
 - If defined on income the customer could easily recognize that they would be eligible to participate
- The income verification process is currently a barrier to participation for moderate income customers
 - Targeting customers based on other characteristics could make it easier for customers to participate
 - Would a sliding scale of incentives result in a challenging implementation strategy?
 - There could be multiple ways to qualify for a program.
- A community-based approach may make more sense for achieving equity since each PA serves a variety of unique communities.
 - For instance a community-based approach could start with a few of the least served communities in each PA territory. PAs would make a commitment to actively target those communities during the next 3-year plan.
 - Lessons learned and best practices from EN+ and the Muni Partnership Strategy could inform the program design of a community-based approach.

- A community-based approach would allow for dedicated investment in a community.
- This program would need a collaboration during the program design process rather than later.
- How would the PAs claim benefits in a community-based program?
- Need to ensure that whatever approach we land on has a consistent message that doesn't confuse customers
- It may be worth considering having a 3rd party work to target a specific geographic area and identify how we can best increase participation within the moderate income group.
- One of the biggest hurdles in serving moderate income customers is the landlord split-incentive.
 - *We will discuss this in more detail during our renter-focused meetings.*
- 61-80% received full incentives similar to income-eligible program.
 - 100% heating system incentives could be available for electrification.

Lingering Questions

- How will enhanced incentives be phased in?
- How will the DPU react to a community based program?
- What do we do if someone has gas or doesn't want to electrify?
 - Would customers that install a fossil fuel system receive a 100% heating incentive?

Next Steps

- Maggie Downey will facilitate the next meeting on 9/1/2020.
- Develop a straw proposal for a community based approach and get feedback on this proposal prior to our next meeting. Amanda will follow up on who will serve as PA lead on this task.
- PAs will prepare slides on current and prior efforts to serve renters.
- Working group members will send in recommendations for external stakeholders to join the next working group meeting on renters.
- Alexis will send out a detailed email on items that need working group member feedback.