

# Memorandum

**To:** Massachusetts Program Administrators and EEAC Consultants  
**From:** Opinion Dynamics Evaluation Team  
**Date:** October 23, 2020  
**Re:** Municipal Partnership Initiative Program Theory and Logic Model Development Memo (Study Number: MA19X12-B-PTLMMuni)

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The Massachusetts Gas and Electric Program Administrators (PAs) began deploying the Municipal Partnership Initiative in 2020 in collaboration with seven municipalities across the state. The PAs engaged Opinion Dynamics in the development of the Initiative's Program Theory and Logic Model (PTLM) to document the Initiative's activities, outputs, and outcomes. This PTLM can help facilitate a common understanding of the Initiative design and implementation processes across Initiative stakeholders and support future evaluation efforts.

As part of the PTLM development process, the evaluation team sought to answer the following research questions:

- What is the core theory behind the Initiative?
- What are the anticipated activities that will be undertaken as part of the Initiative?
- What resources and tools are the PAs providing to the municipal leaders?
- What are the outputs of the activities?
- What the intended outcomes of the Initiative?
- What are the key metrics used to assess the Initiative's performance?
- Do the Initiative's activities and outputs vary by target community?

In addition, the evaluation team conducted research to gather feedback from participating municipalities on impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and opportunities for the PAs to further support the municipalities in reaching target populations and improve the Initiative design.

Sections below provide an overview of the data collection and analytical activities, detail the PTLM for the Initiative, and provide a presentation with the results of the additional process research.<sup>1</sup>

## Data Collection Activities

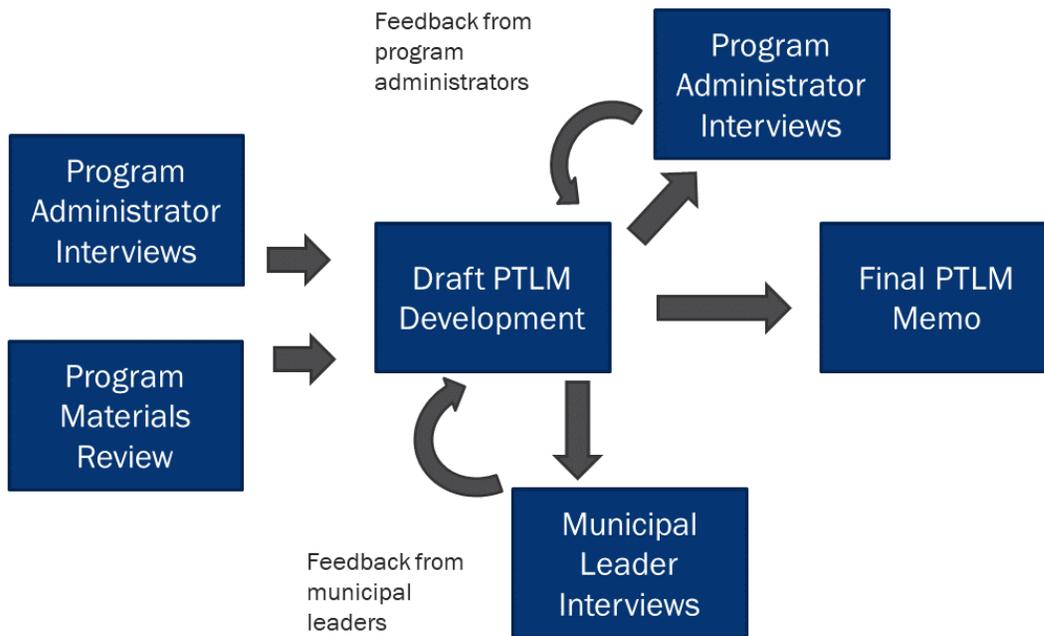
We approached the development of the PTLM as an iterative and interactive process. We started the process with a review of relevant program materials to develop initial PTLM inputs, which served as the base for in-

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<sup>1</sup> The evaluation team presented research results to the Massachusetts PAs on September 28, 2020. In this memo, we include a PowerPoint presentation with research results.

depth interviews with PA staff. These activities gave us an initial understanding about the theory behind the Initiative and allowed us to develop a draft PTLM. Through interviews with each of the seven municipal leaders, we refined the PTLM and discussed Initiative implementation processes, any setbacks as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and identified successes and challenges related to participation. We also held follow-up group interviews with PA staff which allowed us to collect feedback on a draft PTLM and identify variations in program theory across municipalities, address gaps in knowledge, and determine any missing linkages to the PTLM. Figure 1. PTLM Development Process

Figure 1. PTLM Development Process



## PTLM

The PTLM documents how the activities, outputs, and short-, and long-term outcomes expected from the Municipal Partnership Initiative are inter-connected. In the sections that follow we document the overarching theory of change for the Initiative and the links between activities, outputs, and outcomes in more detail than can be represented in the PTLM.



Municipal Partnership PTLM

## Overarching Theory of Change for the Initiative

The purpose of a theory of change is to explain how and why an initiative functions. It is designed to link the initiative activities to outputs that should lead to both short-term outcomes, which can be assessed to provide early feedback that informs initial course corrections, and long-term outcomes, or market changes that may take multiple years to adequately measure and achieve.

The overarching goal of the Municipal Partnership Initiative is to leverage municipalities' existing relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs), local knowledge, and expertise in engaging their constituents to increase awareness and participation in Mass Save offerings, particularly among key target customer segments. The targeted customer segments include market rate renters, market rate residents with limited English proficiency, moderate income residents (defined as 61%-80% of state median income), and small businesses. To reach these target segments, the Massachusetts PAs select municipalities with a high proportion of harder-to-reach and small business constituents to participate in the Initiative. In 2021, the PAs are considering adding customers residing in Environmental Justice (EJ) blocks<sup>2</sup> and low-income customers as target segments.

In order to best reach the target customer segments, municipal leaders and their partnering CBOs of choice develop and lead the Initiative outreach. The underlying theory is that municipalities and partnering CBOs are best suited to reach the targeted customer groups because of their firsthand understanding of their communities, experience serving their local communities' constituents, and ability to more easily engage citizens as a result of the trust they have earned in their communities. Through providing municipal leaders with the resources to further implement the most effective methods of outreach in their communities, the PAs seek to extend the reach of Mass Save offerings among residents and businesses previously underserved by their energy efficiency programs. Notably, the Municipal Partnership Initiative is designed to increase the participation rate for already-existing Mass Save offerings.

### Initiative Implementation Goals and Processes

Massachusetts PAs deliver the Initiative by empowering municipal governments to promote existing Mass Save offerings throughout the state. Prior to Initiative implementation, the PAs review all municipality applications and choose municipalities to participate. Applications to participate consist of an official letter from a municipal representative, a detailed outreach strategy and timeline with considerations for reaching target customer groups, a description of existing partnerships with local organizations, and documentation of plans for spending the incentive funding. In 2020, the PAs selected seven municipalities including Chelsea, Framingham, Lancaster, Lawrence, Methuen, New Bedford, and Pittsfield. The appointed leader of the Initiative from each municipality serves as the ongoing coordinator of the implementation processes with the assistance of their respective PAs.

Upon signing an Initiative execution agreement with the PAs and receiving \$2,000 in initial incentive funding, the leaders from the municipalities and partnering CBOs conduct marketing and outreach within their community to engage target customer populations. Municipalities receive further incentive funding at the conclusion of the 12-month outreach period based on their progress toward achieving increases in online residential energy assessments, insulation jobs, heating and cooling upgrades, and Small Business Turnkey

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<sup>2</sup> An EJ population is identified by U.S. Census data and defined by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs as a block group whose annual median household income is equal to or less than 65 percent of the statewide median income; or 25 percent or more of the residents identify as a race other than white; or 25 percent or more of households have no one over the age of 14 who speaks English only or very well.

participation over prior years using a points-based structure. Points are also based on municipalities' progress towards following through with their outreach plans to increase participation from target customer groups.

The role of the PAs throughout the execution of the Initiative is to provide support with developing outreach materials, tracking progress toward Initiative participation goals, and providing feedback on outreach tactics. The frequency of communication between municipal leaders and the PAs varies across participating municipalities. At a minimum, on a monthly basis PAs provide municipal leaders with updates on the municipalities' progress toward their participation goals via email, while municipal leaders provide activity reports in which they reflect on the prior month's outreach tactics and successes in reaching their constituents. Other communications include one-on-one discussions between the PAs and individual municipalities, ad hoc communications of varying frequency, and monthly meetings where all municipalities and their PAs have the opportunity to gather and discuss Initiative successes, challenges, and outreach best practices as a group. In general, the PAs strive to maintain an open-door policy in which municipalities may reach out at their preferred frequency. These ongoing interactions between PAs and municipal leaders help foster stronger relationships between PAs and participating municipalities.

Municipal leaders have unique visibility into their community and constituent needs and as such have freedom to tailor outreach and engagement tactics to the specifics of their municipality as part of the Initiative. Most commonly, municipalities utilize existing relationships with CBOs in their community to conduct outreach. The degree of reliance on the CBO partnerships varies across municipalities, with some relying on the support of the CBOs more than others. To further support the initiative, some municipalities fund additional staff<sup>3</sup> either within their municipal government or through participating CBOs. In addition to supporting the Initiative marketing and outreach, municipal leader engagement with CBOs can strengthen their relationships and lead to additional future collaborations for the benefit of the community beyond the Initiative.

Although specific outreach tactics differ across the municipalities, all the municipal leaders originally intended for their outreach to be some variation of distributing physical marketing materials and attending and hosting community events. Municipal leaders and PAs collaborate to develop marketing collateral in both English and non-English languages for the targeted customer groups. Initially, the PAs develop stock materials, which municipal leaders review and may choose to disseminate in their communities. However, municipalities also have the option to create their own custom materials for their constituents, with review and feedback provided by the PAs and their marketing teams.

Notably, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, municipal leaders and their partnering CBOs could not rely on in-person outreach in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted municipalities to shift from activities such as conducting door-to-door canvassing with program materials and tabling at community events to outreach that did not consist of in-person interaction, including social media outreach and hosting virtual events. Given the limitations of the in-person interactions this year, municipalities were more restricted in their abilities to conduct outreach and therefore unable to pursue many of their originally planned outreach tactics that would contribute to meeting their participation goals. As a result, they adapted by developing more outreach opportunities online or via mail.

The above described activities and outputs are designed to bring about a series of short-term and long-term outcomes. Municipality and CBO-driven outreach strategies tailored to the unique characteristics of each community are designed to improve Initiative reach among target segments. This, in turn, should lead to

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<sup>3</sup> Including temporary intern staff.

increased awareness of Mass Save program offerings among target populations. Messaging strategies specifically tailored to the needs of the target community should lead to increased knowledge of and interest in designated Mass Save programs. Outreach by trusted sources, such as municipal representatives and CBOs, along with the presence of continued local support is designed to promote greater trust and as a result comfort level with program participation. Increased program participation among hard-to-reach populations will lead to improvements in the overall equity of Mass Save program delivery. Efforts focused on building awareness, participation, and accessibility of these offerings should ultimately lead to improved customer satisfaction among targeted customers.

Furthermore, an increase in participation rates should result in more energy savings, which contributes to municipalities' local energy reduction, climate, and resilience goals for their communities. Ultimately these outcomes should result in an improved customer experience as participating customers are more likely to realize savings on their energy bill, resulting in more funds to spend on other needs, and an overall improvement in quality of life. Participants also gain satisfaction from saving energy in a manner in which they are playing an active role in helping their community achieve their sustainability goals.

### Measuring Initiative Performance

In addition to outlining activities, outputs and outcomes of the Initiative detailed above, we developed a list of potential performance metrics which the PAs can leverage to determine whether the Initiative is being delivered as planned and whether the intended theory of change is occurring. We detail these metrics and suggest potential data sources through which the metrics can be assessed in Table 1. These metrics are designed to be a menu of suggested options for the PAs to consider when determining their approach to measuring success for this Initiative moving forward.

Table 1. Municipal Partnership Initiative Performance Metrics and Potential Methods for Measurement

Category	Performance Metric	Potential Data Source
<b>Outputs</b>		
Stakeholder Participation	Number of municipalities engaged in the Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initiative execution agreements</li> <li>▪ Interviews with PAs</li> </ul>
Meetings and Communications	Number of meetings between PAs and their municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meeting minutes</li> <li>▪ Interviews with PAs and municipal leaders</li> </ul>
	Frequency of communication between the PAs and their municipality as compared to previous years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interviews with PAs and municipal leaders</li> </ul>
Outreach and Community Engagement	Number of CBOs, local organizations, and local “influencers” partnered with municipalities to promote Mass Save offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interviews with municipal leaders</li> <li>▪ Initiative applications</li> </ul>
	Frequency of communication between municipalities and CBOs, local organizations, and local “influencers” as a result of Initiative participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interviews with municipal leaders</li> <li>▪ Interviews with CBOs and local leaders</li> </ul>
	Number of community events and town meetings used to promote Mass Save offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interviews with municipal leaders</li> <li>▪ Monthly activity reports</li> </ul>

Category	Performance Metric	Potential Data Source
	Number of marketing and outreach materials created and distributed to municipalities, either by PAs with municipal leader input and/or by municipal leaders with PA input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PAs and municipal leaders</li> <li>Monthly activity reports</li> </ul>
	Number of materials distributed per outreach tactic (i.e. community events, mailings, door-to-door canvassing), including quantity of materials distributed in non-English languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly activity reports</li> </ul>
	Number of residents from each of the participating municipalities that attended (virtual) community events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Event attendance records</li> <li>Monthly activity reports</li> </ul>
	Number of social media posts, impressions, engagements, and interactions and website visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Web and social media analytics from the municipalities</li> </ul>
Performance-Based Funding	Incentive funding provided to each municipality to promote energy efficiency in their respective jurisdictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PAs</li> <li>Initiative execution agreements</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>		
Increased participation in Mass Save offerings, especially from targeted customer groups and increased equitability of Mass Save outreach efforts	Number of customers <b>overall</b> that enroll in the Online Energy Assessments, Residential Insulation, Heating and Cooling Systems, and Small Business Turnkey programs compared to prior years in participating municipalities as well as compared to similar non-participating municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program tracking data</li> <li>Quasi-experimental design with a comparison group</li> </ul>
	Number of customers from <b>designated customer groups</b> that enroll in the targeted programs in participating municipalities compared to prior years as well as compared to similar non-participating municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program tracking data</li> <li>Customer data</li> <li>Secondary data including Experian data and Census data<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Quasi-experimental design with a comparison group</li> </ul>
	Number of online residential energy assessments, insulation jobs, and residential heating/cooling upgrades completed, energy assessment conversation rate, and depth of savings per customer compared to prior years in participating municipalities as well as compared to similar non-participating municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program tracking data</li> <li>Customer data</li> <li>Quasi-experimental design with a comparison group</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> We understand that the current program tracking data does not include designations for target customer groups. To address this data gap, we recommend use data from secondary sources such as Experian which effectively propensity scores customers and assigns them a probability to be in a variety of income-based segment. In addition, we can use Census data on income and rental status at the census block group to compare uplift in participation and savings among hard to reach audiences

Category	Performance Metric	Potential Data Source
Enhance existing channel of communication and develop stronger relationships between PAs and municipalities	Frequency of communication between the PAs and their municipality as compared to previous years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PAs and municipal leaders</li> </ul>
Build targeted customer awareness and education of Mass Save offerings for increased accessibility	Unaided and aided awareness, familiarity, and knowledge of Mass Save offerings among the target customer groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey of non-participants and participants in both participating municipalities and similar non-participating municipalities</li> </ul>
Development of an additional avenue for municipalities to collaborate and strengthen their relationships with partnering CBOs	Number of meetings between municipalities and their partnering CBOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting minutes</li> <li>Interviews with municipal leaders</li> </ul>
	Number of CBOs involved with implementing the Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with municipal leaders</li> </ul>
Strengthening relationships and building of community for sharing information across municipalities and their PAs	Number of meetings arranged by the PAs in which municipalities have the opportunity to converse with one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting minutes</li> </ul>
Increased customer satisfaction and trust in their utility	Customer satisfaction scores for the Initiative and for Mass Save overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiative participant satisfaction research</li> <li>Non-initiative participant (general Mass Save participant satisfaction research)</li> </ul>
Energy savings realized as a result of increased customer participation	Energy savings that can be attributed to increased customer participation in comparison to previous years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparisons of electric and gas savings overall and per project between treatment and comparison communities compared to the baseline period (2018 and 2019)</li> <li>Comparisons of electric and gas savings per project and overall in participating municipalities compared to the baseline period (no comparison group)</li> </ul>
Municipalities achieve their energy, reduction, climate, and resilience goals	Contribution of the Initiative toward the independently set municipality sustainability goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with municipal leaders</li> </ul>
Targeted customers experience energy bill savings and improved quality of life	Participants' perception of benefits realized from the Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant Survey</li> <li>Assessment of Non-Energy Impacts</li> </ul>

# Appendix A. Municipal Partnership Initiative Early Process Results Presentation



Early Process  
Results Report