

BPA's Northwest Low-Income Energy Efficiency Workgroup

May 1, 2024 | 1:00pm – 2:30pm (PST) | Hosted by the BPA LIEE Team

Logistics

- Hosts:** Low-Income Energy Efficiency Team: Amy Burke (aaburke@bpa.gov)
Kirsten Midura (KMMidura@bpa.gov)
- PowerPoint Slides:** [Posted here](#), which is posted in the “Meeting Materials Archive” on the [BPA Low-Income EE page](#)
- Workgroup Charter:** [Click here](#) for the updated Structure& Organizing Principles for this Workgroup

Agenda Notes *(See PowerPoint for additional content/details)*

Welcome & Introductions

About 150 attendees called in for this kick-off meeting, representing a wide range of utilities, CAP agencies, advocacy groups, non-profits, IOUs, BPA teams, and others. Margaret Lewis provided some opening remarks regarding BPA’s ongoing support of critical energy efficiency resources and low-income programming.

Low-Income Workgroup: Setting Expectations

This initial meeting is to set expectations and discuss priority topics for future meetings. Given the size of this group and the wide range of challenges and opportunities with low-income, the LIEE team wanted to be intentional with how future discussion is planned.

The LIEE team reviewed the exceptional feedback received through the recent Low-Income Workgroup survey. The updated Workgroup charter reflecting some of that feedback is [posted here](#), which is listed under “Regional Low-Income Energy-Efficiency Workgroup” on the [BPA Low-Income EE page](#). Attendees supported hosting future meetings in person when possible. All were encouraged by such a large turnout.

Question from a utility about how BPA defines multifamily:

- “Multifamily Low-Rise” is defined as five or more dwelling units within the same structure that is no more than three stories high.
- “Multifamily Mid-/High-Rise” is defined as five or more dwelling units within the same structure that is more than three stories high.

BPA Program Updates

The LIEE team highlighted two new measure options offered in the April 1, 2024 Implementation Manual which include the Ductless Heat Pump in Multifamily measure and a higher incentive per kWh for qualifying low-income custom projects and programs. The LIEE team also gave a quick summary of the Low-Income Process Evaluation as well as the BPA program response, both of which are posted on the [BPA Energy Efficiency's Evaluation webpage](#). Slides from the evaluation webinar on April 4th summarizing results and BPA’s response can be found on [EE’s Presentation and Webinars page](#).

General Discussion

The LIEE team facilitated a discussion to find out what challenges attendees are facing, what has been working, and what issues they want to talk about and prioritize.

Some attendees cited cost increases for some equipment have been high and the higher LI incentives can't cover the costs, so some responded that they rely on loan programs to cover the cost difference.

Advice from one utility with a multi-year LI program is that contractor management is key. Contractor toolkit to help them get started and co-created templates for customer and contractor education can help prevent consistent issues.

Highlighted successes from utility attendees include examples of:

- Easy process working with their local CAP
- Work with BPA to develop an easy template to help them and their CAP income qualify residents
- A great rental LIEE program
- Successful energy audit program
- Removal of the requirement for their income qualified rebates to meet the cost-effectiveness requirements of our non-income qualified rebates permitted them to notably increase their offerings, including our income qualified rental program (IQRP).

There is a lot of interest in hearing more of:

- Examples of successful utility programs
- Starting a multifamily program
- Success stories of utilities working with CAP agencies
- Successful gift-wrapped programs, especially in rural and tribal communities
- Customer-oriented work that is more simplistic and aligned through program design, funding sources, CAP agency collaboration
- Support for measures that encourage outreach, like kits
- Best practices and successful examples of small and moderate sized PUDs/municipal utilities running low-income programs
- Suggestions for outreach to customers
- Suggestions for better collaboration with community partners
- Adequately considering, improving, and articulating energy burden in the design of programs
- Creating programs that reach people just outside of qualification, like middle income residents
- Split incentives (i.e. drawing more customers that are bill-paying renters into programs)
- How to better support dual fuel customers
- Financing support and loan programs to cover the difference between incentive caps and the actual cost of the project
- Trade ally support, specifically for low-income
- Blending EE & DR and capacity mitigating measures
- Address long-term equipment O&M to keep installed equipment operating well
- Income verification and a possible aggregated process
- Hard to reach demographics, including but not limited to renters, anyone with roof repair needs, rural residents, and people who have a hard time proving their income
- How to better integrate EE programs to support more wrap-around services
- Weatherization materials

- BPA's LI incentive levels and cost caps
- Workforce development, including solutions and support for locally based rural contractors
- Additional funding opportunities
- Collaboration & program sharing
- New low-income measures
- Utility and CAP Partnership development
- Explanation of repair cost coverage
- Deemed measures & Priority Lists: DHPs and HP have a lot of funding so are getting installed in droves, which is impacting cost effectiveness of shell measures
- Large businesses that are draining the local pool of contractors

Regarding how DOE, BIL, and BPA funds can be treated within the same home, BPA has had a lot of internal discussions around how these are stacked or braided. This will be a topic of future discussion to provide more clarity to this group.

Closing: Next Steps

The next goal is to fill the Steering Committee positions by May 31st and begin preparation for the following Low-Income Workgroup. The intent is for the next workgroup to be in July 2024. Prior to the next workgroup, the BPA LIEE team and Steering Committee will meet, prioritize topics, determine a location (if in-person is possible) and coordinate speakers who would like to present at the next and future meeting.

Anyone who would like to present in future workgroups about their current program structure, pilot programs, successes, challenges, etc., please reach out to the LIEE team.

Participants should contact Amy Burke (aaburke@bpa.gov) and Kirsten Midura (KMMidura@bpa.gov) if they would like to be included on the mailing list for future Low-Income Workgroup meetings.