



## LIFE 2005 Regional Meetings

Conference Report: Ithaca

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The LIFE 2005 Regional Meeting for the Central/Southern Tier Region was held on August 4, 2005 at the Hilton Garden Hotel in Ithaca. Seventy individuals representing 40 organizations attended the event. Martin Insogna, Chair of the LIFE Steering Committee and Utility Consumer Program Specialist for the New York State Department of Public Service served as Master of Ceremonies. Support for the regional meeting was provided by our local host, New York State Electric & Gas. Lisa Tallet, Supervisor for NYSEG's Low-Income Programs and a member of the LIFE Steering Committee provided a local welcome.

### Agenda

The agenda for the regional meeting included the following sessions:

- **Session I: Energy Prices: Challenges to Affordability.** This session explored the impact that rising energy prices are having on low-income energy consumers. *Speaker: Charles Wesley, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority.*
- **Session II: The Low-Income Story: In Their Own Words.** This session provided an opportunity to hear directly from low-income consumers as well as the chance to discuss the barriers to participation, the difficulties that low-income consumers face getting assistance and the strategies they take to address their energy needs. *Speaker: Paula Gilbert, NYSEG.*
- **Session III: Everybody Has an Advocate; Everybody is an Advocate.** This session identified policy advocates working on low-income energy issues at the state level. Opportunities for public participation in energy policy development and the constraints that affect participants when utilizing these opportunities. Finally, the program provided an overview of the upcoming low-income policy development agenda. *Speaker: Ben Wiles, Public Utility Law Project.*
- **Session IV: Being a Smarter Energy Shopper.** This session explored some opportunities we all have to become smarter shoppers. It also discussed steps New York State is taking to get more bang for its HEAP bucks. *Speakers: Jeff Wagner, NYS Department of Public Service and Peggie Neville, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority.*
- **Session V: Building Local Alliances.** One of the most important techniques for developing sustainable community energy solutions is the creation of local alliances. This session provided a close-up view of existing or potential alliances that may benefit the region. *Speakers: Carol Burch, Hannibal High School and Janette McCord, Early Childhood Director, Tompkins Community Action.*
- **A group discussion** rounded out the day, which focused on the challenges and opportunities facing low-income households in the Southern Tier and Central New York and the impact that rising energy prices are having on those households. A summary of the group discussion comments is included here and is categorized into five areas: Outreach & Education, Information Clearinghouse, Assistance Strategies (i.e. Short-Term), Long-Term Solutions, and Crisis & Concern.

## Discussion Group Summary

The following is based on two discussion groups that met during the regional meeting.

Outreach & Education	Information Clearinghouse	Assistance Strategies (i.e. Short-Term)	Long-Term Solutions	Crisis & Concern
<p>1. Need to look at how information gets shared – word of mouth, written, small churches, etc.</p> <p>2. Simple, cheap energy conservation methods</p> <p>3. It may be possible to provide information – even to those who don't believe in taking "handouts"</p> <p>4. Cornell workshops in 30 counties on energy conservation, money management, credit debt management</p> <p>5. Education - how to help yourself</p>	<p>1. Good to find out what other people are doing, knowing about other services to follow through with other needs</p>	<p>1. Need follow-up for services</p>	<p>1. Pilot clean &amp; tune program</p> <p>2. Education partnered with conservation</p> <p>3. IDAs</p> <p>4. Involve private sector</p> <p>5. Need to break cycle</p> <p>6. Volunteerism, community involvement</p> <p>7. Focus on sustainability for ALL income levels</p> <p>8. Energy star ratings for new buildings across society</p> <p>9. Focus on life-cycle cost rather than 1<sup>st</sup> time cost</p> <p>10. Change tax codes to promote energy efficiency</p> <p>11. Incentives for landlords to improve energy efficiency</p> <p>12. Incentives for contractors</p>	<p>1. To do justice need compassion</p> <p>2. Need to build new bridges and other foundations</p> <p>3. When people are "handed the fish" how do you get their attention</p> <p>4. Alternative strategy – give HEAP oil customers a five gallon container, fine to teach them to fish but if they're in crisis that's not the time</p> <p>5. All should pay into the systems benefits charge</p> <p>6. Balance between new long-term goals and current money</p> <p>7. Low-income living crisis to crisis don't have opportunity to focus on big picture</p> <p>8. DSS workers overworked and underpaid</p> <p>9. Can you regulate use of energy by consumers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different rates for different categories of consumers</li> <li>• Inclining block rates</li> <li>• System Benefits Charge related to usage</li> </ul>

## Conference Evaluation Results

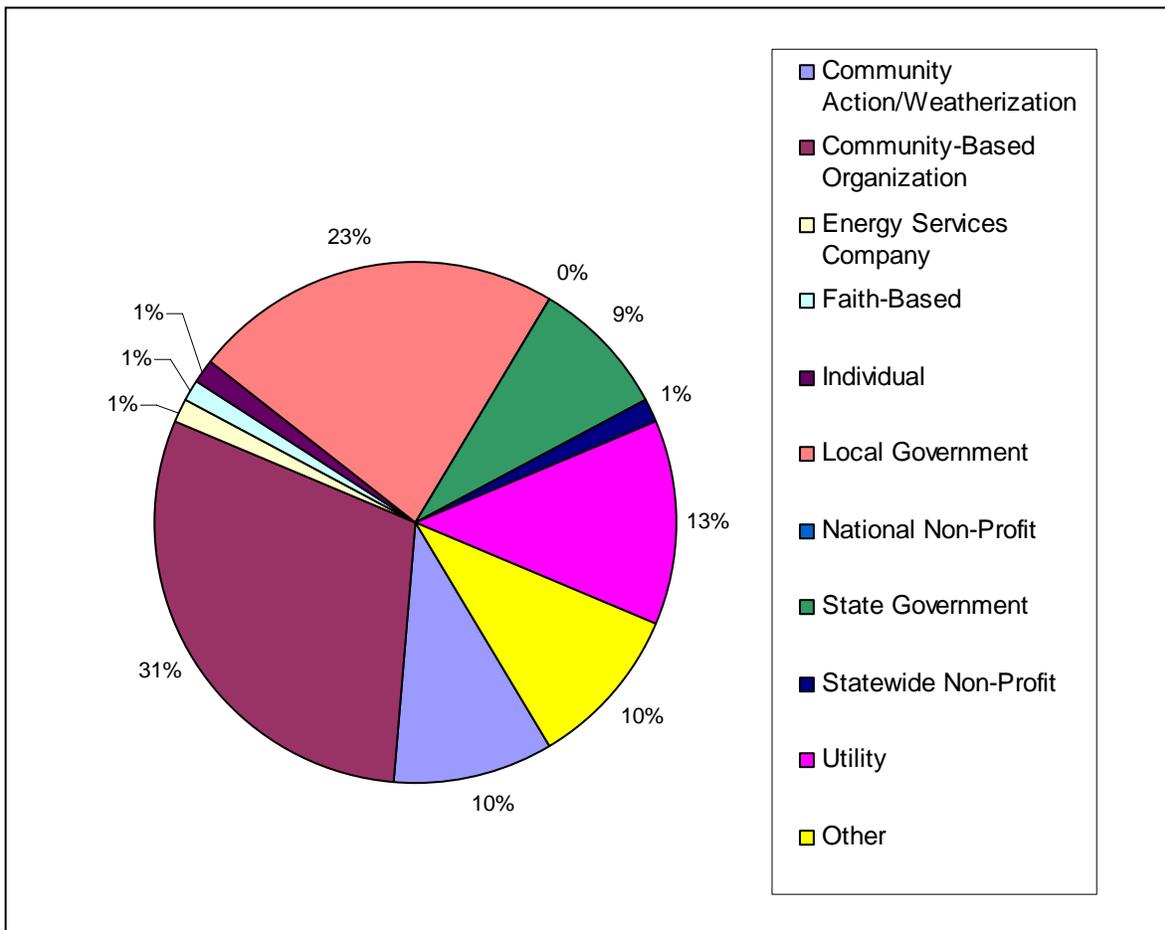
Each conferee was asked to complete a conference evaluation. Twenty-three participants completed evaluations with the following results.

1. How well did the Regional Meeting meet your expectations? *Over 90% of the 21 attendees who responded to this question indicated that the conference overall met or exceeded their expectations.*
2. Please rate the quality of the speakers overall. *One hundred percent of the 20 attendees who responded to this question indicated that the quality of the speakers met or exceeded their expectations.*
3. Participants were asked to identify what three sessions included in the conference would most help them in their work. Based on these responses, all five sessions were ranked as follows:
  - a. *Session IV: Being a Smarter Energy Shopper*
  - b. *Session III: Everybody has an Advocate; Everybody is an Advocate*
  - c. *Session II: In Their Own Words*
  - d. *Session V: Building Local Alliances*
  - e. *Session I: Energy Prices: Challenge to Affordability*
4. When asked “do you plan to attend future LIFE Regional Meetings” *100% of the 18 attendees who responded to this question indicated that they would.*
5. Attendees were given a list of possible benefits of the conference. The following are ranked according to the percentage of participants who indicated that they found each item helpful:
  - a. *Network with others with shared interest – 73.91%*
  - b. *Receive valuable information – 60.87%*
  - c. *Gather a list of people/organizations to contact for further discussion/questions – 56.52%*
  - d. *Compare your region to other regions in New York State & Identify new ideas that can assist you in your work – 47.83%*
  - e. *Have an opportunity to ask questions – 43.48%*
  - f. *Have a venue to discuss the issues facing the low-income households in your region – 34.78%*
  - g. *Identify additional issues in your region – 30.43%*
  - h. *Provide input for future forums – 17.39%*

## Unique Regional Issues

- Partnering with the education community can be a powerful tool in developing long term solutions to the challenges facing low-income customers.
- Using Individual Development Accounts for reducing energy costs is a model which should be further explored.
- The unique partnership between the Alternatives Federal Credit Union, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Tompkins Community Action is resulting in new models, particularly in the area of financial literacy and asset building.
- The availability of energy education videos could be an important resource in many communities. The private sector should be involved in helping make this resource available.
- This region had both the highest percentage of attendees from Community-Based organizations and the largest number of Community-Based organizations represented.

## Participation by Sector



## Organizations Represented at This Regional Meeting

- American Red Cross of Broome County
- American Red Cross of Cortland County
- American Red Cross of Tompkins County
- Catholic Charities Samaritan Center
- Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga Counties
- Cayuga County Health and Human Services
- Cayuga/Seneca Community Action
- Chartwell House
- City of Syracuse Economic Development
- Community Power Network of NYS
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schuyler County
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Steuben County
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County
- Genesee/Finger Lakes Rural Preservation Corp.
- Genesee Valley Rural Preservation
- Hannibal High School
- Honeywell, Inc.
- Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance
- NYS Department of Social Services
- NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal
- NYS Electric & Gas
- NYS Energy Research and Development Authority
- Onondaga County Department of Social Services
- Opportunities for Chenango
- Performance Systems
- Public Utility Law Project
- Seneca County Department of Social Services
- Steuben County Department of Social Services
- Taitem Engineering
- Tioga County Department of Social Services
- Tioga Opportunities
- Tompkins Community Action
- Tompkins County Department of Social Services
- Tompkins County Economic Opportunity Council
- Tompkins County Office for the Aging
- Wayne County Department of Social Services
- Yates County Department of Social Services
- Yates County Office for the Aging