



LIFE 2005 Meeting Series

Final Series Executive Summary

LIFE 2005 Regional Meetings

The Low-Income Forum on Energy (LIFE) is the longest running statewide low-income energy policy dialogue in the United States. LIFE, which began with its first statewide conference in April, 1999, brings together a diverse range of parties committed to addressing the challenges and opportunities facing low-income New Yorkers as they seek safe, affordable and reliable energy.

Sponsored by the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), LIFE has attracted participants from community-based organizations, utilities, state government, local government, energy services companies, low-income advocates, and others.

The 2005 Regional Meeting Series included six day-long meetings in the following locations and were hosted locally by these organizations:

August 3	Ellicottville	Cattaraugus Community Action Agency
August 4	Ithaca	NYSEG
August 10	Lake Placid	Adirondack Community Action Agency
August 23	Kingston	Central Hudson, Dutchess County Community Action Agency
August 24	Brooklyn	KeySpan Energy and HeartShare
August 30	Troy	Commission on Economic Opportunity

The agendas for each regional meeting included common sessions, but also included two which allowed unique regional concerns and ideas to be shared. One session highlighted alliances which are strengthening energy services in the region. Another included low-income customers from the region who shared the unique challenges that their households face in obtaining safe, reliable, affordable energy.

On the following pages are summaries for each LIFE Regional Meeting which includes the speakers, participants and unique regional issues that were raised in the group discussion or through the presentations. Three themes emerged across all six regional meetings:

- The need for more structured networking among those who are working with low-income customers to address their energy needs;
- The need for more outreach and education to customers in a variety of venues and formats;
- The need for clear, basic information about the programs that are currently available for low-income customers.

One of the highlights of each of the regional meetings was the group discussion. Many issues were considered, some common across regions and some unique to each region. Those have been included in the individual regional reports (available upon request) and have been categorized into one of five issue areas: Outreach and Education, Information Clearinghouse, Assistance Strategies (Short-Term), Long-Term Solutions, and Crisis and Concern.

The following shows the attendance figures and changes in attendance compared to the previous year's program.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Pct. Change from 2004</u>
Western (Ellicottville)	59	+48%
Central/Southern Tier (Ithaca)	70	+25%
North Country (Lake Placid)	39	+26%
Hudson Valley (Kingston)	69	+73%
New York (Brooklyn)	63	+34%
Capitol District (Troy)	63	+24%

We believe the strong and consistent increases in attendance demonstrate that the LIFE conferences are providing value to attendees.

The LIFE Sponsors and Steering Committee thank those who attended, those who shared their expertise in presenting, and the local hosts and volunteers for each session. Your enthusiasm and support are moving the LIFE dialogue to a higher level. We look forward to seeing you again at the LIFE Statewide Conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albany on May 2 and 3, 2006! Details about the statewide conference will be posted shortly at the LIFE web site: <http://www.lifenynews.org>. If you have suggestions that you would like to share for the statewide conference, please contact:

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LIFE 2005 Regional Meeting Agenda

8:00-9:00 a.m. Registration and Networking

9:00-9:15 a.m. Welcome

9:15-10:00 Session I: Energy Prices: Challenges to Affordability

This session explored the impact that rising energy prices are having on low-income energy consumers.

10:00-10:45 Session II: The Low Income Story: In Their Own Words

This session provided an opportunity to hear directly from low-income customers 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.

10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-11:45 Session III: Everybody Has an Advocate; Everybody is an Advocate

This session identified state level policy advocates currently working directly or indirectly on low-income energy issues. It also catalogued the opportunities available for public participation in energy policy development and the constraints that affect how these opportunities are used. It also provided an overview of the upcoming low-income policy development agenda for the remainder of 2005 and the first half of 2006.

11:45-1:00 Lunch

1:00-1:45 Session IV: Being a Smarter Energy Shopper

In a time of high prices and changing energy markets, it is more important than ever to understand how we can become smarter shoppers. This session explored some of these opportunities as well as steps New York State is taking to leverage its HEAP resources.

1:45-2:30 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 each region.

2:30-3:15 Group Discussion

3:15-4:00 Wrap-Up

Western New York Regional Conference

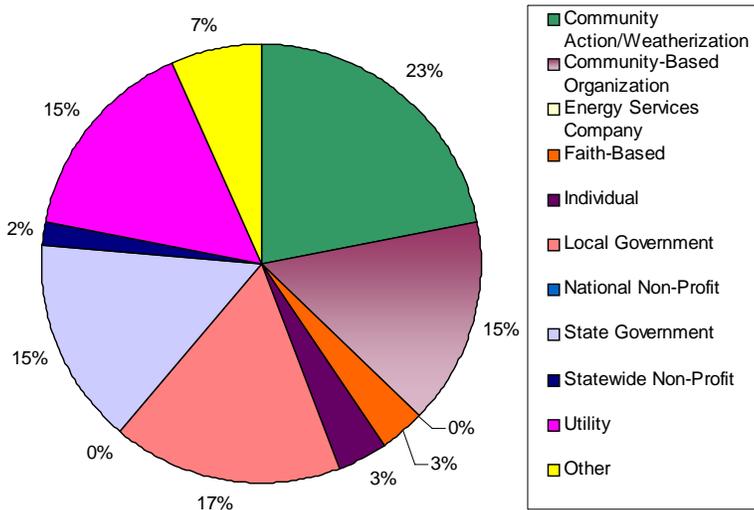
Holiday Valley Resort and Conference Center, Ellicottville
August 3, 2005

Local Host: Cattaraugus Community Action

Attendance:

Fifty-nine representatives from thirty-one organizations participated.

Ellicottville Meeting Attendance by Sector



Speakers:

Marty Insogna, NYS Department of Public Service; *Tina Zerbian*, Cattaraugus Community Action; *Peggie Neville*, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority; *Sue Montgomery Corey*, Community Power Network of NYS; *Burlin Bridges*, Customer; *Tina Stanczykowski*, Customer; *Ben Wiles*, Public Utility Law Project; *Virginia Stimson*, NYS Department of Public Service; *John McCarthy*, NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance; *Candy Plants*, Cattaraugus Community Action; *Barry Gan*, St. Bonaventure University; and *Sharon Mathe*, Healthy Community Alliance.

Unique Regional Issues:

- Forced mobility is recognized as an issue for low-income families to a greater extent in this region because of efforts being made by Cattaraugus Community Action to track the housing disruptions caused by energy costs and other factors.
- New opportunities to address and resolve poverty may exist through high impact strategies such as those identified by the Move the Mountain model.
- There is recognition that many program outcomes do not lend themselves easily to numerical representation. New program metrics are needed to measure success.
- Transportation issues are critical in this region due to geography and rural character of the region.
- Issues and concerns of the region may not be adequately understood and addressed by the state capital due to the region's distance from Albany.

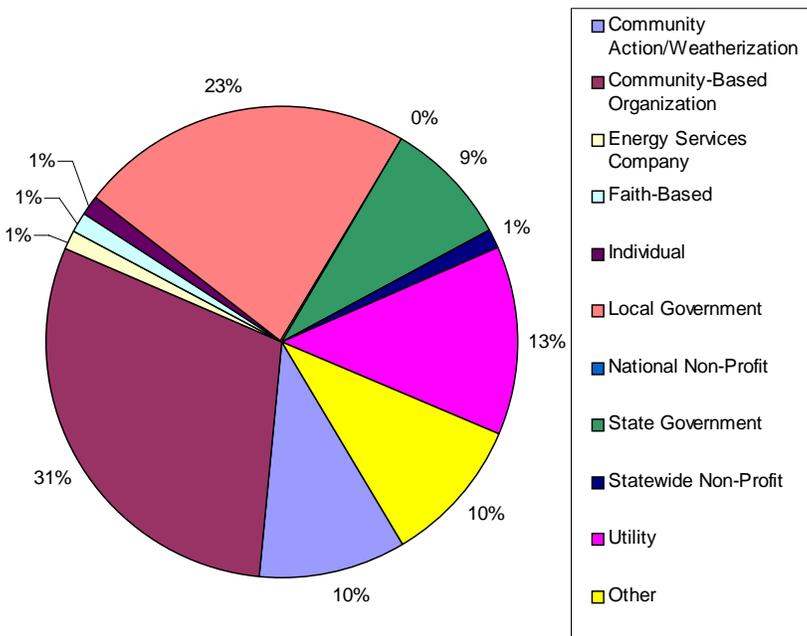
Central New York/Southern Tier Regional Conference

Hilton Garden Inn, Ithaca
 August 4, 2005
 Local Host: New York State Electric & Gas

Attendance:

Seventy representatives from forty organizations participated.

Ithaca Meeting Attendance by Sector



Speakers:

Marty Insogna, NYS Department of Public Service; *Lisa Tallet*, NYSEG; *Charles Wesley*, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority; *Sue Montgomery Corey*, Community Power Network of NYS; *Paula Gilbert*, NYSEG; *Ben Wiles*, Public Utility Law Project; *Jeff Wagner*, NYS Department of Public Service; *Peggie Neville*, NYS Research and Development Authority; *Carol Burch*, Hannibal High School; and *Janette McCord*, Early Childhood Director, Tompkins Community Action.

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.

North Country Regional Conference

Crowne Plaza, Lake Placid

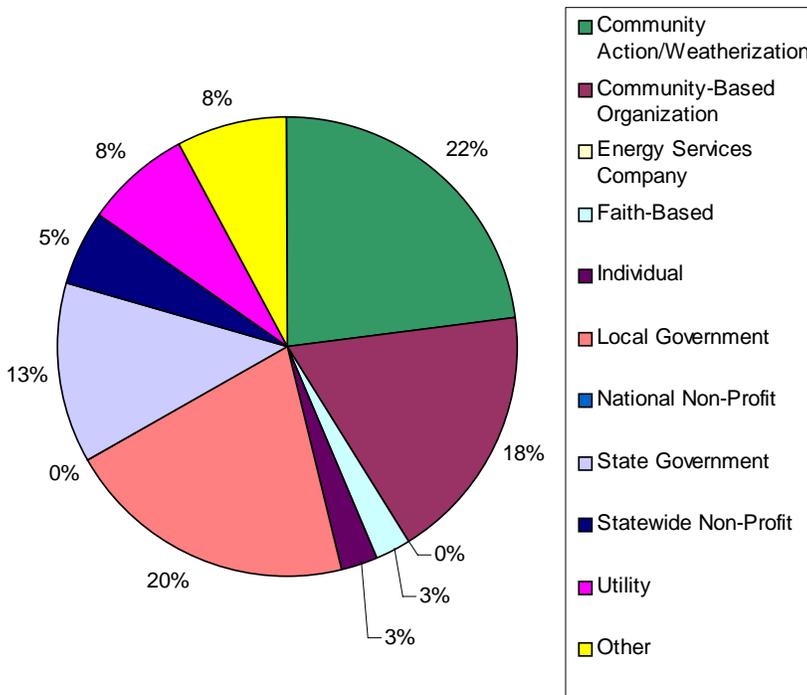
August 10, 2005

Local Host: Adirondack Community Action Program

Attendance:

Thirty-nine representatives from twenty-six organizations participated.

Lake Placid Meeting Attendance by Sector



Speakers:

Marty Insogna, NYS Department of Public Service; *Cynthia Wenzel*, Adirondack Community Action; *Charles Wesley*, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority; *Sue Montgomery Corey*, Community Power Network of NYS; *Phyllis Saratowski*, Customer; *Paula Gilbert*, NYSEG; *Ben Wiles*, Public Utility Law Project; *Sue Herlands*, NYS Department of Public Service; *Peggie Neville*, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority; *Ann Heidenreich*, Community Energy Services; *Mike DiNunzio*, Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks; and *Terry Martino*, Adirondack North Country Association.

Unique Regional Issues:

- The Energy Smart Park Model has the potential to bring together the public, private, and non-profit sectors in a unique way that will help residents in the Adirondack Park address their energy needs.
- The region has a higher percentage of seniors, disabled people, and veterans than other regions.
- The high cost of gasoline and transportation costs are resulting in great difficulties for many families in paying the cost of commuting to work. Community-Based Organizations are facing greater demand for emergency assistance to address these costs.
- Oil dealers in the region are starting the heating season with high accounts receivable than last year which means that low-income customers are in debt for last years energy cost before this years HEAP season has begun.
- The fact that 60-70% of the households in the region heat with oil means that this region is more vulnerable to oil industry fluctuations than other parts of the state.
- The region has more seasonal laborers than other parts of the state.
- Home-owners who purchase their property with land contracts often have difficulty accessing the weatherization program.

Hudson Valley Regional Conference

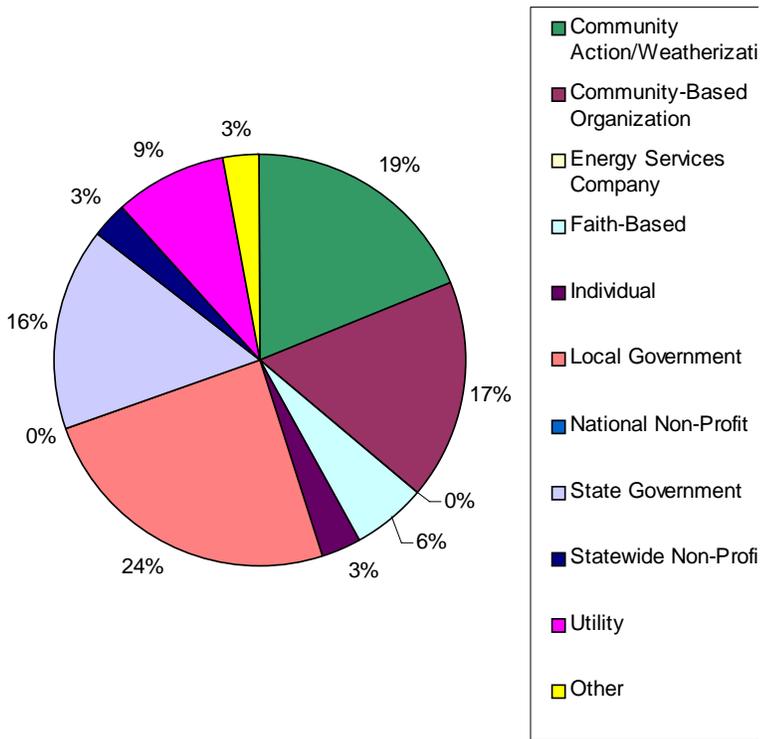
Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation Auditorium, Kingston
August 23, 2005

Local Hosts: Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation and Dutchess County
Community Action Agency

Attendance:

Sixty-nine representatives from thirty-one organizations participated.

Kingston Meeting Attendance by Sector



Speakers:

Marty Insogna, NYS Department of Public Service; *Sue Royce*, Central Hudson; *David Hepinstall*, Association for Energy Affordability; *Sue Montgomery Corey*, Community Power Network of NYS; *Mike Mangi*, Customer; *Gale Thurst*, Customer; *Barbara Hahn*, Dutchess County Community Action Agency; *Ben Wiles*, Public Utility Law Project; and *Peggie Neville*, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority.

Unique Regional Issues:

- The region is facing urban “creep” as urban “sprawl” moves north from New York City.
- The high cost of living in this region (especially high housing costs) makes it difficult for low and low-moderate income families to meet their basic needs.
- Outreach strategies need to adapt to reach traditional low-income consumers and new low-income consumers – especially the newly poor and downsized.
- There is a correlation between the working relationship between heads of government programs, community-based organizations, and utilities and the success of and access to programs for low-income consumers. The state should encourage best practices in organizational relationship building.
- Underground oil tanks are a problem that is looming on the horizon. Often they are linked to low-income and substandard housing. Removing them is an expense and a liability that is far beyond what low-income households can afford and well-beyond what existing state and federal programs can address.

New York City Regional Conference

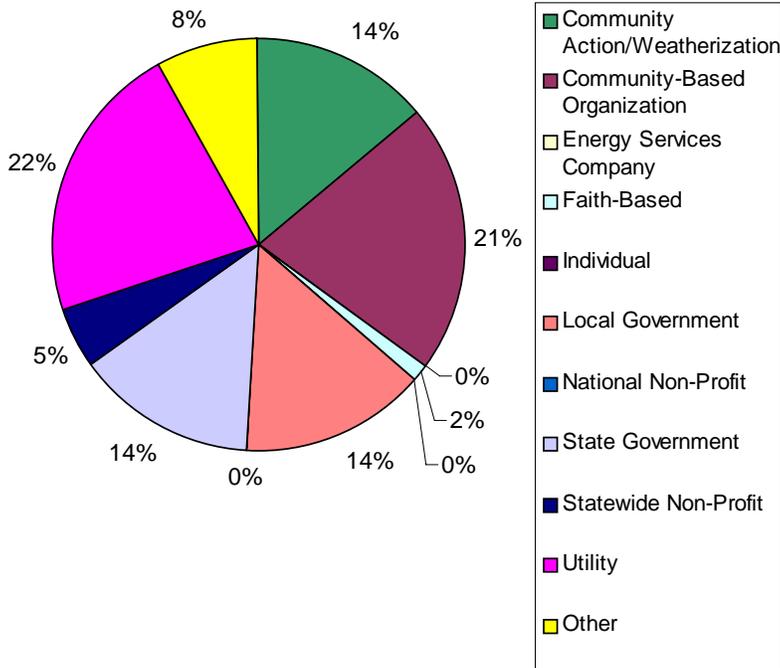
KeySpan Energy Delivery Facilities, Brooklyn
August 24, 2005

Local Hosts: KeySpan Energy Delivery and HeartShare Human Services

Attendance:

Sixty-three representatives from thirty organizations participated.

Brooklyn Meeting Attendance by Sector



Speakers:

Marty Insogna, NYS Department of Public Service; *Joseph Guarinello*, HeartShare Human Services; *Leonard Jordan*, KeySpan; *David Hepinstall*, Association for Energy Affordability; *Sue Montgomery Corey*, Community Power Network of NYS; *Jillian Higgins*, KeySpan; *Tanya Brothers*, HeartShare Human Services; *Ben Wiles*, Public Utility Law Project; *Peggie Neville*, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority; *Mary Thompson Grassi*, HeartShare Human Services; and *Chris Neidl*, Community Environmental Center.

Unique Regional Issues:

- Literacy, especially in a multi-lingual environment is a barrier to energy education and access to resource programs for low-income customers.
- Kings County is the fifth poorest in the nation; the other four counties are in Texas, along the Mexican border.
- Word of mouth messages that can be conveyed from caseworker to customer as well as from neighbor to neighbor rather than relying on written literature, are an important part of conveying program information and should be recognized as such.
- Utilities have reduced the number and availability of consumer advocates. This is particularly difficult for low-income consumers who may need help in understanding and communicating with their utility company.
- Understanding how housing and energy affordability impact low-income consumers is critical.
- Renters in this region often do not see the benefit of HEAP because their access to it is limited as utilities are factored into rent.
- The number of renters in multi-family buildings creates unique challenges in the implementation of the resource programs and in outreach and education.
- Real time pricing and peak load issues are critical for New York City.

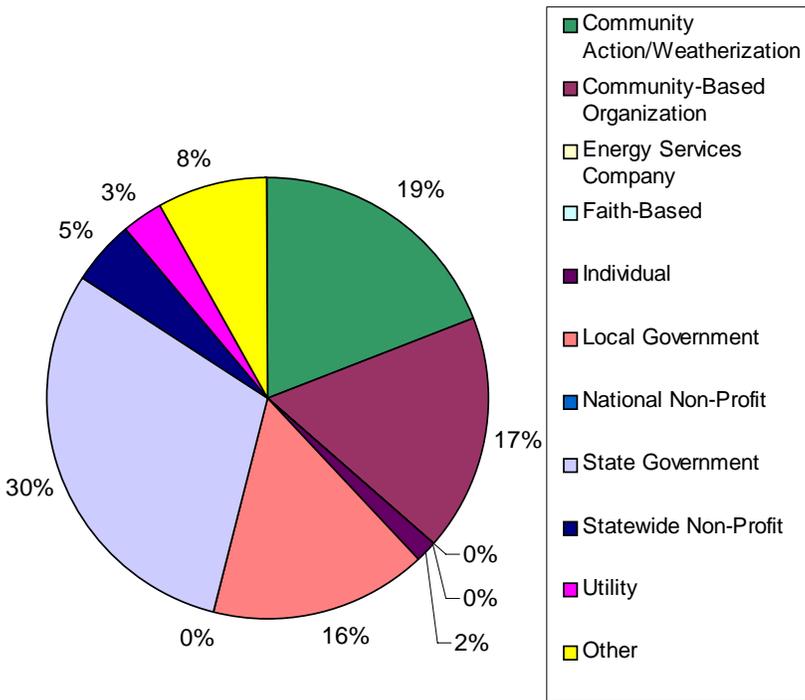
Capital Region Regional Conference

Joseph L. Bruno Family Resource Center, Troy
 August 30, 2005
 Local Host: Commission on Economic Opportunity

Attendance:

Sixty-three representatives from thirty-eight organizations participated.

Troy Meeting Attendance by Sector



Speakers:

Marty Insogna, NYS Department of Public Service; *Sandra Sloane*, NYS Department of Public Service; *Peter Lindley*, Commission on Economic Opportunity; *Charles Wesley*, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority; *Debbie Huber*, Commission on Economic Opportunity; *Minesha Payton*, Customer; *Ben Wiles*, Public Utility Law Project; *Elizabeth Katz*, NYS Department of Public Service; *Peggie Neville*, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority; *Sue Montgomery Corey*, Community Power Network of NYS; and *Jennifer Forster Green*, NYS Community Action Agency.

Unique Regional Issues:

- Service providers are urged to examine the accessibility of their service sites, including handicapped access, parking, and public transportation.
- Over 30% of attendees in this region work for state government. Proximity to state agencies resulted in a different dynamic than other regional meetings.
- Lack of affordable housing is a significant issue in this region.
- Past arrears, even if recently paid off can make it difficult for low-income customers to establish utility service in a new residence.
- The perception that assistance programs represent a “handout” is a barrier for many customers in accessing service. The message may need to be adjusted especially for rural customers for whom the pride issue may be more significant.
- Local governments need to be more involved with energy issues and their impact on low-income customers.
- Energy conservation must be stressed across income levels.