



LIFE

Low-Income Forum on Energy

LIFE Low-Income Forum on Energy
2007 Regional Meeting Evaluation
Kingston, NY
May 10, 2007

The fifth in the LIFE 2007 Regional Meeting Series of six meetings was held at Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation’s office located on 120 Route 28 Kingston, New York. Central Hudson served as the day’s local host. Eighty-nine individuals attended this event. There was a 29% increase in attendance compared to the 2005 Regional Meeting held in the Hudson Valley. Pamela Carter, Chair of the LIFE Steering Committee, New York State Department of Public Service served as Mistress of Ceremonies. Their warm welcome; large meeting room space, with thoughtfully arranged flowers on each table (door prizes); breakout room space and in particular the assistance of Central Hudson staff Kyro Ojulo, Anita Carfora and Sue Royce, was acknowledged by Ms. Carter in her opening remarks. Brian Dimisko, Manager, Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation, Honorable Cheryl A. Buley, Commissioner, NYS Public Service Commission, Honorable Maureen F. Harris, Commissioner, NYS Public Service Commission provided welcome remarks.

Scholarship support at this meeting was provided by Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation and Orange & Rockland Utilities.

Attendees by Affiliation

% of Attendees	Type of Organization
16%	Community Action Agency
0%	Community-Based Low-Income Energy Agency
2%	Community-Based Low-Income Housing Agency
2%	Consultants
5%	Cooperative Extension
0%	Educational Institution
0%	Energy Service Company (ESCO or Marketer)
1%	Faith-Based Organization
19%	Local Government Agency
8%	Not-For-Profit
0%	Public Official
2%	Rural or Neighborhood Preservation Organization
27%	State Agency
17%	Utility Company
1%	Weatherization Agency

Agenda and Ratings

Note: attendees were asked to rate session content using the following scale:
5=Excellent 4=Very Good 3=Good 2= Fair 1=Poor

Welcome and Opening Address

Rating 4.07

You have asked and we are responding. The LIFE Chairperson will focus on questions raised at previous LIFE events and the solutions generated. Whether you have attended LIFE events in the past or this is your first time, you will want to hear about the positive effects LIFE has on the lives of many low-income New Yorkers. *Welcome: Brian Dimisko, Manager, Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation, Honorable Cheryl A. Buley, Commissioner, NYS Public Service Commission, Honorable Maureen F. Harris, Commissioner, NYS Public Service Commission, Speaker: Pamela Carter, LIFE Chairperson, NYS Department of Public Service*

Introduction to Networking

Rating 4.10

More than just a term used to describe time to interact with colleagues, networking is a valuable tool. We will demonstrate how you can use this tool to your advantage and give you an opportunity to practice what you have learned later in the day. *Speaker: Mary Thompson Grassi, Project Manager, NYSERDA*

Session 1: Panel Presentation – A New Light on Today’s Energy

Rating: 4.33

Our animated panel will report on the state of energy in New York, energy sources and how energy use affects the environment. We will also address low-income consumer’s energy burden. It’s a fact that low-income consumers pay more of their income toward energy bills; we will examine how much more. The session will end with useful cost effective ways to help consumers save energy. *Moderator: Ben Wiles, Senior Attorney, Public Utility Law Project, Speakers: John Ahearn, Program Manager, NYSERDA, Charles Wesley, Senior Project Manager, NYSERDA, Brian Atchinson, Associate Project Manager, NYSERDA*

Session 2: Weatherization: The Jet Stream Shouldn’t Be in Your Home

Rating: 4.25

Heard of a blower door test and wonder what that is? Want to refer a client for weatherization and not sure how to explain what to expect? Whether you are a seasoned weatherization professional or someone just starting out, this session will provide you with a hands-on look at the tools of the trade and information on the referral process. *Speakers: Maureen Collett, WRAP Liaison, Orange County OFA, Donna O’Brien, Weatherization Director, Dutchess County CAP, Inc., Brian Atchinson, Associate Project Manager, NYSERDA*

Session 3: The Mystery Unraveled

Rating: 4.28

Within the myriad of programs available to help low-income consumers, we’ll share three that you should have in your tool box. *Speakers: Elizabeth Katz, Utility Consumer Assistance Specialist 3, NYS Department of Public Service, Laura Mulvihill, EPIC Outreach Representative, NYS EPIC Program, Patrice O’Connor, Utility Consumer Assistance Specialist 4, NYS Department of Public Service, Mark Schaffer, WMS Installation Team Supervisor, NYS OTDA*

Networking Lunch

Rating: 4.11

Attendees were asked to Join a luncheon table discussion group for a conversation about one of the topics presented during the morning sessions.

Session 4: Regional Program Best Practices – Learn From the Experts

Rating: 4.28

An in-depth presentation will highlight one local program’s creative approach to working with low-income New Yorkers. *Speakers: Kelvin Keraga, Project Manager, NYSERDA, Kyro Ojulo, Supervisor of Low-Income Programs, Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation, Rick Struck, Director of Consumer Energy Program, Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc.*

Session 5: Hypothetical Family – Meet the Coopers

Rating: 4.45

Heat or eat. A choice no one should have to make. Join the group as we problem solve our way to helping the Cooper family struggle with limited resources to meet the challenge of paying for their energy bills and still have money to buy the necessities of life. Small group working session. *Steering Committee members facilitated this session.*

Session 6: LIFE, Sharing, Action...

Rating: 4.11

An opportunity to practice the networking skills learned through out the day. *Speakers: Pamela Carter, LIFE Chairperson, NYS Department of Public Service Mary Thompson Grassi, Project Manager, NYSERDA*

Evaluations Returned: 48

Total day’s average rating of all session scores: 4.25

Notification

How did you hear about this meeting? (Attendees were asked to... check all that apply.)

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|-----|---|
| 17% | Postcard notice | 44% | My supervisor |
| 33% | Email notice | 25% | A colleague |
| 13% | LIFE Newsletter | 4% | Other - steering committee member presenter
(5) NYSERDA Low-Income Program |

Attendees were asked...

What information did you learn today that you will use in your day-to-day work?

- How to use the networking process better.
- EPIC, Lifeline, EITC, Empower
- (6) Lifeline/Link-Up
- Lots of general info
- (2) EmPower info
- Discounted loans
- (2) EPIC
- Home performance/weatherization
- Energy education
- The many programs that are available to the consumer
- Programs that county & state agencies offer
- Learning about programs which can benefit our clients that will improve their living conditions and cost of utilities.
- I would like to try and refer clients to Empower.
- Information on Weatherization cap
- Programs that are available and how to access them.
- The resources that are available and what some of them are for those I work with.
- I learned there is more to low-income help than I thought. Good program.
- Customers who are not low-income can receive a 10% rebate on a home performance project.
- Different programs that are in existence in the state to assist low-income customers.
- I learned more info on the WEAP plan & NYSERDA’s assisted home performance energy system.
- Being very interested in aide for the working poor, I was happy to get information about weatherization audits and other weatherization programs that would apply to those who are slightly above the low-income level.
- What is EmPower and what it can do.
- What energy audit really is.

- EPIC information was very helpful.
- Improved resources and contacts.
- Every presenter gave me something to take away! The most crucial aspect today was the networking.
- Very interesting and eye-opening information about many, many programs to conserve energy.
- Ways to help clients make better use of energy in their homes. Agencies which clients can be referred to for different problems.
- All
- Organizations that are available for services can refer clients to these programs
- Catholic Charities
- NYSERDA programs
- New referral info for program participants
- Energy saving programs
- Educating clients
- Information we can provide to client
- POP (Central Hudson's low income program)
- Assisting clients with referrals to proper agencies
- Programs available, financial aid, and education
- Never knew about Empower New York Program
- Weatherization process
- Useful reminder of energy saving tips
- EITC & EPIC info
- Energy audits info
- OFA & Weatherization
- NYSERDA referrals
- Low income programs administered by utilities
- A lot of referral info for many programs available
- Honeywell & EmPower is very useful for me
- Lots of stats in session 1 that will/can be used in publications/customer outreach
- Some info on NYSERDA audits for homeowners
- EITC needs more publicity so more can take advantage of its benefits
- I will refer to EmPower

What questions did you still have at the end of today?

- Why the weatherization program is not helping families more in Orange County.
- Landlord involvement in e-audit
- Home performance/weatherization through DSS and through Empower – clarify
- Quickest means of accessing Empower services
- Is anything being offered or is anyone working towards using solar energy?
- Why are people that are eligible for EITC allowed to collect the money in a lump sum instead of monthly so that they can use the money to pay on the electric bill or some other bill to make their lives easier? When they get the lump sum they tend to “blow it.”
- What help is there for end-of-the-road customers?
- If client still cannot pay utility and is shut off mode, what can I do to keep them in heat and/or lights?
- I would like to have taken away a comprehensive list of the different agencies and their contacts.
- How to work together better?
- More incentives for landlords to provide more energy efficient rental units
- New strategies that Orange and Rockland are providing
- How some available programs will be available to our partner families (Habitat for Humanity). I do plan on making follow up calls for more ways.
- How/where to advocate for low-income energy consumers locally, state-wide

- How to deal with slum landlords or very low-income landlords and assist with weatherization
- Funding overlap
- What does the NYS Public Service Commission do? How do they serve low-income energy costs? Are there laws that protect consumers?

What would be some good follow-up sessions for next year?

- Follow up 1 year later on Spitzer's EE plan; how much energy savings was also affected, etc.
- Real case scenarios outcome leaving out names
- More into on help for the working poor – local agencies info
- More for low-income housing (not aging)
- How info has helped some families
- Lighting, landscaping, home (residential) strategies
- Updates on energy conservation measures
- More emphasis on energy efficiency for customers, especially homeowners and renters
- A repeat of the same forum with more updated programs
- More energy efficiency demonstrations
- Some time for Q&A
- More information on Empower and what's offered for customers just over the income level.
- Information on Solar Energy Savings.
- (2) Weatherization
- Further workshops on best practices
- Additional case studies
- High performance
- Energy education
- Applying forms for weatherization

Name any of the speakers you heard from today that you would like to hear more from in the future.

- (16) Kelvin Keraga (Comments included. Kelvin was a standout; engaging and pertinent!)
- (3) John Ahearn
- (4) Charles Wesley
- Mary Grassi
- EmPower
- OFA & Weatherization program – Maureen Collett
- (7) Brian Atchinson
- PSC
- more time for energy tips
- NYSERDA
- Weatherization programs
- Laura Mulvihill
- Mark Schaffer
- All
- EmPower NY
- NYSERDA
- (2) Rick Struck
- Kyro Ojulo
- EPIC – Laura
- (2)Elizabeth Katz
- (2) Kyro Ojulo
- Pamela Carter
- I would have liked to have heard from DHCR

What speakers would you like to recommend for LIFE to invite to present next year?

- Amory Lovins – expert on energy efficiencies
- DHCR representative
- Someone who has monitored the outcome of global warming following public awareness – what is the percentage of purchases to prevent global warming – are people complying?
- Perhaps invite assembly representatives to participate in dialogue
- Joan Young – Rural Development, or some rep
- Energy Star
- All
- Honeywell
- Charles Wesley, Brian Atchison, Kelvin Keraga, Rick Struck
- Wrap & Recap Programs, NUSECo
- Other electric companies, NYSE&G, etc., to have them speak about programs they have to help low-income families.
- NYSE&G
- Kelvin Keraga (multiple people suggested him)
- Pam Carter
- EmPower
- NYSERDA
- NYSEG
- NSDA, Rural Development repair program which can assist every-low income households with regards. Our state office is located in the Galleries of Syracuse, Syracuse, NY. E-mail: jennifervjackson@ny.usda.gov. She is the program director.
- Rick Struck
- Brian Atchinson (multiple people suggested him)
- Charles Wesley
- Same group as today
- James McGarvey – NYSWDA
- Some experts from CSG and BPI

Logistics

Attendees were asked to rate logistics using the following scale:
5=Excellent 4=Very Good 3=Good 2= Fair 1=Poor

Timeliness of meeting notification	Ratings: 4.69
Ease of pre-registration	Ratings: 4.68
Ease of on-site registration	Ratings: 4.71
Meeting facility, food & beverage	Ratings: 4.50
Average of all logistic scores: 4.65	

General Suggestions / Comments

- I appreciate your running the program on time/schedule
- Speakers were well-organized
- Day ran smoothly and showed how organized the whole event was
- Very informative
- Energy kits were given to our consumers at Orange County Dept. of Social Services. There were not enough kits.
- Have brochures available informing consumers of the weatherization program through OFA, RECAP & NYSERDA.
- This regional meeting was very informative; speakers were excellent and kept the audience attentive. Great handouts to follow speakers.

- Have brochures available for the public such as Dept. of Social Services and other county or state or local offices and grocery stores.
- This year's content and presentations were much more interesting than previous years.
- Great event
- More interaction through asking questions from the participants attending the forum.
- Provide: actual reduction of energy usage, i.e. refrigerator – proper maintenance in order to reduce refrigerator energy used
- For the NYSERDA session, include somehow (or refer to) NYSERDA's regional coordinators.
- It would be helpful to have a session at the end (or info in the packet) that outlines important events to stay connected throughout the year.
- Very informative
- The heat sensor equipment is very interesting but this was a great distraction to the NYSERD presentation that followed.
- Kelvin Keraga is a fantastic speaker, but he did not address the front of the room – gave his info 3 rows back from the front.
- I would like to see more participation by the Office for the Aging. With the number of seniors on fixed incomes increasing, input from OA staff could be very valuable.
- I found all speakers to be very knowledgeable. They presented valuable information – background and program.
- I enjoyed the networking exercises and the joint experience re: Coopers. Sharing of info was very helpful.
- To reduce paper costs, rather than automatically give brochures, offer presentation online.
- Great job – thanks
- Speakers who relate to rural areas; it seems that a lot of these speakers are from urban areas
- Excellent program. Need to keep people informed.
- Kelvin Keraga – great speaker!
- I also really enjoyed Brian Atchinson & Rick Struck
- I would like to have a bit shorter lunch time
- To see the utilities companies get more involved in funding weatherization programs and overseeing funding for such a program.

And comments on refreshments and logistics...

- Very cold in room