



LIFE

Low-Income Forum on Energy
George E. Pataki, Governor

LIFE 2001-2002 Regional Conferences

Conference Report: Albany

The LIFE 2001-2002 Regional Conference for the Albany area was held on January 22, 2002 at the University at Albany's Alumni House. Fifty individuals representing twenty-four organizations attended the event which was hosted locally by NYSEERDA, the NYS Department of Public Service Commission, NYS Consumer Protection Board and the Capital District Region Cooperative Extension.

Representatives of the Public Service Commission and NYSEERDA presented an overview of statewide energy and low-income information. A regional perspective on the needs of low-income energy customers was provided by representatives of Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation's Low-Income Customer Assistance Program, Dutchess County Community Action Agency and NYSEERDA-SBC Programs.

Work Group Findings

Representatives from NYSEERDA, the NYS Department of Public Service and the Community Power Network of NYS served as facilitators for the three afternoon workgroups. NYSEERDA and the NYS Consumer Protection Board provided recorders for the workgroups.

The Albany Regional Conference work groups considered three themes which were titled:

Theme #1 Nourishing the Roots (exploring the role of Community-Based Organizations and Local Government in the changing energy market)

Theme #2 Marriage Counseling (exploring the changing relationship between low-income energy customers and their energy vendors for both regulated fuels and unregulated fuels)

Theme #3 Putting the Pieces Together (exploring the way that resources for low-income households are changing due to the changing energy market or to statutory or regulatory changes due to Welfare Reform or other factors)

Each work group discussed one of the themes in a 45-minute discussion period. At that point, the facilitators and recorders rotated among the groups which allowed each group to consider a second theme.

The work group discussions at this region identified several issues that have become common themes at LIFE conferences: the need for consumer education, impact of increasing energy costs, and challenges in accessing resource programs-particularly emergency HEAP. The Albany Regional also revealed several unique issues:

- Using a one-stop shop approach to bring energy services and energy education together;
- Strategies for strengthening the quality of HEAP no-heat emergency assistance;
- Confusion on the funding status, availability and eligibility for Weatherization Assistance;
- Potential for using schools as a mechanism for distributing energy efficiency information, products and services; and
- The need for new, creative mechanisms for increasing choice for low-income customers including: energy cooperatives and energy buyers group/aggregation.

Conference Evaluation Results

Each conferee was asked to complete a conference evaluation. Twenty-seven participants completed the evaluation. The results of that evaluation follow.

1. How well did the Regional Meeting meet your expectations? *Conferees rated this at 3.81 of 5.*
2. Please rate the quality of the speakers overall. *Conferees rated this at 3.93 of 5.*
3. Please rate the quality of the other aspects of LIFE.

Materials	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.78 of 5.</i>
Conference Facilities	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.87 of 5.</i>
Food	<i>Conferees rated this at 4.35 of 5.</i>
Parking	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.80 of 5.</i>
Conference Staff	<i>Conferees rated this at 4.31 of 5.</i>

Participation by Sector

Sector	Number Attending	Percent Attending
Utility	5	10.00%
State Government	17	34.00%
Local Government	3	6.00%
(All 3, Dept. of Social Services)		
Community Action/Weatherization	12	24.00%
Community-Based Organizations	10	20.00%
ESCO	0	0.00%
Other	3	6.00%
Legislature	0	0.00%

Organizations Represented at This Regional Meeting

Albany County Dept. of Social Services
 Albany County Opportunity
 Business & Energy Services
 Central Hudson Gas & Electric
 Community Power Network of NYS
 Cooperative Development Institute
 Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany
 County

Couch White LLP
 Dutchess County Community Action
 Agency
 Fulmont Community Action- Head Start
 Glens Falls Independent Living Center
 Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation

NYS Community Action Association
 NYS Weatherization Directors
 NYS Consumer Protection Board
 NYS Dept. of Public Service
 NYS Office for Aging
 NYS Rural Development Council
 NYSEG
 NYSERDA
 Schenectady Community Action Program
 Schenectady Inner City Ministry
 Schoharie County Community Action
 Program
 SCOIL
 Washington Co. Cooperative Extension