



LIFE 2004 Regional Meetings

Conference Report: Ithaca

The LIFE 2004 Regional Meeting for the Finger Lakes Region was held on April 20, 2004 at the Holiday Inn Executive Tower in Ithaca. Fifty-five individuals representing thirty-four 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, Tompkins Community Action.

Agenda

The agenda for the regional meeting included the following sessions:

Consumer Protection Update. This session discussed the changing consumer protection requirements: what they mean for low-income customers and common misconceptions about New York's consumer protection rules. *Speakers: Ben Wiles, Public Utility Law Project; Glenn Alveranga, New York State Dept. of Public Service and Carolyn Ditewig, NYSEG.*

The Changing Resource Picture. This session explored the current public and private resource programs available for low-income energy customers and the changes occurring with those resource programs. *Speakers: Peggie Neville, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority; Bruce Bowdy, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and Rick Jost, New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal.*

Regional Profiles. This session reviewed regional energy, housing, and poverty statistics available for this region. *Speaker: Sue Montgomery Corey, Community Power Network of New York State.*

Housing and Energy. This session provided a regional perspective on the link between energy and housing. It explored community-based solutions that helped low-income households address their housing and energy needs. *Speakers: Paul Mazzarella, Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services and Michael Quaranta, Opportunities for Chenango, Inc.*

Best Ideas Identified At This Conference

Vertical integration and networking among resource programs and organizations is important. Collaboration and information exchange is essential.

Home repair resources: it was good to hear about available programs. The need for home repair services is significant in this region. Demand far outstrips the available resources.

The information on consumer protection was comprehensive and very useful. HEFPA information was particularly helpful.

NYSERDA's expanded role with low-income utility programs and the need for a strong link between these programs and the weatherization program.

Making the whole house energy efficiency approach known to housing professionals and housing finance programs.

Regional profiles and the statistics on New York's participation in the HEAP Program.

Significant Concerns Identified At This Conference

The number of households requiring energy assistance and other help is increasing constantly.

Rising energy costs are increasing the energy burden for most low-income households.

Changes in the State Median Income may result in fewer households qualifying for HEAP in the 2004-2005 heating season.

There are few resources available for renters.

The timing required to coordinate resources is challenging.

There needs to be greater communication concerning the impact of housing inspection programs on improving home energy efficiency and code enforcement.

The shortage of home repair dollars.

The potential for utility deposits will be problematic for low-income households.

The lack of financial literacy is an issue for many low-income households.

Long waiting lists at local weatherization programs mean that many households must wait many months or even years in order to get served.

Reliability and redundancy in the electric distribution system is particularly an issue for low-income households who may not have the resources to deal with power outages and brownouts.

Conference Evaluation Results

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

1. How well did the Regional Meeting meet your expectations? *Conferees rated this at 3.56 out of 5.0.*
2. Please rate the quality of the speakers overall. *Conferees rated this at 3.44 out of 5.0.*
3. Please rate the quality of the other aspects of LIFE.

Materials	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.60 out of 5.0</i>
Conference Facilities	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.76 out of 5.0</i>
Food	<i>Conferees rated this at 3.84 out of 5.0</i>

Parking
Conference Staff

Conferees rated this at 3.36 out of 5.0
Conferees rated this at 4.00 out of 5.0

Participation By Sector

Sector	Number Attending	Percent of Total
Utility	6	10.91%
State Government	5	10.91%
Local Government	9	16.36%
1 Dept. of Social Services		
4 Office for Aging		
4 Other Local Government		
Community Action/Weatherization	15	27.27%
Community-Based Organization	13	20.0%
Energy Services Company	1	1.81%
Faith-Based	2	3.63%
Independent Living Centers	0	0%
Statewide Non-Profit	1	1.81%
National Non-Profit	0	0%
Other	4	7.27%

Organizations Represented at This Regional Meeting

NYS Dept. of Public Service
NYS Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County
Tompkins County Office for the Aging
Jewish Family Service
Yates County Office for the Aging
Community Action Program for Madison County
American Red Cross, Tompkins County Chapter
New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG)
Community Power Network of NYS, Inc.
Tompkins Community Action
American Red Cross of Cortland County
Chemung County Dept. of Social Services
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County
NYS Division of Housing & Community Renewal

Community Action Self Help, Inc. (CASH)
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cortland County
Pro-Action of Steuben & Yates, Inc.
Center for Environmental Information
Schuyler County Cooperative Extension
Chenango County Catholic Charities
Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS)
Cortland County Area Agency on Aging
NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)
EOP Inc. of Chemung County
Opportunities for Chenango, Inc.
Tioga Opportunities, Inc.
Chemung County Office for the Aging
Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance (MEGA)
Broome County Office for the Aging
Tioga County Dept. of Social Services
Public Utility Law Project
Performance Systems Development, Inc.