



LIFE 2005 Regional Meetings

Conference Report: Lake Placid

The LIFE 2005 Regional Meeting for the North Country Region was held on August 10, 2005 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Lake Placid. Thirty-nine individuals representing 26 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, Adirondack Community Action Program. Cynthia Wenzel, Program Assistant from Adirondack Community Action 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. *Speakers: Phyllis Saratowski, Customer and Paula Gilbert, NYSEG. Moderator: Sue Montgomery Corey, Community Power Network of NYS.*
- **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: Marty Insogna, NYS Department of Public Service and Peggine 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: Ann Heidenreich, Community Energy Services, Mike DiNunzio, Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks and Terry Martino, Adirondack North Country Association.*
- **A group discussion** rounded out the day, which focused on the challenges and opportunities facing low-income households in the North Country 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	Long-Term Solutions	Crisis & Concern
<p>1. Clients need to be aware of other programs</p> <p>2. Clients need to be educated on how to save energy</p>	<p>1. Benefits of networking</p> <p>2. Not letting people with expertise do their jobs – need to take a piece out of each program, more contact between different organizations</p> <p>3. Frustration that there is not more coordination of services</p>	<p>1. Identified 4 areas within county that are most in need and applied for small cities grants and supplemental weatherization assistance program \$ to address these areas</p> <p>2. Energy \$mart Park – look at total impacts on community by implementing full energy efficiency measures, not just \$ savings and energy savings but economic impact on area, this would illustrate cost effectiveness of work</p>	<p>1. Need a way to provide additional HEAP benefit without calling it “emergency” – leads to manipulating system</p> <p>2. Inefficient apartments lead to higher utility bills, leads to moving out of apartment and can’t get power in new home...unpaid balances can’t get paid</p> <p>3. No inspection of furnace installation, quality control</p> <p>4. Difficulty accessing weatherization when customer has land contract</p> <p>5. Payments after termination notice go to utility not energy services companies</p> <p>6. Project Share eligibility not as clear as it should be</p> <p>7. Oil dealers lost money last year while accounts receivable are higher</p> <p>8. Dealers stating that people are way behind on budgets</p> <p>9. Concern that this heating season will be devastating and communities are not prepared</p> <p>10. Assistance money doesn’t go as far in periods of high prices</p> <p>11. North Country has more seasonal labor, high reliance on automobiles, high winter demand for heat</p> <p>12. Households may try to switch to wood heat or supplement, may not get supply, poorly installed systems can cause fire, theft of wood</p> <p>13. Contradiction between long weatherization waiting lists in some counties and need to market programs</p> <p>14. Minimally funded agencies can only do 58-60 houses, need is tremendous</p> <p>15. High percentage of disabled and seniors in region</p> <p>16. Fear that minimum HEAP won’t allow full delivery</p>

Conference Evaluation Results

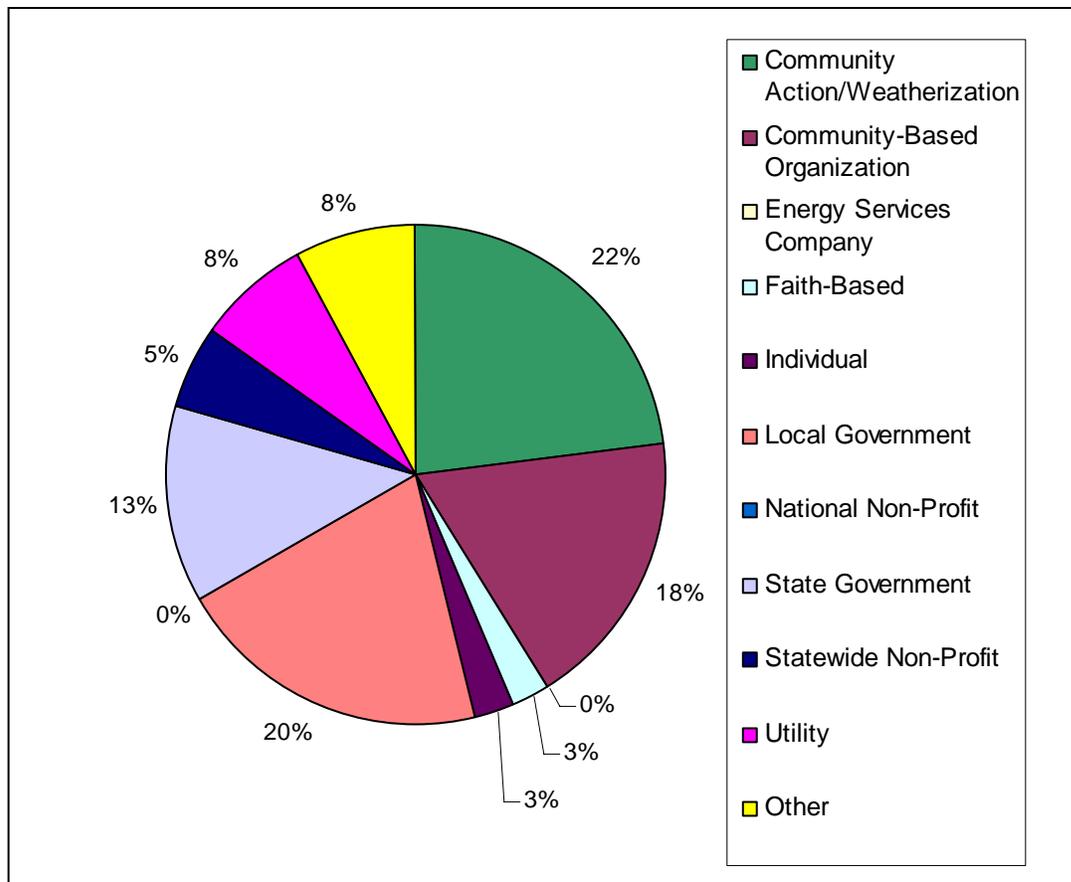
Each conferee was asked to complete a conference evaluation. Twenty-four participants completed evaluations with the following results.

1. How well did the Regional Meeting meet your expectations? *Over 95% of the 23 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 23 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 I: Energy Prices: Challenge to Affordability & Session IV: Being a Smarter Energy Shopper*
 - b. *Session II: In Their Own Words*
 - c. *Session V: Building Local Alliances*
 - d. *Session III: Everybody has an Advocate; Everybody is an Advocate*
4. When asked “do you plan to attend future LIFE Regional Meetings” *over 95% of the 23 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. *Receive valuable information – 87.50%*
 - b. *Network with others with shared interest & Identify new ideas that can assist you in your work – 62.50%*
 - c. *Identify additional issues in your region – 45.83%*
 - d. *Have an opportunity to ask questions & Gather a list of people/organizations to contact for further discussion/questions – 41.67%*
 - e. *Have a venue to discuss the issues facing the low-income households in your region – 37.50%*
 - f. *Compare your region to other regions in New York State – 25.00%*
 - g. *Provide input for future forums – 20.83%*

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.

Participation by Sector



Organizations Represented at This Regional Meeting

- Adirondack Community Action Program Weatherization
- Adirondack North Country Association
- Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks
- Cerebral Palsy Association of the North Country
- City of Plattsburgh Municipal Lighting Department
- Clinton County Department of Social Services
- Clinton County Office for the Aging
- ComLinks
- Community Energy Services, Inc.
- Community Power Network of NYS
- Essex County Department of Social Services
- Franklin County Department of Social Services
- Franklin County Office for the Aging
- Honeywell, Inc.
- Housing Assistance Program of Essex County
- Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton & Franklin Counties
- Niagara Mohawk
- North Country Ministry
- NYS Department of Public Service
- NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal
- NYS Electric & Gas
- NYS Energy Research and Development Authority
- Public Utility Law Project
- Rural Preservation Company of Clinton County
- St. Lawrence County Community Development Program
- St. Lawrence County Housing Council