NYSERDA Residential Market Advisory Group (RMAG) Quarterly Meeting

Virtual Webinar
Tuesday, May 20, 2025

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NYSERDA RMAG Quarterly Meeting

Meeting Summary, Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 011:00am ET

Meeting Overview

Background

On May 20, 2025, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) convened its Q2 2025 virtual Residential Market Advisory Group (RMAG) meeting. The session brought together stakeholders from across New York's residential energy efficiency and electrification landscape to share updates, explore cross-sector coordination opportunities, and identify actionable solutions to current market challenges.

The meeting included updates on evolving program structures and market strategies, as well as breakout discussions focused on three key areas: regional opportunities for geothermal deployment, strategies to improve residential energy affordability, and coordination between Clean Energy Hubs, contractors, and community-based organizations (CBOs).

Participants engaged in open dialogue around implementation barriers, collaboration models, and recommendations for improving access, equity, and market alignment across New York's residential clean energy programs.

A total of 75 individuals participated, including 15 NYSERDA staff. Questions were accepted via WebEx Q&A function and are included here as Appendix A.

Meeting Agenda

Time	Topic and Presenter	Presenters
11:00 am – 11:05 am	*Welcome and Introductions*	• **Tamar Nagel**, Project Manager, Home Modernization, NYSERDA • **Trevor Reddick**, Senior Director, Kearns & West
11:05 am – 11:40 am	*New York State Policy and Program Updates* • Home Modernization Team • EmPower+ Program • Business Opportunities and Operations in Skilled Trades (BOOST-NY) Program	• **Courtney Moriarta**, Director, Home Modernization, NYSERDA • **Scott Oliver**, Program Manager, Home Modernization, NYSERDA • **Lucinda Gilman**, Project Manager, Home Modernization, NYSERDA

11:40 am – 12:25 pm	*Breakout Rooms*	• **Anna Rossi**, Senior Associate, Kearns & West • **Cameron Hucek**, Associate, Kearns & West • **Donovan Gordon**, Director, Building Transformation, NYSERDA • **Michael Ding**, Senior Associate, Kearns & West • **Miquela Craytor**, Vice President, Kearns & West • **Trevor Reddick**, Senior Director, Kearns & West • **Zach Barr**, Senior Associate, Kearns & West
12:25 pm – 12:30 pm	*Closing and Next Steps*	• **Trevor Reddick**, Senior Director, Kearns & West

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Trevor Reddick opened the meeting with a brief overview of the agenda and housekeeping instructions. He reminded participants that the chat function was restricted to the host for technical support and encouraged the use of the Q&A feature for questions. The chat would reopen during breakout sessions later in the meeting.

NYSERDA Opening Remarks

Tamar Nagel, Project Manager on NYSERDA's Home Modernization Team and RMAG lead, welcomed participants and thanked them for their continued engagement. She shared her excitement for the upcoming breakout sessions and introduced Courtney Moriarta, Director of the Home Modernization Team, for additional opening remarks.

New York State Policy and Program Updates

Home Modernization Program Updates

Courtney opened by announcing that the NYSERDA Single Family Residential Team is now the Home Modernization Team, part of the Integrated Energy Solutions business unit at NYSERDA. As part of this reorganization efficiency and electrification programs currently offered for 1 – 4 unit buildings will be further integrated with NY-SUN and other distributed energy resource programs at NYSERDA. New Yorkers will be able to access energy efficiency, building electrification, and distributed energy resource solutions under one umbrella.

NYSERDA efforts will be directed based on the May 15, 2025, Orders from NY Department of Public Service, authorizing Low-to-Moderate Income and non-Low-to-Moderate Income Energy Efficiency and Building Electrification (EE/BE) Portfolios for 2026 – 2030. These Orders, being referred to by some as Clean Energy Fund 2.0—guides the eligible measures and program guidelines for Joint Utilities of New York and NYSERDA, acting as Program Administrators for energy efficiency and building electrification incentives. NYSERDA and the Joint Utilities are now tasked with submitting implementation plans for NY DPS approval. Stakeholder engagement opportunities will continue throughout the development and implementation process.

Courtney highlighted two major initiatives for the Home Modernization Team. First, the MyEnergy platform (https://myenergy.ny.gov/), a one-stop platform for consumers to access state government resources, will continue to be developed under new guidance from the EE/BE Order. Second, NYSERDA plans to pilot Virtual Energy Assessments (VEAs) later this year for eligible customers, with integration of service access into the MyEnergy portal targeted for early 2026. The VEAs seek to provide dynamic customized energy roadmaps for homeowners, replacing static

reports with an evolving digital experience housed on the MyEnergy portal.

Courtney provided an update on the federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR). Incentives remain active for households below 80% of Area Median Income through the EmPower+ Program for eligible electrification measures. NYSERDA is also preparing to extend rebates to households earning up to 250% of AMI through the Comfort Home program for eligible efficiency measures. Deployment is expected in late 2025, early 2026.

EmPower+ Program Updates

Courtney then introduced Scott Oliver, Program Manager for the Home Modernization Team, who provided an update on the EmPower+ program and shared early insights into how the recent Orders impact the program. He began by highlighting strong performance for EmPower+ in 2025, noting that as of the end of April, the program had received more than 11,800 applications, reviewed nearly 9,000 work scopes, and completed close to 12,000 projects. Over $84 million in incentives has been paid out, putting the program ahead of last year's pace in both activity and spending.

To keep up with this growth, averaging 30 percent year over year, Scott explained that NYSERDA is refining its approach to pipeline management. A key change includes the implementation of a new "provisional workflow step," which creates a queue for technically approved projects not yet cleared for installation. Each week, a batch of projects is reviewed and authorized to move forward, based on referral source—with priority given to utility, agency, and hub referrals—and the date of customer enrollment. This process is designed to manage flow and ensure alignment with program budget constraints.

As of March 14, EmPower+ is no longer accepting refrigerator and freezer replacements as eligible measures. Due to increased baseline efficiency across the appliance market, these upgrades no longer yield meaningful energy savings and are thus not considered 'strategic measures.' The program is phasing them out accordingly.

Scott emphasized NYSERDA's continued focus on ensuring equitable program access across the state. Contractor onboarding is being targeted to underserved areas, including the North Country, Capital Region, Hudson Valley, and New York City. Currently, new contractor participation is being limited to these focus regions to better support equitable deployment of services.

Regarding NYSERDA's MyEnergy platform, Scott noted that the portal is already in use for processing appliance rebates under IRA Home Energy Rebate programs. He flagged that EmPower+ intends to make applications available via the platform in Summer 2025. Scott noted that MyEnergy offers a more customer-friendly experience than previous systems and will eventually serve as a long-term engagement tool for projects, allowing all parties to track project status and pursue future upgrades more easily.

Scott concluded with an overview of the implications of the NY DPS Order for Low-to-Moderate Income Programs. The proposed five-year budget for EmPower+ under the Order is $445.5 million, or approximately $89.1 million annually. Under the Order, EmPower+ will be the only program serving 1-4-unit LMI buildings statewide. For multifamily buildings, NYSERDA will oversee upstate multifamily programs and will work in collaboration with the Program Administrators who will be responsible for delivering downstate multifamily programs.

Among the changes called for in the order are adjustments to income eligibility, which will now use either 60 percent of State Median Income (SMI) or Area Median Income (AMI), whichever is higher. This change is expected to expand access in higher-cost areas, especially Downstate. The order also phases out incentives for natural gas appliances except in limited "no heat" situations and calls for EmPower+ to adopt packaged measures like those offered in the Comfort Home program. Additional directives include a focus on serving customers enrolled in utility Energy Assistance Programs, allocating up to ten percent (10%) of funds for pre-weatherization and health and safety work to assist deferred households, and reserving up to fifteen percent (15%) of the budget to support heat pump installations for delivered fuel customers.

NYSERDA has until mid-September to submit an implementation plan and is coordinating with KEDNY/KEDLI (National Grid) and Con Edison on how to align program offerings to best serve customers. While the full implications of the 150-page order are still being reviewed, Scott emphasized that NYSERDA's aim is to simplify the program while maintaining a strong focus on energy affordability and equitable access.

Question & Answer was held and is included in Table 1.

Table 1: EmPower+ Program Updates Q&A

Question/Comment	NYSERDA Answer
KEDNY/KEDLI	
What is KEDNY/KEDLI	National Grid in New York City and in Long Island
EmPower+ Funding	
How does the $90 million a year compared to the previous five years?	It's a little bit more. NYSERDA gets funding from a variety of sources. For example, a couple of years ago, NYSERDA received $200 million dollars from the state legislature that enabled program growth. NYSERDA received another $50 million dollars this year that is being evaluated for how it can be deployed. NYSERDA will be outlining full expected budgets in the implementation plan to be submitted to NY DPS in response to the recent Energy Efficiency and Building Electrification Order.
Is EmPower+ funding expected to continue on Long Island?	During this time period, we will have some funding that's available on Long Island, and we are working to determine what KEDLI will provide. The NY DPS Energy Efficiency and Building Electrification Order requires NYSERDA to coordinate with other Program

	Administrators to ensure there is state-wide coverage that is right sized to regional needs. NYSERDA will be looking to see how the program interfaces with incentives available from NYPA to make sure that customers across the state are receiving relatively equitable amounts of LMI funding.

Business Opportunities and Operations in Skilled Trades (BOOST-NY) Program

Lucinda Gilman, Project Manager on NYSERDA's Home Modernization Team, introduced a proposed program, Business Opportunities and Operations in Skilled Trades, or BOOST-NY. The program is designed to connect business consultants with trade contractors through structured consulting engagements that help remove barriers to business growth. Rather than providing pre-written deliverables, the focus is on skill-building, for example, teaching contractors how to design and manage their own advertising strategies.

Consultants will be pre-qualified through a competitive RFP process, ensuring participating contractors are matched with experienced professionals. The program offers a 50% co-pay on consulting projects, up to a maximum contribution of $50,000. The contractor application process will be intentionally designed to be simple and accessible.

The program is being launched in response to the challenge of scaling the current trade workforce to meet statewide decarbonization goals. Interviews with contractors and partners identified key barriers to growth, which helped shape seven primary focus areas for consulting: advertising and lead generation; financial planning and records management; leadership and business management; operations; sales and customer relationship management; business technology (including tools for sales tracking and inventory); and workforce recruitment, hiring, and retention. Workforce challenges emerged as a consistent concern across the board.

Each engagement will include success metrics tracked at three stages: before project start, at completion, and again at three- and six-months post-completion. These results will inform case studies to help demonstrate the program's value and impact.

Lucinda shared the program's development timeline. Initial program design is complete, and a third-party implementer has been selected to support administration and outreach efforts. Consultant applications will open in two waves, in June and July. Once consultants are selected, contractor applications are anticipated to open in July, with project work expected to begin shortly after.

She then outlined expectations for business consultants. Selected consultants must demonstrate expertise in at least one of the seven focus areas and have significant experience working with residential trade contractors. The program seeks consultants who offer clear, functional, and results-oriented advice. While a Better Business Bureau (BBB) rating is not required, if a rating exists, it must be B or better. Consultants will be responsible for promoting their services to contractors,

developing scopes of work, executing deliverables, and submitting documentation and billing in alignment with contract terms.

Lucinda also described program expectations for participating trade contractors. The goal is to engage at least 20 contractors by the end of 2025, with a focus on firms that are actively looking to increase their capacity or grow. A broad geographic distribution and a mix of focus areas are anticipated, and while not required, contractors who serve disadvantaged communities are encouraged to apply.

Contractor eligibility criteria include operating within New York State (even if based elsewhere), working in single- or multifamily residential markets, and either currently offering or seeking to offer heat pump or envelope services. Contractors must have a defined business growth or improved capacity goal, though they will be supported in refining it if needed. They are expected to fully participate in the consulting engagement, cover 50 percent of the project cost, and share project outcomes. As with consultants, a BBB rating of B or better is required if one exists, and if they are part of a NYSERDA or New York State Clean Heat contractor network, they must be in good standing.

Trade contractors' responsibilities mirror those of the consultants, including setting goals, collaborating on scopes of work, implementing improvements, and submitting both qualitative and quantitative outcomes. Contractors are also expected to complete follow-up surveys three and six months after the project concludes.

Question & Answer was held and is included in Table 2.

Table 2: BOOST-NY Program Q&A

BOOST-NY Program Q&A	
Can a contractor be approved for multiple projects? So if we're working with a consultant on advertising, marketing development, and that's one project, but then separately, we work with a business consultant on a software, financial development package	The answer is yes. NYSERDA would prefer that projects be completed in series rather than simultaneously, to ensure bandwidth to really focus on each project in question.
Can a university program offering services to MWBE be the consultant?	Yes, they are eligible to apply to the program.

Introduction to the Breakout Sessions

After the NYSERDA Program presentations Trevor Reddick introduced the breakout sessions.

Breakout #1: Geothermal Hot Spots, continued a conversation from the previous RMAG meeting, exploring perceptions of where geothermal systems are most viable in New York. Donovan Gordon provided framing remarks to guide discussion on key market characteristics that influence deployment.

Breakout #2: Energy Affordability, examined the tension between decarbonization goals and cost constraints, particularly for low- and moderate-income households. The discussion built on recent engagements that helped inform the NY DPS Orders and considered opportunities to reduce both first costs and operating costs.

Breakout #3: Community-Based Organization (CBO) Coordination, focused on the role that CBOs have in residential clean energy market development and how different market actors—like home performance contractors, program implementers, and local organizations—are and can collaborate to improve outcomes.

Breakout Room #1 – Geothermal Hotspots

Zach Barr, facilitator from Kearns & West, facilitated the breakout session using a virtual white board to explore core considerations—technical, regulatory, market, and social—that define suitability of an area for geothermal heat pump technologies. Despite a growing recognition of the unique benefits of geothermal heat pumps, deployment is constrained by cost, overall awareness, and perceived limitations. The group explored these factors, with the goal of leaving with some criteria and topics that can inform development of a Geothermal Hot Spots Working Group.

Donovan Gordon of NYSERDA explored several factors impacting the uptake of geothermal technologies to frame the conversation. An estimated 280,000 heating systems are replaced annually in New York—representing a massive market opportunity for geothermal if outreach and infrastructure planning are handled well. One factor of high importance is the "obligation to serve"—where utilities must provide fossil fuels if requested—can limit the deployment of geothermal. Such regulatory challenges can make exposure to communities already unfamiliar with the technology even more challenging. Solutions can include strategic drilling (e.g., under easements) a potentially scalable approach where multiple properties can later connect to a shared loop. The state and communities can explore driller incentives to reduce mobilization costs, including proposals that drillers could pre-set heat exchangers in communities with concentrated demand. Working with CBOs can help organize neighborhood-level sign-ups similar to historical gas line extensions.

The group then discussed policy considerations like the proposed removal of the federal 25D tax credit for geothermal systems. New York Geothermal Energy Organization (NY-GEO) shared that efforts are underway to retain the credit, including a letter-writing effort led by industry advocates like Ryan Goverty of GeoExchange. Christine Hoffer of NY-GEO offered to share a template letter with attendees and coordinate outreach to supportive congressional offices.

The group discussed the state of geothermal drilling technology. Since 2008 equipment has changed significantly and drilling is now possible in areas deemed previously inaccessible. For example, drilling under basements or in tight urban lots is now feasible with "low headroom" rigs. These rigs

enable boreholes to be drilled with as little as 6 feet of vertical clearance, making geothermal feasible in many older buildings. One challenge noted is that mobilization costs are high. However, if a rig is already on-site, multiple installations in close proximity can become cost-effective. Shared loop systems were explored, including reference to a recent Dandelion Energy project in Colorado where a single borehole was installed in front of each of 1,500 new homes.

Environmental considerations like soil type were discussed. This can impact drilling time, with "good" areas yielding 1–2 boreholes per day and difficult areas yielding 1–2 per week. Drilling variability across the state adds further complexity, especially in western New York where subsurface conditions can vary dramatically.

Bringing first costs down to make geothermal economically attractive for residential customers was discussed. A participant noted that unlike solar—where costs declined rapidly due to mass adoption and investment—geothermal has not experienced similar cost reductions and is unlikely to without substantial investment or oversight.

Socially, one participant believed that geothermal heating technologies often receives greater scrutiny than other heating sources, which may hinder adoption despite potential grid-supporting benefits.

Key Takeaways

- A recurring theme across the session was education—both to dispel misconceptions (e.g., that geothermal requires large land parcels) and to help customers understand the long-term savings and system design possibilities.
- Geothermal is technically feasible across most of New York, but education, cost, and regulatory barriers limit adoption.
- Shared-loop systems, incentive structures for drillers, and neighborhood-scale planning are promising strategies.
- Modern drilling technology allows installations in urban and space-constrained settings.
- Participants supported forming a Geothermal Hotspot Working Group under RMAG to continue developing criteria for hotspot identification and deployment strategy.
- NYSERDA and RMAG members were encouraged to take these insights back to their organizations to help align program design and community outreach with geothermal market needs.

Breakout Room #2 – Energy Affordability

Trevor Reddick, facilitator from Kearns & West, opened the session by framing the discussion around the ongoing challenges and opportunities related to energy affordability. He encouraged participants to consider the structural and market dynamics that are impacting affordability, and to share both obstacles and examples of successful collaboration. The goal of the session was to surface actionable strategies that can help reduce costs, improve program alignment, and support an equitable decarbonization of residential buildings across New York.

To guide the conversation, Trevor shared three prompts for participants to reflect on:

- How are people currently working to address affordability in this space, and how do we want them to?
- What is needed to bridge the gap between what people already know and are doing, and what we want them to know and do?
- What gaps and recommendations can we identify and confirm across segments to inform future actions and collaboration?

The group discussed strategies to reduce first costs.

- *Education and Data Availability*: Core drivers of first cost reductions. Decision support tools should follow the natural capital cycle by helping build knowledge regarding end-of-life equipment switching opportunities well in advance. This can be prioritized in programs and external messaging to help ready customers to make the switch.
- *New Technologies:* We should track how novel heat pump deployments are working, like the NYCHA pilot, to assess affordability improvements for residential retrofits.
- *Stacking Funding from Programs*: Combining multiple funding streams to bring down first costs has proven successful in helping people access programs in areas where they use delivered fuels. Challenges with stacking funding are affecting the ability of energy concierges to deliver affordable projects. Incentive stacking processes should be considered by Program Administrators in the design phase, and the increased collaborative design process under the new NY DPS Order is an opportunity.

The group discussed strategies to reduce operating costs.

- *Aligning Incentives*: Some consumers are not facing disincentives for doing "business as usual", and we need to explore incentivizing alternative generation technologies (e.g., some coops may have misincentives).
- *Combining Clean Energy Solutions*: Integrate with DERs for heat pump packages, like a sub solar package.

- *Cost Calculators*: Making available resources like a calculator for costs of measures can help energy concierges and other key stakeholders can use to help assess potential cost impacts of a transition from fuels to electric.
- *Grid Services*: Texas and other states are leveraging virtual power plants (VPPs) to great success, can we use grid services value to reduce costs?
- *Rate Reform*: Explore opportunities to deliver heat pump rates to recognize the grid value that the heat pumps provide.

Key Takeaways

- Misaligned public expectations hinder engagement: Motivational program announcements often outpace implementation timelines, creating confusion and straining frontline educators. Clearer communication about rollout timing is needed to sustain trust.
- Funding restrictions are undermining equity goals: The inability to stack or braid funding (e.g., between EmPower+ and other programs) is limiting local impact, particularly in disadvantaged communities that rely on flexible incentives.
- Contractor and workforce strain threatens delivery: Provisional approval processes and onboarding freezes are frustrating contractors and risking layoffs, threatening program capacity and momentum in key regions.
- Affordability metrics and energy burden definitions need rethinking: The standard 6% income threshold may not reflect real affordability for low-income households. Alternative metrics should be explored.
- Pre-electrification barriers must be addressed upfront: Mold, asbestos, and structural issues are halting progress in LMI homes. More funding for pre-weatherization and health and safety work is critical.
- Technology fit matters for cost and health: Poorly specified heat pump systems—like PTAC units that default to resistance heat—can drive up bills and create unhealthy living conditions in low-income housing.
- Grid-interactive solutions offer long-term promise: Revenue from grid services like virtual power plants could help offset operating costs, especially as more homes electrify. This strategy warrants further exploration.

Breakout Room #3 – Community Based Organization Coordination

Miquela Craytor, facilitator from Kearns & West, opened the session by framing its context. The breakout was intended to build on a conversation started during a recent New York Building Performance Contractors Association (NY-BPCA) conference in February 2025. In that discussion between Regional Clean Energy Hubs, NY-BPCA, NYSERDA, and NY Department of Temporary and Disability Assistance, it was evident that Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have many important roles to play in the clean energy transition and that they also face many headwinds in collaborating with others across the value chain. Given rising funding and capacity challenges being

faced by CBOs, we convened a cross-sector discussion to better understand how market actors are currently collaborating with CBOs, learning from what's working and what's not to maximize impact.

The group discussed coordination challenges in regions like Western New York where staffing and scale of the geography covered by a CBO can negatively impact contractor/CBO coordination. A participant shared an experience where coordination with an assigned contractor sited over sixty miles away hindered project success, and that more localized approaches including satellite models may help contractors and CBOs better collaborate to serve rural communities. Another participant shared the belief that low homeowner participation and inconsistent contractor engagement were universal challenges. When CBOs are engaged and understand contractors' work, and vice versa, partnerships can thrive. However, when those initial relationships disappear, it becomes difficult to re-initiate support from each other.

Funding models were discussed, with one participant noting that short-term grant structures make it difficult to retain passionate staff and sustain local momentum, and that alternative funding models should be explored.

The group discussed information availability as a challenge. Two participants shared a challenge with contractor listings being inaccurate. After contacting listed contractors, it was found that many did not serve the local area nor offered key services listed. Some teams have manually curated their own sub-list. A call was made for regional vetting, continuous updates, and more transparency on contractor capabilities to help CBOs and homeowners avoid misdirection or failed service attempts. Additionally, improving visibility into CBO and contractor performance history can strengthen trust between entities. NYSERDA could consider convening regular (e.g., quarterly) coordination between CBOs and contractors to formalize interactions and improve accountability.

Key Takeaways

- Hubs and CBOs are not always interwoven: Participants noted that while some hubs are housed within nonprofits, others are not, creating confusion about roles and expectations. Greater clarity and documentation on the structure of each Hub and its associated partners would help.
- Mapping the ecosystem: Multiple participants called for a centralized map or directory of all Clean Energy Hubs, CBOs, and vetted contractors—detailing what services they provide and where they operate. This would reduce redundancy, prevent miscommunication, and streamline referrals.
- Social services integration: Some participants noted that Hubs do not sufficiently coordinate with local social service organizations. There was strong support for closer alignment between NYSERDA, Hubs, and these agencies to broaden program reach—particularly for non-market-rate households.
- Avoiding energy inefficiency due to low pricing: One participant added that in regions served

by co-op electric utilities with very low rates, homeowners often have no incentive to weatherize or electrify. This suggests the need to consider how pricing signals and program design interact in different utility territories.

Closing and Next Steps

The group facilitators provided breakout session highlights before Trevor Reddick and Tamar Nagel closed the meeting.

Appendix A: Consolidated Question & Answer

Question/Comment	NYSERDA Answer
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