



**NYSERDA Residential Market Advisory
Group (RMAG) Virtual Quarterly
Meeting**

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Meeting Summary

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NYSERDA RMAG Quarterly Meeting

Meeting Summary, Wednesday, March 6, 2024, at 02:00pm ET

Meeting Overview

Background

On March 6, 2024, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) hosted its Q1 2024 Residential Market Advisory Group (RMAG) meeting. NYSERDA staff provided updates on the Experience Clean Heat program and facilitated a discussion on Community Benefits Planning, part of New York's applications for Home Energy Rebates Programs funded by the federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The meeting was held virtually via WebEx Webinar.

Stakeholders participated by providing feedback on these key topics, contributing valuable insights to inform NYSERDA program updates and development.

In total, 77 individuals attended the meeting, including 12 NYSERDA staff.

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- RMAG Progress Updates
- Experience Clean Heat Program Update
- Updates on Inflation Reduction Act Home Energy Rebate Applications
- Closing Remarks

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Trevor Reddick from Kearns & West welcomed attendees to the meeting. He introduced the presenters for the event, Laura Geel, Assistant Director Single Family Residential, Tamar Nagel, Project Manager Single Family Residential, and Jackie Albanese, Contractor from TRC. Trevor reviewed the meeting agenda and ground rules.

RMAG Progress Update

RMAG Overview

Laura outlined the mission of the Residential Market Advisory Group. She explained that the group's aim is to unite various stakeholders within the residential market to collaboratively envision and implement the next generation of residential clean energy solutions. The group's objectives include facilitating the deployment of strategies across real estate that stimulate market growth, deliver customer value, and align with New York State's energy policy goals.

The group convenes in several ways. Meetings are conducted quarterly. Meetings are typically held virtually with one in-person meeting each year, when feasible. Additionally, the RMAG convenes sub-groups, including working groups, expert panels, listening sessions, and other activities to support achievement of priority areas set by membership.

RMAG Programming Interests by Existing Priorities

In advance of the meeting, registrants were asked to submit input on experiences or topics they would like to see presented during a future RMAG meeting.

Members were asked: “RMAG membership have identified the following as group priority topics: (1) The Customer's Journey Toward Energy Efficiency and Electrification, (2) Developing Clear and Concise Messaging for the IRA and other Funding Opportunities, and (3) Economic Benefits of IRA's Home Energy Rebates. Do you have any insights or recommendations that can inform future RMAG programming on these topics?”

Areas of high interest noted by participants included:

- **Community Relationship Building:** Presentations on partnerships with non-profits (like community action organizations) that already have insight into informing customers of the opportunities available.
- **Consumer Decision Tree Mapping:** Potential customers move through a decision tree to test the impact of consumer education, incentives, and phased implementation of residential clean energy technologies.
- **EPA ENERGY STAR Program:** Noting the success of the ENERGY STAR program in creating broad brand awareness, a presentation and discussion on consumer brand awareness focusing on this success could be instructive.
- **Funding Case Studies:** Present and review case studies of how different classes of buildings and their owners would leverage all funding opportunities.
- **Inflation Reduction Act Home Energy Rebates:**
 - Targeted stakeholder input sessions, Civil Society Organizations, Manufacturers, Retailers, etc.
 - Program clarifications – Clarify if 'stacking' of the various IRA and state energy efficiency incentives will be possible, and how the EmPower+ Program is involved.

RMAG Membership Showcases

In advance of the meeting, registrants were asked to submit input on topics they would be interested in presenting at a future RMAG meeting as part of a Membership Showcase.

Members were asked: “If we were to host a “Membership Showcase” section of this RMAG meeting, are there any topics or activities in the residential energy efficiency and clean energy spaces that you would like to present on?”

Responses indicated a strong interest in participating in a membership showcase. The RMAG has previously hosted showcases highlighting various technologies and tools, such as virtual home inspections and energy audits.

Topics of interest included discussions on consumer messaging and economic benefits from the manufacturing sector, software and hardware platforms for home energy management systems, and interest from financial services firms to discuss Federal Green Bonds, among many others.

Trevor concluded by indicating that Membership Showcases will occur as part of future RMAG programming, and that participants should continue to share information on updates and presentation interests with the RMAG team.

Ice Breaker Poll

During the meeting, participants were asked "Within the residential clean energy space, what is your business goal or aspiration for 2024?" In total, twenty responses were received, showcasing a diverse set of objectives aimed at advancing residential clean energy technologies.

The aspirations outlined by participants encompassed a broad spectrum of goals, including the provision of policy input based on residential data, offering technical support to bridge the gap between policymakers and residents, and enhancing the living conditions of low-income families through energy savings and healthier home environments. A significant emphasis was placed on overcoming financial barriers to clean energy adoption, with particular focus on reaching more low- and moderate-income (LMI) customers. Utilizing programs such as IRA Funding, EmPower+ Funding, and tax credits efficiently was highlighted as a key strategy.

Participants also expressed a desire for a streamlined rollout of IRA cash incentives and the development of more equitable programs and workforce initiatives. The industry's understanding of program performance and the real value delivered was another area of interest. Technical aspirations included the development or refinement of standards, creation of necessary certifications for the workforce, and readiness for program stack, particularly in relation to heat pumps and Energy Star certifications.

The poll responses underscored the importance of expanding financing solutions to benefit people in Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) and increasing the adoption rates of cold climate heat pumps in residential buildings. Moreover, there was a call for greater promotion of upgrades to the building thermal envelope prior to electrification measures, service expansion to more households with improvements, provision of clean energy products to residents, acceleration of EmPower+ enrollment, and successful leveraging of federal funding.

Experience Clean Heat Program Update

Jackie Albanese provided an update on the Experience Clean Heat program, an update to a presentation she provided on the subject during the Q2 2023 RMAG Meeting. The presentation began with an overview of the initiative's objectives, emphasizing the dual focus on both consumer and contractor engagement. Jackie emphasized the multifaceted goals of Experience Clean Heat, which include raising awareness and addressing misinformation about cold climate and ground source heat pumps in New York among consumers and contractors. The initiative is aimed at winning the "hearts and minds" of consumers by experiencing the benefits of heat pumps firsthand.

To achieve these goals, the initiative seeks to create opportunities for customers and HVAC workers to firsthand experience the benefits of heat pump technology in public spaces. This approach is designed to

highlight the technology's application in everyday environments, encouraging direct interaction and observation by the public and professionals alike. Additionally, the effort includes leveraging social media and peer-to-peer sharing to amplify the impact and reach of the initiative.

Jackie then detailed the pilot phase on the consumer side of the program, noting that there are 13 active sites across the state, primarily concentrated in the capital region and the Saratoga area, with other locations including Fort Ticonderoga, an arts center in the Buffalo region, and a publicly accessible tiny home in central New York. These sites, which vary from breweries and bakeries to children's consignment clothing shops and town halls, feature heat pump technology as the primary heating and cooling solution. The initiative has introduced signage and other promotional materials to these locations to educate visitors about the technology.

The presentation also covered ongoing marketing efforts, including paid social media campaigns tailored to each site's characteristics and color schemes. These campaigns aim to drive consumer interest and visitation to the sites, linking them to further content on heat pumps. Since the launch of the paid social media initiatives, two events have already been held at selected sites, attracting a total of 120 attendees. Upcoming social media giveaways are planned to further encourage public engagement with the initiative.

Jackie further elaborated on the Experience Clean Heat initiative, moving beyond the social media campaigns to discuss customized signage developed for each participating business. The signage, ranging from chat bubbles next to indoor heat pump units to large banners at locations like Fort Ticonderoga, was designed to seamlessly integrate into the business environment while providing educational content. Each piece of signage includes QR codes for consumers seeking more information, aiming to educate the public as they go about their daily lives.

Jackie then shifted focus to the HVAC contractor side of the initiative, which is still in the developmental phase. The plan targets HVAC contractors who show interest in heat pumps but lack confidence in the technology's functionality and profitability, particularly in the cold climate of New York State. The initiative seeks to identify and address the barriers preventing these contractors from promoting and installing heat pumps, from doubts about profitability and functionality to concerns over installation complexity and rebate program management. Tailored resources will be developed to overcome these barriers, including coordination with heat pump distributors.

The proposed program for HVAC contractors is considering three components: manufacturer sizing and design training, becoming a New York State Clean Heat contractor, and participating in an internal employee campaign aimed at overcoming skepticism within their organizations. Additionally, contractors could choose three optional offerings, such as financial and technical support for installing heat pumps in their offices or employees' homes, sales training, marketing, lead generation, and ongoing technical support. These components are designed to provide a comprehensive support system to encourage contractor participation and confidence in heat pump technology.

As the contractor-focused component of the Experience Clean Heat initiative is still being refined, Jackie concluded her presentation by inviting feedback through a series of poll questions.

Membership Polling

Prompt 1. What program offerings are key to win the 'hearts and minds' of target contractors? (Rank in order of highest to lowest value)

Seventeen responses were captured. Results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 1: Experience Clean Heat Poll - Program Offerings

Responses	Rank
A. Financial and technical support to install a heat pump in the office	1st
C. Heat pump sales training, marketing and lead generation support	2nd
B. Technical support to install a heat pump in select employees' homes	3rd
D. Manual J and NYSCH Application Pre-submission review	4th
F. On-call technical support	5th
E. Pre-application field-QC dry-run	6th

Prompt 2. What would most incentivize contractors to install heat pumps in their office?

Ten responses were captured. Results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 2: Experience Clean Heat Poll - Incentivize Office Install

Responses	Upvotes	Downvotes
Confidence in technology	7	0
The owner wants them	4	0
Lower operating costs	5	1
Discounted equipment fees, and discounted energy prices	4	0
Incentives	3	0
Rich commercial incentives	4	1
promised of higher incentives for first 5 customer installations in NYSCH	1	0
Enough office staff to make the investment worthwhile	0	0
We have Mitsubishi heat pumps in our office	0	0
Free pilot technology	1	2

Prompt 3. When it comes to selling heat pumps, what types of acknowledgements, awards, or incentives do you think would be most likely to win the 'hearts and minds' of HVAC contractors?

Eleven responses were captured. Results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 3: Experience Clean Heat - Hearts and Minds of Contractors

Response	Upvotes	Downvotes
Manufacturer certifications to show customers that the installer has the skills, knowledge	4	0
Public Demand	4	0
Seeing their competitors kick their butts and absorb all their customers.	4	0
An incentive that requires at least two follow ups after installation is completed to confirm systems are being operated in the most efficient manner and anomalies/questions are addressed.	3	0
Guaranteed supply; able to get products quickly	3	1
Referrals	3	1
Competitions; sales competitions within a company. Or regional competitions among different companies	3	1
SPIF giveaways	3	1
Incentive for commissioning the homeowners/household with training	1	0
In our area it's east to sell heat pumps, we are most interested in upcoming rebates as our clients are asking about those and we want to share accurate information	1	1
Reliable branding of technology/products	1	2

Updates on Inflation Reduction Act Home Energy Rebate Applications

Laura Geel provided an update on New York’s applications to the U.S. Department of Energy for Home Energy Rebate Programs funded by the federal Inflation Reduction Act. The meeting was an update on a presentation given to the Residential Market Advisory Group at its in-person Q4 2023 meeting held in Albany, New York, and on public input webinar held in December 2023.

Laura focused on the Home Energy rebate program under the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, detailing its two main components: the Home Efficiency Rebate (HER) program and the Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate (HEAR) program. The HER program is performance-based, offering whole-house rebates, while the HEAR program targets specific appliances and measures, providing incentives for each.

New York State is set to receive nearly \$317 million for these home energy rebates, with the budget lasting until September 30, 2031, or until funds are fully expended. The allocation includes \$159.3 million for the HER program and \$158.4 million for the HEAR program, with a distribution plan that reserves 20% for program administration and 80% for incentives, roughly equating to \$127 million in incentives for each program. These funds will be distributed across a wide range of eligibility criteria, including single and multifamily homes, with no income limits for the HER program.

Laura explained that if the funds were utilized over a five-year period, the average annual incentive budget would be about \$51 million, divided equally between the HER and HEAR programs and further allocated among different housing types and income levels.

Furthermore, Laura outlined federal requirements for state allocations, with a particular emphasis on low-income households. In New York State, approximately 41% of households qualify as low income, defined as those earning below 80% of the area median income. This translates to an allocation of around \$104.2 million for low-income households. NYSERDA aims to invest 35% of the funds, with a goal of reaching 40% in disadvantaged communities, aligning with the New York State Climate Act and Justice 40 criteria. Additionally, a minimum of \$25.4 million is designated for low-income multifamily buildings, adhering to Department of Energy guidelines, though the state may exceed this minimum allocation.

Laura shifted the focus to the Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate (HEAR) program within the Inflation Reduction Act, which is progressing more rapidly in New York State. The HEAR program targets low to moderate-income households, defined as those with an income less than 150% of the Area Median Income (AMI), and extends eligibility to owners of multifamily buildings where at least 50% of the units are occupied by low-income residents, as well as to government, commercial, or nonprofit entities undertaking projects for these households.

Laura outlined the eligible measures under the HEAR program, noting the maximum rebate amounts per measure for each housing unit, with a total cap of \$14,000 per unit. The coverage varies by income level; for low-income households, up to 100% of project costs can be covered, whereas for moderate-income households at 150% AMI, up to 50% of the total project cost can be reimbursed. Installer incentives of up to \$500 are also available, with an additional \$200 for work completed in disadvantaged communities.

Providing an update on New York State's progress with the Inflation Reduction Act, Laura mentioned that on December 28, NYSERDA submitted an initial application to the Department of Energy (DOE) for the first phase of IRA programming. This initial, "partial scope" application proposed allocating up to 25% of the funds to the EmPower+ New York program, aimed at serving low-income households in one to four family homes. This approach, also adopted by a few other states, positions New York as one of only four states to have submitted an application within this timeframe.

Laura emphasized that no states currently have active funds available through the IRA home energy rebates, but efforts are underway to expedite the availability of these funds in New York State, particularly for low-income communities. The partial scope application focuses on utilizing the EmPower+ program for low-income households to fund measures such as heat pump water heaters, heat pumps, electrical service and wiring upgrades, insulation, air sealing, and ventilation, adhering to the maximum rebate amounts legislated and the \$14,000 cap per unit.

Laura noted that approval of this application is anticipated in the coming months, and NYSERDA is preparing a comprehensive, full-scope application to be submitted to the DOE in the first half of the year, further advancing the state's commitment to implementing the Inflation Reduction Act's provisions for energy-efficient upgrades in low to moderate-income households.

Laura presented a timeline for the progress of the home energy rebates, noting advancements since their last update in the fall. During that time, stakeholder engagement was a key focus, with in-person working groups and virtual sessions facilitating important discussions. As of the first quarter of 2024, the engagement process continues, alongside the submission and review of the application by the Department of Energy (DOE). She emphasized the ongoing development of implementation blueprints, crucial for detailing how the funds will be managed and distributed in the market.

Looking ahead, she mentioned plans to expand stakeholder engagement to include multifamily stakeholders and those involved in point-of-sale rebate programs. The goal is to develop and launch a full scope application for the Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate (HEAR) and Home Efficiency Rebate (HER) programs by year's end.

Laura highlighted four critical implementation blueprints required for the initial application: a Community Benefits Plan, a Consumer Protection Plan, an Outreach and Education Strategy, and Privacy and Security Risk Assessments. These components are essential for demonstrating to the DOE how the funds will be administered effectively and securely.

Special emphasis was placed on the Community Benefits Plan, which aims to support meaningful community and labor engagement, ensure a skilled and qualified workforce, advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and contribute to justice, with a particular focus on ensuring that 40% of the benefits reach disadvantaged communities. Laura invited feedback from the Residential Market Advisory Group, underscoring the importance of their input in shaping the Community Benefits Plan. The plan includes developing annual milestones to track progress in these key areas, demonstrating a commitment to measurable advancements in community support and engagement.

Participatory Session

Overview

Trevor guided participants through a virtual whiteboard activity where participants provided input on potential metrics to evaluate progress and success on the four sub-sections of the Community Benefits Plan Implementation Blueprint. Thematic summaries by sub-section are provided here, and a full copy of the Miro Board is attached here as [Appendix A](#).

Engage Community and Labor

Respondents delved into progress and success metrics to evaluate public participation. Themes include:

- **Demographic and Geographic Tracking:** Measuring participant demographics through self-identification and tracking program participation across demographic metrics and Disadvantaged Communities (DAC) geographies. This also includes monitoring participation by Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE), Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses (SDVOB), etc.
- **Digital Marketing and Cross-Promotion:** The effectiveness of digital marketing in reaching a wide audience was highlighted, with a suggestion to use retail product programs for cross-promotion of other initiatives.
- **Direct Mailings and Participation in EmPower+:** The use of direct mailings, postcards, and active participation in the EmPower+ program as methods to measure engagement.
- **Education Through Youth:** The potential of educating children in target populations to convey messages to their parents was noted as a strategic approach to increase public engagement.
- **Engagement with Community Groups:** Stakeholders suggested engaging with smaller community groups, including churches and food pantry participants, and involving participants from the EmPower+ program to gauge public participation levels.
- **Program Ambassadors:** Utilizing program participants as ambassadors to spread awareness and information about various initiatives.

- **Retailer and Cable TV Promotions:** Focus on leveraging retailers for promotional efforts and replicating cable TV's success in facilitating neighbor-to-neighbor endorsements through local, trusted, non-partisan figures such as church leaders, elected officials, or housing authority executives.
- **Surveys:** Running public surveys within programs of interest, tracking completed surveys, and analyzing the data to understand public engagement levels in different community segments.

Engage and Support a Skilled and Qualified Workforce

Respondents discussed approaches to effectively measure job growth, quality, and retention in the context of residential clean energy workforce development (WFD). Themes include:

- **Comparative Analysis and Internal Mobility:** Analyze job growth and messaging relative to other areas and measure upward mobility within organizations as indicators of job quality and opportunities for advancement.
- **Employment Outcome Tracking:** Incentivize the tracking of employment outcomes over time as part of Workforce Development funding to gauge long-term job growth and stability.
- **Flexible Training Schedules and Standardization:** Implement flexible training hours/days while monitoring attendance and standardize training requirements to ensure consistency in skill development.
- **Mentoring and Apprenticeships:** Develop mentoring programs to encourage participation and ensure project quality, along with measuring the increase in labor apprenticeship enrollees annually and providing funding for apprentices.
- **Partnerships and Certification:** Foster partnerships with trade organizations (e.g., Association of Plumbing, Heating, and Cooling Contractors (PHCC)) to enhance training and certification opportunities.
- **Performance Metrics for Contractors:** Establish metrics to measure contractor performance on each project, allowing for real-time evaluation and necessary interventions to maintain high standards throughout program lifecycles.
- **Support for Participants:** Address prerequisite and wrap-around needs of participants, monitor the number of contractors attending trainings, and track the number of staff certified in various programs.
- **Tracking Green Jobs and Contractor Engagement:** Track the number of green jobs by county and conduct surveys among contractors to gather insights on job quality and retention.

Incorporate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA)

Respondents explored methods for assessing the investments and outcomes of DEIA initiatives focused on enhancing diverse representation in hiring and contracting. Themes included:

- **Contractor Participation in DACs:** Count the number of participating contractors located in, or primarily serving, DAC areas to understand reach and impact.
- **DAC Contractor Incentives:** Track the number of DAC contractor incentives provided, measuring efforts to engage underrepresented contractors.
- **DEIA Case Studies:** Compile case studies that showcase customers and contractors from diverse backgrounds, highlighting successful integration of DEIA principles.

- **Development and Monitoring of DEIA-Focused Applications:** Create applications that promote DEIA services and monitor the business generated from these initiatives to gauge reach and effectiveness.
- **Customer Profile Tracking:** Utilize program data to monitor the customer profile of participants in each program, ensuring broad representation among different customer types.
- **Equitable Customer Participation:** Ensure equitable customer participation across New York State, adjusting for population diversity and distribution to reflect true inclusivity.
- **Flexible Scheduling for Greater Accessibility:** Offer trainings and meetings at varied times to make these sessions more accessible to a wider audience.
- **Incentives Measurement in DACs:** Assess the measurement of incentives distributed within DACs to evaluate financial support and encouragement for participation.
- **Material Translation:** Translate program materials into various languages to increase accessibility and understanding among diverse populations.
- **Sharing of Program Experiences:** Monitor the number of diverse program participants willing to share their experiences, which can serve as a metric for engagement and satisfaction.
- **Targeted In-Person Trainings:** Offer in-person trainings specifically designed for underrepresented workers, making these programs directly accessible to them.

Address Justice40 Initiative

Respondents explored strategies to measure the flow of benefits from Home Energy Rebate programs flow to disadvantaged communities (DACs), especially in terms of alignment with the goal to deliver forty percent of the benefits to DACs. Themes included:

- **Communal Wide Efforts:** Evaluate total community-wide efforts to weatherize homes and install heat pumps, measuring the household-by-household impact.
- **Contractor Mentorship:** Encourage contractor mentorship within DACs to build local capacity and ensure quality installations.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Measure the customer satisfaction levels of DAC program participants to gauge the effectiveness and reception of initiatives.
- **DAC Share Indexing:** Index all metrics to ensure that at least 35% of benefits are directed towards DACs in New York.
- **Demand Response Units:** Require the installation of demand response units in DAC homes to enable detailed data collection on energy usage and savings.
- **Energy Bill Savings:** Measure energy bill savings for individuals in DACs as a direct benefit of program participation.
- **Financing and Rebate Utilization:** Monitor the share of rebate transactions that take advantage of financing options, facilitating access to energy-saving technologies.
- **Heat Pump Installations and EmPower+ Enrollment:** Track the number of heat pump installations in DACs and EmPower+ enrollment figures as indicators of program reach and engagement.
- **Leveraging DAC Resources in Solution Design:** Utilize contracted DAC input resources during the design phase of solutions to ensure that the needs of these communities are directly addressed.
- **Non-Energy Benefit Data Collection:** Design data collection methodologies to capture non-energy benefits with specific consideration for DAC and Justice 40 impacts.

- **Project Size and Energy Savings Analysis:** Compare the average project size and energy savings within DACs against those outside of DACs to assess equitable benefit distribution.
- **Quality Assurance in DAC Homes:** Implement a higher quality assurance percentage for services provided in DACs to ensure high-quality outcomes.
- **Reduction in Household Energy Spending:** Track the reduction in the percentage of total household spending on energy in DACs as an outcome of energy efficiency improvements.
- **Upfront Assistance for Installation Costs:** Provide disadvantaged communities with upfront assistance for installation costs, including tax credits and refunds, to overcome financial barriers.

Closing Remarks

In her closing remarks, Laura addressed a key topic identified during the Miro Board activity, focusing on training and workforce development. She informed the attendees that New York State had applied for a \$6.4 million grant dedicated to training residential energy contractors, which NYSERDA submitted in January and is currently under review by the Department of Energy (DOE). The intention is to utilize these funds to subsidize training costs, facilitate testing and certification, and foster partnerships with relevant organizations. Further details will be shared following DOE approval.

Laura expressed gratitude for the participants' contributions, emphasizing how such discussions contribute to refining programming and ensuring the effective distribution of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) home energy rebates to eligible New Yorkers. She highlighted the ongoing opportunities for stakeholder input across various platforms, including the Residential Market Advisory Group activities, community stakeholder workshops, contractor workshops, and public webinars. She also mentioned future collaborations with utilities, multifamily partners, retailers, product manufacturers, and outreach partners, inviting interested parties to participate by contacting NYSERDA via email. Questions or comments regarding the Inflation Reduction Act in New York State can be directed to residential.ira@nyserda.ny.gov

Appendices

Appendix A: Participatory Activity Miro Board

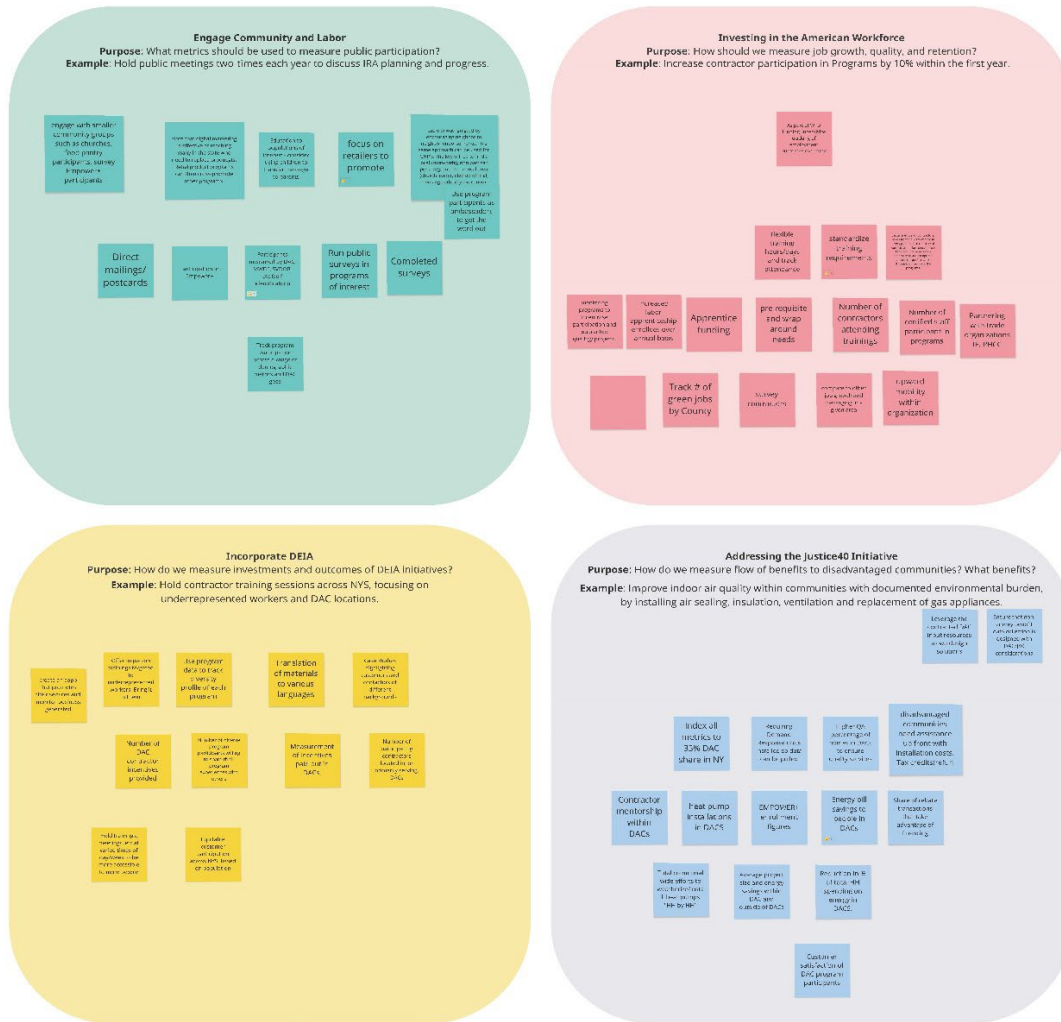


Figure 1: Full Whiteboard

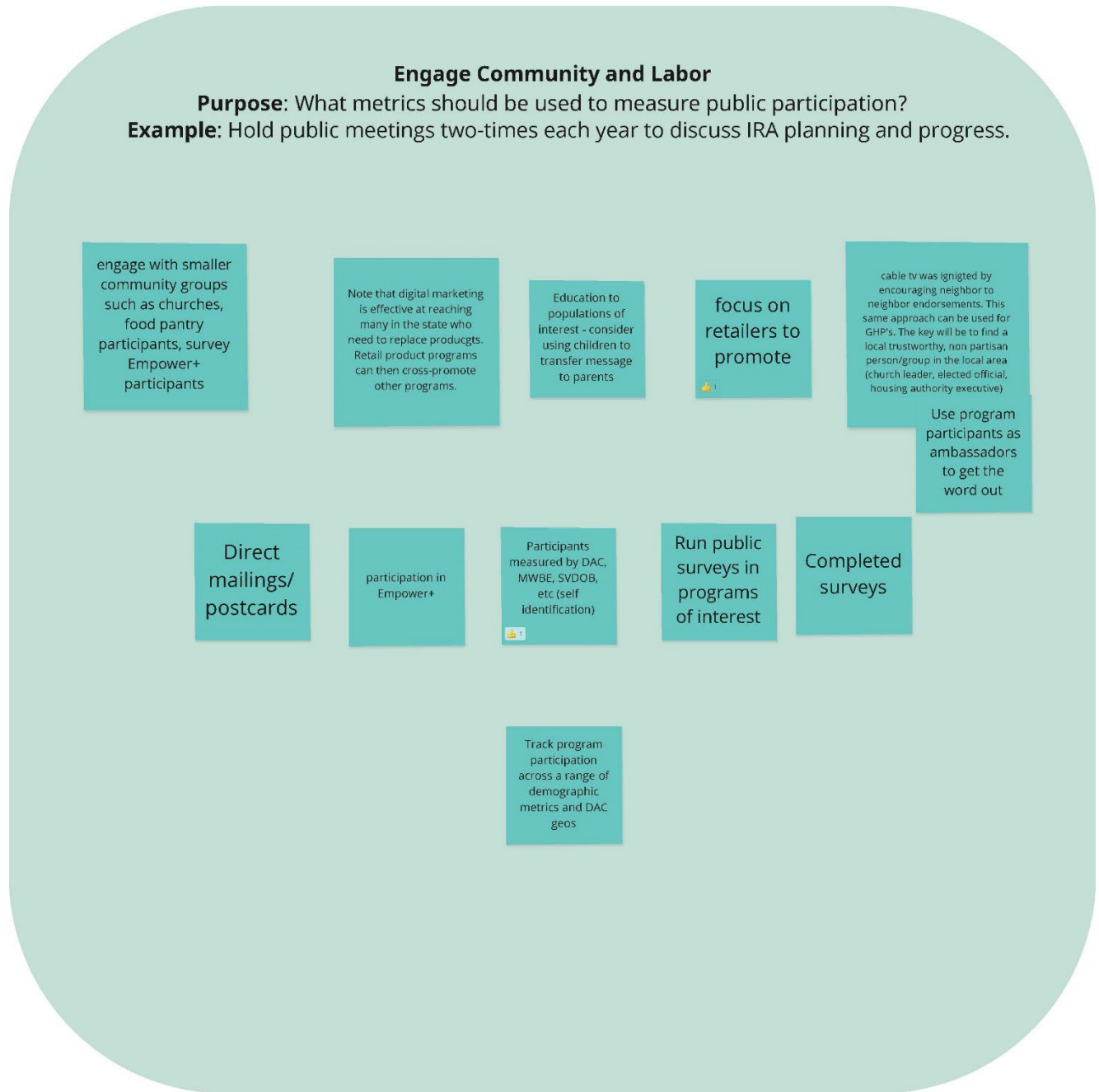


Figure 2: Engage Community and Labor

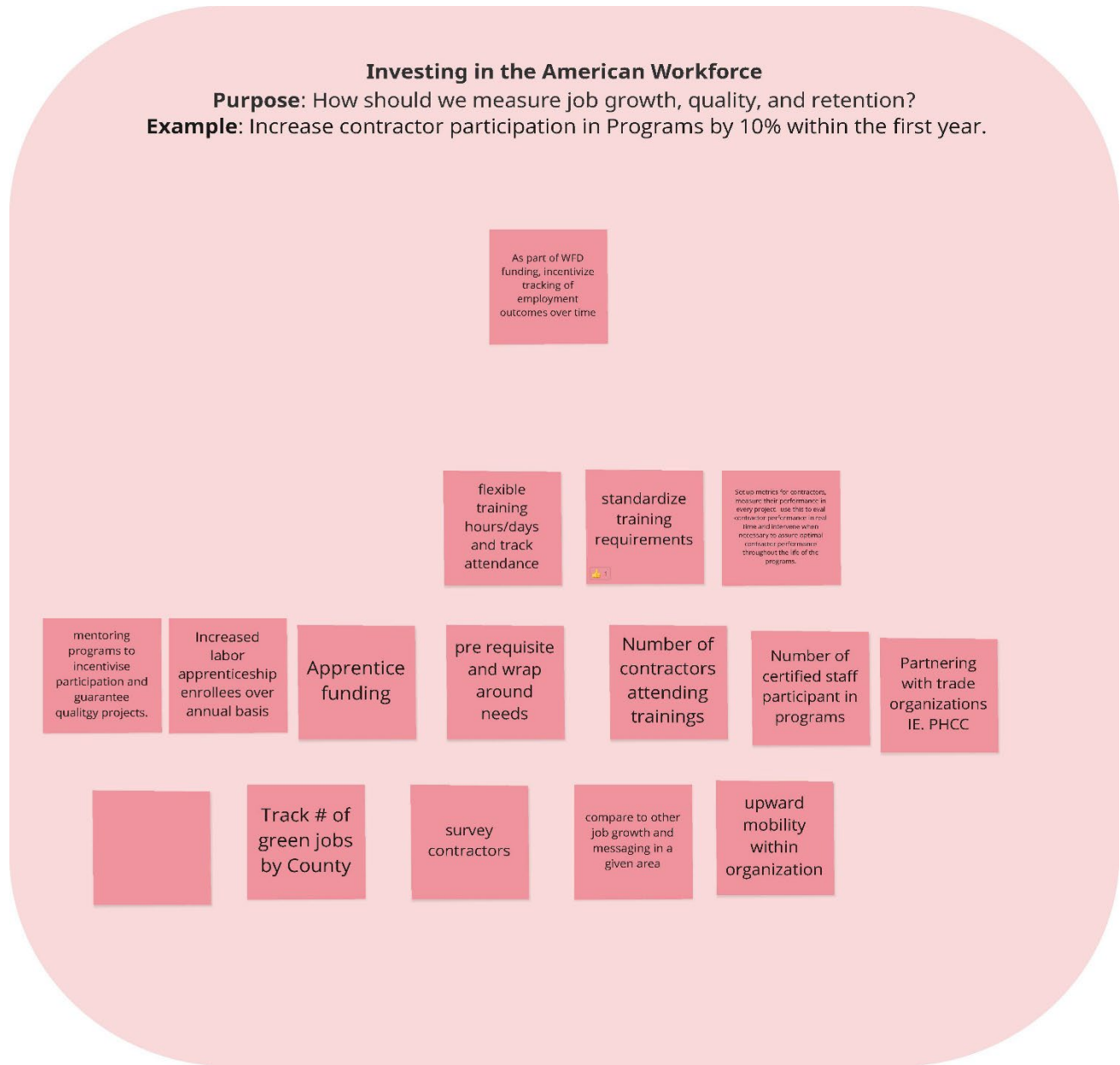


Figure 3: Investing in the American Workforce



Figure 4: Incorporate DEIA

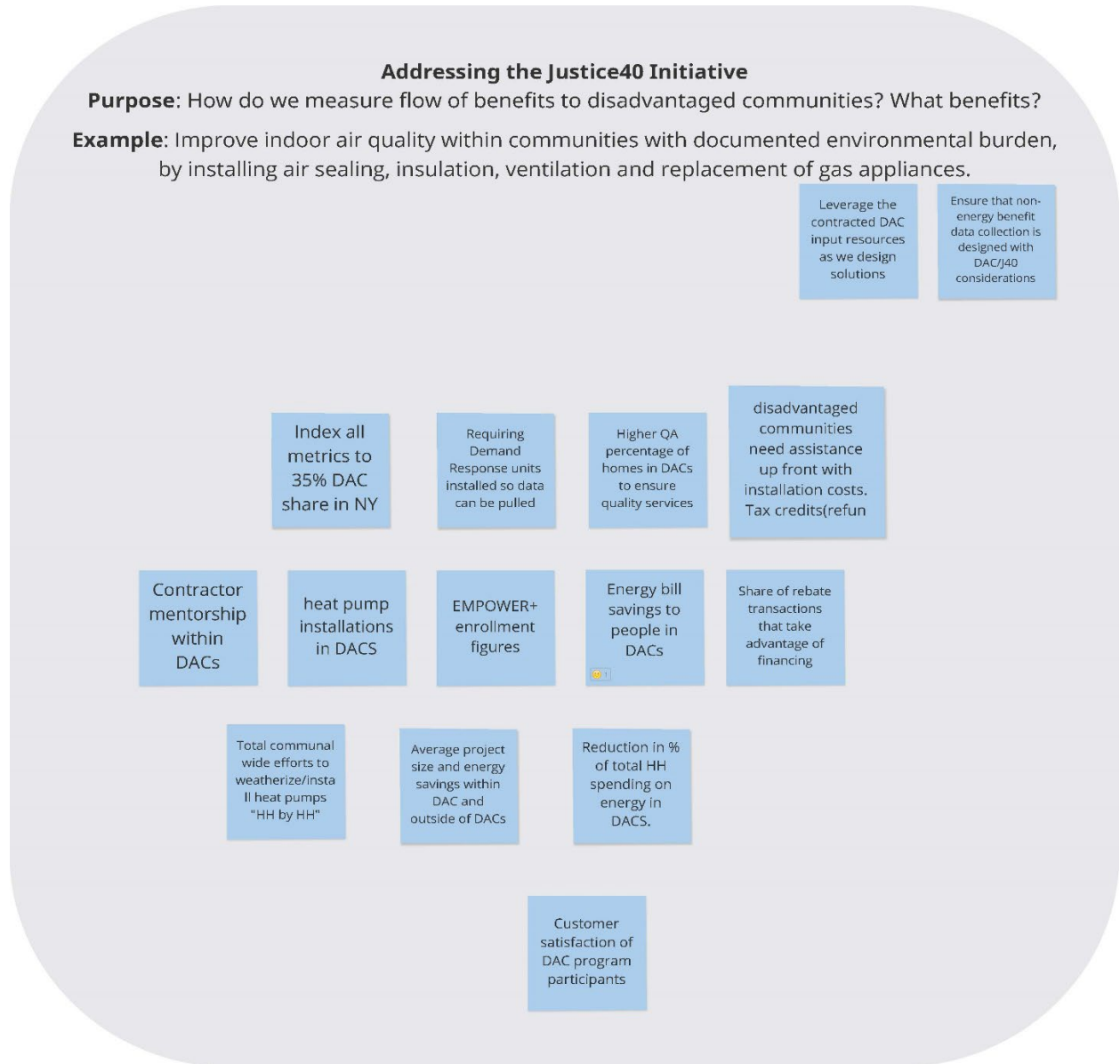


Figure 5: Addressing the Justice40 Initiative