

Meeting date/time: March 7, 2022 | 9:00 am
Meeting location: Virtual, Microsoft Teams
Chair/Sponsor: Nicole Hynum

List of meeting participants attached separately

List of Presenters:

Name	Title	Organization
<i>Tam Wagner</i>	<i>Director, Energy Efficiency</i>	<i>IESO</i>
<i>Nicole Hynum</i>	<i>Supervisor, Business Development</i>	<i>IESO</i>
<i>Stephen Lachan</i>	<i>Program Advisor</i>	<i>IESO</i>
<i>Luke Connell</i>	<i>Executive Director</i>	<i>Omega Foundation</i>
<i>David Forgione</i>	<i>Advisor, Market Research</i>	<i>IESO</i>
<i>Vicki Gagnon</i>	<i>Advisor, Business Development</i>	<i>IESO</i>

Agenda Item 1: Welcome Remarks

- Nicole Hynum thanked participants for attending and introduced Tam Wagner as the new Director of Energy Efficiency. Tam Wagner shared her professional experience from the past 17 years at the IESO, including her support for the value of conservation in Ontario, this was followed by a Land Acknowledgement.

Agenda Item 2: IESO Business Updates

- Nicole Hynum provided an overview of the agenda [see supporting material], opened the floor for new participant introductions¹, shared business updates related to the Energy Affordability Program (EAP) Delivery Partner procurement and Enbridge collaboration, results-to-date, marketing and awareness, as well as the Conservation Demand Management (CDM) 2021 – 2024 Mid-Term Review (MTR) Customer Needs Review (CNR). The group also discussed decarbonisation in the sector. Details of the discussion can be found below:

¹ New Participants include: Jonathan Hudson, Ecofitt | Abraham Wairisal, Ecofitt | Katie Fotheringham, CLEAResult | Melanie Johnston; EnviroCentre | Henock Abraham, EnviroCentre | Brett McMullen, Bruce County Housing Corp. | Annette Altounian, OEB

Procurement

- The IESO completed a joint procurement for program delivery services with Enbridge to facilitate a “one window” program experience for gas/electric customers.
- Program delivery partners are delivering in three different regions of the province:
 - Ecofitt – Serving the City of Toronto and Northern Ontario Region + distribution of kits
 - CLEAResult – Southwest and GTA Region
 - EnviroCentre – East Region
- The IESO is working with the outgoing program delivery vendor to wind-down projects commenced in 2021.

Results-to-Date

- There continues to be healthy participation in EAP, despite COVID-19 challenges. Since the EAP Roundtable in October, IESO delivery agents have completed 5,200 EAP projects and have enrolled an additional 5,000 households. In 2021 the IESO enrolled 17,500 households in total (vast majority were Tier 1 participants with comprehensive support).

Marketing and Awareness

- There is now a dedicated landing page on the Save on Energy website for First Nation participants.²
- Feedback provided by members of the EAP Roundtable has led to the IESO translating program brochures into three Indigenous languages, Oji Cree, Cree and Ojibway.

CDM Mid-Term Review

- The IESO is undertaking the 2021-2024 CDM MTR as per the CDM Framework Directive requirements. Four aspects will be considered as part of this CDM MTR review: 1) System Needs Review, 2) Customer Needs Review; 3) Competitive Mechanisms Review; and 4) Program Review. The IESO is required to report the findings to the government by the end of 2022.
- As part of this review, the IESO will engage with the marketplace to gain broad insight into customer experiences with the framework, including with the income-eligible³ sector to gather insights on current programs to consider impacts due to electrification, decarbonisation, changes to bulk and regional system needs, COVID, inflation, related supply chain interruptions, etc.

Decarbonisation

- Keir Brownstone of the EAP Roundtable shared that the City of Toronto (CoT) has set a target to achieve net-zero by 2040. As part of this, CoT has directed municipal organizations (e.g., social housing providers) to stop installing gas-fired equipment in 2023. Other jurisdictions (i.e. City of Ottawa, County of Oxford, etc.) and non-profit housing providers are likely to follow. These changes will result in increased demand for electricity as natural gas equipment is replaced with electric. There is concern about the available capacity of the local distribution system to support this change and how this will impact the bulk system.
- The IESO was asked to evaluate a moratorium on the procurement of new natural gas generating stations and develop a proposal for an achievable pathway to zero emissions in the electricity sector and report back to the Minister in fall 2022. There are opportunities for stakeholders to

² <https://saveonenergy.ca/First-Nations-Energy-Programs>.

³ For details on the high level engagement plan see the [Q1 EAP Roundtable Slides](#)

provide feedback to the IESO on the reasonableness of the assumptions of the APO.⁴ Of note – This is not a plan but a proposal that will be used for high level decision making.

Agenda Item 3: Omega Foundation Update

- Stephan Lachan introduced Luke Connell (Executive Director, Omega Foundation) and provided the background and rationale for the Energy Affordability Program pilot with the Omega Foundation to test different pathways of reaching income eligible participants in a targeted manner. Luke shared the pilot background/results noted below:

EcoSAVER Background

- EcoSAVER is a project of the Omega Foundation (a national charity focused on alleviating poverty). EcoSAVER's goal is to: motivate low-modest income households to participate in free energy assistance programs to save money, reduce residential energy waste and greenhouse gas emissions, while living in more energy-secure and healthier homes.
- The EcoSAVER Pilot promoting the Energy Affordability Program was held between November 2021 to December 2021. The goal was to 1) transition 300 Ontario households into the EAP and Enbridge Home Winter Proofing (HWP) Program; and 2) measure the impact of cost/comfort messaging. The pilot's key finding was that EAP eligible participants were motivated by the incentive (\$50 Tim Horton's gift card) and by both comfort and cost messages.

The discussion/feedback from the group yielded the following themes:

Incentive to Participate in EAP/HWP

- An incentive to participate in EAP/HWP was provided in the form of a Tim Horton's gift card for the test group. There was a noted increase in participation when an incentive was provided; however, there was no meaningful difference between the "comfort" or the "cost" messaging.
- It was noted that participants in the charitable space are limited to \$500, after which incentives are considered income. It was also noted that larger amounts for incentives can be seen as not believable/trustworthy from participants (i.e. some participants have received cheques for \$500 and have not cashed them).
- There is a diminishing return past \$100 for incentives. Being prescriptive with gift card incentives and choosing universally attractive incentives is better received. The Tim Horton's gift cards were being redeemed and seen as incentives that were readily usable.

Digital Literacy Limitations

- Participants for the pilot had chosen a digital pathway to participate in the survey. Non-digital pathways were not considered as part of the pilot. Suggestions to improve this included phone and hardcopy outreach. Text messaging was not recommended due to variability in access to cellphones, and issues of trust/legitimacy.

Building Trust and Relationships

- Gift cards were provided within three days of completion of the pilot application. Participants did not have to wait until after intake in the service delivery portal. The immediate reward/incentive to participants helps to build trust and legitimacy.

⁴ See feedback form and due dates in the following link <https://www.ieso.ca/en/Sector-Participants/Planning-and-Forecasting/Annual-Planning-Outlook>

- Minimizing what is being asked of delivery organizations and having a strong collation of participants, (i.e. support from IESO, Enbridge, United Way etc.) helps to build credibility.
- The IESO uses its brand identity to legitimize the activities that partners are doing by providing links to collateral. The IESO is clear that it never solicits participants' door-to-door, asks for payments or copies of bill, etc.

Agenda Item 4: Market Research Update

David Forgione presented results of the income-eligible market research conducted by IPSOS on behalf of the IESO. The presentation started with an overview of research objectives and methodology followed by an executive summary and detailed review of the results. The discussion was centered around the following themes:

Impact of Season on Level of Concern with Energy Bills

- The research shows that all key subgroups express the highest degree of concern about their ability to pay their electricity bills during the winter months, followed by their winter natural gas bill. Myfanwy Parry (Housing Services Corporation) notes that at least half of the social housing sector is electrically heated due to the vintage (late 60/70s construction when electricity costs were relatively more affordable). Additionally, there is not a lot of available cooling in social housing units. In many cases, social housing providers are bulk metered which is a factor that affects uptake.
- Cooling is becoming a health and safety issue in Northern Ontario due to temperature extremes. Participants are generally individually metered.

Trust and Awareness in the Offering

- Robert Hargain (Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services) noted that even if there is a local representative for the area that participants are familiar with, there's still some hesitancy because some of these measures sound "too good to be true" for some residents. Building trust is very important in the sector.
- Particularly in Tier 1, awareness is low which makes it difficult to get a potential participant to trust and therefore register in the program. This result was seen consistently across stakeholders for both EAP and Indigenous Programs.
- Trust was lower amongst Indigenous groups. Of note – they did not find the brand untrustworthy; they just found the brand slightly less trustworthy than other categories of participants.
- Creating regular, meaningful engagement points is very helpful with Indigenous communities to build trust overtime. This may be more efficient than other strategies as it overcomes the trust element as it "custom tailors" the engagement points.
- Sending local community staff with tradespersons or residential energy advisors improves trust. The local community staff need not be fully trained, just their presence helps.

Outreach Channels

- There is an opportunity to strengthen pathways through Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).
- The Omega Foundation trained caseworkers to use tools on behalf of clients. There may be a model/gateway there to help facilitate program access.
- English is a barrier in many Indigenous communities as it may not be their first language.

- (Jessica Nadjiwon, ONWAA) Sending translated brochures then doing follow-up will help to start building relationships. ONWAA staff can be provided with brochures that can be taken into communities. Hosting a town hall or getting the Chiefs involved would also be helpful.

Program Framing and Marketing Collateral

- Indigenous communities, and seniors may have limited digital access and prefer marketing collateral in the mail as opposed to social media.
- Framing of the program was identified as a barrier itself. There are publicly facing materials and the website that were referencing low income. Some participants (especially the elderly) were resistant to the idea that they were considered low income. Program implementers have started moving towards the term lower income. The IESO has rebranded to the program to “Energy Affordability Program” and removed reference to “low-income” to mitigate this issue.

Agenda Item 5: Final Remarks

The next EAP Roundtable meeting is planned to take place in June 2022. IESO will contact all meeting participants with a meeting date and a proposed agenda.

Agenda Item 6: Social Housing Focused Session

Vicki Gagnon lead a discussion on areas where insights can be gained to support future program enhancements from groups representing the social housing sector. The following key themes were explored further.

Electrification and Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPS)

- Due to the City of Toronto’s pivot to net zero by 2040, there is a need to move to add ASHPs in addition to more common measures such as pumps and variable speed drives. There is interest in incentive support for ASHPs.
- In many installations, baseboard heating was not disconnected, it was allowed to be used during emergency settings due to extreme cold. The use of the auxiliary heat (i.e. baseboard heating) has been mitigated by showing participants the increase in electricity bills caused by the use of auxiliary heating.

Panel capacity and Electrical Service Limitations

- Panel Capacity has been flagged as a contentious issue by a number of service providers. There is a particular concern with this in terms of the net zero 2040 target. If there is no service to supply due to local distribution limitations, it is difficult to upgrade panels and install additional measures (i.e. ASHPs).
- There has been a lot of scenario planning submissions to senior management at the City of Toronto by social housing providers but capacity limitations remain a systemic issue and a barrier to achieving the net zero 2040 targets.

Trust and Program Delivery

- Building trust in the social housing sector is an important theme and many social housing groups have worked hard to build and overcome challenges with trust.
- One successful strategy has been the use of *Tenant Assistant Program Representatives*. Representatives are a touch point for tenants and they coordinate the EAP Audit, delivery agent, measure implementation, etc. This is a single touch point of contact for tenants. Additionally, this helps tenants become stakeholders in the process.
- Upwards of 50% or more of municipally owned social housing has baseboard heating and a portfolio approach with deep retrofits has been identified as an ideal strategy by many housing providers.

Marketing Material for Retrofit Program

Vicki provided marketing collateral to gain insight on whether the collateral is useful or if it should be removed. There continues to be interest in the current marketing collateral.

Toronto Community Housing Pilot Project Update

Keir Brownstone (Toronto Hydro) provided an update on online facility operator training. The pilot is planned to be launched in Q3 2022. This training program is designed to help facility operators operate buildings by providing an overview on Variable Frequency Drives, Building automation system screens, condenser boilers, etc.