

Connecticut Energy Efficiency Board

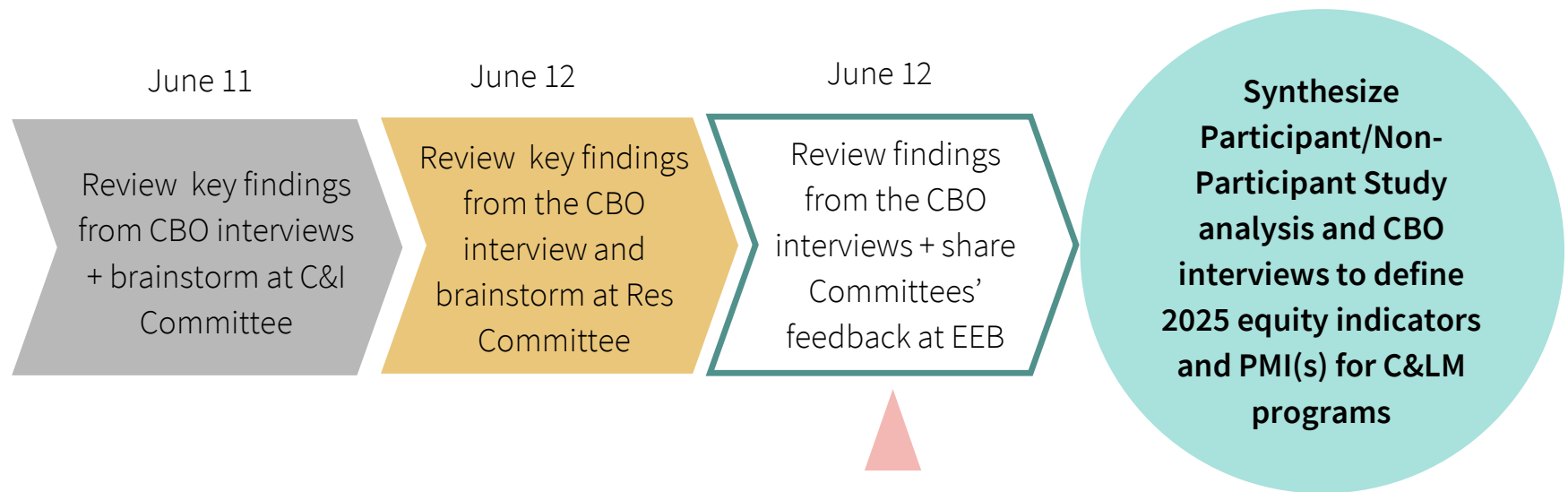
DEI Consultant:

Findings from CBO and Stakeholder Interviews

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What Comes Next



A black and white photograph of a building facade. The building features a large, prominent clock face with the word 'MARKET' written in large, bold letters across its center. To the left, there are two vertical signs that read 'LASSALLE'. The building has a classic architectural style with windows and a flat roof. A teal banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text 'Introduction: CBO Interviews'.

Introduction: CBO Interviews

Stakeholder Interview Scope and Approach

We conducted twelve interviews with **community-based organizations (CBOs)** who could speak to the **perspectives and the lived experiences of priority populations in Connecticut.**

These interviews – in addition to the non-participant study and 2023 DEI consultant work – will help inform the EEB's equity metrics for 2024 onward.

Methodology

Interviews completed: 12 interviews

Interview length: 45-60 minutes

Interview method: Online via Microsoft Teams

Interview recruitment:

1. Survey from EEB members
2. Poll / call for interviews to the public, and
3. Snowball recruitment method

Fielding timeline: March – April 2024

CBO Interview Topics

C&LM Programs & Priority Populations (WHO)

- Who is not benefiting, fully benefiting, or not participating?
- Program communication

Challenges and barriers to participation and what can help (WHY and HOW)

- Barriers to participation
- How to address participation barriers

Equity Indicator Framework (HOW and WHAT Metrics)

- What can help advance equity
- How does progress look like and how can we measure it

Community Stakeholder Engagement

CBO Interview Outreach list

Organizations we interviewed (n=12)

Harisi Energy LLC
Nonprofit Accountability Group
Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven
CEEJAC Staff
DEEP EJ staff
Operation Fuel
Interreligious Eco-Justice Network
Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises, Inc.
People's Action for Clean Energy
North Hartford Partnership
Catholic Charities
Habitat for Humanity Eastern Connecticut

Other organizations we reached out to (n=22)

Handyman Express Energy Solutions LLC
Efficiency For ALL CT
Green eco-warriors
The TEA (Tenant Energy Advocacy) Project
Connecticut Coalition for Economic and Environmental Justice
Clean Water Action
Chamber of Commerce- Eastern Connecticut
Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce
Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce
East Hartford Chamber of Commerce/CT Rivervalley Chamber of Commerce
Metro Hartford Alliance
East Hartford Chamber of Commerce
Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce
Waterbury Regional Chamber of Commerce
Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce
Public Utilities Regulatory Authority
Center for Children's Advocacy
M&T Bank
Capital for Change
United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut



CBO Interview Themes

- ◆ Rental Buildings/Properties
- ◆ Program Outreach and Awareness
- ◆ Program Design & Delivery
- ◆ Trust
- ◆ Language
- ◆ Building Health and Safety Issues
- ◆ Priority Population - Residential
- ◆ Priority Population - C&I

Key Findings | Renters and Rental/Multifamily Properties

1 Tenants, rental units, and multifamily properties identified as customers least benefit from C&LM programs.

3 Targeted education and recruitment for landlords and Property owners can improve participation.

2 There are multiple **barriers** to Renters and Rental Properties program participation, including:

- Split incentives
- Lack of understanding of program offerings and benefits
- Difficulty in meeting income eligibility documentation requirements
- Liability issues
- Limited capacity of small rental properties

Tenants, rental units, and multifamily properties were identified as customers least benefitting from C&LM programs. (n=11)

Almost all respondents identified tenants, rental units, and multifamily properties as those who least benefit from C&LM programs. The most cited challenge was the **requirement for – and difficulty in getting – landlord approval** for program participation.

“

I see the multifamily customer as being the most unseen because... the industry feels that they are the most challenging customer to work with because they don't own their properties and there's a liability with having a vendor come in and weatherizing a space without landlord permission. And then there are issues with the landlords not understanding the benefits of energy efficiency.

”

There are multiple barriers to program participation.

CBOs and stakeholders noted following barriers:

- **Split incentive** or misalignment between the cost and benefits of energy efficiency upgrades for tenants and owners (n=3)
- **Lack of understanding** of program offerings and benefits for both tenants and renters (n=3)
- **Meeting income eligibility documentation requirements** or getting income information from building units (n=2)

“When you're talking to landlords... the landlord doesn't care about, you know, insulating the house unless it's free. There's no benefit to him unless he's trying to sell his house because he wants to upgrade his house.”

“[...] it's very difficult for them to get permission from everybody in their buildings... by the time they get permission from all of them then it's too late and they have to start over again to get them all to sign to fill out the paperwork.”

There are multiple barriers to program participation.

- Renter challenges when the bill is in someone else's name (n=3)
- **Liability issues:** landlord hesitancy to have someone to access and “assess” the unit (n=3)
- **Limited capacity of small rental properties:** 1-5 units, or under 12 units that are run by individuals or mom-and-pops (n=3)

“

We need to figure out how to break the barrier between the landlord and the tenant ... [and] how do we get in touch with both of them?[for example] how do we... empower or give information to the tenant so the tenant could go and demand it from their landlord.

”

“

Most of my clients, I would say 99% of my clients, are renters. The only way that anyone in Connecticut can access energy efficiency programs is with the consent of their landlord.

”

Targeted education and recruitment for landlords and property owners can improve participation.

“

[we] want to make sure that tenants are protected. [if] The landlord gets this great benefit, increases the value of their property, and then they [do not] evict the tenant.

”

“

Educate landlords as to what it means to participate in energy efficiency...[utilities are] not trying to condemn property or take the property away but arguably increase the value of the of the property.

”

Key Findings | **Program Outreach and Awareness**

- 1** C&LM **program awareness is low** among underserved populations.
- 2** Partnerships with **trusted messengers**, such as community-based organizations, are the most effective way to engage underserved customers.
- 3** To reach priority populations, several respondents noted utilities need to be **more culturally thoughtful in outreach methods**.

C&LM program awareness is low among underserved populations. (n=11)

Respondents noted that **lack of awareness** is likely the key barrier to program engagement. To reach them, they noted the importance of developing new, **culturally responsive outreach strategies that ‘meet the customer where they’re at.’**

“

A lot of times when I'm talking to someone about these energy efficiency programs, it is brand new information. They have never heard of the small business program before, which tells me that our group is... reaching out to an entire demographic that can be served by this program but isn't being served by the program.

”

Partnership with trusted messengers are the most effective way to engage underserved customers. (n=5)

Several respondents noted that **communities already have people, organizations, and community hubs they trust**. Partnerships with these organizations can help drive increased participation.

“We really need to have funding for a community organization that has the *trust of neighbors*. [they] know low-income people and can... help people fill out the applications and encourage the people who need the programs to get the programs rather than having the utility companies - which you know oftentimes contact you to shut off your service. For them to say ohh you know we got this program that will benefit you, it doesn't resonate, [utilities] are not trusted.”

To reach priority populations, several respondents noted utilities need to be more culturally thoughtful in outreach methods. (n=4)

COBs mentioned:

- **Multi-pronged outreach** (e.g., presentations and leave-behinds in community centers)
- **Culturally responsive outreach** (e.g., going beyond translations – using imagery and cultural references that resonate with customers)
- **In-person outreach** – and awareness that relationship-building takes time

“

*I would recommend that we look at the aggregate population and say there are some people that we absolutely should go almost **knock on their door**... because communication is so difficult, the idea prioritizing and focusing... You have to identify the barriers where you can prioritize and focus.*

”

Marketing materials should be easier for customers to understand. (n=3)

Respondents noted that marketing materials should be easier for customers to understand and include **tangible affordability-focused program benefits** such as:

- Easy-to-understand cost savings and comparisons → making the focus affordability, not EE
- Comfort and improved health (e.g., indoor air quality)

“

One of the things we're trying to do is think more about what is the customer intent or resident's goal in, [and] what they're trying to aim for. It's common that [utilities] synthesize it to “energy” or “climate” or “comfort...” but we're finding this more nuanced need to learn about that person. And we start to find that if we understand their story well enough, there are others that are actually in line with that.

”

Key Findings | **Trust**

- 1** For many customers, there's a cognitive disconnect around utilities wanting to help customers save energy and spend less on their bills. Underserved customers typically **only interact with their utility when there is a problem** (e.g., high bills, payment issues, shutoff notices).
- 2** Respondents felt that **direct marketing/outreach from utilities may not be effective** in reaching underserved customers.

There is a cognitive disconnect around utilities wanting to help customers save energy and spend less on their bills. (n=10)

Many respondents (n=10) noted that underserved customers typically **only interact with their utility when there is a problem** (e.g., high bills, payment issues, shutoff notices).

“

I do think that when your only interaction with people is kind of threatening or sending pay me notice... that sort of dampens people's enthusiasm to reach out to you and see what you can do to help them. So, I think the utilities running these programs may not be the best interest.

”

Respondents felt that direct marketing/outreach from utilities may not be effective in reaching underserved customers. (n=7)

“

I think once you enter a relationship of fear, it's hard to have positive communications.

”

“

Some people in the community will see an email from the utility company and read it and read it to understand it. And then there are others who have such a poor relationship with the utility companies that any mail or email that they get, if it's not a bill, not reading it.”

”

“

[In regard to a negative experience as a POC with vendor] it's interactions like that that once they happen, it's hard to, you know it's hard to put the toothpaste back into the tube.

”

Key Findings | **Program Accessibility & Delivery**

- 1** Stronger **partnerships with community-based organizations to provide support and technical assistance** can enhance program participation and the experience for underserved customers.
- 2** The **Community Partnership Initiative (CPI)** and **funding for local community-based organizations** to conduct program outreach and recruitment are steps in the right direction.
- 3** Some respondents feel that program **applications and processes are complicated** and challenging for underserved customers.
- 4** The big-picture priorities and **barriers of under-served customers are different from other customers**, and they need programs that accommodate their needs and are designed to address participation barriers.

Stronger partnerships with community-based organizations to provide support and technical assistance. (n=4)

Partnerships can improve both program participation and the experience for underserved customers.

“

I think the information about programs is not available and then the technical assistance piece around having access to these programs is not available and I think those are some of the biggest barriers for folks.

”

“

We still need a community groups that can provide the guidance and help people to fill out the forms if they need the help, but mainly to provide the guidance on where to start, how to start, you know what to do first and what to do second, what to do third, what the timing is, and what the eligibility is for certain things.

”

The Community Partnership Initiative (CPI) – and funding local community-based organizations to support program outreach and recruitment – are steps in the right direction. (n=3)

Interviewees who were familiar with CPI applauded this effort from the utilities. They asked for more information on organizations that are part of CPI and wanted to promote collaboration and information-sharing between funded CPI organizations.

Some respondents feel that program applications and processes are complicated for underserved customers. (n=5)

Respondents mentioned application challenges related to:

- Language
- Format
- Legalese
- Documentation requirements

“

The process is just so complicated and you gotta have a lawyer or at least a perception is that you have to have a lawyer in order to participate.

”

“

There need to be more of them (in regards to programs like I Heart My Home) so that people can get the one-on-one guides.... and [these programs] should be advertised, they should be on the website.

”

Programs should accommodate under-served customers' needs and address participation barriers. (n=3)

The big-picture priorities and **barriers of underserved customers are different from other customers**, and they need programs that accommodate their needs and are designed to address participation barriers.

- Work schedules don't align with audits/site visits.
- Competing priorities mean that EE takes a backseat.

“

I am not sure what could possibly be done about this, because I'm having the audit done is a fairly long process to takes a couple hours,.. for someone who is lower income might be working 2 jobs that can just literally just be very difficult to schedule, you know, finding a time that work.

”

Key Findings | **Language**



Utilities' current marketing and outreach strategies (i.e., beyond translated materials) do not cater to customers who speak a language other than English.

Key Findings | **Building Health and Safety Issues**



The big-picture priorities and **barriers of under-served customers are different from other customers**, and they need programs that accommodate their needs and are designed to address participation barriers

Utilities' current marketing and outreach strategies (i.e., beyond translated materials) do not cater to customers who speak a language other than English. (n=4)

Respondents cited **Chinese languages and Spanish** as areas of particular concern.

“

[There are] 63 different languages spoken in city schools... And the Spanish community has lots of small businesses. I'm not convinced they're addressing the language problem. It's more that they kind of get left out of the equation when people are even thinking about outreach.

”

Old buildings or building stock issues often prevent priority populations from participating in C&LM programs. (n=11)

Old buildings or building stock issues such as mold, asbestos, knob and tube wiring, and health and safety issues in homes, religious centers, and small businesses often prevent priority populations from participating in C&LM programs.

“

A lot of the funding that goes into energy efficiency is not able to be accessed by the lowest income people... because there's barriers in people's homes that prevent that work from happening.

”

Priority Population Indicators | **Residential**

We asked interview respondents to characterize “priority populations” from their perspective. Most common responses are below:

The most mentioned populations are:

- Renters (n=11)
- Multifamily buildings (n=5)
- Low-income (n=5)
 - Low-income families
 - Low-income communities
 - Environmental justice communities
 - Working Poor

Followed by:

- Elderly and fixed-income families (n=3)
- BIPOC, LGBTQ+, Non-English speaking - Micro-communities/immigrants (n=3)
- Single-parent households (primarily led by women), and those caring for family members (n=3)

Priority Population Indicators | C&I

We asked interview respondents to characterize “priority populations” from their perspective. Most common responses are below:

- BIPOC contractors
- Small businesses
- Municipalities with limited capacity to engage in programs
- Minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses
- Faith-based institutions, religious communities, churches



APPENDIX

Other Findings : Data Access

Customers lack access to data to empower them to clearly and easily understand their EE journey to date or what they can do next.

Two also noted that, while utilities capture extensive data, they do not share this data in a way laypeople can understand.

“

[There are] some barriers that are preventing customers from having their own data and any record of what was done and any information about what should be done.

”

Other Findings : Structural Issues

“

The level of service that people are receiving for energy efficiency improvements in their homes to me does not seem commensurate with the amount that they're investing in these services through their electric bills or gas bills... there's a challenge there because low- and moderate-income people always pay into those programs, but don't seem to benefit from them at the same level.

”

“

Demand for assistance continues to grow, which to me means we're not doing enough to prevent people from needing that. If we're really getting into everybody's house and we're really focusing on the lowest income people and the oldest housing and the most barriers, and we were really getting a lot of progress to remediate those barriers... you would be seeing, you know, and a decrease or a flattening or a change in the demand of 'I need help paying my electric bill.'

”

May 8, 2024

X2208/2235 **Participant/Non-Participant** **Customer and Equity Analysis**

Literature Review Summary

Shawn Bodmann, Melissa Dempsey & Miles Ingram, DNV



Link to the presentation on May 8 EEB meeting:

<https://app.box.com/s/shmxd9o1z8yb1oxkb49j1duip2snkhit/file/1523655594141>

General Findings – Residential

Residential participation and savings rates differed across several key customer characteristics:

Characteristic	Underserved Groups	Notes
Household income (7 studies)	Moderate income, Low income	Studies exploring the effects of multiple variables found ownership and income to be the most important factors
Ownership (7 studies)	Renters	
Housing type (7 studies)	Small MF (e.g., 2-4, 5-9 units)	
Language proficiency (7 studies)	Limited and non-English speaking	Language effects explained through ownership and income
Geographic location (3 studies)	Rural	
Age of head of household (2 studies)	Older (e.g., 65+ years)	
Age of structure (2 studies)	Older (e.g., pre-1950)	

Additional Insights – Residential

- **Connecticut-specific results:** CT is successfully serving marginalized populations via income-eligible programs and participation of large multifamily properties in the market rate programs (R1983 evaluation)
- **Important trends:** Recent shifts in market (e.g.: lighting cliff) and policy focus (e.g.: electrification, GHG) will significantly impact savings metrics
- **Data limitations:** Most analyses use geographic level (U.S. Census) data rather than individual household level data
 - Individual level demographic data is often not available*
 - Threatens the validity of the research
 - Some topics that advocates really want (e.g. energy burden) have not been studied*





Residential – Barriers and Opportunities

The reviewed studies included the following common barriers to residential program participation:

Common Residential Barriers	CT R1983	MA 19R04-B-NP	MA 21R23-B-MF	RI 21-RX-NP
Lack of program awareness	Program Outreach and Awareness			X
Lack of access to and understanding of program information	Program Accessibility & Delivery			X
Insufficient trust	Trust	X		X
Competing priorities	Program Accessibility & Delivery			X
Lack of decision-making authority for multifamily programs or renters	Renter / Multifamily		X	X

- **Findings put into practice in multiple ways:**

- Definition of hard-to-reach customer in MA
- Increase focus on renters
- Increase focus on limited English beyond renters



C&I – Barriers and Opportunities

Studies included the following **common barriers** to participation in C&I programs:

- Uncertainty about monetary bill savings **Program Outreach and Awareness**
- Higher cost of energy efficient equipment **Program Accessibility & Delivery**
- Lack of awareness of energy efficient options **Program Outreach and Awareness**
- Access to financing, especially for smaller customers **Program Accessibility & Delivery**
- Tenants lacking authority to make the decision about equipment upgrades **Renter / Property Owner**



Findings can be put into practice in multiple ways:

- Collect better segmentation data
- Targeted outreach & streamlined offers for systems that renters can change
- Pursue repeat participation



General Findings – C&I

C&I participation and savings rates have been less studied, but based on the three studies reviewed, they have been found to differ based on the following customer characteristics:

Characteristic	Underserved Groups	Notes
Size of business (3 studies)	Small and microbusinesses	Intersection of size and segment was stronger indicator in CT study
Fuel type (3 studies)	Gas customers	
Industry segment (3 studies)	Administrative & Support, Waste Mgmt & Remediation, Accommodation & Food Services, Information	
Community type (3 studies)	Distressed/EJC communities receive program benefits generally proportional to population and consumption	



CBO Interview Guide

See the full In-depth interview guide by clicking on the image.

Overview

ILLUME Advising will conduct in-depth interviews with Connecticut-based community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve communities that, based on their experiences or perspectives, can speak to the experiences and needs of Connecticut customer segments. These interviews help ground-truth the work done by ILLUME and the EEB – particularly around Task 5 in 2024 SOW, Define the "Who:" Target Populations Definition Development, and Task 6. Articulate the Longer-Term "How:" Equity Indicator Framework Development.

These interviews could provide better understanding of the needs and priorities of communities, as articulated by those communities – and this insight can feed into the definition of priority populations and the development of metrics to measure equity in C&LM programs.

Research Approach:

We plan to conduct interviews online via Microsoft Teams. Interviews will last 45-60 minutes, using a semi-structured topic guide for each conversation. However, given the nuance of experience or expertise, each respondent may have, we propose taking more of a flexible, exploratory approach to each interview to ensure that we dig into areas that are most pertinent to them. We will provide a \$100 incentive for participation.

We used a three-pronged approach to identify the CBO and organization sample for these interviews:

1. **Requested input from EEB and Committee members:** On January 22, We distributed a form¹ to EEB and committee members and the EEB Public Notices and Events distribution list via an email from the EEB Executive Secretary. In the form, we requested names (and, if available, contact information) of organizations they think we should interview.
2. **Published an interest form on the EEB website:** We published an interest form on the EEB website where CBOs could submit their interest in participating in this interview effort – or where members of the public could suggest an organization they think we should interview.
3. **Conducted secondary research:** ILLUME conducted secondary research to identify organizations in CT working on equity and energy burden to include in our interview sample.

Recruitment Approach

ILLUME will email a list of stakeholders suggested by EEB - through poll or email- and ILLUME's research. ILLUME will follow that email with scheduling for individual interviews with interested participants. ILLUME plans to interview 12 stakeholders in March and April of 2024.

¹<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=AWKQWorsWUKuHaEwaqCh69vw4ofGmBdu8EgnjApTb9UQjVG0DhDT1k5VziWOUc4OTgwV0ZUQkPmQIQjQCN0PWcu>