

Income Qualified EE Advisory Committee North

Attendee List and Meeting Notes

The Renaissance Collaborative
3757 S. Wabash Ave, Chicago IL 60653
Wednesday, October 30th, 2019
10:00am – 2:00pm

Attendees (In-Person)

Theo Okiro, Facilitator
Celia Johnson, Facilitation Team
Annette Beitel, Facilitation Team
Alberto Rincon, Facilitation Team
Christa Shavers, L3 Agency
Larvetta Loftin, L3 Agency
Cassie McNeill, L3 Agency
Dion Warr, L3 Agency
Scott Steward, Genius Lab
Dantawn Nicholson, ComEd
Angela Hurlock, Claretian Associates
Danielle Cooper, Claretian Associates
Tevonne Ellis, Claretian Associates
Connor Jansen, Slipstream
Nick Hromalik, MEEA
Brady Bedeker, ComEd
Melvin Nicks, ComEd
Booker Vance, Elevate Energy
Lauren Casentini, Resource Innovations
Aimee Gendusa-English, Citizens Utility Board
Dan Maksymiw, CEDA
John Pady, CEDA
Dave Hernandez, ComEd
Karen Lusson, National Consumer Law Center
Lisa Miranda, Rebuilding Together
Chris Vaughn, Nicor Gas
Ashley Palladino, Resource Innovations
Kristen Pratt Kalaman, Resource Innovations
Angela Morrison, Chicago Jobs Council
Jean Ascoli, ComEd
Naomi Davis, Blacks In Green
Bridget Williams, Navigant
Dan Westin, Franklin Energy
Yesenia Diaz, Franklin Energy
Omy Garcia, Peoples Gas – North Shore Gas

Leanna Mckeon, Chicago Housing Authority
Katie Elmore, Community Investment Corporation
Cheryl Johnson, People for Community Recovery
Yvette Pittman, Peoples Gas – North Shore Gas
Mary Johnson, Resource Innovations
Briana Parker, Elevate Energy
Mike King, Nicor Gas
Jordan Berman-Cutler, ComEd
Beatrice Quach, Resource Innovations
Yami Newell, Elevate Energy

Attendees (By-Phone)

Foluke Akanni, Citizens Utility Board
Diane Alford, Kendall County
Marsha Belcher, CAP Lake County
Mary Lockhart White, CAP Lake County
Demi Charalab, Franklin Energy
Larry Dawson, IACAA
Brian Eakin, Navigant
Alan Elliott, Opinion Dynamics
Mary Ellen Guest, Chicago Bungalow Association
Jasmine Gunn, Claretian Associates
Nick Horras, Resource Innovations
Lauren Kriz, Nicor Gas
Chelsea Lamar, Navigant
Jennifer Morris, ICC Staff
Rob Neumann, Navigant
Andy Odom, Community Contacts Inc,
Patricia Plympton, Navigant
Brandon Pieczynski, Pangea
Erin Stitz, Applied Energy Group
Gina Strafford-Ahmed, Dupage County
Litesa Wallace, Rockford County CAA
Brian Yeung, Slipstream
Julie Hollensbe, ComEd
Erikka Byrge, Slipstream
James Carlton, People for Community Recovery
Melissa Creamer, Kendall County
Daniel Lach, Thresholds

- **Follow-up and action items are highlighted.**

Opening and Introductions (Theo Okiro, Facilitator)

- Today's meeting is in Bronzeville. Bronzeville is a historic and vibrant community in Chicago's South Side. It is has also been selected as ComEd's "Community of the Future."

- **Overview of ComEd’s “Community of the Future” Bronzeville Initiative (Jean Ascoli and Dantawn Nicholson, ComEd)**
 - ComEd has taken seriously that the utility needs to change its model from transmission/wires and other energy infrastructure built –to increased focus on community engagement.
 - The “Community of the Future” Initiative is an investment in the Bronzeville community. It is a better way to serve all customers in more fluid way. Giving customers more choices and platforms to do business with us.
 - The initiative includes a partnership with IIT on microgrid.
 - The initiative is a new model that will pivot ComEd to be more focused on resilience, sustainability, better communication w/ customers, opportunities for distributed energy.

Spotlight on The Renaissance Collaborative (TRC) – Priscilla Foster, TRC

- TRC was formed to save the former Wabash Y, a historic location for African Americans during the Great Migration.
- Mission is to provide self-sufficiency through housing, employment and workforce initiatives.
- **Programs:**
 - TRC is an affordable housing provider:
 - 101 permanent supportive housing units for chronic homeless
 - Residents are required to have an “agenda” (mission, something they are working toward)
 - Workforce initiatives
 - Organic landscaping
 - Customer service training
 - Janitorial/ environmental service training
 - Senior Village 71
 - Independent living facilities for seniors
- **Comment from Pastor Vance, Elevate Energy:** TRC is a superb organization. We worked with them to establish a pipeline for our workforce program.
- **Comment from Annette Beitel, Facilitation Team:** One of the Committee recommendations to engage with and build trust with “hard to reach” populations is to identify “community ambassadors”, and also hire customer service people from communities, perhaps there could be coordination with TRC for this effort.
 - **Response:** Absolutely, we welcome efforts to collaborate.

Leveraging a “Technology Education” Program to include EE Education (Scott Steward, Genius Lab)

- Five years ago, right after CPS strike. Scott Left CPS to “teach differently.” He really identifies with challenges of being an income qualified community and trying to make a way for yourself.
- While at CPS, he recognized that students were distracted by cell phones. He also had a very strong record teaching entrepreneurship and was part of regime that was not allowing cell phones in the classrooms. He wanted to help students understand the power of technology they had in their hands.

- He created “Project Tech Teens.” Which is now known as Genius Lab. The goal is to create more “tech-preneurs.”
- We’ve touched at least 670 students. Genius Lab touches about 50 – 60 student per program. We run 8 – 10 programs (4 - 6 programs per year). Each class teaches young people about technology and its viable career paths.
- Genius Lab is creating pipeline of new tech innovators. Not just mobile app development. We did work with 50 students over two years in renewable and sustainable energy. We gave students mock situations. We looked at solar, wind. We began to think about what their relationship is with energy, science.
- Genius Lab’s 2020 Goal is to teach students about EE and how it can help them save money and live well.
- L3 agency recognized their work; submitted the organization to ComEd to be a potential community “All-Star” for “Save and Share” app.
- The ComEd partnership has helped Genius Lab be exposed to new populations. They have showcased work at the Museum of Science and Industry.
- **Question for Cheryl Johnson, People for Community Recovery:** Would love to collaborate in Altgeld Gardens; sees kids hanging out near library just to get WIFI, there is a need for tech education at Altgeld Gardens.
 - **Response:** Genius Lab would love to have a presence at Altgeld Gardens.
- **Question from Annette Beitel, Facilitation Team:** Do you help students identify post-secondary/college opportunities that create path to STEM?
 - **Response:** Yes – example: 14 yr. old girl who started program at 8 yrs. old that just graduated from John Hopkins with a Masters.
- **Comment(s) from Yami Newell, Elevate Energy:**
 - Would love to partner GL with Elevate’s community engagement folks
 - Look into The Learning Exchange
- **Question from Briana Parker, Elevate Energy:** You mentioned that Genius Lab is self-funded. Is there a way people can plug into the organization and donate?
 - **Response:** Nothing set up at the moment but has autonomy & flexibility to take on help
 - Pitch Event coming up on November 22nd.
 - **Follow-up item:** The Facilitation Team will follow-up for details on this event.
- **Question from John Pady, CEDA:** Have you been able to connect with 1871 Merchandise Mart, they are an incubator like Genius Lab.
 - **Response:** Has not been able to create relationship w/ 1871, they focus primarily on adults, Genius Lab is geared towards the youth.

EE Education for IQ Communities (Aimee Gendusa-English, Citizens Utility Board)

- Reviewed barriers to engagement for income challenged consumers. already taken advantage of. Some people have complicated living and billing arrangements.
- Pamphlet handed out that helps consumers → Consumer Rights booklet.
- CUB is currently working on CEJA petitions, water privatization, solar incentives.
- Focus on making people feel empowered: “don’t get taken advantage of, you can understand it!” Rather than mentioning “energy efficiency.”

- For EE Education: Use “Empowerment” vs. “energy efficiency.” Your utility bill does not need to be a mysterious thing. CUB does 500 events per year.
- People find “empowerment” more engaging than “energy efficiency” which seems penny pinching.
- CUB strategies for engagement:
 1. Go to where the public is
 2. Spark their interests
 3. Peak time savings
 4. Tailor to their interests
 - a. Avoiding scams
 - b. Money smart week
 - c. Solar power hours, listen lead share
 5. Include EE/DR concepts/programs!
 6. Work with staff who work for clients.
 7. Empower them to solve problems
 8. Include EE/DR concepts/programs
- **Action Item:** Utilities should consider utilizing a comprehensive and holistic approach to EE education and outreach.
- **Comment from Pastor Vance:** One of the things that has been good working with CUB is that they provide a variety of services. IQ Communities are dealing with several issues at once. Needs to be a diverse group, can’t just be white people coming into the neighborhood. Also, people in low-income customers have situations discussing, and people from the community will understand the challenges.
- **Comment from Karen Lusson:** In communicating EE, it would be great if the utilities departments connected with credit and collection about why people are in crisis. She can tell horror stories trying to help consumers. There are pending cases before ICC that default rate on deferred payment arrangements. This must be a joint arrangement with credit and collection.
 - **Follow-up Item:** Promoting coordination with utility departments will be addressed via the 2019 IQ North Committee memos.
- **Question from Annette:** Do you train community ambassadors?
 - **Response:** CUB has no direct workforce development, but Service Provider workshops focus on “deputizing” attendees to understand utility/EE issues
- **Comment from Pastor Vance:** We really do need diverse folks to engage the community. They need to understand community needs.
- **Comment from Karen:** Message for utilities in the room: you have to take a holistic approach. Ask collections people why people are in such crisis. There are more Deferred Payment programs being signed up for than can be practicably paid back.
- **Key Takeaways:**
 - Marketing efforts should focus on training the community-based service providers on range of opportunities for addressing IQ customer energy burdens. The community-based service providers can then continue advising/assisting IQ customers even if program efforts have moved to a different community.
 - Marketing and Outreach should be “holistic” and focus on addressing the full energy-related needs of an individual customer. Most programs just focus on marketing their individual program, and don’t think about the customer’s holistic needs.

Small Group Breakout Responses

- **Table 1- Melvin Nicks, ComEd**
 - We are incorporating many of the marketing and outreach recommendations into our 2020 strategy plan.
 - On EE education: ComEd is already working on Fact Sheet for IQ communities; ways to better understand your bill and how to address EE.
 - On Marketing & outreach: will leverage data analytics to target communities that aren't participating in program and uncover barriers to participation
- **Table 2- Pastor Vance, Elevate Energy**
 - On one-on-one outreach: great method as exemplified by CUB but may benefit from group outreach as one-on-one is tough and can come with barriers.
 - Keep communications simple to avoid confusion in conveying EE education
 - Work with existing, innovative projects (like Genius Lab).
- **Table 3- John Pady, CEDA**
 - Mostly focused on Hard to Reach recs.
 - Have better data to understand what the hard to reach pops are and where they are. Based on applications that they've received, can use data
 - There is a need for centralized database so that people know where to go for answers to questions about EE, FEJA, assistance programs, etc.
 - On EE education: need to decide what that means and what exactly we want to teach people
 - Should try not to stretch dollars too thin to avoid underserving people that apply for programs.
- **Table 4- Kristen Pratt Kalamon, Resource Innovations**
 - Modifications: Language "hard-to-reach" should be reframed. This can be offensive, can be perceived as the audience has done wrong. How about "reaching IQ populations" or use "underserved" populations.
 - Modification: There are several mentions of trust between customers and utilities. One is regarding scams, other trust between utilities. Suggestion to streamline its use.
 - More emphasis could be created outside of context
 - Framing of programs: shame can be a challenge for people interested in program; think of language that makes it clear programs are for everyone
 - Responses from people might be utility-related but not EE; should be able to refer them to the appropriate service → think "wrap-around service" model
- **Table 5 – Katie Elmore, CIC**
 - In order to make sure these are incorporated into utility plans → treat them as "guiding principles."
 - Sections 1,2,6 in Hard to Reach section → consolidate them and create a communication standard.
 - Communicate standards to utilities, perhaps as a checklist.
 - Overall, some reorganization is in order.
- **Table 6 – Yami Newell, Elevate Energy**
 - Generally, agree with recommendations; also thought some things can be combined.

- Think about how we frame all these programs, and how we talk about communities we are trying to reach.
 - We tend to characterize the programs as the problems we are trying to solve, rather than the perspective of the communities; they are much more than those problems.
 - Not great to tell people what's wrong with them, characterize them by their flaws.
- **Table 7 – Christa Shavers, L3 Agency**
 - There are assumptions about communities when outside groups come in trying to help; better to talk with them directly about what is needed.
 - Culture affects the way language is used; helpful to consider how culture may alter what language to use.
 - Younger organizations tend to be more energized about working on new programs, as opposed to established organization that have a “base.”
 - Make sure to account for differences between homeowners and tenants.

Establishing Metrics for Tracking Job Diversity and Creation in IQ Communities (Angela Morrison, Chicago Jobs Council)

- **Question(s) from Yami:**
 - How do you work with partner orgs to assess their programs, effectiveness?
 - What gaps exist in the current WD landscape?
 - **Response:**
 - 200-300 existing orgs around Chicago that do WD
 - They work with orgs look at their programs to better understand whether they are effective. They promote apprenticeships, paying stipends, etc. They promote quality jobs and policy that helps develop quality jobs
 - Not all organizations fill out their form asking for info on the populations they work with
 - Support Services were cut during the budget impasse. Organizations became more strategic about cobbling together funding opportunities. Organizations need to network with one another to weave together support services (housing, jobs, etc.)
- **Comment from Pastor Vance:** Male oriented training programs are a challenge because it becomes difficult to retain and train women. Transgender folks also have a challenge accessing these programs.
- **Comment from Angela:** Trade-skill jobs are challenging because they require tests that people need to be trained up to take and pass.
- **Comment from Cheryl:** Possession of guns (not use – nor discharged) is also an issue that limits job opportunities
- **Comment from Annette:** There is lots of discretion in criminal charges at the State Attorney --> diversion programs may help
- **Comment from Angela:** There is a need for metrics, standards in legislation to ensure there is “teeth” that creates accountability

Next Steps

1. **IQ North Memos:** The feedback from the small group breakout sessions will be incorporated into the 2019 IQ North memos.
2. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting date will be **Wednesday, December 5th**. At this meeting, the IQ North Utilities will respond to IQ North memo recommendations. The goal will be to reach consensus on next steps for action items.