



**LIFE**

**Low-Income Forum on Energy**

LIFE Low-Income Forum on Energy  
2007 Regional Meeting Evaluation  
Batavia, NY  
May 1, 2007

The first of six meetings in the LIFE 2007 Regional Meeting Series was held in Batavia, New York on May 1, 2007. Seventy-four individuals attended this event. There was a 25% increase in attendance compared to the 2005 Regional Meeting held in Western New York. Pamela Carter, Chair of the LIFE Steering Committee, New York State Department of Public Service served as Mistress of Ceremonies. The Genesee County Office for the Aging served as local host and supported this meeting. Their warm welcome, well lighted meeting space and comfortable breakout space was acknowledged by Ms. Carter in her opening remarks.

**Attendees by Affiliation**

<b>% of Attendees</b>	<b>Type of Organization</b>
15%	Community Action Agency
0%	Community-Based Low-Income Energy Agency
4%	Community-Based Low-Income Housing
0%	Consultants
4%	Cooperative Extension
0%	Educational Institution
0%	Energy Service Company (ESCO or Marketer)
7%	Faith-Based Organization
26%	Local Government Agency
9%	Not-For-Profit
0%	Public Official
1%	Rural or Neighborhood Preservation Organization
20%	State Agency
11%	Utility Company
7%	Weatherization Agency

**Agenda and Ratings**

Note: attendees were asked to rate session content using the following scale:  
5=Excellent 4=Very Good 3=Good 2= Fair 1=Poor

**Welcome and Opening Address**

**Rating: 3.84**

You have asked and we are responding. The LIFE Chairperson will focus on questions raised at previous LIFE events and the solutions generated. Whether you have attended LIFE events in the past or this is your first time, you will want to hear about the positive effects LIFE has on the lives of many low-income New Yorkers. *Speaker: Pamela Carter, LIFE Chairperson, NYS Department of Public Service*

**Introduction to Networking****Rating: 4.02**

More than just a term used to describe time to interact with colleagues, networking is a valuable tool. We will demonstrate how you can use this tool to your advantage and give you an opportunity to practice what you have learned later in the day. *Speaker: Mary Thompson Grassi, Project Manager, NYSERDA*

**Session 1: Panel Presentation – A New Light on Today’s Energy****Rating: 3.85**

Our animated panel will report on the state of energy in New York, energy sources and how energy use affects the environment. We will also address low-income consumer’s energy burden. It’s a fact that low-income consumers pay more of their income toward energy bills; we will examine how much more. The session will end with useful cost effective ways to help consumers save energy. *Moderator: Ben Wiles, Senior Attorney, Public Utility Law Project, Speakers: Peggie Neville, Senior Project Manager, NYSERDA, Lee Butler, Project Manager, NYSERDA*

**Session 2: Weatherization: The Jet Stream Shouldn’t Be in Your Home****Rating: 3.41**

Heard of a blower door test and wonder what that is? Want to refer a client for weatherization and not sure how to explain what to expect? Whether you are a seasoned weatherization professional or someone just starting out, this session will provide you with a hands-on look at the tools of the trade and information on the referral process. *Speakers: Rick Benetz, Energy Auditor, Neighborhood Housing Services of South Buffalo, Randy Machelor, WRAP Liaison, Erie County Department of Senior Services, Lee Butler, Project Manager, NYSERDA*

**Session 3: The Mystery Unraveled****Rating: 3.79**

Within the myriad of programs available to help low-income consumers, we’ll share three that you should have in your tool box. *Speakers: Gabrielle Dotterweich, EPIC Outreach Representative, NYS EPIC Program, Mark Schaffer, WMS Installation Team Supervisor, NYS OTDA, Ben Wiles, Senior Attorney, Public Utility Law Project*

**Networking Lunch****Rating: 3.76**

*Attendees were asked to ....* Join a luncheon table discussion group for a conversation about one of the topics presented during the morning sessions.

**Session 4: Regional Program Best Practices – Learn From the Experts****Rating: 4.20**

An in-depth presentation will highlight one local program’s creative approach to working with low-income New Yorkers. *Speakers: Joshua Clayson, Office Manager, Cattaraugus Community Action, Kenneth Tomczak, COO, Cattaraugus Community Action, Tina Zerbian, CEO, Cattaraugus Community Action*

**Session 5: Hypothetical Family – Meet the Coopers****Rating: 4.20**

Heat or eat. A choice no one should have to make. Join the group as we problem solve our way to helping the Cooper family struggle with limited resources to meet the challenge of paying for their energy bills and still have money to buy the necessities of life. Small group working session. *Steering Committee members facilitated this session.*

**Session 6: LIFE, Sharing, Action...****Rating: 4.17**

An opportunity to practice the networking skills learned through out the day. *Speakers: Pamela Carter, LIFE Chairperson, NYS Department of Public Service, Mary Thompson Grassi, Project Manager, NYSERDA*

**Evaluations Returned: 48****Total day’s average rating of all session scores: 3.94**

## **Notification**

**How did you hear about this meeting?** (*Attendees were asked to... check all that apply.*)

36% Postcard notice	45% My supervisor
46% Email notice	6% A colleague
20% LIFE Newsletter	2% Other - steering committee email was forwarded to me by SOFA

*Attendees were asked...*

**What information did you learn today that you will use in your day-to-day work?**

- (5) EmPower information to make referrals
- (4) Lifeline service
- I thought the “Best Practices” was a great presentation about improving the intake process.
- EITC and tweaking Lifeline and tie in with HEAP & FS (food stamps)
- EITC family/income table
- EITC
- Information on EITC for energy consuming families is info that DSS and case manager need make known to all low-income people
- How other county organizations handle problems—housing/fuel/utilities
- Agencies that I had not heard about
- Very interesting topics – much variety
- Not much new about weatherization. The other topics are not in my area or of use to me.
- Collaboration: coordinate with other agencies
- Resources that I didn’t know of before
- Energy tips, additional programs and resources
- How to better conserve energy
- About weatherization
- I learned a lot today and didn’t know about some of them, like Lifeline and EPIC
- Energy conservation is key
- Different resources and programs available to me to use and discuss with clients
- Lots of program options, especially Lifeline and EITC
- Energy savings tips to relay to clients – possibly newsletter article
- Nice to have list of participants
- Networking
- Additional programs available; specifically natural fuel
- There are many referrals to use
- Networking, able to discuss topics throughout the day
- EPIC changes
- Tips to give to clients to conserve energy
- Weatherization programs should receive more referrals than currently receiving if you look at the number of HEAP referrals, cost savings and benefits are overlooked.
- Networking and information sharing is critical as many programs and initiatives exist to assist low-income folks.
- Written shared dialogue – handouts that can be re-read to get all of the info stated
- Other agency linkage
- Much of it – EPIC, Lifeline, EITC...
- I will share information with weatherization and with the public on EITC, EPIC, fuel/telephone utility assistance programs and other programs that can help low-income persons (GAF, FEMA, etc.).

**What questions did you still have at the end of today?**

- Too many to write down
- Will we ever have enough resources?
- How to partner with other agencies to coordinate outreach programs
- I felt a lot of presentations were fragmented and possibly not explained in terms understandable to all persons present.
- Why did they not have a presenter on “earth-sheltered homes”? The technology is largely used in mid-eastern and southern homes.
- All my questions were answered.
- What is E-911?
- What is the kilowatt/hour cost of running 750 watt heater?
- How do you apply for EPIC (local administrator) or directly through some other source)?
- Where are the NY State DSS (OTDA) programs to help pay high energy costs?
- NYSERDA’s program for appliance/refrigerator replacement – how do people qualify?
- Roof replacement, windows, handicap needs – what agencies help with this?
- Please make sure that programs are explained like WRAP – many will not know what they mean.
- Presenters should have knowledge of what they’re presenting.
- Many said way too many times “we’ll get back to that”.
- A number of questions – looking forward to communicating without others in attendance
- What more can we do?

**What would be some good follow-up sessions for next year?**

- The weatherization piece was very poorly demonstrated.
- Identify who has referrals and who has funds/services available by organization.
- Discussion of the New York Power Authority and its impact on
- Breakout session should reconvene to discuss ideas and topics collectively
- Unsure
- More HEAP info
- Tax preparation
- Organizations to refer potential customers to
- The hypothetical family concept was EXCELLENT – to evaluate and discuss with each other
- How is Cattaraugus County Community Action doing with their “holistic” approach to helping their customers?
- Presentation to all New York county social service agencies
- EmPower – more info including financial guidelines
- More time for client service discussion – THAT was outstanding
- Rationale for repayment of 131-S (4 month payments)
- Please have a session at the 2008 LIFE Conference that models the Cattaraugus
- How do you deal with people in crisis – furnace breakdown or electric shutoffs, etc., emergencies
- Put all participants on an email distribution list so that we can all be more aware of various trainings w/various organizations
- More in-depth sessions on any topic discussed
- Weatherization related concerns
- Sessions that would get more detailed in providing information on a topic that was covered today

**Name any of the speakers you heard from today that you would like to hear more from in the future.**

- (5)Peggie Neville (Peggie’s data is always fascinating)
- (2)Tina Zerbian
- (3)Attorney (Ben Wiles)
- (4)Lee Butler
- Joshua Clayson
- Ken Tomczak
- (1)OTDA – as many speakers did not relate to county-run social services programs
- (3)Mary Grassi (entertaining as always)
- (2)Mark Schaffer
- (4)Cattaraugus Community Action – real life hands-on
- (2)Rick Benitez
- Best practices
- Liked weatherization session-Lifeline -possible other programs available-utility companies
- More from utilities, weatherization programs
- Need more info on the weatherization program and energy audits
- Speakers need to be better informed

**What speakers would you like to recommend for LIFE to invite to present next year?**

- Somebody on DSS programs in NYS – for more detail
- Local people from the area where the meeting will be held
- DHCR – Division of Housing & Community Renewal
- New York Power Authority & Niagara Power Project
- Mark Pierce or Joe Laquatra from Cornell University
- More on NYSERDA programs and eligibility for same
- Agencies – real life examples; panel discussion
- (2)Peggie Neville
- Lee Butler
- Tina Zerbian
- Weatherization. Cattaraugus County approach was interesting.
- Cattaraugus
- Someone to speak about “earth sheltered homes”, “greenhouse homes” or “solar pit adobe homes” and any available funding for the building of these homes.
- I like info that relates to other issues than energy as a referral for helping entire household.
- A great team. Bring them all back.

**Logistics**

Attendees were asked to rate logistics using the following scale:

5=Excellent 4=Very Good 3=Good 2= Fair 1=Poor

Timeliness of meeting notification

**Rating: 4.35**

Ease of pre-registration

**Rating: 4.32**

Ease of on-site registration

**Rating: 4.32**

Meeting facility, food & beverage

**Rating: 3.8**

**Average of all logistic scores: 4.22**

## **General Suggestions / Comments**

- Thank you – great meeting
- The challenge to presenters is how can you creatively present material that is terribly boring to your audience. Peggie Neville does this.
- Including a list of attendees is a good idea
- Good idea to give info on other programs available to low-income folks.
- Cooper exercise was good!
- Intro to Networking exercise was a great idea. Will use with other groups.
- Need to do a better screening on speakers.
- Genesee County Office for the Aging hosts a very good program and facility.
- Today was VERY pleasant and well organized.
- This meeting was not what I expected.
- I think it was good to hear about programs they may not have known about. Those are things I'd like to see at the conference next year.
- Good training, lots of information, variety of speakers
- An excellent forum – one of the most effective workshops I've been involved in.
- Excellent speakers and good information!!
- Spare us from climate change lectures! (too long as well)
- This format is informative and provides good ideas to take back to my county for the next season and ongoing.
- It's better to cover a topic completely than stay on schedule.
- Very well done.
- This was a very beneficial day
- I really liked the informative nature of these workshops. So often we hear about programs but why they were formed and what they do, etc., is very helpful in understanding the referral process.
- Really found the case study very helpful and beneficial!
- Such a great place to learn about other resources – such a benefit!! This was a very helpful day.
- Networking was good.
- Please spell counties and names correctly
- Great job
- Hope to see you next year.
- Target the lowest income counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua
- Session 1: Unfortunately only a small portion of the presentation was permitted / too much information for session
- Session 2: The second person was great! Good advocate!
- Lunch Networking Session: Good opportunity to ask questions / too many people w/their own discussions
- Session 5: My group was great (group #1) / Very good (group #1)

### ***And comments on refreshments and logistics...***

- Lunch to be non-working. Chance to unwind and go off-site.
- (2) Breakfast – need more liquids like juice. Leave out the water.
- Lunch?
- Hot lunch
- Chairs too hard
- Not enough bathroom breaks
- Lunch provided was not a healthy choice for low carb dieters and no choices!
- Facility great / food average