

Shaping the Future of Equity in Energy Efficiency

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ABSTRACT

Inequity in energy has a long history. Low-income and underserved communities have asserted for decades that low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, English-isolated populations, and others have been underserved by energy efficiency programs. These communities also have borne the brunt of environmental impacts, have fewer job and contracting opportunities, and experience higher energy burdens. However, our national and state greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals will not be fully reached without including low-income communities, racial and ethnic minorities, English-isolated populations, moderate-income communities, renters, small business, and others in energy efficiency and electrification ratepayer-funded programs. Expanding access into targeted communities, increasing participation, and supporting and strengthening supplier diversity are challenges that must be effectively met.

There is now an equity-in-energy movement advancing in state and utility energy efficiency, particularly for ratepayer funded programs. The movement is nascent and, while there are many good ideas and new initiatives, there is little direct literature from which to draw stories of success. This paper presents an overview of approaches from current state and utility equity working groups (EWGs), coupled with insight from interviews with thought leaders, including those from Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, and Vermont. We integrate their strategies to present a holistic framework for equity in energy efficiency. This framework can serve as a strategic tool for state- and utility-led EWGs to advance equity and climate resilience.

Understanding the Complexities of Energy Efficiency Equity

The Problem is Inequity

State and utility planning to reduce GHG emissions for climate resilience are revealing the disparities in access to both the benefits and costs of clean and renewable energy and energy efficiency. Low-income and minority communities have asserted for decades that they have been underserved by energy efficiency programs while at the same time bearing the brunt of deleterious environmental impacts. These communities have also faced greater energy burdens and have received few of the local economic benefits of the energy industry. Increased recognition of these systemic inequities has brought a new equity-centric approach to decarbonization. This energy equity movement recognizes that there has been historic underinvestment in disadvantaged communities by ratepayer-funded energy efficiency offerings.

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How Inclusive Energy Efficiency Equity Initiatives Can Be Structured to Improve Equity

Energy efficiency equity focuses on modifying ratepayer-funded programs so that all customers have equal ability to access, participate in, and benefit from programs. Historically, efficiency programs have focused on low-income customers, with little attention to other equity demographics like language, race, and housing tenure. More attention is being paid now to these latter groups, but to date there is little literature with evidence of successful strategies. Benefits of inclusion to these communities are jobs and economic development, supporting and strengthening diverse suppliers, and improving workforce development and pipeline planning that target low-income and minority communities.

Developing effective and equitable programs for underserved communities requires participation and guidance by those communities rather than just a reaction (EPA 2021). For energy equity efforts to be effective, they require multisector stakeholder participation. Stakeholders include community-based organizations (CBO), environmental justice (EJ) organizations, and/or community leaders, coupled with state and utility representatives. Historically, community planning politics and practices involved those of privilege disproportionately participating and leveraging their political strength to maintain or enhance their privilege. The results in communities of color are diminished housing stock and higher housing costs. Given the pattern of how low-income and underserved communities are marginalized, similar patterns must be prevented when addressing energy equity. Engaging and empowering leaders of communities that come up against racial, social, and environmental injustice is vital to making changes in their communities.

Energy equity has the most potential to be achieved when impacted communities and the CBOs that serve them are provided with structured opportunities for input in the planning, design, and delivery of the programs. Energy equity efforts that address all four components of equity can have the greatest impact:

- **Distributional equity:** Policies and programs fairly distribute benefits and burdens.
- **Procedural equity:** There are inclusive and accessible processes for developing and implementing programs, and community members have authentic leadership roles.
- **Structural equity:** Decision makers recognize the historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics that have led to inequities and reform programs that perpetuate disparities.
- **Transgenerational equity:** Decision makers consider the impact on future generations of policies and program and create solutions that benefit future generations. (ACEEE)

Expanding access to energy efficiency programs benefits targeted communities by reducing their energy consumption, energy costs, and GHG emissions, while increasing community energy resilience. Improving the equitable delivery of energy efficiency programs also serves states and utilities in meeting energy savings and emissions reduction goals.

Necessary Ingredients to Inclusive Equity Planning

There are two determinants that will drive the work to best impact: (1) representational composition of the group that is working to devise solutions, and (2) concurrent development of the full supporting structure of equitable program delivery.

Ensuring Diversity in Energy Equity Planning

Inward-facing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts should reach beyond current standard scopes. While conventional DEI training is designed to reduce workplace discrimination, anti-racism DEI training can serve a valuable role in helping EWGs be more equitable in their own composition and deliberations. Anti-racism DEI efforts provide the opportunity for EWG team members to gain new insight, tools, and a deeper understanding of issues of equity and racism.

EWGs are comprised of state and utility representatives from the energy utility or policy community with little local representation. Too often, state and utility EWGs are dominated by or are exclusively white without adequate representation or leadership from Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities. Anti-racism DEI training is a critical component so that EWGs can tackle the effects of multigenerational systemic racism. An effective anti-racism DEI training program allows participants to recognize and manage their biases, change their behavior (HBR 2021), progress and reduce the influences of such biases on their energy equity work.

Prejudice-reduction interventions, including workplace DEI training, are broadly viewed as minimally effective. Most diversity training conducted over the last decades has been presented within the framework of the homogeneous social and cultural environment. As a result, studies of the effectiveness of diversity training are analyzing the effects of ineffective training. To improve outcomes, groundbreaking approaches to DEI training that disrupt biases are necessary. Even the best anti-racist training will not entirely eradicate deep-rooted prejudice; however, self-awareness of biases is fostered, which can then change how those biases manifest. Inward-facing DEI trainings designed to help each EWG member gain a clear understanding of individual, institutional, structural, and systemic racism and biases are recommended. Also, the success of anti-racist training depends largely on the person facilitating the training. The facilitator must be highly qualified and experienced in a variety of workplace diversity issues (Training Industry 2019).

A foundational education in DEI concepts, including anti-racism training, helps provide an equity lens. EWGs can gain a better understanding and appreciation of inclusivity and equity. Anti-racism DEI training better ensures that the EWG's efforts meet intended positive impacts.

Community, state, and utility representatives working together are the most effective teams to develop equitable solutions that are relevant to underserved communities. If an energy equity team does not include community representatives or diverse participants as active voting representatives, the energy equity efforts will not be as effective.

The Supporting Structure of Energy Equity

Like all complex social structures, energy equity initiatives will have better effect when attention is paid to underlying structural components of equity. Too often, utility programs consider this only an issue of better marketing, and ignore the other pieces that can work together to propel a program to success. Committing to improving equity in energy efficiency programs and investments enhances energy services while creating better processes, systems, and outcomes. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to equitable programming, the following are typical components that need to be addressed, with detailed examples provided later:

- **DEI training** (addresses procedural and structural equity) – Provide foundational anti-racism DEI training to help develop an equity lens for all those focused on establishing equity metrics and incentive programs. This can improve equity by creating better understanding among staff and subcontractors who design and implement programs.
- **Equity metrics** (addresses structural and transgenerational equity) – Assess utility-driven data and establish measurable goals. As it is said, it is difficult to improve that which is not measured. Helping staff and subcontractors understand clearly what they are trying to improve by defining clear metrics can help.
- **Community engagement** (addresses procedural equity) – Support authentic and culturally congruent outreach and communication strategies. The energy efficiency industry has learned that the best inroads into any community are through resources that are already trusted by that community.
- **Workforce development** (addresses distributional and transgenerational equity) – Create energy efficiency workforce development paths for underserved communities. This can improve equity in two ways: it provides direct economic benefit; and, it makes the workforce more like the communities being served, which can increase uptake of service.
- **Supplier diversity** (addresses distributional and transgenerational equity) – Increase the supplier diversity base to reflect the diversity of the communities served. Similar to the benefits of workforce development, this has direct and indirect impacts on equity.

Establishing and working toward meaningful energy equity goals in each of these five areas helps to improve equity in ratepayer-funded energy efficiency programs.

Method – Learning from Energy Efficiency Equity Thought Leaders

The authors drew on decades of direct experience in energy equity programming to identify characteristics of effective equity programs. Additionally, a series of virtual interviews were conducted with industry thought leaders. Structured questions were asked and open discussions were held. The interviews provided the opportunity to explore programmatic characteristics and helped to identify best practices based on comments recorded (and, later, reviewed and approved) by the thought leaders. Interviews were held with leaders at District of Columbia Sustainable Energy Utility, Efficiency Vermont, Energize Delaware Empowerment Grant – Energy Equity Fund, Energy Trust of Oregon, Massachusetts Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (oversight of Mass Save), New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, and TSK Energy Solutions. In each interview, we explored key players and strategies in advancing equity through energy efficiency programs. In each, we also queried specifically about best practices that had been learned experientially.

Best Practices in Energy Efficiency Equity

The strategic depth of energy equity initiatives and goals varies significantly across state and utility territories, as well as by the level of program maturation. In some initiatives, there is a targeted approach to one or two specific goals, while others are broader in scope. It is our goal to help shape the future of equity in ratepayer-funded energy efficiency program design by providing a recommended energy equity framework, a comprehensive approach for improving

overall equity, diversity, and inclusion with measurable impacts. Best practices were developed from insight from thought leaders interviewed.

Equity Metrics: Best Practices

To best determine if a ratepayer-funded energy efficiency program is equitably serving customers, an understanding of available data is key. In the best cases, disparity studies will identify the size and scope of gaps in service and characterize who is and is not being served (Energy Trust of Oregon 2021, Frank and Nowak 2016, VEIC 2019). Recommended best practices for equity metrics include:

1. Measure and report on program delivery inequities. Analyze participants and nonparticipants for all sectors, and identify and study barriers to participation. Develop meaningful equity goals and metrics based on these disparity study results.
2. Collect and analyze utility data. As examples, collect and assess data on energy use, energy costs, energy savings, energy burden, as well as procurement practices and workforce development initiatives.
3. Align qualification standards with related programs. For example, for low-income housing retrofit programs, it may be useful to align with affordable housing qualifications to reduce barriers to entry for participants and allow programs to collaborate in delivery.
4. Analyze the benefits and burdens of policies. Assess who is helped or who is hurt, both intentionally or unintentionally. As an example, there may be a program policy that requires specific documentation that may be easier for some to provide than others.
5. Track and regularly report equity findings. Re-examine the metrics being used to ensure that they continue to be the right focus for program design and implementation. Change metrics as needed. Support a commitment to transparency and accountability.

Best Practices in Action: Equity Metrics. In 2020, the Massachusetts Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (EEAC) established its EWG, comprised of EEAC councilors and consultants, and representatives of program administrators (PAs) and the low-income lead vendor, and EJ organizations. The EWG was established after an analysis of nonparticipation (DNVGL 2020). The evaluation determined underservice to moderate-income customers, renters and landlords, households with a primary language other than English, and small businesses. The EWG developed detailed equity targets to address these issues and for guiding investments to improve equity and to assess performance in its next three-year plan (EEAC EWG 2021).

The EEAC agreed with the adage of “what is not measured is not managed,” and, in effect, is not prioritized. Mary Wambui, who represents the residential sector on the EEAC and serves as the co-chair of its EWG, is a strong advocate of this. Ms. Wambui pointed to the need for change in what is measured and valued. She said, also, that she was proud of the set of metrics that the EWG put before the EEAC to improve equity in the 2022-2024 Energy Efficiency Plan in Massachusetts. The EWG laid out a series of metrics tied to each of the four consumer groups that were underrepresented as well as to the overarching theme areas of community engagement and workforce development (EEAC EWG 2021). Each metric was designed to be measurable and timebound. Each was negotiated with the PAs as the three-year plan was developed. The EWG recognized that its current framework will evolve and that its metrics may need to change in the future.

As Ms. Wambui summarized in our interview, “In Massachusetts, we did a good thing to come up with the energy equity targets. That is how we get to advance equity in energy efficiency.” Examples of the EWG equity targets include:

- **Moderate Income:** Increase number of moderate-income weatherization jobs by 700% from baseline to 2024.
- **English-isolated:** A Mass Save Language Access Plan will be developed. This Plan will address how customers are to be served in their preferred language.
- **Renters:** Increase renter unit participation by 24% from 2021 to 2024.

Communities Strategies: Best Practices

It is recommended that culturally congruent community outreach and education strategies and recommendations be planned and implemented. Effectively listening and collecting information from underserved communities will contribute to helping strengthen relationships between policy makers and those communities.

Develop a community outreach strategy while keeping in mind that to make the greatest impact, it will be best to go through trusted, community partners (Narayanan 2020). Usually, there are a variety of active community groups to consider as community partners. In large cities, there may be a wide variety; in smaller jurisdictions, the choices may be much more limited. All may be relevant and/or have different and competing interests. Identifying relevant and effective CBOs can be complicated. If it is challenging to prioritize CBOs, consider including those organizations that have previously participated in community advocacy for energy, environmental, and/or other related community issues. CBOs with a strong track record of relevant leadership, activism, and being solution oriented are preferred. In addition, CBOs that have positioned themselves in the center of local communities are valued, such as faith organizations and community centers. Inquiring with these organizations and local political representatives and community or local business leaders regarding which CBOs they recommend can help ensure aligned CBOs are identified. They may prefer to align and to send a representative that serves their collective voice. Best practices include:

1. Develop strategies around geographically targeted areas. Relevant local groups can help to create program offerings that are relevant to the local community. CBOs can serve as a bridge to help design relevant offerings that serve community members and/or subgroups in need.
2. Develop program goals, program design, and new marketing strategies and community engagement plans in partnership with CBOs.
3. Integrate information management systems so that CBOs can access data, information, and knowledge to support their efforts.
4. Create a continuous feedback mechanism from community leaders and CBOs to learn from as needed. For example, design and conduct surveys and focus group discussions that assist in understanding experiences, perspectives, values, concerns, and interests.

Best Practices in Action: Communities Strategies. As the Director of Development and Programs at the Energize Delaware Empowerment Grant, Jim Purcell is building a new model

for energy equity. Mr. Purcell is operating a new grant program for systemic change in multiple sectors. This new Energy Equity Fund (EEF) targets investment in local underserved communities to advance equity. EEF encourages multisector collaboration that is community-based and focused on “easing energy burden, creating healthy and safe homes, advancing clean and renewable energy, developing and sustaining clean energy jobs, cultivating a systems change that ensures legislators, regulators, and power providers account for equity in energy services.”

Mr. Purcell understands that funding local community-based energy projects promotes resilient communities and advances the community’s political power. By funding open-call grant proposals, like a foundation, EEF can focus on increasing energy equity impact in low- and moderate-income communities. Mr. Purcell has a strong understanding that cultivating community resiliency is rooted in fostering relationships in the community. He describes himself as a convener and a listener, and he spends significant time out in the community building relationships to understand interests. As a result, EEF offers the resources needed for communities to move forward into the clean energy movement with training and jobs, renewable energy projects, affordable and healthy homes, and more.

Workforce Development: Best Practices

Workforce development is designed to cultivate a knowledgeable workforce for the energy efficiency sector while fostering economic development in low- and moderate-income (LMI) and other historically disadvantaged communities. By providing LMI communities with access to well-paying jobs and career opportunities, these practices ensure economic benefits related to energy efficiency programs include those historically underserved. In addition, the workforce pipeline addresses the energy efficiency sector’s lack of diversity, replaces retiring workers, and contributes towards innovation by building the skilled workforce the industry needs. Best practices include:

1. Develop a workforce pipeline network that prioritizes underserved communities, customizes necessary training programs, identifies talented partners, and provides on-the-job training.
2. Identify and partner with CBOs to help with recruitment. (Jobs for the Future 2017) CBOs can help with both outreach and vetting of candidates.
3. Develop training programs with specific end goals. The goal should be to develop and secure specific available jobs and career pathways for trainees.
4. Workforce training should include developing skills in leadership, problem-solving, communication, financial literacy, sales, and teamwork.
5. Include a social worker or counselor in the workforce training program staff. Given potential complex backgrounds of trainees, it improves retention.

Best Practices in Action: Workforce Development. As a leader in effective workforce training, Ted Trabue, the Managing Director of the District of Columbia Sustainable Energy Utility (DCSEU), recognizes the need to “engage differently.” DCSEU begins workforce development by defining the end goal and engaging stakeholders (e.g., HVAC contractors, solar contractors). Mr. Trabue engages stakeholders early and asks them “what do you need the trainees to know and be able to do in twenty weeks.” DCSEU’s focus is to provide hands-on field training with local stakeholders for five months. According to Mr. Trabue, this model effectively “serves as a

five-month interview process and that is why so many participants go on to being employed.” The contractors have seen, observed, and worked closely with trainees for an ample amount of time, rather than in other programs in which trainees get placed with contractors after training. Mr. Trabue reports that the DCSEU job placement rate is 85 percent.

The DCSEU training program also focuses on job retention. Mr. Trabue explained that most trainees do not lose jobs due to the specific work-related requirements but due to other non-work-related reasons, such as lack of transportation or wages lost to check cashing services for those who are unbanked. In response, DCSEU’s workforce training also teaches about public transportation travel planning, financial literacy, nutrition, and more.

Supplier Diversity: Best Practices

Supporting and strengthening supplier diversity practices can result in attracting a more diverse supplier base, emphasizing the inclusion of vendors such as minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, small/disadvantaged businesses, LGBTQ-owned businesses, and/or veteran- and disabled-owned businesses. Supplier diversity can help programs be more accepted and trusted by having contractors that reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. In addition, a diverse supplier base provides a greater variety of perspectives (Reynolds 2019), leading to more effective problem solving. Recommended best practices include:

1. Develop systems to track energy efficiency supplier diversity and metrics to promote a diverse supplier pool.
2. Provide easy online access for diverse suppliers to register as prospective suppliers.
3. Implement a supplier diversity action plan for both internal operations and external programs, including, for example:
 - a. Connecting supplier diversity goals to performance review and compensation
 - b. Surveying personnel on current supplier diversity practices
 - c. Reviewing existing contracts to find new opportunities for diverse suppliers
 - d. Querying diverse suppliers on their experiences and/or challenges

Best Practices in Action: Supplier Diversity. When Michael Colgrove joined Energy Trust of Oregon as the Executive Director, his predecessor had effectively made the business case that Energy Trust has an obligation to serve all customers and that its programs were not meaningfully reaching all of them. Today, Energy Trust continuously strives to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive through annual DEI goals as well as performance measures set by the Oregon Public Utility Commission. Yet, Mr. Colgrove feels that there is still much to do. He understands the internal and external factors pertaining to energy inequities. In our interview, he acknowledged that “everyone is influenced by implicit bias and underlying racism that we all have to own and recognize, systemic or otherwise.” From that awareness, he leads staff and board members to focus on creating and refining programs that all people can participate in, including communities of color, rural communities, and people with low incomes. One aspect of this work was creating a Board Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy to focus on enhancing programs and internal operations.

Mr. Colgrove identified a lack of BIPOC staff as an issue because “diverse staff who reflect the communities that we serve bring more ideas, productive discussion, and build trust among the customers we need to better serve.” He offered that “when you get to root causes and

barriers, one of the reasons BIPOC communities don't participate in our programs is because of a lack of trust. Our job is to identify and knock down barriers and, in this case, that means building trust. We have to hire implementation contractors and companies that look like the communities we seek to engage, and also ensure customers can choose from a diverse network of contractors when they are considering home or business improvements." He thinks about how to overlay an equity lens on all processes.

One of Energy Trust's goals is to contract with diverse suppliers, including minority and women-owned businesses. To that end, Mr. Colgrove led the organization to develop a Supplier Diversity Policy that requires its large contracts with majority-owned companies include subcontracts with minority- and women-owned businesses, among other requirements. Mr. Colgrove recognizes the interconnectedness of all of this. It is not enough to diversify staff if you are not also building supplier diversity.

DEI: Best Practices

The vision for equity must be grounded in a true understanding and appreciation of inclusivity and equity to ensure efforts succeed in measurably meeting intended positive impact. Inward-facing anti-racism DEI training is recommended. Prejudice-reduction interventions, including conventional workplace DEI training, are broadly viewed as minimally effective. However, inward-facing DEI modules designed to help EWG members gain a clear understanding of individual, institutional, structural, and systemic racism and biases are recommended. For example, Step Up: Equity Matters has developed a leading-edge approach to DEI education modules that pertain to facing biases, the emotions of change, and changing the narrative (Step Up: Equity Matters 2022). DEI training should continue over a significant amount of time rather than as a single intervention or meeting.

DEI training that will help EWGs or equivalent teams gain a clear understanding of individual, institutional, structural, and systemic racism and biases is recommended. This insight will create a foundation for all energy equity efforts. Once anti-racism DEI training is completed, then EWGs can develop equitable goals and metrics utilizing data and applying knowledge and awareness gained. DEI best practices include:

1. Anti-racism DEI training should be included in all energy equity multisector collaborations. EWGs or similar collaborations must have anti-racism intentions to recognize and breakdown systems that have quietly been suppressive.
2. Not all DEI training is effective. Many are designed to fit in to a one-day format when more is needed. Others lack leadership buy-in. Training is often designed for the comfort of white participants. Effective DEI training should include racial equity, justice, and anti-racism training. DEI training is valuable only if well-designed and delivered with the time needed to change awareness and behavior.
3. Foster safe space for all because addressing equity properly can trigger personal issues for everyone in different ways.

Best Practices in Action: DEI. Excellence in DEI training, specifically within the context of energy efficiency equity, has a very long way to go. While many utilities and other participants have conducted some DEI training, the deep and comprehensive work necessary to move to design, develop, and deliver truly anti-racist programming is yet to come. Anti-racism

programming focuses on fostering self-awareness and ownership of one's biases. This changes how one's biases are acted on. Inward-facing DEI modules designed to help gain a clear understanding of individual, institutional, structural, and systemic racism and biases is recommended. DEI training must continue over time rather than as a single meeting activity.

In our discussions with thought leaders, we heard of nascent efforts that we will be following with interest. We look forward to reporting in the future on some of these best practices being fully developed and implemented and seeing what the results are for programming equity.

The Future of Energy Efficiency Equity

Equity Working Group Best Practices

The five supporting pillars of equity identified above should be recognized as a synergistic, holistic framework. One relatively successful model for driving success using the five pillars is a structured EWG or equivalent team that includes CBO and EJ organizations coupled with state and utility representatives and other interested stakeholders. An EWG is a cross-sectoral group formed to develop solutions to increase the equitable delivery of ratepayer-funded energy efficiency programs so that all have the equal ability to access, participate, and benefit from energy efficiency programs, whether as a customer, a supplier, or both.

An EWG should be chartered to explore problems, identify solutions, and establish goals in each of the five areas. Each component has many possible associated actions and goals. The strategic depth, quantity, and combinations of goals prioritized by an EWG will depend on the relevant equity issues and status – the starting point – as well as the regulatory and policy framework of a jurisdiction.

EWGs must understand if energy efficiency services are not deployed quickly and equitably, then low- and moderate-income communities will be left paying for stranded infrastructure while wealthier communities move forward. EWGs should consider the relationship between measurable energy equity impact and cost effectiveness or other impacts mandated by policy or regulation.

To begin, define the focus and goals of the EWG. Understand that the EWG process may be challenging and time- and resource-consuming. EWG best practices include:

1. Determine what data are needed to meet goals set for the EWG, whether by policy, regulation, or charter. The EWG may want to gather and analyze data, including rates of investment and return.
2. Analyze data carefully and understand where it is leading or misleading. Data can be used for oppression just as much as it can be used to improve equity.
3. Create space where EWG members can name and address issues. Ensure there is accountability and transparency. Have records that show support or opposition to ideas. Build consensus, but do not let a consensus model inhibit workable solutions.
4. Ensure that the EWG itself is representative of its community.
 - a. Compensate community representatives for their time and expertise.
 - b. Ensure that diverse voices are heard.
 - c. Manage voting power so it is just and balanced.

Best Practices in Action: EWG Strategies. Based on his expertise in leading multisector clean energy collaborations, Gregory King of TSK Energy Solutions LLC “focuses on the strategic use of information systems within complex social and environmental initiatives.” As a model for EWGs that address energy inequities, Mr. King values the “involvement of all community stakeholders.” He recommends that EWGs gain “a systems view of the structures currently in place to identify the barriers in the system, and possible leverage points that could be activated through purposeful policy, infrastructure, and/or market interventions. This can only be accomplished through community-led engagement, where critical knowledge, relevant value systems, and innovative capacity exist.” Mr. King understands there is a need for better information management infrastructure in the energy equity space. He also recognizes that “a lack of information is the foundation of inequities,” and, in response, recently developed the Massachusetts Energy Burden/Environmental Justice GIS System to educate elected state officials on energy burden disparities in their districts (King 2022). According to Mr. King, “equitable decarbonization will require new policies, rate structures, installation best practices, energy systems and/or training programs.”

Shaping the Future of Energy Equity

As communities, states, and utilities and other stakeholders began to address historic energy inequities and as energy equity initiatives and goals continue to evolve and expand, we need to ensure that energy equity is developed with all of the supporting structures that ensure meaningful results for those who have been left out of access, participation, and the benefits of ratepayer-funded energy efficiency programs. Together, DEI training, equity metrics, community strategies, workforce development, and supplier diversity provide a holistic framework for state- and utility-led EWGs to approach energy equity initiatives. This framework is a strategic tool and a consistent model to advance equity and climate resilience.

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