

Illinois EE Stakeholder Advisory Group Q3 Large Group Meeting: Joint with Income Qualified (IQ) EE Committee

Thursday, September 8, 2022

1:00 – 3:30 pm

Teleconference

Attendees and Meeting Notes

Meeting Materials

- Posted on the [September 8 meeting page](#):
 - [Thursday, September 8 Q3 SAG Meeting – Joint with IQ EE Committee](#)
 - [2021 Ameren Illinois Low Income Needs Assessment: Opinion Dynamics Presentation](#)
 - [Ameren Illinois Low Income Needs Assessment Final Report \(June 1, 2022\)](#)
 - [2021 Ameren Illinois Empower Communities Study: Opinion Dynamics Presentation](#)
 - [Ameren Illinois Empower Communities Study Final Report \(July 11, 2022\)](#)
 - [Ameren Illinois Disadvantaged Areas Policy Proposal Presentation](#)

Attendees (by webinar)

Celia Johnson, SAG Facilitator
Samarth Medakkar, Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA) – Meeting Support
Al Walker, Leave No Veteran Behind
Alan Elliott, Opinion Dynamics
Alexandria Cedergren, Elevate
Allen Dusault, Franklin Energy
Amy Jewel, Elevate
Andrew Cottrell, Applied Energy Group
Andrey Gribovich, DNV
Andy Vaughn, Leidos
Angie Ostaszewski, Ameren Illinois
Annette Beitel, Future Energy Enterprises (IQ Committee Facilitator)
Anthony Brown, Ameren Illinois
Arlinda Bajrami, MEEA
Ashley Palladino, Resource Innovations
Asmaa Abdelazim, Resource Innovations
Billy Davis, Bronzeville Community Development Partnership
Bob Baumgartner, Leidos
Carla Walker-Miller, Walker-Miller Energy Services
Cheryl Johnson, People for Community Recovery
Chris Neme, Energy Futures Group, representing NRDC
Chris Vaughn, Nicor Gas
Claire Flaherty, Cascade Energy
Dalitso Sulamoyo, Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
David Brightwell, ICC Staff
David Kilgore, Ameren Illinois
Deb Dynako, Slipstream

Dena Jefferson, ComEd
Denise Munoz, ComEd
Elizabeth Horne, ICC Staff
Erika Dominick, Walker-Miller Energy Services
Gregory Norris, Aces 4 Youth
Haley Keegan, Resource Innovations
Hannah Howard, Opinion Dynamics
Jamey Neal, Ameren Illinois
Jason Fegley, Ameren Illinois
Jeff Mitchell, Resource Innovations
Jim Dillon, Ameren Illinois
Jim Fay, ComEd
Jimmy Faggett, Ameren Illinois
John Carroll, Ameren Illinois
Julie Hollensbe, ComEd
Kalee Whitehouse, VEIC (IL-TRM Administrator)
Karen Lusson, National Consumer Law Center
Katherine Elmore, Community Investment Corp.
LaShelle Newland, Resource Innovations
Laura Goldberg, NRDC
Lawrence Kotewa, Elevate
LaJuana Garret, Nicor Gas
Lorelei Obermeyer, CLEAResult
Thomas Manjarres, Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas
Martha White, Nicor Gas
Mary Ellen Guest, Chicago Bungalow Association
Mary Johnson, Resource Innovations
Matt Armstrong, Ameren Illinois
Michael Brandt, Elevate
Michael Ihesiaba, Elevate
Molly Graham, MEEA
Monique Leonard, Ameren Illinois
Naomi Davis, Blacks in Green
Nick Lovier, Ameren Illinois
Omayra Garcia, Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas
Paulette Hamlin, Western Egyptian E.O.C.
Philip Halliburton, ComEd
Philip Mosenthal, Optimal Energy, on behalf of IL AG's Office and NCLC
Randy Gunn, Tierra
Randy Opdyke, Nicor Gas
Ron Markus, BCMW Community Services
Ronna Abshure, ICC Staff
Ryan Kroll, Driftless Energy
Sanjyot Varade, Resource Innovations
Sarah Moskowitz, Citizens Utility Board
Seth Craig-Snell, SCS Analytics
Shonda Biddle, Center for Energy & Environment
Shonika Vohra, Recurve
Stacey Paradis, MEEA
Tara Cunningham, Rinnai
Ted Weaver, First Tracks Consulting, on behalf of Nicor Gas

Thomas Drea, Ameren Illinois
Tim Dickison, Ameren Illinois
Tina Grebner, Ameren Illinois
Tyler Sellner, Opinion Dynamics
Victoria Nielsen, Applied Energy Group
Vitaliy Ladimirov, Resource Innovations
Zach Ross, Opinion Dynamics

Opening & Introductions

Celia Johnson, SAG Facilitator

Purpose of September 8th meeting:

1. To educate SAG and IQ EE Committee participants about two research efforts completed in 2022 by Ameren Illinois' evaluator: the Low Income Needs Assessment and Empower Communities Study; and
2. For Ameren Illinois to describe a disadvantaged communities policy proposal submitted for consideration in the Illinois EE Policy Manual update.

Low Income Needs Assessment (LINA) Study

Alan Elliott, Opinion Dynamics and Angie Ostazewski, Ameren Illinois

Introduction

- Opinion Dynamics, is the independent evaluator for Ameren Illinois. Alan oversees evaluation of Income Qualified (IQ) and multifamily (MF) initiatives, as well as special research studies, including the two studies presented today.

Key Objectives

- Understanding the needs of LMI income AIC customers, preferred communication methods.
- Surveyed over 1300 customers. An even mixture of IQ and non-IQ customers. Also identified customer subsegments with high need.
- Energy burden is a core metric of the study. Defined as annual household energy cost as proportion of annual household income. Metric includes Ameren fuels and non-Ameren fuels.
- Study identifies what drives energy burden and which subsegments – older homes, older appliances. MF tenants, mobile homes, alternative fuel users, historically marginalized communities.
- Study indicates Ameren's programs are set up well to serve diverse needs of IQ sector.
- Mobile homes initiative has evolved from a pilot last year to full initiative in 2022.

Health, Comfort and Safety (HCS)

- Historical barriers for utilities, including Ameren. HCS issues and split incentives for renters and property owners. Survey confirms renters and mobile home dwellers have disproportionately higher energy burden and MF housing and mobile homes experience greater HCS issues. Study recommends strategies to target landlords, address weatherization (window infiltration) and recommends new mandates from CEJA create new opportunities to address HCS.

Alternative Fuels

- Users are rare, but have higher energy costs on average. Tend to be higher income rather than LI, but conceivable that LI AFC exists. AIC is looking to electrify propane users. Study identifies targeted electrification.

Ameren Illinois Market Development Initiative

- Key goal: reach historically underserved communities who've never participated in EE – improve reach of IQ. One way is the empower communities' index.
- Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is an MDI partner; developed index for Ameren. Communities prioritized on zip code by income and race. One key goal of study is to assess if this is appropriate and if this should be expanded. Criteria still makes sense (energy burden correlated) but other demos like less than college level education, single parents, and customers with health issues. Public assistance is just the tip of the iceberg for household needs. See top right figure. Avg modified energy burden – those that receive energy assistance still have a high energy burden after benefits. Recommends census data on receipt of LIHEAP in the index criteria.

Marketing, Education, and Outreach (ME&O)

- Awareness remains the biggest barrier to participation – less than half customer are aware. Less than 2/3 of those eligible for LIHEAP are aware of LIHEAP. 1/3 of those eligible are unaware. Recommends more concentrated OME for LIHEAP. Value of this study is how to reach customer as well. IQ and non-IQ customers are not different in preferred method – mail, followed by email, and distantly text. A niche preference but worth for some. Study also recommends meeting people where they are – where they go for support for energy bill. AIC customers consent established AIC sources – call center and website.
- Community locations are low – customers go to AIC for help on bill, but critically, it does not mean that they would actually seek assistance – they often don't know that assistance is available in the first place. Recommended community partnerships – MDOT and AIC partner with CBOs.

Discussion

[Karen Lusson] One readily apparent way to market programs is for AIC to look at its own credit and collections data – people who have received disconnection notices, arrearage data, late notifications, late fees, etc. This is a natural area to promote EE programs. For example, any kind of customer calls to avoid disconnections and set deferred payment agreements. This is not referenced in the slide, but is included in the AIC EE settlement agreement. Credit and Collections seems to be a natural place to promote EE programs.

[Alan Elliot] Good point – another example of meeting people where they are – using existing support mechanisms. As mentioned, customers are likely to go to AIC site or call centers for support. Appreciate the comment.

Ameren Illinois Next Steps

- Mobile Homes Initiative: AIC launched its Mobile Homes initiative in May 2022 – data from homes served will feed into recommendations for HCS in future years. Need a unique customer approach for this segment.
- Health & Safety (H&S): AIC will evaluate potential to include additional funding, including external funding for H&S. AIC's grant writer will help community partners to seek HS funding. Encourage stakeholders to share funding opportunities.
- Healthier Homes Pilot: AIC launched healthier homes pilot – includes H&S measures (air quality measures for example). Results from this pilot will be available this year.
- Low Awareness of LIHEAP – AIC is beginning a promotional video campaign to combine EA (energy assistance) and EE (energy efficiency) assistance to share with community partners to consolidate information. AIC will market LIHEAP.
- IQ Messaging: AIC is increasing use of text messaging, direct email and mail.
- Identifying Community Partners: AIC is continuing to identify CBOs (community partners) in high-need communities using CCRPC regional planning and internal tools.

Discussion

[Laura Goldberg] Is the healthier homes pilot related to other H&S efforts of AIC or separate?

[Angie Ostezewski] Healthier Homes Pilot is separate. Identifies and focuses on indoor air quality. A little different than H&S from other parts of portfolio and will be sharing results later this year

[Andy Vaughn] What are the LIHEAP criteria?

[Alan Elliot] There are a few different layers; generally 200% FPL. Aligns with AIC's CAA channel/ They would automatically be eligible for AIC's program. 300% would also qualify

[Phil Mosenthal] Approval for LIHEAP is one criteria for eligibility for Ameren's program.

[Phil Halliburton] For your findings (slide 7) is there a % breakdown by geographic area (rural, urban, suburban)?

[Alan Elliot] In slide deck, I called out recommendations, but you can see more detailed list of all recommendations and report for more details (end of slides). Did not include urban vs. rural. Broken out by LI, Moderate Income, non-IQ and total, also by housing type. Right side of figure shows max-dif (least and most likely sources for where customers would seek info on bill assistance).

[Angie Ostezewski] This is not going to be our only exploration of this topic and research. Encourage sharing recommendations from this group.

[Alan Elliot] There may be some differences across income, but they are not extreme. Likely not statistically significant. This folds back to the point that Income doesn't determine or home type determine ME&O preferences.

[Chris Neme] Interested in the results with respect to propane. I would imagine propane is prevalent in more rural parts of the state and that there is a fair amount of poverty in these geographies. Curious about finding that propane customers aren't LI or high energy burden. Wonder if this is because those customers have electric heating systems. Do you look at the energy burden by heating fuel? Electricity vs gas space heat?

[Alan Elliot] When we did this (more info in report) I was surprised too. Study recommends better understanding this. We did a breakout on energy cost by home size. Normalized by bedroom number. Levelized for size. Propane is high on a bedroom level. When you control for size, propane and wood pellets are the top two. All homes have some electricity – electricity with an alternative fuel in these households.

[Chris Neme] The other supporting result is electric only means electrically heated only – the idea that these customers had lowest cost is somewhat surprising. Function of electric heat is in MF business, with smaller dwelling? I'd be surprised if there wasn't a non-trivial number of propane customers with energy challenges.

[Alan Elliot] There is a whole piece in the report on MF tenant units and types of HVAC – large amounts of electric baseboard in these units – not the sole cost, but part of the reason for higher energy burden in these units. Ductless HP are part of the solution (AIC is working on this) and window AC unit replacement. Saw window infiltration issues in MF.

[Laura Goldberg] Was LI MF looked at as a segment of MF broadly?

[Alan Elliot] Low income is any household type (energy burden figure is all MF, whether LI or not). We were not able to do a reliably statistical analysis on IQ/non-IQ MF.

[Laura Goldberg] In depth look at IQ tenant units. Did you evaluate whole-building measures and how this interplays with burdens or benefits that come from this work?

[Alan Elliot] We asked customers about issues, and window infiltration was the top issue. We did ask about Wx issues.

[Phil Mosenthal] Baseboard heat does show the highest energy burden there. May be a MF issue and bleeding in heat pumps.

[Alan Elliot] We did look at energy burden by different heating types, but MF tenant types – what do you do with inefficient window AC and baseboard heat? Ductless heat pump could be a potential solution for energy burden. Preparing to do survey research on Ductless HPs.

[Chris Neme] Weatherization findings?

[Alan Elliot] We landed on multifamily households that are in dire need of Wx upgrades. MF – window infiltration was a challenge, but replacement may not make sense. May make sense to begin least cost measures – air stripping, etc, then moving forward.

[Chris Neme] Does Ameren have a storm windows program currently?

[Alan Elliot] The measure is in the TRM but not sure if it is offered in the MF program.

[Chris Neme] May be worth looking at.

[Andy Vaughn] We've offered with the CAA channel, but not with the MF channel. Because we had some cost-effectiveness (C/E) challenges in the past. We are considering offering going forward. C/E for IQ gets exception anyway, but we are trying to build in going forward.

[Chris Neme] If you only apply them in circumstances where there's notable infiltration problems, you might get more savings. Does TRM reflect significant need or average?

[Alan Elliot] Analysis indicated conflation in MF. Types of systems in MF are part of the energy burden. If you go into the report, you will see conflation with income (denominator) so it's not all down to the system. A nexus of need.

[Chris Neme] One could ask what's driving what – suspect it's not window AC, but likely customers with high energy burden can't afford anything other than window AC.

[Alan Elliot] Regression analysis in the report indicates it's not just window AC or baseboard heating.

[Karen Lusson] One thing noticed is reporting energy burden is based on average. Important to indicate the extremes - there are some people with EB higher than 20%. There are extremes and wrapping into averages loses this nuance. Report says awareness is biggest barrier in AIC offerings – that may be true but I also want to suggest that trust, affordability, and disconnection policies are also a major barrier to participation. If relationship with utility is trying to keep utilities on, you may not think of the company as a place to provide these benefits. Finally, noticed a note that awareness about LIHEAP should be incorporated – agree here, but in terms of suggesting that this is another area that the company should look at, again, a conversation that we've had with AIC. If it can reexamine disconnection policies, that also is an important action that the company can take to improve people's lives.

[Chris Neme] Different potential metric could be reporting customers with EB higher than a certain percent.

[Naomi Davis] Does the analysis break out by census tract?

[Alan Elliot] Survey not large enough to provide this, but this would be ideal.

Empower Communities Study

Alan Elliott, Opinion Dynamics and Angie Ostazewski, Ameren Illinois

- This study can be thought of as a non-residential sister study of LINA. Conducted deep dives in four disadvantaged communities or “empower communities” (EC) – includes Decatur, East St. Louis, Monmouth, ESTL, Monmouth, and SRC (Southern Rural Communities) (see presentation slides for list of SRC counties).
- These are not the only Empower Communities (EC) in AIC territory. ECs are defined on zip code level. Generally aiming for communities that represent differences in sizes, racially diverse, and income levels. Focus on small biz customers. Includes actual small business and nonprofit institutions (community serving institutions) churches, municipal buildings, faith-based centers (referred to as “organizations” here).

- The study identified energy upgrade needs and HCS (non energy needs). We wanted to identify vulnerable types of organizations that might justify different outreach and MDAP. The goal was to unearth strategies for four communities to conduct outreach.
- Conducted in-depth interview and surveys. Shared types of organizations interviewed.
- Gave info on each community – organizations could speak about their own experiences. Also conducted a larger survey with 280 orgs. We compared responses for various types of orgs. We captured a wide array of business types – services (tax, legal, barber shops), retail stores, non-profit category. These were the three largest, conducted comparisons. Surveys identified cross-cutting findings. In depth interviews with community leaders added depth for strategies for these communities. More details on surveys are found on the supplemental slides.

Study Results

- Awareness and interest – there are major differences across communities. Shared themes – orgs are starting their EE journey from a similar place – they are largely unaware of programs, but moderate interest once they are aware. There are more challenges than just awareness but this is the first hurdle.
- Awareness is the largest barrier, but over a third of respondents are completely unaware, and 41% are somewhat aware. There’s also a clear decline in awareness as communities get smaller. Three SRC’s reported lack of awareness is a major barrier to participation. The barrier is mentioned more often in small communities.
- How might AIC overcome this barrier? Asked respondents about preferred communication. Learned that there is a mix of preferences – email is most common preference. Based on other research, we know email recall can be more challenging compared with mail. Respondents heard offerings more often through mail. Underscores the importance of a mixture of tactics and multiple touches.
- Next recommendation: keep relying on community experts to guide MEO strategies. Energy advisors, program allies know communities in and out and there is no replacement. Boots on the ground strategies and establishing community presence is critical.
- Lastly, pair virtual promotion with physical touch and in-person engagement. Pursue community partnerships to meet customer where they are.
- Results provided a dozen partnership opportunities.
- Program interest is an uphill battle after awareness. Results showed some limited interest in participating in AIC’s offerings. 1/6 not interested at all. Certain groups are much more interested.
 - 46% had a lot of interest. Community service institutions and non-profits are highly interested. More likely to seek outside assistance to support orgs. But within interested orgs, only half have any interest. This is typical across the country. The study digs into why:
 - Challenge boils down to how respondents are concerned with energy costs.
 - Energy costs are not a high priority for many respondents - there are other competing priorities, including operating, labor, and cost of goods. Energy is a mid-tier priority, sidelined by other concerns.

- Consider timing of research - high energy costs and challenges in the economy
- There was a sentiment that energy costs are out of orgs control. Only one-third of orgs reported total or a lot of control over energy use. 46% say they've done what they can. CSIs indicated very little control, twice as likely as small business to report control.

Discussion

[Gregory Norris] How do you determine who or what org is representing your area?

[Alan Elliot] We approached through a snowball sampling approach. Started with Ameren and Leidos staff (energy advisors) who know communities and have engaged businesses on programs. Challenge from there is we don't know who to talk to – asked leaders who would be good responders. Identified more organizations through leaders. No perfect solution to get a broad set of perspectives.

[Gregory Norris] Concerned with whether the process is true as it relates to those who know the community.

[Alan Elliot] This is why we need community based participatory research. There are probably many orgs that were missed. Happy to discuss further with anyone interested.

Survey revealed additional barriers. See other key barriers slide.

- Workforce issues were key. ESTL spoke about lacking businesses and out of area contactors. In southern rural communities, generally out migration of young people will create future workforce issues, but leaders saw contractors were not signed up as program allies.
 - Recommendation: keep SBDI copays as low as possible and MDOT mini-grants available. Recommended strategies to build up the local workforce. Availability of control upgrades should be a point of emphasis. Underscoring importance of program allies.
- Common theme was lack of information. Time is a barrier. Leaders in Decatur (largest city) noted that orgs may be too busy to participate. Emphasize turn key offerings and convenience. Ameren and program ally take care of everything for you. Virtual retro commissioning.

Related Energy Needs

- Understand whether AIC offerings address the most critical needs. Answer appears to be yes – what we found is AIC SBDI and SBEP address most high-profile systems that contribute most – HVAC and lighting, then recommendations continue to focus on these systems.
- Regarding some types of industry specific needs, like cooking, refrigeration and kitchen equipment – half of non-profits also mention having these appliances and needs. Churches particularly mentioned this, and consider soup kitchens.
- Wx (Weatherization) is a pressing need. They weren't able to tell us what needs they have, but when they could, IDd Wx measures – stripping, caulking windows. Emphasize wx through SBEP.

Women-led (WL), Minority-led (ML) and Community Service Organizations

- These groups are highly motivated to make changes – may be key to expanding participation. These groups are often one in the same – CSIs are more likely to be WL and ML. These groups are in high need of support for HCS issues. These findings highlight the importance of MDAP.
 - Prioritize these types of CSIs - SBDI no copays.
 - Recommend look for other ways to emphasize these groups – i.e. revisit empower communities index. Index is already a good tool – used to target specific offerings (smart savers) but also helpful for IDding targets for this study. The index is residential focused - % of households. Create a new index or expand the index to include small businesses.

Discussion

[Chris Neme] Regarding weatherization – respondents mentioned it. Let's be careful we don't make the same mistake from decades ago in housing – in assuming that these are the right things to focus on for Wx. If there are issues with comfort or high heating bills, Wx can be great, but hope that we look at ways to deal with issues in more sophisticated ways. These businesses may be in residential style buildings, and blower door tests could identify more specific leakage areas to ID most effective measures. Is your recommendation to dive into this level of focus?

[Alan Elliot] Agree Wx can mean a lot of things. They are generally pointing to lack of seal-ness. Old buildings. Comfort or sealness – we keep talking about how to approach these.

[Chris Neme] We've had some conversations with AIC and other utilities about a pilot program to test the best ways to save energy – where opportunities are. Resurfacing this pilot may be worth considering.

Community-Specific Findings: Decatur

- Plentiful opportunities. Largest cities in AIC territory. But less than 5th have participated. See slide for largest barriers
- Leaders emphasize orgs are too busy - a major barrier.
- Also emphasize building trust, timing of engagement and strategic community engagement.
- See study recommendations on slide.

Discussion

[Phil Mosenthal] Eversource in Mass has SBDI program that had an initiative called main streets program. They blitzed small neighborhoods, gave fliers for windows and stressed turnkey opportunities.

[Alan Elliot] Industry tends to separate res and non-res, but residents may still be a conduit as a pathway to reach non-res. Much more about community engagement is needed, broadly.

Community-Specific Findings: East St. Louis

- Greatest opportunity to reach CSI orgs eager to participate. Plentiful number of orgs in this area. See slide for challenges and recommendations.
- Strong sense of community in East St. Louis. Going through concerted business growth and community revitalization. Opportunity for AIC to double down on MDAP efforts. Build up workforce.

Community-Specific Findings: Monmouth

- See slide for characteristics and recommendations

Community-Specific Findings: Southern Rural Communities

- Diverse circumstances; defies single solution
- No MDI partnerships in these communities and low awareness of AIC programs. This is an area for growth and focus.
- See slide for recommendations.

Next Steps for Ameren Illinois

- Continue to pursue a mix of marketing, education and outreach. Stack efforts to touch customers in multiple ways.
- Incorporate questions for barriers to participation. Review barriers on regular basis.
- Focus SBEP in empowering communities. Utilize suggested partners from study.
- AIC will explore MDI partnerships, and formulate a community ambassador model.

Ameren Illinois Policy Proposal: Net-to-Gross Policy for Disadvantaged Areas

Matt Armstrong, Ameren Illinois

- Ameren Illinois worked to summarize findings and next steps from Empower Communities and LINA studies. Recognizing there is an unawareness of programs, and high energy burden. Common threads between these two studies as far as strategies to overcome these. Requires additional effort, specifically, marketing, education, outreach, engagement of community partners. Also heard need for training for program allies.
- Ameren submitted a policy proposal for the Policy Manual Version 3.0 process regarding net-to-gross values in disadvantaged areas. We recognize that while this policy clearly outlines customer types and situations that require attention, there isn't a clear direction for program admins to successfully engage customers and deliver in an equitable manner. We have been implementing MDI for about 4 years now. See slides for additional policy proposal details.
- There are examples from other states that have identified disadvantaged areas and efforts to map these areas. This is informing Ameren's policy effort here. We haven't seen jurisdictions go as far as this policy proposal – a proposal for a mechanism for encouraging greater investment in these areas - but there are resources on how to define these areas as we go through the policy proposal. See slide for additional resources.

- Programs successfully serving communities identified and designated to be disadvantaged areas will receive a NTG ratio of 1.0, similar to that for all income qualified programs. See slide for rationale.
- Next steps: Define disadvantaged areas in AIC service territory. Working with CCRPC (Champaign County Regional Planning Commission) to identify and empower communities. Focus on income qualified and non-white. CCRPC pulling census tract data to generate a heat map to help AIC in targeting programs
- Outcomes of this policy
 - Reduces risk associated with additional investments to achieve EE
 - Encourages innovative program approaches and stronger EE participation

Closing and Next Steps

Celia Johnson, SAG Facilitator

- See Ameren Illinois slides summarizing next steps for the Low Income Needs Assessment and Empower Communities Study
- The Ameren Illinois policy proposal on Net-to-Gross Policy for Disadvantaged Areas will be further discussed by the Policy Manual Subcommittee for the Policy Manual Version 3.0 update process