

# Illinois EE Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) Equity Subcommittee Meeting

**Wednesday, July 16, 2025**

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Teleconference

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### **Meeting Materials**

Posted on the [July 16, 2025 meeting page](#):

- [July 16, 2025 SAG Equity Subcommittee Agenda](#)
- [Nicor Gas Presentation: Market Development Initiative Third Party Evaluation Takeaways](#)
- Nicor Gas Mapping Tool – No Presentation

### **Attendees**

Name	Company or Organization
Celia Johnson	Facilitator (Celia Johnson Consulting)
Zoe Knaus	SAG Facilitation Support (Inova Energy Group)
Abigail Miner	IL Attorney General's Office
Allison Gregoire	Nicor Gas
Anna Allenstein	Erthe Energy Solutions
Briana Moore	Will County Land Use Dept.
Bruce Liu	Nicor Gas
Bryan Haney	Erthe Energy Solutions
Cassidy Kraimer	Community Investment Corp.
Chris Vaughn	Nicor Gas
Dalitso Sulamoyo	Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)
Danish Murtaza	Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas
Derrick Meeking	Walker-Miller Energy Services
Diana Dorman	Energy Solutions
Dr. Crystal Davis	Walker-Miller Energy Services
Elizabeth Horne	ICC Staff
Elli Arzbaecher	Future Energy Enterprises

<b>Name</b>	<b>Company or Organization</b>
Erika Dominick	Walker-Miller Energy Services
Evelyn Kovarik	Nicor Gas
Henry Tieman	Nicor Gas
Irena Acic	Opinion Dynamics
Jane Anderson	Inova Energy Group
Jean Gibson	Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas
Jeff Carroll	DNV
John Mansfield	Nicor Gas
Jonathan Skarzynski	Nicor Gas
Josh Schrec	The JPI Group
Julie Hollensbe	Walker-Miller Energy Services
Kari Ross	NRDC
Keyla Ward	Ameren Illinois
Kim Janas	iL Attorney General's Office
Mike King	Nicor Gas
Naomi Turner	The JPI Group
Odette Hyatt-Watson	East Central Illinois Community Action Agency
Omayra Garcia	Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas
Patrice McFarlin	Encolor Consulting
Sam Stahl	Ameren Illinois
Selena Worster Walde	Erthe Energy Solutions
Tamika J. Cole	Walker-Miller Energy Services
Ted Weaver	Dunsky Climate Advisors, representing Nicor Gas
Tim Dickison	Ameren Illinois
Tori Woolbright	Metropolitan Mayors Caucus

**Meeting Notes**

See **red text** for follow-up items.

**Introduction to July 16 Meeting**

*Celia Johnson, SAG Facilitator*

**Purpose of the July 16 meeting:**

1. For Nicor Gas to report-out on the Market Development Initiative (MDI) Assessment results; and
2. For Nicor Gas to share information about a reporting mapping mechanism
  - a. This is a follow up item on [Equity and Affordability Reporting](#) metrics finalized in June 2024.

**Nicor Gas Presentation: Market Development Initiative Third Party Evaluation Takeaways**

*Allison Gregoire, Nicor Gas*

**Evaluation Timeline**

- Evaluation completed in December 2024 and reviewed the first year of our program (2023).

- Encolor Consulting – RFP Process Selection
- EcoHealth Strategies – an MBE consultancy specializing in strategic policy advice, program design and program evaluation for nonprofits, industries and municipalities.

#### Nicor Gas MDI Overview

- Initiative Objectives
  - Increase opportunities for diverse contractors and workers
  - Build support from community partners
  - Increase transparency and equity for contractors
- Workforce Training & Employment Program:
  - Increase the energy efficiency workforce by developing skilled building scientists
  - Provide free hands-on training and industry certifications
  - Help individuals find gainful employment in the industry
- Trade Ally Development Program:
  - Support the growth and development of diverse trade allies as they expand their business into the energy efficiency industry
  - Improve business practices for resiliency
  - Create a business mentorship environment
  - Provide support for diverse/technical certifications

#### Primary Evaluation Deliverables

- What's performing well in our program
- Areas of improvement
- Best practices for program implementation
- Actionable recommendations for improvement
- Data collected from focus groups, surveys, interviews and curriculum review

#### Summary of Findings – Strengths: Trade Ally Development Program

- Networking with peers
- Improved perception of energy efficiency offerings and rebates
- Flexibility and wraparound services
- One-on-one sessions with program staff
- 100% of participants surveyed agreed that TAD provided them with a familiarity of the Nicor Gas energy efficiency program offerings and their role in providing these offerings

#### Summary of Findings – Improvements: Trade Ally Development Program

- Financial constraints that impede growth
- More formal post-graduation follow-ups
- More general trade ally support
- Need for post-graduation support in accessing back-office needs

#### Summary of Findings – Strengths: Workforce Training and Employment Program

- Program staff support
- Skills provided for meaningful employment
- One-on-one mentoring sessions
- BPI certifications
- Job placement
- Wraparound services
- 90%+ graduation rate and work placement to date

## Summary of Findings – Improvements: Workforce Training and Employment

- Long-term access to energy efficiency opportunities in their communities
- More real-world training prior to employment
- Greater balance between classroom and hands-on training

## Action Items

- Implementation of a formal post-graduation mentorship program for Trade Ally Development Program
- More live demonstrations with tools in attics and crawl spaces for Novice WTE cohort
- Marketing material to reflect hands-on job aspects and real-world applications
- Continue to offer BPI Certifications to make participants more competitive
- Continue to offer impactful wraparound services in all programs
- Enhance upfront communication for CBOS, such as providing an orientation package that discusses comprehensive program details early
- Provide post-program follow-up to inform CBOs of the impact their support has achieved, share success stories from graduates' placement

*Cassidy Kraimer (via chat): Can you repeat how many participants completed the WTE and TAD programs?*

- *Allison Gregoire: Across skilled and novice cohorts, there have been 42 for the WTE program and 50 for the TAD programs.*
- *Celia Johnson: Can you remind us of what WTE and TAD stand for?*
- *Allison Gregoire: Yes. WTE stands for Workforce Training and Employment, and TAD stands for Trade Ally Development.*

*Kim Janas: My understanding of trade ally development is that they are already established entities. When you mention post-graduation support and tool rental, it reminds me of a workforce training program. If these trade allies are in the field and do not already have the tools to succeed, how can they network?*

- *Allison Gregoire: Our participants in the TAD program are early companies. They have staff but are aiming to grow. They do have assessment tools, but not some they do not use frequently, like a blower door test. Occasionally, they will rent a tool and return it to us. We want them to focus on growing their business and using funds prudently, tool rental helps them succeed.*

*Kim Janas: What is the monetary amount allocated to childcare assistance, and how is that provided and verified?*

- *Allison Gregoire: We know childcare is very expensive and only continues to increase. We provide a \$125/week stipend for childcare. After verifying they have a child, they can use it however they see fit.*
- *Kim Janas: What is the DoorDash meal credit and how does it work?*
- *Allison Gregoire: We have a fully virtual presentation held during dinner time during the week. This credit provides a \$30 DoorDash credit for Thursday evenings, only valid during the time of the presentation. This allows participants to order a meal to their door, ensuring full engagement.*
- *Kim Janas: Thank you. The time limit is a useful tool.*

*Jane Anderson: Does the 90% graduation rate for the WTD cohort align with the percentage of graduates that have been placed in a job?*

- *Allison Gregoire: Yes. A lot of participants are placed where they completed on-the-job training. If something unexpected happens, our team continues to work with them. We also conduct 30, 60, and 90 day follow ups, as well as at six- and 12-months post-graduation. We develop relationships with these folks, so if something happens, we help them get placed in other areas or make connections. We want to make sure they stay in the energy efficiency field.*

*Patrice McFarlin: What is the typical volume of applicants, what are your acceptance rates, and have you identified the main applicant sources?*

- *Allison Gregoire: We work with CBOS across our service territory to develop a pipeline. Most participants are male from marginalized communities. We take all applicants no matter their background or disability status. We work with CBOs who have identified individuals looking for work with these kinds of programs. Our partners have been great at finding qualified applicants.*
- *Patrice McFarlin: What is your acceptance rate, and how do you make selections?*
- *Allison Gregoire: Applicants submit an online application, followed by a phone screen, then a video interview aiming to get to know them. We ask about their background and motivations behind applying. After a background check, we place them. Last year we received over 400 applications and accepted 12 candidates. We will usually choose those who show interest in the program and willingness to learn and grow in the energy efficiency field.*

Reach out to Allison Gregoire, Nicor Gas with additional questions: [aegregoi@southernco.com](mailto:aegregoi@southernco.com)

## **Nicor Gas Mapping Tool**

*Bruce Liu and Henry Tieman, Nicor Gas*

### **Overview**

- In 2019, Nicor Gas established an in-house analytics team to leverage data for improved customer identification and service, focused on underserved residential, commercial, and industrial customers.
- From 2022 to 2025, Nicor Gas used data-driven strategies to guide investments towards communities with high energy burdens and historically underserved populations.
- In 2024, Nicor Gas committed to developing a beta version of an interactive map highlighting key equity metrics including affordability, health and safety, multifamily housing, and trade ally locations.
- The energy efficiency team has been actively using this ArcGIS-based tool in recent months to support strategic decision-making.

### **Map Introduction**

- The map displays the state of Illinois, segmented by census tract boundaries, which were selected for their consistent population size.
- A color-coded heat map visualizes the number of unique customers participating in Nicor Gas programs from January 2022 until now:
  - Bold colors indicate income-eligible census tracts, where over 50% of the population earns below 80% of Area Median Income (AMI).
  - Muted or translucent colors indicate tracts that are not income-eligible.
- Clicking on a census tract reveals detailed data, including the number of customers, projects, gross therm savings, incentives, and health and safety investments.
- Using this layer, Nicor Gas can identify holes in trade ally coverage across the state.

## Mapping Tool Walk Through – Trade Allies and Single Family Income Eligible Participation

- Live overview of mapping tool. The purpose is to help Nicor Gas identify areas where we don't have Trade Allies.
- Noticeable pattern surrounding the south suburbs which highlights the amount of program participants in these areas.
- Lighter participation in the west.

*Kari Ross: Are trade allies represented at their business address?*

- *Henry Tieman: Yes.*

*Abigail Miner: Does Nicor Gas anticipate only using this tool for internal planning purposes, or will it be available to stakeholders, trade allies or program participants?*

- *Chris Vaughn: We only have licensing to utilize in house currently.*
- *Abigail Miner: Is there a plan to make it available at a later date?*
- *Chris Vaughn: Not sure how we would make it available, other than publishing on the SAG website. We can have future discussions about incorporating this into updates for stakeholders if that would be helpful.*
- *Abigail Miner: I can tell there was a lot of effort put into the map. I know it would be useful to parties other than the company.*

*Kari Ross: When Henry was showing the individual census tract data, there were values for number of customers and number of projects. Can you define projects?*

- *Henry Tieman: A project could be a blended package of measures installed. The data comes to us this way, we do not name or define projects. If a bundle of work was done at a given time, it is one project. If a single-family home has multiple projects, we assume work was done at different times.*
- *Kari Ross: This is a great map. The mapping tool came up within the SAG Reporting Working Group in 2023 or 2024 as something stakeholders were requesting. Nicor Gas shared that once it's ready, they could talk further about attaching some of the outputs to quarterly reports. I appreciate the sensitivities with the data, but I want to emphasize that others would like to be able to see these geographical outputs.*
- *Cassidy Kraimer: I have the final Reporting Working Group documents – I believe it was an intended annual reporting metric, but it does not outline that the map should be shared, or how it would be shared. This is worthwhile to discuss.*
- *Chris Vaughn: To clarify, we decided to share this as an opportunity to illustrate some of the existing trends within our territory that go beyond data-heavy tables. Stakeholders could use the reported data and develop their own maps to avoid our licensing issues. We did not intend to create a mandate going forward. Nicor Gas can develop a mapping mechanism, but I cannot speak to the other utilities. I think we should have the metric conversation as we proceed. There are some legal obstacles to openly distribute access to this.*

*Kari Ross (via chat): This link is the final reporting metrics doc from June 2024 reporting metric meeting, which outlines the next step on geo reporting was to be Nicor's presentation of this tool [https://www.ilsag.info/wp-content/uploads/Equity-and-Affordability-Reporting-Policy-Metrics\\_FINAL-Redline-6-20-2024.docx](https://www.ilsag.info/wp-content/uploads/Equity-and-Affordability-Reporting-Policy-Metrics_FINAL-Redline-6-20-2024.docx)*

## Mapping Tool Walk Through – Multifamily Income Eligible Participation

- Measures unique projects instead of customers.

- In one data point, there could be one customer, one building, but 237 units/projects.
- Northern suburbs show higher concentration of projects than southern suburbs.

*Abigail Miner: This is a heat map representing projects in multifamily housing units, correct? Does Nicor Gas consider one multifamily building a project? Is each unit a project?*

- *Henry Tieman: Yes. We consider each unit in the multifamily building a project when the upgrade applies to the entire building. We are limited in defining this data, we are trying to refine it. Health and safety measures may increase the project number, as they can be applied to only one unit.*
- *Abigail Miner: So, the number of projects is a good proxy for building units, but it is not an exact number. Has the company looked at the relationship between locations of multifamily projects and their service territory?*
- *Henry Tieman: This is something we are looking at next. Nicor Gas does not know the exact number of multifamily units in our service territory. Some multifamily buildings are identified as commercial because they have a commercial rate. We are aiming to use the Census Bureau's unit data. One proxy is that we can click on the map and see how many residential units are in an area, which can likely show us if that area has more single family versus multifamily units.*
- *Abigail Miner: If a multifamily building is metered, is it commercially rated?*
- *Henry Tieman: Yes.*
- *Abigail Miner: Thank you, I did not know that. This tool has a lot of potential.*
- *Ted Weaver: I believe rates are either measured as Rate 1 or Rate 4, but it depends on the building.*
- *Henry Tieman: Rate 1 is general residential, and Rate 4 is general commercial. They can be higher with larger usage. We may have more information on this. We will look more into what we have and what we can apply as a layer.*

*Cassidy Kraimer: Are there outlined next steps for how this information will be used?*

- *Henry Tieman: We are mostly exploring now. We are asking questions to see what other layers are possible.*
- *Chris Vaughn: We do not have an exact plan, as we are trying to see how we can leverage this tool best.*
- *Cassidy Kraimer: Metropolitan planning agencies use GIS a lot. This could be an opportunity to leverage their regional perspective.*

### **Mapping Tool Walk Through – Single Family Health and Safety**

- Layer prioritizes incentives and identifies where the most money is spent.
- Pattern is similar to income-eligible participation, showing high concentration in southern suburbs.
- Layer scale can be difficult to conceptualize, as spending reaches \$300,00+ in some areas.

*Abigail Miner: Looking at this data against rate classes would be very helpful. The differences between concentrations in the northern and southern suburbs are very interesting and could be useful.*

- *Henry Tieman: This is a question we have raised internally.*

### **Next Steps**

*Chris Vaughn, Nicor Gas*

- Thank you for your questions. This is a work in progress, we will examine what ways we can utilize these functions. This is the beginning of extrapolating trends and data. This is an opportunity to share with stakeholders, who can provide insight.

*Abigail Miner (via chat): This is an interesting tool, and I think it has a lot of potential. Thanks for presenting it with the group, even if it is a work in progress.*

- *Kari Ross (via chat): Agreed.*

*Cassidy Kraimer: In the Reporting Working Group notes, it outlines Nicor Gas as responsible for undertaking this mapping project. Do you think this is an opportunity for learning and peer-sharing among the utilities? If Nicor Gas would be open and willing, if possible, to share their process.*

- *Chris Vaughn: This would be a function of what the other utilities are internally capable of. We have no problem partnering with them and reducing learning curve.*
- *Jean Gibson (via chat): Celia – I wonder if reviewing notes/comments from the Policy Manual 3.0 discussions would be useful?*

### **Closing and Next Steps**

- During the July 16 meeting, several stakeholders asked if Nicor Gas plans to share their mapping information with other utilities. The commitment to develop a mapping mechanism was specific to Nicor Gas. If another utility is interested in discussing Nicor Gas' mapping process, Nicor Gas is available to discuss. Please note the [Equity and Affordability Metrics](#) document finalized in June 2024 references utilities annually reporting the total number of Income Qualified (IQ) Single Family (SF) EE program participants and spend by zip code, specifically: *Program Administrators will report via spreadsheet each zip code they serve, whether the zip code is defined as an economically disadvantaged area, and income qualified single family EE program spending for each zip code.*