

Energy Affordability & Accessibility Collaborative

September 15, 2021

AGENDA

10:00 am 10 min	Welcome/Goals Review	11:10 am 30 min	Moving from Crisis Response to Prevention Group Exercise
	<i>Anne Armstrong</i> , MPSC		<i>Moderator: Luke Shaefer</i> , MDHHS
10:10 am 10 min	Guiding Values	11:40 am 10 min	Community Issues and Solutions Participants raise current issues facing communities
	<i>Briana Parker</i> , Elevate		<i>All</i>
10:20 am 45 min	Energy Assistance in Michigan In-depth Presentations and Q&A	11:50 am 5 min	Ad Hoc Definitions Subcommittee Update (Additional subcommittee updates on EAAC webpage)
	<i>Kelly Rose</i> , MSHDA <i>Luke Shaefer / Tammy Bair</i> , MDHHS <i>Jamie Curtis</i> , MPSC		<i>Mary Wilkins</i> , Salvation Army
11:05 am 5 min	BREAK	11:55 am 5 min	Next Steps
			<i>Anne Armstrong</i> , MPSC

Putting the Energy Affordability & Accessibility Collaborative Work in Context

Anne Armstrong - MPSC

EAAC CHARGE

To implement the Commission recommendations from the [February 18, 2021 U-20757](#) order and to file the first interim report to the docket on 12/17/2021.

Commission Priorities:

- Ongoing COVID-19 response
- Recommend approaches for simplifying the energy assistance and customer protection systems, working with the EWR low-income workgroup
- Explore a common definition of energy affordability and energy security with the goal of reducing the number of households in Michigan with unsustainable energy burdens
- Emphasize the importance of data collection, transparency, and analysis to inform program design and policy changes
- Review rule-based protections
- Communication and engagement

TWO CONCURRENT PRIORITIES

- **COVID-19 Response**
 - ✓ Outreach and education
 - ✓ Program and policy revision to meet immediate needs and reduce immediate barriers

- **System Analysis and Recommendations for Long Term Reform**
 - ✓ Sustainable affordability
 - ✓ Establish process for high energy burden/low-income communities to influence policy development
 - ✓ Expand and Increase ease of access to services
 - ✓ Collection of data for protection, safety and equity

STRUCTURE

Energy Affordability & Accessibility Collaborative

Definitions Ad hoc

Leaders: Anne Armstrong, Mary Wilkins

- ✓ Recommend standard for energy affordability, includes energy self-sufficiency

Affordability, Alignment, Assistance

Co-chairs; Amy Bandyk, Elaina Braunschweig, Jamie Curtis, Tanya Paslawski

- ✓ 360° look at energy affordability: streamlining energy assistance; next generation affordable payment plans; collections processes, integration with EWR, weatherization, & rate design

Outreach & Education

Leaders: Anne Armstrong, Reka Holley, Briana DuBose, Briana Parker

- ✓ Expand participation by geography and low-income/high energy burden households
- ✓ Develop a strategy for outreach on federal COVID-19 energy assistance

Data Analysis & Regulatory Review

Leaders: Chris Forist, Stakeholder

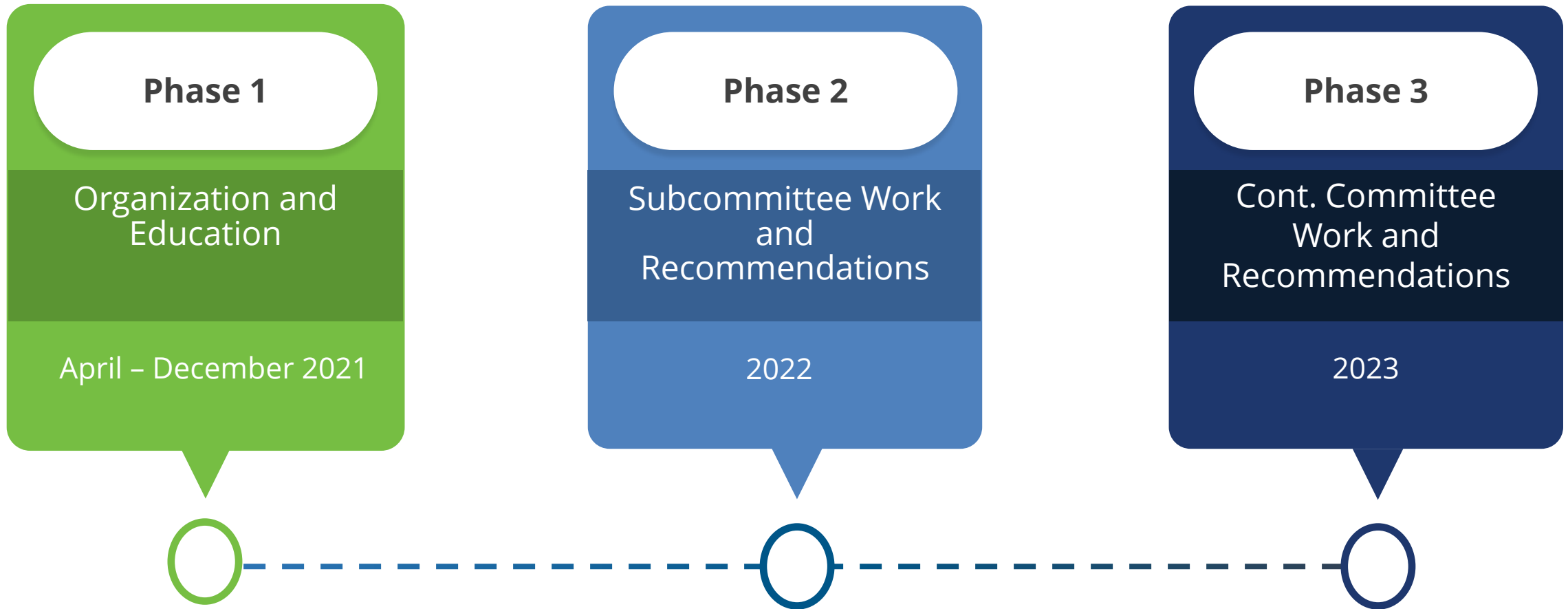
- ✓ Analyze current data submissions and develop long-term data strategy
- ✓ Review rule-based customer protections and make recommendations for improvement

TIMELINE



- ✓ Set up the Collaborative with input from Low-Income EWR on structure
- ✓ Establish subcommittees with MPSC and Stakeholder co-leaders of each subcommittees
- ✓ Begin subcommittee work, develop workplans
- ✓ At monthly EAAC meetings provide education on approaches to affordability from different states and utilities, including state of Michigan perspective
- ✓ Progress report due on 12/17

TIMELINE



RECAP OF LAST MEETING

- Overview of the EAAC work to date, where we are in the process and where we are going
- Presentation/Discussion on enhancing environmental justice
- Presentation and Q&A with Commissioner Tremaine Phillips on energy affordability and outreach and education in the context of the Commissioners overall work.
- Panel on Regulatory Approaches to Affordability with Pennsylvania talking about an energy affordability definition; Colorado talking about PIPP and the legislative expanded definition of disproportionately impacted communities; and Indiana MI Power talking about a consumption-based rate for seniors
- Session for discussion of Community Concerns

GOALS FOR THIS MEETING

- Deepen understanding of how energy assistance works in Michigan, including the energy assistance linked to rental assistance
 - The first of 3 rounds of how the energy assistance delivery system functions; round 2 will be focused on utilities and agencies; round 3 will be focused on the customer perspective
- Group discussion on brainstorming the transformation from crisis to prevention
- Understand utility work with low-income customers; the customer journey, outreach and education; with stakeholder input on improvements
- Listen to the community
- Learn from subcommittee work

Guiding Values

Briana Parker - Elevate



ELEVATE



MPSC EAAC Guiding Values Segment

- **EAAC Guiding Values**
- **Introduction to Guiding Value: Active Listening & Communication**
- **Let's Work together!**
 - Define
 - Case Example
 - How can we enhance active listening and communication?
- **How do we implement?**
- **Follow up & Next Steps:**

MPSC EAAC Guiding Values



1. Advance racial and economic justice
2. Enhance environmental justice
3. Active listening and communication
4. Operate with integrity
5. Ensure inclusion
6. Practice accountability
7. Encourage collaboration
8. Follow leadership from impacted individuals and communities
9. Education and awareness
10. Promote transparency

- **What does it mean to actively listen and communicate with communities?**
- Equity-based communication puts community first. Unlike some traditional communications models where messages are developed in a silo **for target audiences**, in an equity-based model, communications are co-developed **by communities** through close partnership with individuals and organizations who lend their time, energy and expertise to the effort.
- Inclusivity shouldn't be treated as a side project but rather fully ingrained in the culture, similarly to the way we are now all thinking about sustainability broadly. One way to do that is to get better at active listening. Active listening is at the core of Inclusion, and it ensures that barriers are dealt with by asking curious questions and doing your own research.
- **Case Example**

Guiding Value: Active Listening & Communication



- **How can we (EAAC) work to ensure that we are actively listening and communicating with communities?**

Follow up Next Steps

- Please add comments to: EAAC Guiding Values
- Next Guiding Value: Operate with Integrity

Energy Assistance in Michigan: In-depth Presentations and Q&A

Kelly Rose – MSHDA
Luke Shaefer – MDHHS
Tammy Bair – MDHHS
Jamie Curtis - MPSC





COVID Emergency Rental Assistance

www.Michigan.gov/cera

Kelly Rose, Chief Housing Solutions Officer



Tenant Eligibility

- CERA tenants can be up to 80% AMI
- Households must have experienced a hardship during COVID
 - Unemployment
 - Decreased Income
 - Increased Expenses
 - Other Financial Hardship
- Be at risk of homelessness or housing instability
 - Past-due rent or utility notice/statement

Rental Assistance Benefit

- Up to 50% AMI—up to 12 months of rental assistance
 - Included within the 12 months, 3-months can be future rent assistance
- 50-80% AMI—up to 10 months of rental assistance
 - Included within the 10 months, 3-months can be future rent assistance
- Tenants may apply for an additional 3-months of rental assistance if necessary for housing stability
 - Income must be reassessed
- Rent is limited to 150% of FMR
- Up to \$400 of late fees and \$150 of court costs

Internet Assistance Benefit

- Tenants may receive an Internet stipend if they request it and provide a recent internet statement/bill
- Internet Stipend will be \$300 (\$50/month for six months)
- Payment will be made directly to the tenant

Utility Assistance Benefit

- CERA can pay for electricity, any type of home heating, water, sewer and trash
 - Trash will only be paid if it is paid along with water or sewer
 - An additional \$500 may be paid for households under 50% AMI if needed to fully pay all utility arrearages.

Household Size	Maximum Total One Time Utility Payment (Includes Future Payment)	Maximum Future Utility Payment as a Credit
1-2 persons	\$1,500	\$300
3-4 persons	\$2,000	\$500
5+ persons	\$2,500	\$500

Assistance for non-lease holders

- CERA can assist those that are not current lease holders
 - Hotel stay when needed to safely house family
 - Application Fees
 - Security Deposit
 - 3-months of Rental Assistance
 - \$300 or \$500 towards future utility assistance

CERA Partnerships to Avoid Evictions

- CERA has funding provided to Legal Aid organizations so that tenants can get free legal services during an eviction case
 - Go to www.michiganlegalhelp.org to get connected to an office near you
- The State Court Administrative Office has issued admin order 2020-17 that provides for:
 - Automatic 30-day stay in court proceedings when the tenant has applied for CERA
 - Another 15-day period for payment to be made

Application Process

- Online application portal
 - www.michigan.gov/cera
 - Either tenant or landlord can initiate the application
 - Paper application process will still be available
- Imminent eviction cases will be prioritized for processing
- Public dashboard will launch later this month
- As of 9/13, over \$209 million in financial assistance has been approved for about 32,100 households



LIHEAP Update

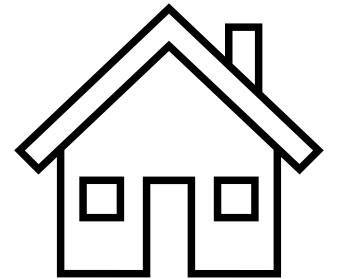
Presented by: Tammy Bair

Email address: Bairt.michigan.gov



Topics

- Supplemental LIHEAP Funding
- Home Heating Credit
- State Emergency Relief Application Process





Supplemental LIHEAP

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

- MI FY2020 allocation - \$35,130,421.00
- Funding has been fully utilized

American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act

- MI FY2021 allocation - \$238,219,248
- Funding has not been appropriated by the legislature yet
- Expected to be used to expand existing LIHEAP programs



Home Heating Credit (HHC)

HHC is Michigan's preventative LIHEAP benefit and is administered by the Department of Treasury. Applications are accepted from the time tax forms become available through September 30 each year.

Eligibility Criteria:

- ✓ Income
- ✓ Number of Exemptions
- ✓ Household Heating Costs

Income Eligibility = 110% FPL

Application form is the MI-1040CR-7

[2020 MICHIGAN Home Heating Credit Claim MI-1040CR-7](#)

Treasury issued supplemental payments to 178,666 HHC claimants who applied this year. 116,559 vulnerable households received a \$200 supplement and 62,107 received an additional \$100 payment.

A vulnerable household is defined as having at least one member who is:

- Age 60 and above;
- Disabled; or
- A child, age 5 or younger



State Emergency Relief (SER) Application Process

Fiscal Year 2019 - changes were made to better coordinate the SER and MEAP programs and to more efficiently serve households. Effective 10/1/2018, households facing energy emergencies must apply for SER in order to receive additional assistance and services through MEAP.

Applicants can apply by completing one of the following:

- MDHHS-1171 (and MDHHS-1171-SER supplement)
- DHS 1514 **or**
- MDHHS online application found at [MI Bridges \(michigan.gov\)](http://MI Bridges (michigan.gov))

Currently there are over 4,500 Community Partners registered to assist Michigan residence with the MDHHS online portal, including representatives from each MEAP grantee. MEAP grantees are registered as MI Bridges Navigators and are able to assist residents with the application process, verification/document upload and provide referral assistance, in addition to working with the household to develop a self-sufficiency plan for assistance through MEAP.

MEAP 101

Customer Assistance Division
Michigan Public Service Commission

September 2021



Agenda

- MEAP foundation and history
- Program details
 - How MEAP is distributed
 - Energy assistance services provided
- Questions

Appendix:

- Funding chart
- MEAP Goals



MEAP Foundation

Public Act 615 of 2012 (March 28, 2013)

- Created the Michigan Energy Assistance Act that requires the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to establish and administer the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP).
- The purpose of the MEAP is to establish and administer programs statewide that provide energy assistance and self-sufficiency services to eligible low-income households.
 - Michigan Public Service Commission(MPSC)-MEAP Section performs administrative duties through an Inter-Agency Agreement with MDHHS.

Senate Bill 451 (August 20, 2019)

- Extends the Michigan Energy Assistance Act that established the MEAP until Sept. 30, 2023.

*Low-income is defined as a household at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines which for FY19 was roughly \$25,000 of annual income for a household of four



Continued: MEAP Foundation

Public Act 95 of 2013 (July 1, 2013)

- Created the Low-Income Energy Assistance Fund (LIEAF), charging MDHHS with expending money from the fund as provided by the Michigan Energy Assistance Act.
- The Act allows the MPSC to annually approve a low-income energy assistance funding factor, not to exceed \$50,000,000, to support the LIEAF.
 - On July 27, 2021, in Case No. U-17377, the MPSC adopted a funding factor of 87 cents per meter per month for all Michigan electric utilities that have opted to participate in the funding of the LIEAF, effective for the September 2021 billing month.
 - Electric cooperatives, municipal electric utilities, & investor-owned electric utilities are able to participate in funding LIEAF.
 - Electric utilities that opt-out of collecting the funding factor may not shut off service to any residential customer from November 1 to April 15 for nonpayment of a delinquent account.



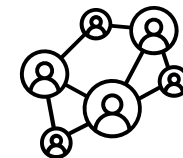
How MEAP is Distributed

- Two-year grant cycle
- FY 2020-21 and FY2022-23 grants awarded to:
 - Barry County United Way, MDHHS Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity, St. Vincent de Paul, Superior Watershed Partnership, The Heat & Warmth Fund (THAW), The Salvation Army, TrueNorth, United Way of Jackson County, United Way for SE Michigan
- Customers must have received State Emergency Relief (SER)
 - Be 150% of FPL or below, past-due on utility bill or 25% remaining in propane tank
- Customers can select to be referred to MEAP through their MDHHS SER application
 - Other ways to get connected to a MEAP grantee is through their utility, by contacting 2-1-1, or by directly contacting a MEAP agency



Energy Assistance Services

- Direct assistance payments – focused on household need
 - “One-time” assistance
 - Affordable payment plan (APP) enrollment; ongoing assistance in a 24-month program that incorporates arrearage reduction and provides a subsidy for the customer’s monthly utility bill
 - Currently offered by Consumers Energy, DTE, SEMCO, UPPCO, Great Lakes Energy
- Assurance 16
 - Covers expenses directly related to the delivery of energy assistance self-sufficiency activities
 - Allowable activities include:
 - Needs assessment and referral
 - Vendor advocacy
 - Energy education and financial counseling
 - Short or long-term case management

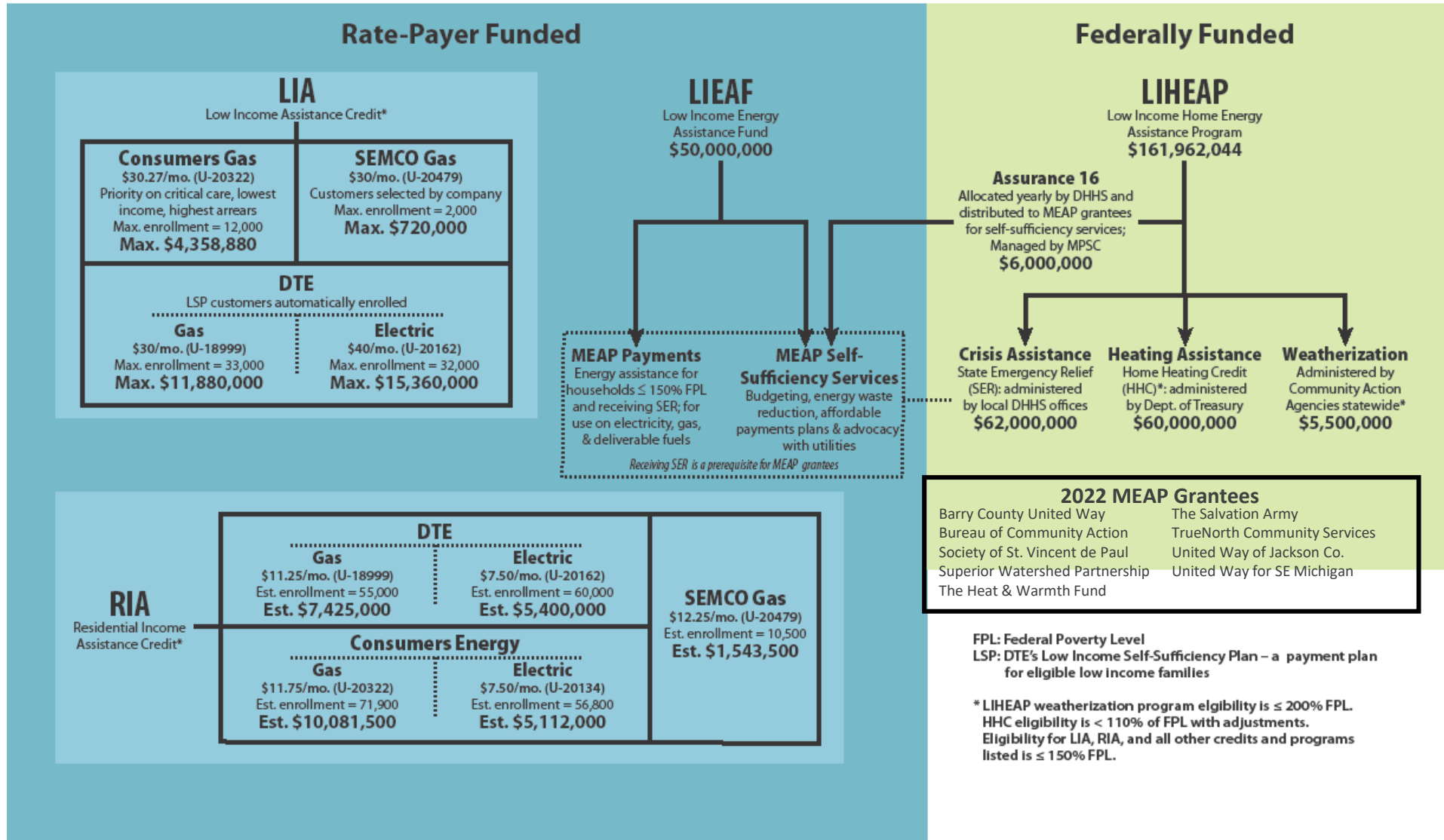


Questions



Energy Assistance Funding & Low-Income Credits

FY20 ENERGY ASSISTANCE FUNDING & LOW INCOME CREDITS



Break

- 5 minutes

Moving from Crisis Response to Prevention Group Exercise

Moderator: Luke Shaefer - MDHHS

Community Issues and Solutions

All

Participants raise current issues facing communities

FIRST YEAR DELIVERABLES: 12-17-21 PROGRESS REPORT

- Establish consensus values for conducting meetings and outputs - *done*
- Demonstrate outreach to and participation of impacted and under-represented groups - *ongoing*
- Demonstrate on-going COVID-19 response including program adjustments; outreach & education efforts - *ongoing*
- Demonstrate progress on recommendation for energy affordability definition - *ongoing*
- Demonstrate coordination between Low Income EWR workgroup, EAAC, utilities and MPSC - *ongoing*
- Recommend structure for tying EWR programs to energy assistance programs – *staff work in progress, EAAC work scheduled for early 2022*

NEXT STEPS

- EAAC Meetings are the 3rd Wednesday of the month
- Next Meeting: October 20, 2021, **9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**
 - ✓ Utility and Human Service Agency discussion of the customer journey, and outreach and communication
 - ✓ Community Concerns
 - ✓ Subcommittee updates
- [Documents and Resources Page](#)
- Affordability, Alignment and Assistance Subcommittee update [here](#)
- Outreach and Education update will be presented in October.
- Low-Income Energy Waste Reduction Workgroup next meeting is October 7, 2021, event info [here](#)

Thank You for Participating

Anne Armstrong – armstronga3@michigan.gov



Appendix

Affordability, Alignment and Accessibility Ad-Hoc Definitions Subcommittee Update

Mary Wilkins – Salvation Army

EAAC Definitions Sub-committee

Define

- Establish common definition of energy security/self-sufficiency.

Develop

- Develop proposal for an energy affordability standard. Determine how the standard can be integrated into the regulatory environment.

Draft

- Draft suggested requirements for consistent energy affordability-related information for utilities to submit to appropriate dockets (rate cases, IRPs, EWR cases.)

EAAC Definitions Sub-committee


Started with the self-sufficiency definition from the MEAP Work Group.

Self-sufficiency: “Household’s basic needs are being met while minimizing reliance on public assistance.”

EAAC Definitions Sub- committee

Working on a
definition of
“Energy
Affordability”

Held 2/6 planned
meetings to arrive
at a definition



EAAC Definitions Sub-committee

Discussing and vetting concepts including:

Home

Efficiency

Fuel types

Basic needs

Affordability

Reasonable
temperature

Consistency

Household

Energy
security

Lack of
interruption

Sufficient
quantities

Non-energy
utilities

Using credit
/savings

Reasonable
Pricing

Payment over
time

Sacrificing
other needs

Health

Reliance

Clean energy

Payment on
time

Public
assistance

Payment
predictability

Sustainability

Affordability, Alignment and Assistance Subcommittee

Tanya Paslawski (5 Lakes Energy) tanya@5lakesenergy.com

Amy Bandyk (CUB Michigan) amy.bandyk@cubofmichigan.org

Jamie Curtis (MPSC—MEAP administrator) CurtisJ14@michigan.gov

Elaina Braunschweig (MPSC—Rates and Tariff) Braunschweig@michigan.gov



Meeting Overview

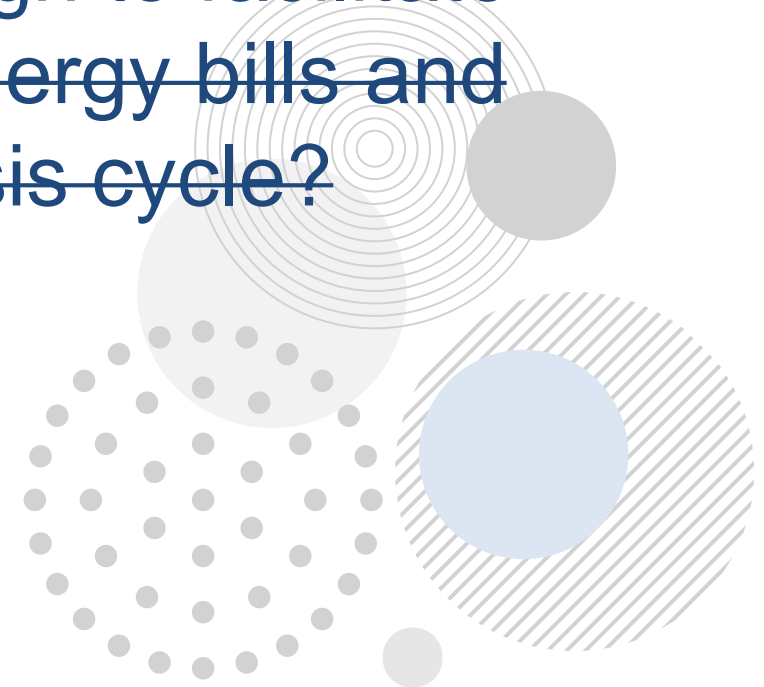
- Guiding question and subcommittee charge
- Meeting structure/roadmap
- Survey results
- Addressing concerns
- Finalize goals
- Assign tasks/research topics

*Slides and materials will be shared by email after the meeting



Guiding Question

~~What is the best system/program design to facilitate customers' sustainably paying their energy bills and avoiding the crisis-assistance-crisis cycle?~~



Guiding Statement

End the crisis-assistance-crisis cycle by centering energy *affordability* and facilitating customers sustainably affording their energy bills by providing all households with uninterrupted *access to affordable, sufficient* energy in an *efficient, healthy,* and *sustainable* manner.



New Guiding Principles

- *This ideal system/program design should achieve this while also:*
 - **Ensuring equitable distribution** in the access to, use of, and outcomes from energy affordability and assistance policies/programs
 - **Centering impacted community priorities** and participation in policy/program development, accountability, and assessment
 - **Treating customers with dignity**, enabling them to live comfortably, and not penalizing customers for an inability to pay their bills
 - **Coordinating and communicating clearly** with relevant state agencies to integrate state policy goals, including those related to healthy homes and climate change



Logistics: Meeting Structure

1

- Choose a goal
- Solicit input on changes members would like to see in said program or goal using the guiding question/subcommittee charge parameters

2

- Research the goal
- Have organization who runs that program (utilities/Staff/DHHS) provide background knowledge/limitations of that program

3

- Identify solutions
- Bring to EAAC for greater review

4

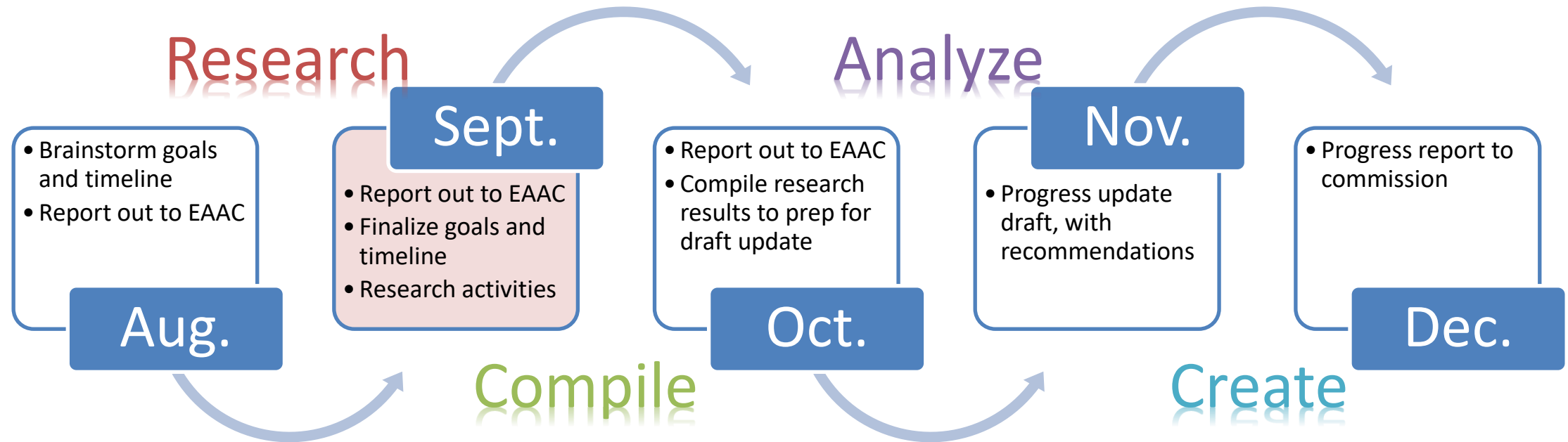
- If appropriate, collaborate with the responsible organization
- Propose to the Commission

Logistics

- File-sharing medium
 - Website https://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/0,9535,7-395-93307_93312_93320-566302--,00.html
- Delegating/Communication
 - Research/project groups organized by leadership
- Frequency and date/time of meetings
 - After each meeting we will send out a follow-up email with current projects



Projected 2021 Timeline



Beyond 2021

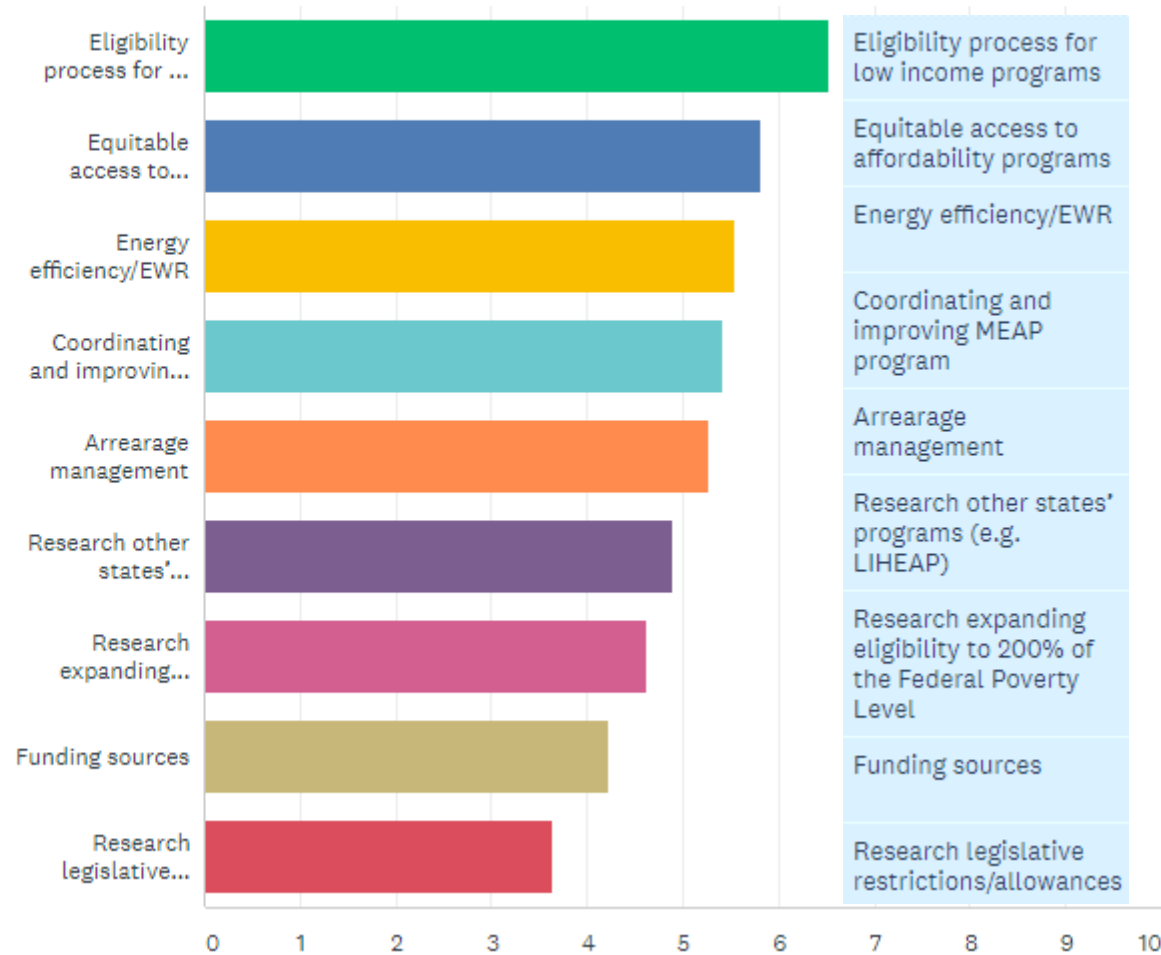
December 2022: Submit updated report with recommendations

2023: Continue collaborative as necessary and finalize work

Survey Results: Priority List

Rank the following areas of focus for prioritization in the December report:

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0



Survey Results: Priority List

What specifically do you want to see changed?

- Eligibility process for low-income programs
 - Delve into ideas from last meeting. E.g.:
 - Automation of the process
 - Look at Cohere pilot
 - Automatic enrollment by the utility company (utility collect data and enroll those who are eligible)
 - Proactively identify customers who are falling behind before it gets to the point of emergency
 - Standardize eligibility so that programs interact with each other
 - Standardize a screening tool and application process
 - Align state and federal program requirements
 - More flexible and understandable
 - Shared databases for identification of LI households
 - Create a secure portal for customers to upload documentation
 - Look at ongoing assistance that doesn't require yearly eligibility verification
 - Increased coordination when a customer qualifies for one program, including energy waste reduction upgrades
 - Review customer journey maps
 - Provide flexibility in eligibility
 - Take into account certain expenses (other bills, debt), medical issues/equipment



Goals from last meeting → Project List

Accessibility

(Mostly addressed through outreach group and guiding principles i.e. equity)

- Customer journey

Eligibility

- How verification and collection (works with accessibility)
- Not having to be in crisis to get assistance
 - Avoid policies and program designs that include punitive measures that penalize customers for their inability to pay
- Simplify/expedite process
- Streamline design
- Make more flexible and understandable
- Should be as AUTOMATIC as possible
- Implications of expanding eligibility to 200% FPL
- Critical care---**came out in survey. Please contact leadership or extrapolate in the Google doc about your concerns**

Affordability

- Arrearage management (payment plans, late fees, debt forgiveness)
- Work with MEAP workgroup
 - Update APP pilots
- Financing options for PIPPs and credits
- Can EWR programs be tied to property values?
- Renewable generation and efficient resource opportunities

Next Steps

- Members--Researching desired eligibility changes

- Leadership--Schedule speakers from relevant organizations

- October: education on low-income program eligibility

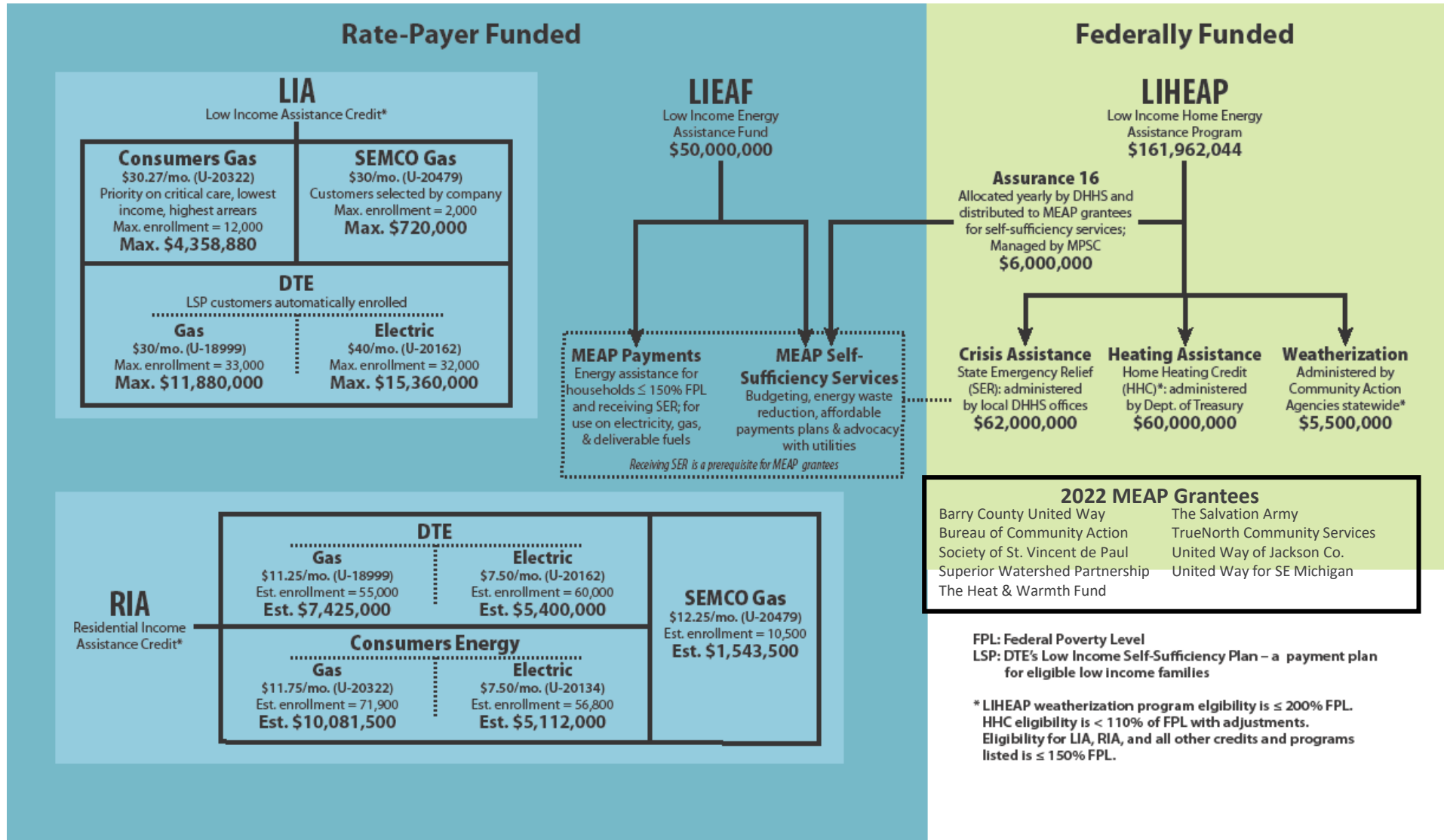
November: potentially identify solutions

Appendix

- Energy assistance funding & low-income credits chart
- MEAP goals

Energy Assistance Funding & Low-Income Credits

FY20 ENERGY ASSISTANCE FUNDING & LOW INCOME CREDITS



MEAP Goals

- Steward tax and rate payer dollars
- Provide compassionate service
- Increase ease of access
- Coordinate various energy assistance programs and prioritize to most vulnerable populations
- Develop creative methods for targeting underserved or special population households (e.g. low/fixed income, higher than average energy usage, non-metered fuel use)
- Achieve targeted, population-specific metrics of energy security