

Energy Affordability & Accessibility Collaborative

November 17, 2021

AGENDA

9:30am 10 min	Welcome/Agenda Review	Anne Armstrong - MPSC
9:40am 15 min	Guiding Values	Briana Parker – Elevate Briana DuBose - EcoWorks
9:55am 10 min	Community Concerns and Solutions	All Led by Briana Parker – Elevate
10:05am	Break	
10:10am 80 min	Presentations from Subcommittees	Ad-Hoc Definitions Affordability, Alignment & Assistance Outreach and Education
11:30am 10 min	Overview of Interim Report	Anne Armstrong - MPSC
11:40am 15 min	Future Structure of LI-EWR and EAAC	Anne Armstrong and Brad Banks - MPSC
11:55am 5 min	Next Steps	Anne Armstrong - MPSC

Update: Where We've Been, Where We're Going

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:

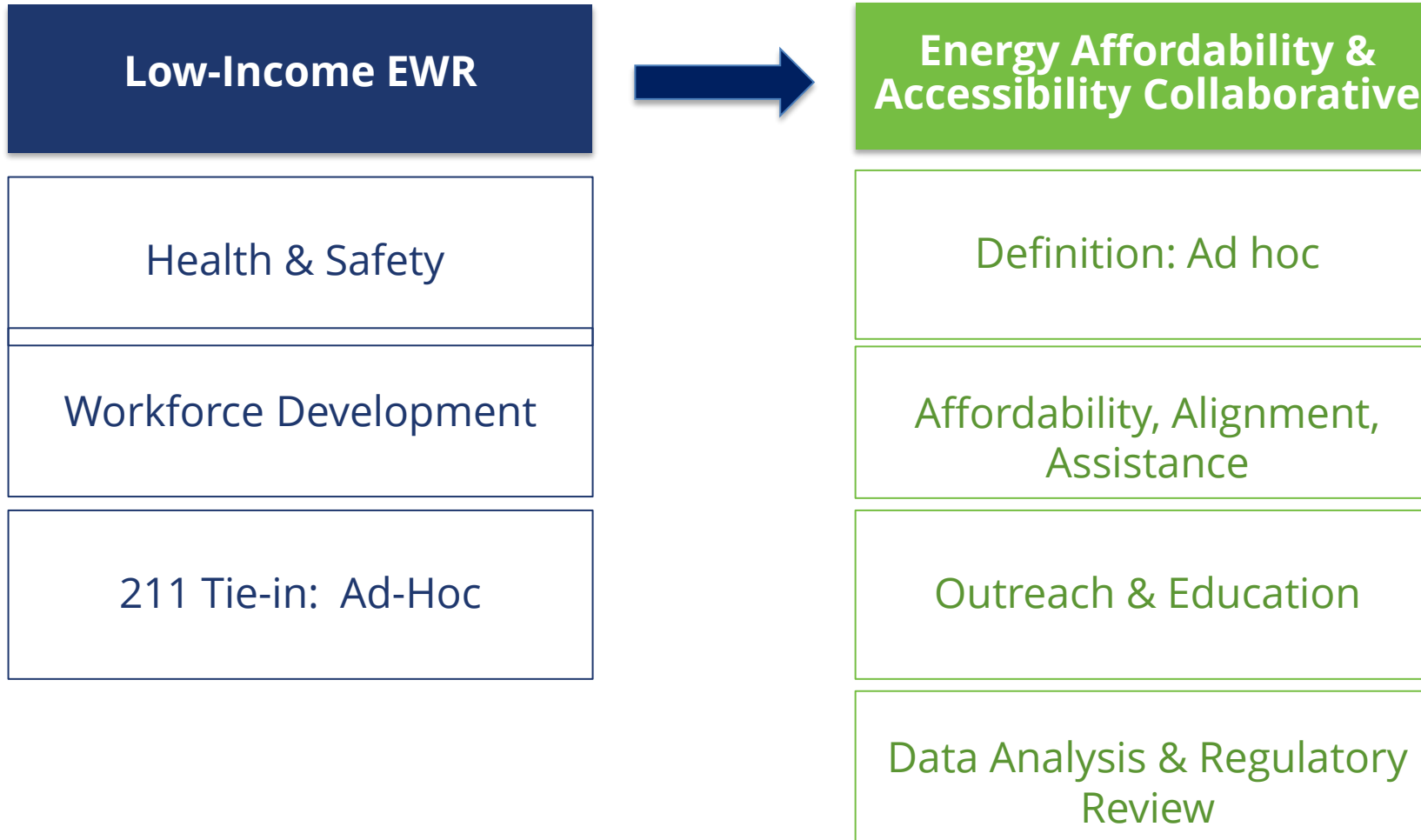
- Ongoing COVID-19 response
- Recommend approaches for simplifying the energy assistance and customer protection systems, working with the EWR low-income workgroup
- Explore a common definition of energy affordability and energy security with the goal of reducing the number of households in Michigan 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: One Goal

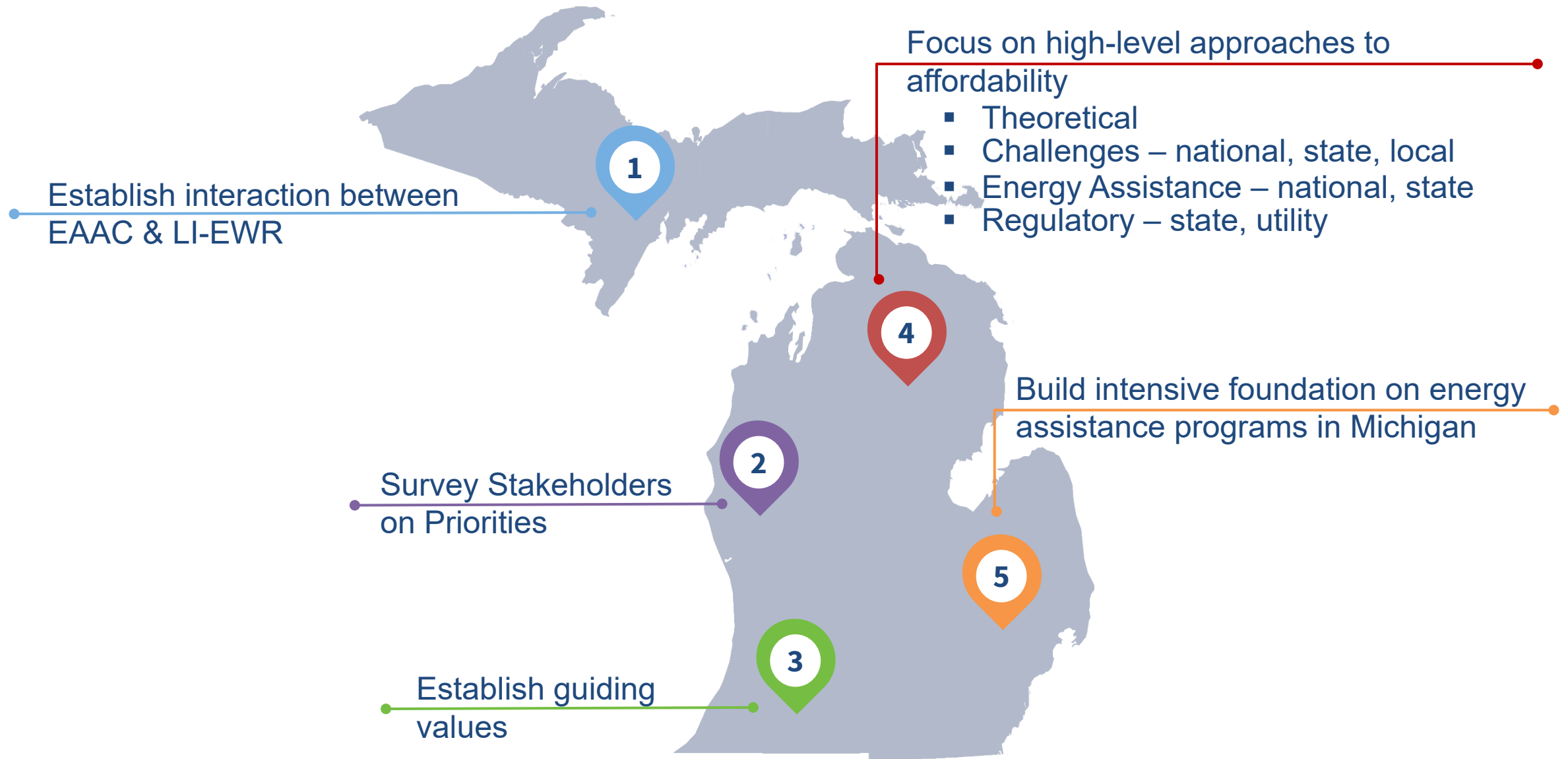
Reduce the number of households with unsustainable energy burdens

- **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

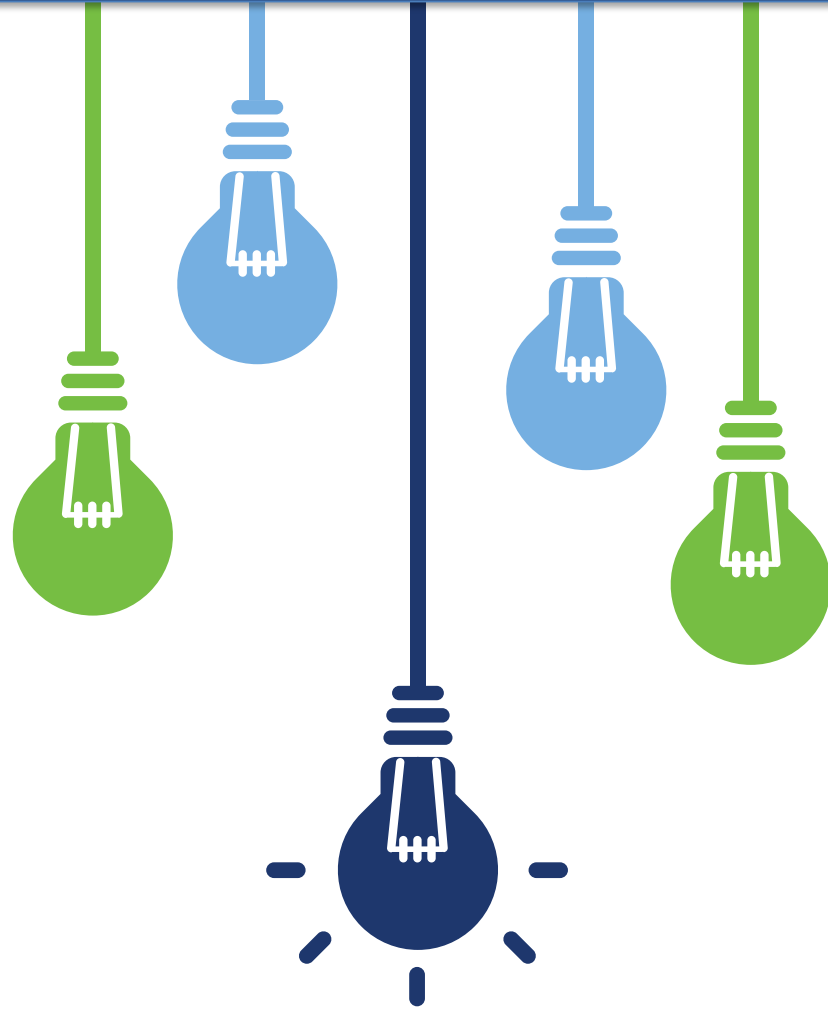
EAAC STRUCTURE



WHERE WE'VE BEEN



RECAP OF LAST MEETING



Understand the customer journey from the utilities as they work with and reach out to customers in need of assistance

Understand the customer journey from the human services agencies as they assist customers seeking assistance via 211, MIBridges, and by phone or in person



Group discussion on ways to improve the customer journey



Listen to the community concerns.

TODAY'S MEETING: CUSTOMER JOURNEY

01

Subcommittee
Updates on Progress
with Discussion



02

Overview of
Interim Report



03

Discussion on the future
structure of
LI-EWR & EAAC

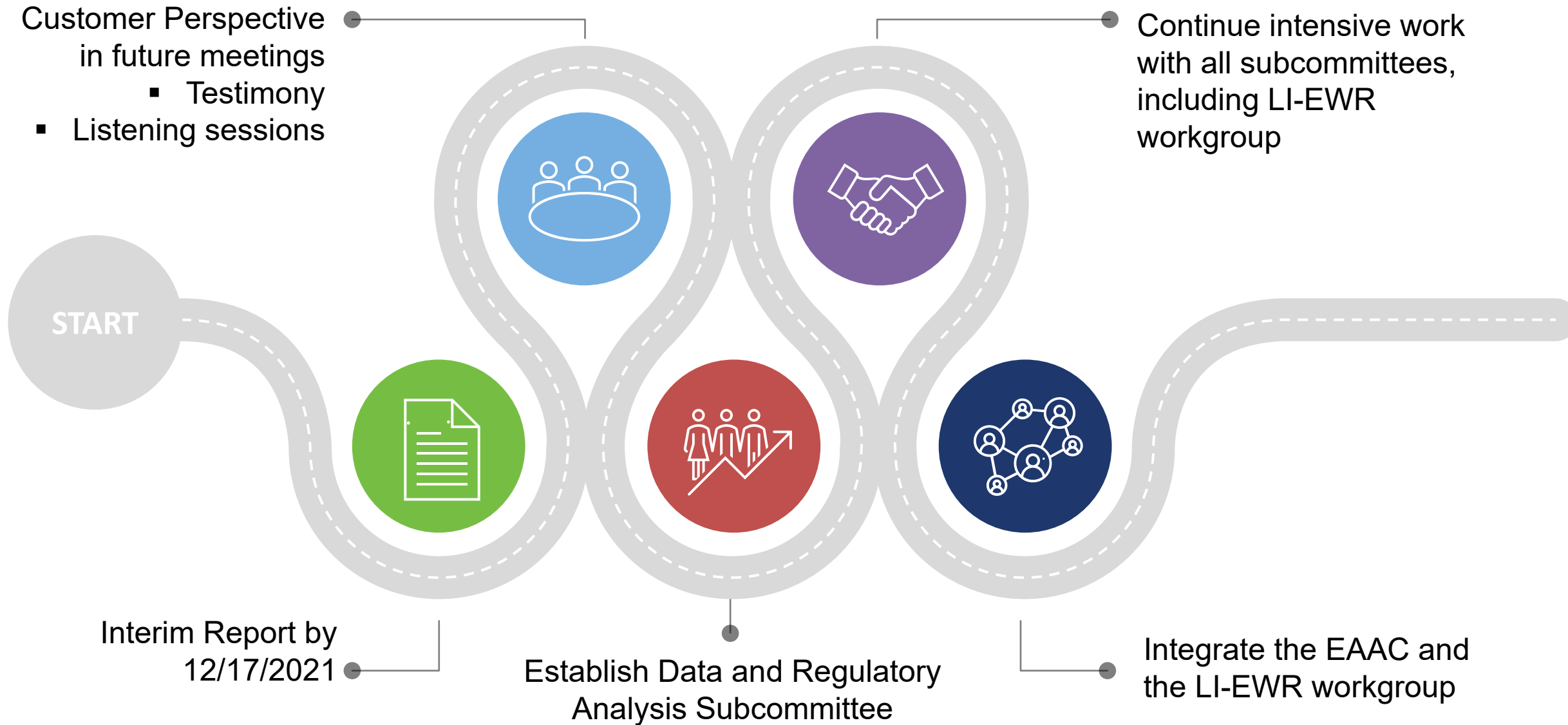


04

Next Steps



WHERE WE'RE GOING



Guiding Values

Briana Parker – Elevate
Briana DuBose – EcoWorks

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

Community Concerns and Solutions

ALL

Led by Briana Parker – Elevate

Break

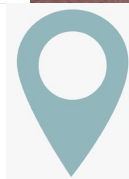
Subcommittee Updates and Discussion

Ad-hoc Subcommittee on Definitions

Mary Wilkins - Salvation Army



EAAC Definitions Subcommittee Progress Update





REMINDER OF OUR CHARGE

Establish common definition of energy **security/self-sufficiency** – begin with proposed definition by MEAP Workgroup Subcommittee 2.



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



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



A Roadmap Was Established

1. Review charge at each meeting
2. Discuss a concept to defining energy affordability
3. Survey committee members on outcomes of the discussion
4. Incorporate results if there's consensus



The Road We've Travelled

- 📍 Started with the MEAP Workgroup's definition of self –sufficiency
- 📍 Decided to define Energy Affordability
- 📍 Qualified energy as home energy



The Road We've Travelled

Considered concepts from definitions of energy security



- 📍 Discussed and ruled out fuel types and non-energy utilities for inclusion
- 📍 Discussed how to qualify basic needs
- 📍 Discussed energy efficiency and its importance
- 📍 Considered reasonable temperature
- 📍 Consistency or lack of interruption
- 📍 Sufficient quantities of energy

The Road We've Travelled

Considered definitions of affordability and related concepts



- 📍 Consent or agreement to cost
- 📍 Reasonable pricing
- 📍 Payment predictability
- 📍 Ability to pay today or over time, month after month
- 📍 Ability to pay without use of savings or credit
- 📍 Ability to pay on-time

The Road We've Travelled

Considered what costs are inherent in the concept of affordability

- 📍 Reviewed alternative metrics and dimensions
- 📍 Diagram of Energy Affordability and Service Planning Costs
- 📍 Household relationship to affordability in the affordability equation
- 📍 Definitions from industry experts
- 📍 Energy burden and discussed the drivers of energy burden
- 📍 “What costs are being considered in affordability?”
Financial, Human, Environmental?
- 📍 Challenges in affordability of the grid of the future



Affordability / Affordable

af·ford·able | \ ə-ˈfɔr-də-bəl \

- Definition of affordable
- : able to be afforded : having a cost that is not too high
 - products sold at affordable prices
 - an affordable purchase
 - affordable housing [=housing that is not too expensive for people of limited means]
- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/affordability>



Definition after our third meeting



Revised definition

Energy Affordability:

“A household’s home energy needs for heating, cooling, lighting and other uses that promote health and well-being are being met ...while promoting energy efficiency ...

Suggested Language from Surveys

“A household’s home energy needs for heating, cooling, lighting and other uses that promote health and well-being are being met...

- And cost-efficient pricing
- And cost-efficient utility pricing
- Without compromising the household's ability to meet other basic needs.
- Customers know they have the money to pay

...while promoting energy efficiency ...



We Tried a Slightly Different Approach

- Definition:
- Energy Affordability is...
- Energy is affordable if...



Energy is affordable if...

“A household’s home energy needs for heating, cooling, lighting and other uses that promote health and well-being are being met...

- and there is cost-efficient pricing
- and there is cost-efficient utility pricing
- without compromising the household's ability to meet other basic needs.
- and customers know they have the money to pay

...while promoting energy efficiency ...



Definition Options: Energy Affordability



- 📍 Members completed a survey to narrow options for the phrasing of the definition.
- 📍 We are meeting on 11/18 to review our work and continue to narrow definitions.

Survey Responses

How would you qualify energy as “able to be afforded?”

In defining energy affordability, would you qualify home energy uses as “for heating, cooling, and other uses?”



Survey Responses



- 📍 In addressing the manner in which energy is used, which phrasing do you prefer?
- 📍 What is your preference for phrasing that qualifies the manner in which energy affordability is achieved?

Survey Responses

📍 In defining energy affordability, how would you qualify “having a cost that is not too high?”



Discussion:

In what ways can we build consensus around a definition?



- How might we broaden input into the definition beyond this small group?
- How might we gain input from additional stakeholders including low- and middle-income utility customers?

Potential Definitions

Should we offer more than one option for consideration by stakeholders?

- “A household’s home energy needs for heating, cooling, lighting and other uses that promote health and well-being are being met...”
- A household’s basic energy needs are being met in an efficient, healthy, and sustainable manner...
- Other options?



NEXT STEPS

- Progress Report to the Commission
- Vet definition concepts to other stakeholders?
- Develop a proposal for an energy affordability standard and how the standard can be integrated into the regulatory environment.



QUESTIONS?



Affordability, Alignment and Assistance Subcommittee

Elaina Braunschweig – MPSC
braunschweig@michigan.gov



Introduction

- The subcommittee's charge is to streamline and make more accessible energy assistance programs, research affordable payment plans, analyze collections processes, while integrating EWR and rate design.
- 57 members, of which 35 regularly attend meetings. This includes stakeholders, utilities, and partner agencies, who we actively try to recruit, as our programs greatly overlap with DHHS.

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. 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

Organization

- Resources on the EAAC documents website
 - Actively use a Google Doc for a goals list, which also houses learned information
 - Anonymous suggestion box
 - Majority of information on PowerPoints
- Working on definitions list and more detailed customer journey charts (feedback given to us from this report)
- Trying to improve upon organizational techniques

Input and Goal Structure

- Sent out a survey early on for participants to express concerns and rank which goals they would like to address first
 - Streamlining the enrollment process was ranked first
 - Participants were concerned the scope of our work was too large to accomplish
- Developed a way to accomplish goals:
 - Choose a goal and solicit input
 - Research/educate on the goal
 - Find solutions & bring to EAAC for review
 - Collaborate/coordinate with responsible organization or Commission

Progress

- We have completed the first three stages of the goals
 - Received detailed feedback about issues in enrollment
 - Utilities presented on customer journey and outreach
 - Refined where issues existed
 - Currently working with DHHS to further streamline the customer journey and enrollment process

Challenges and Successes

- Challenges

- Most of the desired change is outside of the MPSC's control
 - Working with DHHS to try to make changes
- Leadership is aware that if we do not deliver on the goals, we will lose a lot of trust

- Successes

- The skepticism of delivery on the goals motivated us to develop an organizational structure for accomplishing them
- High level of participation increases likelihood of change
- The AAA helps educate and refine advocacy by pointing advocates in the right direction

Recommendation

- Utilities should have access to more customer eligibility information from DHHS to automatically enroll customers for assistance based on their participation in other assistance programs like Medicaid and food. The AAA subcommittee strongly believes that there should be fewer barriers to receiving assistance and that customers should not be burdened by applying for each form. They should instead be automatically enrolled in any assistance they're eligible for if they have already applied to other forms.

Current Feedback

- Not many responses
- Still receiving retroactive feedback on consensus items e.g. the guiding statement, the goals we're addressing.
- Recommendations on additional organizational techniques, which we are trying to implement.
- Strong desire for EWR and EE, which is something we will ensure customers are referred to, but we will likely have to refer the programmatic desires to the EWR workgroup.

Resources

- If you are a member and want to provide feedback, make sure to do so using the research.net link by COB today.
 - You can dissent on the version sent out on 11/22
- If you cannot attend meetings or want to view our resources (PowerPoints, recordings, etc.), they are now housed on the EAAC document website
https://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/0,9535,7-395-93307_93312_93320-566302--,00.html
- If you want to join the subcommittee, please reach out to Anne or AAA leadership. It's never too late and we can always use more community representation.

Outreach and Education Subcommittee

Briana Parker – Elevate
Briana DuBose – EcoWorks



ELEVATE



MPSC EAAC Outreach & Education Subcommittee

Briana DuBose, EcoWorks

Briana Parker, Elevate

- **Ensuring Inclusion of Communities**
 - Shifting Resources to Communities to have “meaningful participation”
- **2022 Implementation**
 - 1) **5 Community Town Halls “What Does Energy Affordability Mean?”**
 - 2) **Comprehensive Energy Assistance Resource**
 - 3) **Immediate Assistance for Communities**

- **What is Inclusion?**

- The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups.
- In the EAAC context: Ensuring impacted communities are at the table and have “meaningful participation” in the EAAC process. Impacted communities are people who qualify for the programs, and experience the problems being discussed.

- **Mini Grants to Community Groups**

- Working with Advocates to ensure funding for community groups to participate and polling to find out where barriers lie has been important in working towards inclusion.

- **Subcommittee Progress**
 - Conducted Community Conversations
 - **Initial Kickoff Meeting** Sept. 9th (3 meetings total)
- **2022 Implementation Plan**
 - ☐ **5 Community Town Halls:** “What Does Energy Affordability Mean?”
 - ☐ **Statewide Comprehensive Energy Assistance & Energy Waste Reduction Resources for Communities**
 - ☐ **Immediate Assistance to Communities Experiencing Shutoffs**

Interim Report Overview

Anne Armstrong – MPSC

Interim Report Outline

- No recommendations outside of possible change in LI-EWR and EAAC
- Overview of Commission work outside of the EAAC
 - Formal and informal collaborations
 - Public Shutoff and Arrearage Data Site
- EAAC update
 - Overview of charge
 - Structure and priority development in collaboration with LI-EWR workgroup
 - Subcommittee reports written by each subcommittee
 - Next steps
 - Conclusion

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*

Future Structure of the LI-EWR Workgroup and the EAA Collaborative

Anne Armstrong – MPSC

Brad Banks – MPSC

Low-Income EWR



Health & Safety
Workforce Development
Ad-Hoc: 211 Tie-in

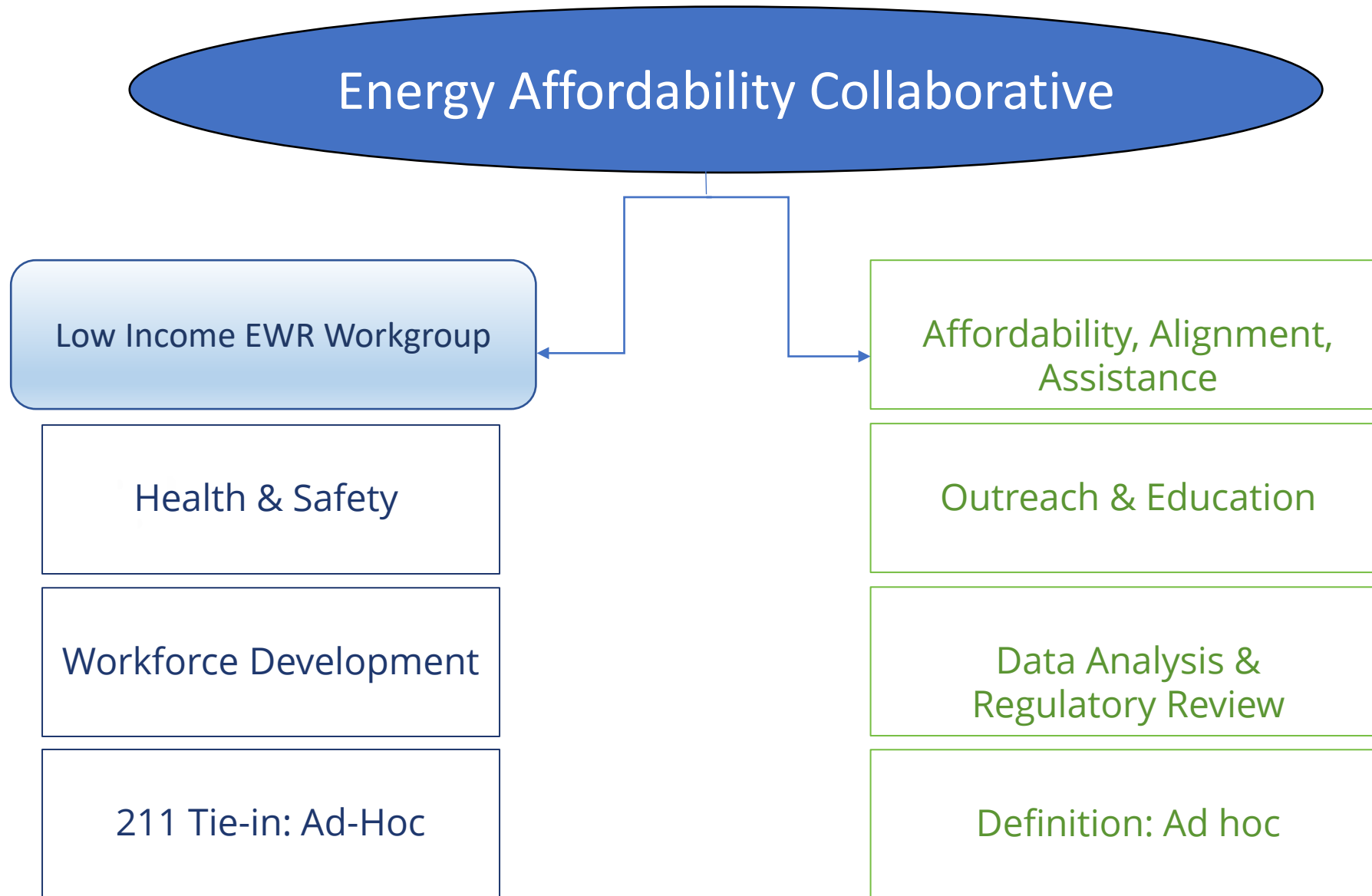
Energy Affordability & Accessibility Collaborative



Definition: Ad hoc
Affordability, Alignment, Assistance
Outreach & Education
Data Analysis & Regulatory Review

Energy Affordability Collaborative

Energy Affordability Collaborative



Energy Affordability Collaborative



Collaborative meets 4 times
per year

Subcommittees meet per
group consensus and charge

Subcommittees report to the Collaborative for
education and consensus building

EWR LOW INCOME WORKGROUP

- Why is an integrated structure a good idea? What is good about it?
- Why is it a bad idea?
- Does doing a version of this even make sense?
- Is there a better version or idea to facilitate action and communication between the LI Workgroup projects and payment assistance projects? Are we already doing it?
- Does having a formalized structure to the relationship even matter? Is this an MPSC internal issue that doesn't affect the groups' work?
- Provide written responses to Brad and Anne by email or in the chat.

Next Steps

Anne Armstrong – MPSC

NEXT STEPS

- Circulation of draft EAAC section of the Interim Report week of 11/22
 - Due back to Anne or committee leaders by 11/30
- EAAC Meetings are the 3rd Wednesday of the month
- Next Meeting: January 19, 2022 – pending recommendations on structure
- General 2022 strategy
 - ✓ Focus on the customer journey from the customer perspective
 - ✓ On-going subcommittee work
 - ✓ EAAC educational sessions and review of subcommittee work
- [Documents and Resources Page](#)
- LI-EWR Workgroup next meeting is November 18, 2021, event info [here](#)

Thank You for Participating

Anne Armstrong – armstronga3@michigan.gov

