MOVING TOWARDS COMMUNITY DRIVEN ENERGY EFFICIENCY

AN EVALUATION OF GREEN JUSTICE COALITION'S COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION INITIATIVES

GREEN JUSTICE COALITION

NOVEMBER 2011

ON BEHALF OF THE GREEN JUSTICE COALITION STEERING COMMITTEE

Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), Alliance to Develop Power (ADP), Boston Climate Action Network (BCAN), Boston Workers' Alliance (BWA), Chelsea Collaborative, Chinese Progressive Association, Clean Water Action, Coalition Against Poverty/Coalition for Social Justice (CAP/CSJ), Community Labor United (CLU), Greater Four Corners Action Coalition, MassCOSH, Laborers' New England Regional Organizing Fund, Massachusetts Energy Consumers Alliance, Neighbor to Neighbor, New England Regional Council of Carpenters, New England United for Justice, Painters & Allied Trades District Council 35, Project RIGHT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation of the Green Justice Coalition's Community Mobilization Initiative

Chinatown and Chelsea Residential Energy Efficiency Pilots

September 19, 2011

> *Communication is a big barrier (because I only speak Toisanese). I would have no idea what they were talking about without CPA and I would not have found out about the program without (Chinese Progressive Association).*
>
> — CHINESE HOMEOWNER

> *(Chelsea Collaborative organizers) are like intermediaries working behind the scenes of the program. They facilitate the process and create a sense of trust so that you feel more comfortable with the process.*
>
> — LATINA HOMEOWNER

BACKGROUND

In July, 2008, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick signed into law the Green Communities Act, to promote energy efficiency measures throughout the Commonwealth. The Act created an entity charged with conducting strategic planning – the Energy Efficiency Advisory Committee (EEAC) – to oversee and support policy created by this legislation. Among the measures included in the Act is a mandate for utilities to offer rebates to customers to weatherize their homes through Mass Save, the state's utility-sponsored energy efficiency program. The costs of rebates are paid for via ratepayer contributions from all utility customers. While these rebates are available to all utility customers, they are significantly underutilized in communities referred to as "Hard-to-Reach, Hard-to-Serve" (HTR/HTS), including immigrant communities and communities of color.

Members of the Green Justice Coalition – a partnership of over forty community organizations – recommended to the EEAC that pilot initiatives be implemented in HTR/HTS communities *targeting households with incomes between 60-120% of State Median Income (SMI).* These are households which are not eligible for dedicated low-income programs but nonetheless face income barriers to participating in energy efficiency initiatives.[1] In October, 2009, the EEAC approved a $1.4B plan aimed at reaching 140,000 households which included a recommendation to implement these pilot efforts, called Community Mobilization Initiatives (CMIs). The pilots were charged with field testing a variety of community-based strategies to mobilize residents in HTR/HTS communities to participate in the Mass Save program. The pilots also included a jobs component, with the goal of generating weatherization jobs for local workers with good wages, benefits and career pathways.

1 Utility-sponsored programs for households under 60% SMI are implemented in Massachusetts through the Low-income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN).

The Focus

Between November 2010 and August 2011, Arbor Consulting Partners conducted an evaluation of two pilot Community Mobilization Initiatives (CMIs) developed by the Green Justice Coalition: the Chinatown CMI, led by the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) and the Chelsea CMI, led by the Chelsea Collaborative (CC). Both Chelsea and Chinatown have been described as HTR/HTS communities where residents have traditionally not taken advantage of the Mass Save program. The goal of the CMI Pilot evaluation was to provide an in-depth understanding of strategies employed by CPA and CC to educate and mobilize residents to pursue home weatherization, including the challenges they faced, and efforts made to overcome these challenges. Findings reflect the perspectives of these two community-based organizations (CBOs), as well as those of their collaborating partners, including the Program Administrators of the Mass Save Home Energy Services program (PAs), lead vendors, weatherization contractors and unions.

In addition to a focus on weatherization, the evaluation also addressed the green jobs component of the CMI, which included training for local workers conducted by the Painters and Carpenters Unions.

A Closer Look at Process and Results

Arbor consultants conducted both a process and outcome evaluation. The process evaluation documented the process of CMI implementation, including the implementation of CBO strategies to mobilize residents with incomes between 60-120% of SMI in HTR/HTS communities, as well as the use of financial incentives by residents who took advantage of the program, and the collaboration among program stakeholders.

Arbor's outcome evaluation documented the impact of specific community outreach methods in engaging residents to participate in the program; the effect of CBO support to sustain customer engagement in the program; and the impact of CMI efforts to train and employ local workers in the weatherization industry.

Arbor's Research Methods

Arbor consultants conducted grounds-up "immersive" research collecting qualitative data through interviews and/or focus groups with a range of key stakeholders, including:

- Lead staff in organizations that played a role in planning and/or implementing the CMIs (e.g., utilities, CBOs, energy efficiency specialists, contractors);
- Community members/customers who were engaged and supported by the CBOs through the weatherization program;
- Workers who were trained for green jobs; and
- Union trainers.

KEY FINDINGS

> *It gave us access to information in our own language and access to a benefit that we are entitled to. It also offers financial assistance for up front costs, (without which) many could not access the home weatherization. I felt comfortable going through this process with CSG technicians… and with the support of (CC staff), who were always by my side.*
>
> — LATINA HOMEOWNER

Success: meeting weatherization targets

Both CBOs set out to secure a target number of residential units for energy efficiency retrofits in two categories: 50 retrofits in homes with 1-4 units, and 4 retrofits of multi-family buildings with 5-20 units[2].

2 The Mass Save Home Energy Program offers different incentives to owners/tenants in buildings with 1-4 residential units and buildings with 5-20 residential units.

As of mid-August 2011, both CBOs were close to meeting their target for the multi-family homes. Through mailings to both owners and tenants and by reaching out to landlords directly, CPA secured commitments from the owners of two multi-family buildings early in the pilot, and shortly after, added a third. Energy efficiency work in these buildings has been completed. Due to delays with a fourth, CPA has recently reached out to sign up another multi-family facility. CC initially focused on signing up customers for 1-4 unit homes and postponed efforts to engage owners of multi-family buildings. But once they shifted to these landlords, they made immediate progress, and after only one mailing, CC received numerous calls of interest. At the time of this writing, energy efficiency work in two multi-family buildings has been completed, and two further jobs are scheduled.

In the case of 1-4 unit homes, the challenges were greater and the process more protracted. Since November 2010, when both CC and CPA began their efforts to engage community members in the program, 12 retrofits have been completed in homes of tenant/owners that CC recruited, with 4 scheduled for retrofit work; and 15 retrofits have been completed in homes of tenant/owners that CPA recruited.[3]

Success: reaching hard-to-serve populations

Evaluation research confirms that both CBOs played a critical role in addressing the needs of the hard-to-serve, hard-to-reach population in the City of Chelsea, and in the Chinatown, Allston/Brighton and South End neighborhoods of Boston. Because CC and CPA are well-established and have strong credibility in their communities, they were met by prospective "customers" with openness and trust. Both CBOs were persistent in their attempts to identify pockets of opportunity during the marketing stage, as they tested out different strategies to engage residents in the program. And they were persistent troubleshooters during the audit-to-retrofit process, as they provided intensive support to homeowners to overcome physical and/or financial barriers to weatherization.

CC staff supported residents to move through the weatherization process in five principal ways: Staff coordinated scheduling of the energy efficiency audits with the Conservation Services Group. A CC organizer was present at the homes of community members during every audit, to translate and provide other support as needed. Staff provided advice and support to community members who were not approved to progress beyond the audit to address health and safety issues and pre-weatherization roadblocks. And they coordinated an effort to overcome these obstacles where possible, for example, hiring electricians or plumbers and monitoring their progress. Staff also worked with community members who had financial obstacles, supporting the process of applying for the HEAT Loan[4] or local bank loan. And finally, staff interpreted contracts so that people could be knowledgeable about what they were signing.

Similarly, CPA staff supported residents through the process of weatherization. They were present at the homes of community members when energy audits were conducted to translate and provide other support as needed. Staff provided advice and support to community members who did not pass the audit because of health and safety or other pre-weatherization roadblocks. And they served as a "third eye" identifying opportunities to improve or speed up the process, coordinating directly with Next Step Living, the Boston-based energy efficiency company that works with the Chinatown CMI.

3 These data updated to August 16, 2011.

4 The HEAT Loan is a 0% interest loan from participating lenders, available to those who are part of the Mass Save Program and in the process of pursuing home weatherization. The loan provides up to $25,000 for "qualified" energy efficiency measures, such as attic, wall and basement insulation, high efficiency heating systems, digital programmable thermostats, and "Energy Star" qualified replacement windows.

Success: learning and adjusting in the field

The process of implementing a pilot affords the opportunity to test strategies and implement mid-course corrections. As expected, both CBOs were on a learning curve in terms of developing a deeper understanding of weatherization, as well as determining the most effective methods to market the CMI in their communities. CPA began with a strategy that employed volunteers, but modified this strategy to involve more time and effort from CPA staffers. CPA also began in Chinatown but found that that the majority of community members they reached had incomes below 60% of SMI. CPA completed their outreach activities in Chinatown to confirm what they suspected; and then shifted their focus to Allston-Brighton where they correctly gauged that they would find people who were eligible and interested in the program. CC began with two new part-time staff, but quickly discovered that the work was more labor-intensive, and ultimately involved more time than expected from a lead organizer and the Associate Executive Director. When CC staffers felt they had reached the threshold of opportunity in one Chelsea neighborhood, they moved to another. Ultimately, CBOs were able to respond to a number of challenges, modifying their courses of action. A continuation of the CMIs in these two neighborhoods would likely run more smoothly, given lessons learned.

Success: developing effective tracking tools

In any pilot, it is to be expected that the start-up phase will be labor intensive, as all parties are developing systems to communicate and collaborate, and some of the challenges are being ironed out. The process of moving from the audit phase to having one's home retrofitted is complex and includes many stages and a cast of characters. ACP developed tracking tools for CBOs to monitor the process of outreach leading to individual customer sign-ups. A data tracking system was developed by CSG as an interim measure to help CC track customers in the process. But this system was never intended as a case management tool. NSL updated tracking data in monthly charts that were easy to interpret and helpful to PAs as well as to CPA staff on the ground.

Success: providing intensive support for residents

CPA reported that 30% of those who signed up for the Mass Save program required intensive support, compared to 80% of individuals signed up by the Chelsea Collaborative, of whom 42% required language support. Based on our analysis, both organizations provide intensive support to those with pre-weatherization roadblocks related to the old age of the housing stock; and both organizations worked with individuals with linguistic and cultural challenges who needed help navigating through the audit-to-retrofit process.

We hypothesize that in addition to these issues, there is an additional layer of discrimination in Chelsea related to the minority status of Latinos in our broader society. The most obvious manifestation of this added layer is the immigration status of many Latinos as "undocumented", and therefore vulnerable to deportation. Given the majority Latino population in Chelsea, reflected in participation rates in the CMI, there was a significant number of prospective "customers" who are either undocumented immigrants or living with family or friends who are undocumented. Even when these individuals have no undocumented immigrants in their homes, people have friends and families who may be undocumented. We suggest that the discrimination experienced by many Latinos in our culture has a spillover effect that is felt in the CMIs, contributing to alienation from mainstream programs – particularly those that require home visits - and resulting in low expectations of what mainstream programs can do for them.

Making Weatherization Affordable

In the case of the Chelsea CMI: In addition to incentive funds provided by the utilities, the City of Chelsea has provided one-time-only gap funding of $500 to each customer to complete the weatherization work.

- Thus far, of the twelve residents who have had their homes weatherized, two-thirds – or eight homeowners – paid nothing out-of-pocket.
- Of the eight residents who paid nothing to have weatherization work done in their homes, three-quarters (6) received both air sealing and insulation.
- Of the two others who paid nothing out-of-pocket, one had air sealing done and the other had insulation done in their homes; and
- In addition to the six residents who paid nothing out-of-pocket for air sealing and insulation, there were three others who had air sealing and insulation done and paid the following: $695, $97 and $1,602.

The average cost of weatherization work among the twelve Chelsea homeowners was $1,909; and the median cost was $1,927. Other breakdown figures include the following:

- The least expensive work was $798, and the most expensive was $4,102;
- The average incentive provided by the utilities was $1,377; the median amount was $1,456;
- Four homeowners used the full amount – or $500 – of ARRA funding provided by the City of Chelsea;
- The average amount of ARRA funding used was $403; the median amount was $485.

In the case of the Chinatown CMI, Renew Boston has provided up to $1,500 in gap funding to each customer to complete the weatherization work, in addition to incentive funds provided by the utilities,

- Thus far, of the 15 residents who have had their homes weatherized, 14 residents paid nothing out-of-pocket.
- Of the 14 residents who paid nothing out-of-pocket to have weatherization work done in their homes, a third (4) received both air sealing and insulation.
- Of the 11 others who paid nothing out-of-pocket, 9 had insulation only and 2 had air sealing only.
- In addition to the 4 residents who paid nothing out-of-pocket for air sealing and insulation, one other customer had air sealing and insulation that required a co-pay of $656.

The average cost of weatherization work for the 15 homeowners via the Chinatown CMI was $2,389; and the median cost was $2,723. Other breakdown figures include the following:

- The least expensive work was $293 and the most expensive was $4,166;
- The average incentive provided by the utilities was $1,649; the median amount was $2,000;
- One homeowner used the full amount of funding offered by Renew Boston ($1500);
- The average amount of Renew Boston funding used was $697; the median amount was $694.

Certainly in the case of Chelsea residents, these factors suggest that there is a sub-set of the HTR/HTS population that require more intensive support from a non-mainstream, trusted partner. There may be other sub-groups that require this level of more intensive support in moving from audit to retrofit.

Success: creating some high-road jobs

By all accounts, the 10-week training programs for CPA and CC trainees were successful. The unions, contractors and CBOs collaborated well to ensure that the training was thorough and adapted to the needs of the trainees; and training included in-class lectures and comprehensive hands-on work in well-equipped

union facilities. For the first time, the Painters Union conducted a bi-lingual training co-led by a Chinese-speaking trainer, providing mono-lingual Chinese workers with an opportunity to access an industry that they had not in the past. Moreover, worker/trainees whom we interviewed also emphasized the benefit of having the OSHA and lead training and certification. All the workers we interviewed expressed satisfaction with this opportunity. And CMI workers who are currently on the job received high praise from their employers – Insul-Pro and Aulson Company – a further testament to the quality of the training as well as the trainees.

Nonetheless, a poor economy has provided a less-than-ideal environment for a pilot employment initiative. Evaluation research confirmed that a protracted process for generating weatherization contracts also contributed to disappointing opportunities for CMI employers and workers. While ten Chelsea workers started the training, five completed it, and only one worker has regularly been hired by Insul-Pro, Inc. In the case of the Chinatown CMI, twelve workers completed the training and four workers have been hired by the Aulson Company.

CC and CPA workers who have been hired have received union cards and will be eligible to receive health and other benefits once they have completed six months of work. Moreover, once workers receive union cards, they are ensured that they will be paid at the higher union rate.

To the extent that the audit to retrofit pipeline is made more efficient and funding is available to address pre-weatherization issues, the pipeline will likely generate more work at a higher and more predictable pace. This in turn may allow bundling of jobs and drive down costs. We note that an additional factor influencing the creation of "high road" jobs in the weatherization industry is per unit pricing offered by the utilities. CLU and other CMI partners continue to promote increased pricing for weatherization work to support a wage and benefits structure that reflects union rates.

Needed: examining each stakeholder's strengths

The objective of the CMI collaboration is for each stakeholder to focus on its core strengths. Arbor research confirmed that CBOs played an important role in supporting community members through to a completed weatherization. While acknowledging their support in the "service" phase, some program stakeholders believe that CBO's strengths lie mainly in the area of community outreach and that lead vendors and contractors are best placed to coordinate weatherization scheduling and work. One stakeholder proposed a slightly different process in which CBOs find local contractors to whom they bring leads, and the contractor brings those leads to the program.

This suggests that further discussion among all stakeholders regarding core competencies, including the CBOs' role in both outreach and service phases, is warranted.

Needed: broader measures of cost-effectiveness

Our evaluation research suggests that the CMI model can increase participation rates in HTR/HTS communities. Many of the people we interviewed have acknowledged that CBOs can play an important role in marketing and outreach and are now preparing to discuss how to effectively and efficiently continue this work. Our research confirmed that a straight return-on-investment calculation of the CMIs does not fully reflect their broader impacts. These broader impacts include the good will generated towards the utilities in the community where the program is implemented, and the longer-term effects of the program on the health and well-being of the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Fund CBOs for outreach and education

The purpose of the pilots was not to replicate CMIs across the state but rather to surface information that could inform program design going forward. Based on the results of this evaluation, we recommend that the EEAC incorporate best practices surfaced through the CC and CPA pilots into the overall statewide program. We further recommend that CBOs receive ample funding to perform marketing and outreach functions in local communities as well to support community members through the audit to retrofit pipeline.

2. Engage community partners in decision making

We believe that the partnership created by the CMI pilot has provided an excellent opportunity to bring together community groups, the utilities, unions, contractors and CLU. We recommend that this partnership continue, and that the important voice of community partners is maintained throughout the planning and implementation process.

3. Create an effective pipeline

Creating an efficient pipeline that minimizes barriers for HTR/HTS customers will generate more weatherization contracts and result in more jobs for workers who are newly trained to do weatherization work. Conversations among stakeholders about how best to address pre-weatherization issues, including securing sources of funding to provide subsidies to customers with incomes within 60-120% of SMI, should continue.

4. Provide support based on needs

In light of our findings of differential levels of support needed in Chelsea and Chinatown, we recommend that very careful consideration be taken in the next planning phase to determine the levels of intensive support needed to ensure true participation in the program, and to incorporate this concept of differential levels into the planning process. This determination must include input from community organizations/partners.

5. Fund programs for HTS/HTR communities

In order to maximize potential for customer participation in HTR/HTS communities, utility-sponsored energy efficiency programs should be funded at appropriate levels to subsidize associated costs.

6. Create a user-friendly data tracking tool

Attention must be given to develop a user-friendly tool that will help CBOs track customer progress from the initial audit to completed retrofit work.

7. Expand definition of cost-effectiveness

We recommend that "indirect benefits" be included in any calculation of cost-effectiveness of CMIs. Although more difficult to measure, these indicators of program impact, including good will generated towards utilities and the longer-term effects of the program on the health and well-being of communities, are important. Efforts should also be made to incorporate these measures into any future evaluation efforts.

8. Clarify stakeholder roles going forward

Key stakeholders will shortly begin developing a three-year plan, the next iteration of the project beyond the pilot. The problems and solutions articulated in the HTR/HTS Charrette[5] provide an excellent foundation for this planning process. All stakeholders agree that each participant in this collaboration should reflect their core strengths. We recommend that this evaluation report provide a jumping off point for a facilitated conversation to discuss the role of CBOs going forward and other key issues raised here.

9. Share information to improve efficiency

We recommend that utilities share all relevant information that could lead to more targeted outreach by CBOs, including information related to units and buildings that have previously been surveyed for weatherization opportunities.

5 Utility-initiated two-day dialogue among key stakeholders regarding how to reach HTR/HTS populations (June 2011).

ABOUT COMMUNITY LABOR UNITED

CLU's mission is to protect and promote the interests of working class communities in Greater Boston by uniting our organizations and communities around a common vision and plan of action. Through collaborative research, leadership development and organizing, CLU brings together many of the strongest community organizations and unions in the Boston area to drive forward policies that promote equitable and sustainable communities. CLU convenes the Green Justice Coalition and commissioned this evaluation.

ABOUT ARBOR CONSULTING PARTNERS

Arbor Consulting Partners
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This document summarizes the final evaluation report produced by Mindy Fried, Ph.D. and Madeleine Taylor, Ph.D., Principals of Arbor Consulting Partners (ACP). ACP is a collaborative of experienced social science researchers with strong evaluation skills, a commitment to working collaboratively with clients and expertise that is directly relevant to this project: www.arborcp.com.

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