



Meeting Summary

Clean Energy Partnership Energy Efficiency Workforce Advisory Committee Kick-Off

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

1:00pm – 4:00pm, Augusta

Background

The Maine Department of Energy Resources (DOER), through the Clean Energy Partnership (CEP) program, created the Energy Efficiency Workforce Advisory Committee (“Advisory Committee”) to help guide the State’s approach to energy efficiency workforce development. The Advisory Committee is comprised of members of industry, labor, support organizations, training and educational institutions, and state government. The Advisory Committee provides a collaborative platform for community-based organizations, contractors, training partners, and others to share input with the State to improve workforce training programs that support energy efficiency across Maine.

Fourteen of the twenty members of the Advisory Committee attended the October 29 meeting in person, and two attended via Zoom.

Meeting Summary

DOER reviewed the results of a survey and interviews with Advisory Committee members that had been conducted over the summer and facilitated a discussion to gather public input. Four members of the public were present, but no public input was shared during the meeting. The Advisory Committee then divided into three breakout groups facilitated by members of DOER to discuss the current energy efficiency workforce landscape and its pain points, as well as what the Advisory Committee’s focus and goals should be. When the full group reconvened, a facilitator led a discussion to identify the top three focus areas for the Advisory Committee, a desired outcome for the next quarterly meeting, and target outcomes for the next year. DOER then provided next steps and concluded the meeting. The following discussion points summarize the conversations among participants during the October 29 meeting.

Presentations

Tagwongo Obomsawin, CEP Program Manager, presented an overview of the committee, meeting objectives, and Maine’s energy efficiency industry.

Kristine McCallister, CEP Workforce Development Coordinator, presented survey and interview findings.

Libby DeLucia-Harting, Empowering Work Advisors, facilitated the full-Committee discussion

Discussion Summary: Interview Findings

Themes from the discussion are categorized and summarized below:

- **Rising costs for equipment, inputs, and materials.** Energy efficiency project costs are increasing due to several factors, including new requirements to phase out use of refrigerant R-410A, the increasing price of copper, and other equipment cost increases. The



impact of tariffs and expiring tax credits for energy efficiency equipment as well as increasing electricity rates were also noted as concerns by Committee members.

- **Students need more opportunities for hands-on learning.** Some committee members noted that their students report being bored in classroom settings. Pairing theoretical classroom training with hands-on training to apply that knowledge was one solution presented to keep students engaged in learning the field. Attracting and retaining instructors to deliver this training will be an important strategy to continue training a workforce pipeline.
- **Individuals face barriers to accessing workforce training.** Committee members discussed challenges with accessing workforce programs, including conversations regarding the potential for lost wages, e.g., in cases where individuals must go without pay for the duration of the training program. In addition, the timing of program offerings, such as during daytime working hours, can make it difficult for workers to attend.
- **Industry standards for heat pump installation, particularly in the residential sector.** Contractors expressed support for increasing quality standards, acknowledging that consumer education is also an important component. Some contractors expressed concern about quality of work among more inexperienced contractors, leading to the need for additional maintenance and repair and potentially damaging industry reputation.

Discussion Summary: Advisory Committee Next Steps

Themes from the discussion are categorized and summarized below:

- **Support energy efficiency literacy to drive sales for the whole sector.** It would be valuable to the whole energy efficiency industry if their target customers better understood the value of weatherization and electrification projects. One barrier is a low supply of qualified energy auditors, particularly those working through Community Action Agencies to administer US Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program funds.
- **Focus on exposure to trade careers during early education.** Committee members expressed a desire to reverse the recent shift away from the trades in education spaces. Committee members acknowledge that many High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are currently trying to address this, and perhaps they can be improved and augmented.
- **Continue to elevate industry standards for heat pump installers.** Some committee members noted that manufacturers often implement quality standards for contractors who install their equipment. These models could be leveraged to address quality issues across the energy efficiency sector, while also considering the most appropriate role for state licensure and certification bodies. The roles of the Efficiency Maine Trust, MaineHousing, and the US Department of Energy were also discussed.
- **Explore support models that improve access to external workforce programs.** Committee members noted that productivity is impacted when they send their workers to external workforce programs, with small businesses particularly impacted. This applies



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even when the workforce programs are offered at no cost. Businesses also invest significant resources when conducting in-house training programs. Administrative and financial support is important in closing these gaps. Some committee members advocate for tax credits or direct payments to energy efficiency businesses that conduct their own in-house workforce training, in order to incentivize growing the qualified workforce in a way that doesn't put small businesses at a disadvantage.

Next steps

The DOER will distill focus areas for the Advisory Committee and use these to inform planning for the next meeting. The Advisory Committee will continue to meet quarterly.