



Meeting Summary

Clean Energy Partnership Energy Efficiency Workforce Advisory Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 3, 2025

1:00pm – 3:00pm, Augusta

Background

To support initiatives related to energy efficiency workforce development, the Maine Department of Energy Resources (DOER), through the Clean Energy Partnership (CEP) program created the Energy Efficiency Workforce Advisory Committee (“Advisory Committee”). The Advisory Committee is comprised of members of industry, labor, support organizations, training and educational institutions, and state government. The committee provides a collaborative platform for community-based organizations, contractors, training partners, and others.

On February 3, 2026, the DOER hosted a quarterly meeting for members of the Advisory Committee. Representatives from 11 of the 20 Committee members attended the meeting either in person or via Zoom.

Meeting Summary

The meeting facilitator recapped the Fall 2025 Advisory Committee meeting, including the themes and proposed goals that were raised, and led a discussion to review and refine the Committee’s focus on those goals. The Committee then considered several potential areas of focus and the associated next steps.

DOER provided an overview of the \$1.2 million in grant awards for energy efficiency workforce training programs that was [announced in January 2026](#), and other relevant program updates. The meeting concluded with DOER discussing the meeting schedule and structure for the remainder of 2026.

Presentations

Tagwongo Obomsawin, CEP Program Manager, presented an overview of the awardees under the Training for Residential Energy Contractors (TREC) grant

Sy Coffey, Energy Innovator Fellow, presented an overview of a pilot energy coaching program design

Discussion Summary: Review of Challenges and Goals Identified during Fall 2025 Meeting

The discussion of challenges and opportunities facing the energy efficiency sector built on the areas identified at the Fall 2025 meeting. Themes from the discussion are categorized and summarized below:

- **The existing workforce training pipeline could be improved.** Some contractors prefer to hire workers from adjacent trades, such as carpenters or auto mechanics, over hiring participants from workforce training programs that have little to no work experience. Some



contractors shared that these workforce program graduates are not sufficiently prepared to do basic field tasks. Some committee members think this disconnect is partially driven by the lack of qualified instructors. As an example, the Committee was aware of only two BPI-certified building science instructors available in the state. Awareness of existing training programs varied, with some Committee members unsure of where to send current employees for additional training and others sharing their positive experiences with the existing training and educational system.

- **High costs of workforce training.** Several factors were discussed that add to the high cost of workforce training, in particular the compensation necessary to recruit and retain high-quality instructors. Committee members noted from personal experience that professionals with sufficient experience to teach key skills can typically get paid twice as much or more to work in the field than to be a workforce instructor. The cost of having a training space is also high, as mentioned by a contractor who has their own training facility. Lastly, the opportunity cost for employees to attend trainings is significant for employers.
- **Rising costs of conducting business.** In addition to other rising costs mentioned previously (equipment, copper, refrigerant and other inputs), increased health care costs for employees due to the expired tax credits from the Affordable Care Act were mentioned as a challenge for energy efficiency businesses.
- **Improving industry standards.** Committee members acknowledged the importance of industry standards but expressed that trying to influence them might not be the best use of the Committee's efforts. Program administrators can adjust the vendor qualification process for rebate and incentive programs, for example, but there are limits to the effectiveness of doing so; for instance, many heat pumps are installed without the use of rebate and incentive programs.
- **Emphasis on early education pipeline.** Multiple Committee members favored focusing on developing an early education pipeline for the energy efficiency workforce. They acknowledged that this would be a long-term strategy, both because trained workers wouldn't graduate for some time and because aspects of curriculum development and delivery would need to be coordinated among multiple stakeholders and potentially approved by certification bodies.

Discussion Summary: Potential Focus Areas

With additional consensus on the challenges and goals of the Committee, the group talked about specific areas it could focus on to maximize its impact in the next year. DOER presented the following options to the Committee for feedback, informed by prior discussions:

- **Develop an Industry Standards Roadmap.** The Committee could focus its effort on creating a roadmap to support high quality energy efficiency installations across the state. This would be a communication document containing industry recommendations and best



practices. Next steps for the Committee would be to agree upon key stakeholders and target audiences, desired outcomes, and associated pathways to achieve those outcomes.

- **Strengthen existing and new workforce programs through collaboration.** The Committee could focus its efforts on working with the Maine Community College System (MCCS), industry associations, unions, or other existing training providers, on co-designing training programs and events to better address industry-specific needs, including elevating barriers to participation, identifying gaps, and proposing solutions. The majority of Committee members favored this activity as a potential focus area.
- **Improve energy efficiency literacy through education.** The Committee could focus its efforts on developing tools to assist with communicating the costs and benefits of energy efficiency improvements. This could include the development of case studies, marketing, and communication assets, along with sales training for contractors. Additionally, knowledge of building science among the contractor workforce is an important component.

Themes from the discussion are categorized and summarized below:

- **Industry members are open to co-designing programs with other training stakeholders.** Committee members are aware of some effective partnerships between employers and workforce training providers in the trades. However, it would be beneficial to augment these existing partnerships and to enhance awareness of existing opportunities, particularly for upskilling. Two specific opportunities for improvement that were mentioned were bolstering existing heat pump installer trainings, and better leveraging training infrastructure at MCCS.
- **There may be opportunities for targeted changes to rebate and incentive program requirements.** The Committee acknowledged that more work is needed to determine the best approach for effectuating changes to industry standards, but that there may be opportunities for targeted changes within existing rebate and incentive programs. Specific recommendations included requiring proof of warranty and permits to qualify projects for rebates.
- **Driving sales remains important.** Committee members recognized Maine's leadership on energy efficiency policy and programs and particularly heat pump installation. Due to cost pressure and economic uncertainty, additional efforts may be needed to drive demand for projects including consumer education, which was agreed upon by Committee members. From a workforce perspective, any downturn in project volume could cause skilled workers, particularly electricians, to switch to other industries. A weakened workforce would make it harder for the sector to ramp up in more favorable conditions.

Next steps

The DOER will continue to distill focus areas for the Committee and present back to Committee members in one-on-one meetings that will be held throughout the spring.