
Bridging Climate Change and Public Health
Energy Insecurity Workgroup Meeting
Meeting Notes – | April 21st | 2:30PM -3:30PM

Purpose of Meeting:

1. Discuss the connection between energy insecurity and public health, climate change, and burdened populations through the lens of health equity.
2. Discuss the need for community and stakeholder engagement: establish the energy insecurity workgroup
3. Facilitate communication and collaboration across different community sectors

BREAKOUT SESSION 1:

1. *What do you think are the most significant **challenges and opportunities** to achieving a fair, equitable, and healthy future in Maricopa County?*

Challenges:

1. **Political barriers**
 - a. Denial that climate change is happening
 - b. Lack of Corporation Commission leadership in understanding and addressing challenges in the community
2. **Affordability**
 - a. Umbrella issue – we have more and more people that can't afford
 - b. Inability to afford your bill needs to be seen at a large complex context
 - c. Neighborhoods without essential goods and services (transportation, healthcare, education)
3. **Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP)**
 - a. Not having as many LIHEAP funds – less funds for southwestern region

- b. households eligible for LIHEAP- stark difference between what is available and who receives these LIHEAP services
- 4. Funding**
- a. Huge gap – no match between need and available resources, advocate for more funding
 - b. Assistance programs provide only band aid
 - c. Need systemic changes – advocating for tier-rates based on income
- 5. Processes**
- a. Advocate for simplified application process
 - b. Simplified paperwork
 - c. Live body to answer phones – lost during navigation process
 - d. Waiting list weatherization programs – it takes time
 - e. Eligibility Criteria – scaring people for seeking help
 - f. Resources not in their language
- 6. Infrastructure**
- a. the built environment in neighborhoods (poor infrastructure; the efficiency of the equipment)
 - b. Poverty – housing inefficiency, the building stock, and the high rates there is no coming out of that hole on top of paying for rent, utility bills
- 7. Social**
- a. Lack of empathy
 - b. Energy is basic human right
 - c. No need to make tradeoffs – food vs energy bill/rent; medication vs. energy bill/rent; school supply vs. energy bill/rent
 - d. Extreme heat is public health crisis – not enough recognized, silent killer
 - e. Climate changes are Emergency – heat compounding with another health emergency (COVID and Heat)
- 8. Health**
- a. Disproportionate environmental and health concerns (rising cost of living, unhealthy housing, pay too much for utilities, inadequate nutrition) people’s health decline
- 9. Climate Change**
- a. Climate mitigation strategies to reduce the number of extreme heat days

Opportunities

1) Solutions

- a. Elevate the vulnerable communities and prioritize the people with highest energy insecurity so we can improve housing efficiency and utility cost
- b. Create fair, equitable and healthy energy future
- c. Prioritize people with highest energy insecurity
- d. Improve health
- e. Literacy – education
- f. Community engagement to SRP and APS board
- g. Policy shift – cultural and regulatory at the ACC

- h. Prevent - so situations don't become normal, get used to it (it is not normal to pay high bills, help community voice to be at the center)
- i. Shift the power – help community to fight against many competing issues that are facing
- j. Community Solar project
- k. Solar training-workshops
- l. Planting trees
- m. Education through Community college
- n. Healthy people require resources (healthy and secure housing, secure energy, efficient appliances)
- o. Bring community to the table, listen what they have to say, remember they are the ones that face these challenges day after day
- p. Improve housing conditions, heating, and cooling
- q. Cut energy costs
- r. Huge opportunities to train people through the weatherization program for jobs in A/C or construction. People are aging out or getting hired into the private sector because of their skills and so there is an opportunity to train more people, and then advocate for increased pay so that these trained people stay in their jobs. There is also an opportunity to recruit people who are working in low wage jobs, but there doesn't seem to be a lot of intention to make this happen.
- s. **Case study** – to assess the situation and initiate actions. This requires multi stakeholder involvement and real-time solutions. Provides relevant information and opportunity to organize and scale-up.

2. *How do you currently **address energy insecurity in your professional work?***

- a. Data sharing
- b. Bring partners together
- c. Weatherization program which is helping people get their utilities bill down
- d. Meet community and listen to their concerns
- e. Gain communities trust – meet them where they are, direct them toward the information they need

BREAKOUT SESSION 2:

1) When you imagine *an energy secure Maricopa County*, *what does that mean to you?*

- Healthy: people and healthy environment (good income, affordable housing, and utilities, education, healthcare)
- Addressed affordability, inequality, education – Phoenix will become a showcase city
- The construction of housing and buildings are aligned with clean energy and expanding modes of transportation beyond cars
- A household that can cool themselves comfortably in their own home without worrying about how their energy bill will impact their ability to pay their other bills
- Creating “resilience hubs” where there is accessible energy and cooling available to every resident in Maricopa within walking distance
- There should be an emphasis on energy equity with focus on the economic aspect of energy

- Utilities are active partners – share ideas and work toward solutions with residents
- The placement of energy facilities must be equitable, free of air pollution
- Fair society -No one is left behind- opportunities for everyone
- Need for multisector collaboration, work faster, people are hurting
- A safety net to catch everyone and give them some relief to cover fundamental basic needs (domino effect). We tend to focus on low income households when discussing energy insecurity, but people don't realize how closely people live on the edge of that median. It doesn't take much to push people over the edge, if we are talking about energy security for everyone, not just those currently needing the aid, but also those that are just barely scraping by.
- Relating to the narrative - it's not something energy secure people think about, it is just life. Humanity/empathy problem rather than solutions based. Everyone needs to be aware.

2) *What do you think are the most **critical elements to realize this future?***

- Cross -sector collaboration of stakeholders (those that are in need and those that can help)
- Shifting the power by teaching, listening, respecting, try to put yourself in their shoe
- Fully engaged partners and keep them engaged
- Create safe and comfortable working environments (no one should feel intimidated)
- Problems can't be solved by only one partner- must be all engaged because EI is multifaced problem
- Initiate ACTIONS TIMELY
- Affected communities to be present
- Advocacy
- Having the right stakeholders at the table. There are specific stakeholders that should be involved in this project. Also, having community.

3) *What **stakeholders** have to be at the table?*

- Accessibility. There is a lot of information that could be disseminated and translated into different languages that can help people to understand extreme heat and resiliency strategies.
- We need mass community participation and mass campaigning to bring advocates to these issues.
- Having community liaisons is critically important. Having attended many community stakeholder meetings, elected officials participating and listening to the communities that they represent.
- Planning professionals, and professional stakeholders like those in the energy industry. How are they working with each other and other groups to meet the goals for 2035?
- Housing - The legislation in AZ is not supportive for people who are tenants, or living in mobile homes and they are not prioritized or supported by the legislation
- When talking about the most vulnerable and at-risk people in mobile homes and RVs we need to address the gaps in accessibility for them to be served
- We have not done a good job of making this a public health issue, and the reality is that it is.
- Use of housing funds by local jurisdiction
- Utilities, Policy, Government, Human Services, Community based organizations, Healthcare sector and social workers, Community members, Resale sector (appliances), Education sector,

youth, non-governmental agencies, people from tribal entities, community colleges, city councils, public health, utilities, Equality Health, and FQHCs.

4) How would you involve the community?

- More solutions, engaging in projects with the community, provide families with information
- Earning Trust and Credibility, Confidentiality and Privacy
- Cultural Sensitivity, be respectful
- ACTIONS and Incentivize
- Continue conversation and plan together
- About project: please watch if you are interested- Statewide, closed group system, system where you can enter someone in, and you can connect them with resources; closed loop, people that can connect other people with food boxes, energy utilities. <https://healthcurrent.org/sdoh/>
- Organize workshops to teach community members
- I have heard discussion on urgency, and the need to move, however, we are having more meetings