

INTRODUCING YOUR WORK AND YOUR INSTITUTION TO UTILITY REGULATORS

The first step is to become known to the Commissioners and their staff in your own right. “You” could be one CAP or, better, several CAPs or WAP organizations who are members of one Association. The first meeting should be a group of similar or nearly identical -organizations- i.e. your network; later, meetings with a variety of partners who are allies could be terrific.

Know and follow the strict rules about what can be discussed with regulators outside a formal proceeding.

Who should go? Leaders, including Board Members from each of the 3 sectors [yes, even local officials who sit on the Board] and also include the energy program managers, your staff who collect data and prepare Community Needs Assessments or other reports on poverty conditions.

What to bring: A short written report to leave behind (2 Pages Max) describing the energy programs of the agencies including budgets, service area and utility contracts if any, leadership contacts, and some solid very local data on eligible customer needs. If you don’t have income or housing cost and energy burden data, tell stories from your LIHEAP and WAP clients perspective.

BEFORE YOU START listing all the programs managed by meeting attendees and the details of each one

Explain why you are there:

You want the Commissioner to know that you have a lot of information about lower-income customer’s situations and a lot of experience running multiple programs to make their energy bills more affordable. You are hoping he/she will come to rely on your ability to provide insights into this large group of residential customers and also also your knowledge of the programs and protections, both government and utility, that serve your communities’ residents.

1. **Describe** the attendees’ roles as long-standing, trusted community facilitators, bringing together multiple stakeholders in partnerships to address community poverty conditions. Explain you have a lot of information about needs and opportunities because of your wide reach [how many families this year?] And regular data analysis [what do you know about incomes of working families and retirees? Energy Burden]
 - a. **ONLY THEN** describe the size and the combination of agency initiatives that address energy affordability: LIHEAP and utility discounts or other protections, WAP and state, utility and any other related programs.
 - b. In general tell how they are running and the challenges you expect to overcome. Stay positive.
2. **Stories:** Give an example of agency[ies] addressing an immediate community energy related need that would be otherwise ignored. {Warming shelters?}

Very few regulators know the full picture of what a CAA does and its approach. Few could separate CAAs or other WAP providers from the mass of all non-profits. Be prepared to explain in concrete

stories that include actions by the unique Board of three sectors, and by your team when it is organizing partners, coordinating both services and projects, trying new approaches and supporting people, activities and facilities. The story should show your scope of skills and your flexibility.

Important tip: Staff of the Commission and the Commissioner are of key importance for access. If a staffer is present - be sure to address him/her too and to get their contact info for any follow up. Try to find a reason to follow up (another report they should see etc.) in addition to the action below:

3. **At the end:** Ask if it would help the Commission customer service staff to have a list of staff contacts for people in your communities to call about bill payment and services. Bring such a directory with you.

ASK - Which Commission staff should receive it? If that person/those people are not in the room - schedule a meeting with them ASAP and present the same material the Commissioner received plus the contacts. Much of the staff stays on when Commissioners change.

And, of course, you CAN help them do their customer service job better.

