

Exploring the Energy Burden

Ideas from the Small Group Discussion – May 2018 Energy Committee Roundtable

Contact Energy@VitalCommunities.org for more information about anything mentioned below

Helping ONE Family or TWENTY Families

- **Weatherization**
 - **Low-cost measures** (air sealing, plastic on windows, weather-stripping, low flow faucets/showerheads, LED bulbs)
 - **Volunteer assisted projects** (*Thetford* has a case study for an energy committee doing this, *COVER home repair* runs volunteer projects as part of their program offerings)
 - Challenges include fundraising, insurance, town involvement, some homeowners overwhelmed by having people in their home
 - **Free energy audit** (challenge: how will they pay for actual improvements?)
 - **Raise funds** to help cover efficiency upgrades (*Washington Neighbors Warming Neighbors* example).
 - Button up event that includes fundraising money to help families with cost of audit/improvements
- **Build Relationships within the Community**
 - **Build relationships** with these families and the community.
 - Change the dialogue so people are empowered to ask for help instead of feeling shame.
 - Reach out during heating season
 - Give people a sense of involvement
 - Ask neighbors to suggest people to reach out to.
 - Neighbor to neighbor outreach
 - Connect with local social service agencies and community partners to identify who is experiencing energy burden and how to connect with them.
 - **Nonprofits** (Listen, COVER, Haven, Food shelf, etc.)
 - **Town office** and listers
 - **Public library**
 - **Schools** - programs for free/reduced lunch may have audience overlap with those dealing with high energy burden
 - Other important stakeholders
 - Educate **employers** with minimum wage employees so that they can run education programs for employees
 - Educate **landlords** by reaching out. Landlord symposium – work toward a landlord code of practice for steps toward sustainability. Programs and financing for landlords (e.g. PACE financing).
 - Partner with **energy audit companies** to share financing information
 - Partner with **fuel dealers** to find ways to support struggling families and avoid unnecessary added pain and fees
 - Some **oil heat associations** have programs to provide heating assistance

- **Raise Awareness of Programs**
 - Energy Committee can be a resource for information about existing program
 - Comprehensive list of programs in print and online? (*Energy Advocacy Council* is a new group working on this – includes LISTEN, HAVEN, and others)
 - Partner with organizations and community partners who already have relationships with the people who most need help. Get them the info they need to refer and assistance people who need energy assistance.
 - Churches
 - NGOs (Listen, Haven, COVER Home Repair, CAPs, Twin Pines Housing Trust, meals on wheels, senior centers)
 - food banks
 - town offices, listers
 - Host an Energy Expo (*New London example*)
- **Help Families Navigate and Apply for Assistance**
 - Help folks apply for assistance – including website with all local and state programs?
 - Help filling out forms
 - “Pay it forward” approach (e.g. spreading the word about resources and how to access them)
- **Fuel Help**
 - Fuel/Energy club – subsidized (with some financial planning)
 - Wood share (firewood)
 - Make sure families know about LIHEAP (Low Income Fuel Assistance Program)
- **Energy Saving Options Beyond Weatherization**
 - Energy Star appliances - Distribute hand-me-down energy star appliances
 - Heat Pumps
 - Switch away from fossil fuels for heat (e.g. wood pellets, solar power & heat pumps)
 - Pellet stove loan program – lend out pellet stoves
 - Solar with PPA, community solar, community solar garden (mention PAREI)
- **Programs mentioned**
 - Neighborworks woodstove program in VT - heatsquad.org
 - Make connections to identify households in need (senior citizen centers, meals on wheels)
- **Tell Success Stories** - Be able to tell stories of success (including improved comfort)

Helping 500 Families

- **Financing options.** Develop/promote unique financial model that helps alleviate a bit of the upfront costs associated with everything energy
- **Twin Pines Housing Trust** has a portfolio of 500 units, maybe we could use them as a core audience and a source for examples of success.
- **Top down change – Advocacy** – codes, legislation. Advocate in our professional lives for cultural change.
 - LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program – gives families money to fill their fuel tanks) is not the best approach for the long term – we need to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and improve energy efficiency. We can advocate for more funding to be put toward weatherization programs to help reduce reliance on LIHEAP
 - NH adopt 2015 national building code
 - Target people who can effect change, builders, architects, planners, legislators.