

## *Massachusetts Decarbonization Clearinghouse Community Outreach*

### **Purpose:**

This document provides general background on options for establishing a Building Decarbonization “Clearinghouse” in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is seeking feedback from stakeholders regarding the most effective ways to deliver equitable decarbonization statewide.

### **Mission:**

EEA seeks stakeholder feedback as they determine whether to move forward with any of the options for Building Decarbonization Clearinghouse. On behalf of EEA, the Solomon Group and VEIC were asked to engage stakeholders throughout Massachusetts, from local communities and small businesses to advocates and experts, asking them to provide feedback on potential options to improve the equitable delivery of decarbonization solutions to everyone in the Commonwealth.

### **Actions Taken:**

Building Decarbonization Clearinghouse is a comprehensive initiative to help people and businesses reduce the carbon emissions and energy burden. The Solomon Group and VEIC relied on input from a number of entities during the development of design options for the Clearinghouse, including our Equity Advisory Committee, a statewide cross-section of energy, environmental and equity advocates, energy coaches and others who guide customers through decarbonization projects. (Committee members are collectively referred to as Advisors.) Below are highlights from input and feedback we received from them on the essential elements required to establish equitable decarbonization in Massachusetts.

### **What We Heard:**

- Equity - ensuring that low-income and marginalized households benefit from the Building Decarbonization Clearinghouse—was a major focus. Advisors pointed out that existing programs have not done a great job serving low-income communities. They feel the Clearinghouse should spell out exactly how it will help low-income households adopt clean energy solutions like electric heating, especially for those who rely on delivered fuels. If done right, the Clearinghouse could fix gaps in current services and make sure these communities get the support they need.
- Advisors emphasized the need for enhanced outreach and customer journey services that identify customers needing support, communicate opportunities to participate in decarbonization incentive programs and escort customers through the process of selecting and completing these projects.
- Advisors requested greater information-sharing infrastructure that would house data related to household demographics, structural data, decarbonization incentive program data and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) capabilities to facilitate outreach and expedite customers’ journeys through their decarbonization projects.
- The Advisors emphasized the need for more transparency and inclusivity when engaging stakeholders. They want a clearer process for how decisions are made and for their input to be taken seriously. To make this happen, they suggested expanding the engagement process to include more voices, especially from low-income communities and other underrepresented groups, so that everyone impacted has a say.
- Funding was another big concern. Advisors didn’t see a clear plan for how to pay for the expensive upgrades that will be needed to make households and buildings more energy efficient.

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They recommended setting up a finance team within the Clearinghouse to work with various funding sources, like tax credits, lending programs, and green banks, to make sure there's enough money to meet stated decarbonization goals for all households.

- Advisors supported consolidation of program delivery to a single organization to manage all of the programs instead of having them spread across different agencies and energy providers. They believe this would make everything run smoother, reduce confusion, and make it easier for customers to access these programs. It was also asserted that consolidation of management and delivery would allow for greater operational efficiencies related to costs, information sharing and marketing/outreach operations and program delivery. With the program delivery being housed in a single organization, greater accountability could be achieved as well.

### **Clearinghouse Proposals in Brief:**

Based on research from within and outside of Massachusetts at the start of the project, input from the equity Advisors, and deliberations with EEA, we developed proposals that include:

1. **Create a Unified "One-stop Shopping" Customer Experience:** This would streamline customer access to support for energy efficiency, renewable energy, and decarbonization programs, making it easier for people to navigate through program options. It also would allow for more cost-efficient administration.
2. **Put Equity at the Core:** Ensure the programs are designed to be accessible and beneficial to disadvantaged communities by assigning the Clearinghouse accountability to equity objectives in statute, aligning funding with those objectives and by expanding capacity for local/regional engagement.
3. **Enhance the Customer Journey Process:** Create/enhance the technological assistance, customer service, and language access infrastructure to increase the scale and pace of decarbonization in an equitable manner statewide.
4. **Provide More Unified Financial Support:** The Clearinghouse would play an active role in helping customers bring together different financial resources to pay for energy projects, from Mass Save rebates and federal funding to solar incentives and subsidized loans.

### **Requests:**

Respectfully, we request that you:

1. Share this document with your organization and constituents, and if possible, elicit feedback from them related to the processes, observations and recommendations communicated above.
2. Make one person available from your organization to receive a presentation and participate in a question-and-answer session so that your views, opinions and recommendations can be integrated into our final proposal to EEA.
3. Inform your organization and constituents about public listening sessions on **12/3/2024 from 10:00am - 12:00pm** and **12/4/2024 from 6:00pm - 8:00pm**. These sessions will provide an opportunity for EEA and the consulting team to present the design options for the Building Decarbonization Clearinghouse and give an opportunity for feedback. We will be sending an email with public listening session details and registration links that can be shared with your organization and constituents.

Following receipt of community stakeholder feedback, we will report our findings to EEA for consideration in the development of the final proposed Clearinghouse design. **Thank you!**