

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC) Equity Working Group

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 26, 2024

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members Present: Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation (chair)
Julia Fox, Department of Energy Resources
Chris Modlish, Attorney General’s Office
Kyle Murray, Acadia Center
Mary Wambui, Planning Office for Urban Affairs
Larry Chretien, Green Energy Consumers Alliance

Non-Voting Members: Erin Engstrom, Eversource

Members Absent: Vernon Walker, Clean Water Action

DOER Staff Present: Julia Fox, Colin Carroll

Consultants Present: Tim Woolf, Synapse
Kyle Schultz, Synapse

1. Call to Order

Kathryn Wright, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m.

2. Agenda, Roll Call, Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chair Wright gave an overview of the agenda and took roll call.

Kyle Murray moved to approve the Equity Working Group (EWG) minutes of May 3, 2024. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

3. Discussion on DPU 24-15 and Energy Affordability

Chair Wright gave an overview of DPU 24-15, an investigation on energy affordability and energy burden. Chair Wright posed questions for discussion and reflections on the June 24th DPU technical session or public comments that are relevant to the EWG or GMAC process.

Discussion:

Larry Chretien: This group, and GMAC in general, could bring forward anything they learn on forecasts and impacts on T&D to DPU 24-15.

Marry Wambui: The GMAC Report identified that there is a lack of sufficient information to know the full extent of cost impacts of grid modernization. There is a need for a holistic view across all the different dockets that are related to affordability. There is a need for meaningful stakeholder engagement and participation. It doesn't feel like EWG recommendations were listened to. The overall equity agenda was in EWG recommendations and should be carried through. The GMAC can help push this forward. The CESAG (Community Engagement Stakeholder Advisory Group) is good for a narrow scope.

Erin Engstrom: Mary makes an important point on the scope of CESAG. The CESAG's purpose is different from looking at an affordability perspective. CESAG is specific to outreach to specific communities for specific projects. A conversation about how to incorporate overall affordability is needed.

4. Presentation on Accounting for Equity in Future Massachusetts Electric Sector Modernization Plans

GMAC Consultant, Tim Woolf, presented on equity in the 2024 ESMPs, the DOE Distributional Equity Analysis report, and accounting for equity in the 2028 ESMPs.

The presentation included a discussion of needs for a Distribution Equity Analysis (DEA) and an overview of the steps of a DEA. Woolf suggested a streamlined DEA for the 2028 ESMPs.

Discussion:

Kathryn Wright: What would participation mean in this context? Are there other states that have done this?

Tim Woolf: There is not much work in other states. Participation is straightforward for energy efficiency (EE) and distributed energy resources (DERs) but is trickier for Grid Mod. There's a blurry line between traditional investments and Grid Mod investments. We could look at which investments will be located in communities that are in priority populations. E.g., how many NWAs are located in priority populations? Which communities get new circuits?

Larry Chretien: What's our lane in GMAC? Thinking through how GMAC should apply this. Doing work for solar and EVs is probably more straightforward, but the work GMAC should be doing should be an analysis of substation upgrades, etc. We should remind others to be doing

DEA analysis of EVs/ PV. Wants to be able to be able to say in the future why an investment was made where it was and that it wasn't done cavalierly.

Marry Wambui: DEA tool may be new, but issue of distributional equity has been out there for a very long time. Disappointed we are just thinking about 2028. Needs to be more emphasis on equity now, not just equity later. Appeal to GMAC members to push more on equity.

Kathryn Wright: GMAC has limited role in what it can do because it cannot intervene in the docket directly.

Larry Chretien: When he was on EEAC – saw there was inequality in delivery of service, even without the DEA tool. But they had the data. In contrast to ESMP process so far.

Marry Wambui: Asking for more conversation of equity, keeping conversation alive in GMAC.

5. GMAC Stakeholder Engagement Materials

Julia Fox, DOER presented what DOER staff working on for GMAC stakeholder engagement materials that are planned to be released after the DPU ESMP order comes out in late August 2024.

Discussion:

Marry Wambui: DOER needs to go meet regular people and talk to them about developing materials. We've seen on the EE side that it doesn't work out when you just produce things and give them to people.

Kyle Murray: Agreed. Thinks it would be good to bring in a few people who know nothing about the grid. He is willing to help on development and dissemination, and thinks the utilities also have a role to play on dissemination. Murray noted he is interested in helping more with the development of these materials.

Julia Fox: Would love to have support on dissemination from EWG members.

Kathryn Wright: We do have a panel of people for testing messages. For our next meeting in September, should also think about what else we're doing beyond fact sheets.

Erin Engstrom: Eversource is having similar conversations. One idea they had is they are planning to go to a couple local community groups and work with different students at different age levels to understand where they need to do tweaks. Eversource is happy to help disseminate and leverage each other's material.

6. Closing

Kathryn Wright: The next EWG meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2024. We likely will know what will be going on in September EWG after the DPU Order.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Schultz

Synapse Energy Economics

Meeting materials:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides
- DOE Guide to Distributional Equity Analysis for EE and DERs