



# Energy Equity Engagement

What We Heard Report  
Phase 2: February - April 2024

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# ENERGY EQUITY ENGAGEMENT AT A GLANCE

PHASE 2: FEBRUARY - APRIL 2024

## PHASE 2

Participants provided their feedback on the draft strategy framework and proposed actions.



**35**  
people engaged

## INTERACTIONS



### 1 COMMUNITY PANEL

Diverse group of people experiencing energy inequity



### 2 COMMITTEES

Older Adult Advisory Table and the Social Wellbeing Committee



### 1 WORKSHOP

Organizations and non-market housing

## KEY THEMES

### Communication and Awareness:

- 1 Stressed the importance of clear, concise information using infographics, subtitled videos, and translated materials for accessibility. Tailored communication strategies, partnering with organizations for outreach, multi-language resources and transparency about costs and requirements are crucial.

### Strategy Framework:

- 2 There is support for the strategy's draft framework but a call for practical, measurable goals, and including climate targets. Clear definitions of principles is recommended to avoid confusion.

### Program Design and Eligibility:

- 3 Emphasis on including all housing types (i.e., apartments, social housing, etc.). Support for automatic enrollment for people receiving similar support program services, a sliding scale for eligibility based on income levels, a one-stop shop approach, and integrating education opportunities in program offerings.

### Landlord Participation and Requirements:

- 4 Address barriers to landlord participation and clearly communicate program benefits. Safety and renter and affordability protections are essential to protect renters from renovictions or rent increases.

### Reporting and Storytelling:

- 5 Baseline data is needed to monitor success and incorporate feedback for continuous improvement. Utilize the opportunity to share positive stories and outcomes to build awareness and trust.

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## Executive Summary

In 2022, The City of Calgary (The City) declared a climate emergency and created the [Calgary Climate Strategy – Pathways to 2050](#). In Calgary, approximately 64,000 households struggle with energy inequity each year. Experiencing energy inequity means that people find it hard to afford basic utilities like heating and electricity and spend more of their income on these essentials compared to others. The Climate Strategy states that to be on track to achieve net zero by 2050, the number of households struggling to afford energy should be reduced by half by 2030 and all Calgarians should comfortably afford their home energy by 2050.

To address energy inequity, key actions for The City are to create an Energy Equity Strategy and incentive program for Calgary.

This report summarizes the findings from the Energy Equity Strategy's Phase 2 engagement which consisted of four workshops held between February to April 2024.

## Main Themes

The following key themes were identified throughout Phase 2 engagement:

### 1. Communication and Awareness:

- Participants stressed the importance of clear, concise information conveyed through different methods such as infographics, subtitled videos, and translated materials to ensure accessibility.
- There was a strong consensus on the need for tailored communication strategies, partnering with organizations for outreach, and multi-language resources.
- Transparent about costs or other requirements associated with program participation is key.

### 2. Strategy Framework:

- Overall support for the strategy's draft framework but a call for setting practical, measurable goals, and including climate targets.
- Recommendations to define principles clearly to avoid confusion and ensure alignment with community expectations.

### 3. Program Design and Eligibility:

- Emphasis on including all forms of housing that are used by people experiencing energy inequity (i.e., apartments, social housing, refugee housing, international student housing).
- Suggestions for automatic enrollment for people receiving similar support program services.
- Implement a sliding scale for eligibility based on income levels.
- Consider a one-stop shop approach to save time and simplify things for participants.
- Integrate education opportunities within program offerings.

### 4. Landlord Participation and Requirements:

- Address barriers to landlord participation and clearly communicate program benefits to landlords including non-financial benefits.
- Ensure safety is a top priority and that renter and affordability protections are in place for the program to avoid any potential negative impacts to renters such as renovictions and rent increases.

### 5. Reporting and Storytelling:

- Baseline data should be available to monitor program and strategy success and build in feedback opportunities to continually improve throughout implementation.
- Utilize the opportunity to share positive stories and outcomes to build awareness and trust.



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## Engagement Overview

This report summarizes the findings from the Energy Equity Strategy's Phase 2 engagement which consisted of four workshops held between February to April 2024.

The Energy Equity Strategy will be developed with feedback from community engagement. The engagement process is separated into three phases. This What We Heard Report is reporting on Phase 2.

### I. Phase 1: Understand Options

**Timeline:** October – December 2023

**Objective:** Listen and learn from people's experiences to confirm the challenges and understand what solutions should be prioritized.

**Actions:**

- Workshops with organizations, utilities, and non-market housing.
- Community Panel that includes diverse people who have experienced energy inequity.
- Five focus groups to understand how communities are impacted differently.
- An online and paper survey.

### II. Phase 2: Refine Solutions

**Timeline:** February – April 2024

**Objective:** Present solutions identified in Phase 1 and gather feedback to refine the solutions.

**Actions:**

- Organizations and non-market housing workshop
- Community Advisory Panel
- Older Adult Table
- Social Well-being Committee

### III. Phase 3: Draft Energy Equity Strategy

**Timeline:** Upcoming – Summer 2024

**Objective:** Present the draft strategy ensuring that it reflects the feedback and learnings gathered and collect further feedback.

**Actions:**

- Community Advisory Panel
- Older Adult Table
- Social Well-being Committee
- Open webinar to share the final strategy with anyone who was involved in the process or whoever is interested in learning about the engagement and Energy Equity Strategy.

## Engagement Evaluation

The City of Calgary asked participants to provide feedback on the engagements. Please see Appendix B.



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## Caveats and Limitations

The City of Calgary is one level of government and may lack the ability to make direct changes in some areas. With The City's limited control over some of the factors that contribute to energy inequity and the solutions to address it, we will strive to advocate for and collaborate with interested parties on solutions. Areas where The City has direct control, we will actively strive to find and implement solutions.

All the input collected for this project should be considered through the lens of what will work best in Calgary.

## Next Steps

The feedback received from Phase 2 engagement will be used to draft the Energy Equity Strategy. Once drafted, engagement with the Community Advisory Panel will be held before finalizing the strategy.





## Engagement Themes

The following are the engagement themes that arose across all four engagements.

### Engagement and Communication:

- Support for having a highly accessible, short, and simple public facing version of the strategy.
- The importance of outreach, engagement, and communication in developing and promoting programs was emphasized. Working with partner agencies will be critical to successfully reaching people who need these programs most.
- Providing information through a one-stop shop approach would be useful.
- Communication will require tailored strategies that consider different tactics and languages for different audiences.
- Build in feedback collection throughout the program for continuous improvement.
- The importance of making sure everyone, including those with disabilities, seniors, newcomers, and international students can access and understand the information easily was emphasized. Using a variety of communication options including graphics, subtitled video, audio, and written was recommended.

### Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles:

- The strategy's direction and general framework is supported. There is desire for clearer principles and goals that are realistic and measurable.
- The strategy's goals need to include the connection to climate targets.
- The strategy should include various living situations beyond just low-density residential homes.
- Clarify key terms such as "efficiency," "accessibility," "inclusivity," and "affordability". Consider providing examples of these principles and explanations on what these terms mean.
- "Equity-denied" was viewed as a potentially negative phrase and that the definition is unclear. It was recommended that The City should use consistent language throughout all its strategies to avoid unnecessary confusion. Use of the term "Calgarians" was supported.
- The strategy was noted to benefit from broader community involvement with a particular emphasis on incorporating Indigenous voices and perspectives.
- Consider including safety, security, and innovation as potential guiding principles.

### Program Eligibility and Design:

- There are concerns about using income limits that are too low for eligibility criteria because of the possibility of excluding multi-property landlords, apartment owners, social housing providers, homeless shelters, refugees, and international students as well as low to middle-income households.
- Eligibility should be on a sliding scale to be inclusive.
- Have the programs be easily accessed by those who need it the most. Programs should have an automatic enrolment feature to ensure that it reaches those most vulnerable. Having as little paperwork as possible was emphasized.
- Programs should adapt to various living situations, including different agreements between renters and landlords, and different housing types.
- Ensure safety is a top priority, address the power imbalance between landlords and tenants, prevent unfair evictions, and the requirement to move out during renovations.
- Make the programs as easy to understand as possible.



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- Clearly communicate the benefits of program participation, especially to landlords.
- Having baseline energy efficiency data available is important to monitor program success long-term.
- Pilot programs may be useful to see if upgrades are worth it.
- Finding a way to make the programs and supports last a long time will help with sustainability of the programs for people rather than stop-start. It was expressed that change in government may cause disruptions to the programs and funding.

## Potential Landlord Issues:

- There were concerns that landlords could be barriers to the programs by not signing up due to a lack of incentive, that there may be renovictions, or rent increases after the designated freeze period.
- The strategy should find ways to make it worthwhile for landlords while also protecting renters. Making the program benefits clear to landlords was highlighted as being important to help get them on board with the program.

## Advocacy and Collaboration:

- There are opportunities to collaborate and support existing advocacy efforts to expand programming awareness and support especially partnerships with local organizations, charities, and community groups.
- There was support for using social media to promote the programs.
- There is confusion about the roles of The City and the community. The City should continuously review these programs to ensure that they are fair.

## Education and Awareness:

- Education opportunities about energy efficiency are critical, such as how to save energy, where to access energy resources, and how to use new energy saving technology.
- Consider including education in every program rather than being a standalone program.

## Financial Considerations:

- Concerns around the cost of joining existing building retrofit financing programs especially for non-market housing providers. The need for help with those costs were expressed. Participants expressed needing clear plans for sharing costs.
- The program will need to be upfront about costs and consider continuing support after home improvements.



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## Detailed Phase 2 Engagement Report





# Energy Equity Engagement

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## Phase 2 Engagement

The second phase of the engagement included:

- Four engagement sessions with 35 participants from February to April 2024 and included:
  - Community Advisory Panel
  - Older Adult Table
  - Social Well Being Committee
  - Workshop for organizations and non-market housing providers

A list of organizations that participated can be found in Appendix A.

## What We Asked

In the engagement sessions, the project team provided updates on Phase 1, the draft strategy framework (i.e., vision, principles, priority areas), and overviewed the proposed actions aimed at solving energy inequity.

After the overview, discussions took place that were guided by, but not limited to the following questions:

- In achieving the vision, do you think it is aligned through the: guiding principles, aspirational targets, and priority areas?
- Do you think the priorities adequately address the key challenges?
- Is there anything missing from the strategic framework?
- Are there other actions or solutions you would suggest instead of the ones presented?
- What do you think is the most important action or solution to focus on?
- Home retrofit programs will need eligibility criteria. What are your thoughts on the options presented?
- What potential barriers or challenges do you foresee in implementing these actions and solutions and how can they be addressed?
- Do you have any suggestions for how to build these programs? (i.e., accessibility, criteria)
- What role do you see your organization playing in advancing energy inequity in the community?
- Would you like to be engaged moving forward? If yes, what is the best method for you?

This feedback is not statistically representative of all Calgarians, so participants will be called participants, not Calgarians.



## What We Heard

The following section highlights the primary themes identified from each of the four engagement sessions.

### 1. Community Advisory Panel #2: March 14, 2024

7 out of 10 members attended this meeting.

#### Strategy Communication

- Having two documents is a good idea – one that is a short summary and one that provides more details offers people multiple options to access the information. There was shared agreement that the short version of the strategy needs to be ideally no more than 5 pages.
- Infographics with simple illustrations, subtitled videos or translated voice-overs were recommended to make the strategy more accessible and engaging.
  - Having information in different languages, especially for newcomers, was highlighted as being important.
  - Sign language can also be helpful to make information accessible to deaf or hard of hearing individuals.
- The specific roles of The City of Calgary and Calgarians was unclear in the presented solutions showing a need for clearer communication on community involvement and responsibility.
- Importance of having one place on The City website where people can find all the information they need, along with a checked list of consultants and suppliers.

#### Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

- Positive feedback was received on the overall strategy, vision, mission, and guiding principles but some felt that the vision lacked emphasis on choice and action.
- The goals are too ambitious. Set smaller, more achievable goals instead.
- Using the word "all" in the vision was seen as too broad. It was suggested that this be removed or replaced with number targets, like a percentage, to make the vision more specific and realistic.
- The vision should include all forms of living situations including apartments and rentals.
- Community involvement such as the inclusion of Indigenous voices and perspectives in the strategy was highlighted as being important.
- Innovation as a guiding principle was suggested.

#### Programs Overview and Solutions

- The program may not be inclusive enough to account for various housing types. Specifically, not enough attention is given to apartment buildings which could be a key area for energy-saving programs.
- Concerns about the complexities and challenges of landlord-tenant relationships, including:
  - eviction risks, including potential evictions due to rezoning or hesitance to rent to people without a credit history,
  - the need for tenant safety,
  - better rent protection was emphasized, and
  - the idea of rent controls in programs for landlords to ensure rental prices don't increase and measures to ensure that any construction that takes place won't negatively impact tenants currently living there.



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- Questions about the potential energy savings from the programs were raised, with a suggestion to provide estimates to better understand the benefits.
- Concern that people with a middle income who are struggling to pay for their energy may not be eligible.
- Having a sliding income scale to match different financial situations is a fair way to decide who is eligible.
- Doubts about prioritizing electric vehicles (EVs) were expressed, citing their high cost and the lack of charging stations.



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What We Heard Report  
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## 2. Older Adult Table: March 19, 2024

10 participants attended this meeting.

### Landlord Participation and Incentives:

- Explore other ways to incentivize and encourage landlords to participate in energy efficiency programs.
- Consider the challenges posed by aging homes and that landlords may not be motivated to do property maintenance and/or energy upgrades.
- Are there opportunities to work with private investors?

### Financing Energy Efficiency Retrofits:

- Address the upfront costs of retrofitting, especially for seniors who may not have the upfront money or who don't want to invest when the return on investment is not there for them.
- Explore partnerships with private investors for financing options.
- There is a need for free or subsidized programs tailored to seniors with different income levels.

### Language and Communication Accessibility:

- Emphasize the importance of language accessibility and translation in program materials and communications to ensure inclusivity and reach within diverse communities.
- Alternative methods to applying other than online would be helpful for seniors who do not have access to a computer or may not understand how to apply online.

### Program Promotion and Awareness:

- Develop effective strategies to promote programs among older adults considering the limitations of digital channels and leveraging community-based outreach methods.
- Explore partnerships with Age Friendly networks, community associations, and newsletters to enhance program visibility and engagement with older adults.



### 3. Social Well-Being Committee: March 20, 2024

8 participants attended this meeting.

#### **Rent Control and Affordability Concerns:**

- There were concerns about potential rent increases after program participation.
- Create a way to ensure savings from energy efficiency initiatives are passed on to renters.

#### **Engagement and Communication Strategies:**

- Engage and communicate with faith-based groups.
- Target outreach to equity-denied groups for program success.
- Engage and educate landlords about the initiative and reasonable rent caps.

#### **Program Eligibility and Impact:**

- Consider eligibility criteria for refugees, international students, landlords living abroad, and individuals with middle-class incomes.
- Concerns the income eligibility may be too low. Even individuals with typical middle-class incomes are now struggling to afford their bills due to inflation. Recommendation to consider higher cut-off than what Statistics Canada uses.
- Communicate potential savings from retrofits to promote program participation.

#### **Program Expansion and Collaboration:**

- Potential expansion of programming to social housing providers, homeless shelters, and group homes.
- Collaboration opportunities with the Social Wellbeing Advisory Committee who can help with advocacy efforts.
- Explore incentives for landlords and eligibility of landlords with multiple properties.

#### **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:**

- Implementing participant feedback surveys for program evaluation and continuous improvement.
- Tailor programs for different groups to maximize the impact and effectiveness.

#### **Promoting Calgary's Values and Uniqueness:**

- Highlight initiatives like this as a reflection of Calgary's values and uniqueness.



## 4. Organizations and Non-Market Housing #2: April 9, 2024

20 participants attended this meeting.

### Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles

- Affordability was seen as an important guiding principle with some participants feeling that it should be listed first before the others.
- Confusion around the terms “efficiency”, “accessibility”, “inclusivity”, “affordability” and “fairness” with some participants suggesting having specific definitions or examples for each to help clarify.
  - It was also unclear how renewable energy as identified in the vision is included in the strategy actions.
  - The term “equity-denied” was viewed as a potentially negative phrase and is unclear. A suggestion was made to refer to the broader Calgarian population facing energy inequity.
- Safety and security were suggested as other important guiding principles to be added.
- There is a lack of discussion around infrastructure issues, such as grid problems and brownouts, in the energy inequity work. Some were worried how these might impact programs long-term.
- It will be hard to act on all the guiding principles listed, highlighting that The City may have to prioritize some principles more than others due to necessary trade-offs.
- Some confusion about whether the principles are intended to support the vision or guide the structure of programs, highlighting the need for clarity around how they are connected.
- Importance of including climate goals into the targets, such as reducing natural gas usage.

### Priority Areas and Strategic Gaps

- Better access to energy data to help monitor program success. Setting goals will be challenging without baseline data to work from.
- Offer tailored education and training – seen as critical to the long-term success of the programs. Some participants expressed not having a lot of technical knowledge, highlighting the desire for more information on energy efficiency appliances and how to maintain them long-term.
- Concerns about who will be overlooking the programs execution long-term. The City should be directly involved to keep things fair and accountable.
- Pilot programs may be useful for measuring program impact and to help show the benefits of each program. This was especially important for housing providers who are not sure if certain energy efficient upgrades are worth it.
- Teach people about simple energy-saving methods and raising awareness of other city resources, such as water-saving tips.

### Communications

- A major theme is the need to ensure everyone is aware of these programs, highlighting that they should be easy to find and apply for and have flexible eligibility criteria.
- Promote the program through partnerships with local organizations and charities, and use social media, flyers, and utility bills as outreach options. Use strategic locations like the foodbank for outreach. Additional options include creating a one stop shop for all energy equity programming.
- The City should develop a communications toolkit to distribute to partners.
- When working with partner organizations, The City needs to recognize that there is limited capacity to act as a partner for these types of programs, and so there should be a capacity grant from The City to support these efforts.





## Eligibility Criteria:

- Clear communication with renters and landlords on eligibility criteria and program benefits, including energy saving benefits is important for successful program uptake.
- A sliding scale for income qualification is a fairer eligibility approach, avoiding the introduction of new labels, and ensuring all participants provide income information.
- Have people who are eligible for the program to be automatically enrolled, as well as to have an unsubscribe option for Fair Entry rather than an opt-in approach.
- An AHS health inspection or a fire evaluation of a house could automatically qualify someone for the program.

## Feedback on Proposed Programs

- **Renter/Landlord Energy Efficiency Program**
  - Clear communication with renters and landlords on eligibility criteria and energy program benefits, including energy saving benefits is needed.
  - A renter/landlord program should offer incentives to landlords to get them onboard and consider how to handle situations where properties change owners.
  - Support for those who are new to the country and seniors is needed.
  - Importance of having the application process as easy as possible with minimal to no paperwork.
  - Clear benefits and rules are needed to protect renters, especially if they face eviction, and to prevent misuse of the program.
  - The strategy could do better at helping people with different needs, like offering interest-free loans or making homes more accessible.
  - The City needs to think about how much the program costs to run and whether it's worth it. Concerns with high administration fees.
  - Partnership with the Fair Entry program is a good idea; however Fair Entry may not have enough capacity to deal with this type of program.
  - Concern that building audits might lead to tenants being asked to temporarily leave their home due to potential construction operations.
  - Support services will be required including translation services for the audit process, and how to build trust with the program. Even terms like "audit" will mean some people don't apply because of the connotations with that word.
- **Deep Energy Retrofit Pilot**
  - Concerns about the risk of people needing to leave their homes during renovations, questioning the availability of support and if the program could accommodate these needs.
  - The importance of considering how these projects align or can be integrated with existing programs to improve program capacity and reach (i.e., align with the Clean Energy Improvement Program).
  - Preference for including education and capacity-building efforts directly into each program, rather than keeping them separate.
  - Consider whether to include landlord and tenant program within an existing program to avoid creating new, isolated programs.



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- Additional support for lower-income tenants or participants.
- **Non-market Housing Training Programs**
  - Participants are willing to take time off from work for specific training even though time is tight for small teams.
  - Interest in visiting multiple buildings and engaging in straightforward benchmarking but concerns with excessive paperwork.
  - Recommend simplifying reporting for the benchmarking program to align with other government programs to make the process simpler.
- **Non-Market Housing Energy Efficiency**
  - Questions were raised about the possibility for programs to complement existing ones with a call for more funding to initiate large-scale projects.
  - There is a need for major upgrades to government-owned buildings with a preference for focusing funding on a few high-impact projects rather than spreading it thin across many smaller ones.
  - Concern that the application process for small funding amounts would be burdensome.
  - A preference emerged for a program design that allows for easy selection from a list of cost-effective upgrades, recommending that The City should fund a significant part of the initial costs.
  - Continuous support to maintain the benefits of energy upgrades, such as helping with repairs, is important for housing providers as maintenance staff may not understand how to operate or fix energy saving upgrades.
  - Include thorough assessments to better understand energy usage and to share success stories of major upgrades or projects.
  - Need for a simple explanation what "net zero" is and what the goal is.
  - It is ideal for the program to cover 80% or more of upgrade costs otherwise the providers may not have enough funding to move forward with the projects.
  - Concerns about affording upfront costs and delays in rebates led to a suggestion for an 80/20 cost split, with non-market providers paying the initial 20% and The City covering the rest upon project completion.
  - Property owners have different priorities which can make it challenging to choose the best program as each program has its own benefits.
  - General agreement towards option 2 being the most effective.
  - Case studies are valuable for learning, especially on net-zero buildings.

## Conclusion

The City of Calgary would like to thank all participants and organizations for taking the time to participate in the engagement sessions and for providing honest feedback and recommendations. The City of Calgary received a significant amount of information from each engagement session and will be reviewing all feedback to incorporate these perspectives where appropriate into the Energy Equity Strategy.



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## Appendices



## Appendix A: Participants

### Organization and Non-Market Housing Workshop Participants

27 organizations were invited to participate in the workshop. The following 19 organizations participated:

- Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- Accessible Housing
- Acorn
- Alberta Ecotrust
- Calgary Housing (CHC)
- Disability Action Hall
- ESG Housing (Elder Statesman Group)
- Energy Futures Lab
- Green Calgary
- Immigrant Education Society (TIES)
- Kambo Energy Group
- Norfolk Housing
- Rise Calgary
- Sinneave
- Southern Alberta Cooperative Housing Association (SACHA)
- Trellis Society
- United Way
- Vibrant Communities Calgary
- YWCalgary



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## Appendix B: Participant Engagement Feedback

At the end of every engagement session, we asked for feedback on whether the engagement was meaningful to better understand how to modify for future sessions.

The feedback we received is summarized below.

### Community Advisory Panel #2: March 14, 2024

Total Responses: 7

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
We were clear in what we were trying to do for the meeting.	7			
The information we talked about was understandable.	7			
Everyone's ideas were welcome.	7			
You feel that you were able to participate in a meaningful way.	7			

Please tell us anything else we should consider for the next meeting.	
Response 1	I will be available on or after June 1. 2. Implement shorter and simple solution (WORD) steps. 3. Focus on wind energy. 4. Focus on earth ground heat energy.
Response 2	N/A
Response 3	The Community Advisory Panel was very informative x enlightening. Well done to the team.



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What We Heard Report

Phase 1: October – December 2023

## Organizations and Non-Market Housing #2: April 9, 2024

Total Responses: 15

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree and Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
We were clear in what we were trying to do for the meeting.	7	6	2		
The information we talked about was understandable.	6	9			
Everyone's ideas were welcome.	13	2			
You feel that you were able to participate in a meaningful way.	10	5			

Please tell us anything else we should consider for the next meeting.	
Response 1	Great engagement session!
Response 2	I think you all did a great job with this. I also walk away with solutions I can start putting in place right away so thank you!
Response 3	Great facilitation.
Response 4	Good facilitation, our room needs to be energy efficient.
Response 5	Very well organized. Well facilitated.
Response 6	This was very specific to program design, so I'm not sure all participants had a shared understanding of the nuances. But I did feel there was enough time to chat.
Response 7	It felt like the strategy already included a lot of details, each of those details (eligibility etc.) could have used hours of discussion.