Tuesday, February 25, 2025 | 10:00 AM– 3:30 PM

Home Energy Solutions (HES) & Home Energy Solutions- Income Eligible (HES-IE) Program Redesign Technical Meeting Minutes

Meeting Recording

Discussion

1. **DEEP Introduction & Remarks**

The Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) reviewed the meeting agenda and housekeeping items. DEEP provided the history and timeline regarding the HES and HES-IE redesign public process. DEEP reminded attendees that they do not expect consensus, and that the focus of the decision-making process is cost-effective energy savings. The timeline for HES and HES-IE redesign has been as follows:

- 10/4/24 Connecticut Technical Advisory Committee special session for the redesign
- 10/10/24 DEEP pauses vendor Request for Proposal (RFP) and pricing Request for Information (RFI) until proposed redesign had been satisfactorily evaluated through public process
- 10/28/24 DEEP issued request for written comment
- 12/13/24 Technical Consultants and Vendors program redesign meeting
- 12/31/24 DEEP lifted the RFI pause and planned for two technical meetings on 2/25/25 and 3/18/25 (if necessary)
- 1/31/25 Technical Consultants hosted a meeting focusing on the 1 versus 2 visit model, vendor compensation, thermal boundary, delivery model and compensation

Public comment 00:06:00

No public comment.

2. **Energy Efficiency Board (EEB) Technical Consultants 00:06:30**

Richard Faesy, an Energy Efficiency Board (EEB) Technical Consultant, presented program redesign recommendations.

   a. **Review Program Impact Studies and other issues which triggered this proposed redesign.**

The EEB Technical Consultants reviewed three major studies that influenced the need for program redesign.

- R1983: HES/HES-IE Single Family Impact & Process Evaluation
    - Key Finding #1 is that: "Air sealing and insulation savings in natural gas heated homes are much lower than the previous evaluation and ex ante values, but generally are in line with regional benchmarks."
        - Air sealing and insulation represent more than 80% of both programs' expected lifetime savings across all fuel types.
        - In comparison with other programs, the CT air sealing delivery model appears less comprehensive.
        - The evaluation consultants recommend refining the HES incentive structure to encourage more comprehensive weatherization, increase targeting of homes with greater savings potential, and consider an air sealing field assessment to assess work quality and missed opportunities.
    - Key finding #2 is that HES participants install insulation less often than participants in similar regional programs. The percentage of 2019 HES participants that install insulation following their assessment is less than half that of programs in MA and RI.
        - The evaluation consultants recommend: revisiting HES' current existing conditions requirements to qualify for insulation; consider directly incentivizing HES vendors based on their insulation conversion rate; and providing dedicated sales training. Additionally, the evaluation consultants recommend simplifying customer-facing incentive messaging, and developing a program or elevated incentives to target moderate-income households and rental properties.
- R2222b: Assessing Optimal Levels of Residential Envelope and Duct Sealing
    - Interim takeaways indicated that there is remaining potential for Cubic Feet per Minute (CFM) reductions, especially in leaky homes. Additionally, there is a need to prioritize high-value air sealing targets and a need to identify opportunities to better match work scopes with project opportunities, regardless of visit structure.

- R2218+: HES/HES-IE Continuous Improvement Package

    - Key findings included that health & safety showstoppers are extremely common, and duct testing can be difficult and time consuming.
    - According to this study, attics are a high priority but access is often challenging. Most vendors do not miss the easiest sealing opportunities throughout a home, but onsite visits demonstrate significant opportunities often remain.

i. Clarifying Questions

Diane Del Rosso (Eversource) had a clarifying statement regarding the market rate insulation program. Up until 2024, any contractor could participate. As of January 21, 2024, only contractors who are part of the Connecticut Insulation Installer's Network (CTIIIN) can install insulation for customers using the Conservation and Load Management (C&LM) rebate. Diane clarified that this does not come out of the HES contractors' purchase orders (P.O.). The lack of incentive for sharing P.O. would only be for HES-IE, not HES.

Becca Trietch (DEEP) asked how many of the contractors that provide the HES assessments are also in the installation network. The Companies will follow-up with a response for DEEP. There are

contractors who have designed their business model around core services, potentially making them less incentivized to provide additional services to reach deeper savings.

b. Overview of working group process

Richard Faesy reviewed the timeline and history of the working group. The first meeting for the technical consultants, companies, and contractors was held on December 13, 2024. Nineteen respondents representing 17 companies attended. Meeting notes and a report was provided to DEEP on February 11, 2025. The topics of discussion included:

- 1 visit vs. 2+ visit model
- 2-4 unit buildings
- Compensation
- Thermal boundary
- Training
- Suggestions

A second meeting was held on January 31, 2025, with a report to DEEP provided on February 24, 2025. Following this meeting, the technical consultants had several key recommendations:

- Adopt the proposed new HES/HES-IE model, while allowing the Companies to determine the implementation details.
- Ensure the contractors spend enough time in each house to address air sealing and duct sealing opportunities.
- Proceed with the Request for Information (RFI) and HES-IE Request for Proposal (RFP) processes, while attempting to expedite the process.
- The thermal boundary working group should be encouraged to finalize the implementation approaches for defining thermal boundaries.
- Keep early, often, and open communication and encourage continued dialog between the Companies and contractors.

c. Review proposed program design and recommendations

Richard Faesy presented the proposed flow chart for a flexible hybrid model for the HES and HES-IE programs. The proposal, which there appears to be agreement on, provides the flexibility to choose between a 1-visit or 2-visit model. The site assessment can be conducted separately and followed by an insulation visit. The biggest change is that the work can be split into 2 visits, if preferable. Stakeholders want to ensure that all services are provided but are offering the flexibility to complete the work in 1 or 2 visits.

Richard Faesy also presented on RFI next steps, including:

1. Finish HES/HES-IE model design

2. Update spreadsheet of measures that align with new model

3. Companies share draft RFI for contractor feedback

4. Companies prepare and distribute RFI solicitation

5. Contractors complete RFI (without any discussions with others)

6. HES-IE RFP developed and distributed based on RFI

Richard Faesy also presented a proposed timeline for the RFI, including draft pricing elements distributed for consideration on February 24, 2024, the Companies providing contractor office hours during a 30-day review period, then the RFI pricing request to be issued in April, and a contractor meeting to review final results to be held afterward. The goal is for an RFP to be issued for HES-IE contractors in early quarter 3 of 2024 so that training can start in October. Finally, it is proposed that new contractors with updated statements of work and P.O.s will be in place for January 1, 2026.

3. **DEEP Questions & DEEP Facilitated Discussion 0:55:00**
    a. **Program Design Questions**

Ben McMillan (DEEP) asked how many hours of air sealing are allowed for Vermont, Wisconsin, and Nationally, as Connecticut was compared against these states for CFM reductions based on Pre-Weatherization Leakage. Richard Faesy responded that there is an initial assessment and blower door test. As part of the work scope there is a number of hours, or at least a CFM reduction target that is established as part of this initial visit, however, Mr. Faesy believes that much of this work is conducted on a case-by-case basis.

Ben McMillan asked if hard to seal attics are an issue of time, or if they simply cannot be sealed. Richard Faesy responded that customer approval is needed prior to doing the work, and that in most situations it is a combination of access and fixing the access. It can be challenging, however, as the contractors may need to return to a home multiple times. Mr. Faesy noted that the pricing and hours for attics may need to be reviewed. Diane Del Rosso (Eversource) described that there are issues that can make some attics difficult to seal. Connecticut's program is unique because air sealing and duct sealing can be installed on the first visit. Contractors are trying to serve a customer or 2 customers a day and may not necessarily anticipate difficulties. In the current model, it's a gap. Contractors have also talked about board over access. They are able to pull up the plywood if the customers allow that. If the customer is agreeable, the recommendation is to do the dense pack in the floor cavity, and the dense pack is thick enough and heavy enough to act as both air sealing and insulation. However we move forward, the Companies need to remain flexible enough to take care of these situations.

Ben McMillan asked about the proposed process flow with the new model. If a contractor or customer sticks with the single-visit model, it appears that they are moving forward with the program model as it is currently structured. Mr. McMillan asked how this would still address some of the issues discussed. Diane Del Rosso explained that the Companies would like to require that they are going to do one visit a day or have 3 technicians, and will require that a workplan be submitted after the work is done for review. The contractors will still be held accountable to do all of the work. Additionally, staff can talk to the customer if they believe there will be obstacles.

Becca Trietch (DEEP) asked if there would be any kind of review with the 1-visit model or only a retroactive review. Diane Del Rosso described that there would be a work plan that indicates work completed for air and duct sealing, which is provided to the Companies for each project. For the 2-visit model, air sealing and duct sealing will be reviewed prior to the work being completed. For either visit model, the intention is that the work plan scope will be provided with supporting

documentation for Quality Assurance and Quality Control (QA/QC). DEEP questioned the process for when a scope of work is rejected; this would require the contractor to go back and re-evaluate before air sealing is performed. If numerous scopes are rejected, a contractor could potentially be eliminated from the program. The big change moving forward will be the amount of time spent in the house, which could potentially increase costs. An unintended consequence of the current payment structure is over-claiming CFM reduction. DEEP will need to monitor the benefit cost ratios (BCRs) of these programs if these changes are implemented. It's important that these programs remain cost effective and achieve savings.

Ben McMillan confirmed that with the new proposed layer of scope review if the contractor will be able to schedule the customer for the upgrade services at the time of the first visit. Eversource has committed to reviews within a certain period of time, which is 5 days. Diane Del Rosso mentioned that they would need to schedule the work to be conducted in a timeframe to allow for approval. The Companies will be pushing contractors to submit more frequently.

Richard Faesy mentioned that for the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) rebate programs, offers and integration will need to be considered. Some contractors that follow a 1-visit model may need to change in order to offer IRA rebate funding. Becca Trietch noted that this is a federal requirement; DEEP is awaiting more information on federal requirements moving forward.

b. Facilitated Discussion 1:38:00

Perkin Simpson, CEO of Operation Fuel, highlighted the potential of working in congruence with Conservation & Load Management (C&LM) programs. At operation fuel, they have numerous people that call and are income-eligible to qualify for a program. Becca Trietch mentioned that they have started to map out support for red-tagged systems and coordination with Operation Fuel could aid in this endeavor.

Contractors expressed their general satisfaction with the proposed hybrid model. The flexible design will allow contractors to better align their technician team's strengths with the service tiers proposed. Concerns and opinions regarding further program details were discussed.

- Statement of Work (SOW) approval timing and administrative requirements
    - Tim Fabien brought awareness to turnaround times for SOW approval from the Utilities. The Eversource has proposed their SOW review, and approval will take 3 business days. Customer contracts may have to be adjusted based on the SOW, which will require more administrative assistance.
    - Edgardo Mejias shared that a lot of the defined approach is already in place, with the proposed hybrid model methods already used by some vendors.
    - Discussion further elaborated that under an updated model, metrics will need to be tracked and reported to ensure improvement is occurring and to ensure all expectations are being met.
- One job per day restrictions and mandating number of technicians on the job
    - Ryan Behling shared the opinion that it would make more sense to define clear expectations for a job but allow vendors to determine how long to schedule the job for and how many technicians to bring. Homes are not simple to compartmentalize into defined service expectations.

    - Becca Trietch (DEEP) questioned how to ensure that more time is being spent in a home if there are no limitations in place, and the potential need for heightened QA/QC during the program transition.
- Contributors to incentive levels and restrictions
    - Michelle Long voiced that every house is different, and they can attempt to pre-screen the home as much as possible, but contractors do not fully know the situation they are dealing with until being in the home. Attic access, for example, can depend on how the occupants use the house.
    - Attic access can sometime be a challenge in homes. Edgardo Mejias stated that the best method to address floored over attics is to dense pack under the floor. This provides both air sealing and insulation, however, there are program restrictions in place for the maximum existing R Value. The contractors cannot dense pack if insulation under the floorboard meets an R Value threshold.
- Evaluation study details and misconceptions
    - Contractors addressed the need for accurate comparison between neighboring state programs. Edgardo Mejias pointed out that the R1983 study compared Connecticut and Massachusetts based on hours spent in a home, however, CFM reductions were reported higher in Connecticut than Massachusetts.
- Duct sealing test requirements and duct sealing compensation
    - Lorenzo Wyatt shared an example of an assessment involving ductwork. Contractors are concerned about compensation regarding duct testing. It is a requirement to test the ducts regardless of whether they can be sealed or not. Currently, contractors are compensated only for CFM reduction and manual sealing.
    - The Utilities stated that the duct testing was not a change to the program or the implementation manual, but a change in QA/QC. Pricing was updated for the beginning of 2025, but there currently is no fee in place for duct testing. If ducts are already insulated, contractors have the option to partner with an advanced duct sealing (ADS) contractor, but some choose not to. In evaluation R2218+, it showed some vendors are skipping duct sealing, missing saving opportunities. The QA/QC was an attempt to hold contractors accountable to complete work under the contract. However, a possible reason for the lost duct sealing opportunities was due to visit time constraints. The Utilities shared these measure descriptions and fees with the contractors for a 30-day review in September 2024 but only received a couple responses with feedback.
        - The Utilities recently shared an updated proposed pricing structure with contractors on February 24, 2025. There will be 30 days to review, per contractor request. The Utilities intend to release an RFI beginning of April, which is generally out for 30 days. Responses would come back to the Utilities potentially in May and then there would be analysis. Depending on planner agreements, the Utilities suggested introducing a duct test fee at that time. This would take place before releasing the full request for proposal (RFP).
        - The Utilities later questioned if the duct testing fee should be paid each time testing occurred or paid only when there is no opportunity for manual duct sealing. Contractors voiced opinions on fair compensation, as testing and

sealing are two separate tasks. Edgardo Mejias noted that the November 2023 RFI also covered compensation for duct blasting and leakage to the outside, which may be a resource for information.

- Martin Harisi suggested in the future looking into an hourly payment for duct sealing or number of registers. Tim Fabian stated that an hourly structure for duct sealing will not have the same precision as a CFM based structure. Conversation continued with an analogy of duct sealing acting as a garden hose, where there are limited reasons for leakage. Whereas in air sealing the building's envelope, leakage can happen in many ways, and CFM reductions can vary drastically. DEEP urged contractors to review the pricing request for information (RFI) and submit their thoughts and opinions to the Utilities.

4. **Lunch Break 02:41:00**

5. **DEEP Questions & DEEP Facilitated Discussion (continued) 02:42:00**
    a. **Zoom Q&A Questions**

Daniel Rabine asked what drives resident participation. Becca Trietch responded that there is an evaluation study looking into program non-participants and the barriers to participation, which will be released in draft form this year.

Daniel Rabine asked why Eversource branding was on backgrounds and slides if the studies are financed by C&LM. Becca Trietch clarified that any evaluation study is funded through C&LM dollars but are conducted through third-party evaluation administrators. Branding on those should just be EnergizeCT. For the technical meeting slides being referenced, the Utilities have their own presentation. The Utilities also use template slides that say EnergizeCT.

Michael Frownfelter shared that the space around chimneys is a huge opportunity for air sealing. Michael asked how other states are accomplishing this. Richard Faesy indicated that other states address this and provides an example from Vermont. Vermont does fire approved caulking and flashing protocol for chimney chases. Keeping combustibles away but sealing up the space between the framing and the chimney is a common practice in weatherization programs in Vermont. Diane Del Rosso stated Connecticut does this as well.

6. **Utilities Presentation 02:27:40**

Diane Del Rosso (Eversource) and Amy McLean (Avangrid) presented the Utilities' HES & HES-IE Program Redesign presentation.

    a. **Utility perspective on how proposed changes will address identified issues.**

The Utilities noted that there are many identified opportunities for improvement and addressed four major takeaways with proposed tactics for strengthening the current programs.

1. Ensure air sealing energy savings are realized and maximized in customer homes

- Diane Del Rosso explained that air sealing and duct sealing are paired together often, but in this instance the presentation focused on air sealing. To improve air sealing energy savings, the proposed HES/HES-IE redesign would transition from paying for CFM reduction and focus on paying for time and materials. Based on analysis from evaluation results and partner programs in Massachusetts, most homes fell between a 6-to-8-hour air sealing job. This guided a proposal to set time expectations. In addition, there needs to be adjustment to target areas such as attic air sealing, garage space, or unconditioned basement prior to conditioned space. Utilizing a work scope to verify work to be completed, or that has been completed, will help make sure that everything is getting accomplished as anticipated.

2. Improve the design to consider the high rate of homes that have a blower door health and safety barrier

- Currently, homes with health and safety berries are on the rise and are creating a stop work. HES-IE customers will be referred to Residential Energy Preparation Services (REPS), and all customers should receive education and next steps. This also entails ensuring contractors are paid for all services provided, which is structured through a health and safety type audit. Diane Del Rosso specified that technicians need enough time for diagnostic testing, documenting and providing customer education.

3. Increase insulation adoption in both HES & HES-IE

- Diane Del Rosso noted the low-income HES-IE program should easily sell insulation upgrades as the Companies are paying 100% for the installation. Technicians and contractors need to verify recommendations and existing R Values to increase adoption and complete the work in homes that need it. QA/QC can be in place to ensure recommendation accuracy. Increasing adoption may also mean spending enough time in low-income and market rate homes to give meaningful information about why the insulation measure is so important, and improving follow-up and sales. The Companies intend to have sales training with the contractors and technicians to help improve comfort with sales and to support the building of customer relationships.
- Qualifying jobs using program guidelines were also addressed. Pre-qualifications include R4 in the walls and R19 values in the attic. Savings are based on this prequalification.

4. Strengthen QA/QC

- This includes contractors understanding they have a role in QA/QC responsibilities. Diane Del Rosso stated that this has not always been the case. Some contractors have field staff or field supervisors that are in charge of reviewing work, but this also entails office staff following expectations with documentation. Desk Reviews need to have all the work scope information and picture requirements present to support work being completed and submitted for the Companies' review and approval. The field staff put together a packet of information for a project, the desk or office staff should review it for accuracy when submitting for payment. Desk reviews can be for work already completed or work to be completed, depending on the model. For example, if air sealing was completed on the first visit, but insulation or a heat pump was recommended for a follow-up visit, this would all be included in the scope of work. A scope of work for a two-visit model would include recommendations for the second visit such as air sealing and insulation.

Air sealing priorities and cost effectiveness were then presented. An air sealing focus should include the AGBC Priority: Attic and Garage (attached/under), Basement, Conditioned space. The Utilities stated that approximately 40 - 50% of air sealing time should be spent in the attic. Consistent with Building Performance Institute (BPI) standards, air sealing and insulation is required for an air/thermal barrier in all areas recommended for insulation, unless dense pack is part of SOW. It was reiterated that the insulation rebate may only be provided utilizing the existing R Values.

- The Companies presented Table 1: HES & HES-IE Air Sealing with Attic Air Sealing.

This chart was shared with contractors in 2023 and integrated ideas and feedback. The chart in Table 1 set expectations of potential payment for hours spent in a customer's home. The tables specified criteria based on home size square footage and house age. Contractors requested for technician discretion of up to 2 hours, which was also included in the table. Up to 2 hours of additional air sealing are available based on attic considerations, per technician discretion and justification. It was noted that most homes fall within a 6-to-8-hour range.

Richard Faesy asked why 2014 is the cutoff year for new home air sealing with attic air sealing hours criteria in the table. Was that year the same as the exemption date for solar installations not needing a HES/HES-IE assessment? Should there be a date after which a home is built when customers do not need to have a HES or HES-IE assessment to qualify for other rebates?

Diane Del Rosso explained that the Companies decided in 2014 to select a date when contractors would not need to send two technicians, if it were recognized that the only thing the customer might need is duct ceiling because the house may not need air sealing or insulation. Diane del Rosso recalled that around April of 2014, Connecticut adopted the 2012 IECC. There was consensus at the time for 2014, and that is how the cutoff was established. This is also supported by evaluation studies to focus efforts on the right housing stock.

As for the solar incentive exception date, 1980 was the year adopted. Richard Faesy questioned whether the dates should be the same, as justification for both scenarios is that the homes are generally good with insulation or air sealing. The question evolved to whether C&LM should spend scarce resources in newer homes, if resources could be better spent in older homes. Diane Del Rosso stated that previously the programs had a focus on old leaky homes.

Becca Trietch explained that everyone pays into the program, and everyone should be served. The same conversation has remained for over ten years. There will always be some tensions in efficiency programs between going wide versus going deep per building. Trying to strike the right balance will always be challenging.

- The Companies presented Table 2: HES & HES-IE Air Sealing without Attic Air Sealing.

Situations were listed in the table such as floored over attic, knee wall transitions, basement crawlspace rim joist, basement or crawlspace ceiling, or an exception of the home being at or near building airflow standard (BAS). Up to three hours could be invoiced without attic air ceiling. Diane Del Rosso referred to a previous discussion with contractors during the technical meeting. If calling for dense pack, a floored over attic does not necessarily need to pull up the floor all the time, but if the technician is going to dense pack, the dense pack can serve as both air sealing and insulation. This table is just a list to choose from. For example, a cape style house has a little cap at the top of the cape where not much work can be completed. The focus would be on the knee walls and knee

wall transition access, where most of the work is required. Two or four knee walls might require four hours of work, which can be approved by the Utilities beforehand. Even though these lists have explicit exceptions, if there were other services that came up and didn't fit the list, there is still a process to get approval from the Utilities.

The Scope of Work (SOW) plan will include a drawing of spaces that need to be sealed. The plan view will have training associated with it so that the technicians know their plan visually. The details of how the SOW process will be submitted, either digitally or in paper form, are still open for discussion.

b. Expected program (budget, savings, etc.) impacts of the proposed redesign.

Diane Del Rosso praised the continuous great work happening in the C&LM programs. A deep dive on HES and HES-IE programs is expected on March 12th with contractors presenting some of their work as case studies.

As there is always room for growth and opportunity, expected program impacts from the proposed changes were also addressed. An improved customer experience will come from setting customer expectations, improving results, and improving customer education. The program should ensure customers are very happy with their services. The Utilities expect spending to be similar or slightly higher overall to current spending. As detailed previously in the meeting, there are services and measures that are potentially not being paid for today because of how the payment structures have been in place. Diane Del Rosso explained that the payment structure needs updating, and the Companies want to make sure that contractors are getting paid for the tasks that they are completing. The final program goal with the proposed redesign is for savings to increase. The Companies stated they want to make sure air sealing is getting completed in the right places and that there are duct ceiling savings, and increased insulation adoption. All of this will improve realization rates and savings results.

c. Assessment of contractor impacts resulting from the proposed redesign

Amy McClean presented the contractor impacts from the proposed HES and HES-IE redesign. It was indicated that flexibility in delivery for the contractors will be a focus. There will be health and safety visits if needed, in the form of a 1-visit or 2-visit model. Secondarily, a defined work scope and expectations to allow enough time for work, such as air sealing and duct sealing, to be completed. The final impact on contractors would be the ability to better focus on the customer's home, addressing the needs for air sealing and duct sealing, customer education, and in-demand home upgrades.

7. DEEP Facilitated Discussion & Stakeholder Questions 03:18:00

Becca Trietch asked about anticipation administrative costs. DEEP's primary concern is cost-effectiveness and how the program savings will be monitored.

The Companies noted there are differences in staff size and territory size. In terms of desk reviews, Avangrid will be evaluating what their team can handle for review turnaround timelines. It was also noted that the portion of projects where contractors submit 2-visits, will have the first visit for the Utilities to review. It is unknown how many contractors will use this method. It is also unknown how these changes will impact administrative costs. The scope of work, for example, may potentially be

simpler for the Utilities to review. It will be a map or drawing, which is different than the current method of pictures.

As for tracking savings, Steve Bruno (Eversource) explained that monitoring can be done on a job-by-job basis in their tracking systems. It was indicated that they intend to track the two different model versions and can compare both. Steve Bruno suggested in quarterly reports DEEP would be able to see if any metrics were changing or not. Diane Del Rosso noted that this is also on the evaluator's radar. Eversource is really interested in improving results and improving realization rates. Savings that the Utilities will be able to use in the new program will be savings calculations that have been attributed using today's low realization rates. To measure success, the Companies will be looking for insulation adoption and conversion rates for measures such as heat pump water heaters or advanced duct sealing, to increase. In-process inspection scoring and post inspection rates will also be evaluated. In the long term, analyzing realization rates after a new evaluation will be the goal to observe metrics.

Ben McMillian (DEEP) questioned how contractors who are not going to be doing insulation work will be motivated to sell insulation. The Companies explained that the Utilities will more than likely add a small commission to the contractor when the air sealing and insulation is sold in the 2-visit model. The pricing in the RFI will be the same, except for the slight bump for a commission. The Companies want the HES contractors who do not install insulation directly to have strong relationships with insulation installers. It was noted that this "matchmaking" will be strengthened and in all of the RFPs in the past twelve years, insulation installers have had to be identified by contractors.

Further discussion addressed issues the Utilities are having with approved R-Values and whether the SOW approval will help eliminate these issues. There may need to be a different tactic with the insulation rebate. Diane Del Rosso explained that in the future, there may be a digital rebate. The digital rebate would not automatically be given to a customer, but it would go live once a desk review is approved, for instance, and then the rebate would be activated and sent via email to the customer. In that situation, yes, desk reviews will play a leading role in preventing the problem with the insulation rebates that we're seeing today, where a rebate is left where it should not have been.

Another process clarification was discussed in regard to the submitted SOW. The SOW is not a customer facing document. A contractor could sign something with the customer, even though the scope of work is not yet approved by utility, which means it might have to be adjusted in some way if the SOW changes. If contractors are right on with the expectations of what is going to be approved, there should not be an issue. However, there may be a learning curve and program rules might change. DEEP noted that this could be a difficult situation for both the contractors and the customers. Eversource stated that the contractor's total cost presented to the customer can be framed as an estimate and awaiting utility SOW approval before final cost.

Ben McMillian questioned how the health and safety barrier expectations are different in the proposed model. The Companies responded that if there are health and safety barriers, the proposed model would have more defined expectations and maybe a better fee associated with it. If a technician goes to a customer's home and cannot do the air sealing, there should still be payment for the time it took to do other work. The Companies define what they want that work to be. The contractors will communicate how much payment is expected, but it should be very similar in time and cost to the first portion of a 2-visit model.

Training is expected to be sometime around the last quarter of the year, before program implementation in January 2026. Program transition office hours will be in place for direct communication between the Utilities and Contractors. Additional trainings were mentioned, such as sales, as the program changes have a stronger emphasis on this. Similar to the insulation bootcamp, it is possible that sales training will be an available resource that contractors can send their staff to every year or two, especially if there is staff turnover.

Discussion transitioned into building relationships with landlords of 2–4-unit multifamily family buildings. Eversource noted that based on previous Contractor Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC) meetings, contractors asked for the Utilities' assistance in reaching landlords. Eversource has transitioned back to reaching out to landlords and trying to get their signature so work can be done not just in one unit, but on the entire building. The Utilities are working to help bridge the gap in landlord outreach and increase participation. Program redesign wise, a HES-IE multifamily landlord may continue to sign off on the application right at the beginning for either a 1-visit or 2-visit model, as the program currently flows now. In a market rate 2-4-unit building, the air sealing hours tables are incorporated by square footage, or unit size, to calculate the number of hours spent in the overall buildings and a consistent focus on the AGBC Priority. If someone decided to do a 2-visit model, a first visit audit can be completed on the entire building, a scope can be put together, then the advantages of doing all the units at the same time and the additional incentives can be shown to the landlord, and a landlord may be more likely to sign off.

The Companies noted that a draft implementation manual had been sent out to contractors in Fall 2024, but the proposed hybrid process flow would be added into the manual and sent for additional review, if approved by DEEP. The Utilities are committed to a process with Contractors for updates and new guidance that has clear timelines and comment opportunities, and which will follow the same process for implementation manual review.

Richard Faesy questioned the one-size fits all method for air sealing hours, and if there is potential for just keeping the expectations tied to the 1-visit model but provide more flexibility with the 2-visit model because of the SOW allowing contractors to right size the job and the hours associated. If a house is very tight and does not need much air sealing, or if a house has a lot of leakage and needs two days of air sealing service, this will only be tracked and known with the 2-visit model option. The Companies agreed that the one visit per day or three technicians for 6 to 8 hours rule comes into play with the 1-visit model and can impact flexibility. There would be less guardrails with a 2-visit model because the contractors would have already been at the home to assess and create a work scope.

a. Contractor perspective discussion

Jane Bourdeau asked for clarification on the expected air sealing hours as a HES vendor in a 1-vist versus 2-visit model. Diane Del Rosso responded that there are 6 to 8 hours of air sealing on the table for an average home. The program redesign would require a team there for one full day, with all of the work that needs to be completed in addition to the 6 to 8 hours. One tech could do air sealing for 4 hours while the other tech might do something else for 2 hours and then help out with the last 2 hours of air sealing. The Utilities clarified that the technicians are not necessarily in the house for 6 to 8 hours. Jane Bourdeau stated this method may cost more budget money. Their number of audits at the end of the year will be less, equaling the amount of budget based on the plan we have now. Jane pointed out that the redesign will come down to half as much a day for the

same amount of money, equals half as many audits at the end of the year. Discussions continued regarding hours spent in a home and the number of homes being served. Becca Trietch explained that the proposal is a concerted step toward going deeper in savings for each home being served, which might end up spending more money per home, but also should hopefully, generate more energy savings. DEEP will be tracking this closely and saving realization rates will go through an evaluation cycle to help determine progress. Diane Del Rosso mentioned the 6 to 8 hours a day would also mean less travel, less time between jobs, and maybe less product by focusing on one home. There are different complexities with shifting from two homes a day to one.

Martin Harisi suggested that the 2-visit model could have a home standard or limit that gets auto approved on the Companies' side, this way Contractors can schedule the second visit with the customer right away and not have to wait for SOW approval. Martin Harisi explained that an expedited pre-approved SOW process would help lower overall administrative costs on both the Contractor and Utility side and serve more customers.

Diane Del Rosso explained it is unknown if the Companies can implement an auto approval standard right out of the gate, but it could be an idea for the future. It was also noted that a portion of QA/QC will be moving from after work is done to before the work is done, with verification on the back end. Eversource does not want to get rid of QA/QC, but a way to automate and streamline this would be a potential option eventually. This could also tie into Utilities' process in tracking metrics for streamline opportunities.

Edgardo Mejias recommended that training vendors be expanded for inspectors and possibly even Utility staff. Training on BPI fundamentals would be beneficial for program approaches and consistent communication among all stakeholders. Some inspectors within the same company give different advice, and it would be helpful if everyone were on the same page. Edgardo Mejias also shared opinions regarding HES-IE assessments and SOW submissions in a 1-day versus 2-day model, as well as fair compensation for administrative work.

DEEP stated their next steps and expectations. DEEP will review all the information from the technical meeting and will issue a request for written comment. DEEP will then issue a letter indicating the next steps with approval/denial of the HES & HES-IE redesign proposal. DEEP will aim to release next steps before the follow-up technical meeting.

8. **Public Comment 04:17:30**

Edgardo Mejias commented that vendors are struggling with the new program changes that have already been implemented. It is impacting vendors financially as they are not being compensated for their time. He requests an RFI as early as possible. Currently, the new requirements have limited the thermal upgrades they can put in customers' homes, and it is preventing customers from purchasing upgrades. Edgardo Mejias stated there was a time when vendors were allowed to address thermal boundaries, dense pack attics, and dense pack walls, and does not think they can make the same wall and dense pack saving claims anymore. Edgardo suggested the program savings document (PSD) may need to be edited to address maximizing savings.

The Utilities stated the R4 and R19 prequalification criteria for attic dense packing have been in place since 2012 or longer. The Utilities will be working with the planners regarding additional air sealing benefits from dense packing. Richard Faesy responded that the evaluators are aware of this issue,

and it is on their list to do an annual PSD review of additional air sealing savings that can be accounted for in addition to the thermal benefit of dense packing.

9. **Adjourn 02:25:00**

Announcements/Relevant Timeline

1. October 4, 2024, DEEP held a Connecticut Technical Advisory Committee special session for the proposed HES & HES-IE redesign.
2. October 10, 2024, DEEP paused the vendor Request for Proposal (RFP) and pricing Request for Information (RFI) until the proposed redesign had been satisfactorily evaluated through public process.
3. October 28, 2024, DEEP issued a request for written comment on the proposed public process.
4. December 13, 2024, the EEB Technical Consultants and Vendors held a program redesign meeting and summary notes were provided to DEEP.
5. December 31, 2024, DEEP lifted the RFI pause and planned for two technical meetings on February 25, 2025, and March 18, 2025 (if necessary).
6. January 31, 2025, the Technical Consultants hosted a meeting focusing on the 1-vist versus 2-visit model, vendor compensation, thermal boundary, delivery model and compensation. Summary notes were provided to DEEP.
7. February 24, 2025, the Utilities shared proposed pricing with contractors. There will be a 30-day review. The Utilities intend to release an RFI at the beginning of April, which is generally out for 30 days.