

Subject: Stakeholder Input Opportunities for a Massachusetts Non-Pipes Alternative Framework

From: NPA Framework Stakeholder Facilitators

Date: **September 11, 2024**

Overview

The five Massachusetts natural gas companies¹ are creating a Non-Gas Pipeline Alternative (NPA) framework to inform future decisions about the gas system. The NPA framework will enable natural gas companies to evaluate both traditional pipeline investments and alternative options like electrification, thermal networks, energy efficiency, and demand response.

The natural gas companies want to gather input from a wide range of people with different viewpoints to ensure the NPA framework meets customer needs while maintaining safety and reliability as the gas system changes. The companies conducted a formal request for proposals and have hired a team of independent consultants (E3, Apex Analytics, and Efficiency for Everyone) to lead the stakeholder input process. This announcement presents multiple ways for interested individuals and organizations to participate.



D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group. This group will consist of approximately 30 selected stakeholders who will meet monthly from October 2024 to March 2025. The goal is to collect diverse perspectives to help shape a comprehensive NPA framework. A Technical Subcommittee will tackle key technical questions identified by the NPA Working Group through a series of focused, remote meetings. More information about the 20-80 NPA Working Group and Technical Subcommittee is provided below. To apply, [click here](#) and respond by **September 25, 2024**.

Community Focus Group. This group will examine the potential impacts of NPAs on communities in Massachusetts, including historically overburdened and marginalized populations. The focus group will seek to gain feedback from community members about how alternatives to natural gas infrastructure will impact their families, businesses, and communities. The Community Focus Group will consist of up to 15 members representing communities in Massachusetts and will meet approximately six times between October 2024

¹ The five natural gas local distribution companies are Berkshire Gas Company, Eversource Energy (including Eversource Gas Company of Massachusetts), Liberty, National Grid, and Unitil.

and March 2025. [Click here](#) for more information about the Community Focus Group. [Click here](#) to apply by **October 2, 2024**.

Public Engagement. Individuals and organizations that would like to stay informed and provide input without joining a standing group have several options:

- Sign up for email updates about the NPA Stakeholder Input Process, which will provide information about public meetings, opportunities to provide feedback, and updates on the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group. To receive these emails, send a request to npaworkinggroup@apexanalyticsllc.com.
- Participate in **two public listening sessions**—one in person and one online. These sessions will give an overview of the natural gas system and the NPA framework and allow for feedback. Dates for these sessions will be sent to the email distribution list referenced above and posted on the [NPA Stakeholder Website](#).
- The [NPA Stakeholder Website](#) will house D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group meeting materials, written comments from the public and group members, and information about public meetings and opportunities to provide feedback.

D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group Details

Background and Deadlines

On December 6, 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities' (DPU), through its order in D.P.U. 20-80, requested that the natural gas distribution companies (also known as local distribution companies, or LDCs) engage with stakeholders to develop an NPA framework. To engage with stakeholders, the LDCs, in consultation with E3, Apex Analytics (Apex), and Efficiency for Everyone, are establishing a D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group. The D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group is being designed to ensure balanced representation, transparent communication, and effective stakeholder engagement to provide meaningful input to the LDCs regarding the development of an NPA framework. The NPA framework will be critical in guiding decisions related to future investments in the gas system. The LDCs recognize the critical importance of creating a framework for NPAs, such as electrification, thermal networked systems, targeted energy efficiency, and demand response, as well as behavior change, education, and market transformation. Through the implementation of the NPA framework, the LDCs will consider alternative options to traditional, natural gas system investments.

The goal of the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group is to gather diverse perspectives and inputs that will inform a comprehensive NPA framework that considers the needs and concerns of customers as the natural gas system evolves.

The Technical Subcommittee will tackle key technical questions identified by the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group through a series of five remote meetings approximately two hours in length. The subcommittee will then report back on findings and insights in relevant Working Group monthly meetings. Members of the Technical Subcommittee should have modeling experience or subject matter expertise related to non-pipeline alternatives and/or economic evaluation of gas decarbonization measures. The exact scope of the questions will be determined by the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group, but some areas of support may include NPA measure characterization, customer segmentation, cost to customers, technical potential, and representative NPA case studies.

The sections below provide additional details on the logistics of the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group. If you are interested in applying to be a member of the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group, instructions can be found at the end of this document. As described above, public engagement will be included in the stakeholder input process, but the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group will be an exclusive, selected group.

The receipt of this letter signals the opening of an application window that ends on **September 25, 2024**. All applications must be received by **September 25, 2024** to be considered to become a member of the 20-80 NPA Working Group.

Composition and Characteristics

To ensure effective discussions, the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group will include up to 30 members from various stakeholder categories, noted in Table 1 below, as well as a representative from each LDC. Potential applicants should consider whether they possess at least one of the following attributes:

- Will be uniquely impacted by the availability, removal, or replacement of natural gas infrastructure and/or alternatives to natural gas infrastructure to meet energy needs.
- Possess expert knowledge of the planning and operating of electrical and/or natural gas systems.
- Can coordinate with stakeholders that have similar interests and represent those interests.
- Have a legal mandate associated with the energy transition.
- Have political standing or activism in the development of energy policy.

D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group commitment requirements:

- Six meetings, held during business hours, approximately 3–4 hours in length.
- Ability to attend at least 4 of the 6 meetings in person.²
- Willingness to review meeting materials and provide feedback in a respectful, objective, and productive manner.
- Completion of periodic surveys on the Working Group process.

Table 1. Composition of D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group³

Stakeholder Category	Expected # in D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group (+/-1 depending on final selection)
Government	3

² The meetings will likely have some remote participation options.

³ Each LDC will designate a lead to participate in the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group.

Stakeholder Category	Expected # in D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group (+/-1 depending on final selection)
Environmental Justice ⁴	2
Clean Energy Advocates	2
Environmental Advocates	2
Business–Large or Small	2
Commonwealth Cities and Towns	3
Labor/Unions	2
Electric Planning	2
Property Developers	1
Educational Institutes & Schools	1
Low Income Advocate	1
Workforce Development	1
Public Health	1

Selection Process

Interested members should respond via this [application link](#) by **September 25, 2024**. Responses received after this date will not be considered. Applicants will be asked to provide their contact information, the organization they represent, and stakeholder type (Table 1). They will also be asked to provide a short response stating why the applicant is interested in participating, the perspective they bring, their commitment to the Working Group, listing of participation in any public processes/meetings on the energy transition, and interest in participating in the Technical Subcommittee. Applications will be processed through a multi-step selection process facilitated by Apex to ensure a balanced representation across the various stakeholder types listed in Table 1.

Selected applicants will be notified by email from Apex and asked to confirm their participation. The list of applicants selected for the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group will be posted on the NPA Stakeholder Website by **October 9, 2024**.

Meeting Logistics

Six meetings will be held with the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group, on a monthly basis, starting in October. Each meeting will be held in person with a virtual option, during business hours, and will be approximately 3–4 hours in length. Members are encouraged to attend in person whenever possible. There will be an additional two meetings for public listening sessions scheduled in the evening, which D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group members are encouraged to attend but are not required.

- **Meeting Location:** 75 State Street, Boston, MA

⁴ Please note: a dedicated Environmental Justice Focus Group will meet separately. Applications to the Community Focus Group are due by October 2, 2024. Details and the application form can be found [here](#).

This location will host all six D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group meetings and was chosen to ensure accessibility by public transportation and proximity to public parking.

- **First Meeting:** October 16, 2024, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

The preliminary schedule is displayed below and is subject to change based on meeting space availability and weather. However, best efforts will be made to adhere to the schedule below. Any changes to the schedule will be communicated to D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group members with as much advance notice as possible.

Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting 4	Meeting 5	Meeting 6
Oct 16, 2024 10am-2pm	Week of Nov 4-8, 2024	Week of Dec 2-6, 2024	Week of Jan 6-10, 2025	Week of Feb 3-7, 2025	Week of Mar 3-7, 2025

Communications and Public Process Elements

The D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group has a public website/portal where meeting materials and meeting minutes will be available. Additionally, written comments from the public and D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group members will be posted to the website. Notices for the public listening sessions will be posted to the website as well and distributed through the D.P.U. 20-80 email service list which will be updated to include new participants. The application notice will also be available on the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group website. Key materials will be translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, and other languages based on request.

Next Steps

If interested, please respond via this [application link](#) by **September 25, 2024**. If you know of any qualified candidates in your network, please forward this notice and encourage them to apply via the outlined process. Selected D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group members will be notified by email by Apex and asked to confirm their participation. The list of applicants selected for the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group will be made publicly available and posted on the [NPA Stakeholder Website](#) by **October 9, 2024**.

If you have any questions about the D.P.U. 20-80 NPA Working Group or application process, please send your questions to npaworkinggroup@apexanalyticsllc.com.