



LIEN website strategy

LIEN website strategy: Report on LIEN website strategic planning session on website design



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1 Background

This report documents the results of the January 14, 2005 strategic planning session held at the Canadian Environmental Law Association for the development of the Low Income Energy Network (LIEN) website. The session was facilitated by IndEco Strategic Consulting and attended by members of the LIEN steering committee. The agenda for the session is provided in Appendix A.

The purpose of this strategic planning session was to develop a strategy for the LIEN website. The strategy includes developing the content and format of the website and an approach for using the website as an effective information sharing and education tool for LIEN in both the short and long term. This strategy was designed to identify the initial priorities for the website and to provide direction on how to build the website incrementally over time to suit the growing needs of LIEN.

Funding for the development of the LIEN website was provided to LIEN by the Toronto catchment of the Ontario Trillium Foundation (Trillium), via the Resource Library for the Environment and the Law. Trillium is a provincial foundation that distributes funding to charities and not-for-profit organizations for projects related to arts and culture, environment, sports and recreation, and human and social services. The Toronto catchment provides funds for activities that take place in the Toronto area and have a local impact in one or more communities within the Toronto area.

The receipt of funding from the Toronto catchment of Trillium introduced a number of constraints that were adhered to when developing the short term strategy for the LIEN website. These were:

- the website must be Toronto focussed;
- the website can not be used for advocacy. The LIEN web site must simply be an information sharing and educational tool addressed to the purpose of promoting understanding of low income shelter and utility issues and sustainable energy options among LIEN members and the housing, social services, environmental and conservation public interest sectors;
- the content of the website must be accessible to the general public.

2 Preferred state

The preferred state is the ideal vision for the LIEN website if no constraints were present. The ideas that were presented by the LIEN steering committee for the preferred state have been divided into a number of categories. These are: general principles, website audience, short term website content, long term website content, and format.

General principles

The LIEN steering committee members developed a number of general principles that should be adhered to when developing, populating and maintaining the site. These are:

- The website should contain accurate and current information regarding low-income and energy issues;
- The information on the website should have a provincial and municipal focus, with an emphasis on Toronto and looking beyond. The website should also include links to federal matters of interest (e.g. Kyoto protocol);
- The information on the website should be brief, but comprehensive;
- The website should be straightforward to maintain and keep current;
- The website design should allow the LIEN website to grow and mature over time.

Website audience

The LIEN steering committee agreed that the prime audience for LIEN website should be the LIEN steering committee members and the supporting LIEN members, and that all other audience members are secondary, but also important. The additional audience for the website will include:

- Low-income individuals or households that are interested in energy issues or need energy assistance;
- Potential LIEN members;

- Decision makers, (e.g. provincial and municipal policy makers and energy utilities);
- Media
- Members of the general public who are interested in low-income energy matters (e.g. students, educational institutions etc),

The LIEN steering committee also agreed that the website should reach those groups that are instrumental in helping LIEN to fulfil its mission. These include: environmental and energy groups, social and affordable housing groups, anti-poverty groups, government decision-makers and energy utilities. The website should also be a focal point for Ontarians that want to find out information about low-income energy issues.

Website content – short term

To identify the initial priorities for the website and to adhere to the constraints imposed by Trillium, the LIEN steering committee developed a vision of the content of the website in the short term. A more detailed description of this content can be found in Chapter 4.

- The website should contain information for potential new members to LIEN and the criteria for membership;
- The website should contain a friendly, welcoming statement on the homepage;
- The homepage should contain a features section that highlights the activities of member(s) of the LIEN steering committee, or a LIEN supporting member(s).
- The resources found on the website, for visitors, should include: the linkages between energy use and the environment, energy conservation tips and energy saving opportunities for low-income individuals and households, energy and social service policy that low-income people need to know, tools for assisting low-income people to find energy solutions, sources of funding and assistance for low-income people.

Website content – long term

In the long term the content of the website will change. The LIEN steering committee developed a vision of content that may be included on the website in the future (e.g. next two years).

- Members of the low-income community should be encouraged to submit stories about their energy problems and solutions. These stories should be placed on the website with any personal identifiers removed. Members of the public should also be encouraged to submit information about what is happening in their community or neighbourhood regarding low income energy issues. Information will need to be placed on the website describing how stories or opinions can be submitted to LIEN.
- The website should highlight the campaigns that LIEN has worked on and is currently working on. The one or two top campaigns should be placed on the website's homepage. Some of the campaigns that could be featured in this section include:
 - conservation and demand management (CDM) should have a mandatory low-income component,
 - development of a shareholder agreement between municipalities and energy utilities to develop and implement low-income CDM,
 - explanation of how energy processes impact price.

Website format

The LIEN website should be formatted taking into consideration the following:

- The website should be easily navigable and searchable using both keywords and dropdown menus;
- The type face used for the website should be clean and uncluttered and large enough for everyone to read;
- The LIEN logo should be placed on the website;
- The website should be colourful and allow the for posting of photos;
- The website should be easily accessible by dial-up and easy to print (i.e. the whole page can be printed with no cut off sections).

3 Present state

The present state is the current situation as it exists today. In this case, it is the current strategy that LIEN uses to communicate and share information between LIEN steering committee and supporting members.

Information sharing tools now used by the LIEN steering committee include:

- A link on Canadian Environmental Law Association's (CELA) website to LIEN documents;
- A reference to LIEN and a selection of LIEN documents in PDF format on the website of the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO);
- A selection of LIEN documents in PDF format on the website of the Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA);
- A registered domain name, **www.lowincomeenergy.ca**; and
- A LIEN logo.

The above items could be used to develop the LIEN web site.

LIEN also has a number of documents which could be used to populate or made available on the website. These are:

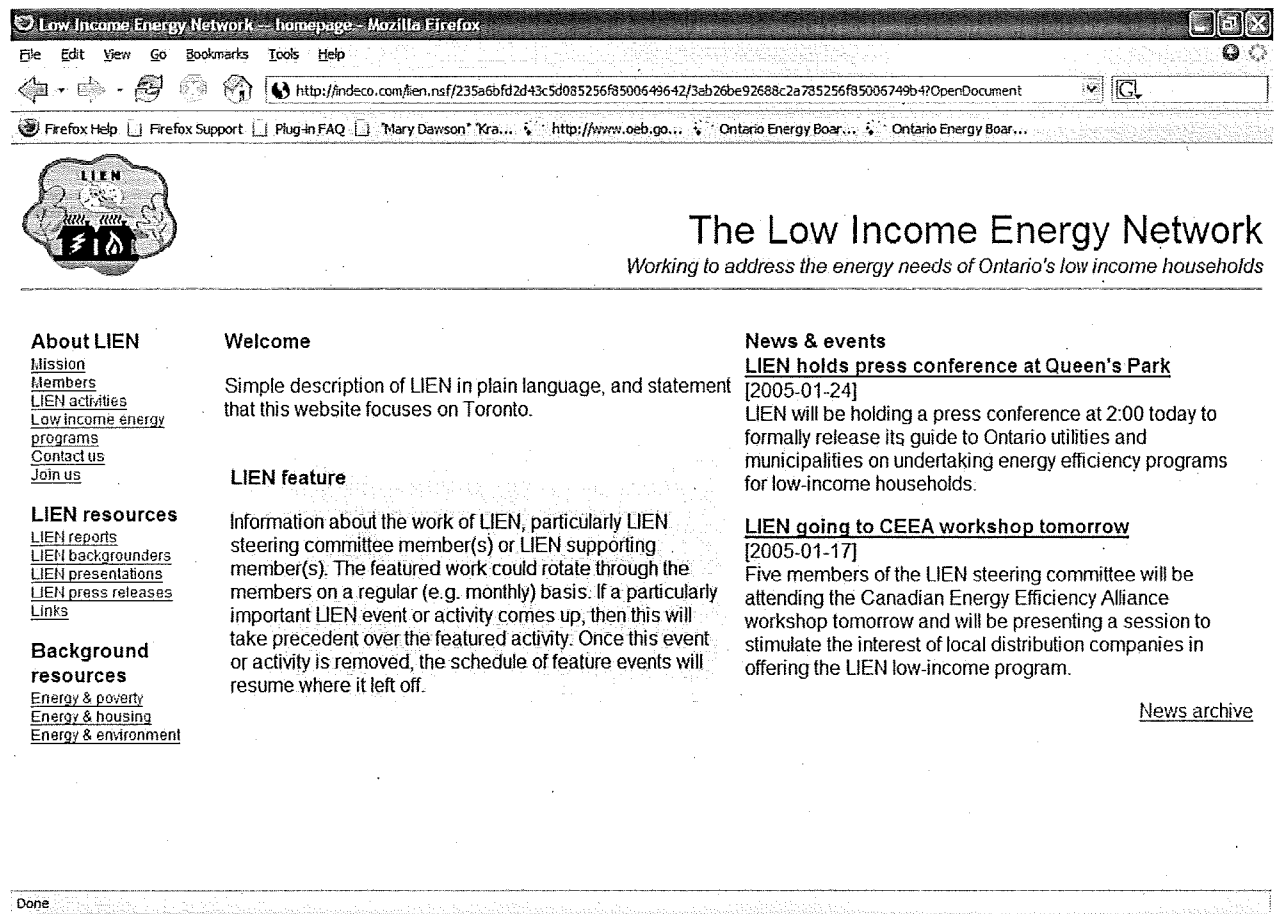
- LIEN reports (e.g. *DSM for low income consumers, Low income energy conservation and assistance, Low income energy efficiency program and Regulated Price Plan for low income consumers*);
- Transcripts from presentations to the Ontario Energy Board (OEB);
- LIEN's generic Powerpoint presentation on low-income energy issues;
- Statistics related to low-income households and energy use;
- United Way's Poverty by Postal Code report;

- Media articles featuring LIEN activities or quotes by LIEN steering committee members;
- The LIEN mission statement;
- A description of the LIEN steering committee and each of the LIEN supporting members;
- A copy of the National Affordable Housing Energy Efficiency Program (NAHEEP) resolution;
- A list of commonly used acronyms related to low-income and energy.
- Toronto Hydro's, Enbridge Gas Distribution's and other energy utility DSM/CDM plans that contain a low-income energy conservation program

4 Website content

This section contains a mock-up of the homepage of the LIEN website followed by a brief description of the content and format of each of the pages that are linked to the homepage. These pages are: mission, members, LIEN activities, low income energy programs, contact us, join us, LIEN reports, LIEN backgrounders, LIEN presentations, LIEN press releases, links, background resources – energy and poverty, energy and housing, and energy and environment.

This mock-up is a preliminary document, produced taking into consideration the discussion at the strategic planning session. This document by no means represents the final website design. This design may be modified based on this strategic planning document and further informal discussions with LIEN steering committee members.



Mission

A description of LIEN's mission statement.

The Low-Income Energy Network's (LIEN) mission is to ensure universal access to adequate energy as a basic necessity, while minimizing the impacts on health and on the local and global environment of meeting the essential energy and conservation needs of all Ontarians. LIEN promotes programs and policies which tackle the problems of energy poverty and homelessness, reduce Ontario's contribution to smog and climate change, and promote a healthy economy through renewable and energy efficient technologies.

Members / Supporters

A list and description of the LIEN founding members, steering committee members, ~~supporting~~ members and ~~endorsers/friends~~ of LIEN. *Supporters*

A previously written description of LIEN members will be provided by the LIEN Coordinator.

LIEN activities

A brief description of the activities, in chronological order, that LIEN has taken part in to date and links to any supporting documentation.

Low income energy programs

This page will contain a brief description of, and links to, low-income energy programs offered by energy utilities, the government and other organizations in Toronto and other municipalities in Ontario, the United States and internationally.

Contact us

LIEN contact information for individuals or groups that may have questions or comments about LIEN or the website. This information should include: the contact person's name and title, direct affiliation, address, e-mail and telephone number.

Join us

A description of how to join LIEN. This page will provide visitors with a description of: the types of LIEN membership, the criteria for membership

in LIEN, the benefits of membership, and an opportunity to sign up to become a member of LIEN.

~~There will be two types of memberships in LIEN: supporting membership and endorsers/friends.~~

The criteria for becoming a ~~supporting~~ ^{supporting} member of LIEN includes:

- Endorse the mission statement of LIEN;
- Be a not-for-profit organization.

The benefit of becoming a LIEN ~~supporting~~ ^{supporting} member is the ability to vote for and become a member of the LIEN steering committee.

^{eligibility} The criteria for being an ~~endorser/friend~~ ^{supporter} of LIEN includes:

- Endorse the mission statement of LIEN;

- ~~Be an individual or for profit organization.~~ ^{There are 4 categories of support:}
 - 1) indiv.
 - 2) corporate
 - 3) government
 - 4) other

For both of these membership types, applicants will be screened and approved by the LIEN steering committee. The LIEN steering committee needs to develop a broad discretionary statement to allow the steering committee to select supporting members and endorsers/friends of LIEN.

LIEN reports

A PDF version of all of the reports written on behalf of LIEN will be posted along with a brief description of the report, why it was produced and the funder(s). This page will be updated when new LIEN reports are written.

LIEN backgrounders

A PDF version of all LIEN backgrounders that have been written will be posted on this page along with a brief description of the backgrounder and why it was produced. This page will be updated when new LIEN backgrounders are written.

LIEN presentations

Any Powerpoint presentations given on behalf of LIEN will be posted on this page along with a brief description of the presentation, including where and when it was presented and to whom. This page will be updated when new LIEN presentations are given.

LIEN press releases

The full text of all press releases produced by LIEN will be posted on the website along with a brief description of the press release and why it was produced. This page will be updated as new press releases are released.

Links

This page will contain links to other websites deemed to be of interest to LIEN members and visitors to the LIEN website. These links will include a direct link to the website and a brief description of the purpose and content of the site. These links will be categorized according to their topics. Potential topics may include: energy and poverty, energy and housing, energy and the environment and case studies.

Background resources – energy & poverty

A brief description (approximately 1 page in length) of the energy and poverty issue will be written. For example, this could include a description of the disproportionate energy burden on low income households. This page will also contain links to other pages on the LIEN website and external websites that provide more detail about specific aspects of the energy and poverty issue.

Background resources – energy & housing

A brief description (approximately 1 page in length) of the energy and housing issue will be written. This page will also contain links to other pages on the LIEN website and external websites that provide more detail about specific aspects of the energy and housing issue.

Background resources – energy & environment

A brief description (approximately 1 page in length) of the energy and environment issue will be written. For example, a description of how energy use can cause environmental problems. This page will also contain links to other pages on the LIEN website and external websites

that provide more detail about specific aspects of the energy and environment issue. Examples of other topics that may be included are: smog, climate change, nuclear waste, renewable energy use and conservation.

5 Website administration

In the short term the LIEN website will be maintained and administered by a website administrator from the Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA).

Members of the LIEN steering committee are encouraged and able to submit pages for posting on the LIEN website. The LIEN steering committee members will have access to the appropriate forms that will allow them to submit pages. The members of the LIEN steering committee will also receive training on how to complete and submit the forms.

Prior to the pages submitted by the LIEN steering committee becoming live on the website, the website administrator will review all submitted pages and approve them. Once the page has received approval from the website administrator, it will be live on the LIEN website. To approve a page submitted by a member of the LIEN steering committee, the website administrator will simply need to click one button on the form. If the website administrator has a problem with the item, then the administrator has a number of options. These include:

- Make the appropriate changes to the page, that the website administrator deems necessary, and approve;
- Contact the steering committee member that submitted the page and ask the member to make any changes and then approve;
- Contact the steering committee member that has submitted the page and inform the member that the page has not been approved and why and suggest corrective action.

To post a page on the LIEN website, the website administrator does not need to seek approval from the LIEN steering committee.

The website administrator will also be responsible for ensuring that the pages that require updating are done so in a timely fashion. In addition to this routine updating, the website administrator and the LIEN steering committee should hold an annual review of website strategy and make modifications to the website design and content as required.

Appendix A. Agenda

RE: *Strategic planning session – LIEN website design*

Date: Monday, January 17, 2005

Time: 12 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Location: Canadian Environmental Law Association

Participants: Keith Stewart, Theresa McClenaghan, Sarah Miller, Mary Todorow, Ana Jamarillo, Michael Shapcott, Edward De Gale, David Heeney, Judy Simon, Shona Adamson

Item	Duration
Introduction to LIEN website project	12.00 – 12.10
Introduction to strategic planning session	12.10 – 12.30
The preferred and present state	12.30 – 1.00
Walk through prototype web design	1.00 – 1.30
Issues associated with each page category	1.30 – 3.00
Wrap up and next steps	3.00 – 3.30
Brainstorming session for LIEN capacity building workshop	3.30 – 4.00



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