

# The Better Buildings Neighborhood View

How energy efficiency is improving lives, neighborhoods, and the economy

From the U.S. Energy Department's Better Buildings Neighborhood Program



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"[The work is] giving me the experience that I need in this field to know what I'm doing as a worker. It gives me new skills to be able to take to the future with me."

-Josh Farris,  
Energy professional, speaking  
of his work with the Better  
Buildings Neighborhood  
Program

## Stay Connected With Resources Introduced at the Residential Energy Efficiency Solutions Conference

Nearly 400 people gathered at the Residential Energy Efficiency Solutions conference in Arlington, Virginia, earlier this month to share lessons learned at a pivotal time in their programs. Participants shared diverse solutions, strategies, and techniques to improve their program design and implementation. All of the [conference presentations](#) from Energy Department leaders and Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners are now available on the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program website for your reference.

The following resources, which were debuted at the conference, also represent some of those lessons learned and provide other resources for programs to use as they aim to increase the energy efficiency of neighborhoods across the country.

- [Six new case studies](#) profile successful workforce development and incentive approaches in Maine, Michigan, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. Each Better Buildings Neighborhood Program case study addresses key topics such as training, tools to foster a growing energy efficiency workforce, and various types of incentives that help contractors and consumers overcome cost barriers to energy efficiency improvements.
- [The Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Business Models Guide](#) offers several approaches for partnering with contractors, retailers, and utilities to expand the range of energy efficiency services available, creating a program that leverages effective business strategies and developing partnerships to deliver home energy upgrades to consumers. A newly developed addendum on partnering with real estate agents is also now available.
- The Energy Department's new video, "[Strengthening the Workforce in Better Buildings Neighborhoods](#)," shows how Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners are fostering their local contractor workforce and expanding job opportunities in their areas.

## Consumer Energy Tip

Water heating costs can add up on your utility bills, but simply lowering the thermostat setting on your water heater can save you money. For each 10°F reduction in water temperature, you can save between 3% to 5% in energy costs.

## Innovation Nation

The [Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance's](#) award-winning print advertisements depict a literal elephant in the room to show how homeowners often overlook

## Driving Demand

discomfort in their homes when energy efficiency upgrades could fix these issues.



## Related Events

2012 ACEEE Summer Study on Energy Efficiency in Buildings  
August 12–17, 2012  
Pacific Grove, CA

Excellence in Building Conference and Expo  
September 25–27, 2012  
Scottsdale, AZ

Affordable Comfort, Inc. (ACI) Mid Atlantic Home Performance Conference 2012  
October 1–2, 2012  
Pittsburgh, PA

ACI New England Home Performance Conference 2012  
October 16–17, 2012  
Springfield, MA

Behavior, Energy and Climate Change Conference  
November 12–14, 2012  
Sacramento, CA

Greenbuild 2012  
November 14–16, 2012  
San Francisco, CA

2013 ACI National Home Performance Conference and Home Energy Leadership Summit  
April 29–May 3, 2013  
Denver, CO

*Site of the next Better Buildings Neighborhood Program conference*

## Understand Your Market Better With Free Tools

Richard Kauffman, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Energy, during his presentation at the [Residential Energy Efficiency Solutions conference](#) stressed that energy efficiency programs need to study the market segments in their area in order to service their customers most effectively. Households in the United States have grown more diverse, so programs need to know whether they should appeal to Kid Country, USA or the Bohemia Mix. The Nielsen Company has collected marketing segments from several sources of demographic research and pulled them into [a free database](#) that is searchable by ZIP code. Plug in your ZIP code to learn what type of consumers make up your community. For more information on market segmentation, read the newly catalogued [market segmentation reports](#) on the Residential Energy Efficiency Solutions conference webpage.

## Stories From the Neighborhood

### Keep Customers—and Energy—From Slipping Through the Cracks

The most successful energy efficiency upgrade programs have customers who are willing *and* able to implement energy efficiency upgrades. This may seem like an obvious statement; however, many upgrade programs are struggling to reach their upgrade goals because they allow initially excited customers to slip through the cracks by not guiding them through the entire upgrade process.

During the [Residential Energy Efficiency Solutions conference](#), Lilah Glick, Director of Marketing and Community Outreach at the [Greater Cincinnati](#)

[Energy Alliance](#) (GCEA), shared how the organization reached out to potential customers who got lost in the shuffle of sign-up sheets and assessment forms. By explaining the entire upgrade process to individuals, GCEA has been able to ensure that potential customers don't drop out of the program simply because their questions weren't answered, they didn't understand how the program worked, or they forgot that they signed up in the first place. [Read more](#) to learn how GCEA tracked customers and helped them complete energy efficiency upgrades.



Now that they understand the process and the value of completing home energy efficiency upgrades, more GCEA customers are completing upgrades.

## Forward-Thinking Financing

### Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Program Expands Funding Options in Connecticut

Connecticut is launching the nation's first statewide Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program. C-PACE financing allows businesses to

borrow money from the local government to pay for energy efficiency upgrades. The businesses then pay back the amount borrowed over several years as a special assessment on their property tax bills. The program further facilitates energy efficiency upgrades by providing commercial building owners access to capital at a low interest rate. The [Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority](#) manages the program and has the authority to back the C-PACE bonds. Supporters who promote the program, including energy efficiency contractors, energy service companies, and environmental groups, hope the new financing will open up demand for commercial upgrades, as financing is often the first obstacle for businesses interested in undertaking upgrades.

## Reports and Studies

### Learn to Create High Road Agreements and Build Long-Lasting Energy Careers

In May 2012, Green For All released a Best Practice Brief for program managers and policy makers interested in learning more about High Road Agreements. "[High Road Agreements: A Best Practice Brief by Green For All](#)" covers how to create High Road standards and use the momentum of energy sector projects to create safe, well-paying, long-term careers for a diverse group of people. The brief also includes case studies on how Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners [Community Power Works](#) and [Clean Energy Works Oregon](#) established Community High Road Agreements to set standards for creating high-quality, fair-wage jobs with health benefits for qualified, historically underrepresented workers in their cities. [Read the brief](#) to determine if a High Road Agreement would be a good approach for your program.

Learn about Seattle, Washington's process for developing its community High Road Agreement by reading the Community Power Works case study, "[Community Partnerships Work to Extend Program Reach.](#)"

### Discover Best Practices for Evaluation, Measurement, and Verification

A new report released by the State and Local Energy Efficiency Action Network and prepared by researchers at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory provides guidance and recommendations to help residential energy efficiency programs more accurately estimate energy savings from behavior change programs. "[Evaluation, Measurement, and Verification of Residential Behavior-Based Energy Efficiency Programs: Issues and Recommendations](#)" identifies steps program managers can take to estimate energy savings more precisely, apply impact estimates over time, and account for/avoid potential double counting of savings. If you are evaluating or planning to start a behavior-based energy efficiency program, [read the full set of recommendations](#).

### Studies Analyze Energy Efficiency Program Progress and Policies

Many consumer energy efficiency programs were conceived during the energy crises of the 1970s, but have not lost importance or relevance since that time. "[Three Decades and Counting: A Historical Review and Current Assessment of Electric Utility Energy Efficiency Activity in the States](#)," a report by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, explores motivations for and approaches to utility programs that drive energy savings through energy efficiency. [Read the report](#) to learn more, such as how utility programs have grown to \$4.6 billion in 2010 and why these programs have expanded.

In a related July 2012 report, the Institute for Electric Efficiency describes how state policies have allowed electric utilities to make energy efficiency a financially sustainable part of their businesses. "[State Electric Efficiency Regulatory Frameworks](#)" explores what policies different states have put in place to incentivize energy savings goals for utilities.

## Share the Savings

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