



# Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Working with Utilities Peer Exchange Call: *Effective Strategies for Participating in Utility Planning*

*Call Slides and Discussion Summary*

August 2, 2012

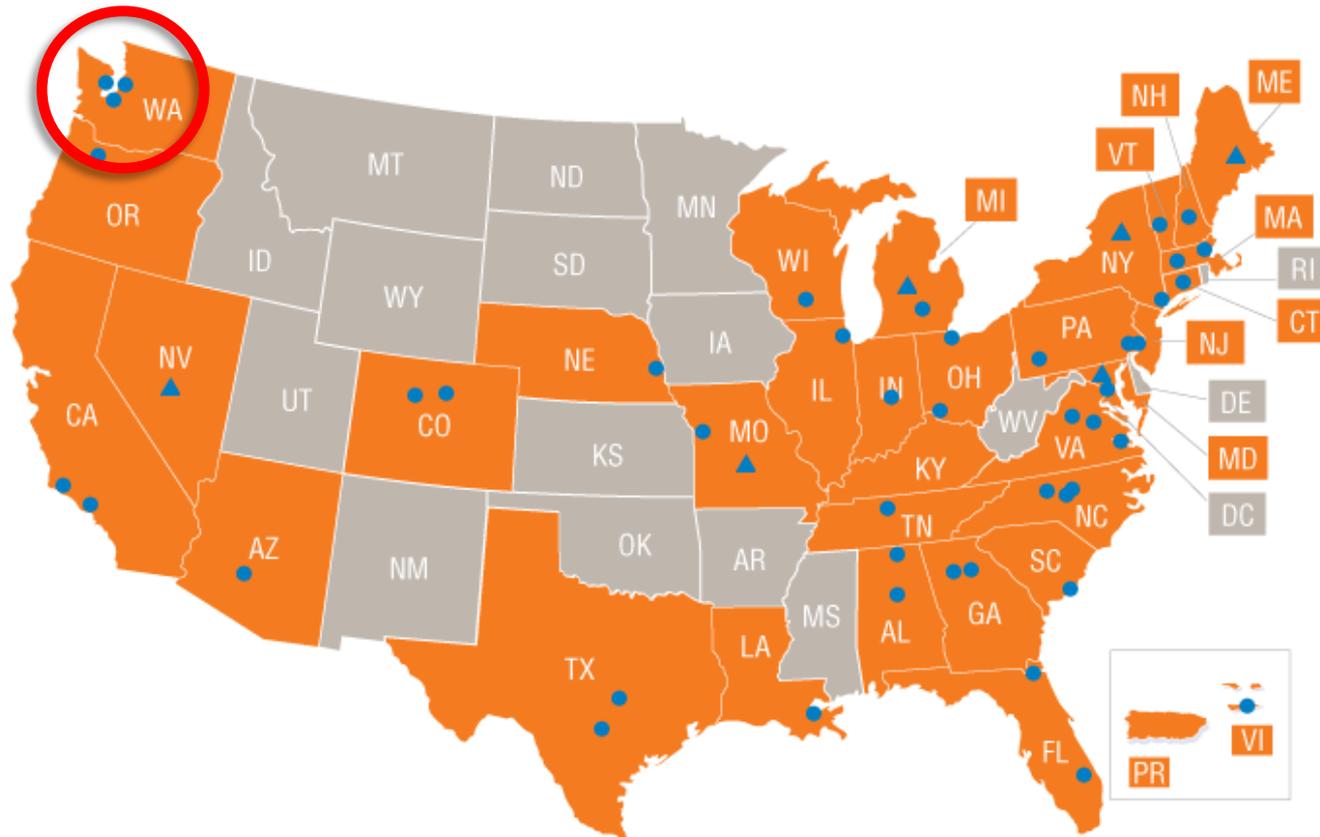
- Call Logistics and Attendance
  - Has your program found ways to integrate with/ participate in utility planning efforts?
- Program Experience and Lessons:
  - Bainbridge, WA: Yvonne Kraus
- Discussion:
  - What are best practices for participating in utility planning and integrating energy efficiency efforts at this level?
  - Are there certain points in the utility planning process that provide an easy(ier) entree?
  - What are other key strategies for engaging this sector?
  - What are barriers/ challenges are faced when engaging this sector? Has anyone found innovate ways to overcome those challenges?

# Participating Grant Programs

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- Bainbridge Island, WA
- Boulder County, CO
- Chicago, IL
- Missouri
- Philadelphia, PA

# Bainbridge, WA



Yvonne Kraus: RePower Bainbridge/ Bremerton/ Kitsap

# Bainbridge's Experience and Lessons

- RePower Bainbridge works with two large utilities that each have individual energy efficiency and conservation programs. The biggest challenge has been coordination.
- It can also be challenging for the customer to discern which incentives they qualify for based on fuel source, especially if they deal with both utilities.
- RePower started working with one utility, Puget Sound Energy (PSE), first to determine how to best interact and determined that they could provide the most value by figuring out how to help the utility service their customers. They looked for where the utility was seeing success and where there were additional needs. RePower restructured some of their program to provide these needs.

# Bainbridge's Experience and Lessons



- RePower decided to use PSE's Tier 1 home assessment instead of the program's original assessment in order to meet PSE's needs. They made some adjustments to the forms to cover DOE requirements.
- RePower became the home assessment implementer for PSE. They delivered almost 1000 home assessments in less than six months, which proved their value to the utility, as PSE was struggling with home assessment delivery. RePower gets paid per assessment.
- At first, RePower and PSE experienced issues with branding and communication strategies as each entity had certain requirements for their own branding on communications material. Eventually they worked out an agreement and the program re-launched as RePower Bremerton and RePower Kitsap.

# Bainbridge's Experience and Lessons



- RePower helps PSE utility energy advisors answer inquiries from contractors about the many different incentives, requirements, and conditions they have to navigate.
- RePower looks at ways to continue to help the utility meet its goals. Currently they are accomplishing home performance with Energy Star goals and are working with PSE to match an air sealing incentive.
- RePower and PSE have created a partnership for marketing the program.

# Bainbridge's Experience and Lessons

- RePower aligned their program structure with the utility's program because the utility's was working well; it was not necessary to invent something new or deliver the program in its own way when the utility program was successful. RePower focused on making the utility's program more successful with additional support and incentives. They have moved their small business commercial program to PSE.
- RePower is not able to get customer-specific data from PSE, as the utility is overwhelmed with the many requests from other programs. PSE set up an agreement with the Washington State University Extension Program to handle the data and parse it for the relevant entities, including RePower.

# Discussion Questions

- What are best practices for participating in utility planning and integrating energy efficiency efforts at this level?
- Are there certain points in the utility planning process that provide an easy(ier) entree?
- What are other key strategies for engaging this sector?
- What are barriers/ challenges are faced when engaging this sector? Has anyone found innovate ways to overcome those challenges?

- Philadelphia solved the problem of receiving customer utility data by working through a lengthy release process. It required getting in touch with the right people and working through the legal language. Utilities may have more or less strict rules than others. It can be useful to ask what they need to protect themselves in the agreement; utilities want to protect their interests and relationships with their customers.
- PSE is seen as a leader for energy efficiency and incentives. The utility targets were already in place. For programs working with utilities that do not have these targets, it can be useful to identify how the program can make the utilities look good by meeting program goals (i.e., help rate payers).

# Discussion Cont.

- Colorado signed a MOU with one utility to receive customer-specific data and is helping the utility to process their rebates. They also partner an analyst with the utility representative during property walkthroughs (for high usage/bill calls).
- Colorado held a conference with two of the counties and 60-70 contractors where each utility presented their rebate and incentive programs for the year. This was the first time many had access to utility representatives and helped to build relationships and good will.
- RePower includes utility staff on all review cycles for products to keep them involved in the program and provide an early opportunity to influence change. It took time to get to this successful working relationship.

# Potential Future Call Topics

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- Effective Strategies for Understanding and Working with Public Utility Commissions
- The Role of Utilities and Utility Partnerships in post-ARRA markets
- Working with Utilities on De-coupling