

The Better Buildings Neighborhood View

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

From the Energy Department's Better Buildings Neighborhood Program



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April 2012

"We knew the program was really helping residents when the most frequent comment was 'you've made it so easy.'"

-Ludy Biddle,
Executive Director,
NeighborWorks of
Western Vermont

Share Program Successes and Challenges at Upcoming Conference

Mark your calendar for the Energy Department-hosted conference, **Residential Energy Efficiency Solutions: From Innovation to Market Transformation**. The conference will be held July 9–11, 2012, in the Washington, D.C. area and will:

- Showcase innovations, highlight accomplishments, and spark connections across residential energy efficiency programs.
- Capture and share diverse program implementation solutions, strategies, and techniques.
- Catalyze effective approaches to residential energy efficiency market transformation.

The Department's goal for the conference is to accelerate success among all attendees by creating an opportunity to share and learn about solutions, lessons, and innovations from colleagues undertaking similar work across the country. The Department would like your input as they plan the agenda. From now through May 1, you have the opportunity to [submit a presentation proposal](#) and/or [describe what topics you would like to see incorporated](#) into the event.

The conference will bring together administrators and implementers of residential energy efficiency programs, including utilities, non-governmental organizations, Better Buildings Neighborhood Program grant recipients, Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® sponsors, Home Energy Score partners, and other stakeholders. More conference details will be available on the [Better Buildings Neighborhood Program website](#) in the coming weeks.

Consumer Energy Tip

Consider installing a ceiling fan this spring to help circulate cool air throughout your home and save energy. Place fans in frequently used rooms, making sure to install them 7–9 feet above the floor and 10–12 inches below the ceiling for optimal performance.

Innovation Nation

In Kansas City, Missouri, the [EnergyWorks KC](#) program is creating a "business incubator" building that will showcase energy efficiency projects to the community and help fledgling businesses

Better Buildings Innovators

Indianapolis Offers a Lesson on Driving Demand

The [City of Indianapolis Better Buildings Program](#) partnered with Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership (INHP) to develop the [EcoHouse Project](#) loan

get involved in building upgrades.



Related Events

[National Association of Home Builders \(NAHB\) National Green Building Conference and Expo](#)

April 29–May 1, 2012
Nashville, TN

[ACEEE Energy Efficiency Finance Forum](#)

May 7–8, 2012
Boston, MA

[Good Jobs, Green Jobs Regional Conferences](#)

May 10–11, 2012
Detroit, MI

Energy Department–hosted conference—Residential Energy Efficiency Solutions: From Innovation to Market Transformation

July 9–11, 2012
Arlington, VA

program, but initially struggled to gain momentum with marketing efforts geared toward "green-minded" homeowners. Through phone calls and meetings with interested customers, EcoHouse Project administrators learned that homeowners were often attracted to the program because they needed to address problems in their home, not necessarily because of the environmental benefits. With homeowners' motivation for upgrades in mind, EcoHouse Project administrators revised their marketing strategy, and interest in the program spiked. "Always listen to the feedback, and always evaluate your program," says Rachel Faulkner, Director of Marketing and Communications at INHP. "Don't be afraid to revise your messaging and your marketing plan." [Continue reading](#) to learn how Indianapolis evolved their marketing approach to attract more homeowners to the program.

Building A Better Workforce

Building Performance Institute, Inc. (BPI) Launches New Certifications This Summer

Beginning in June 2012, building professionals can obtain four new [BPI](#) certifications that cover common energy upgrade job classifications: energy auditor, retrofit installer, crew leader, and quality control inspector. To learn more about these certifications, plan to attend the "[Building Sales with Certification](#)" [webinar series](#).

Reports and Studies

Boulder, Colorado Sets Energy Efficiency Standards to Keep Emissions Target on Track

To help meet the ambitious carbon emissions reduction goals that Boulder, Colorado set forth in its [Climate Action Plan](#), the city enacted "SmartRegs" ordinances in January 2011. SmartRegs require single- and multi-family rental properties, which account for 50% of the city's dwellings, to meet a minimum energy efficiency standard by 2019. In addition to increasing energy efficiency, SmartRegs are designed to improve the quality, safety, and marketability of Boulder's rental properties. To help property owners meet the new standards, the city and county of Boulder launched the [EnergySmart](#) program to provide compliance and technical assistance, rebates, and low-cost energy assessments. Through this support and the community's commitment to climate protection, Boulder has surpassed its first-year Climate Action Plan goals. In addition, some building owners have even voluntarily made upgrades beyond the minimum requirements. Learn how Boulder put itself on this path to success in the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory policy brief, "[Boulder, Colorado's SmartRegs: Minimum Performance Standards for Residential Rental Housing](#)."

Three New Policy Briefs Expand Dynamic Financing For Middle Income Households

Three Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners have been working to increase the availability of energy efficiency financing to middle income homeowners and drive market penetration in this important, yet financially constrained sector. Their financing approaches are outlined in the following new policy briefs from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory:

- "[Alternative Underwriting Criteria– Using Utility Bill Payment History as a Proxy for Credit.](#)" [Clean Energy Works Oregon](#) uses utility bill payment history as an alternative to other credit rating systems. This approach significantly reduces loan underwriting expenses and expands credit access to homeowners who might not otherwise qualify for financing.
- "[Using Credit Enhancements to Leverage Existing CDFI Capacity.](#)" [Indianapolis EcoHouse Project Loan Program](#) offers low-interest loans for energy efficiency upgrades to middle income homeowners who often have access to financing only through a high-interest rate credit card.
- "[Extending Efficiency Services to Underserved Households.](#)" [The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's](#) Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program offers free energy assessments and large energy upgrade financial incentives for middle income households. In conjunction with the [Green Jobs–Green New York](#) financing platform, which uses alternative underwriting criteria, households that otherwise would not qualify for energy upgrade funding receive the loans they need to make home improvements.

Review Insights From the 2011 Behavior, Energy and Climate Change (BECC) Conference

The annual BECC conference focuses on studying individual and group behavior and decision-making to inform the expansion of the energy-efficient economy. Read the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) white paper, "[BECC 2011: A Summary and ACEEE Perspective](#)," to learn about the topics that were addressed in 2011, see attendee metrics, and find out how the conference may expand in future years.

New Studies Highlight Benefits Associated With Greater Transparency of Building Energy Efficiency

The Institute for Market Transformation (IMT), a nonprofit organization promoting energy efficiency, green building, and environmental protection in the United States and abroad, released two reports on the job creation potential of building energy rating and disclosure:

- "[Energy Disclosure and the New Frontier for American Jobs](#)" issues a compelling call for greater transparency in building energy performance. The report cites the leadership of several large U.S. cities that have instituted local laws requiring the public disclosure of building energy performance ratings. By leveraging energy transparency, these cities have unlocked market-driven demand for energy-efficient products and skilled workers without the aid of public investments or subsidies.
- "[Analysis of Job Creation and Energy Savings](#)" examines the potential of a national building energy rating and disclosure policy to create jobs and reduce energy costs in commercial and multifamily residential buildings. According to the study, a policy on a national level could build recognition of energy performance in the marketplace, facilitate demand for energy-efficient buildings, and drive competition to improve energy performance.

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