



# RESIDENTIAL NETWORK

## Newsletter

### News From the Field

#### Residential Network Builds on Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Legacy

The [Better Buildings Residential Network](#) is continuing the legacy of the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program with a commitment to accelerating the pace of energy upgrades in American homes. Currently, the Residential Network has [more than 60 members](#) from the United States and Canada that represent a broad range of energy efficiency stakeholders. The Residential Network will continue to gather and share lessons learned from its members to help the residential energy efficiency industry expand its successes. [Learn more](#) about the Residential Network, and join by completing our new [membership form](#).

#### Find the Latest Peer Exchange Call Summaries

Access to Peer Exchange Calls is one of several benefits available to Better Buildings Residential Network members. Being able to get your questions answered and sharing experiences are the basis of the calls, but for those unable to participate on a given date, [call summaries](#) are regularly posted a few weeks later to the Residential Network Group on the Home Energy Pros networking website. Topics include program sustainability; workforce and business partners; financing and revenue; data and evaluation; multifamily and low-income housing; working with utilities; and marketing and outreach. Members suggest topics for the calls, so please [email us](#) to share what you want covered.

#### Are You Accessing Our Home Energy Pros Group?

Do not miss out on upcoming Peer Exchange Calls, group discussions, tools, and call summaries. Here are helpful tips to connect with the Residential Network on Home Energy Pros:

- Log into Home Energy Pros to request access to the [Group](#).
- Look for Home Energy Pros emails in your spam folder.
- [Reset your password](#).

If you encounter any roadblocks, please [email us](#), and we will be happy to answer any questions.

February 2014

#### In This Issue

- [Residential Network Continues the Legacy](#)
- [New Peer Exchange Calls for Members](#)
- [New Peer Exchange Call Summaries](#)
- [Black History Month and Energy Efficiency](#)
- [DOE's New Cost-Effectiveness Tool](#)
- [Shape DOE's New Benchmarking Guide](#)
- [New Year, New Certifications](#)
- [Virginia Nonprofit-School Partnership Case](#)
- [Efficiency Maine Drives Savings](#)
- [Members Span Coast to Coast](#)
- [Spread the Literary Love Post-Valentine's Day](#)

#### Upcoming Peer Exchange Calls

Residential Network members that are already Home Energy Pros group members must [sign in](#) to view the following links. Non-members wishing to gain access to these valuable resources are invited to [join](#) the Better Buildings Residential Network Group to participate in the online community on Home Energy Pros.

#### February 27

#### How Can the Residential Network Meet Your Needs?

12:30–2:00 PM EST

Residential Network members can catch up on the calls they missed over the holidays, including “Program Support From Socially Responsible Investing” and “Opportunities Through the PowerSaver Loan Program.” The “Optional Residential Program Benchmarking” summary will be posted online in the coming weeks. Better Buildings Residential Network members can [request to join](#) the Home Energy Pros Group to learn more.

## DOE’s Cost-Effectiveness Tool Builds the Business Case for Program Administrators

DOE just released the [beta version](#) of a user-friendly tool that estimates the cost-effectiveness of a residential energy efficiency program based on a program administrator’s inputs. Public utility commissions, and therefore utilities, use cost-effectiveness tests as one screen for determining funding decisions. Program designers, policy makers, utilities, architects, and engineers might also find the tool useful for refining, enhancing, or supporting residential energy efficiency programs.



This tool uses a single set of inputs to calculate the cost-effectiveness of implementing deep home energy efficiency upgrades and individual measures across the five most common cost-effectiveness tests. Program administrators can use the tool to view results for up to five different project types (i.e., measures implemented) at once and identify the number of homes to be targeted for residential upgrades over an entire program cycle. The tool easily allows users to view differences in results following changes to key inputs, to help identify the most significant factors affecting cost-effectiveness.

DOE [welcomes users’ comments](#) on the draft version of the tool.

## DOE Seeks Residential Network Members’ Input on New Benchmarking Guide

Better Buildings Residential Network members are invited to shape DOE’s new Optional Program Benchmarking Guide by [attending a webinar](#) on Wednesday, March 5, 2014, from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. Eastern.

Benefits of this optional initiative and guide include:

- Identifying your program’s strengths and weaknesses by developing a program benchmarking plan
- Measuring progress for years to come by establishing a baseline of performance

[Register now](#)

### Using Social Media for Long-Term Branding

3:00–4:30 PM EST

[Register now](#)

### March 13

#### Loan Programs for Low- and Moderate-Income Households

3:00–4:30 PM EST

[Register now](#)

### March 27

#### Better Buildings Residential Network Orientation

12:30–2:00 PM EST

[Register now](#)

#### Quality Control, Standardization of Upgrades, and Workforce Expectations

3:00–4:30 PM EST

[Register now](#)

## Celebrating Black History Month



More than five decades ago this month, late African American inventor Frederick McKinley Jones registered a U.S. patent for a thermostat and temperature control system. Jones was posthumously awarded the National Medal of Technology in 1991.

## Related Events

[Better Buildings Neighborhood Program “Residential Program Benchmarking Guide” webinar](#)

- Gaining insights from comparing to peers
- Communicating success with key stakeholders

During the [webinar](#), you will be encouraged to provide feedback and will have ample opportunity to ask questions and comment at this formative stage in the guide’s development. A limited number of Residential Network members will take part in an optional pilot to benchmark their programs, which will be the basis for a larger, member-wide optional initiative. [Register](#) for the webinar to learn more.

## New Year Marks New Certification Opportunities for Home Energy Professionals

DOE’s [Weatherization Assistance Program](#) introduced [new certifications](#) in January 2014 as part of the [Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals](#) project. These new certifications cover the four most common home energy and weatherization job classifications: quality control inspectors, home energy assessors, crew leaders, and upgrade installer technicians.



*Trainees practice techniques on miniature model homes at the New River Center for Energy Research and Training in Christiansburg, Virginia.*

Certified professionals are required to demonstrate competency and know-how through a mix of prerequisites, training, and on-the-job experience. More than 150 home energy upgrade professionals have been certified—with many holding multiple certifications—since the inaugural program was launched nationally in October 2013. [Learn more](#) about how the program is set up and how to get certified.

## Marketing and Outreach Solutions

### Virginia Member Turns Home Energy Check-Ups Into Nonprofit Partnerships

Better Buildings Residential Network member and Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partner [Local Energy Alliance Program](#) (LEAP) [raised more than \\$1,350](#) for central Virginia schools’

March 5, 2014  
3:00–4:30 PM EST

[ACEEE 2014 National Symposium on Market Transformation](#)

Mar. 30–Apr. 1, 2014  
Baltimore, MD

[ACI 2014 National Home Performance Conference](#)

Apr. 29–May 1, 2014  
Detroit, MI

[ACEEE Energy Efficiency Finance Forum](#)

May 11–13, 2014  
Washington, DC

### Resolve to Save Customers From Wasted Energy in 2014



DOE’s new [Energy Saver 101 infographic](#) is the perfect tool to help you remind customers it is not too late for them to make a New Year’s resolution to save energy. Whether they consult a home performance contractor to achieve deep energy savings or simply upgrade to energy-saving lighting, the infographic suggests [eight things](#) all homeowners can do to lower their energy bills.



“It’s created what I call a strong community of contractors. We’re all working together as allies. It’s exciting that energy efficiency is now more than a job; it’s a lifetime career.”

– Dave Hammond, lead

parent-teacher organizations (PTOs) while simultaneously increasing demand for home energy assessments. Three PTOs have partnered with LEAP since October 2013 to help spread the word about the program's home energy check-ups in the neighborhoods their schools serve. LEAP, in turn, donated \$10 to the participating PTO for every check-up that occurred in the neighborhoods during a set time frame. More than 200 Charlottesville, Virginia, homeowners have undertaken home energy check-ups in the past four months, 138 of which were a direct result of LEAP's PTO partnership promotion for home energy check-ups. [Learn more](#) about LEAP's win-win marketing approach.



*Fifty-three home energy check-ups raised \$530 for Stony Point Elementary School's PTO.*

We want to hear about your marketing and outreach solutions to share with other Residential Network members. [Tell us](#) what you are doing.

contractor for Faison Energy Solutions, about [Clean Energy Works Oregon](#)

## Stories From the Neighborhood

### Efficiency Maine Drives Home Energy Savings Through the Roof

Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partner and Better Buildings Residential Network member [Efficiency Maine](#) helped make measurable energy improvements in 8,000 houses in just 12 months thanks to its statewide Residential Direct



Install (RDI) program. The program offered a \$600 rebate to homeowners who undertook an energy assessment and at least six hours of air sealing. Following is an abridged transcript of an interview with Dana Fischer, Efficiency Maine's residential program manager, about the RDI program.

*Q: How did you determine the right level of incentives to offer?*

We started with the incentive level at \$300 for the assessment plus six hours of air sealing work, but the uptake was anemic. We were told \$300 was not enough to make it worth the contractors' time getting to and from the job site. The program really took off when we raised it to a \$600 rebate. Among the 8,000 units that we upgraded in our RDI program, the average total project cost was about \$850. The contractors took the rebate directly off of their invoice, so the homeowner would typically chip in around \$250. We recently lowered our incentive level to a \$400 rebate with a \$200 minimum contribution from homeowners and linked the RDI with a comprehensive suite of incentives and financing. This allows us to promote all aspects of home energy improvements, including insulation and heating system upgrades. The total cost of a typical air seal and assessment project is still around \$850, but the homeowner is now paying \$450. Although the new program design is only a few months old, the change in program design and marketing priorities has significantly slowed down the air sealing work. As a program, we're trying to see what the implications are and what might be the best options for increasing the air sealing and assessment work.

*Q. What improvements did homeowners see as a result of the direct installs?*

According to our program evaluation [report](#), the total net annual energy savings were 13.5% of pre-project whole-house energy usage. In Maine, where a majority of homes are oil-heated, that meant homeowners saved around \$300 in fuel oil costs per year. Twenty percent of participating homeowners have already committed to deeper upgrades.

*Q. What advice would you give other programs interested in trying a direct install approach?*

Realize that a lot of homeowners take the energy upgrade process in stages. Even though we did not see a significant increase in loan volume at first, those people who went through the program are more likely to engage in these projects or get loans in the future as a result of their RDI participation.

Read the [full Focus Series interview](#) to learn how Efficiency Maine is helping its customer base realize energy savings through its RDI program.

## Meet the Members

---

### Organizations From Coast to Coast Join Growing Residential Network

The Better Buildings Residential Network is pleased to welcome its two newest members:

- The [Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority](#) (CEFIA)

advocates for clean, renewable energy sources. As the nation's first full-scale clean energy finance authority, the organization offers incentives and low-cost financing to encourage homeowners and organizations to support renewable energy and energy efficiency. CEFIA continues the legacy of the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund, which implemented the [Connecticut Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge](#), as a Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partner.

- The [City of Portland, Oregon, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability](#) provides citywide land-use planning; urban research design; and services to advance energy efficiency, green building practices, waste reduction, composting and recycling, solar energy, renewable energy use, and local sustainable food production. The city is also a Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partner, and facilitated the creation of [Clean Energy Works Oregon](#).

Connect your organization with these and other related programs. Sign up to become a Residential Network member by completing our new [membership form](#).

## Resource Corner

---

### New Reports Keep the Literary Love Alive Post-Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day might be over, but it's not too late to fall for these insightful reads and spread the love by sharing them with your colleagues:

- [American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy \(ACEEE\) Field Guide to Utility-Run Behavior Programs](#) aims to clarify terminology about behavioral programs for both regulators and developers by creating a classification scheme that sorts programs into discrete categories (ACEEE, January 2014).
- [Credit Enhancement Overview Guide](#) provides an overview of loss reserves, loan guarantees, debt service reserve funds, subordinated capital, and other credit enhancements available to enhance programs' energy efficiency goals (State and Local Energy Efficiency Action Network [SEE Action], January 2014).
- [Energy Efficiency Financing Program Implementation Primer](#) provides an overview of considerations for designing and implementing successful energy efficiency financing programs for existing buildings in the residential and commercial sectors (SEE Action, January 2014).
- "[How to Demonstrate the Importance of a Whole-Home Energy Audit](#)" offers a few easy steps to help contractors better explain to homeowners the benefits of a home energy assessment (*Home Energy* magazine's blog, December 2013).
- [Just Energy Policies: Reducing Pollution and Creating Jobs](#) assesses energy policy across the United States from a civil rights

lens, providing an analysis of each of the 50 states' energy sector policies based upon both the environmental and economic impacts (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, December 2013).

## Share The View

---

Forward this email to your colleagues or encourage them to sign up to receive each issue by asking them to send their email address to [Better Buildings Residential Network Support](#).

Do you have something you would like to share with other members through the *Better Buildings Network View*? Send an email to [Better Buildings Residential Network Support](#) to submit your idea.

You are receiving this email from DOE's Better Buildings Residential Network. If you would like to unsubscribe, please contact [Better Buildings Residential Network Support](#).

**U.S. Department of Energy**  
1000 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20585

[betterbuildings.energy.gov/bbrn](http://betterbuildings.energy.gov/bbrn)