



Better Buildings Residential Network  
Workforce/Business Partners Peer Exchange Call:  
*Energy Advising Services in the Post-ARRA World*

*Call Slides and Summary*

June 27, 2013

- Call Logistics and Introductions
- Introducing the Better Buildings Residential Network
- Future Call Topics
- Discussion:
  - What experiences or plans do programs have offering energy advising or energy concierge services without American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants?
  - What fees or other funding models are programs exploring for these services (e.g., fee per referral to contractors, flat fee for advising, etc.)?
  - How are programs adapting (or considering adapting) energy advising and concierge programs post-ARRA?
  - Other questions/issues related to energy advising and concierge programs and funding/supporting them?

# Participating Programs and Organizations



- Alameda County, CA
- San Diego, CA
- Boulder, CO
- City and County of Denver, CO
- Chicago, IL
- New Orleans, LA
- Maryland
- University Park, MD
- Michigan
- Kansas City, MO
- Omaha and Lincoln, NE
- New Hampshire
- New York
- Cincinnati, OH
- Rutland County, VT
- Kitsap County, WA
- Seattle, WA
- Washington
- International Association of Certified Home Inspectors (InterNACHI)

# Discussion: Types of Energy Advisor Services and Benefits



- Programs offer range of energy advisor/concierge services:
  - Homeowner education
  - Connecting homeowners to contractors and referrals
  - Project management for the energy-upgrade process for the homeowner
  - Call center and scheduling on behalf of contractors
- Energy advisor services directly and indirectly benefit contractors and end users:
  - Contractors receive a better educated homeowner (and therefore better qualified) lead
  - Homeowner can be better matched to the right contractor for their needs
  - Administrative support (phone answering and scheduling services) benefit:
    - Small operations without office staff
    - Larger offices whose staff may not be able to answer specific home-performance questions from homeowners
  - Modeling expertise can help homeowners refine project scope

# How Programs Are Adapting Post-ARRA



- Seeking other revenue sources to cover costs of providing energy services
- Shifting to more cost-effective approaches (e.g., phone-based instead of in-home advising)
- Scaling back or deactivating energy advising services

# Funding Energy Advising Services: Fees



- Fee structure options
  - Flat fee (e.g., price per month, percentage of project total)
  - Per-call or per-referral
  - Tiered : free base service (e.g., phone advice), charge more for additional services (e.g., audit plus in-home advisor visit)
    - Boulder County considering “premier” along with phone-only & regular services
- Contractor fees
  - Charge for referrals and administrative support
  - Approach under consideration in Cincinnati:
    - Contractor who receives referral pays fee, regardless of whether they close deal
    - Program refers to only one contractor at a time
  - Be up front with homeowners about any conflict of interest in model design; allow homeowner option to switch to other contractors
- Homeowner fees
  - Charge for advising (e.g., modeling) and advocacy services (e.g., bidding process support)
  - Survey of Denver homeowners found 60% of respondents willing to pay \$30-40 fee
  - Structure to avoid barriers to entry for homeowners (e.g., tiered approach)

- **Loan Fees**
  - Denver examining options to incorporate advising service fee into loan fees
    - Fee would only cover a portion of advisory services, but it would be the more time-intensive ones
  - Regulatory/legal issues and options still TBD with lenders
- **Sustainability Tax**
  - Boulder County sustainability tax proposed on 2013 ballot, a portion of which would fund the energy upgrade program; the program is also exploring funding through the general fund, property tax, or sales tax
- **Partner with utilities**
- **Identify other grants and sources (e.g., foundations)**
- **Subsidize services as part of the general program budget through other funding sources**

# Future Call Topics

- Future Workforce Peer Exchange Calls in 2013:
  - Aug. 22 (3:00-4:30 PM EDT): Strategies for Building Contractor Interest in Program Participation
  - Oct. 10 (3:00-4:30 PM EDT): Trends in Contractor Conversion Rates
  - Nov. 21 (3:00-4:30 PM EST): Contractor-Funded Incentives
- Poll results for additional topics of interest:
  - Workforce Development Funding (60% support)
  - Standardization/QC of Upgrades and Workforce Expectations (60% support)
  - Recruiting HVAC and Remodelers for Whole House Upgrades (20% support)
  - Incubating New Home Performance Businesses (13% support)
- Additional suggestions:
  - Home inspection industry
  - Home Energy Score / Multifamily programs
  - Funding for energy efficiency outreach