

## Help contractors enter the home performance market by lowering barriers to entry

Entering a new market adds risk to contractors' businesses. As several Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners focused on their efforts to attract contractors, they realized that it would be valuable for them to help contractors enter the home performance market. Many programs took steps to lower or eliminate unnecessary hurdles or barriers to contractors' successful entry into the market. These barriers included long delays to receive payment for the program, paperwork burdens that were sometimes excessive enough to make contractors reluctant to participate, program expectations that were unclear to contractors, and upfront costs (e.g. for equipment purchases).

### [In Their Own Words: Mentoring Benefits Both Program and Contractor](#) [1]



Source: [In Their Own Words: Mentoring Benefits both Program and Contractor](#) [1], U.S. Department of Energy, 2012.

To help contractors overcome these barriers and enter the home performance market, many programs have provided program orientations covering expectations and procedures, offered mentoring and networking opportunities, and worked with contractors to improve work processes. Some programs have offered equipment loan programs, subsidized training, and other services to lower the upfront costs of entering the home performance market. Taking steps to help contractors enter the home performance market can help you establish a trained workforce of high-quality contractors to support home performance work.

- [Rutland County, Vermont](#) [2] recruited and trained qualified technicians and “loaned” them to smaller contractors, to help them scale up to meet demand while mitigating business risk. The program set up a temporary labor pool that contractors could access when they needed greater capacity to meet demand. The labor pool helped new technicians enter the home performance industry, and helped smaller contractors weather seasonal fluctuation in market demand. Ten employees had worked in the labor pool as of 2012, with about three to five workers in the pool at any given time.
- [Fayette County, Pennsylvania](#) [3] helped [contractors enter the market](#) [4] by providing grants and financing to minimize startup costs, and by giving contractors the opportunity to provide Building Performance Institute (BPI) certification to their technicians. The program partnered with a local private industry council to train technicians to become BPI certified at no cost to students. The partnership program helped new home performance professionals start new businesses, for example, by providing grants and low-interest loans to purchase computer software and professional equipment. Ninety-four individuals completed the training through the partnership program. Training and certification in the home performance industry provided Fayette County residents with an opportunity for stable and well-paying careers.

- New Hampshire's [Beacon Communities Project](#) [5] sought to reinvigorate the local economy of Berlin, New Hampshire, following the 2006 closure of a pulp mill. The program began working with local community colleges to provide BPI-certified training to develop more qualified home performance professionals. The program supplemented the training with mentoring opportunities for students who completed classroom trainings but needed more experience in the field before being hired by a contractor or starting their own company. In the nearly three years since the program's launch in September 2013, 42 students were trained through these classes and mentorships. These trained students helped the program offer quality home performance upgrades to homeowners, and the mentorship helped students become qualified home performance professionals.
- [Enhabit](#) [6], formerly known as Clean Energy Works Oregon, provided [networking and mentoring opportunities](#) [7] to help contractors enter the home performance market. The program connected new contractors with peer mentoring services, allowing them to shadow an experienced professional in the field and office and get focused guidance from top-performing contractors. Mentors are compensated with additional project leads from the program. Enhabit also held morning meetings twice monthly for contractors to connect with each other. Contractors were able to use these meetings to organize and coordinate with the [Home Performance Guild of Oregon](#) [8], helping enable the Guild to expand significantly and to hire its first full-time executive director. As of December 2015, the Guild had over 50 home performance contractor members across Oregon, including more than two-thirds of the program's contractors.

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**Source URL:** <https://rpsc.energy.gov/tips-for-success/help-contractors-enter-home-performance-market-lowering-barriers-entry>

#### Links

- [1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTTJ68PNxt8&feature=youtu.be>
- [2] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/rutland-county-vermont>
- [3] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/fayette-county-pennsylvania>
- [4] [http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/fayette\\_workforce\\_case\\_study.pdf](http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/fayette_workforce_case_study.pdf)
- [5] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/new-hampshire>
- [6] <https://enhabit.org/>
- [7] [https://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2013/12/f6/cewo\\_workforce\\_case\\_study.pdf](https://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2013/12/f6/cewo_workforce_case_study.pdf)
- [8] <http://hpguild.org>