

Offer homeowners multiple types of assessments

Several successful residential energy efficiency programs offered multiple types of home energy assessments to appeal to a wider spectrum of homeowner interests and needs. These ranged from online home assessments to brief walk-throughs to full diagnostic testing. A comprehensive [evaluation](#) [1] of over 140 energy efficiency programs across the U.S. found that programs offering participants more than one option for home assessments were more successful than those that did not. Some have found that more comprehensive assessments can motivate customers to undertake deeper energy upgrades, as noted in a [2015 Resources for the Future study](#) [2]. For others, low-cost, less time-intensive assessments can attract homeowners with less need for improvement, time, or funds to invest. Offering more basic and more advanced assessment options gives customers an anchor, or reference point, and enables them to choose the best method to begin the upgrade process based on their needs and resources.

- [RePower Bainbridge](#) [3] offered interested homeowners two pathways for participating in the program: pay a fee for an in-depth assessment with diagnostic equipment performed by a BPI-certified contractor or start with a more basic, free home assessment conducted by a RePower Bainbridge energy advisor. The free assessment provided homeowners with a customized list of the three highest priority recommended energy upgrades, information about the home's seasonal and base-load energy usage, information about non-energy benefits of upgrades, rebate availability, and recommendations for local home performance contractors. With the paid assessment, homeowners receive a detailed energy use report for their home, an Energy Performance Score, energy upgrade recommendations, and a comparison of the home's current energy costs to estimated costs following recommended upgrades. Through the program, 900 basic assessments were completed and 306 comprehensive audits were conducted. The basic assessments led to an 11.4 percent conversion rate, while the comprehensive audits led to a 40 percent conversion rate, resulting in 124 upgrades out of the program's 606 total.
- Boulder County, Colorado's [EnergySmart](#) [4] program set out to create an upgrade process that was as easy as possible for participants. Energy advisors played a key role in lowering barriers to participation, including directing homeowners toward the most appropriate type of assessment for their needs. Options included a free phone consultation, a walk-through assessment with an energy advisor for \$50, or a comprehensive audit at \$135 – all subsidized by the program. Energy advisors explained upgrade options during audits, and would follow up with participants to encourage them to take action. The comprehensive audit was the most frequently selected option, and represented more than 50 percent of the total households that went on to complete an upgrade.
- Early in its program, [Clean Energy Works](#) [5] (then operating only in Oregon) conducted a full Home Performance with ENERGY STAR assessment for each participating home; however, this approach was costly for the program and contractors. To reduce costs, Clean Energy Works implemented the [100-Point Performance Check](#) [6]. Assessors go through the list with homeowners during a free initial visual assessment. If the homeowner decides to undertake upgrades, they can invest in more in-depth diagnostic testing.

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Links

- [1] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/accomplishments#reports>
- [2] <http://www.rff.org/research/publications/putting-information-action-what-explains-follow-home-energy-audits>
- [3] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/repowering-bainbridge-and-bremerton-upgrades>
- [4] <http://www.energysmartyes.com/>
- [5] <https://enhabit.org/>
- [6] <https://enhabit.org/wp-content/uploads/100-Point-Performance-Check-12-18-14.pdf>