

Offer customers a range of upgrade paths, including single measures and staging upgrades over time

Programs that offered several paths for customers to upgrade their homes—for example through a choice of single or bundled measures, staged upgrades over time, or a comprehensive whole home upgrade—were found to motivate greater homeowner participation and generate higher energy savings, according to a comprehensive [evaluation](#) [1] of over 140 programs across the United States. Providing a limited number of options with different levels of cost and complexity allowed programs to appeal to a broader range of homeowners and contractors.

Including options also provided homeowners with a reference point against which to compare available options. Information about the program examples below can be found in the evaluation report, [Spotlight on Key Program Strategies from the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program \(Final Evaluation Volume 6\)](#) [2].

- [Austin Energy](#) [3] provided two options for homeowners: mid-tier and advanced-tier. Those that chose the advanced tier received a comprehensive third-party assessment with on-site diagnostic testing and energy modeling; they also received financial incentives to improve energy performance by at least 20 percent. The mid-tier option gave participants a list of eligible measures with point values and specified a minimum total point value that equated to at least 20 percent energy savings. Participants in the mid-tier did not receive energy modeling or advanced home diagnostics. The mid-tier option was Austin Energy's most heavily subscribed program.
- [Los Angeles County's Energy Upgrade California](#) [4] began by offering participants two options: basic path and advanced path. The basic path was a prescriptive set of efficiency measures that would qualify for financing, and the advanced path included a full energy assessment and whole-house energy modeling. The program assumed that most upgrades would occur via the basic path; however, this option had minimal participation because homeowners saw its requirements as being too burdensome. In response, the program created a new [Flex Path option](#) [5] that provided an extensive menu of upgrade options and a \$1,500 homeowner incentive. Despite the fact that the Flex Path rebate was lower than that offered via the basic and advanced paths, the Flex Path met the goal of achieving 500 upgrades in only four months, far surpassing participation in the basic and advanced paths. Fifty-seven percent of Los Angeles County projects were Flex Path, compared to 42 percent advanced path and only 1 percent basic path. More than 80 percent of participants reported the availability of the Flex Path incentive was important in their decision to move forward with energy upgrades.
- [Efficiency Maine](#) [6] structured its incentive program around two upgrade options: a comprehensive project path and a simpler prescriptive project path. The comprehensive project path included two tiers of incentives, based on the expected energy savings from an upgrade. Participants who chose the prescriptive project path received a \$400 incentive to cover the assessment and air sealing, and could earn further incentives for additional measures. The prescriptive path allowed homeowners to take a phased approach. It provided incentives to homeowners that underwent an energy assessment, completed air sealing, and installed at least one other energy upgrade measure. Approximately 40 percent of Efficiency Maine's projects went through the comprehensive path, and 60 percent used the prescriptive path. Energy savings for the two paths was similar, at approximately 25 percent average savings per project.

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Links

- [1] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/accomplishments#reports>
- [2] http://www1.eere.energy.gov/analysis/pdfs/bbnp_volume_6_spotlight_072215.pdf
- [3] <https://austinenenergy.com>
- [4] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/los-angeles-county-california>
- [5] <http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/m3a-culbertson.pdf>
- [6] <http://www.efficiencymaine.com/>