

Partner with organizations or individuals that customers already trust

Many programs found it useful to partner with a range of trusted organizations or individuals to market program offerings to their constituencies or followers. Better Buildings Neighborhood Program participants enhanced their marketing and outreach efforts by partnering with trusted local groups including:

- Community-based organizations and nonprofit organizations
- Large employers, such as local universities
- Respected members of the community (e.g., local elected officials, company executives, community opinion leaders)
- Utilities or fuel dealers.

Using partners' existing communications channels proved helpful for many programs. They found that marketing and outreach materials could be more effective when a potential customer received them from an organization with which they had an existing relationship. Engaging credible messengers in program promotion could also help influence individuals in those messengers' social networks to undertake upgrades.

- [Housing agency NeighborWorks of Western Vermont](#) [1] found that residents of Rutland County, a small, rural community, consider [neighbors to be the most trusted messengers](#) [2], rather than the local government, federal government, or utilities. The program enlisted respected local citizens and organizations to work phone banks and spread the word about home energy upgrade opportunities. This effort helped the program connect with low- and moderate-income homeowners and complete nearly 200 home energy upgrades just six months after the program began promoting its services to the community.
- When [Better Buildings Program San Jose](#) [3] in California set out to encourage homeowners to undertake home energy upgrades, it [joined forces with trusted community-based organizations](#) [4] to accomplish its goals. The program knew that religious organizations not only shared its mission but also had the ability to help. The City of San Jose previously worked in these communities with its partner, the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative, and was able to leverage the trust and goodwill generated by this program to increase its access to partners for the home energy upgrade program. The Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church lent its office space free of charge to Better Buildings Program San Jose, which saved overhead costs and allowed program staff to host meetings with homeowners to discuss their energy upgrade options and schedule home energy assessments. Additional events were held at a Boys and Girls Club in the community. Partnering with highly regarded organizations in the community enhanced the trustworthiness and visibility of the program.
- According to the Small Town Energy Program for University Park (STEP-UP) in Maryland, "low-cost social marketing using trusted, established neighborhood channels was the comparative advantage of the small town model" to catalyze homeowner action to upgrade their residences. STEP-UP's social marketing approach included:
 - Newsletter
 - Town events
 - Direct mailing
 - STEP house parties
 - Yard signs
 - Neighbor-to-neighbor outreach

This [social marketing approach](#) [5] proved to be effective and low-cost. STEP-UP's marketing budget was just 3% of its overall program budget and resulted in 30% of town households signing up to participate in the program.

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Source URL: <https://rpsec.energy.gov/tips-for-success/partner-organizations-or-individuals-customers-already-trust>

Links

[1] <http://www.nwwwvt.org/>

[2] http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/cs_rutland_drivingdemand.pdf

[3] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/san-jose-california>

[4] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/san-jose-california-partners-established-community-groups>

[5] <http://www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/betterbuildings/neighborhoods/pdfs/d2-wilson.pdf>