

# Contractor Engagement & Workforce Development – Identify Partners

## Description

Frequent engagement with contractors, initiated early and often, is a critical ingredient for your program's success. Your program may also want to work with training providers and local employment organizations to develop the skills of the local workforce and help connect those workers with jobs.

Your partners will include:

- Contractors that will become your most important service delivery partners
- Trade associations and economic development institutions that can help you promote your program to contractors and recruit them
- Training partners that can help you increase the number of trained and certified technicians in your workforce.

Your local [market assessment](#) revealed the many types of contractors you can partner with, including home performance contractors, HVAC contractors, insulation contractors, remodelers, and others. You also surveyed the range of local training and employment organizations that can help enhance the skills and qualifications of the local home performance workforce.

This handbook provides information and tools to help you:

- Assess potential contractor partners
- Develop strategies for contractor recruitment
- Establish ongoing relationships with contractors
- Engage and recruit workforce development partners
- Evaluate potential workforce development and employment partners
- Establish partnership agreements with workforce development partners.

### Contractor Engagement & Workforce Development

#### Stages:

##### [Overview](#)

1. [Assess the Market](#)
2. [Set Goals & Objectives](#)
3. **Identify Partners**
4. [Make Design Decisions](#)
5. [Develop Implementation Plans](#)
6. [Develop Evaluation Plans](#)
7. [Develop Resources](#)
8. [Deliver Program](#)
9. [Assess & Improve Processes](#)
10. [Communicate Impacts](#)

Find related information across other program components:

- **Market Position & Business Model – Identify Partners**  
*Identify and engage organizational partners in your business model design.*
- **Program Design & Customer Experience – Identify Partners**  
*Establish relationships with organizations that can help deliver your program by enhancing your knowledge, resources, capabilities and access to customers and contractors.*
- **Marketing & Outreach – Identify Partners**  
*Establish relationships with organizations that will assist with program marketing and outreach.*
- **Financing – Identify Partners**  
*Identify and partner with financial institutions that can provide capital, underwriting, and other functions to enable your customers to access financing.*

## Step-by-Step

Partnerships can broaden the reach of your contractor engagement and workforce development efforts, enhance your relationships with contractors, and improve your program's ability to serve customers effectively. To identify and establish effective partnerships, take the following steps.

### Assess potential contractor partners

Learning about [the range of contractors working in your community](#) is the first step for identifying contractor partners. These include home performance contractors that already offer home energy upgrade services to customers, as well as other trade contractors that could add energy upgrades to their list of services. Trade contractors such as HVAC contractors, insulation contractors, remodelers, and others have different business models than home performance contractors, but could be recruited to participate in your program if it fits within their business interests. You can learn more about the typical business model for each of these types of contractors from the [Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Business Models Guide](#).

These contractors will be the core implementation partners for your program. Contact local contractor associations, unions, or other business organizations that could mutually benefit from establishing a long-term relationship with your program. You may want to turn to these organizations regularly during program development and implementation.

When assessing potential partners for your recruitment efforts, consider two factors:

- **Motivation.** Understanding why a contractor or trade association would be interested in partnering with your program will be critical for successful recruitment. You will not get contractors to participate unless the perceived benefits to their participation (e.g., additional business, co-marketing, incentives, etc.) outweigh the perceived costs (e.g., reporting and administrative overhead costs, additional training or certification needed, etc.). Communicate with contractors and seek their feedback to understand whether the benefits to them will outweigh the costs. Consult the resources in the box below for more information about contractors' motivations.
- **Types of contractors.** The types and experiences of contractors in the local market will influence how your program tailors its recruitment efforts and determines the training and certification needs for your program. If your market has an established home performance industry, your program will have different recruitment challenges and needs than if you are focusing on recruitment from other trades. Similarly, if your program seeks to target small and disadvantaged businesses, you may need targeted outreach and communication channels.

Why Contractors Are Sometimes Hesitant to Work with Programs

Strong incentives, training support, and market education are some of the reasons contractors should be interested in participating in your program. So why aren't they lining up at the door? It's important to understand some of the challenges that program participation can create for a contractor. These challenges can include excessive paperwork, a lack of incremental value over their current business, additional training or certification requirements, concern over additional costs, and the fear that the program will disappear in a few years. Eliminating those barriers or mitigating their impact will improve your ability to attract and retain contractors as partners.

Useful resources and case studies on encouraging contractor participation include:

- [The Contractor-Participation-Inducing Home Performance Program Design Recipe Part 1](#). This presentation by OmStout Consulting summarizes the elements needed to induce and sustain contractor participation in home performance programs. These elements include contractor involvement, learning the contractors' business, rewarding desired outcomes, striving for consistency, tapping customers' true motivations, and working closely with contractors.
- [A Business Case for Home Performance Contracting](#). This U.S. Department of Energy Building America report presents eight case studies of home performance contractors, with in-depth information about their business models. The case studies include home performance companies in Los Angeles, CA; Kalamazoo, MI; Syracuse, NY; Cleveland, OH; Rochester, NY; Portland, OR; Decatur, GA; and Manassas, VA. The case studies provide key metrics of success, and information on typical start-up costs, employee certifications, and marketing.
- [Contractor Blueprint: Getting from HVAC to Home Performance](#). This guide, developed by the California Center for Sustainable Energy and the Home Performance Resource Center, shows HVAC contractors how to get started in the home performance market. It explains the approach of treating a house like a system and provides step-by-step instructions on setting up a home performance contracting business.

## Develop strategies for contractor recruitment

Recruiting and sustaining contractor participation in programs generally requires ongoing effort. Effective contractor recruitment strategies:

- Are built upon good program designs that minimize administrative requirements, while still maintaining quality standards
- Establish a positive relationship between the program and the contractor
- Focus on the benefits of the program to the contractor and how they outweigh the costs of participation
- Help the contractor advance to the next stage of participation in the program, such as completing training/orientation or signing a participation agreement.

Your recruitment strategy should include identifying contractors, enticing them to participate, and continually supporting their participation in your program. As discussed when you learned about contractors in your market, canvas existing energy programs as well as local home performance contractors, HVAC contractors, and trade associations to identify contractors you might encourage to participate in your program. Consult online directories to find certified home performance professionals in your community. For guidance and resources on reaching out to contractors, including online contractor directories, see the [market assessment handbook](#).

After identifying contractors, reach out and make the recruitment pitch. You can do this one-on-one or in group settings such as a contractor breakfast meeting. Methods for contractor outreach include:

- Group meetings like orientation or training sessions, recruitment seminars, and networking events
- One-on-one communications like personal visits or individual communication (phone, letters, email)
- Print and electronic media communications such as newsletters and blogs.

Details about how to approach contractor meetings are discussed in the [implementation plan handbook](#).

Consider how your program will integrate with contractors' business models when developing outreach materials and your program offerings. Help contractors integrate your program's offerings with other available energy incentives and with the contractors' non-energy business. You can help many contractors make the transition from a non-energy focus such as HVAC, remodeling, or general contracting to the home performance industry.

- For example, [Energy Savings Services in Kalamazoo, Michigan](#) operated as an HVAC contractor for nearly 50 years before transitioning into home performance. Adding energy efficiency upgrades to the HVAC business provided a way to up-sell HVAC products and services and ensures better operation of the HVAC equipment. Energy Savings Services is a part of the [Michigan Saves](#) contractors' network.

[Contractor incentives](#), including assistance with training and marketing, may also be critical to recruitment efforts.

### Fayette County Builds New Contractor Relationships

**Fayette County** is a rural community in southwestern Pennsylvania with a long history of coal mining. The county brought together a diverse group of partners to help its residents make significant home energy improvements and create jobs for under- and unemployed workers, under the Fayette County Better Buildings Initiative. To accomplish this, the program recruited new contractors to make progress on long lines of homeowners waiting for energy upgrades, as applicants had to wait as long as seven years before projects were completed under the Weatherization Assistance Program. The Weatherization Assistance Program is a federally funded program that provides homeowners with free weatherization services to make their homes more energy efficient. The wait for these upgrades was historically long, and the initiative expanded the number of homeowners the program could reach by expanding the eligible contractor base of the program.

Program administrators began to engage with contractors through breakfast meetings, offering free food to boost attendance. Program staff consulted the phonebook and cold-called local contracting companies to invite them to attend these meetings to learn about the program. They then followed up with postcards inviting new contractors to learn about specific program details, such as training opportunities. After six breakfast meetings with different contractors, Fayette County observed increased contractor participation in the program. Program officials found that contractors became more comfortable with the details of program participation and, as a result, were bringing in about 40% of the program's home energy upgrade customers as of June 2012. Furthermore, the breakfast meetings allowed contractors to build relationships with each other, and gave them a forum to provide feedback on the program. The opportunities to meet in person fostered a local contractor network beyond the program.

Source: [Spotlight on Fayette County, Pennsylvania: Developing the Skills and Tools for Workforce Success](#), U.S. Department of Energy, 2012.

After recruiting contractors, you should be prepared to provide [support as they engage with the program](#). This includes organizing an orientation, connecting them with any needed skills training (e.g., business and sales), developing marketing materials, and communicating information about program requirements (workforce standards, quality assurance, etc.).

- For example, [Enhabit](#), formerly Clean Energy Works Oregon gathered feedback from contractors and included them in decision-making processes.

## Establish ongoing relationships with contractors

Your initial outreach and recruitment efforts will establish the foundation for an ongoing relationship with contractors and other trade associations. Once you have identified contractors in your community, be sure to engage with them as you design your program and plan for how to provide customers with energy upgrade services. The more seamlessly that your program's administrative requirements and benefits integrate with your contractors' existing businesses without imposing unnecessary burden, the easier it will be able to make the program work for contractors – and therefore your customers.

Check in with contractors regularly to achieve greater success. This engagement can take numerous forms, including regular in-person meetings, webinars, and training sessions, though social events (e.g., Boulder, Colorado's Smart Energy Kickball League where contractors and others in the energy industry interacted in a relaxed environment) and events to recognize contractors' performance are most likely to increase contractor participation. These contractor forums do not exist in some communities and can increase the value of your program. In addition, contractor forums can provide opportunities for networking, mentoring, and shared learning within the contractor community. By establishing and maintaining direct contact with your contractor partners as you roll out your program, you can be a better promoter of their services and of your program. Include ongoing contractor communications as part of your [implementation plan](#).

These strong relationships with contractors will be a significant factor in your program's success. An [in-depth examination](#) of selected program strategies implemented by the DOE Better Buildings Neighborhood Program's (BBNP) grantees found that successful programs were more likely than other programs to identify, foster relationships with, and offer training to their contractors. Conversely, less successful programs had fewer participating contractors, offered little training, and had relatively infrequent communication with contractors.

### Enhabit Makes the Program Work for Contractors

**Enhabit** is charged with saving energy and supporting clean economic growth. Much of its success has come from actively engaging contractors in a continual learning and improvement process. Enhabit solicits feedback from contractors at meetings held every two weeks, and uses this feedback to guide improvements. A few contractors also worked together to create the **Home Performance Contractors Guild of Oregon**, which enables contractors to organize their opinions into a unified voice and have a more formal role in program and regional policy discussions.

When Enhabit engaged a new financing partner, the Guild was able to examine the loan product and approval process; this input helped ensure that the product was something that contractors would be able to explain and promote to customers. Enhabit also collects quantitative and qualitative data to identify areas where incentives can be better aligned with contractor goals. The program further supports contractors by offering business support, including business skills classes, business consulting, peer mentoring, a scholarship fund to offset training costs, and a business support working group to explore new initiatives like quarterly workshops of interest to business owners, technicians, and administrative staff.

Source: [Spotlight on Portland, Oregon: Making the Program Work for Contractors](#), U.S. Department of Energy, 2012.

## Engage and recruit workforce development partners

Local training and education providers can be valuable partners for building the local workforce of home performance professionals and addressing skill and certification gaps. During your **market assessment**, you researched community colleges, universities, **USDA Cooperative Extension Centers**, Weatherization Training Centers, and other trade organizations to identify which ones are offering or equipped to offer relevant training in your area.

Recruitment of workforce development partners will likely be more targeted and direct than recruitment of contractors to your program. Because most programs only partner with one or a few workforce development entities, the hardest part can be locating the right organization and person to meet with. Consider the types of training that different workforce development partners offer, the time and costs involved, and the relevance to your local market.

- Do they have industry experience, and do they have a past performance track record of previous students using their skills and getting jobs?
- Do they offer nationally accepted certification as well as more tailored skills, and are they located in areas that are accessible to your local area?
- Do they have experience with energy efficiency workforce development, and are their facilities appropriate for energy efficiency training?
- Do they provide opportunities for hands-on learning through in-field training, laboratory simulations, or other means?
- Do they offer specialized training, such as BPI certification, weatherization training, sales and marketing training, etc.?
- What experience do they have with training home performance professionals? Have those students found jobs in the home performance industry?

Be proactive and reach out to partners whose training opportunities align with the skills that your workforce will need.

Training people on the knowledge and skills required for the home performance industry is not the same as creating jobs. The latter will largely depend on how successful contractors are in generating new business and expanding the market. In your market assessment, you also may have contacted your **State or Local Workforce Investment Board** (WIB) to help identify employment resources and job opportunities for newly trained home performance professionals. Your WIB can be a valuable resource for your program, helping to connect you with local training programs that might be interested in collaborating, providing information about financial support and scholarships, and therefore potentially reducing the cost of training for contractors.

## Evaluate potential workforce development and employment partners

Before establishing partnerships with training providers and employment organizations in your community, have a clear sense of the **objectives for your workforce development efforts** and the **scope of your program's training and certification needs**. You will want to work with organizations that have both similar goals and the expertise to deliver the training your program will require. Other considerations for evaluating training providers include:

- Cost for training
- Ease of access to the training by the desired participants (e.g., location, frequency of the training sessions, schedule)

- Comprehensiveness of the training they offer
- Relevance of the training to the local market and to area contractors' needs
- Ability for participants to get continuing education credits or professional certifications
- Your or others' experience with similar training and past performance of specific providers
- Likelihood of the training to lead to employment and jobs.

The capabilities and interests of potential training providers can have a big impact on what your partnership, training, and education curricula look like and whether they meet the needs of your community (see the box for an example from Philadelphia).

#### Philadelphia's Energy Coordinating Agency Apprenticeship Program

[Philadelphia EnergyWorks'](#) partner, the Energy Coordinating Agency, collaborated with the Community College of Philadelphia to design an apprenticeship program for energy efficiency and building science for the community. Two one-year programs—Building Energy Analyst and Weatherization Installer and Technician—result in journeyman credentials and Building Performance Institute certification. These programs train home performance professionals in the technical skills and building science knowledge they need while also providing hands-on experience with energy efficiency analysis and installation of energy efficiency measures.

Source: [Philadelphia's Energy Coordinating Agency Apprenticeship Program](#); Energy Coordinating Agency, 2012.

## Establish partnership agreements with workforce development partners

Consider establishing a formal relationship with key partners who will help you implement your workforce development plans. Use partnership agreements to clarify the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for members of the partnership. These agreements can also specify financial and contractual arrangements, such as when a program hires a training provider to deliver a training or certification course.

If in line with your organization's approach to developing partnerships, you might use a request for proposals (RFP) to solicit new relationships with workforce development providers whose interests align with your objectives.

- For example, Green Jobs – Green New York, a state-wide program to promote energy efficiency and installation of clean technologies, used an [RFP](#) to seek a training and implementation coordinator to help the program manage its training and outreach programs. The Green Jobs – Green New York Program relied on a network of local, constituency-based organizations to provide outreach and education services to residents, businesses, building owners, potential workforce participants, and others. The training and implementation coordinator was hired to train these organizations; recruit workforce; coordinate and track their progress with customer referrals, energy assessments, and upgrades as a result of outreach; and other responsibilities

## Tips for Success

In recent years, hundreds of communities have been working to promote home energy upgrades through programs such as the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program, Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, utility-sponsored programs, and others. The following tips present the top lessons these programs want to share related to this handbook. This list is not exhaustive.

### Maintain a sufficient workforce from program launch into program maturity

Your program will rely on its contractor base in order to succeed, so take steps to ensure that the capacity of the workforce is sufficient to launch your program and to maintain it as it grows. An [evaluation](#) of over 140 programs found that successful programs fostered and maintained relationships with a large pool of contractors. Many Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners took the time to learn about contractors' businesses and align program promotions with those needs. Focus on expanding contractors' businesses and avoid interrupting or complicating a sale. Also, remember that it is important not to take contractors' leads to their competitors, as can occur when programs pool all leads and distribute them on a rotating basis. Contractors are protective of leads they generated themselves, so this can become a disincentive for contractors to participate in your program.

If you understand contractors' business processes and align promotions during contractors' periods of greater availability, you can help ensure that your program will retain a reliable workforce into the future. One way that you can attract the contractors you need is to design your program in a way that will benefit contractors. Take steps to ensure that contractors want to work with your program, and to reduce barriers to their ability to do so.

- [Enhabit](#), formerly Clean Energy Works Oregon, created a system to help ensure that the program did not interfere with competition among contractors, or cause contractors' leads to be given to their competitors. Initially, the program pooled all leads and referred them to contractors on a rotating basis, assigning them to the next contractor in line. This led to some contractors' leads being given to other contractors. The program later improved that process by assigning a code to each contractor, and when a contractor generated a lead, the customer would use the appropriate code. In that way, Enhabit would be able to assign the work to the appropriate contractor.
- [Seattle's Community Power Works](#) coordinated with contractors before launching marketing initiatives that were going to drive a spike in demand. Contractors could then prepare in advance for the increase in customer interest, and the program was able to establish required timelines for contractors to follow, to ensure that new customers received an evaluation in a timely manner.

### Design a program that provides value for contractors and considers their seasonal business cycles

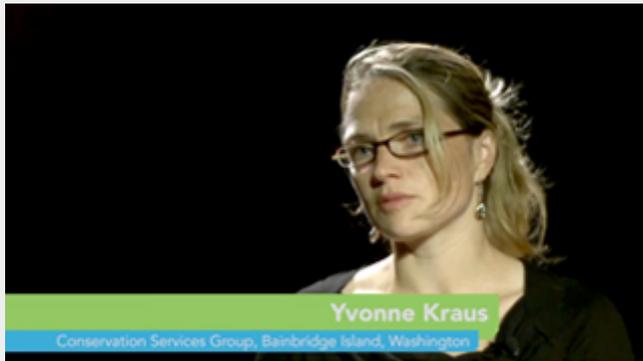
Many residential energy efficiency programs run into challenges maintaining an appropriately sized, well-trained workforce from program launch through maturity, as well as through the fluctuating demand of the seasons of the year. Some programs found that their contractors preferred a smooth annual workload in order to avoid layoffs during the slow off-season months, while others found that they benefited from seasonal fluctuations in demand. By understanding your contractors' schedules and capacity, you can schedule campaigns to generate demand for their services when they want it and pursue innovative strategies to help them manage their workload accordingly. Coordinate with your contractors to identify their needs and preferences and explore ways that you can help drive demand or increase the number of available professionals.

- [Austin Energy](#) acquired an extensive understanding of the existing contractor workforce and gathered key insights into local contractors' schedules and capacity. Austin's hot weather keeps contractors busy dealing with home cooling issues during the warm months of the year. Austin Energy purposely launched its Best Offer Ever promotion in fall 2010 to take advantage of contractor availability and provide more work during otherwise slow contracting months. This approach increased the likelihood that upgrades would be completed in a timely manner, while also helping Austin-area contractors avoid seasonal layoffs.
- [NeighborWorks of Western Vermont](#) realized that fluctuating seasonal demand for home energy efficiency upgrades posed challenges for contractors. Contractors were reluctant to hire additional technicians during peak season because they knew that demand would ebb in the spring and summer. The result was a backlog of projects. The program created a pool of temporary employees to help contractors in need of home performance professionals, including small contractors. This approach helped participating contractors weather the changing demand for home performance upgrades by offering them the flexibility to grow and shrink their workforce as needed. Many contractors expressed enthusiasm for the temporary employee pool, and the extra staffing helped reduce the number of backlogged projects throughout the community.

## Establish collaborative partnerships with contractors and communicate with them early and often

Contractors are more likely to serve as program champions when the program engages with them throughout program design, delivery, and improvement. Your contractors are the primary contact points with your customers, and the quality of their interactions and services strongly influences how customers view your program. Many Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners found that gathering contractor input during the program's planning phase helped ensure that the program would create value for contractors as well as for customers. The programs built personal relationships with contractors by demonstrating interest in their business concerns and needs. Indeed, an [evaluation](#) of over 140 programs across the United States found that programs were more successful when they fostered relationships with their contractors and communicated frequently with them.

### [In Their Own Words: Engage with Contractors From Day One](#)



Source: [In Their Own Words: Engage with Contractors From Day One](#), U.S. Department of Energy, 2012.

By communicating regularly (e.g., via a monthly breakfast meeting, other outreach events) with a core group of contractors, programs were able to better monitor program implementation and receive suggestions for improvement. These programs elicited feedback from contractors about how customers perceived program offerings, as well as input about what was working and what was not for both contractors and customers. Some programs surveyed contractors to collect a regular stream of information about how program implementation was going and to get feedback before rolling out new offers or program design changes.

- [NeighborWorks of Western Vermont](#) maintained steady lines of communication with its network of contractors to help ensure that barriers to getting work done in a timely manner were identified early and that solutions were collaborative. The program held monthly one-on-one meetings with each contractor to review client status and progress and to identify any problems and potential training opportunities. The program also organized bimonthly group contractors meetings focused specifically on sharing new techniques or products. NeighborWorks used regular contractor communications, performance feedback, and contractor incentives and competitions to help contractors improve their assessment-to-upgrade conversion rates. By engaging contractors and including them from the start on any proposed program revisions or promotions, NeighborWorks was able to improve program delivery.
- [Enhabit](#), formerly Clean Energy Works Oregon, program is charged with saving energy and supporting clean economic growth. Much of its success has come from engaging contractors in a continual learning and improvement process. Enhabit solicits feedback from contractors at meetings every two weeks and uses this feedback to guide improvements. With support from the Energy Trust of Oregon, a few contractors collaborated to create the [Home Performance Contractors Guild of Oregon](#), which enables contractors to organize their opinions into a unified voice and have a more formal role in program and regional policy discussions. When Enhabit engaged a new financing partner, the program asked the Guild to examine the loan product and approval process. Input from the Guild helped ensure that the product was something that contractors would be able to explain and promote to customers.
- In Washington State, the [Repower Kitsap](#) program started in a region where the home improvement market was fragmented and under-developed. Contractors were initially wary of one another, tended to work only in their specialty, and often did not have working relationships with one another. The program established monthly brown bag meetings to discuss program goals and requirements and to gather contractor input on the program. The monthly meetings helped contractors get to know and trust one another and develop productive working relationships. Many contractors even shared leads with other contractors who specialized in the types of projects they could not or did not want to handle.

- The [Long Island Green Homes](#) program began consulting with contractors during program design and continued to do so as the program launched and began full service operations. The program established contact with a core group of contractors it trusted, meeting with them regularly to review program status and direction. In particular, the program made it a priority to engage with contractors when rolling out program changes, asking them about their needs, concerns, and current state of business. In this way, the program ensured that program offerings were adding value for the home performance industry and that program requirements were manageable for contractors. For more information on the Long Island Green Homes' launch and other pilot programs, visit the [October 2011 Better Buildings Residential Network Peer Exchange Call Summary](#).

## 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](#)



Source: [In Their Own Words: Mentoring Benefits both Program and Contractor](#), 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](#) 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](#) helped [contractors enter the market](#) 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. Ten employees had worked in the labor pool as of 2012, with about three to five workers in the pool at any given time.

- New Hampshire's [Beacon Communities Project](#) 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](#), formerly known as Clean Energy Works Oregon, provided [networking and mentoring opportunities](#) 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](#), 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.

## Examples

The following resources are examples from individual residential energy efficiency programs, which include case studies, program presentations and reports, and program materials. The U.S. Department of Energy does not endorse these materials.

### Case Studies

#### [A Business Case for Home Performance Contracting \(9 MB\)](#)

Author: Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Publication Date: 2012

This report contains information on the market for home performance upgrades and the opportunities that exist for new home performance contractors; start-up needs and costs for firms entering the home performance contracting industry; home performance business approaches; and how established home performance contractors attract customers. It also contains detailed profiles of eight successful home performance firms across the United States.

#### [Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Contractor Stories](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

These case studies highlight examples of participating contractors who have employed Home Performance with ENERGY STAR to help homeowners improve their home's comfort and lower their utility bills.

#### [LaborWorks@NeighborWorks of Western Vermont Focus Series \(385 KB\)](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2012

LaborWorks@NeighborWorks is a nonprofit temporary labor pool developed by NeighborWorks of Western Vermont (NWWVT) to assist professional contractors involved with the NeighborWorks Home Energy Assistance Team (HEAT). In the first of this Focus Series, DOE interviews Melanie Paskevich, HEAT Squad coordinator, to get details on why NeighborWorks set up the temporary labor pool, how workers are recruited, and lessons learned for other programs to consider.

#### [NYSERDA Home Performance Case Studies](#)

Author: New York State Energy Research and Development Authority

Publication Date: 2013

Links to case studies of residential projects and contractors under the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)'s Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program.

#### [Spotlight on Austin, Texas: Let Your Contractor Be Your Guide for Big Rewards \(445 KB\)](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2011

This case study discusses strategies that Austin Energy, a municipally owned utility, used to collaborate closely with building contractors to launch a new Best Offer Ever promotion quickly and effectively.

#### [Spotlight on Fayette County, Pennsylvania: Developing the Skills and Tools for Workforce Success \(412 KB\)](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2012

This case study discusses strategies that Fayette County, Pennsylvania used to provide Building Performance Institute (BPI) certification and business skills training to aspiring energy efficiency contractors.

#### [Spotlight on Portland, Oregon: Making the Program Work for Contractors \(536 KB\)](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2011

As a program charged with saving energy and supporting economic growth, Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit) balances contractors' work priorities with the program's need to enforce quality standards, track results, and ensure good customer service. This case study discusses Clean Energy Works Oregon's (now Enhabit's) strategies for actively engaging contractors to make the program successful.

#### [Spotlight on Seattle, Washington: Community Partnerships Work to Extend Program Reach \(5 MB\)](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2011

This case study shares how Seattle's Community Power Works engaged a vast network of partners to build on existing capacity and knowledge, extending the reach of its program in a short period of time.

### Better Buildings Residential Network Case Study: Partnerships

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2015

This case study interview shares how GTECH (Growth Through Energy and Community Health) Strategies, a Better Buildings Residential Network member, developed and maintains strong strategic partnerships with trusted local companies and organizations to meet a shared goal of completing 100 home energy upgrade projects.

## Program Presentations & Reports

### [Building the Workforce for Energy Efficiency Programs](#) (116 KB)

Author: Steve Morgan, Clean Energy Solutions, Inc.

Publication Date: 2010

Courtesy of Clean Energy Solutions. This presentation provides an overview of topics related to building the workforce for energy efficiency programs, including market characterization, stakeholder engagement, training and certification, and community workforce agreements. It includes information on the experience of Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit) in Portland, Oregon.

### [Community Power Works Better Buildings Conference Presentation](#)

Author: Andrea Petzel, Community Power Works

Publication Date: 2012

This presentation discusses the new approach to training that Seattle's Community Power Works program is using to support its high-road workforce agreement.

### [Contractor Recruitment Strategies](#) (770 KB)

Author: Lee Butler, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority

Publication Date: 2010

This presentation provides information on strategies to successfully recruit contractors. Topics include setting goals, identifying contractors, contacting contractors, and following up with contractors.

### [Energy Efficiency Workforce Development in Maryland](#) (447 KB)

Author: Lauren Swiston, Maryland Energy Administration

Publication Date: 2010

This presentation discusses workforce development experiences with residential energy efficiency programs in Maryland, including early successes, work with moderate-income populations, partnerships with utilities and colleges, challenges, and lessons learned.

### [Going Deep Green: A Whole House Approach: Lessons Learned](#)

Author: Kellie Stickney, SustainableWorks

Publication Date: 2012

Presentation on the SustainableWorks non-profit general contractor model for supporting energy upgrades in Washington state and lessons learned for implementing a whole house approach.

### [The Leadership Academy: Motivating Contractors to Participate](#) (463 KB)

Author: Gary R. Myers, Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association

Publication Date: 2011

This presentation explains how to engage and motivate contractors and utility companies through the use of commitments, creating a dynamic program that they can become involved with, and the setting of standards for contractors.

### [Market Transformation in Connecticut: Integrating Home Performance into Existing Trades](#)

Author: Jane Bugbee, The United Illuminating Company

Publication Date: 2012

This presentation highlights the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund's efforts to integrate HVAC contractors, builders, and remodelers into its home performance program, which expanded its customer base and significantly scaled up the program. It includes lessons on outreach strategies for integrating these types of contractors into the program.

### [Philadelphia's Energy Coordinating Agency Apprenticeship Programs](#)

Author: Liz Robinson, Energy Coordinating Agency

Publication Date: 2012

This presentation discusses Philadelphia's Energy Coordinating Agency Apprenticeship Program in energy conservation and building science, including programs for journeyman credentials and BPI certification.

## Program Materials

### [Community High-Road Agreement for Seattle's Residential Retrofit Programs](#)

Author: Community Power Works

Publication Date: 2010

This agreement outlines the goals, contractor standards, hiring standards, training program standards, and procedures for contractor participation in Seattle's Community Power Works program. As a "high-road" agreement, the employment and contracting standards are designed to ensure broad access to economic opportunities for all types of businesses and workers, support training on sustainable career paths, and ensure high-quality work.

### [Local Energy Alliance Program Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Contractor Participation Agreement \(198 KB\)](#)

Author: Local Energy Alliance Program

Publication Date: 2013

This is a contractor participation agreement used by the Local Energy Alliance Program in Charlottesville, Virginia.

### [Community Workforce Agreement Between the City of Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation \(110 KB\)](#)

Author: City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation

Publication Date: 2010

This is a community workforce agreement between the City of Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation.

### [Request for Proposals for Phase V \(Neighborhood Phase\) of Clean Energy Works Portland \(now Enhabit\) \(226 KB\)](#)

Author: Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit)

Publication Date: 2010

This is an example of an RFP for workforce development and other program elements. The RFP covers recruitment, outreach and marketing oriented to homeowners and workers, and service delivery of energy assessments and upgrades.

## Toolbox

The following resources are available to help design, implement, and evaluate possible activities related to this handbook. These resources include templates and forms, as well as tools and calculators. The U.S. Department of Energy does not endorse these materials.

### Templates & Forms

#### [Efficiency Maine Residential Registered Vendor Agreement Form](#)

Author: Efficiency Maine

Publication Date: 2014

A short, checklist-style form that contractors complete to participate in Efficiency Maine. The form allows contractors to verify whether they meet basic program requirements, identify their specialized service offerings and qualifications, and describe other information about their businesses.

### Tools & Calculators

#### [Green for All Energy Efficiency Toolkit](#)

Author: Green For All

Publication Date: 2012

This practitioner-focused Toolkit for Residential Energy Efficiency Upgrade Programs was created by Green For All to assist new, established, and future energy efficiency programs launch and scale initiatives that can deliver the full promise of the green economy. It is intended as a practical resource that offers examples, tools, and templates that a program manager can deploy to implement a variety of aspects of their program including best practice briefs and summary documents, RFPs, contracts, and other program design and implementation templates that communities nationwide have used to create their own efficiency programs.

## Topical Resources

The following resources provide additional topical information related to this handbook, which include presentations, publications, and webcasts. Visit [Examples](#) for materials from and about individual programs.

### Topical Presentations

#### [Contractor Outreach: Design & Implementation for Residential Retrofit Programs](#)

Author: Jared Asch; Efficiency First

Publication Date: 2011

This presentation describes strategies for outreach to energy contractors and auditors, including contractor incentives.

#### [The Contractor-Participation-Inducing Home Performance Program Design Recipe Part 1](#)

Author: Mike Rogers; OmStout Consulting; LLC

Publication Date: 2012

Presentation summarizing the important elements needed to induce and sustain contractor participation in home performance programs.

#### [Five Steps to a Profitable Contractor Base](#)

Author: Courtney Moriarta; SRA International; Inc.; Emily Levin; Vermont Energy Investment Corporation; Tiger Adolf; Building Performance Institute; Brad Geyer; Fayette County Better Buildings Initiative; Sammy Chu; Suffolk County Department of Labor; Sam Flanery; Building Science Academy

Publication Date: 2012

Presentation on five steps to building a profitable contractor base. The steps include sensible program design and administration, certification and credentialing, communicating with contractors, contractor requirements (business vs. trade), and training and sales support.

#### [High Road Outcomes in Portland's Energy Efficiency Upgrade Pilot](#)

Author: Stacy Ho and Jeremy Hays, Green For All

Publication Date: 2011

This report highlights the impact of investment for Portland, Oregon in terms of high-quality job creation, equitable hiring, inclusive business opportunities, standardized training, and energy conservation.

#### [Residential Contracting Business Boot Camp](#)

Author: Mike Rogers; OmStout Consulting; LLC

Publication Date: 2013

This presentation provides guidance to contractors on business fundamentals, marketing and lead generation, successful consultative selling and closing, and measuring and improving performance.

#### [Why Add "Home Performance" to Your HVAC Business](#)

Author: Mike Rogers, OmStout Consulting, LLC

Publication Date: 2012

This article and recruiting presentation highlights reasons why it makes sense for an HVAC contractor to move into home performance, and provides program staff with key touch points to consider in considering potential contractor partners.

### Publications

#### [Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Business Models Guide](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2012

This report serves as a resource for program administrators and building contractors who are or may be interested in starting or expanding their services into the residential energy efficiency market.

#### [Contractor Blueprint: Getting from HVAC to Home Performance](#)

Author: California Center for Sustainable Energy; Home Performance Resource Center

Publication Date: 2012

This guide shows HVAC contractors how to get started in the home improvement market. It explains the approach of treating a house like a system and provides step-by-step instructions on setting up a home performance contracting business.

### [Energy Island: A Guide to Creating Your Island Energy Challenge \(26 MB\)](#)

Author: RePower Bainbridge; Conservation Services Group; U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2014

This guide is designed to serve as a "how-to" reference for island communities (or small, similarly sized, more isolated communities) that want to develop and implement a residential energy-efficiency and conservation program. The purpose of this guide is to help communities chart a course for successful program development based on the lessons learned during implementation and operation of RePower Bainbridge, an energy-efficiency program on Bainbridge Island, Washington.

### [For HVAC Contractors, Home Performance Delivers a Year-Round Blast](#)

Author: Leah Thayer, Home Performance Magazine

Publication Date: 2012

This article highlights contractors adding home performance to their HVAC businesses.

### [Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Sponsor Guide and Reference Manual \(v1.5\)](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2014

The Sponsor Guide was designed to assist with developing an implementation plan for a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program. It covers key elements of the plan, including the scope and objectives of the program and the policies and procedures that will ensure its success. The Sponsor Guide is divided into seven sections, each covering a specific requirement of the HPwES Program: Use and Management of the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Mark Program Design and Development Workforce Development and Support The Assessment Project Installation Quality Assurance Tracking and Reporting.

### [Home Performance Program Design Recap](#)

Author: Mike Rogers, OmStout Consulting, LLC

Publication Date: 2013

This blog post summarizes key elements of program design that relate to encouraging contractor participation and facilitating contractor and program success.

### [Ideas to Incentivize Contractors and Build a Strong Workforce \(93 KB\)](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2011

This publication provides tips from Better Buildings Neighborhood partners on incentivizing contractors.

### [Incorporating Home Performance into HVAC](#)

Author: Thomas Dolan, Home Performance Magazine

Publication Date: 2012

This article explores the opportunities for HVAC contractors to move into home performance and includes discussion from contractors and industry experts.

### [Strategy Guideline: Transitioning HVAC Companies to Whole House Performance Contractors](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2012

This guide discusses the findings of research in moving existing companies, with a focus on HVAC, to deliver more comprehensive energy saving upgrade services. It also helps the industry understand the business processes and strategies for transitioning to such an approach.

## Webcasts

### [Concierge Programs for Contractors - They're Not Just for Consumers Anymore Presentation \(1 MB\)](#)

Author: Jonathan Cohen, U.S. Department of Energy; Ryan Clemmer, Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit); Melanie Paskevich, NeighborWorks; Jay Karwoski, ICF International

Publication Date: 2012

This webcast includes slides and information on programs' use of concierge programs to support contractors. It highlights two program examples: Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit) and Vermont NeighborWorks.

