

AEG has been working with Minnesota Energy Resources' portfolio of programs for almost twenty years. Over the longstanding relationship, AEG has provided program administration and implementation services for Minnesota Energy Resources residential and commercial programs.

## Background

The Low Income Community Blitz Program was launched in 2021. This program is designed to provide energy efficiency education and energy saving materials to manufactured home park residents across the service territory.

Manufactured home parks have been identified as the single largest source of unsubsidized affordable housing. Historically, they are categorized as underserved communities, leaving a large gap of energy efficiency opportunities to fill. Due to the rurality of many manufactured home parks, the "Blitz" approach is an ideal method for the efficient delivery of low-cost energy efficiency measures. Minnesota Energy Resources is the first utility in the state to provide this type of program to manufactured home park customers.



## Program Details

The program offers do it yourself (DIY) kits, which include energy efficiency materials, as well as educational tips to lower energy costs and increase comfort for manufactured home residents. In addition, Minnesota Energy Resource customers receive information regarding other low-income programs that they may be eligible for. Project representatives are available on the day of the event to assist with installation, for educational workshops, and door-to-door distribution. This program also offers accelerated rebates for heating system tune-ups and Wi-Fi-enabled or advanced thermostats.

To provide a comprehensive offering, Minnesota Energy Resources partners with electric utilities who support the distribution of LED lightbulbs. The program also provides active engagement with local community organizations who provide additional benefits to residents that may include, safety items, such as smoke alarms, and offer additional information on potential weatherization services.

## Challenge & Opportunity

**Challenge 1** - Initially proposed as a 100% low-income program, it was approved by department staff at 50% low income, allowing half of the program spend and savings to count towards low-income programs goals. With one caveat for special circumstances, upon staff approval, allowing for additional energy savings to be claimed in communities located within designated economic opportunity zones. This changed in 2022 after compiling and analyzing data captured from in-person events. The data collected found many challenges with customer income verification that included language barriers, lack of awareness of assistance eligibility and asking personal income questions in a public setting. AEG proposed to staff that the income requirements be changed due to these challenges found that were also compounded by the varying low-income definitions for various programs. For example:

- LI MF allowed 66% to be claimed as 100%
- CARD grant suggested 68% of homes were under 300% of Federal Poverty Guidelines

Once presented with these challenges and fact-based evidence of the low-income housing stock, the State approved the program energy savings and spend to be claimed at 100% low income.

**Challenge 2** - The health and safety opportunities have been a challenge to capture up until 2023, when AEG engaged a local Fire Department who agreed to assist the program with finding a way to sponsor the delivery of safety items. AEG was also able to partner with the American Red Cross and the United Way to distribute over one hundred smoke detectors and one hundred and fifty CO detectors in customer's homes.

In 2023, AEG engaged a manufactured home property with over 300 homes in Rochester, MN. Together with the local electric utility, CAP agency, local fire department, American Red Cross and United Way, Applied Energy Group facilitated Minnesota Energy Resources first fully comprehensive event. In addition, the American Red Cross has agreed to partner with AEG on future events in manufactured home parks across the state, marking a program that is truly first of its kind in Minnesota.

## Goals

- Provide energy efficiency education and assistance
- Distribute DIY efficiency kits tailored to manufactured home parks
- Offer enhanced rebates for tune-ups and thermostats (2023)
- Deliver jointly with electric/community partners when possible
- Provide a health and safety component



## Partners

- **CERTs – Clean Energy Resource Team**
  - A non-profit out of UMN who connects Minnesota Energy Resources with potential partners and helps implement our program
- **Electric partners**
  - Utilize partnerships already in place, some were not
- **Local CAP agencies**
  - EAP/WAP providers
- **Local Fire Department**
- **Red Cross**
- **United Way**
- **Emergency Services**

## Rochester Event Specific Results:

### Weatherization kits

over 170 weatherization kits distributed in Rochester

### Smoke detectors

105 alarms in 52 homes

### Carbon Monoxide detectors

175 CO detectors

### LEDs

232 Boxes of 4-pack LEDs, total of 928 bulbs

## 2023 Program Specific Results:

- Exceeded goal of 14,920 Therms
- 316 weatherization kits distributed



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