



STATE HOME ENERGY REBATE PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS – TALKING POINTS

*Midwest Building
Decarbonization Coalition*

STATE HOME ENERGY REBATE PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS

The Home Energy Rebate Programs include 8.8 billion dollars in grant funding to help American households save money on energy bills, upgrade to clean energy equipment and improve energy efficiency, reduce indoor and outdoor air pollution, and create workforce training programs.

States have until January 2025 to get their final applications for the [Home Energy Rebate Program](#) to the Federal Department of Energy (DOE). **States are required to do at least one public input hearing and include how that was incorporated into the final application.**

Most likely, states will allow written comments, but we also will want coalition members to be prepared to speak during these hearings (in-person or virtually). The talking points will serve as a resource for folks who want to give input in these sessions.

At this point, we are unsure of what format these input sessions will take place in (virtual, in-person, etc). Midwest BDC's Federal Policy Working Group is monitoring the state energy offices for when more details come out.

Tips for public input sessions:

- There will be a time limit for your comment - often just a few minutes. Practice saying your comment and time yourself! If you go over the time limit, you may get cut off.
- Connect your comment to a personal experience or story. Identify a problem, and comment on how these rebates could help solve it.
 - Have you had trouble understanding or accessing a state or utility rebate in the past? What would have made the process easier for you?
 - What challenges are you facing to decarbonize your home? How could these rebates benefit you?
- Take notes! Use the last page of this packet to jot down any notes you want to reference in your comment. You could underscore a similar experience, or refute an opposing comment.
- Come prepared. If you can reference specific data in your comment, that's great! You can bring a notecard with bullet points, or read from a page where you've scripted out exactly what you want to say.
- Practice, practice, practice! Attend one of our upcoming prep sessions or practice reading your comment to a partner. **This will make you feel more prepared - you've got this!**

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Here are the main, high-level talking points the Midwest BDC Federal Policy Working Group found important to highlight. Use these as inspiration to begin crafting your comment and connect it to your personal story. Comments from multiple people that hit on these same points will emphasize their importance.

Find more in-depth sub-points on the next page.

- **States should use rebates to encourage full home decarbonization.**
 - **States should go above and beyond the minimum safeguards for tenants in cases where building owners utilize rebates to make property upgrades.**
 - **States should place the emphasis of their programs on increasing the affordability of efficiency and electrification upgrades to the most groups possible.**
 - **States should go beyond minimum DOE requirements and submit the most meaningful Community Benefits Plans possible.**
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More details:

- **States should use rebates to encourage full home decarbonization.**
 - DOE has encouraged states to primarily use HOMES rebate money to support energy-neutral measures, such as insulation upgrades, and we strongly echo that recommendation. Additionally, we encourage states to make clear that their gas appliances will not be eligible for their HOMES rebates, even when replacing a less-efficient unit.
 - States cannot assume that applicants for one part of the HEAR or HOMES rebates are aware of other parts that might apply to their home, or of other federal, state, and utility programs they might be eligible to braid their rebate with. Programs should be designed as a 'one-stop shop' or similar model that actively helps participants understand the best combination of rebates or other incentives for their situation.
- **States should go above and beyond the minimum safeguards for tenants in cases where building owners utilize rebates to make property upgrades.**
 - We recommend that states increase restrictions on rent increases and evictions from the DOE mandated 2 years to 5 years.
- **States should place the emphasis of their programs on increasing the affordability of efficiency and electrification upgrades to the most groups possible.**
 - The intent and spirit of these rebate programs is to enable those least able to absorb the upfront costs to transition their homes to clean energy. We urge states to be extremely mindful of this, especially if considering offering retroactive rebates or rolling out rebates for moderate-income households on the same timeline as low-income.
- **States should go beyond minimum DOE requirements and submit the most meaningful Community Benefits Plans possible.**
 - Historical evidence from existing state or utility rebate programs shows that previous typical methods of outreach and program assistance do not effectively reach underserved groups meant to be served by these rebates. States (or their contractors) must show they are partnering with culturally appropriate community partners with a proven track record in targeted communities. These partners should be prepared to offer education and assistance beyond the basics of what rebates households qualify for (overall benefits of home upgrades, understanding the unique context of their home, how to switch to more beneficial utility rates after electrifying, etc.)
 - States should also ensure communities are involved and invested in the continued success of the program by making as much data on program performance easily available to the public as possible. In addition, tracking additional data such as improvement on social determinants of health or racial demographics not included in the CEJST screening tool is encouraged.

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Useful reference links:

- [A Multi-state Analysis of Equity in Utility-Sponsored Energy Efficiency Investments for Residential Customers](#)
- [Targeting energy justice: Exploring spatial, racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in urban residential heating energy efficiency](#)
- [Social Equity in State Energy Policy: Indicators for Michigan's Energy Efficiency Programs](#)
- [An incandescent truth: Disparities in energy-efficient lighting availability and prices in an urban U.S. county](#)
- [Equity performance measure recommendations for Energy Trust of Oregon](#)

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