

August 5, 2010 - Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Webinar (text version)

Erin Jackson:

Okay, hi, everybody. This is Erin Jackson with the Department of Energy, and we welcome you to today's webinar about the EPA's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program. I am very excited to introduce our speakers today. The first person we have online is Chandler von Schrader – am I saying that correctly?

Chandler von Schrader:

Yes.

Erin Jackson:

Good, good. Hi, welcome, Chandler. He has been in the energy efficiency industry since 1981, primarily in the Washington, D.C. metro area. His first EE work was selling and installing domestic hot water solar systems, and from there he moved into providing and performing thousands of energy efficiency audits. This quickly led to running weatherization crews for local utilities and delivering demand side management activities that included commercial lighting; large, scalable... family lighting; low-income energy efficiency services; whole-house diagnostics; and full-scale remediation.

Along the way, Chandler has worked for utilities, an electric cooperative, a weatherization fund, an unregulated utility service company, and has been part owner of a kitchen and bath remodeling company and an energy service company.

For the past seven years, Chandler has worked for EPA, promoting energy efficiency best practices in HVAC, home performance and remodeling industries, and is the national manager of the Home Performance's ENERGY STAR activities. Needless to say, he is an expert, and we're excited to have him. And he told me before he got here that the only reason he's in this business is to help keep winter's colder so that he can ski. So, that's a fun little tidbit for you.

We also have Casey Murphy, who works at ICF International in support of EPA's Home Performance ENERGY STAR Program, and the EPA's Indoor airPLUS Program. With Home Performance Program, Mr. Murphy has assisted in development of sales training for contractors, provided programmatic support for local sponsors, and assisted state and local governments, workforce development agencies, utilities, and other stakeholders to identify avenues of cooperation in improving the performance of existing homes.

He serves on the National Home Performance Council's Forum Committee, and BPI's Home Performance Data Standard XML Project. Prior to joining ICF, Mr. Murphy had over 17 years of experience working in the residential home-building industry, and he is a certified building analyst and envelope professional by the Building Performance Institute, and a certified home energy rater and green rater by the Residential Energy Services Network. Another expert in the field here today to talk to you about this program.

And lastly, we have on the line, joining us remotely from Texas, Matthew Phillips, who has 17 years of experience in the energy conservation field before being appointed the Residential Conservation Program coordinator for Austin Energy's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Rebate Loan Program.

He evaluates and manages the program delivery division, creating guidelines and specification as it relates to the city of Austin's megawatt saving pool. Currently, he oversees 120 residential participating companies that service a population of 320,000 residential customers.

He is here also representing, I believe, the Austin Better Buildings Group, if that's correct, Matthew?

Matthew Phillips:

Thank you.

Erin Jackson:

Yeah, you're welcome. He told me before we got in here that he likes to benefit from Chandler's mission in working in energy efficiency by sitting in a hot tub in 50 degree below 0 weather. So, that gives you a little insight as to we are, and with that, I'd like to tell you that if you have a question throughout the presentation, please just ask us by virtually raising your hand. And you can do that with the go-to webinar toolbar on your screen. You can type in your question, and we will pause, read the question out loud, and then one of our experts can answer for you. So, want to make this as interactive as possible.

And with that, Chandler, I'm gonna let you take it away.

Chandler von Schrader:

Thank you, Erin. I hope everybody can hear us. We've been talking Home Performance with ENERGY STAR now in a big way for the past nine years, and it's increasingly a popular program.

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When Danielle asked me to join this webinar, we were certainly excited to have an opportunity to speak of this program to you folks, and quite honestly in hopes that you will consider expanding your current residential program delivery to a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR model.

It was – it's kind of difficult for us to fully anticipate where you folks are in your understanding of Home Performance with ENERGY STAR. So, some of this information may sound familiar. Too bad, you can hear it again. Make sure you understand it. You know, at the end, I will consider this a successful discussion if your understanding of this program is elevated in that you are actively – have been ginned up to consider modifying your program and becoming a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR sponsor. That would be a good thing.

So, we'll just kinda roll on. This is the agenda we're gonna be going forward with, talk about, you know, just what is the guts of Home Performance? Well, what is the delivery? We'll talk about connecting your program to – your current program to Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, and really drive home the message that, you know, don't reinvent this stuff, folks. We've been doing this for a while. We've built a lot of the rigors that I think you will need going forward in your grant. From quality assurance to reporting, we've got this stuff figured out.

We'll talk about the requirements of a sponsor and the contractor. There's lots of stuff going on there. You must know what you're getting into. We have Matthew online. He's at Austin Energy. That's a program that has been very successful for the – gosh, five or six years now. And we're tickled to death to have him kind of tell you how his program operates.

And we'll try to talk about going beyond this. And, you know, the last one is the most important. You know, for this to really work, please volley in your questions as you have 'em. You don't have to wait 'til the very end.

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I just love this slide because if I'm the captain of that boat, I'm worried. I'm thinking, "I'm going the wrong way." And we really have an energy – you know, perfect storm with our energy environment issues across this country, with enormous weatherization goals, scary goals.

The infrastructure is not there right now to meet these demands. Utilities are getting – some are being very active, coming forward. Some are being pushed, but you know, they're on this ship, too, and they're a little worried themselves. Energy costs are rising. I'll say this in this tight quarter that I think our energy prices are too low. And they're being subsidized all over the place. And until that is fully fixed and people pay the full price of energy, we're gonna be struggling with encouraging efficiency upgrades.

Climate's all screwed up. I think we can all agree to that. You know, money is flowing. DOE, as you well know, is putting money out there to help motivate this marketplace. The media – I challenge you to find – open up the paper today and not find a story about somebody spinning green somehow, someday.

And at the end of the day, you know, efficiency must come first. And we've gotta drive that message home because it's not easy building new generation plants. It's a real tough thing.

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I reckon everybody's seen this pie – the old energy pie. Won't spend a lot of time on this other than to say if you've got teenagers, you can throw this out the door because your costs are crazy. One of the first things I recommend in helping our energy load in this country is get rid of all teenagers. But that's not too popular.

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Okay, this is – this is why we're here, my friends. We've got a lot of opportunity. I won't read this to you except that middle line, and it's a big one, that 70 percent of the homes that are gonna be here in 2050 are here right now. The opportunity for remediation is absolutely huge. Sam Raskin says that they're building 'em faster than we can fix 'em.

Fixing houses is what we're all about. Fixing them correctly is the tough part. Next.

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Now I'm gonna let – Casey and I will be kinda going back and forth a little bit, so I'm gonna let Casey do a couple slides, and he's gonna take this one.

Casey Murphy:

All right, thanks, Chandler. Yeah, I mean, as Chandler mentioned, obviously, you know, our energy use is of national importance. Residential energy use is a big component of that, and it's really become a national priority to address that. In fact, you know, we have a national goal of trying to ramp up residential energy efficiency delivery, you know, many fold. We want to maybe weatherize one million homes. And we have, you know, a variety of different vehicles that we're doing it in the marketplace right now with firms like Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, with other types of utility programs, with the Weatherization Program.

But we really have to take it to the next step, and that's really what, you know, everyone on the phone is doing is being on that vanguard in trying to promote new solutions, innovative solutions to address the challenge of improving our existing housing stock. And so, you know, here are a couple – just facts from, you know, the Competitive Grant. There's a significant amount of money that's going out to all of you folks to help to, you

know, address problems that are in the marketplace, and trying to solve these issues so that we can capture lessons and then replicate them on the national scale.

One – the text on the bottom is what I pulled from the DOE Web site, and that – you know, basically, it's explaining the funding opportunity announcement and the monies that you will be implementing are really – should be viewed within the larger context of what the national goals are, of what the challenges are, and in particular, with the Council on Environmental Quality's Recovery through Retrofit Report.

And so, you know, we can take a little bit of a look deeper into that report

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and see specifically, you know, what are they trying to address in that report? And kind of a high-level overview is the report summarized three market barriers that we have to overcome to improve residential energy efficiency.

And one is access to information that, you know, currently consumers do not have access to straightforward and reliable information. It's a challenge that the industry has faced for a while, and we really have to, you know, promote that reliable information to move the industry forward.

There's also access to financing. A lot of improvements makes sense. But if you can't get over that initial cost hurdle, it doesn't matter if it pays for itself in five years, two years, or two days. If you don't have the capital to make that investment from the get-go, then you can't act on the opportunity.

And then you also need an access to a skilled workforce. And we have a lot of building science professionals. We need a lot more. There aren't necessarily specific standards in place, though. If you are – you want to promote green jobs, people have different definitions of what a green job is. And so, we kind of need to harmonize the standards, understand the skill set of those workers so that, again, we can reach economies to scale and really retrofit a lot more homes.

And, you know, these three barriers have been a struggle with our Home Performance sponsors, too. In fact, the entire programmatic framework, to some extent has evolved in order to address these market barriers.

One of the ways that we describe Home Performance with ENERGY STAR is that it has three key program elements. One is to build up a supply of contractors who have the skills and the tools necessary to diagnose the home.

Another is to promote demand. And certainly, that's one of the cruxes of the ENERGY STAR brand. It's well known. People understand what it means. It's a way to kinda cut through some messaging that homeowners may not understand. It's an Act by the U.S. government, and so it has resonance in the marketplace.

And then also, there's the QA/QC framework that's built up around Home Performance with ENERGY STAR as well. And part of that is making sure that the information that contractors supply to homeowners is straightforward and reliable information, and that it's verified by a third party. And we'll get into that a little bit more as to how Home Performance with ENERGY STAR sponsors have done it traditionally, and, you know, explain that a little more.

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And so, you know, it's confusing enough programmatically. There are a lot of different moving parts. It can be even more confusing inside the house. A house as a system is

not an easy concept. You have a lot of contractors who have been in the business for decades, and they know their particular trade very well, but they don't necessarily understand how the components interact as a system.

I know from personal experience that I had 15 years in constructing homes, and yet, you know, you really, when you start to learn about building science and all the different components, it really opens your eyes and teaches you new ideas. But it really changes your business model as well. And there are challenges there. And so, when it comes to recruiting, training, mentoring contractors and supporting them so they can deliver energy efficiency services, there's a variety of challenges.

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So, I think, Chandler, you're going to go through this section?

Chandler von Schrader:

Yeah, we've got some – it's always – this is the part I like the most, showing pictures of homes that have failed, and impress upon the – you folks, as you probably well know, that – you know, back to the opportunity-rich environment here, the current contracting base in this country fails to really put together the building science correction that are needed. You know, roofers are called out to something like this. And I presume a gutter man will be out here soon enough as well. Well, that's not gonna solve the problem.

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This is a quick snapshot on what we anticipate the energy savings to be in different locations of the country. We use a rough energy savings number of about 20 percent of total energy use can be reduced when a house is addressed holistically. And to be real honest, that number is probably on the thin side. We find more often than not that when a house is fully addressed, the savings can be substantial. It's not unusual to get savings of 40, 50, and 60 percent.

But in different markets, the savings are not as great. Where the energy is expensive, and where we have weather are typically – are prime spots for Home Performance activity, and really the greatest opportunity for homeowners to be motivated to invest in these changes.

I think somewhere – maybe Matthew will talk about his KW reductions. Reducing the demand energy in the summertime by properly taking care of ductwork, insulating, and getting the right size heating and cooling systems installed can have a dramatic reduction in the KW.

The KW demand is a particular squeeze for many utilities – many electric utilities, obviously. And when we can demonstrate that a comprehensive addressment can – really knocks off that KW peak, utilities are very interested in this comprehensive work.

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More fun pictures.

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Go back to that crawlspace one.

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Typically, you'll find the contractor will stick his head in the crawlspace and turn and run when he sees something like this. Our Home Performance contractors will look at this as a challenge, and build a work order to address these kind of issues. Next slide.

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You know, the insulation is always a component of correcting homes. And it's done wrong more often than right. When you start to investigate, you find all kinds of voids and holes and insulation not in alignment with the vapor barrier. Next slide.

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And boy, do we find holes in insulation. And your traditional insulator is just gonna blow more insulation on top of these holes, and really not solve the problem of air passing through. Next slide.

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I tell ya, I can do these slides all day. It's just crazy what you find when you begin to squirrel around in attics and crawlspaces.

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And when a heating and cooling contractor is called out for these, that room is not being conditioned. Replacing the system is maybe not the first order – not the first thing you should do.

When you begin to investigate the house, walk the ducts, and look for a comprehensive solution, you know, these are the issues you find.

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And a big part of it, of course, is indeed that comprehensive front-end evaluation, walk in the house, discussing with the homeowner, looking for health and safety violations. Here, right next to a gas water heater, people are keeping – I think those are paint spray canisters of some sort. Maybe not a good idea to keep that next to an open flame.

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Take off the return, and boy what a clever place to store materials, particularly hazard waste stuff. You know, so, that's kind of like a filter –

Erin Jackson:

[Crosstalk]

Chandler von Schrader:

Yeah. That's a *[crosstalk]*

[Laughter]

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Chandler von Schrader:

Bonus rooms above garages are always a comfort challenge. Here he insulation isn't touching the floor. You know, it's missed all the time. Next slide.

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So, Home Performance to the rescue. Right? So, we come in, and we deliver a comprehensive assessment of the house. And you basically prepare a roadmap on where the homeowner should make their investments on correcting this structure. It's a prioritized list that I guarantee you always includes air sealing. Always includes adding insulation. Almost always includes some level of duct remediation. And often includes an HVAC tune-up and/or replacement. And maybe windows down at the bottom.

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And I tell ya, a real big part of this is – and it's a part that we've learned – that we've underemphasized over the years and now have come to full grips, you know, going belly to belly with the homeowner, talking about what the heck you have found, discuss your

findings, win them in. A lot of this happens when you're walking around the house, doing the diagnostic – you know, they've never seen a blower door. They haven't seen an IR camera before. The other contractors have not brought these tools into play. And our folks become a real champion. And homeowners can and should get very interested. They see the failures of the house.

Ultimately, this work must be sold. And when you're unable to package a proposal up and present it and get a signature from the homeowner, you know, that's a prerequisite for this work to happen. You gotta sell this stuff. And for many, that's a tough thing to swallow.

Erin Jackson:

I actually have a question for you, if that's okay, and that is what work has been done around understanding the psychological reason why a homeowner will let a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR contractor come in and do the audit? You might be getting to this later in your presentation.

Chandler von Schrader:

Well, no, but – you know, homeowners come – you know, call for this work for many reasons. And it is more often than not a comfort-driven predicament in their house. They can't live upstairs in the summertime. Downstairs is cold. Temperatures are all over the map inside their house.

Some indeed call because, indeed, their energy consumption is high, and they want – but more often than not, folks are seeking this work because other contractors have failed to correct the comfort issues in their house.

Erin Jackson:

Okay.

Chandler von Schrader:

Or they have weird stuff growing in the basement, and these other issues. The psychological components – gosh, I don't know what to say to that.

Erin Jackson:

The comfort is one.

Chandler von Schrader:

Well, okay, thank you.

Erin Jackson:

Yeah. You answered it.

Casey Murphy:

I'd just maybe add on two things. One is to recognize that different people might value it at different points in the educational process. And so, a lot of people might go into Home Performance from the energy perspective. So, you know, they might say, again, "My energy bills are high," when they get a Home Performance job. But in order to sell it, in order for them to actually invest \$2,000.00, \$3,000.00, \$5,000.00, then it takes a different type of sales proposition for them, and so that contractor has to recognize the unique benefits, the customer profile, and sell that. And, you know, sometimes, especially if you have new contractors that are coming in, and they're just learning this building science stuff, they tend to focus too much on energy and trying to sell that at the kitchen table. And one of the lessons is, you know, let the contractors customize their delivery. And, you know, maybe it's not about energy. Maybe it is about comfort. And, you know, that's what it takes.

Erin Jackson:

Yeah, the reason why I asked is because I know a lot of grantees are working on their communications outreach plans right now, so, to understand the reasons why ultimately a consumer decides to let someone in their home and do this audit is critical in this whole process. So, thank you.

Chandler von Schrader:

A lot builds up to this. We haven't even talked about, certainly, making the phone ring, and how that phone call is managed, the questions that you must have on the phone. You do not want to be sending crews out, or sales people, or auditors unless you believe you have a pretty, you know, hot lead. We can't continue to spin our wheels. But somebody's calling and asking, you know, "What's the price to blow R30 in 1,500 square feet?" You know, that's not necessarily a customer for Home Performance.

And so, you have to – there's a real education curve here. And ENERGY STAR – that is our strength in getting this communication out. That is the value of the logo. Folks recognize that, "Hey, this is some honest information," and we value that highly. And boy, there's education all through this. Let's go to the next one, talking about the audit and –

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Hopefully, you folks have seen a blower door and an infrared camera. And maybe you've had some of this work on your house. And I would recommend everybody go through this. If you haven't done this on your own home, and you're gonna be moving into this market, talking to contractors and such, administrators, get a whole-house audit on your own homes. See it first hand.

So, we use tools to do the summary. We test ourselves in and out.

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Here is a cutaway of a house. It's one that we've gotten a lot of use out of. It kind of demonstrates all the nuances of the delivered home performance remediation.

At the very end, F is – you know, once you take care of reducing the overall energy use, that is when the consideration on renewables really needs to be played. Next slide.

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All right, you know, this is really Home Performance in a nutshell. It's generally sponsored. We require a sponsor to kind of be our governor, if you will, and that's often a utility, in several cases - a state or local government. It can be a city. It can be, you know, you folks.

You've got to demonstrate that you've built a network of specialty-trained contractors. And that's a big chunk of this is building the capacity folks that know what the heck they're doing. If you're gonna be sending people into homes, you have to have confidence that they've demonstrated their ability to do this work. Comprehensive audit, we've talked about that. A recommendation to make the improvements; we want to see 20 percent or more. Now, I'm jumping some stuff in there. A big chunk of this is the energy savings modeling tool that needs to be deployed to estimate what these savings are.

You have to have the capacity to get the work done. Homeowners choose what they want. You could go through this rigor and the homeowner may say, "Well, that's all great, but I still want those windows." And you hit 'em with the – over the head with a

clipboard, and then you sell 'em the windows. At the end of the day, they pay for it. They make the choices.

We do see single measures inside Home Performance with ENERGY STAR. We don't like it too much, but, you know, the homeowner is, you know, paying the bill, so it's their call. All the work is tested out. The testing on the outside – when you leave, the test out gives us confidence that the savings are going to be real. And then the sponsor must confirm that there's a quality assurance, which we'll talk about a little bit more. Next slide.

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Now, here's our Home Performance map. I hope that you are in a place that – maybe that's near one of our current activities. But you see that we're really starting to gain some momentum in particularly the East Coast, and more and more out West. To be honest, it's a real exciting time for Home Performance with ENERGY STAR. Lots of folks are getting on board. It's also getting pretty crazy and busy. It's a good busy, though.

Okay, then will you take some of these next ones?

Casey Murphy:

Sure. And I'll go ahead and just mention, when you're looking at this map, you know, keep in mind that every one of these dots, or at least the blue dots, represent existing infrastructure that you can leverage. So, you know, if you're out there, and you're thinking about, you know, how are you gonna provide quality assurance in your program, or who are you gonna recruit, you know, keep in mind that these are repositories of building science expertise, and that hopefully you can at least engage in, learn from, and maybe collaborate with, if you're not gonna become your own Home Performance with ENERGY STAR sponsor, which we could, you know, certainly consider as well to putting on your needs.

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So, you know, there are different home retrofit program elements. There are a lot of different moving parts to a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program. You know, if you go back to the picture that we had, talking about the discussion at the kitchen table, and that, you know, some homeowners are worried about comfort. Some are worried about energy efficiency.

It's the same thing with the stakeholders that support home performance programs. We have some stakeholders like utility companies that are mostly focused on energy. We have some stakeholders that are more interested in creating jobs. I mean, certainly to some extent, the EECBG funds, while they want to support energy efficiency, they also want to create job creation.

We have some native people on the phone, certainly other people, who are interested in providing neighborhood stabilization. They see that maybe their tax base is decreasing because the homes are deteriorating, and certainly delivering home performance is a way to improve homes, to make them more durable, and to help support communities.

And so, again, there are a variety of different needs on the homeowner level as to why a homeowner would want to purchase a package of improvements, and they're the comparable or parallel kind of package of value propositions that stakeholders also see when they want to promote Home Performance. And that's one of the tricky things, and one of the things that we want to encourage on the call is just kind of connect the dots, and, you know, making sure that we're not all reinventing the wheel and going off in different directions.

And so, you know, part of that is creating standards. We've created, over time, standards in Home Performance. We allow a lot of flexibility of individual sponsors, but we do have emerging standards for the types of qualifications we look for in contractors, the types of items that are viewed during the Home Performance assessment. We certainly have very firm standards as to what entails a test out and how the program sponsor verifies that test out and actually performs it's own on-site visits.

DOE is doing some tremendously exciting stuff with the standards as well through the workforce development standardization process, and that's what we need to move the industry forward. We need contractors who see the market opportunity to engage in Weatherization, Home Performance, or any other number of programs, and know that, you know, as long as they meet these base requirements, that they can play in all these different markets. That's how you get economies to scale in supply that eventually hit our need to retrofit a large number of homes as well.

So, you know, other program components, which we already kind of went over, was, you know, the contractor recruitment. Sponsors do rely on us to kind of learn what requirements we suggest and/or require, and then they incorporate that into their programmatic framework.

We certainly have a lot of lessons learned in terms of increasing customer demand. Part of it is leveraging the ENERGY STAR logo. Part of it is advertising. Part of it is allowing homeowners to overcome financial barriers, whether or not it's offering rebates, which a lot of our utility partners provide. It might be financing opportunities. But there are a variety of levers that sponsors can use to increase customer demand. And, you know, there are ways to look at the program evaluation as well. And so, those are all the types of, like, designing a program.

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Chandler von Schrader:

You know, we've certainly seen the program sponsors err on the side of capacity building and getting a whole host of contractors readied and getting them prepared to hit the market, while not providing equal emphasis on building the demand for these services.

So, as you folks start to build your programs, boy, a lesson we've clearly learned is build those in unison. If anything, heck, build a demand for the services. Casey and I were both contractors once, and contractors will follow the opportunity. And if the opportunity isn't clearly displayed out there, the recruitment of contractors will be slow. And then, you know, years ago in California, they did it ass-backwards with overbuilding the contractors, got a lot trained, and then the phone did not ring. And they were going, "What the heck is this program? You're killing me. I've invested in this equipment, and you have no marketing. There's no demand for our services." Now, that's turned around, but so build them in unison.

Matthew Phillips:

This is Matthew. I'd like to chime in on what Chandler just said because what happens is, especially with Austin Energy, we've been around – our program's been around for 27 years. We started off as a whole-house program, and like Chandler said earlier, you know, don't reinvent the wheel and piggyback. And we eventually piggybacked in 2005. But what my point – the point I want to make is that the marketing can't be stressed enough because if your marketing isn't in line with your objective, then it's gonna get eschewed. And like Chandler said, eventually you're gonna have all these contractors with all this training and nowhere to go.

So, for instance, in Austin, we have a very educated customer base. And the reason we have an educated customer base is because of the marketing and the outreach, the continual informational/educational component which we send out into the community.

A lot of times what our customers end up doing is they end up educating the contractor in the sense that when a contractor comes in, that customer knows in a very rudimentary way what exactly and precisely the contractor's looking for and at. They might not know the solution, but they know that there's a rebate program available. They know that they're very uncomfortable. They know that their bills are really high. And when you start with those two components of a bill being very high, and they're very uncomfortable, you got a starting point. But the marketing is a very important component to that because when we send those mailers out, and I'll get into that later, the actual customer's gonna know that there's something out there that they can take advantage of.

Casey Murphy:

Thank you, Matt, you're right, the priming of the market is just critical. It must happen early and often.

Matthew Phillips:

Mm-hmm.

Casey Murphy:

And so, there are, you know, there are a lot of lessons learned from people like Matthew and other program sponsors it's kind of through their blood, sweat, and tears that we've been able to develop the program and make it stronger. And, you know, part of becoming involved with Home Performance with ENERGY STAR is really engaging early so that – you know, we certainly don't want an organization coming to us with a plan preformed without talking with us first and having us try to share what experiences we have, maybe direct them to other sponsors who might be able to give them guidance and/or, you know, we can give them some of our templates and some of our resources that are available.

And so, I want to kind of walk through the process. For those of you who are interested in investigating the possibility of being a sponsor, this is kind of the – the way that you can go through it. Or, it's important just to learn what the existing sponsors in your marketplace may have gone through so you understand, you know, kind of the rigors that they went through, to make sure that they have strong programs.

So, any Home Performance sponsor has to submit a plan. We have a template plan, which is basically an editable PDF that addresses a variety of the different program elements that have to be reviewed to successfully deploy a Home Performance program.

So, you know, it's taking a look at what you're envisioning in terms of contractor competency and how you plan on recruiting those contractors and supporting them. It's taking a look at the tools that you would expect that contractor to use, and how they engage the homeowner. Certainly how you intend to promote the program, either through direct marketing, or through incentives and financing. And then we also take a look at kind of the budget and production goals. We are looking for sponsors who can provide, you know, a long-term sustainable program in the marketplace. And that's a unique challenge for a lot of the EECBG grantees, of course, is they have funds for a limited period of time. And so, making that a sustainable program over the long run is a challenge, but one that we're starting to address, and we need to kinda go through the process now and learn what may or may not work.

Once that plan is kind of developed, and oftentimes, it can take two, three, six months, through several phone calls with Chandler and with others, then the sponsor can sign a

partnership agreement, and then they're officially a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR sponsor.

Now, many of you, if you're considering Home Performance sponsorship, you already have a plan that's been developed and reviewed. And so, that time frame may not be applicable. It might be, you know, a lot more expedited than that.

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So, again, kind of to bucket the different program elements that sponsors have to develop, you know, building up the supply of contractors.

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It's building up the demand for those services and trying to match them and build those in unison.

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And then, you know, one of the things we referenced but I want to go into a little more detail is the quality assurance rigors of the programs. And it really does start, of course, with training the people so they know how to offer active improvements, how to implement those improvements, and how to quickly learn lessons when they're in those first homes so that in subsequent jobs, they're becoming stronger and going through a continual improvement process.

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But then there's also, really, the core responsibility of our partners. And that's providing quality assurance over every single job. And so, you know, the basic process is a trained contractor goes in, performs a diagnostic assessment of the house with a blower door, with combustion safety testing. They offer the package of improvements. That's implemented. That contractor goes in and does a test out. So, the blower door goes up a second time, combustion safety testing is performed to make sure that the health of the occupants is looked after. And then that job is reported to the program sponsor.

And so, as part of the requirements of the program, 100 percent of those jobs have to be reviewed by the program sponsor, a desk edit, in essence, to make sure that the blower door test was performed, and everything looks okay.

In addition, a minimum of at least 5 percent of those jobs have to be field QC'd by the program sponsor, or it's designated agent. And so, you know, the blower door's put up a third time –

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on those jobs to verify that the diagnostic test results of the contractor are accurate.

Another part of that is, you know, really engaging with the customer and learning about their experience with the program so that, you know, you can learn how the contractors are performing, and how the program is performing in the eyes of the customer. And so, you know, those quality assurance rigors are fairly strenuous, and that is something that our sponsors are currently doing. So again, when it comes to developing your own plans, to track the quality of your jobs, you know, that's the framework that's currently in existence in a lot of the markets where there are Home Performance sponsors. And it's something that you could either hang your hat on, or stand upon, depending upon your needs.

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Erin Jackson:

Well, we actually have a question that came through. One is, "Is there a recommended contractor reporting tool, and can you provide a standard set of metrics to guide program development?"

Casey Murphy:

In terms of a reporting tool, it's at least my interpretation that that's really the nut we're trying to crack here.

Erin Jackson:

Yes.

Casey Murphy:

I mean, we have a lot of barriers. We know that, you know, going forward, we would want that tool in two years, for instance. And so, really what the EECBG funding opportunity is, is to test out different ideas, learn what works and what doesn't work. And then we can incorporate those lessons on a nationwide scale. So, I mean, I don't know, Chandler, if you have any, you know, recommendations or guidance?

Chandler von Schrader:

Well, that question is, of course, multilayered. If it's just the reporting tool coming up from the sponsor to us, that's a relatively easy reporting tool listing the number of contractors, the frequency that – the jobs that contractor has done, and the frequency that those jobs had a site inspection. So, that's relatively easy.

But if you step down deeper, you know, the reporting tool and the savings estimating tool that the contractor is using, gathering the information and building their savings estimation and work orders, that that tool is marketplace driven. Some of our sponsors – most of our sponsors will say, "This is a tool that we will be deploying, and contractors, here you go. You need to get trained on it and such." And I suspect many of you folks know what some of those tools are out there.

And, you know, that's a real critical piece – getting this information back in a format that is workable for both the sponsor and certainly us upstream. And nationally, we're trying to build XML files that everybody can work with and to develop more of a registrar of this – improvements across the country. But we don't have it yet. Did that answer your question?

Erin Jackson:

Well, Tamara actually was the one who asked that question. So, if you would like to follow up, we can unmute you. Just send us another quick ping on the toolbar and we'll unmute you. And if anyone else has another question, please feel free to ask us, and we'll unmute you and you can ask.

[Next Slide]

Chandler von Schrader:

Before – a slide or two back, there was a mention of mentoring.

[Return to previous slide, two back]

And another lesson we have learned painfully is you cannot underestimate the time you need to build your contractor's confidence in the field.

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It's one thing for them to take a week's course, maybe go out on a couple houses, but it's quite another, when they are let loose, to go inside homes and try to figure out just what the heck is going on. To stay with your contractors into the program, have somebody

that is available to technically help them through issues that they will immediately come across is important.

If you train and let go, if it's a catch-and-release program, you're not gonna get contractors fully imbedded in this comprehensive delivery. They're gonna slip back to their old habits of just blowing insulation, replacing windows, or, you know, replacing heating and cooling systems.

So, do anticipate and invest in mentoring your contractors, not only with the diagnostics, but with the installation.

Casey Murphy:

And so, you know, maybe we can go through a couple of the resources that we have. I really don't want to spend too much time here, I just want to give you a quick overview of what is available on the Web page, or in terms of customized support. I'd really like to maybe move on to delve into a lot of Matthew's experience, 'cause I think that's where the real value lies.

But just to provide a brief overview, on our ENERGY STAR Web site, we do have a sponsor guide. It's a 51-page document that really goes into depth about all the different program elements. It includes not just the program requirements, but a lot of it is just best practices, the types of issues that sponsors have to worry about or plan for.

And so, you know, it's good – even if you're not considering to become a partner, it's still good a resource to learn about the industry in general. If you do want to investigate becoming a sponsor, there is the program plan template, which we referred to earlier. It's an editable PDF, and it's basically just a way for providing a more systemic review of the program, and to make sure it meets programmatic requirements.

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There are, as I said earlier, a lot of different program elements. If all of the – the plan's reviewed, and it's compliant, then we have the four-page partnership agreement, which is on the right-hand side, and that would officially get you into the club and get you listed on our partner locator. Again, it may or may not be, you know, the goal of your individual program needs. That's a process that our sponsors go through.

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And then, you know, one of the challenges that I think all of us have is looking for sustainable funding for the long period. Utilities – you have to worry about this in a slightly different context. Certainly everyone on the call, I think, one of the goals is to, you know, leverage the funds so the program does last beyond the EECBG opportunity. And so, that's really where we're seeing some innovative approaches and ideas come through in some of the implementation plans that we've seen so far. But they're not time tested.

And I think that, you know, we're gonna see these ideas, and hopefully kinda share them and find out if it works or if it doesn't work over time. And certainly, we're looking for the ideas that all of you on the phone call may have as well.

[Next Slide]

Chandler von Schrader:

And as you build your supply of trained contractors, and your money runs out inside two years, inside three years – Danielle just gave you another year, so that's great.

[Laughter]

[Previous Slide]

Chandler von Schrader:

I thought it was two. Anyways, the utilities will be much more receptive if they don't have to make the investments in building the contractor supply. So, hopefully their cost to join the club will not be as high if you've done a good job on building the supply of contractors who know how to deal with these houses correctly.

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Casey Murphy:

And so, you know, for our sponsors, we do provide a variety of marketing resources. There's the ENERGY STAR brand itself that can help to message to homeowners. We have a Web site template so it's easy for the sponsors to set up their own customized Web site. We have an online marketing toolkit. We have contractor resources as well. So, when a contractor enters the program, they can go on to a password-protected site and get access to certain tools, a disaggregation tool, guidance on what type of insurance a Home Performance contractor should have, and a variety of other resources.

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Again, here's an overview of the marketing tools. I don't want to spend too much time. All of this is on the Web site, so you can certainly, you know, download it there at energystar.gov, and you can certainly contact us, and we can direct you to these –

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resources if you can't find it on the Web site.

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Again, publications that our sponsors can also order. I believe most of the publications are free, so you can save on collateral expenses as well.

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And then we do have some form templates available so that, you know, if you haven't built out the specific scope of the test in or the test out that your auditors would perform, we have some templates that you can customize and build upon.

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And again, some consumer demand generation support that we offer.

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And so, I think we're gonna delve into a couple different examples. The major one's gonna be Austin Energy. We kind of mentioned before that this is a look at one of our sponsors. It's Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and they actually started out with a grant a couple years ago. The state was supporting Home Performance, and they were able to get a variety of stakeholders involved in promoting Home Performance throughout the state.

Right now, they have three different providers – MEC, EarthWays, and Columbia Gas and Light, I believe, are the three. And so, they have gone – they recruited and trained the contractors. They're promoting Home Performance. They're providing that quality assurance that has to occur on the test out, reviewing the contractors' jobs. And we've really seen the program explode in the past year, where they did 1,364 jobs in 2009, and they've seen some great success.

And so, one of the things that we want to encourage is for a program such as this to be able to interact with other stakeholders who also want to promote energy efficiency. I know I think there's one program in our audience who's located in Missouri, and it would be great if the existing resources of Missouri's DNR program can dovetail with the needs

of that program as well. It would be a shame if, you know, a different quality assurance framework is designed and implemented – it would be a shame to a Missouri homeowner if they're trying to get information about their energy efficiency opportunities in their home, and they're seeing different messages from different state-wide sponsors.

And I know there's an Energize Missouri Program right now, and we're working in collaboration with them to help to harmonize that message. And that's the key challenge. I mean, there's a lot of funding going into local markets, a lot of different stakeholders, and so it's difficult to coordinate those activities. And that's one of the purposes, I think, of this call is to facilitate that discussion.

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And sorry, one or two more marketing items before we get to Austin. We do have the comprehensive video, starring Chandler, that explains the Home Performance process through the eyes of the customer.

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Chandler von Schrader:
That's what I look like.

[Previous Slide]

Casey Murphy:

Yeah, yeah, a colleague of Chandler on the screenshot there for good reason.

[Next Slide]

Erin Jackson:

So, we just had a comment come through saying that Missouri Group is already in contact with DNR to flesh out their program. "So, thank you very much for their acknowledgement," she says – or he says, sorry, Michael.

[Laughter]

Casey Murphy:

And feel free to contact us, too. I mean, because I think that, you know, you don't want too many cooks in the kitchen, but at the same extent, it can help to, you know, have an enhanced dialogue as well.

And we also had another question come through, and I'm actually gonna unmute him so he can ask it himself. So, Robert Young, we're unmuting you. And now you're unmuted. You should be able to ask your question about certification of contractors.

Robert Young:

Okay. You know, I'm kind of new to this. I'm still trying to grasp it all. Is there a national standard, or can a contractor be ENERGY STAR certified without being within a community that has – that's sponsoring a program? Is it kind of – do you have to go all in, or are you picking off individual – is there a kind of a training and certification process for individual contractors around the country?

Chandler von Schrader:

That's a great question, and off the top, we do not have ENERGY STAR contractors. We do – that's not our role. There is a body out there that provides certifications of contractors and their technicians, and that's called Building Performance Institute. We have been working with BPI for quite some time, and they have basically set the stage on helping us certify technicians in that they've given all us all confidence that these folks know what they're doing inside a home.

That BPI-certified technician is not a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR prerequisite. However, it is widely subscribed by all of our program sponsors. It's a widely recognized pathway to performance for our contractors. There's another group called RESNET, which – Residential Energy Services Network – and they basically – their core delivery is doing home energy ratings. They have built their life really on the new homes, identifying and confirming that new homes are being built to ENERGY STAR standards.

The RESNET auditor, rater, is somebody that participates widely in our Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program. So, those are the two kind of keystone certification bodies that are helping give confidence to our contractors as they separate from, you know, Joe and his truck, who we don't – Joe and his truck may give you a – what I like to call a taillight warranty, "I'm gonna warranty all that work I've done in your house as long as you can see my taillight. Once I'm gone, I'm gone." That is not the case with BPI-certified folks. Does that help?

Robert Young:
Definitely, thank you.

Erin Jackson:
Robert, what grantee group are you with for Better Building?

Robert Young:
San Antonio.

Erin Jackson:
Well, welcome.

Robert Young:
Thank you.

Chandler von Schrader:
Ooh, that's a good lead in to Matt here.

Matthew Phillips:
I was gonna say, just down the road.

Robert Young:
Yep.

[Chuckle]

Matthew Phillips:
Good for you.

Erin Jackson:
Matt, if you don't mind, we also have one other question coming through. We're gonna unmute Steven Randall, and let him ask his question.

Matthew Phillips:
Totally.

Erin Jackson:
So, Steven, you're unmuted as well.

Steven Randall:

Okay. My question is, in Greensboro, we're targeting whole neighborhoods, and we're gonna go in and have probably several different contractors, I imagine, to try to get all of these different kinds of services done – the audits, the post inspections, the installation. What do you do to give the residents confidence that this is the right – you know, somebody who should be here, you know, an approved contractor, or whatever. Do you give 'em some kind of IDs, or program identification, or how do you deal with that kind of security questions?

Chandler von Schrader:

Well, it's good to be careful and to be mindful. And homeowners need to have, again, that confidence that this person coming into my house, one, not only knows what the heck they're doing, but belongs to a program – and I'll obviously speak to Home Performance with ENERGY STAR – our sponsors confirm that these contractors are businesses in good standing; that they carry the appropriate and required licenses to do business in the state; that they have their own individual core licenses, whatever their trade may be, HVAC, for instance.

So, there is an elevated confidence that contractors in our family have demonstrated the business proficiency. And these are firms of consequence. And then guess what? We give them our logo. Hey, when you see that logo come in the door, you're feeling pretty good if you're a homeowner. I'm biased.

[Laughter]

Chandler von Schrader:

But yeah, they should all have identification badges. And if you're doing a neighborhood blitz, you, you know, obviously have to spend some time in the community, and doing a block party, and getting as many together at one point to kind of talk through what's going to happen. They, you know, to show, "We're spending time on the front end," and, you know, breaking down those fears and barriers is gonna be time well spent.

Steven Randall:

Thank you.

Erin Jackson:

Did that answer your question? Okay, great. Matthew?

Casey Murphy:

Yeah, and if we wanted to – is he on mute? Or, Matthew, if you wanted to go ahead and take over.

Matthew Phillips:

Yes, absolutely. Just to add to what Chandler said for the gentleman, one of the things that we do, and I'll get into this in the presentation, but I just wanted to get this – address this before I forget, is that we funnel our contractors through our program, through Austin Energy. So, one of the things that we do is we require them (them being the contractor) to come through an orientation. They have a handbook, and I'll cover all that later.

But one of the things that they have to do – the contractor has to do is they call us. We have an inspection team and such, and the contractor has to actually schedule either the verification or the final through us. So then that homeowner knows that that contractor, one, is legit; two, they do have the ENERGY STAR logo; and three, our inspector goes out there with the contractor and the customer to see what's actually going on with the house and such. And that actually, the verification is a really, really good thing to do

because it puts the customer's mind at ease because the inspector is there for the actual customer, not the contractor, but for the customer, to answer those questions.

So, it's a holistic approach of putting that customer at ease. Plus, once again, you have the mailers that go out, the advertising, so the customer knows that this is a legitimate program that's, you know, going around their neighborhood and such. But with that being said, thank you very much for asking me to participate today. I just want to make it clear that sitting in a hot tub in 60 below 0, I was living in Alaska. I was not living here. I don't think you can even find that in a walk-in cooler.

Now, we – Austin Energy has been doing this since 1982, about 27 years. And the reason we got involved with this is because –

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our customer base, our citizens wanted actually for us to find a different solution as opposed to building another power plant.

So, all of our conservation energy programs, whether it be residential, commercial, solar, are basically a virtual power plant. That was the beginning of the motivation for us to start a conservation program.

Now, we're the tenth largest municipal utility in the country, and we have about 320,000 residential customers, a little over – almost close to a million in population. And as you can see the breakdown of our generation, 35 percent's coal, nuclear's the 28, gas is 28, purchase power's 5, and renewable is 4 percent. So, that comes out to about 3,100 megawatts of generation per year. This program, last year, the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR –

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Program, we saved about 4.8 megawatts just through this program alone.

Now, we have all kinds of different things that we actually address. One of the things that you've heard earlier that's very important is that – the house as a whole system. We break the – if you break a puzzle apart, you have all the puzzle pieces everywhere, that's not a complete puzzle. You just have the little pieces, and it doesn't make sense.

It's the same kind of concept with actual looking at the house as a whole system, and that's addressed through things like building science, Now, that being said, what Austin Energy does is we rebate on specific measures. We approach the house as a whole system, one, because that's the way we've done it for 27 years; two, in 2005, we became a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR partner, and that is one of the backbones of this program is to actually address that house as a whole system.

We want to give an incentive to our customers. Once again, it's cheaper for us to actually give rebates and/or loans to our customers to address their house, whether it's gonna be comfort, or it's gonna be high bills, in order so we don't have to build another power plant. So, we have rebates. We have loans on solar shading; attic insulation; radiant barrier; and then also duct ceiling –

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replacement of the duct; and testing.

Now, there's two ways we go about this in air infiltration: the comprehensive approach, and then we have a system performance approach. And in the A/C replacement, we address the package units, and also central split systems. Now, once again, when we go in and we look at these houses – our contractors go in and they look at their houses –

I'm gonna back up for just a second, and I'm gonna tell you that what – how we approach our contractors. Our contractors, once again, come for right now, and it's been that way – they're coming to seek to find out how they can actually get involved with our program 'cause we're the municipally-owned utility. We have a strong rebate program. We have a strong loan program. And they want to get involved for two reasons: One, because they see the value in it; and two, because the customers are asking for that particular service, and they want that particular contractor to help them out.

What we do is we run our contractors through an orientation; it's about a half a day. And they get a handbook that spells out all the specifications, the guidelines, the policies, what their expectation is gonna be, what our expectation's gonna be because one of the things that I want to emphasize, too, is that this is a collaborative effort. Our contractors, even though this Austin Energy's program, we have an open-door policy with our contractors because we, as a group, are trying to service our customer to find what the best solution is for them to be – either become comfortable, or their energy bills go down.

So, I get a lot of input from my contractors. I have 130 contractors, and they're all over the gamut as far as their expertise and such. As Chandler had said earlier, we have a lot of our contractors are BPI certified, RESNET, or NCI trained. When we get – when we require our contractors to go in and they do the job, a lot of times they test in, they test out. There's a high – we have a high standard for our contractors when it comes to actually addressing that house and the customer that falls in line with a lot of these different certifications.

We do encourage our contractors to go get those certifications. We actually have a training rebate program specifically for the contractor just to encourage them to go out and get this training. We pay a percentage of the actual training once they actually have completed the class and passed the class.

I really appreciate early on when Chandler said that when they go in the class, they come out, they have the head knowledge, but there is that time in there where they have to go from the head knowledge to the actual application of doing it in the field. And that's one of the things that our inspectors do. They keep a very close eye out on these contractors, especially when they're new, to make sure that what their doing is done correctly. All of the air test forms, rebate bid summaries, loan bid summaries, energy analysis, those are forms that we use internally they check and sign off on. So, we make sure that everything's done correctly, that the math is done, what needs to be done is done at the verification. As I said earlier, an inspector will go out with the contractor to the customer, and they sit down, and the contractor let's the inspector know, "This is what I'm proposing to do to the house because this is what I've actually found." The inspector actually looks and makes sure that those particular items need to be done and that they fall within the guidelines of our program and also the ENERGY STAR Program.

The final, we go ahead and the contractor, the homeowner, and the inspector signs off on that – those pieces of materials, send them back to Austin Energy, and then we process 'em for rebate and/or send the loan documents over to Velocity Credit Union, who actually holds our – runs our loan program. So, the next slide.

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Now, the – how we break this down as far as our rebate structure, we have a system replacement, both package and split. And the rebates are anywhere from \$300.00 to \$600.00 per unit. We have graduated levels, tier levels that we actually rebate on.

And attic insulation, we rebate R38. The actual equation that we use that has come through our engineering department. We also have an engineering department that closely monitors our performance as it relates to the utility, making sure that the cost benefit is there and that we're doing exactly, precisely what we need to be doing and the contractors need to be doing. You can see the equation there.

And then we have the comprehensive.

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Second – go back one; go back one.

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The radiant barrier is \$.10 per square foot. And then we have solar screens, film, low E windows at a dollar per square foot. And with our guidelines here in Texas, the South, West, East are one hour more, or 40 percent of the windows where the sun comes in. So, there are actually – we drilled down, and I probably don't have enough time today, but we drill down as far as what the specifications and what the guidelines and such per measure is.

Okay, go ahead, next slide.

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And then the comprehensive, we have a duct replacement – 50 percent or less of the duct work they have to do comprehensive, and we – that's at a \$1.75 per linear foot. Duct insulation's \$1.25, and duct sealing is \$.12 per square foot. Now, we test out, blower door, back draft, and duct blaster is required to make sure that everything's actually been sealed up and done properly.

As I say when I go out and do talks to the general public and outreach and such, I use this analogy where you can have the most efficient, best HVAC system in the world – in other words, you can have the heart of an Olympic athlete, but if you have the veins of an 80-year-old, you're gonna make that A/C work that much harder, and it's not gonna – it's not gonna actually perform to it's efficiency. So, the duct work and the HVAC work hand in hand. So, we really stress that. And how we're also able to stress that and also the – making sure that the house is sealed up and such is by the blower door and duct blaster.

Now, with the replacement at 50 percent of the duct work or more, and window A/C are converted to central A/C, those are the requirements for system performance. Again, it's \$1.75 per linear foot. Duct insulation's \$1.25, \$.30 per linear foot for draped or buried. And then with \$200.00 for each system. And then \$50.00 per when they have to cut in a return for the air. That's another thing that we really keep right on top of, and that's making sure the air flow – room-to-room air flow is done correctly, and that there's enough return air to actually supply that house with the proper air flow.

You know, obviously, we're in a cooling region. Our heating days are next to nil. I can probably count 'em on one hand. But the actual A/C cooling is something that we address – we'll be addressing well into November. We just got off – let's see, about a week ago it started dipping into the 100s, and we're looking at being over 100 for the next week or so. It's not like it was last year, but this is when systems start failing and we start really addressing the customer's issues and stuff with the contractors and such. Next slide.

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And we have a loan option. We have a loan program, Velocity Credit Union, and it's 0 to 6 percent APR unsecured loans. And it's anywhere from three- to ten-year term options. We also have the Austin Clean Energy Accelerator Program that we're getting off the

ground. Right now we're looking at how we can actually enhance the loan program, get the – a lot of our – more of our customers coming through the loan program. How we can incentivize that even more.

And we're entertaining the idea of our customers being able to do some of the loan and also taking advantage of some of the rebate. Right now, our customers can only do either the loan or rebate because we buy down the loan. And so, with the money we would have taken to actually pay out on a rebate, we're paying – buying down on the loan. Next.

Erin Jackson:
Matt?

Matthew Phillips:
Yeah?

Erin Jackson:
Do you mind if I interrupt you for a second? Someone has a question for you.

Matthew Phillips:
Sure.

Erin Jackson:
We're just gonna take a moment to unmute her. Tamara Jones, I believe from Southeast Energy and Efficiency Alliance.

Matthew Phillips:
Uh-huh?

Erin Jackson:
Has a question for you, just unmuting her.

Matthew Phillips:
Okay.

Erin Jackson:
Oops, you know, we're having a technical difficult, so I'm just gonna read the question that she posted to us. The question is, "How does Austin take advantage of DOE's bulk purchasing program, and what do the grantee programs have to put in place to allow their contractors and homeowners access to the savings that the local government can get?" So, do you take advantage of the DOE's bulk purchasing program in Austin?

Matthew Phillips:
At the moment, we're looking into that. I don't know the answer to that at this moment. I know that we've set up – we're setting up criteria, and there's a whole other department that's actually looking into putting that all together. But at the moment, for the Home Performance, we do not.

Erin Jackson:
Okay.

[Next Slide]

Matthew Phillips:
Okay, the participation in energy savings, now, 2005 is when we started with Home Performance with ENERGY STAR. We had a participation of about almost 1,400

customers. As you can see, every year it's gradually gone up quite a bit. Last year we had a little over 2,600 participants in the program.

There's a lot of variables. Our contractor base has actually grown quite a bit, so there's more contractors out there actually getting more jobs and being submitted. Once again, we have a contractor base that's very educated and has a lot of training, whether it's the BPI, RESNET, or NCI. And we require the test in and test out.

Rebate structures, we've actually gotten very aggressive as far as putting more money into rebates. The federal tax credit has been a good thing for us. We've had a lot of customers participate in that also. And I can't – I can't stress again enough the whole marketing approach. We want to make sure that our marketing – that your marketing is in line with your goals as far as what you're wanting to do, what – you know, what you want your contractors to do.

But I also want to stress, too, that we have 130 contractors, but more isn't always better. It's the quality of the contracting pool, not the quantity. So, as Chandler said earlier, make sure that your contractors, once you start on that, down that road, that they're well trained, they're well informed, and that your marketing actually supports their efforts to go out and address these homes and these customers.

We're really busy again this year. We're in the height of our season, and we're just going complete gangbusters, and it's due to a strong contractor base and a well-defined program with well-defined guidelines. So, the contractors know exactly, precisely what they're supposed to be doing and what we're supposed to be doing for them. So, communication is a huge component to all this also.

Casey Murphy:

Hey, Matt, I would add, and tipping our hat to you, Austin Energy is a very engaged and responsible sponsor. And, you know, yes, you've got good contractors, but you also have good folks like you making it happen. So, it's working in Austin.

Matthew Phillips:

I appreciate it. It's – you know, once again, it's a collaboration, and that's the – none of us are going to be able to do any of this in a closed silo. There's just absolutely no way it's gonna happen. And that – keeping that open-door policy as far as new ideas, changing the – you know, changing guidelines, which as the actual atmosphere changes, I mean, we're in a huge change right now as far as energy efficiency and how it's perceived in the general public, pretty much across the country.

Years ago, you know, 18 years ago, I – you know, I was looked at as a freak because, you know, I was talking about energy efficiency and such, and building straw-bale houses. So, you know, it's changed quite a bit. And that's because of, you know, it's because of all the marketing and all of the new technologies. The new technologies have really bolstered this also.

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Chandler von Schrader:

Well, Matt, thanks a bunch. There's, obviously, Matthew's contact information. Great stuff. Again, Austin Energy is one of the premier sponsors, so that was – I hope that was good for your folks to hear his story. And I now need to start thinking of him more as a freak, I guess, than I had in the past.

[Laughter]

Chandler von Schrader:

Thanks, Matt.

Matthew Phillips:
You're welcome.

[Next Slide – skip to second slide]
Chandler von Schrader:

I think we got a couple more slides, and then we're about done. You know, real quick, you know, actually we're a little jaded here. We believe Home Performance is the right delivery. We've got a lot of stuff built, so please consider the tools that we have in place. Don't reinvent the wheel. As you move forward, you know, leveraging your training resources with utilities is gonna help build this for the future. And I think – I hope you got the message on don't underestimate the marketing and consumer education needs.

[Next Slide]

And I think we got one last slide of our Web site. We've got great stuff here. Please spend a moment and play around on this site. We've – and, you know, this is public information. So, it's – as you move forward, certainly our Home Performance page right here is – our resources are for those in our program. So, as you hopefully move in our direction, you'll see that we can accelerate your market position.

[Next Slide]

And then, hey, you best be ready because it's a brave world out there. That's my contact and Casey's contact. Please feel free to track us down with additional questions. We have a moment or two for only good questions. And we get to judge which they are.

Erin Jackson:
Nah.

[Laughter]

Erin Jackson:
Does anyone on the line have a question? Oh, Matt? Did you have a question, Matt?

Matthew Phillips:
I was curious, did the mouse get the cheese?

Chandler von Schrader:

Well, that's in the next slide. It's a ugly picture; you don't – it's a good thing he had his hat on.

[Laughter]

Erin Jackson:

All right, well, with that, if you do have questions, feel free to just e-mail them to me, or to anyone else on that team, and we can get them answered for you. We would – we have recorded this webinar, so we will be posting it to the Google Group soon, once, of course, Chandler approves it 'cause he just gave me a weird look.

[Laughter]

Chandler von Schrader:
Did I sign off on that?

Erin Jackson:

[Laughter] So, we will be posting it to the Google Group, as well as the PowerPoint presentation. So, you have access to that, as well as information on how to get access to the things that Chandler, and Casey, and Matt were talking about, such as the templates and sponsorship guidelines, etc. So, stay tuned.

And we also have a webinar next week, which will be hosted by a different DOE group, but it's the Residential Retrofit Guidelines webinar. We will be sending information out about that. But basically, it will allow you to get an update of voluntary national guidelines, which include standard work specifications, job task analyses, knowledge skills and abilities inventory, and technical reference documents for the residential retrofit market. So, this is a really helpful webinar, and it's going to be on August 11, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern. So, please stay tuned. We'll send an e-mail out with information on how to register for that.

Oh, I'm just getting a note that that'll also help address some of your certification questions. So, I think it was Tamara who had that question. We also just had a question, if you go back a slide – can you go back a slide?

[Previous Slide]

All right, with that, thank you for joining us, and we'll talk to soon. Thank you.

Matthew Phillips:
Thank you.

[End of Audio]