



Better Buildings Residential Network  
Workforce/Business Partners Peer Exchange Call:  
*Strategies for Building Contractor Interest in  
Program Participation*

*Call Slides and Summary*

August 22, 2013

- Call Logistics and Introductions
- Introducing the Better Buildings Residential Network
- Future Call Topics
- Discussion:
  - What strategies or approaches has your program used to build contractor interest in program participation?
    - What has worked well? What has not worked well?
  - Have you used different strategies to reach particular contractor segments (e.g., HVAC) or to meet particular upgrade needs?
  - Are similar or different strategies useful for *creating* interest versus *sustaining* contractor participation over time?
    - Have you adapted contractor outreach/engagement approaches?
  - Other questions/issues related to building contractor interest in program participation?

# Participating Programs and Organizations



- Austin, TX
- Alabama
- Boulder/Denver, CO
- California
- Chapel Hill/Carrboro, NC
- Cincinnati, OH
- Illinois
- Los Angeles, CA
- Philadelphia, PA
- Santa Barbara, CA
- Washington
- West Rutland, VT
- Wisconsin
- Energy Efficiency Business Coalition (Golden, CO)

# Discussion: Strategies for Building Contractor Interest in Program Participation



**If you have good leads, contractors will be interested. The best way to attract contractors to participate is to build a robust program:**

- **Marketing materials and sales training.**
  - GCEA and Philadelphia provide training in sales techniques, including how to “sell the loan” by framing it in terms of savings per month. This helps increase contractors’ closing rates, which attracts contractors to the program and can even make them more successful in their regular business.
  - GCEA provides contractors with outreach packets that explain the program and available upgrades to homeowners.
- Use **energy advisors and “house party” marketing techniques**, as well as neighborhood demonstrations in public spaces and offering bulk purchasing options, to generate leads for your program (Chicago, Philadelphia, Santa Barbara).
- Programs that allow homeowners to list their homes as **Home Performance Certified in the MLS** help drive demand (Illinois).

# Discussion: Strategies for Building Contractor Interest in Program Participation



## Strategies for maintaining a robust program, continued:

- **Training opportunities.** Philadelphia offered partially-subsidized BPI-certified training for workers who met certain criteria. Austin, TX offered subsidized BPI-certified and IECC training to contractors. Chapel Hill/Carrboro, NC paid for contractors to become Home Performance with Energy Star certified, which drove demand.
- Building a large base of contractors **requires active quality control.** Philadelphia had to eliminate two contractors to maintain quality standards, and worked with other contractors to help them reach standards.

## Attract contractors to your program through outreach and incentive strategies:

- **Qualified leads incentives.** Austin, TX provides high-quality leads to contractors who get good customer reviews.
- **Equipment financing.** Austin, TX and Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance provide subsidies for contractors' use of upgraded equipment.

## Challenges to building contractor interest:

- Some programs have an issue with a **low passing rate** of the BPI certification even after offering training.
  - Philadelphia addressed this challenge by offering a prerequisite online course that contractors can take at their own pace.
- After grant programs wind down, **contractors have to maintain certifications on their own**, which involves some annual fees, a cost that can be difficult for contractors to justify.
  - Contractors can be incentivized to remain certified through programs that allow homeowners to list their homes as energy efficiency certified in the MLS.
- Small contractors can be overwhelmed by robust programs, particularly spikes in demand, which generate more leads than these contractors can handle.

# Poll: Future Call Topics

- Standardization and quality control of upgrade work and workforce expectations: 78%
- Incubating new home performance businesses: 33%
- Home performance training and mentoring lessons from the field: 56%
- Contractors and customer loan approval coordination and timing: 22%
- Other: 0%
  
- Other suggested topics:
  - Fees and revenue generation
  - Training standards and maintaining a contractor pool

# Future Call Topics

- Future Workforce/Business Partners Peer Exchange Calls:
  - November 21, 2013 (3-4:30 PM EST): Contractor-Funded Incentives
  - December 12, 2013 (12:30-2 PM EST): Trends in Contractor Conversion Rates
  - *Other workforce calls in 2013/2014 are to be determined*
  
- Please email any ideas for future call topics to [bbpeerexchange@gmail.com](mailto:bbpeerexchange@gmail.com)