



# Effective Practices for Implementing Local Climate and Energy Programs: *Working with Utilities*

## Lessons Learned *by Communities for Communities*

*The views expressed in this document are those of the Climate Showcase Communities grant recipients. U.S. EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned.*

### WHAT IS IT?

Energy utilities are well established and often have energy efficiency and environmental commitments to meet. They can be key partners, especially for local energy efficiency programs.

### WHY DO IT?

- Community programs can help utilities reach people and disseminate information about renewable energy and energy efficiency incentives.
- Utilities can reach a wide audience and provide programs with extensive energy use data.
- Partnerships with utilities can add credibility to a project/program and provide access to technical expertise.

### WHAT WORKS?

- Become familiar with state demand-side management and renewable energy requirements because they provide a key motive for utilities to work with local programs.
- Work with utility staff to design a project that advances common goals. Help them understand how your program adds value.
- Find the right contact at the utility, such as someone who sees the benefits that your organization or program can provide.
- Formalize your collaboration in writing.
- Invite utility representatives to participate in educational workshops.
- Leverage utility rebates by bundling them into program offerings.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU WATCH OUT FOR?

- Utilities may have well-established programs that do not have the flexibility to work with alternative or progressive programs/approaches.
- Utilities face perceived and real constraints by state and public utility commission regulations.
- Some utilities may not be able to release data to third parties.
- Substantial reporting and administrative work may be required to access rebates for customers.

### WHAT RESOURCES HAVE PROJECTS FOUND TO BE USEFUL?

- Public utility commissions' websites and proceedings
- Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency: [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org)



*“Utilities can provide a funding match or cash incentives to enhance program offerings.”*

*Laura, Tri-County Small Business Efficiency Program, Lewis and Clark County, Montana*

*“Build relationships with utilities to provide better information about rebate and incentive programs.”*

*Sabrina, Green Homes Challenge, Frederick County, Maryland*