

Energy Equity for Renters: A Toolkit to Expand Energy Efficiency and Preserve Affordable Housing

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In 2021, the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) launched the [Energy Equity for Renters](#) (EEfR) initiative. EEfR offers technical assistance to support the development of policies and programs in participating communities.¹ Several participating local governments and their partnering community-based organizations (CBOs) have requested that ACEEE compile information about policies and programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs while preserving housing affordability, with a focus on naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) properties. These participants have also requested research into measures that local governments can use to better incorporate equity in the design and implementation of municipal energy efficiency, housing, and other policies.

This toolkit delivers on these requests and consists of four sections:

1. An overview of how local governments can respond to renter challenges with integrated energy efficiency and policies to prevent housing displacement
2. Financing and funding options for owners and renters of affordable properties to address pressing issues and funding gaps for energy efficiency retrofits in rental housing
3. Guidance for conducting an energy efficiency marketing and educational campaign aimed at property owners, staff, and renters of rental properties
4. An examination of procedures that U.S. local governments have taken to ensure that policies and programs are implemented equitably

ACEEE developed this toolkit with four of the five communities participating in the EEfR initiative and their respective CBO partners. That cohort helped us to define the scope of work and served as editorial reviewers, providing comments and feedback on a draft version of the toolkit. The toolkit also builds upon ACEEE's report, [A New Lease on Energy: Guidance](#)

¹ The five communities participating in the EEfR initiative are the Bay Area Regional Energy Network with the City of Berkeley, California; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Duluth, Minnesota; Portland, Oregon; and Tacoma, Washington. More information about these communities can be found on the [Energy Equity for Renters webpage](#).

[for Improving Rental Housing Efficiency at the Local Level](#), which outlines community engagement and other fundamental actions related to [energy equity](#) in rental housing.

The toolkit's methodology consists of two key parts: a literature review and case study interviews. Our literature review informed each section of the toolkit. We also conducted interviews with local government and program administrators to better ascertain information on general costs and staffing needs of programs, challenges to implementation, lessons learned, and so on. Each section includes at least one case study; additional program examples can be found throughout the toolkit.

The table below provides an overview of the case studies in each toolkit section, as well as additional examples.

Table 1. Overview of case studies and additional program examples included in the toolkit

Toolkit section	Case study/program example	Description
Responding to Renter Challenges with Integrated Energy Efficiency and Anti-Displacement Strategies	Denver Transit-Oriented Development Fund	A fund to preserve and create affordable housing in transit areas
	Washington, DC, Flex Program	A pilot program that provides renters with a flexible form of rental assistance
Filling Gaps in Funding and Financing for Energy Efficiency Retrofits in Rental Housing	Additional program examples	Washington, DC, Stay DC ; New York City Right-to-Counsel ; Boston Housing Authority Project Labor Agreement; Washington, DC, Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) ; Takoma Park TOPA ; Minneapolis 4d Affordable Housing Incentive and Green Cost Share ; Santa Barbara affordability covenant ; Charlottesville Housing Voucher Energy Efficiency Pilot Program
	Minneapolis Pay As You Save© (PAYS) Proposal	An inclusive financing system that aims to conduct energy efficiency upgrades while reducing renter energy bills
	Washington, DC, Housing Production Trust Fund	A fund that aims to create and preserve affordable housing
Guidance on Marketing, Education,	Additional program examples	Boise Energy Future Plan ; Boulder County Partners for a Clean Environment ; New York City's Green Predevelopment Loan ; St. Louis Housing Trust Fund
	Dane County, Wisconsin, Efficiency Navigator	A one-stop shop that provides technical assistance to property owners and reduces barriers to energy efficiency program participation

Toolkit section	Case study/program example	Description
and Outreach Campaigns Targeting Energy Efficiency Improvements in Rental Housing	Additional program examples	Fort Collins Utilities Efficiency Works ; Denver Climate Action Plan community engagement ; Castle Square retrofit project
Local Government Measures to Institutionalize Equity Accountability	San Antonio Budget Equity Tool Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative's Participatory Budgeting for Affordable Housing Additional program examples	An internal tool that municipal departments complete annually to identify gaps where budget improvements can be made to reach marginalized communities A community-led process in Monroe County, New York, that resulted in the creation of affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness Washington, DC, Racial Equity Impact Assessment ; Oakland participatory budgeting ; Providence Climate Justice Plan

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

As local governments and their partnering CBOs consider the policies and programs highlighted in this toolkit, they can also look to federal legislation and programs that may be able to support their efforts.²

Table 2. Federal legislation and programs

Legislation/programs	Description
<i>Legislation</i>	
American Rescue Plan Act	COVID-19 pandemic relief, including for supporting health and economic well-being, addressing social inequities, and responding to climate change

² For more information, please see [Ready-to-Go: State and Local Efforts Advancing Energy Efficiency](#).

Legislation/programs	Description
<i>Legislation</i>	
Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act	Advances equity, economic growth, and climate response, including investments in electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, clean energy jobs, efficient transit, and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program
Inflation Reduction Act	Revised and expanded energy efficiency tax credits, rebates for whole-home retrofits, grants and loans for energy efficiency in affordable housing, grants to provide technical and financial assistance for projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
<i>Programs</i>	
Community Development Block Grant Program	Annual grants for governments focused on improving housing and living environments, particularly for low- and moderate-income households
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program	Community-level grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy
Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program	Provides federally funded assistance with energy costs through states, territories, and local governments, including weatherization, home repairs, and energy bills
Weatherization Assistance Program	Weatherization of low-income households

Source: Dewey, Mah, and Howard 2021

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Dewey, A., J. Mah, and B. Howard. 2021. *Ready to Go: State and Local Efforts Advancing Energy Efficiency*. Washington, DC: American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. www.aceee.org/toolkit/2021/11/ready-go-state-and-local-efforts-advancing-energy-efficiency.