



# 2025 INSPIRING EFFICIENCY AWARDS



The Inspiring Efficiency Education Award is presented to an organization that increased knowledge of and action on energy efficiency amongst policy makers, stakeholders and customers through a local campaign or strategy.

## 2025 WINNER

### Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program

The Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program designed the Market Development Initiative (MDI) to ensure that utility energy efficiency offerings are made available to underserved communities through a network of diverse trade allies with a highly trained local workforce through two paths:

Through the Trade Ally Development (TAD) program, diverse contractors are provided with growth opportunities through virtual trainings, resources, and one-on-one coaching support that will elevate their business. Participants learn about diverse and industry certifications, expansion into EE, and creating a business growth plan.

Through the Workforce Training and Employment (WTE) program, unemployed and underemployed individuals in underrepresented and marginalized communities are introduced to the energy efficiency industry, are provided hands-on training and are guided toward gainful employment opportunities with trade allies, utilities and other enterprises.

**Accepted by:** Allison Gregoire | Nicor Gas | [aegregoi@southernco.com](mailto:aegregoi@southernco.com)



# IMPACT

INSPIRING EFFICIENCY AWARDS

## WINNER

The Inspiring Efficiency Impact Award is presented to an organization that has made a significant and measurable impact through a program, campaign or strategy to reduce energy consumption (or resulted in a quantifiable positive impact on health, emissions reductions, energy burden or other societal impact) based on their target market.

## 2025 WINNER

### SEEL Grant Writing Program

In 2022, leading into 2023, SEEL, LLC with funding from the Ameren Illinois Market Development Initiative (MDI) designed and launched the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Grant Writing Program. Participating in the Ameren Illinois Market Development Initiative, the program empowered nonprofits in Illinois to secure approximately \$10 million in funding through CEJA to establish workforce development hubs in disadvantaged communities. By providing full-service grant writing support, the program ensured nonprofits with limited resources could successfully apply for and receive funding. These hubs played a crucial role in training and placing individuals in clean energy jobs, reducing energy burdens, and promoting economic development in low-income areas. The program offered all participating agencies a grant writer and coaching for teaming agreements and program design at no cost to the organization.

**Accepted by:** Angie Ostaszewski | SEEL, LLC | [aostaszewski@seelllc.com](mailto:aostaszewski@seelllc.com)  
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The Inspiring Efficiency Impact Award is presented to an organization that has made a significant and measurable impact through a program, campaign or strategy to reduce energy consumption (or resulted in a quantifiable positive impact on health, emissions reductions, energy burden or other societal impact) based on their target market.

## 2025 WINNER

### Michigan Farm Energy Program

In response to Michigan's low numbers of USDA-REAP funded energy efficiency projects (tied for 50th in two of the initial seven years, no higher than 46th), the Michigan Farm Energy Program's (MFEP) was created in 2009. The activities of the MFEP and participating organizations resulted in a dramatic rise to fifth by 2012. Michigan has maintained a top 10 ranking ever since.

The MFEP has expanded from certified ASABE/ABSI S612 farm energy audits and renewable energy assessments to working with uUtilities in developing agricultural energy waste reduction programs and over 45 agricultural measures for the Michigan Energy Measures Database.

To date, over 463 energy audits and 154 renewable energy assessments have been completed and it is the only program specifically for farm energy auditors.

**Accepted by:** Aluel Go | Michigan Farm Energy Program | [goaluel@msu.edu](mailto:goaluel@msu.edu)



The Inspiring Efficiency Innovation Award is presented to a nominee that has developed and implemented a successful new and innovative program, campaign or strategy or has implemented a program in a new and innovative way.

## 2025 WINNER

### Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative

Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative (MVEC) has an EV-only time-of-use program with 750 members enrolled. When members sign up, MVEC must install a submeter, which bears with it costs and logistical complexity that are borne by both MVEC staff and participants who need to hire an electrician. With FlexCharging, MVEC launched a one-year study in October 2023 to compare EV telematics data directly from the vehicle against utility submeter readings. This is the largest study of utility submeter data against EV telematics in a field setting in North America. The study results confirm that telematics data is sufficiently accurate to serve as a viable and cost-effective replacement for utility submetering and offers specific program recommendations for other utilities looking to implement these programs at scale.

**Accepted by:** Mike Dietz | Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative |  
miked@mvec.net



The Inspiring Efficiency Marketing Award is presented to a nominee that has engaged in or supported a successful marketing campaign or strategy to increase the adoption or market penetration of energy efficient products and/or altered public behaviors or practices in the Midwest.

## 2025 WINNER

### Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas Energy Efficiency Programs

The 'Inspire to Save' campaign spans five years and features highly visible activities such as billboards, digital display, and paid social, ads, radio and streaming ads, and community events along with consistent branding and effective communication across two utility territories. The campaign leverages partnerships with diverse enterprises and community organizations to effectively reach customers and overcome barriers to reaching specific customer groups. Over the course of the campaign, messaging has evolved from asking customers what they would do with the money they save in our "Treat Yourself with Energy Savings" ads to encouraging customers to "Warm up to Energy Savings" in 2022-2023 and "Find Comfort in Savings" in 2024. The 'Inspire to Save' campaign has successfully improved customer engagement and trust in energy efficiency programs, setting a scalable model for future initiatives.

**Accepted by:** Jean Gibson | Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas |  
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Kelly Klopp | Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas |  
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The Inspiring Efficiency Champion Award is presented to an organization or individual who successfully took actions to ensure all communities are able to take advantage of the benefits of energy efficiency; or who has worked with a community organization or addressed an issue specific to a community, particularly a historically excluded community, in a unique and purposeful way to enact change.

## 2025 WINNER

### Community Engagement – Building Energy Exchange St. Louis

High Performance Building Hubs as a concept are independent policy-neutral, implementation focused not-for profit initiatives that resource and support local implementation of energy efficient projects and best practices. When the need for trusted expertise and ground-level support was realized in St. Louis and Kansas City, local organizations and utilities joined together. A groundbreaking national partnership formed with the Building Energy Exchange in New York and the Institute for Market Transformation, parent of the Building Innovation Hub in Washington DC, in order to develop and launch the Building Energy Exchanges in St. Louis and Kansas City. Since this time, their capacity to draw attention and resources to the Midwest has grown and the Building Energy Resource Hub launched as a high-contributing partner in Chicago.

With Executive Director, Malachi Rein, at the helm, the Building Energy Exchange St. Louis (BE-Ex STL) is a key resource hub dedicated to enhancing the energy efficiency of St. Louis' building stock. By connecting stakeholders with the necessary expertise, funding and skilled partners, BE-Ex STL supports building performance improvements at scale. An initiative of the Missouri Gateway Green Building Council, BE-Ex STL also supports the City of St. Louis' energy benchmarking and BPS policies, with backing from local and national partners, including Ameren Missouri and the Institute for Market Transformation.

**Accepted by:** Malachi Rein | Building Energy Exchange St. Louis | [malachi@be-exstl.org](mailto:malachi@be-exstl.org)



The Inspiring Efficiency Champion Award is presented to an organization or individual who successfully took actions to ensure all communities are able to take advantage of the benefits of energy efficiency; or who has worked with a community organization or addressed an issue specific to a community, particularly a historically excluded community, in a unique and purposeful way to enact change.

## 2025 WINNER

### Energy Equity – Quinn Parker

Quinn Parker has over 16 years of experience working with utilities, regulatory bodies, and government agencies to develop inclusive programs and equity metrics to drive accountability. Since founding Encolor in 2020, Quinn has delivered impactful training and facilitated workshops on operationalizing equity to several thousand participants, including many MEEA member organizations. Tired of sitting in rooms where community priorities are discussed without community present, Quinn launched a nonprofit organization in 2024 called The Shared Space Project which helps organizations share space with communities they have underserved in the past. Quinn is a Certified Diversity Professional, Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, and has earned AESP's Member of the Year and GRIT Awards for her dedication to amplifying underrepresented voices in rooms where they have not yet been invited.

**Accepted by:** Quinn Parker | Encolor | [qparker@encolorconsulting.com](mailto:qparker@encolorconsulting.com)





The Inspiring Efficiency Chair's Award is presented to the organization or individual who has provided exemplary leadership and support to MEEA throughout the organization's history.

## 2025 WINNER

### **Brandon Renaud**

In his tenure on the MEEA Board, Brandon Renaud brought thoughtful leadership during industry uncertainty. Brandon served on the board from 2018 through 2024, serving as Treasurer for two years and as Chair. In that role, Brandon led MEEA's strategy and ensured MEEA maintained a strong financial position while the organization and industry felt the effects of the pandemic. As Board Chair, Brandon worked closely with the Board and MEEA leadership as the organization searched for a new Executive Director to continue the organization's success and excellent industry reputation.

Brandon was a very active member and Board Member representing the City of Columbia Utilities, bringing the important voice of municipal utilities to conversations about utility programs, equity and member benefits. Now at the Missouri Public Utility Alliance, Brandon is responsible for business planning and project management for new and existing services, while forging strong relationships with member utilities and stakeholders. Aside from City of Columbia Utilities, he also previously worked for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Brandon also has a ruthless spin shot in foosball.

# Thank you to everyone who took the time to apply or nominate others.

## Education Nominees

### Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program

The Business Symposium is a one-stop shop for energy efficiency – making it easy for customer’s business or organization to learn about the latest technologies, while connecting with trusted energy professionals and gaining additional financial incentives to move their energy efficiency projects forward. Customers can attend a full day of breakout sessions designed to educate them about implementing energy-savings ideas, they receive a bonus coupon potentially worth thousands in additional incentive dollars and they get to interact with Program staff and Program Ally contractors who can answer questions. The Business Symposium is free to attend for all Business customers.

**Program Contact:**

Stephanie Hill  
Ameren Illinois  
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### ComEd Home Heating & Cooling Offering in the Energy Efficiency Portfolio

ComEd Energy Efficiency, DNV and Slipstream partnered to implement a training program for the ComEd Home Heating & Cooling offering, a midstream program offering incentives on air source, mini-split and geothermal heat pumps.

Heat pump technology is growing in the market, and the program’s goal is to help contractors obtain proper training to increase the adoption and reputation of heat pumps in the Midwest, grow sales and ensure that customers receive the maximum saving/energy efficiency benefits.

Our teams prepped the distributors and contractors for the change, supplying optional on-demand modules and in-person trainings and worked with distributors to schedule manufacturer trainings at their facilities. In 2023, mandatory contractor training was announced to receive incentives in 2024. Contractors were required to complete one manufacturer-based training (typically hosted by their distributor) and take the online module trainings covering basic heat pump installation, sizing and controls.

**Program Contact:**

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## Focus on Energy

“Watt’s the Story?” is a ten-video series dispelling energy efficiency misinformation on social media. The series tackled residential and business energy efficiency myths chosen from comments left on FOCUS ON ENERGY® social media pages.

### Residential topics:

1. Cranking thermostats.
2. Solar panels in Wisconsin.
3. Energy audits for old homes.
4. Air source heat pumps in Wisconsin.
5. Ceiling fans.

### Business topics:

1. Employees and energy costs
2. Energy audits for old buildings.
3. No ROI replacing lights.
4. Upgrading to energy-efficient equipment is difficult.
5. Maintaining energy-efficient equipment is difficult.

The series expanded program awareness, highlighting Focus on Energy Business Solutions. Short, educational video content is a large piece of the team’s online marketing strategy and yearly general awareness umbrella campaign.

### Program Contact:

Ron Giordan  
Focus on Energy  
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## HVAC U

HVAC U’s initiative focuses on expanding energy efficiency knowledge through targeted workforce development programs. These programs equip a new workforce as well as existing tradespeople and HVAC professionals with the skills needed to implement energy-efficient solutions in residential and commercial settings. By emphasizing practical, hands-on training and the latest technological advancements, HVAC U ensures that participants are prepared to meet modern energy efficiency standards. The program has successfully increased the energy efficiency expertise of hundreds of professionals, thereby contributing to regional and state energy efficiency goals.

### Program Contact:

Lance Turner  
HVAC U  
lance@hvactrain.com



## HVAC U

HVAC U's training program is a gateway to a brighter future for two distinct groups of community members. We have designed a 'novice' program to help individuals kickstart their careers and a second group for contractors looking to 'upskill' and enhance their professional prospects. The training program is geared to solving the workforce issues surrounding energy efficiency work.

### **Program Contact:**

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HVAC U  
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## Michigan Heat Pump Collaborative

The Michigan Heat Pump Collaborative (MIHPC) was founded by four investor-owned utilities in Michigan—Consumers Energy (CE), DTE Energy (DTE), Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO), and Indiana Michigan Power (I&M)—as a united effort to lead the Midwest with heat pump technology market transformation strategies. The initiative's primary goal is to create a holistic education, outreach, and training forum to pursue deeper engagement with manufacturers, distributors, trade allies, customers, and other stakeholders to design a more efficient, effective strategy to accelerate heat pump adoption across the state. To date, the MIHPC has held several online training courses and in-person educational summits to address the specific knowledge gaps that will help contractors throughout Michigan better serve heat pump customers.

### **Program Contact:**

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Slipstream  
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# Impact Nominees

## Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program – Workforce Development Program

The Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Workforce Development Program makes significant societal impacts by assisting diverse jobseeker candidates to find work in energy efficiency. With an additional emphasis on assisting returning citizens, the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Workforce Development Program reduces and removes barriers that would otherwise inhibit opportunities for obtaining jobs. Travis Thornton was one such success story and is an example of a returning citizen who was not only able to find work in energy efficiency through this Workforce Development Program, but also exemplify personal qualities and perseverance he brought to the program to make it successful.

**Program Contact:**  
Stephanie Hill  
Ameren Illinois  
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## Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program – Healthier Homes Initiative

The Healthier Homes Initiative is a no-cost program to help eligible Ameren Illinois residential customers save money and energy as well as promote comfortable and safe living conditions in their homes. Through Healthier Homes, eligible customers receive home upgrades and minor repairs for FREE.

Eligible customers may receive energy efficiency improvements to their home such as air sealing, insulation, lighting replacement, ventilation and moisture control measures.

**Program Contact:**  
Stephanie Hill  
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## **Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program – Houses of Worship**

Houses of Worship in Decatur, IL received complimentary Energy Assessments as part of a targeted effort to complete projects to community service organizations in an empowered community. To help Houses of Worship bring energy efficiency projects to completion, financial incentives were offered to upgrade to energy efficiency products such as lighting. In some instances, the incentives and program offerings were enough to cover a majority of the costs which results in long-term energy savings as well as immediate savings the Houses of Worship can re-invest in other areas to serve their communities.

### **Program Contact:**

Stephanie Hill  
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## **ComEd Public Schools Carbon-Free Assessment**

Designed in compliance with Illinois' Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), ComEd's Public Schools Carbon-Free Assessment (PSCFA) program aims to provide a decarbonization roadmap, with a goal to help schools become carbon-free by 2050. These assessments available to all public K-12 schools in ComEd's service territory include analysis of energy efficiency, HVAC, water heating,, and fleet vehicle electrification, electric service upgrade needs, and onsite solar power generation. Schools receive tailored recommendations and are connected to relevant third-party experts who offer technical assistance and guidance on grant and funding opportunities. The support provided is key in turning a district's goals into actionable projects, empowering schools to achieve their vision for a sustainable future.

### **Program Contact:**

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Michaels Energy  
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## ComEd's Retail Rebates and Discounts Offering

The Retail Offering was expanded over the 2024 program year by offering higher incentive options, various and equitable ways to access incentives, and various education opportunities through online tools, and in-person interaction and events. We are also in the process of launching our first ever IE targeted marketing campaign. These efforts have led to, so far, our the most successful program year in IE participation, savings, and incentive spend. The IE portion of the program is expected to save 175,000 MWh and about 11 million therms in 2024, compared to the 120,000 MWh and 2 million therms saved in 2023.

### Program Contact:

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ComEd

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## Center for Energy and Environment's One-Stop Shop LED Direct Install Program

In 2023, CEE piloted a lighting direct install offering focused on businesses in most need of additional resources to complete lighting upgrades. The offering serves businesses in economically strained areas and businesses with a demand of 25 kW or less that are outside of these areas. The program provides free installation of LED screw-ins, tubes, and exit signs. As part of this effort, CEE specifically collaborated with the City of Minneapolis and the City of Saint Paul to identify underserved areas with businesses unlikely to participate in efficiency programs without additional support.

The initial pilot exceeded goals and CEE continued the program in 2024. The annual program goal is to install 100,000 LED tubes. By the end of 2024, CEE will have installed over 217,000 LED tubes and screw-ins for 772 businesses.

Participants will save:

- 4.8 MW
- 14.7 GWh
- 11,475 Tons of CO<sub>2</sub>

### Program Contact:

Laura Bedo-Ekanayake

Center for Energy and Environment

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## CenterPoint Energy Commercial Rebate Program

The CenterPoint Energy Commercial Rebate Program narrowed its focus when an opportunity to work with the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation (EVSC) arose that would see 41 separate facilities undergo sweeping energy efficiency improvements, involving a range of the program's subordinate offerings including Prescriptive, Custom, Building Tune-Up, and Small Business Energy Solutions.

CenterPoint wanted to maximize the educational corporation's energy savings through a comprehensive set of projects that would cover 37 schools and would uniformly improve the performance of lighting, HVAC, and kitchen equipment across the board.

### **Program Contact:**

Jill Barrett  
CenterPoint Energy  
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## DTE EEA Program – Weatherization Scale Up

DTE's Energy Efficiency Assistance Program has significantly expanded its weatherization capacity to better serve income-qualified households across Michigan. This expansion has increased both the volume of air sealing and insulation installations and the program's ability to maintain high quality as it has scaled.

A major achievement of the program's weatherization efforts is its development of capacity that complements the work funded by the DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). By leveraging both the WAP channel and direct initiatives through the EEA Program, as well as collaborating with community-focused non-profit organizations, the program effectively delivers high-quality weatherization services to households with the greatest need, particularly those facing severe energy burdens.

### **Program Contact:**

Noah Purcell  
ICF  
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## Focus on Energy Community Impact Pilot

Aimed at diverse small businesses who actively strengthen their communities, the Focus on Energy Community Impact Pilot campaign helped bring education, support, and energy efficiency to seven underserved Wisconsin communities. The campaign's achievements from April 2023-August 2024 directed over \$929,359 to energy efficiency improvements for 57 small businesses, estimated to save them a combined total of more than \$171,405 in annual energy costs. Key partners in this effort included local utilities, community-based organizations, and nearby Trade Allies. Success stories shared across platforms (videos, blogs, a podcast, and an interactive overview) inspire energy efficiency, shine a light on the small businesses involved, and describe both energy and non-energy impacts. This ongoing work is poised to help more small, diverse businesses achieve energy savings for their businesses and in their communities.

### Program Contact:

Lindsay Buckwell-Yeung  
Focus on Energy  
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## Greenlite and Xcel Energy Food Bank Program in Minnesota

Greenlite and Xcel Energy's Food Bank Program entails a strategic initiative aimed at distributing residential energy efficiency products to low-income customers across Minnesota, from January 2024 - December 2026. The program seeks to improve energy efficiency and reduce water consumption amongst Xcel Energy residents. Through partnerships with large/local food banks and food pantries/shelves, Greenlite provides ENERGY STAR LED Kits (light bulbs and nightlights), water-saving kits (showerheads and aerators), and Tier 1 Advanced Power Strips (APS) at no-additional cost to customers. The campaign integrates customized branding, streamlined outreach efforts, inventory management, and reporting to ensure transparency and effectiveness. For 2024, the anticipated distribution includes 300,000 APS, 1,860,000 LED bulbs, 465,000 LED nightlights, and 250,000 water-saving kits, reflecting a significant commitment to energy conservation and community support.

### Program Contact:

Simran Kohli  
Greenlite  
simran@greenlite.ca



## **HKS, Inc.**

The Prairie Pollinator Garden was a multiphase natural habitat restoration project (now home to over 750 pollinators and native plants amounting to 3,300 ft<sup>2</sup> of restored habitat) inspired the students at Prairie Elementary School with the principles of sustainable ecology and connects with living context to foster growth. The Prairie Pollinator Garden serves as an outdoor classroom that provides the needed context to learn about the natural environment we live in. It challenges students to study principles of interdependence, diversity cycles, energy and resources, succession, and sustainability. The success of the project was measured by the health and vitality of the plantings, school/community engagement, and carbon sequestration provided by the native plants where it also helped stabilize the soil, increase moisture levels, and retain nutrients.

### **Program Contact:**

Dr. Tammy Zakrzewski  
HKS, Inc.  
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## **Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative (MVEC)**

Pairing Weatherization with Electrification to provide meaningful impact with low-income members is an approach that provides value and can be replicated across the country. Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative joined forces with Center for Energy and Environment (CEE) for a pilot to explore all aspects of serving targeted homes with envelope work & energy efficiency to meaningfully impact both the home and energy grid. Typical low-income programs provide various appliances, but don't address roots of the issue- generally a poor envelope and insulation. These are what MVEC and CEE attacked with targeted outreach & onsite work to lessen member budget dedicated to utility bills, to decrease financial strain that holds members back from positively gaining ground and finding success in other areas.

### **Program Contact:**

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### **Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program's Community Connection Center (C3)**

The Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program launched the Community Connection Center (C3) in response to increased customer requests for energy assistance due to economic conditions and the lasting impacts of COVID-19. Empathizing with customers facing hardships, C3 was established in 2022 as a resource to provide a one-stop shop for energy-saving offerings, payment assistance, housing support, food, federal funding, and other essentials.

C3 has gone beyond energy efficiency and natural gas services to provide exceptional customer service for Nicor Gas customers, including the recent implementation of its online Community Assistance Navigator (CAN) tool that allows customers to discover specific assistance options, based on individual needs. Using energy efficiency as a primary entry point, the offering has been able to support thousands of customers.

**Program Contact:**

Lauren Kriz  
Nicor Gas  
lepirc@southernco.com

## **Innovation Nominees**

### **Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program – SkyCool Systems**

In a pioneering effort to combat the high costs of commercial refrigeration, the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program partnered with Schnucks supermarket chain to install a cutting-edge radiative rooftop panel system at its Fairview Heights store in June of 2023. It's the first of its kind in Illinois, and one of only 20 such systems installed around the world.

This game-changing technology from SkyCool Systems features rooftop panels that integrate with the store's existing cooling systems. Layered, radiative cooling films on the panels act like a mirror, reflecting up to 97% of sunlight back into the atmosphere. This technology will bring big savings to the supermarket as 24/7 refrigeration needs bring high energy costs to operations.

**Program Contact:**

Stephanie Hill  
Ameren Illinois  
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## **Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program – Tree Planting Initiative**

In 2023, the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program implemented their Tree Planting Initiative, which provides a planted tree in the easement area next to an underserved Ameren Illinois customer's yard. As the tree grows, it will continue to provide shade to the home with the goal of reducing energy usage within the home and saving the customer energy costs year after year. For this first-time initiative, the Program selected an empowered community in the south side neighborhood of Peoria, IL, furthering its dedication to supporting diverse communities. The Tree Planting Initiative utilized volunteer support and partnerships with the city to plant 100 trees. It is estimated that these trees will reduce energy usage by nearly 25% by reducing the customer's home temperature by 10-15 degrees. In 2024, this Initiative will plant 100 more trees in Decatur, IL.

### **Program Contact:**

Stephanie Hill  
Ameren Illinois  
shill@ameren.com

## **CenterPoint Energy, CLEAResult, and JD Sheth Foundation Partnership to Advance Energy Efficiency for Income Qualified Residents**

The “Partnership to Advance Energy Efficiency for Income Qualified Residents” leverages existing CenterPoint Energy programmatic funds alongside ARPA funds to maximize energy efficiency impact and healthy living conditions for qualified residents. This innovative program collaborates with the City of Evansville, the JD Sheth Foundation, CenterPoint Energy, CLEAResult, and other local partners to provide targeted interventions, including comprehensive energy upgrades and essential health improvements in homes. By addressing both immediate energy needs and broader home health issues, the program not only improves residents' quality of life but also sets a new standard for integrate support services. This collaborative approach creates a replicable model for communities across the Midwest facing similar challenges, showcasing how diverse funding sources and partnerships can be effectively combined to enhance community wellbeing and sustainability.

### **Program Contact:**

Jill Barrett  
CenterPoint Energy  
jill.barrett@centerpointenergy.com



## ComEd Energy Efficiency Program

Implementing effective outreach requires continuous innovation as the marketplace evolves beyond energy efficiency toward clean energy solutions. ComEd optimizes continuous innovation throughout its expansive outreach “ecosystem” to integrate market segments and program offerings, cost-effectively engage customers, drive long-life measures, and achieve other clean energy goals. Aspects of innovation covered in this submission include: Portfolio, Design, Outreach Performance, Large Customers, Marketing, Events, and Data and Tools. Our innovation ranges from ongoing process improvements to improve the customer experience, to strategic initiatives, to designing and launching new tools and programs.

### Program Contact:

Any Populorum  
ComEd  
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## ComEd SEM Program – Innovations to serve an evolving market

The ComEd Strategic Energy Management (SEM) offering is one of the largest SEM offerings in North America. With CLEAResult Consulting as prime implementation contractor collaborating with multiple implementation partners, ComEd SEM has continued to innovate in multiple areas, creating a holistic offering that meets market challenges and opportunities. The three innovations are: a groundbreaking SEM DOE 50001 Ready cohort, a first-ever all-SEM participant full day Summit in June 2024, and a ComEd Student Intern program committed to expanding education and opportunities to diverse populations.

### Program Contact:

Martin Jacobson  
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## CII Diversities LLC

The “Enterprise GBT-OnPrem” project is a cutting-edge initiative to develop a context-specific AI-driven chatbot solution tailored for enterprise needs. This solution is designed to learn from enterprise data and interact with multiple knowledge bases to assist employees in resolving their queries. Supporting multiple languages and country-specific work cultures, this AI-driven chatbot is aimed at enhancing productivity and communication across diverse teams within an organization. By leveraging this innovative platform, the enterprise can provide localized support that aligns with the unique cultural and linguistic needs of its global workforce.

### **Program Contact:**

Jaya Pattela  
CII Diversities LLC  
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## Focus on Energy

To help Wisconsin residents easily identify savings and reduce energy waste, the Focus on Energy team implemented the next phase of its Online Home Energy Assessment campaign over the last year. Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI), the hyper-personalized campaign delivers emails directing residential customers to their very own, prepopulated home energy profile. By aggregating publicly available information, the Focus on Energy team has served up 245,000 energy profiles to utility customers with actionable recommendations and links to rebates based on their actual homes.

The cutting-edge experience has been delighting residents and driving action. Not only is the team seeing 52% open rates and 10% click-through rates, roughly 80% of active tool users have completed their assessments, identifying 1.5M eMWH or \$123 million of energy savings.

### **Program Contact:**

John Landowski  
Focus on Energy  
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## **Greenlite's "Energy Access for All" Program**

Launched in the past two years, this initiative is a groundbreaking effort to address energy inequities in the Midwest. The program innovatively combines real-time data analytics with tailored energy-saving kits and educational resources, making it unique in its precision and outreach. By collaborating with local nonprofits and community organizations, "Energy Access for All" not only promotes energy efficiency but also ensures inclusivity and empowerment for underserved populations. This novel approach in program design and implementation sets a new standard for addressing energy disparities, reflecting Simran Kohli's strategic vision and commitment to energy justice.

### **Program Contact:**

Simran Kohli  
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## **Indiana Michigan Power**

Indiana Michigan Power (I&M) was experiencing significant increases in customers having challenges to make regular monthly energy bill payments, with seemingly increased challenges with those customers' awareness on what payment assistance programs and services were available to them. This resulted in an increase in call center volumes and customers not aware of payment assistance programs available. With that, I&M started seeking a turnkey one-stop-shop solution; Your Bill Assistance Options to provide a user-friendly process and targeted proactive equitable outreach with personalized soft messaging with those customers struggling to pay on their bill. The digital solution would give I&M the outreach tools to provide the needed assistance along with energy efficiency tips and assistance with weatherization programs.

### **Program Contact:**

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kkdavis@aep.com



## Minnesota's Efficient Technology Accelerator

Minnesota's Efficient Technology Accelerator is a statewide market transformation program designed to save Minnesota residents and businesses money by paving the way for broad adoption of the most promising energy efficiency technologies. The program aims to dramatically improve Minnesota's clean energy marketplace and energy systems, one technology at a time — saving energy and money, increasing customer choices, reducing emissions, and contributing to benefits that improve comfort and quality of life.

### **Program Contact:**

Carl Nelson  
Center for Energy and Environment  
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## Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program's Healthy Homes Offering

Healthy Homes is a comprehensive weatherization initiative that employs a distinctive approach to participant enrollment, forging partnerships with healthcare and non-profit advocacy entities to find target participants. The primary goal is to identify and enroll income-qualified customers with diagnosed respiratory conditions. In 2023 and 2024, the offering focused on providing free weatherization and indoor air quality measures to families experiencing pediatric asthma. Participants were able to experience a healthier, safer, and more comfortable home with a reduced energy burden. These services make it possible for customers to better manage the cost of maintaining a household while proactively mitigating some potentially costly health risks.

### **Program Contact:**

Lauren Kriz  
Nicor Gas  
lepirc@southernco.com

# Marketing Nominees

## AES Indiana's Small Business Direct Install Video Case Studies

Through video case studies, AES Indiana developed a marketing campaign to help increase program awareness and to increase program participation using real-life customer examples to demonstrate how participation in AES Indiana's Small Business Direct Install program benefited and supported their goals to achieve energy efficiency.

### Program Contact:

Christina Thompson  
AES Indiana  
christina.thompson@aes.com

## Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program

In 2023 to 2024, we Ameren Illinois took a look at our marketing material for income qualified customers. We did some market research and identified that due to inflation, many IQ customers are behind on their utility bills and live in homes that are causing even higher energy costs. Additionally, we looked at reading level of the areas we served were looked at and were mindful of imagery and copy we needed to present so customers were receiving the important information about our the Home Efficiency Income Qualified Program. Through testing of marketing mediums, messaging and imagery, we used market data and marketing analytics, to create a successful 2024 marketing campaign was created to reach and better serve these customers.

### Program Contact:

Stephanie Hill  
Ameren Illinois  
shill@ameren.com

## CenterPoint Energy – Energy for what matters most

In 2024, CenterPoint Energy unveiled its new tagline “Energy for what matters most”, marking the launch of an exciting brand refresh. This year, we have strengthened our role as a trusted community partner.

Our refreshed brand identity has fueled an expansion of our community outreach and customer engagement. We are now more than ever able to meet our customers where they are – whether at home, online or at a community event. By raising awareness of our energy efficiency programs, available to all customers regardless of their income level, we aim to boost participation and support customers in managing their energy use more effectively.

### Program Contact:

Emma Nelson | emma.nelson@centerpointenergy.com  
Ryan Schunk | ryan.schunk@centerpointenergy.com  
CenterPoint Energy

## Consumers Energy

The Consumers Energy Online Store program and marketing teams developed a video to provide customers with education on smart thermostats in a fun, interactive way. The video personified three different thermostats, giving them a unique personality, voice, and guiding customers to learn more or make a purchase. The video was developed using an interactive platform that allowed for multiple hotspots or links throughout the video. A customer would have the ability to view the video and engage with the content in several ways, allowing the user a unique journey and answering common questions about rebates and programs. Ultimately, the video allowed for a large amount of information to be communicated to customers in a fun, engaging and innovative way.

### Contact:

Lyndsay Gulledge  
ICF  
lyndsay.gulledge@icf.com

## Focus on Energy

“Preparing Your Home for Winter” was a multimedia educational campaign deployed in November 2023 to residents of Wisconsin. The goal of the campaign was to promote Focus on Energy residential rebates and educate people on how to make their homes more energy efficient for the colder months of the year.

This campaign included an email, blog post, social post, and two YouTube videos. While each of these tactics approached the topic of prepping your home for the winter in a unique way, all had energy efficiency in the forefront of their messaging.

The campaign helped drive visibility to the Focus on Energy home energy assessments webpage and residential heating and cooling webpage, resulting in an increase of participation in the heating and cooling rebate program.

### Contact:

Jennifer Heveran  
Focus on Energy  
jennifer.heveran@focusonenergy.com



# Champion Nominees

## New Buildings Institute – Advanced Water Heating Initiative

“Preparing Your Home for Winter” was a multimedia educational campaign deployed in November 2023 to residents of Wisconsin. The goal of the campaign was to promote Focus on Energy residential rebates and educate people on how to make their homes more energy efficient for the colder months of the year.

This campaign included an email, blog post, social post, and two YouTube videos. While each of these tactics approached the topic of prepping your home for the winter in a unique way, all had energy efficiency in the forefront of their messaging.

The campaign helped drive visibility to the Focus on Energy home energy assessments webpage and residential heating and cooling webpage, resulting in an increase of participation in the heating and cooling rebate program.

### Contact:

Trude Namara  
New Buildings Institute  
trude@newbuildings.org

## Consumers Energy, Residential Demand Side Management

Based in Michigan, Consumers Energy is a public utility that provides natural gas and electricity to 6.7 million residents. The company is dedicated to providing safe, reliable, and renewable energy to its customers. Pledging to lead the clean energy transformation, Consumers Energy offers various Demand Side Management programs, rate options, and savings on energy efficient appliances to its customers— all while prioritizing accessibility.

### Program Contact:

Linzy Kurdziel  
Consumers Energy  
linzy.kurdziel@cmsenergy.com

## Greenlite Outreach Team

Greenlite’s Outreach Team leads a transformative initiative distributing energy efficiency products through food bank and CBO organizations nationwide, including across the Midwest. Through meticulous outreach efforts, Greenlite personally engages with each food bank and pantry, outlining the program’s benefits and educating staff and patrons alike on the transformative potential of energy-saving technologies.

### Contact:

Nina Gupta  
Greenlite  
nina@greenlite.ca

## Thanks to the 2025 Inspiring Efficiency Awards Review Committee

MEEA would like to thank all of our members and Board Members who spent hours promoting the 2025 Inspiring Efficiency Awards and reviewing the nominations. We had 50 applications this year in the six categories. There was great diversity among the applications from across the Midwest representing a wide variety of industries. The Inspiring Efficiency Awards represent the best in the Midwest and all of the great work you are doing.

Please join us in thanking our members for their time and service:

Justin Idleburg | Cabanne District Community Development Corporation

Amalia Hicks | Cadmus

Ashley Robertson | Center for Energy and Environment

Brady McNall | DNV

Patrice McFarlin | Encolor

LeAndra Archuleta | Energy Solutions

Rich Hackner | GDS Associates

Maria Onesto Moran | Green Home Experts

Nathan Baer | i3 Energy

Quinn Zeagler | ICF

Kevin Duffy | ICF

Nanako Hisamichi | Institute for Electric Innovation

Carl Samuelson | Michaels Energy

Todd Parker | Michigan Saves

Kelly Mulder | Mulder Consulting

Chanda Rowan | Nicor Gas

Jolene Sheil | Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Will Baker | Renew Homes

Scott Yee | Resource Innovations

Gabrielle Gordon | SEEL, LLC

Theresa Collins | Senior Services Plus

Deborah Dynako | Slipstream

Scott Steiner | TRC

Maddie Emerson | TRC

## Past Award Winners

### Chair's Award

**2024:** Kristol Simms  
**2023:** Shawn White  
**2021:** Nick Mark  
**2020:** James J. Jerozal Jr.  
**2019:** Lauren Casentini  
**2018:** Jon Williams  
**2017:** Jeanine Penticoff  
**2017:** Llona C. Weiss  
**2016:** Randy Gunn  
**2015:** Tim Melloch  
**2014:** Alecia Ward  
**2014:** Wendy Jaehn  
**2014:** Jay Wrobel  
**2013:** Sam Sirkin  
**2012:** Commonwealth Edison  
**2011:** David Eijadi  
**2010:** Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)  
**2009:** Janet Streff  
**2008:** Sara Ward  
**2006:** Mary O'Toole  
**2005:** David Leishman  
**2004:** Val Jensen

### Champion's

**2024:** City of Cincinnati  
**2023:** Kristol Simms, Ameren Illinois

### Education

**2024:** Xcel Energy, Center for Energy and Environment and CenterPoint Energy  
**2023:** ComEd's Energy Efficiency Service Provider (EESP) Incubator Program  
**2022:** DTE Energy and Consumers Energy New Home Construction Programs  
**2022:** Focus on Energy  
**2021:** Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program  
**2020:** School Energy Manager Project (SEMP), Kentucky School Boards Association  
**2019:** Ameren Illinois  
**2018:** National Energy Foundation, Think! Energy  
**2017:** Xcel Energy  
**2016:** Alliant Energy  
**2016:** Columbia Water & Light  
**2015:** Nicor Gas, What's in the Box? Energy Efficiency Campaign  
**2014:** AEP Ohio  
**2014:** Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP)  
**2013:** AEP Ohio

**2013:** Xcel Energy, BOMA Greater Minneapolis, and BOMA St. Paul  
**2012:** Advanced Technology Environmental and Energy Center (ATEEC)  
**2011:** Energy Center of Wisconsin  
**2010:** Commonwealth Edison and Chicago Urban League  
**2010:** Commonwealth Edison and US EPA ENERGY STAR Change the World  
**2010:** Smart Energy Design Assistance Center (SEDAC)  
**2009:** Interstate Power & Light Company  
**2008:** Schools for Energy Efficiency  
**2006:** Missouri Botanical Gardens EarthWays Center  
**2005:** University of Illinois Energy Resources Center  
**2004:** Wisconsin Focus on Energy Residential Programs

### Impact

**2024:** ComEd  
**2023:** The Chicago Smart Lighting Program  
**2022:** Consumers Energy  
**2022:** Peoples Gas Public Sector Energy Efficiency Program  
**2021:** DTE Energy Efficiency Assistance (EEA) Program



**2021:** Greenlite Lighting Corporation USA  
**2020:** Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden's Light Up Avondale Program  
**2019:** Minnesota Army National Guard  
**2018:** Ameren Illinois  
**2018:** ComEd Energy Efficiency Programs  
**2017:** Focus on Energy  
**2017:** Michigan Saves  
**2016:** ComEd  
**2016:** MidAmerican Energy  
**2015:** City of Chicago - Retrofit Chicago  
**2015:** Illinois Public Housing Authority Efficient Living Program - Illinois Energy Now  
**2014:** Commonwealth Edison and Nicor Gas, New Construction Services  
**2014:** Columbia Gas of Ohio  
**2013:** Xcel Energy  
**2012:** Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives  
**2011:** Commonwealth Edison  
**2010:** Interstate Power & Light Company, an Alliant Energy Company  
**2009:** Orion Energy Systems, Inc.  
**2008:** MiraCit Development Corporation  
**2006:** Alliant Energy- Wisconsin Power & Light Co.  
**2005:** MidAmerican Design Assistance  
**2004:** The Compressed Air Challenge

## Innovation

**2024:** ComEd  
**2023:** DTE Equity Insights and Inclusion Study  
**2023:** ComEd Multi-Family Energy Savings Program, In Partnership with Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas, North Shore Gas and Franklin Energy  
**2022:** International Center for Appropriate and Sustainable Technology (ICAST)  
**2021:** City of Minneapolis Home Energy Disclosure  
**2021:** ComEd Energy Efficiency Program  
**2020:** Focus on Energy Disaster Relief Offerings  
**2020:** Virtual Commissioning™ Program  
**2019:** Focus on Energy's Strategic Energy Management (SEM) Initiative  
**2018:** ComEd Energy Efficiency Programs  
**2018:** Focus on Energy and Madison Gas and Electric (MGE)  
**2017:** AEP Ohio  
**2017:** Iowa Economic Development Authority  
**2016:** AEP Ohio  
**2015:** AEP Ohio's Continuous Energy Improvement Program  
**2015:** DTE Energy / Energy Efficiency / DTE Insight  
**2014:** Focus On Energy  
**2013:** Ohio Development Services Agency

**2012:** Ohio Hospital Association  
**2012:** Energy Innovation Corridor (Xcel Energy & Centerpoint Energy)  
**2011:** DTE Energy  
**2011:** Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
**2010:** Ameren Illinois Utilities, Watts Solution Program  
**2010:** Ameren Illinois Utilities, LED Refrigerated Case Project  
**2009:** Keyser Visual, Inc. and Florida Plastics International, Inc.  
**2008:** George Bialecki, Jr., Alternative Energy Builders (AEB)  
**2006:** District Energy St. Paul  
**2006:** The Cleveland Green Building Coalition  
**2005:** Center for Technology Transfer, Inc.  
**2004:** Community Energy Cooperative's Energy-Smart Pricing Plan

## Leadership

**2024:** Angela Tovar  
**2023:** Rudolph Chahine, Consumers Energy  
**2023:** Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program & Senior Services Plus  
**2023:** Angie Ostaszewski, Ameren Illinois  
**2022:** Carla Walker-Miller, Walker-Miller Energy Services  
**2022:** Minnesota State Senator Jason Rarick & Minnesota State Representative Zack Stephenson  
**2021:** Ohio Environmental Council  
**2021:** Winneshiek Energy District  
**2020:** Senator Megan Hunt, Nebraska State Legislature  
**2019:** Mayor Rahm Emanuel, City of Chicago  
**2018:** Louis James, SEEL, LLC  
**2018:** Governor Rick Snyder, State of Michigan  
**2017:** George Malek  
**2017:** Kim Winslow  
**2016:** Rick Sites, Ohio Hospital Association  
**2015:** Jim Jerozal, Nicor Gas  
**2015:** Carol Stemrich, Public Service Commission of Wisconsin,  
**2014:** The Honorable Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County (IL) Board President  
**2013:** Commissioner Cheryl Roberto, Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

**2012:** Jennifer Easler, Iowa Office of Consumers' Advocate  
**2011:** Commissioner Monica Martinez, Michigan Public Service Commission  
**2010:** Janine Migden- Ostrander, Ohio Consumers' Counsel  
**2010:** Tom Casten, Recycled Energy Development  
**2009:** Governor Jim Doyle, Wisconsin  
**2008:** State of Minnesota  
**2008:** State of Illinois  
**2008:** City of Ann Arbor, Michigan  
**2006:** Diane Munns, Iowa Utilities Board  
**2006:** Robert L. Cowles, Wisconsin State Senate  
**2005:** Governor Jennifer Granholm, State of Michigan  
**2004:** Governor Tim Pawlenty, State of Minnesota

## Marketing

**2024:** Consumers Energy  
**2023:** Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program & Peoria Guild of Black Artists Partnership  
**2022:** Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program  
**2021:** Focus on Energy  
**2020:** Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program, Unexpected Love Story Campaign

**2019:** Focus on Energy's Wisconsin Is In Campaign  
**2018:** Ameren Illinois  
**2018:** Vectren Corporation  
**2017:** Nicor Gas  
**2016:** Consumers Energy  
**2015:** Nicor Gas, energySMART, Customer Journey Marketing Strategy  
**2014:** Ameren Illinois ActOn Energy Business Program  
**2013:** Nicor Gas  
**2012:** DTE Energy  
**2012:** AEP Ohio  
**2011:** Xcel Energy  
**2011:** Prairie Power  
**2010:** Interstate Power & Light Company, an Alliant Energy Company  
**2010:** R.L. Just & Associates, P.C. Architect  
**2009:** Wisconsin Focus on Energy  
**2008:** Rochester Public Utilities  
**2006:** MidAmerican Energy  
**2005:** Interstate Power & Light Co.

## Rising Star

**2023:** Angie Ostaszewski, Ameren Illinois