CITY OF BEND

City Hall
710 NW Wall Street
Bend, OR 97703

MEMORANDUM

To: Environment & Climate Committee
From: Megan Lee, Environment & Climate Management Analyst
Date: February 27, 2026
Re: Energy Efficiency Program Options

Purpose

This memo describes energy efficiency program options the City could pursue with a budget of about $30,000 to $40,000. The goal is to decide which approach best supports our priorities: helping community members realize energy savings, filling gaps in existing services, and equitable distribution.

High-Level Comparison of Program Options

Option	Description	Estimated Reach	Strengths	Limitations / Risks
1. Home Energy Audits	Free professional home energy audits for residents	**60–100** full audits **or 150–250** walk-throughs (cost-dependent)	High-impact guidance + behavior change; fills mid-income gap	Higher cost per home; requires a contractor
2. Efficiency Toolkits	Toolkits with basic efficiency items; installation available	**300–600** kits	Broad reach; strong equity if installed; can leverage school/youth channels	Many items like LEDs are already widely adopted; lower savings without installs
3. Hybrid (Audits + Toolkit Installs)	Combines audits with in-home efficiency kit installs	**40–60** homes	Deep + broad; high equity; ensures install + guidance; strong education	Might be more complex to run
4. Small Business	Workshops, resources, and walk-throughs	**100–200** businesses (education) **or**	Supports a high-use energy	Less direct/quantified savings;

Education & Outreach	for retail and food service	**50–80** walk-throughs	sector; builds relationships	depends on business follow-through

Option 1: Home Energy Audit

Program Overview

The City contracts a qualified firm to provide free residential audits, focusing on households not served by existing programs (for example, middle-income residents outside low-income offerings or specific utility territories). Audits would include a walkthrough, optional diagnostics (e.g., blower-door), a report with prioritized actions, and assistance to access incentives and tax credits.

Existing local offerings (for context):

- **Central Electric Co-op** offers home energy audits to its customers (utility-territory limited).
- The **Environmental Center** in partnership with Energy Trust of Oregon offers free energy assessments to historically overlooked communities.
- **Electrify Oregon** volunteer electrification coaches provide no-cost audits but have expressed they are capacity-limited.
- **NeighborImpact** provides free weatherization repair services (insulation, duct sealing, heating repairs) for income-qualified residents which includes a four-hour on-site energy audit.
- **GreenSavers** provides paid home energy audits that include full diagnostic testing (e.g., blower-door testing), infrared scanning, and a detailed Home Performance Report with upgrade recommendations, prioritized actions, cost estimates, and available incentives/tax credits. Audit typically takes 2–4 hours and costs about $400, which can be applied as credit toward future retrofit work.
- Home Energy Scorers are certified assessors under the City of Bend's **Home Energy Score Program**. Although HES is required for homes publicly listed for sale, the service can be used more broadly as a low-cost baseline energy assessment for any home. Assessors use a standardized U.S. DOE tool to evaluate a home's physical characteristics (insulation, windows, HVAC systems, air leakage, etc.) and issue a score from 1–10, accompanied by a report with recommended improvements. Typical market prices in Oregon range from $150–$300, depending on the assessor.

A City program could fill gaps for moderate-income residents and renters outside these lanes. The **BayREN EASE** model is a successful example of a similar program that uses an up-to-120% AMI approach to reach middle-income households.

Figure 1: Area Median Income Percentages by Household Size in Bend

Median Income Percentages	Household Size 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
30%	$24,000	$27,450	$30,840	$34,290	$37,050	$39,800	$42,550	$45,300
40%	$32,000	$36,600	$41,120	$45,720	$49,400	$53,050	$56,750	$60,432
50%	$40,000	$45,750	$51,400	$57,150	$61,750	$66,300	$70,900	$75,450
60%	$48,000	$54,900	$61,680	$68,580	$74,100	$79,600	$85,100	$90,550
70%	$56,000	$64,050	$71,960	$80,010	$86,450	$92,850	$99,300	$105,650
80%	$64,000	$73,200	$82,240	$91,440	$98,800	$106,100	$113,450	$120,750
90%	$75,250	$85,950	$96,700	$107,450	$116,050	$124,650	$133,250	$141,850
100%	$86,450	$98,800	$111,150	**$123,500**	$133,400	$143,300	$153,150	$163,050
110%	$95,100	$108,700	$122,300	$135,850	$146,750	$158,500	$171,150	$184,850
120%	$106,700	$118,550	$133,500	$148,200	$160,100	$172,900	$186,700	$201,650

Visit the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's FY 2025 Income Limits Documentation System for a full table.

Who it serves: The program could either focus on middle-income households such as those at or below 120% AMI (similar to models like BayREN's EASE program) or be made broadly available to all residents on a first-come, first-served basis without an income cap. It is also intended to support renters and residents of older homes that typically experience higher energy loss.

Benefits: Clear, personalized guidance; quick behavior and control fixes (thermostats, heat pump settings); a pipeline of projects for more significant upgrades; structured data to inform future programs.

Challenges: $175–$700+ per home depending on scope and testing, plus procurement, contractor oversight, scheduling, and quality control.

What $30–$40k gets: 60–100 full audits or 150–250 lighter walk-throughs

Option 2: Efficiency Toolkits

Program Overview: Residents can request a free efficiency kit that includes efficiency saving tools such as LEDs, aerators, door sweep, efficient showerheads, weatherstripping, window film, and smart power strips, insulation and air sealing, and smart thermostats,. Delivery can be by mail or pickup, handed out at in-person events. Ideally, installation would be done in partnership with a local organization or green trades program.

Who it serves: Households seeking low-cost, easy upgrades.

Benefits: Strong equity impacts when items are installed (especially for seniors and community members with disabilities); effective with partners like schools, libraries, and nonprofits; can consider co-branding a whole-home efficiency toolkit with the Water Services Department to de-silo efforts.

Challenges: Installation and careful kit curation matter. Many basic items are already common in Bend and therefore result in lower incremental savings (especially LEDs); effectiveness decreases if not paired with installation; prior programs observed that aesthetics/fit (e.g., faucet aerators) affect adoption; added admin for housing/inventorying kits, and scheduling installation and partnerships.

What $30–40k gets: 300–600 self-install kits or 150–300 installed kits.

Option 3: Hybrid Model | Audits + Toolkit Installs

Program Overview: A coordinated model that funds ~40–60 professional audits, installs toolkit items during the audit visit. This approach combines personalized guidance with immediate installation of basic efficiency upgrades, improving follow-through and overall savings potential.

Who it serves: Households that benefit from both expert audit recommendations and hands-on installation support, including residents of older homes, renters (with landlord permission), and those seeking straightforward, impactful improvements.

Benefits: Ensures efficiency items are properly installed; combines deep, tailored guidance with quick wins; increases equity by assisting households who may not be able to install items themselves.

Challenges: More complex to administer than a standalone toolkit distribution or audit program (contractor coordination, scheduling). Higher cost per household than a standalone toolkit program.

What $30–40k gets: 40–60 audits paired with toolkit installations.

Option 4: Small Business Education & Outreach

Program Overview: Support small businesses, especially restaurants and retail, with sector-specific workshops, simple resource guides, incentives navigation, and light walk-throughs (on-site or virtual). Content can cover refrigeration maintenance, ventilation, plug-load management, equipment replacement planning, and electrification options. Restaurants typically use about 5–7× the energy per square foot of typical commercial buildings, so targeted education and maintenance can pay off.

Who it serves: Small, family-run and BIPOC-owned businesses that lack time or capacity to navigate incentives; restaurants with high energy intensity.

Benefits: Can leverage existing utility and federal incentives; reduces operating costs; builds relationships; visible community impact.

Challenges: Harder to quantify direct savings; depends on owner follow-through; needs coordination with local partners (Energy Trust, Chamber/DBBA, CEC, nonprofits); potential need to contract out some work.

What $30–40k gets:

- Scenario A: 3–5 targeted workshops + materials for 100–200 businesses
- Scenario B: 50–80 light walk-throughs with brief recommendation memos and incentive navigation.

Discussion Questions

1. Which of these options resonates with you the most?
2. What other options come to mind?
3. What are your concerns and priorities for an energy efficiency program?