



2024 INSPIRING EFFICIENCY AWARDS



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

2024 WINNER

Xcel Energy, Center for Energy and Environment and CenterPoint Energy

The purpose of CEE's workforce development program is to recruit, train and retain Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latin, people of color and women in the energy efficiency sector. With support from Xcel Energy, CEE launched a career training program in early 2022 specifically for unemployed and underemployed Minnesotans of color and women from Green Zone areas of Minneapolis and areas of concentrated poverty in St. Paul. Not long after their program launch, CEE was awarded funding by CenterPoint Energy to expand its training to areas of concentrated poverty in suburban Hennepin County.

Since the program launch, CEE has trained 90 participants through its holistic, paid four-week home energy career training. Skilled energy auditors serve as the instructors and 98% of participants have earned the Building Science Principles BPI credential. In partnership with community-based organizations, CEE is able to offer wrap-around support services including transportation support, financial coaching and employment navigation during and after the paid training and internship. CEE looks forward to expanding its work to HVAC career training in the Twin Cities' east metro through Ramsey County's Learn and Earn ARPA funding and to areas of Greater Minnesota later this year (2024).

Accepted by: Sarah Northrup | Center for Energy & Environment
Husein Yussuf | Xcel Energy



IMPACT

INSPIRING EFFICIENCY AWARDS

WINNER

The Inspiring Efficiency Impact Award will be presented to the 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.

2024 WINNER

ComEd Expanded Income Eligible Health and Safety Investment

As part of their four-year Energy Efficiency Plan spanning 2022 – 2025, ComEd committed to an expanded investment in health and safety to help ensure energy efficiency access to those customers that can most benefit. This budget is reserved to address conditions identified in homes and residential buildings that represent a potential risk of harm to a person or property that limits the ability for an energy efficiency project to move forward safely. To date, ComEd has invested over \$13M in health and safety mitigation, enabling nearly 650 energy efficiency projects to safely proceed resulting in 41,145 net MWhs of savings (inclusive of converted therms) to be recognized by income eligible and public housing customers.

Accepted by: Kara Jonas | ComEd



The Inspiring Efficiency Innovation Award will be presented to the 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.

2024 WINNER

ComEd Energy Efficiency Electrification Portfolio Development

Energy savings from certain building and industrial electrification opportunities were enabled by CEJA (Illinois' Energy Law) to be counted toward annual energy savings goals for the ComEd Energy Efficiency Program starting in 2022. Throughout 2022 and 2023, ComEd embarked on an ambitious effort to enhance existing measures and create new customer offerings in support of customer end use electrification that could also contribute meaningful, cost-effective savings toward statutory goals. The effort has included research, new industry partnerships, cross-function collaboration and the launch of exciting, new or renovated customer offerings. Early signals suggest these offerings are successfully bringing in new, cost-effective energy savings to ComEd's energy efficiency portfolio while also stimulating regional market adoption of key electrification technologies.

Accepted by: Mark Milby | ComEd



The Inspiring Efficiency Marketing Award will be presented to the 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.

2024 WINNER

Consumers Energy

Consumers Energy is a reliable, affordable and sustainable electric and natural gas energy provider that serves 6.6 million customers in 68 counties in Michigan. The Consumers Energy Residential Online Store is an online shopping platform where customers can purchase and get instant rebates on energy-efficient products. Research shows that consumers tend to buy from brands that they know and trust. The need for a general awareness campaign was identified when a Consumers Energy customer panel indicated that only about 30% of customers surveyed had heard about the Online Store. In response to this, Consumers Energy launched a multi-channel awareness campaign in 2022 to help support the need to increase customer awareness of the online marketplace and the energy efficiency opportunities presented there. This campaign helped contribute to a highly successful Q4, with over 19,000 products sold through the Online Store, a 134% overachievement of the planned goal.

Accepted by: Shannon Morrow | Consumers Energy
Lyndsay Gullede | ICF



LEADERSHIP

INSPIRING EFFICIENCY AWARDS

WINNER

The Inspiring Efficiency Leadership Award is presented to the organization or individual who has served as a strong leader in support of energy efficiency in their city, state, region, company or community.

2024 WINNER

Angela Tovar

A Chicago native with a background in urban planning and community organizing, Angela Tovar takes a community-led, justice-first approach in her role as the City of Chicago's Chief Sustainability Officer. Since her appointment in 2020, she has established the City's first Office of Climate and Environmental Equity and led the development of the Cumulative Impact Assessment, which identifies Chicago environmental justice neighborhoods and essential action items. She is leading the effort to transform the city's climate office into the Department of the Environment, which will be responsible for the implementation of the 2022 Chicago Climate Action Plan. With her collaborative leadership approach, she is working across city departments and neighborhoods to create change for all Chicagoans, especially those who have experienced legacies of environmental discrimination.



CHAMPION

INSPIRING EFFICIENCY AWARDS

WINNER

The Inspiring Efficiency Champion Award is presented to the 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.

2024 WINNER

City of Cincinnati Office of Environment and Sustainability

The City of Cincinnati Office of Environment and Sustainability (OES) leads City government and the broader community in building a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient Cincinnati. Their notable energy efficiency initiative, WarmUp Cincy, stands out as a testament to their commitment to addressing the high energy burden experienced by Cincinnati residents.

Accepted by: Molly Robertshaw | City of Cincinnati Office of Environment and Sustainability



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.

2024 WINNER

Kristol W. Simms, Ameren Illinois

In her tenure on the MEEA Board, Kristol W. Simms was instrumental in setting the organization up for success and guiding MEEA through many pivotal moments. Kristol served on the board from 2018-2023, and as Board Chair from 2021-2023. During this time, she helped develop the organization's most recent strategic plan and form our DEI Committee.

Kristol offered insight and support as MEEA expanded to integrate equity and diverse suppliers into its membership and work. During the organization's leadership transition in 2023, she worked with MEEA staff and the Board, to see that the organization continued to deliver on its mission, while also overseeing Ameren Illinois' work related to the Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA), Illinois' landmark clean energy legislation.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to apply and was nominated.

Education Nominees:

Ameren Illinois

The Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program reaches over 12,000 students and teachers annually through their School Kits Channel; 9,500 fifth grade and 2,500 high school students and teachers are reached during fall and spring semesters. In 2022, a new community-based engagement initiative was introduced to the program that reached over 2,500 additional community members. Sparrow Energy Services implements the Community in Action (CIA) and Innovation Camp (IC), which create meaningful and strategic opportunities for community engagement in underserved communities. CIA events are designed to promote energy efficiency awareness, workforce development resources, and a Smart LED giveaway. The Innovation Camp is an interactive multi-day program that focuses on energy education, workforce development and energy industry networking.

Program Contact:

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Ameren Illinois and the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program implemented by Leidos

In 2023, Leidos worked with SEEL as an implementation partner for Workforce Development, including the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program Market Development Initiative (MDI) Summer Internship Program and management of MDI scholarships. SEEL worked in partnership with NEF to design the curriculum for six webinars for the Summer Internship Program, as well as provided educational information about energy efficiency throughout the summer, with oversight support from the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program implemented by Leidos. SEEL also supported a number of community organizations, educating them on the funding opportunities available through CEJA, as well as provided valuable training on grant writing and submissions. Additionally, SEEL provided training to jobseekers at both the individual and group levels to prepare them for careers in energy efficiency.

Program Contact:

Lindsey Hammond
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CenterPoint Energy

CenterPoint Energy hosted an Energy Savings Workshop that won the attention of a critical audience for program success; the opt-out eligible large energy user. Success came from prioritizing attendee benefits rather than focusing on the utility's agenda. Informed by survey results, the Workshop gave participants interest-specific training, professional development hours, project planning resources and access to utility staff to discuss bill impacts. This customer-centric approach resulted in 11% of all opt-out eligible customers attending the Workshop. In the following 12 months, 80% of the attending opt-in customers completed projects with savings equaling 10% of our overall electric savings goal while gaining great visibility to future projects. Furthermore, CenterPoint Energy retained 100% of the opt-in customers for the next program year.

Program Contact:

Justin Forshey

Jill Barrett

CenterPoint Energy

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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. Drawing on a market characterization study and needs assessment from Slipstream, the MIHPC has launched several online training courses to address the specific knowledge gaps that will help contractors throughout Michigan better serve heat pump customers.

Program Contact:

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MidAmerican Energy Company

MidAmerican wanted to extend their brand message reach through an influencer marketing partnership with a regional social marketing company, Hummingbirds. Hummingbirds are local “influencers” who are invited to attend various events, take part in special promotions or document an experience with a specific brand, company or product. MidAmerican, collaborated with the Hummingbirds to share the positive energy-efficient impacts of installing a smart thermostat. Utilizing word-of-mouth marketing helps share the importance of using energy wisely, invites the community to join them on the road to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, helps customers understand the value of renewable energy and how that plays into their low rates and more.

Program Contact:

Stacy Christoffersen
MidAmerican Energy
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Minnesota Department of Commerce

Minnesota’s Badges Training Program is a partnership result with Everblue, who was contracted by the state to build out a learning management system and develop a training series online. The training is broken into 25 Weatherization Installer Badges based on the Standard Work Specifications, and accounting for Minnesota-specific requirements due to the unique nature of our state’s climate. Each badge is a short video explaining the task, reference material from MN and the DOE about the skill, a quiz to test learner’s knowledge and a requirement for in-field verification, or skills check, of the task by either a QCI or Crew Lead. The program allows trainees to get on-demand access to training on pertinent skills required to perform effective weatherization.

Program Contact:

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Municipal Pathways to Achieve Energy Efficiency

The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus leveraged the expansive and unique role that local governments have in community engagement to educate residents about energy efficiency. The Caucus explored municipal pathways for promoting energy efficiency and prioritized these three pathways: 1) Communications - They used municipal newsletters, social media, cable TV and other unique outlets to share vital information about existing energy efficiency with all residents. 2) Community Engagement - They supported engagement of energy efficiency through diverse community events with fun and unique energy efficiency games and activities. 3) Municipal Policies and Programs - They have mapped pathways for promoting energy efficiency through services such as water utilities, public safety programs, and building codes. The Caucus has also supported targeted outreach to income qualified customers through senior services and housing programs.

Program Contact:

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Minnesota Department of Commerce

The Nicor Gas Workforce Training and Employment (WTE) program supports the expansion of the Illinois energy efficiency (EE) workforce, helping people from underrepresented communities develop the capabilities necessary to find employment or improve their skills in the EE industry. The program is designed to support individuals who don't traditionally have access to these opportunities. WTE focused on promoting BPI principles and industry certifications. The novice cohort will train entry level workers, introduce underrepresented groups to the energy efficiency job market, and guide cohort members toward gainful employment with implementation contractors, trade allies, the utilities and other enterprises delivering EE to income-eligible communities. The skilled cohort will train mid-level workers with some experience in the industry to increase their salary opportunities and overall knowledge.

Program Contact:

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Renew Our Schools

Renew Our Schools is a building-level energy conservation program using real-time electricity consumption data to empower students to visualize their school's energy performance. Students are engaged through various resources and activities, such as using energy measurement tools like the eGauge equipment and participating in school energy audits. Energy tools and eGauge equipment are integrated into the school's curriculum. Students are provided with real-time data to help them identify ways to reduce energy usage and promote behavioral changes from their peers. Renew Our Schools builds a strong energy awareness foundation during the formative years. Not only will it have immediate impacts, but it will raise engaged, informed adults better equipped to meet climate goals in the future.

Program Contact:

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University of Illinois Chicago

The University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) implements a U.S. Department of Energy Industrial Assessment Center (IAC) program that trains the next-generation of energy savvy engineers how to conduct energy assessments for small-to-medium sized manufacturing, wastewater and commercial facilities that identify energy savings, productivity improvements and waste reduction opportunities. The student training incorporates safety and equipment training, how to identify energy conservation measures, how to engage with clients, in-the-field assessment training at client facilities, learning how to calculate energy and carbon reduction savings, development of ASHRAE Level 2 quality reports and presenting findings to clients. Over the past two years, UIC partnered with City Colleges of Chicago Wilbur Wright College and trained 20 university graduate/undergraduate students and 19 community college students that co-led 40 no-cost assessments that identified 200+ energy efficiency measures totaling \$5.2 million in annual energy savings, representing a 22.5% savings of total annual energy expenditures.

Program Contact:

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Willdan Clean Energy Academy (CEA)

The Clean Energy Academy is a pioneering initiative, tailor-made for the energy efficiency sector, serving as a comprehensive workforce development program. This turnkey offering encompasses recruitment, training, certification, hands-on capstone projects, job placement and support and continuing education. CEA's approach blends academic theory and engineering principles with certification-based content and real-world, on-the-job training, utilizing industry standards, manuals, codes, software and excel tools, ensuring participants are thoroughly prepared for their future roles. CEA was co-developed in partnership with a local utility's energy efficiency program to create both a talent pipeline for well-trained new hires and a training hub for current Participating Contractors' staff. What sets CEA apart is its comprehensiveness and adaptability, offering a full range of workforce development services through a fully virtual, in-person, or hybrid training, including hands-on service projects.

Program Contact:

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Impact Nominees:

CenterPoint Energy's C&I Custom Program

CenterPoint Energy's C&I Custom Natural Gas Program transformed the warehouse segment by redefining a baseline using real market conditions through the partnership and support from Resource Innovations and Cadmus. CenterPoint Energy sponsored in-depth research of heating systems installed in newly constructed warehouses that did not participate in their rebate program. The results showed non-participants consistently selected recirculating direct-fired units that use more outdoor air than code requires. Given the market trend, a new, regional baseline was established. Higher efficiency heating systems, which save 30% - 45% relative to the newly defined baseline, gained popularity. CenterPoint Energy and the Indiana Oversight Board secured additional funding to allow the program to achieve 225% of C&I portfolio gas savings goals over the past two years.

Program Contact:

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ComEd Energy Efficiency Instant Discounts Fork Truck Offering with DNV

ComEd Instant Discounts offering and implementing contractor DNV launched an incentive program to transform the fork truck market from fossil-fueled trucks to all-electric equipment with lithium-based batteries. As electrification comes into the forefront with new legislation, ComEd and DNV have worked to educate and transform the market to clean energy. The fork truck offering was launched in January 2023 with no prior market engagement and no ancillary programs to rely on. In its first year, the offering has already transformed the marketplace, with 57 fork trucks switched from fossil-fuel technology and 5.4 GWh saved. \$2.9M of incentives were provided and the offering is projected to grow as more in the market become aware of the ComEd program and the benefits of electrification.

Program Contact:

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Frontier Energy – Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) Solutions to Minnesota’s Cooperative & Municipal Utilities

Frontier Energy has an important role in the energy industry that allows them to interact with all stages of an energy efficiency or clean energy project, and the stakeholders involved at each step. Their work comprises of creating and supporting utility programs, working directly with clients on-site, analyzing energy usage and creating custom energy savings calculations and installing new technologies. Frontier Energy’s Minnesota Team specifically has over 30 years of experience in advising & implementing the State of Minnesota’s mandated Conservation Improvement Program (“CIP”) goals and associated energy efficiency programs for 15 Minnesota utility cooperatives & municipalities. Through extensive customer outreach, customer-tailored energy audits, customized energy conservation recommendations and rebate assistance, the Midwestern team has transformed low-performing utility energy efficiency rebate programs to sweeping energy efficiency savings campaigns.

Program Contact:

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Multi-Family Energy Savings Offering – Public Housing Initiative

The Multi-Family Energy Savings offering – Public Housing (PH) Initiative beneficially impacts Northern Illinois’s Public Housing residents through a comprehensive approach to implement electric and gas energy efficient measures to save energy, reduce cost and improve comfort for residents culminating in saving 282,794 therms and 4,338,751 kWh between 2021 and 2023 with 65% of its incentive budget targeted to certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise contractors. The PH initiative does this through sustained, long-term engagement of agencies that respect the appetite, constraints, and challenges of PH partners. By listening to agency stakeholders and working with them to overcome barriers, the PH initiative enables agencies to implement Energy Efficiency projects public housing authorities believe will benefit their residents.

Program Contact:

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Xcel Energy Lighting Efficiency Programs – 45 Lumens per Watt Baseline Strategy

A new federal law mandates that bulbs emit a minimum of 45 lumens per Watt, effectively phasing out most incandescent/halogen bulbs. With LED bulbs as the sole option, many utility companies anticipated the end of their lighting programs. To address this, Xcel Energy’s Lighting Efficiency team brainstormed solutions rather than considering program elimination. One option considered included using 45 lumens per Watt as the baseline since ENERGY STAR LEDs exceed lumen requirements and produce savings over baseline. For example, a 60-Watt equivalent LED bulb consumes 9 Watts and produces 88 lumens/Watt, exceeding the required 45 lumens/Watt. By establishing this new “baseline,” they maintained program benefits and supported customers in their pursuit of energy efficiency. This method also inspired other programs to consider this approach.

Program Contact:

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Innovation Nominees:

Ameren Illinois and the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program implemented by Leidos

From lighting to direct install measures and everything in between, the Multifamily One-Stop-Shop approach developed by the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program builds an all-inclusive-style multifamily energy efficiency program offering. This innovative approach helps Multifamily customers achieve the highest energy savings across all eligible channels of the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program. Oftentimes, energy efficiency programs tend to be segmented with customers navigating through program offerings on their own, while also working with varied teams to achieve energy savings in all areas of their properties. But the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program chose to take an approach of concierge service by offering their Multifamily customers a single point of contact through all areas of potential energy efficiency projects and upgrades.

Program Contact:

Lindsey Hammond
Ameren Illinois
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Ameren Illinois and the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program implemented by Leidos, SkyCool and Schnucks

The Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program partners with SkyCool to deliver an innovative cooling technology for customers. Schnucks, a local grocery in Fairview Heights, IL, was identified as a top candidate to benefit from the installation of this innovative cooling system. First of its kind in Illinois, and only 1 of 20 world-wide, SkyCool uses a dual-mode film on radiative panels, acting like a mirror to reject heat, reducing electrical demand of refrigeration systems. These radiating cooling panels reduce electricity usage, reducing the store's overall energy usage and allowing them to manage usage and save money month after month.

Program Contact:

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Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program, City of Peoria, Trees Forever, Peoria Park District

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 will utilize 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.

Program Contact:

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CenterPoint Energy

CenterPoint Energy infused new technology with industrial customer engagement through low-cost, high-impact compressed air audits. CenterPoint Energy's Energy Manager handles program interaction, coordinates aspects of energy efficiency projects, and conducts energy assessments for our large energy users. Now the Energy Manager is equipped with an acoustic imager to provide even more valued service. The tool simplifies leak detection by eliminating the need for tagging by taking photos of each leak. Leak audit reports are quickly generated and easy for maintenance staff to reference. Since launch, savings from compressed air leak audits are now tripling the average annual savings the C&I program lost from EISA 2020 baseline impacts and they are cheaper too!

Program Contact:

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ComEd Multifamily Energy Savings Operational Efficiency program (MFES-OE), designed and delivered by Energy Infrastructure Partners LLC (EIP)

ComEd Multifamily Energy Savings Operational Efficiency (MFES-OE) program takes the best of the holistic Strategic Energy Management approach, and tailors it to the specific needs of low and moderate-income multifamily communities. Furthermore, EIP takes a hands-on approach to training the building management, staff and residents in energy efficiency practices, preparing them for the clean energy transition and the energy jobs of the future. Incentives include a stipend for a Resident Champion and savings performance incentives paid to building owners. This MFES program by ComEd delivers energy equity through the comprehensive energy efficiency multifamily program. The MFES-OE is led by Franklin Energy and designed and delivered by Energy Infrastructure Partners (EIP), a certified MBE.

Program Contact:

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Consumers Energy Healthier Homes

The correlation between housing quality and health outcomes is well-studied and understood. So, too, is the correlation between energy efficiency improvements and improved health outcomes in low-income households with respiratory issues.

The Healthier Homes program for income-qualified Consumers Energy customers in Flint, Michigan directly addresses this correlation. It is a typical efficiency program except for two key innovations – direct referrals from healthcare of residents with a qualifying respiratory issue, plus an array of extra, non-energy-impact measures and home repairs aimed at reducing indoor environmental triggers, at no cost to the customer. Based on its success, this program model will be part of Consumers Energy planned filing with the Michigan Public Service Commission and the chance to be a permanent program in their portfolio.

Program Contact:

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Consumers Energy Segment Insights & Non-Energy Benefits Study

The Consumers Energy Segment Insights & Non-Energy Benefits Study models a unique approach to motivating customers' energy efficiency actions. Through this research, they uncovered key challenges that customers face in their business—many of which are not immediately associated with energy—and broke those problems out by customer segment. For each segment, the team then identified solutions to these non-energy problems (example: labor shortages, supply chain challenges) using equipment & program offerings that also save energy. By focusing first on customers' most pressing problems, Consumers Energy can better market their solutions to each customer segment and motivate customers who would not make the change for energy savings alone.

Program Contact:

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Divergent Alliance Grounds and Jumper Program

The Divergent Alliance Grounds and Jumpers Program consists of key initiatives to help companies save money, reduce environmental waste and ensure that they are never without necessary lifesaving equipment. Divergent Alliance will service, repair and test existing grounds and jumpers rather than have customers purchase new assemblies every time. They also offer short-term rentals, so customers still have grounds and jumpers to use while they are being serviced. In 2022, more than 4,000 grounds and jumpers that were serviced failed. Due to unique troubleshooting methods, Divergent Alliance was able to repair more than 80% of those failures, which reduced costs for their customers. Additionally, Divergent Alliance built proprietary software that provides over 50 valuable data points for each ground or jumper assembly that comes through their testing facility so customers can see how, why and where they failed.

Program Contact:

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Frontier Energy's Grant Support Services - Connecting CMPAS to Federal Funds

Frontier Energy's Grant Support Services program is paving the way for rural utilities to participate and benefit from the country's most significant investment in combating climate change: the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act ("IIJA" & "IRA," respectively). Through attending DOE webinars, NASEO Washington Updates and connecting with state & federal representatives, the team has successfully delivered informational funding updates to Central Municipal Power Agency/Services ("CMPAS") - a public power joint action group composed of 12 municipal utilities in southern Minnesota - relating to grid resiliency, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, battery storage, and more on a monthly basis for the past 1.5 years. As a result of growing client interest, Frontier Energy has directly supported 25 CMPAS member Grid Resiliency Concept Papers and two full DOE Grid Resiliency Grants.

Program Contact:

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MidAmerican Energy Company

MidAmerican wanted to extend our brand message reach through an influencer marketing partnership with a regional social marketing company, Hummingbirds. Hummingbirds are local "influencers" who are invited to attend various events, take part in special promotions or document an experience with a specific brand, company or product. For MidAmerican, we collaborated with the Hummingbirds to share the positive energy-efficient impacts of installing a smart thermostat. We can use word-of-mouth marketing to help share the importance of using energy wisely, invite the community to join us on the road to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, help customers understand the value of renewable energy and how that plays into our low rates, and more.

Program Contact:

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Minnesota Department of Commerce, WAPMAP

The WAPMAP was developed to provide community-level data about the Weatherization Assistance Program's historical service as compared to a number of socioeconomic details from Census Tract data and other data sources. Together, this data may be layered in the WAPMAP to help paint a picture about service and populations. This public tool helps support Service Providers in directing efforts to disadvantaged populations in Minnesota to continue prioritizing localized, equitable service delivery.

Program Contact:

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Renew Missouri Homes Program

Pearl Certification and Renew Missouri, a local non-profit, launched the Renew Missouri Homes program in October 2022 as a statewide program to make energy efficiency more accessible and to help Missourians reduce their energy bills. The program leverages Missouri's Department of Natural Resources' Missouri Home Energy Certificate (MHEC), Earth Advantage's Green Building Registry, Renew Missouri's deep understanding of the local energy efficiency sector and Pearl's unique approach to market transformation that ties energy efficiency features to home value to drive consumer demand for high-performing homes. Pearl is an official scoring tool of the state's certificate, which is issued alongside the Pearl certificate as part of the Pearl Certification Package.

Program Contact:

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Xcel Energy Lighting Efficiency Programs – 45 Lumens per Watt Baseline Strategy

A new federal law mandates that bulbs emit a minimum of 45 lumens per Watt, effectively phasing out most incandescent/halogen bulbs. With LED bulbs as the sole option, many utility companies anticipated the end of their lighting programs. To address this, Xcel Energy's Lighting Efficiency team brainstormed solutions rather than considering program elimination. One option considered included using 45 lumens per Watt as the baseline since ENERGY STAR LEDs exceed lumen requirements and produce savings over baseline. For example, a 60-Watt equivalent LED bulb consumes 9 Watts and produces 88 lumens/Watt, exceeding the required 45 lumens/Watt. By establishing this new "baseline," they maintained program benefits and supported customers in their pursuit of energy efficiency. This method also inspired other programs to consider this approach.

Program Contact:

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Xcel Energy, Trade Incentive as a Service

Xcel Energy's business energy efficiency programs collaborate closely with industry trade partners to promote and install energy-efficient equipment. In 2020 and 2021, feedback from these partners highlighted their challenges due to staffing shortages and paperwork-related requirements for customer rebates on high-efficiency equipment. Xcel Energy's Channel Development Manager working with the HVAC+R product manager recognized an opportunity to cost-effectively assist with this paperwork burden. Introducing the Trade Incentive as a Service (TIAAS) program, trade partners voluntarily participated, accepting a minor reduction in their transaction-based incentives. This novel initiative, previously unexplored at Xcel Energy, delivered approximately 2 gigawatt-hours of savings over two years. Furthermore, it bolstered relationships with trade partners and customers, underscoring the success of this innovative approach to energy efficiency collaboration.

Program Contact:

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Marketing Nominees:

Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program Smart Thermostat Marketing Blitz Campaign and Partnership with Google

Since 2008, the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program has been committed to helping customers save money on their energy expenses through various energy-efficient products, services and education. To further expand upon this commitment, the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program recently partnered with Google to increase the distribution of Google Nest Thermostats throughout the service territory, with special consideration surrounding diverse and underserved communities. To do this, the Energy Efficiency Program Marketing team worked diligently alongside the Google team and AM Conservation to create a blitz campaign for customers to acquire a no-cost Google Nest Thermostat. The campaign consists of print and digital communications, while also incorporating non-traditional tactics like pop-up events, billboards and partnerships with the local Peoria Guild of Black Artists.

Program Contact:

Lindsey Hammond
Ameren Illinois
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Ameren Illinois Market Development Initiative & Aluma Media Partnership

The goal of the partnership between the Ameren Illinois Market Development Initiative (MDI) and Aluma Media is to document programs, highlight participant stories, and attract diverse interns, employers, and partners to energy efficiency programs. In 2018, Aluma Media owner, Allison Walsh, a documentary filmmaker, was asked to create a video for one of the first MDI Internship Programs. She was immediately enamored by the MDI program and shared the desire to increase opportunities for local and diverse job seekers in the energy efficiency (and video) field. Walsh grew her own business with the MDI Internship Program (2020, 2021) and Seasonal Worker Program (2021) and created Aluma Media, a four-person team of diverse creatives who are passionate about artistic storytelling for companies working in energy efficiency.

Program Contact:

Allison Walsh
Aluma Media
allison@alumamedia.com

DTE Energy AC Diagnostic Tune-Up Influencer Marketing Campaign

The DTE AC-Tune Up Influencer campaign effectively achieved its goal of raising awareness and educating audiences about the benefits of diagnostic AC Diagnostic Tune-Ups by DTE preferred contractors. Timed strategically during spring, the initiative empowered customers to attain energy savings during the impending summer peak. Collaborating with proficient social media influencers, DTE Energy delivered credible and authentic social-first content, amplifying the campaign's core messages. A pivotal component was spotlighting eligibility for rebates when upgrading to efficient central air conditioning. Influencers ingeniously crafted user-friendly, relatable content, employing engaging green-screen videos to guide customers through contractor selection, rebate acquisition on the DTE site and simple tactics to optimize AC units.

Program Contact:

Emily Spurlock
Ignite Social Media
emily.spurlock@ignitesocialmedia.com

DTE Energy EV eFleets Marketing Campaign

DTE Energy and Ignite Social Media collaborated to produce a targeted marketing Campaign on LinkedIn ("EV: eFleets") focused on raising awareness for small business consumers on the benefits of electric vehicles and providing DTE resources to support increased adoption. Guided by the ever-present need for energy-efficient vehicles, this campaign set out to encourage small business owners to convert their existing fleets to electric vehicles. Additionally, the campaign targeted industries such as recreational industries and retailers (grocery, apparel, restaurants, museums, etc.) to install EV chargers for their customers' electric vehicles.

Program Contact:

Emily Spurlock
Ignite Social Media
emily.spurlock@ignitesocialmedia.com

MidAmerican Energy Company

MidAmerican wanted to extend our brand message reach through an influencer marketing partnership with a regional social marketing company, Hummingbirds. Hummingbirds are local “influencers” who are invited to attend various events, take part in special promotions or document an experience with a specific brand, company or product. For MidAmerican, we collaborated with the Hummingbirds to share the positive energy-efficient impacts of installing a smart thermostat. We can use word-of-mouth marketing to help share the importance of using energy wisely, invite the community to join us on the road to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, help customers understand the value of renewable energy and how that plays into our low rates, and more.

Program Contact:

Stacy Christoffersen
MidAmerican Energy
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Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program

Saving energy is like music – it’s personal and everyone has their own preferences. From homes to businesses, energy efficiency isn’t one-size-fits-all solution. The Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program helps all customers build their custom playlist of offerings to find their savings groove. The savings playlist campaign encompasses a full effort across mediums to not only educate customers about energy efficiency but also improve brand awareness and increase overall participation. Music and energy flow through all our lives, and this campaign is meant to embody our commonalities as well as the different ways people interact with both.

Program Contact:

Ashley Bennett
Nicor Gas
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SEEL, LLC

SEEL's community-focused stance on energy efficiency is exemplified by their work with the Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO). As a minority and service-disabled veteran owned business enterprise uniquely attuned to the need for diversity and equity in the energy efficiency space, SEEL focuses on addressing the needs of the UPPCO by crafting a tailored marketing approach designed to connect with consumers in a service area spread across 13 counties. Spearheaded by the Grand Rapids branch, the marketing strategies SEEL employs in UPPCO's entire energy efficiency portfolio are designed to connect with the largely rural communities served by UPPCO. The team's dedication to connecting with clients and consumers alike is a product of the company's dedication to creating a path to efficiency for everyone.

Program Contact:

Gabrielle Gordon
SEEL, LLC
ggordon@seelllc.com

Champion Nominees:

Commonwealth Edison

Commonwealth Edison (ComEd) is a unit of Chicago-based Exelon Corporation (NASDAQ: EXC), a Fortune 100 energy company with approximately ten million electricity and natural gas customers. ComEd powers the lives of more than four million customers across northern Illinois or 70% of the state's population. ComEd's service territory borders Iroquois County to the south (roughly Interstate 80), the Wisconsin border to the north, the Iowa border to the west and the Indiana border to the east.

ComEd provides a portfolio of energy efficiency commercial and industrial (C&I) programs that intentionally include program design elements to help better serve and support historically excluded communities, including targeted marketing campaigns, community-focused Outreach Service Provider recruitment, community-based organization (CBO) partnerships and project incentive promotions. Through these efforts, ComEd has seen significant energy efficiency growth. Lower operating costs resulting from using less energy allows businesses to invest further in their companies and spur local economic growth critical to lifting up disadvantaged communities.

Contact:

Teri Lewand
ComEd
teri.lewand@comed.com

Theresa English

Theresa English is a Sr. Program Manager responsible for managing the residential income-eligible DSM programs and is most certainly a “Champion of Community Engagement!” She is constantly thinking about and seeking new ways to provide better, more comprehensive, customer experiences and is known to make significant positive impacts in the lives of customers she engages with. As a Kansas City native, Theresa has been a tireless champion for income-eligible communities in the Midwest by providing increased understanding, access and participation in Evergy’s bill support programs, energy efficiency programs and other outside resources to assist the most in need. Her motto is “meeting customers where they are, one neighborhood at a time.”

Think! Energy, Consumers Energy and National Energy Foundation

The Think! Energy program influences students and their families in single or dual-fuel services in Michigan to take actions that can reduce their home energy use and increase Energy Waste Reduction (EWR). This multipronged program provides an interactive EWR presentation and “take-home” kit that raises awareness on how individual actions and low-cost measures can reduce the consumption of electricity, natural gas and water. Historically, the program has targeted elementary and middle school students in 4th-6th grade. However, Consumers Energy expanded the Think! Energy program to include primary and high school students, senior citizens and community groups in Fall 2021. This expansion has continued into 2023 and is a core component of the Think! Energy program.

Contact:

Amber Hicok
Consumers Energy
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Thanks to the 2024 Inspiring Efficiency Awards Review Committee

MEEA would like to thank all of our members and Board Members who spent hours promoting the 2024 Inspiring Efficiency Awards and reviewing the nominations. We had 46 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:

William Worek, Argonne National Laboratory

Lisa Stefanik, APTIM

Justin Idleburg, Cabanne District Community Development Corporation

Dr. Amalia Hicks, Cadmus

Ashley Robertson, Center for Energy & Environment

Mike Newman, CMC Energy

Brady McNall, DNV

LeAndra Archuleta, Energy Solutions

Rekha Kumar, Erthe Energy Solutions

Rich Hackner, GDS Associates

Maria Onesto Moran, Green Home Experts

Will Baker, Google

Quinn Zeagler, ICF

Todd Parker, Michigan Saves

Kelly Mulder, Mulder Consulting

Chanda Rowan, Nicor Gas

Scott Yee, Resource Innovations

Patrice Suggs, SEEL, LLC

Gabrielle Gordon, SEEL, LLC

Zahra Albarakat, SEEL, LLC

Theresa Collins, Senior Services Plus

Deborah Dynako, Slipstream

Nathan Baer, Staples Energy

Scott Steiner, TRC

Maddie Emerson, TRC

Past Award Winners

Chair's Award

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 Award

2023: Kristol Simms, Ameren Illinois

Education

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

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

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

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

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.