

Nonprofit Energy Efficiency Program (NEEP)

Program Profile

Improving Energy Efficiency Across Nonprofit Facilities

Launched by [Energy Outreach Colorado](#) (EOC) as a pilot program in 2007, the [Nonprofit Energy Efficiency Program](#) (NEEP) supports nonprofit organizations of all types that provide direct services to income-qualified Coloradans. NEEP helps these nonprofits reduce their own energy costs, freeing up more money to operate their programs. EOC, the statewide nonprofit that administers the program, first helps the participating organizations conduct a building assessment and then provides grant funding to offset the purchase and installation of new equipment such as energy efficient lighting, insulation, low-flow fixtures, and HVAC systems.

Qualifying organizations must—at a minimum—be 501(c)(3) nonprofits that serve income-qualified individuals, own their building or are on a long-term lease, and pay their own energy costs. NEEP is funded by investor-owned Colorado utility companies, cities, and municipalities throughout the state, and EOC.

Community History

In Colorado, the median household income from 2018 to 2022 was \$87,598, with a per capita income of \$47,346 and a poverty rate of 9.4%.¹ The state hosts 23,148 nonprofit organizations, including 18,166 public charities, 1,020 private and public foundations, and 3,962 other nonprofits.² These entities play a crucial role in addressing the needs of diverse communities.

NEEP evolved from the EOC bill assistance program that helped Colorado homeowners and renters struggling to pay their energy bills. These funds were distributed through nonprofit partners across the state. During the 2007 recession, EOC saw their nonprofit partners struggling with building maintenance costs and increased risk of closure for some organizations.

¹ The Census Bureau, 2022. [QuickFacts](#).

² Independent Sector, 2020. [State Profile: Colorado](#).

Fast Facts

Program scope: Building energy efficiency upgrades and replacement of appliances with more efficient models to reduce carbon emissions and energy costs for nonprofits.

Communities served: Nonprofits that serve income-qualified persons, own their building(s) or are on a long-term lease, and pay their energy costs in Colorado.

Funding: Funding is provided through cities, municipalities, investor-owned utilities and EOC.

Key partners: Cities, municipalities, investor-owned utilities.

Promising practices: Reducing the operating costs of nonprofits that serve low-income households so they can devote more of their budgets to direct work with the community.



Closures of these nonprofit partners would remove pieces of the essential community network that low-income Coloradans depended on in that period more than ever. EOC sought a solution to the issue and created NEEP to help nonprofits reduce their energy costs, allowing them to direct more funding toward their programs. Nonprofits of all types, including youth centers, crisis shelters, food pantries, and clinics have all benefited from NEEP.

Community Engagement

NEEP has evolved in line with Colorado utility programs and their priorities, along with input received through community engagement. For example, the program may begin to incorporate electrification, a shift that was influenced by broader stakeholder and community advocacy in Colorado.

NEEP has reached eligible participants through its existing relationships with EOC and utility companies, as well as through word-of-mouth referrals. Operating in the community since 1989, over time EOC has been able to develop a strong reputation for helping low-income Coloradans reduce home energy costs. The program has also compiled lists of potential nonprofit participants and conducted cold-call outreach when there is not a waitlist for the program. Additionally, the program has sought recommendations from other nonprofits it has served, fostering a network of shared knowledge and mutual support.

Key Partners

In 2007, NEEP attracted the City of Denver's Office of Nonprofit Engagement as its first funding partner. In the years following, NEEP has grown to attract funding from cities and utilities across the state—including the state's largest investor-owned utility—Xcel Energy. Today, all of the investor-owned utilities have programming specifically for income-qualified Coloradans, which can be attributed in part to years of advocacy by EOC at the Public Utilities Commission. EOC also advocates at the state level for other programs that support the income-qualified community.

Funding Mechanism

NEEP's funding sources are diverse, enabling it to execute its energy-saving initiatives for nonprofits across the state of Colorado. NEEP provides comprehensive project management, collaborating with contractors to implement energy-saving upgrades. NEEP aims to lead and manage as much of the project implementation as possible, understanding that nonprofits are often resource-strained. In most cases, NEEP can pay for the project costs in full and is



reimbursed by its funding sources. Commonly, funding can cover switching lighting fixtures to LEDs, upgrading heating systems, and increasing insulation.

NEEP also conducts custom energy audits to identify opportunities and can even address health and safety concerns. Its diverse funding sources empower NEEP to pursue its mission of reducing the burden of energy costs on nonprofits in Colorado.

Program Impact

NEEP has helped many nonprofits across Colorado achieve significant energy savings and efficiency improvements. In 2023, NEEP successfully completed 67 projects, resulting in a total savings of over 1.6 million kilowatt-hours and leveraging assistance totaling \$2,874,083.³ NEEP is often engaged in roughly 90 projects simultaneously. The program places a strong emphasis on verification to ensure that all equipment is installed correctly and that the equipment's model numbers align with NEEP high efficiency specifications.

Barriers and Challenges

The nonprofits that NEEP serves typically operate under financial and capacity constraints. To overcome this barrier, NEEP has established a process to pay contractors directly and manage the projects to take the cash flow and administrative burden off of nonprofits participating in the program.



In 2021, Centro San Juan Diego partnered with NEEP to improve its building's energy efficiency. NEEP helped install LED lighting, insulation, and HVAC upgrades, eliminating temperature fluctuations. This initiative not only improved comfort but also freed up resources for Centro San Juan Diego to expand its educational and support programs for the local Latino community.

³ Ann Cruz, Energy Outreach Colorado, 2023. Personal Communication



Additionally, NEEP faces challenges related to contractor availability and expertise. Securing HVAC equipment contractors in a timely manner has often been a struggle. NEEP has high contractor standards, expecting professionalism and discretion when working in buildings that serve vulnerable populations. Rural areas face unique challenges, including contractor availability. They frequently must rely on the participating nonprofit's designated contractor, limiting flexibility in project execution.

Recommendations from the Field

- **Diversify funding sources.** NEEP's model demonstrates the benefits of tapping into a variety of funding channels. This approach provides the flexibility needed to support energy-saving initiatives effectively and allows NEEP to provide services to more nonprofits across Colorado.
- **Provide comprehensive project management and oversight.** Unlike programs that only provide energy audit results and contractor recommendations, NEEP's comprehensive approach allows for a hands-on role throughout the entire efficiency upgrade process. This level of engagement can streamline project execution and enhance overall effectiveness.

For More Information

- [EOC Annual Report 2022](#)
- [EOC Home Page](#)
- [NEEP Home Page](#)