

NC Home Energy Rebate Program

# **NC Home Energy Rebate Program**

## **Public Input Session Summary Report**

North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

August 1, 2024, 6:30pm ET



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## Executive Summary

On August 1, 2024, at 6:30pm ET the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) hosted a virtual Public Input Session related to the NC Home Energy Rebate Program. The state solicited public input to inform the priorities for program design and implementation and identify opportunities for ongoing stakeholder engagement and shared community benefit. The goals of the public input session included:

- Introducing participants to the Department of Energy's (DOE) Home Energy Rebate program,
- Providing an overview of DOE's Community Benefits Plan and the Education & Outreach Plan requirements, and
- Welcoming public input on the DEQ Home Energy Rebate program.

The virtual public input session was facilitated by:

- Julie Woosley, Director, DEQ State Energy Office
- Helen Hossley, Special Projects Manager, DEQ State Energy Office
- Dr. Allison Mathews, Executive Grant Writer, DEQ

One hundred two members of the public attended the public input session, of whom 17 provided comments. The session lasted approximately two hours.

## Program Overview

### Background

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) was signed into law in 2022 and is the single largest investment in climate and energy in American history. As a part of the Inflation Reduction Act, the Department of Energy (DOE) was authorized to allocate \$8.8 billion in program funds to States, Tribes and Territories to administer rebates for home energy efficiency and electrification projects.

DOE's Home Energy Rebate programs are two distinct, but complementary programs. The Homeowners Managing Efficiency Rebates (HOMES) and Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR) programs together provisionally allocate over \$209 million in federally funded rebates for low-income and middle-income families in North Carolina to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes and install electric appliances.

### Designing the Home Energy Rebate Program for North Carolina

DEQ's program goals include reducing energy burden for households, improving indoor air quality, reducing harmful emissions and pollutants, supporting historically underserved communities statewide, and advancing North Carolina's 2050 goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).

In the interest of providing a clear, seamless resident and contractor experience, DEQ is planning to combine the two DOE Home Energy Rebate Programs (HOMES and HEAR) into a single North Carolina Home Energy Rebate Program. Additionally, DEQ is prioritizing stacking the forthcoming Home Energy Rebates with existing utility rebates, to the extent possible, to further simplify the experience for program participants.

The Home Energy Rebate Program provides DEQ with the flexibility to design a program that meets the unique challenges and opportunities facing North Carolina residents statewide including:

- Focusing on low-to-moderate income families experiencing high energy burdens.
- Supporting income eligible single family, and multifamily building tenants and building owners to make energy efficiency upgrades.
- Creating economic opportunities -- good jobs, new business creation, and business expansion -- for energy contractors and suppliers.

DEQ recognizes the effective design and successful implementation of the Home Energy Rebate Program will require ongoing, two-way engagement with a diverse stakeholder ecosystem including homeowners and tenants, energy auditors and contractors, community-based organizations, workforce development organizations, utilities, other North Carolina state agencies and many others.

While North Carolina's Home Energy Rebate Program design is underway, DOE has put in place a number of guidelines which North Carolina must comply with including those below.

## NC Home Energy Rebate Program

- Single family homeowners and multifamily building owners are eligible participant types. For select appliances, tenants may also be eligible.
- Priority program participants are low-income residents (those with household income levels below 80% of Area Median Income) and moderate-income residents (those with household income between 80% and 150% of Area Median Income).
- Major home upgrades together must reduce energy usage by at least 20% to be rebate eligible.
- DOE has set recommended rebate levels, rebate maximums, and example home energy efficiency projects.
- Eligible appliances must be ENERGY STAR certified.

This is a representative, but not complete list of DOE's program requirements, which North Carolina and all participating States must comply with. NC's full program eligibility guidelines are being developed and will be shared with the public as soon as available.

### State Application to DOE and Implementation Blueprints

To receive the \$209 million allocation, DEQ must submit to DOE formal program applications and additionally eight plans called "Implementation Blueprints." Some of these plans are due 60 days prior to program launch while others are due up to a year after program launch.

Descriptions of these required plans are noted below.

- **Consumer Protection Plan:** This plan is being designed in collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Justice to create protections like a Responsible Contractor Policy, a process for filing complaints and having those complaints formally addressed, a process for adding and removing contractors from good standing in the program and more. DEQ acknowledges that these policies are critical for building and maintaining public trust.
- **Privacy and Data Security Plan:** This plan is being developed in accordance with all North Carolina laws and leading practices to protect personal information that may be shared by households or home energy contractors to determine program eligibility.
- **Utility Data Access Plan:** This plan is being developed with the support of the utilities as well as the co-ops and municipal utilities.
- **Data and Tools Plan:** This plan is required to describe the data and tools DEQ plans to leverage, including available tools developed by DOE and the federally run national laboratories, which could help the program run more efficiently and effectively.
- **Community Benefits Plan:** This plan describes the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) goals DEQ commits to during the life of the Home Energy Rebate Program to advance community and labor engagement; workforce development; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility; and the [Justice40 Initiative](#). DEQ will incorporate public input and seek external stakeholder insights to develop this plan. DEQ will post the plan including the SMART goals, commitments, and milestones on the DEQ webpage to advance transparency and accountability.

- **Education and Outreach Plan:** The plan outlines the partnerships, channels and educational materials DEQ will use to educate stakeholders on the program and perform outreach. DEQ intends to conduct meaningful education and outreach to ensure households, contractors, retailers and distributors are aware of the program and to provide clarity on how they can apply, and examples of how partners such as community-based organizations can get involved.
- **Program Evaluation Plan:** This plan will outline the framework, policies and key performance indicators to evaluate the Home Energy Rebate Program's success and compliance with DOE guidelines throughout the program lifecycle.
- **Market Transformation Plan:** This plan describes how North Carolina will track the overall impacts of the program on the market for home energy efficiency including the number of homes upgraded and the pace of that program uptake, and broader market impacts like the potential home value increases from these home upgrades. DEQ also must describe in this plan how the Home Energy Rebate Program will be combined with other rebates and funding sources including those available from utilities to stretch program funds. This plan also aims to address an approach for sustainable business models for home energy contractors after the program funds draw down.

### Program Timeline

The timeline for the North Carolina Home Energy Rebate Program is designed to meet all essential standards and requirements from DOE, while balancing the urgency to launch as quickly as possible.

Following the passage and signature of the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022, DOE released program guidance to the States between October 2023 and March 2024. DEQ participated in a DOE-hosted technical application assistance cohort, which began in April 2024 and ended in June 2024.

DEQ is currently designing the Home Energy Rebate program. DEQ aims to submit the applications and required implementation blueprints, then receive approval from DOE to launch the program later this Fall. DEQ anticipates launching the Home Energy Rebate Program this Winter and the active period for the program will go from 2025 to 2031, or until funds are depleted.

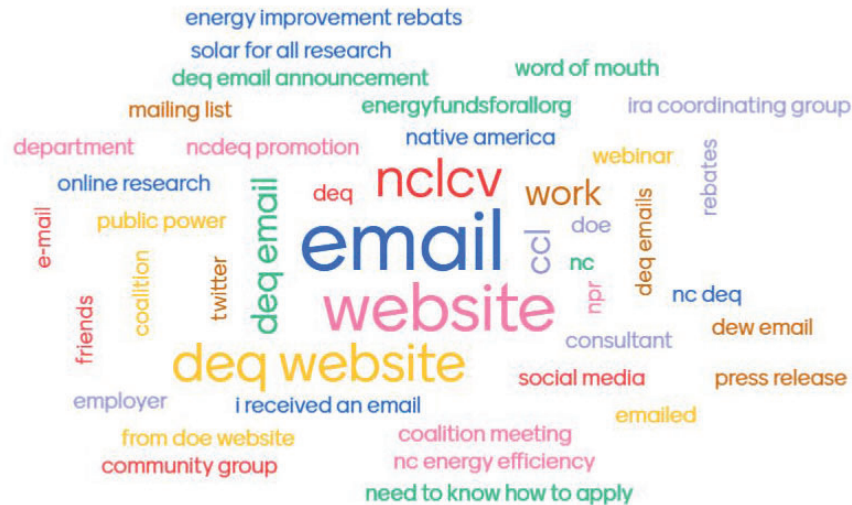
DEQ has created an email sign-up list for interested homeowners, contractors and members of the public to stay up to date on program announcements at [North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality \(govdelivery.com\)](https://govdelivery.com).

## Interactive Participant Poll Results

Live polling was conducted with participants to capture feedback on the NC Home Energy Rebate Program. Results of these poll questions are as follows:

# 1. I learned about the session today through...

72 responses





## 2. Use the scale to address the statement below:

How urgent do you feel the need for energy upgrades in your home/community?

4.3

¿Hasta qué punto considera urgente la necesidad de mejoras energéticas en su hogar/comunidad?

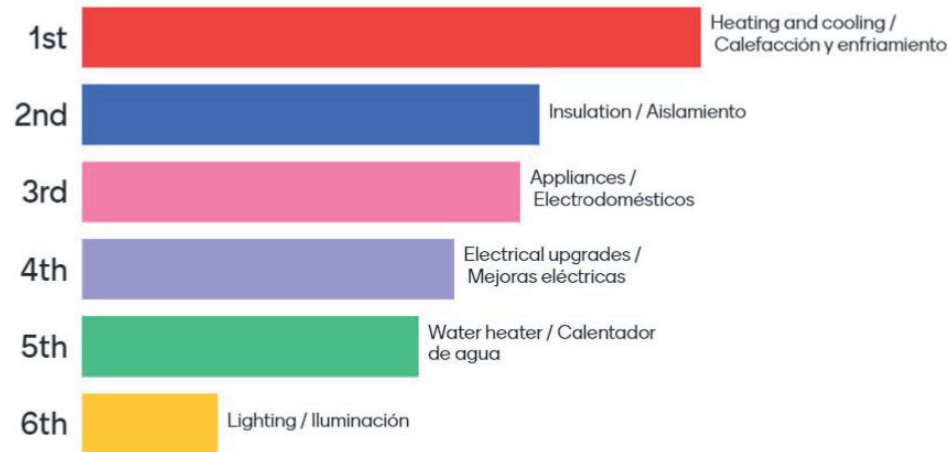
1.1

Not urgent/No es urgente

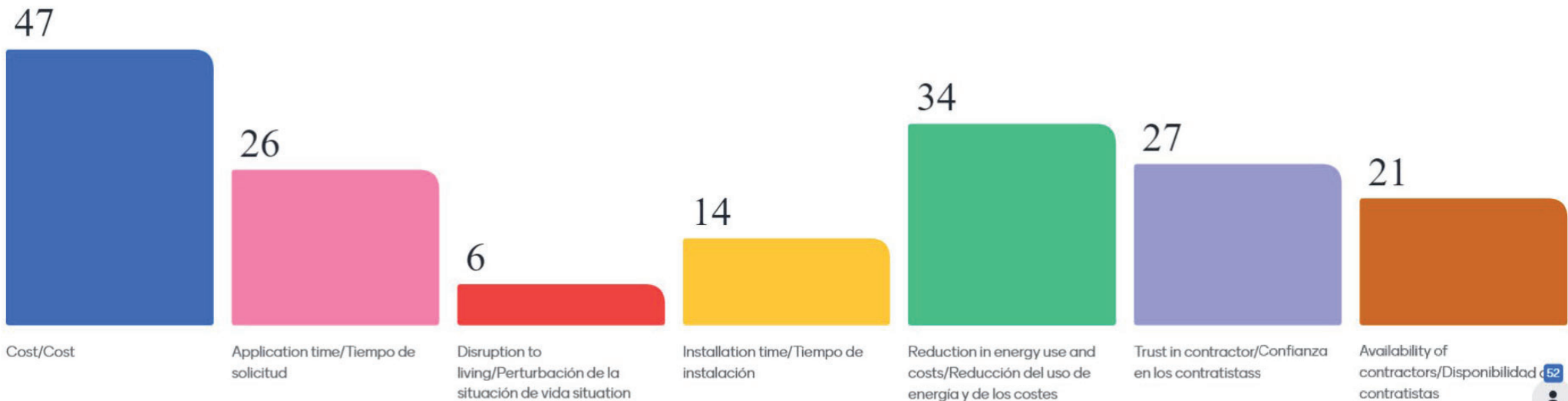
Very urgent/Muy urgente

Join at menti.com | use code 2544 3083

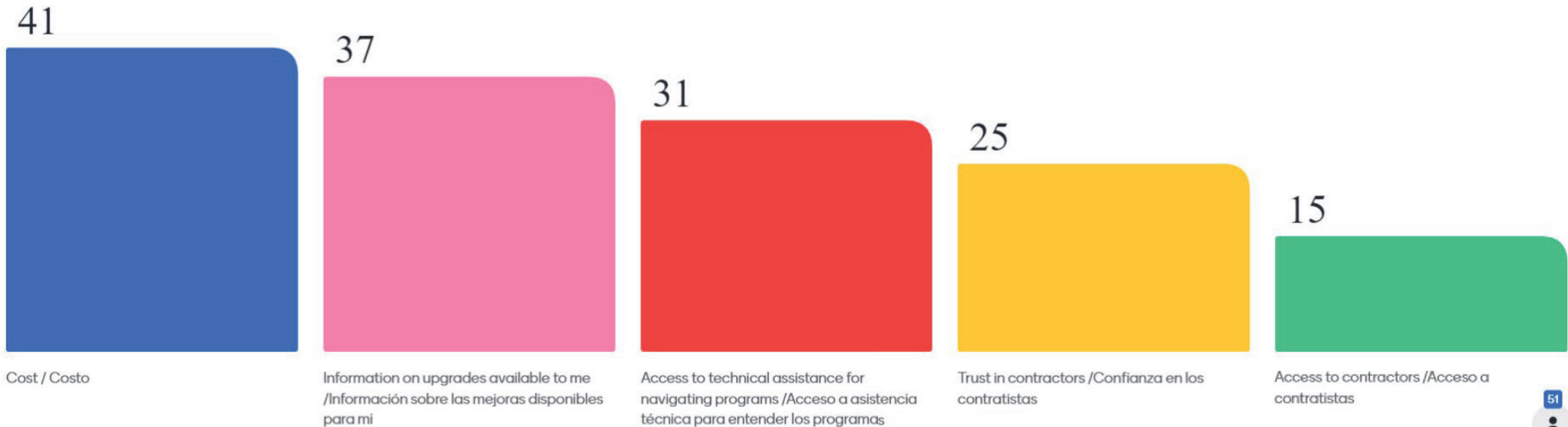
# 3. What efficiency improvements does your home (or homes in your community) need most?



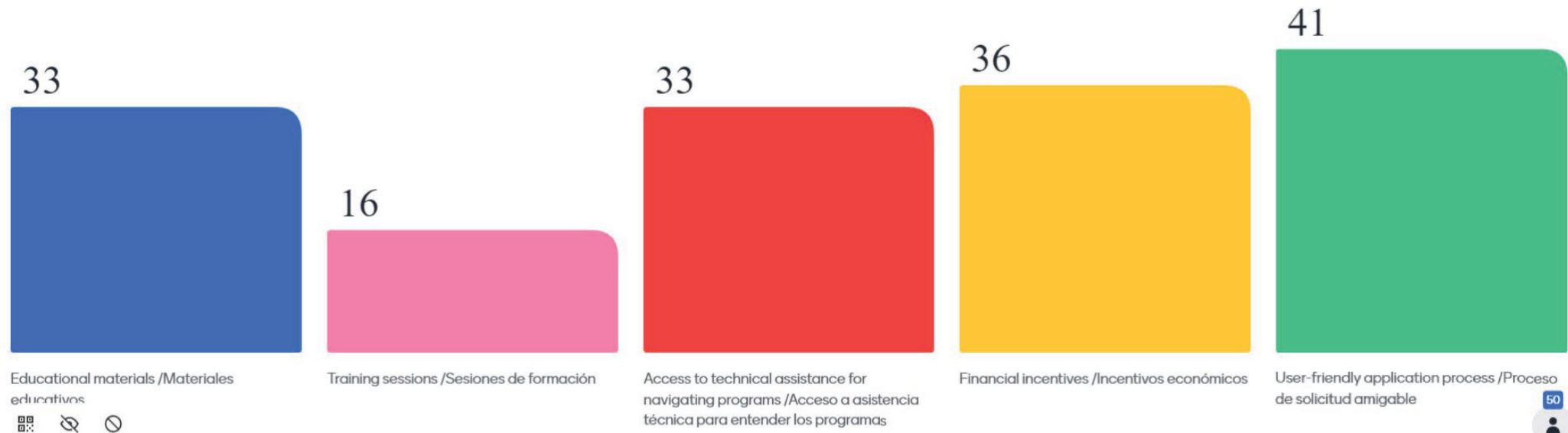
# 4. What factors would influence your decision to participate in the NC Home Energy Rebate programs?



# 5. What challenges do you (or people in your community) face in accessing energy efficient upgrades?



# 6. Which of the following would enhance your community's ability to access the NC Home Energy Rebate Programs?

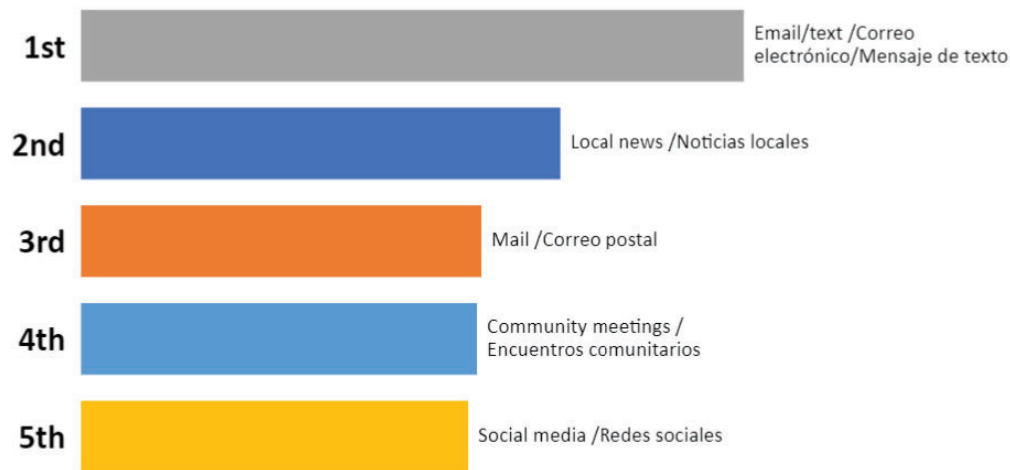




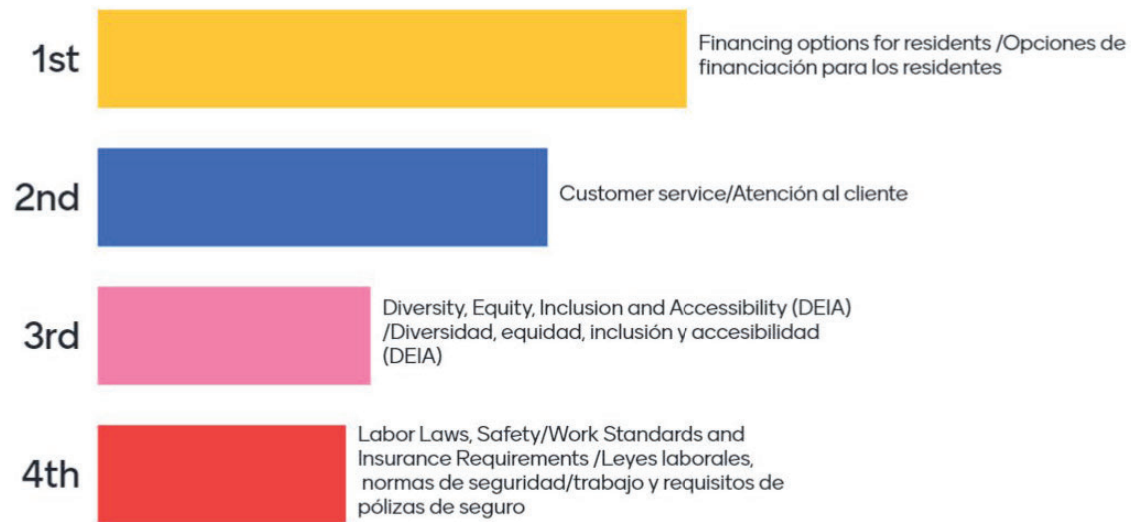


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## 8. What are the best ways for you (or people in your community) to receive information about NC Home Energy Rebate Programs?



# 9. What topics should be included in contractor training?





## 10. Please share suggestions on how we can make the program more accessible for residents.

52 responses

Marketing. Getting the word out there that this program exists.

In person community engagement

Make it retroactive to Jan 2024

Education

EnergyFundsforAll.org

NPR WFAE coverage, technical assistance and CLEAR guidance on what to do when (steps and links to follow)

Website

In person community engagement

Use a centralized resource like energyfundsforall.org for program

Contractors know all of the financing and rebates available for customer. As a customer, I want to

I will spread the word for weatherization clients.

Transparency and



# 11. If you are representing an organization and want to be considered as potential education and outreach partner, please type the organization name.

33 responses

Schneider Electric -  
we manufacture  
electric panels and  
can facilitate electric  
panel upgrades  
Naveed Ahmad,  
Business  
Development  
Manager,  
naveed.ahmad@se.co  
m

Schneider Electric

North Carolina's  
Electric Cooperatives

Preservation Durham

NA

NVLCV

North Carolina  
League of  
Conservation Voters  
Foundation

Leading Energy  
Solutions

FreeHeatPump.com  
Rebate Aggregator

n/a

Melanie Jirka WAMY  
Community Action