

Green Communities Webinar Q&A

1. Do you know why your cold-mailer response was higher than Mass Save?

Letter campaigns to two specific groups—homeowners that do not heat with gas, and homeowners that had Mass Save/Home MPG energy assessments in the past—were conducted in the fall of 2013 into January 2014. The response rate to these letters was above 3%, which is considered above average. Although we can't say for sure why the response was above average, it may have been because the messaging was tailored to the recipient, and communicated a sense of urgency in that Home MPG's bonus rebates were time-limited—i.e., homeowners that don't heat with gas were urged to take advantage of bonus rebates for high efficiency renewable thermal heating equipment, and homeowners that had already had assessments were reminded of the deadline for the bonus rebates and incentives.

2. How do these results compare to the results Mass Save alone is getting in implementing energy efficiency?

DOER is in the process of comparing the Home MPG initiative results with data from the Mass Save program and expects to be able to share these results and other results by September 2014.

3. How is the MPG being financed?

Home MPG was funded by a multi-year grant from the US Department of Energy. Home MPG funds were used to provide "extras" to the Mass Save program in eight MA communities: Belchertown, East Longmeadow, Hampden, Longmeadow, Monson, Palmer, Springfield, and Wilbraham. The "extras" include:

- An Energy Performance Score (EPS), similar to a car's miles per gallon (MPG) rating;
- Thermal imaging analysis to highlight insulation opportunities;
- "Bonus" financial incentives for "deeper" efficiency and renewable thermal measures;
- Technical assistance to homeowners to facilitate HVAC/hot water system upgrades; and,
- Training for realtors and appraisers to build awareness and support for incorporating a home's energy performance into the appraisal and home valuation process.

4. How does a community get permission to use the energy score card?

The Home MPG initiative piloted the integration of energy performance scorecards into the Mass Save Home Energy Services Program. DOER is now beginning to discuss broader implementation of scorecards with the Mass Save Program Administrators. Any community interested in having an energy performance score distributed through Mass Save should express their interest to their utility.

5. I'm assuming that it will COST the utility company MORE to use it...how is that cost being covered?

There is a relatively small additional cost over the standard Mass Save home energy assessment involved in generating an energy performance score and explaining it to the customer. There is extra time involved in providing an updated score to homeowners who implement efficiency work. During Home MPG, this cost was covered by the DOE grant that funded the project, and the lessons learned would most likely reduce the cost associated with scorecards if they were implemented on a larger scale. The issue of cost will be part of DOERs discussions with Mass Save program administrators regarding scorecard integration on a larger scale.

6. I understand the value of using asset value to avoid behavioral effects, but was there any thought about how to provide information to the homeowners on the effects of different behaviors?

Home MPG focused on providing the energy performance score and explaining the asset rating concept to homeowners. The initiative did not explicitly address occupant behaviors.

7. The Mass Save website provides a long list of rebates etc. Can a homeowner work with someone there to get details of exactly what will work in their case if they are already planning an upgrade or a new construction?

Via a Mass Save home energy assessment, the Mass Save home energy specialist provides recommendations regarding cost effective efficiency improvements incentivized by the Mass Save program. Mass Save supports a New Construction program as well, and eligible, participating homeowners can work with a consultant from the program's vendor to help navigate the process and build a qualifying home.

8. What were some of the primary 'lessons learned' (i.e., things that worked unexpectedly well and/or things that were unexpectedly problematic and what lessons came from those experiences)?

a. Homeowners like the scorecard:

Results of phone survey conducted by a third party evaluator indicate that 98% percent of homeowners that received a scorecard feel it is useful in helping to make decisions about energy-savings improvements to their home. (67% of homeowners that received a scorecard feel it is very useful in helping to make decisions about energy-savings improvements to their home, and 31% said it was somewhat useful.) Additionally, 74% of those surveyed said the scorecard would be useful when buying a house.

b. Targeted mailings appear effective:

The 3% response rate to mailings in the fall of 2013 indicates the effectiveness of targeted mailings with messaging alerting specific recipients to specific opportunities to save energy and money.

- c. *Technical Assistance was underutilized but well-received by those who used it:*
Despite marketing and mailings, fewer homeowners than anticipated used the Technical Assistance service to understand their options for upgrading and/or changing their HVAC equipment. Anecdotal feedback indicates the service was very helpful to the customers who did use it.

- d. *Bonus rebates and incentives motivate homeowners to make efficiency improvements:*
According to home energy specialists, Home MPG bonus rebates and incentives were effective in motivating people to implement efficiency work.