

STAFF REPORT

DATE: March 25th, 2024

TO: Yolo County Climate Action Commission

FROM: Yuridiana Pantoja, CivicSpark Fellow
Kristen Wraithwall, Sustainability Manager

RE: Approve Updated Home Energy Score Early Action Project Description

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Approve the Updated Home Energy Score Early Action Project Description (Attachment K).
2. Recommend allocation of \$72,600 in Climate Action American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds for the implementation of the Home Energy Labeling pilot program.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDED ACTION

Launching a Home Energy Score (HES) Pilot Program will enable the County to assess the GHG benefits of voluntary HES assessment programs prior to pursuing a Countywide program or a time-of-listing HES requirement. Allocating ARP funding to this effort will enable staff to officially launch the seventh and final early action project as approved by the Commission in 2022, and to provide free-of-cost home energy assessment to up to 60 homes in the unincorporated area.

BACKGROUND

From September 2021 to January 2022, Yolo County staff and the Yolo County Climate Action Commission (Commission) sought applications from the public for early actions to further Yolo County's climate action and sustainability initiatives and support the goals in the 2020 emergency climate resolution. In January 2022, the Commission approved early action eligibility and prioritization criteria, which Yolo County staff used to recommend rankings of the 21 early action proposals received by the Commission. County staff used the approved prioritization criteria to recommend seven early action priorities to the Climate Action Commission, including a Home Energy Labeling Program, which recommended the development of an ordinance to require the completion of a Home Energy Score at time-of-listing. This proposal was approved in concept by the Board of Supervisors on May 24, 2022, however immediate progress on this project was delayed due to limited staff capacity.

In the interim two years, staff have revisited this early action project with the Board Subcommittee on Climate and implementors of Home Energy Score programs across California. These conversations have led staff to recommend the development of a Home Energy Score (HES) Pilot Program to assess community buy-in and interest in conducting assessments, analyze the voluntary energy efficiency upgrades undertaken by

homeowners as a result of receiving a HES assessment, and to assess the costs and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction benefits of implementing a time-of-listing program as the early action was initially outlined.

The updated project description for this early action project is attached (Attachment K), and outlines a pilot program for the unincorporated County, wherein the County leverages ARP funds to administer Home Energy Scores free of charge for up to 60 homes, with a priority on low-income homeowners and renters.

Following the completion of the pilot program and an analysis of program effectiveness completed by the County in partnership with identified technical assistance providers, the County will consider identifying funding opportunities to expand the scale of the program in the future.

BENEFITS OF HES

Economic Impact

Through comprehensive energy assessments, the HES pilot program equips homeowners with the knowledge and recommendations to decode and enhance their residential energy efficiency, potentially leading to improvements that drive down utility expenses. The HES pilot program will provide participants with a straightforward list of home improvements that can improve energy efficiency and reduce utility bills, particularly crucial for low-income families for whom these savings can translate into essential financial reprieve. While the pilot program in its current form does not provide direct incentives for home energy improvements, staff will connect program participants to the Home Weatherization Program and the Electrification Retrofit Rebate Outreach Program (ERRO) to help address financial gaps in implementing improvements.

The Home Energy Score (HES) program, initiated by the U.S. Department of Energy, plays a vital role in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by promoting residential energy efficiency. By evaluating homes on a scale from 1 to 10, HES provides homeowners with actionable insights to enhance their energy performance, directly contributing to GHG emissions reduction.

Notably, in cities like Portland, Oregon, a mandatory Home Energy Score program has successfully incentivized energy-efficient improvements in homes, aligning consumer behavior with environmental sustainability goals.⁷ In the case of time-of-sale or time-of-listing programs, studies confirm that energy-efficient homes can command higher market values, further motivating investments in energy upgrades reduce emissions.⁸

⁷ Report to Portland City Council on Residential Energy Performance Rating and Disclosure (Ordinance No. 188143) October 2020

⁸ Pigman, M., Stratton, B. C., & Mercado, A. (2022). Quantifying the Multiple Benefits of Energy Efficiency and Low-Income Energy Programs at the Household Level [Preprint]. Lawrence Berkeley National

The emissions reductions benefits of a Home Energy Score Program in Yolo County, particularly one that is voluntary, is unknown at this time. This is a key reason for pursuing a pilot program before launching an expanded Countywide program or exploring time-of-listing or time-of-sale HES requirements. Yolo County is committed to developing a robust mechanism to track the program's impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, such as through post-assessment surveys and assessing utilization of ERRO and Weatherization Program offerings to implement home energy efficiency upgrades.

Target Demographics

The HES pilot program is tailored to support our community's most vulnerable residents, including low-income families, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and renters and will provide energy assessments for up to 60 homes in unincorporated area with a focus on low-income single-family homes and eligible multifamily units. The program will launch in coordination with the Electrification Retrofit Rebate Outreach Program (ERRO) and the Home Weatherization programs, and staff will provide additional support and guidance to pilot program participants to connect them with additional resources and funding opportunities to implement home energy efficiency upgrades.

Services Provided

This program employs the DOE's Home Energy Score system, rating homes on a scale of 1-10. Each pilot program participant will receive a report that provides their home's energy efficiency score and specific recommendations for improvements, such as upgrading to LED lights or enhancing insulation. This standardized scoring helps homeowners understand their energy usage and identify impactful changes.

Funding Allocation

Running a HES pilot program in Yolo County for up to 60 homes will cost \$72,600, as outlined below:

Description	Cost
One-Time Pilot Program Launch Costs	\$25,600
Pilot Program Management Costs	\$16,000
Energy Score Rebate Costs (\$350 each, up to 60 scores)	\$21,000
Community Outreach Partnerships	\$10,000
Total Budget	\$72,600

Monitoring and Evaluation

Laboratory. https://eta-publications.lbl.gov/sites/default/files/pigman_aceee_summer_study_2022_preprint.pdf

To assess the program's impact, staff will conduct post-assessment surveys to assess program value and to track any upgrades that occurred as a result of the program. This approach allows us to quantify the energy savings and emission reductions achieved, providing essential feedback to optimize the program and consider the correct path forward for a potential expansion.

NEXT STEPS

Pending recommendations by the Commission, the next steps and estimated timeline for the HES program are as follows:

April 9 th , 2024	HES Program to Board of Supervisors
Spring/Summer 2024	Preliminary Outreach Begins
	Release RFP for Community Outreach Partners
Fall 2024	Launch HES Pilot Program