



County of Yolo

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HOME ENERGY SCORE PILOT PROGRAM

Proposed Early Action to Implement Resolution No. 20-114 Related to the Climate Crisis

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action will launch a voluntary Home Energy Score (HES) pilot program for homes in the unincorporated area of Yolo County. Homeowners will be given the opportunity to voluntarily undergo a home energy assessment conducted by trained technicians, resulting in the assignment of a score on a one to ten scale to assess energy use, utilizing the Department of Energy's scoring system. This score provides targeted recommendations for improving the home's energy efficiency, including installing energy-efficient appliances or making other home weatherization upgrades. The County will work with partners to provide toolkits, checklists, information about rebates/incentives, and other recommendations to homeowners regarding options to improve home energy efficiency. Program rollout will coincide with the launch of the Electrification Retrofit Rebate Outreach (ERRO) Program and Home Weatherization Program, enabling pilot program participants to be connected to immediate technical assistance programs. The pilot program will cover assessment costs for up to 60 homes and will prioritize outreach to low-income homeowners and owners of multifamily properties to ensure low-income households can access energy efficiency benefits and associated technical assistance programs. The County may host webinars for real estate agents to educate them about the program and coordinate with local job training centers to explore opportunities for training additional home energy assessment technicians.

BACKGROUND

The County hopes to undertake a Home Energy Score Pilot Program as a way to assess the potential benefit of developing a Countywide program similar to those currently implemented in jurisdictions such as Berkeley, California and Portland, Oregon. While home energy labeling is mandatory at time of home listing in Portland and at time of sale in Berkeley, improving the home energy score is not mandatory. In Berkeley, the Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) provides incentives to low scoring homes to implement energy efficiency measures and partners with Rising Sun, a job training program, to hire and train technicians. BayREN's Green Labeling Program has two offerings: 1) Regional Home Energy Sector Score (HEScore) that trains assessors to complete a HEScore and provides incentives for scores, and 2) continuing education and other opportunities for realtors, appraisers and lenders to increase their ability to understand, market, and evaluate energy efficient and green homes. The primary objective of the program is to establish integrated and aligned green labeling to increase awareness and transparency of residential energy information. In 2020, BayREN, through the Green Labeling program, provided single family homes with 1,626 Home Energy Scores and \$317,300 in incentives.

Yolo County plans to run a pilot program for up to 60 households, and will assess the benefits of the program based on post-assessment surveys, an analysis of upgrades undertaken as a result of the completed assessments (including whether or not pilot households utilized the ERRO or Weatherization programs as a means to achieve energy efficiency improvements), and consideration of community interest in participating in the pilot program. At the conclusion of the pilot program, staff will assess the potential for expanding the HES program and/or exploring time-of-listing or time-of-sale HES programs.

CONSISTENCY WITH EXISTING POLICIES

The February 2021 *Yolo County Sustainability Plan* includes the following relevant strategies to support this project:

- Action ED 1.1. Support existing County outreach and awareness programs arounds stormwater quality, energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste
- Action ED 1.1. Work with indigenous groups, vulnerable populations, and community-based organizations in creating sustainability outreach and education programs
- Action AQ 2.2 Work with school districts, community colleges, and career technical education providers to develop a green workforce pipeline
- Action BU 2.1. Provide incentive programs to encourage electrification of existing homes

The 2024 *Yolo County Climate Action Plan* includes the following relevant strategies:

- Strategy 3: Decarbonize Energy and Buildings and Increase Energy Efficiency
- Measure: Increase accessibility to home weatherization and energy assistance programs, focusing outreach efforts on low-income and non-English speaking households to ensure widespread access to these programs.

BENEFITS TO DISADVANTAGED/VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

A goal of the Home Energy Score pilot program is to equip community members with knowledge about the critical opportunities to improve energy efficiency in their homes, and to connect these community members to technical assistance programs—including ERRO and the Home Weatherization Program—and support to make energy efficiency/decarbonization improvements. If implemented, these energy efficiency improvements will in turn reduce ongoing energy costs for low-income households, freeing up limited income for other household needs. To realize these benefits, the County needs to ensure low-income households and renters have the opportunity to participate in this program free of cost. For this reason, the County proposes waiving costs associated with receiving a HES for participants in the pilot program. Furthermore, as is outlined above, the 2024 CAAP has an action aimed at increasing the accessibility of home weatherization and energy assistance programs, particularly for low-income and non-English speaking households. County staff will design and carry out the HES pilot program with this action at front of mind, ensuring that these vital programs are accessible to all community members.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction

The emissions reductions benefits of a Home Energy Score Program in Yolo County, particularly one that is voluntary, is unknown. This is a key reason for pursuing a pilot program before launching a Countywide program or exploring time-of-listing or time-of-sale assessment 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 tracking utilization of ERRO and Weatherization Program offerings.

CO-BENEFITS

If the pilot program is expanded into a Countywide program, it will create “green” jobs by creating training and employment opportunities for people working to assess and retrofit homes.

TRANSFORMATIVE/REPLICABLE ELEMENTS

Should the HES pilot program achieve success in Yolo County, it presents an opportunity to consider a broader, county-wide rollout. The successful implementation and positive outcomes of this pilot could inspire and serve as a model for other jurisdictions, potentially leading to wider adoption and fostering a regional commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability.

DEGREE OF READINESS

There is a high degree of readiness to launch this program. Partnerships with StopWaste and EarthAdvantage, the current implementors of the Bay Area’s regional HES program, have been developed and assessors covering the Yolo County region are ready to be deployed. Yolo County must create an outreach plan for the home energy labeling in the unincorporated area to ensure priority populations have access to the pilot program.

COSTS

The total cost of implementing the pilot program within unincorporated Yolo County is \$72,600.

Pilot program costs for the County include:

- 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

FUNDING

County staff recommends the County allocate \$72,600 in American Rescue Plan funds to this program.

CONCERNS

In its current form, the County does not provide direct incentives to implement the home energy improvements identified in the HES assessment process, which could be seen as diminishing the

value of the program for low-income homeowners and renters. To address this limitation, the County plans to waive costs associated with receiving a home energy score, and will launch this program in line with existing technical assistance programs such as ERRO and the Home Weatherization program. Staff will also provide additional support and guidance to pilot program participants to connect them with additional resources and funding opportunities to implement home energy efficiency upgrades.

PARTNERS

Yolo County is partnering with StopWaste and Earth Advantage, effective statewide leaders in Home Energy Score program implementation, to carry out the HES program. The County is also partnering with the City of Davis to launch an equivalent pilot program at the city level at the same time. Costs associated with the City of Davis pilot program are not included in this proposal, as the City will manage its own pilot program rollout and associated costs.

PERSONNEL

In the chart below, please list names, role, and contact information for all project leader(s) and project partners.

Name	Role (Lead or Partner)	Email
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