

What's in a Label? Using Home Energy Score to Advance Local Climate Action Breakout Session 1

Speakers: Ammon Reagan (Moderator), Yuridiana Pantoja, Valerie Nguyen, Maria Hart

- StopWaste = public agency in Alameda County, supports BAYREN's Home Energy Score (HES) program
- HES = home energy asset reading based on energy characteristics of a home (not performance-based)
 - Like a nutrition label or MPG for a car
- Program partners train assessors that go into homes, plug data into HES tool, and produce a score/report
- Homeworkers can get a HES anytime as long as there is a trained professional to assess
 - Especially when renovating, to make upgrades that maximize efficiency, among other use cases
- Case study: Portland
 - Requires sellers to disclose HES at the time of listing
 - It is listed directly on MLS page, to encourage transparency
- BAYREN = collaboration between 9 Bay Area counties
 - Green Labeling Program = increasing home energy transparency
 - They support marketing of HES across the Bay and training assessors
- Overall increase in uptake of these scores since 2015
- >26,000 homes have been scored in the Bay Area, which is 1.8% of single-family homes
- Incorporated electrification checklist in 2020
- Three scenarios listed in the report to guide homeowners' path forward:
 - Current score
 - Score with shell improvements
 - Score with electrification
- Geographic customizations are available as well, which will be helpful when expanding state-wide
- Statewide expansion will be coming in 2026 (soft launch in Q1 of 2026)
 - \$9.9 million through 2027 which includes incentives for program participation and staffing
- Maria Hart mhart@stopwaste.org
- Yolo Energy Partnership = pilot program in Yolo County
 - Focus on unincorporated communities within Yolo County
 - 56% of residents own homes, and 82% of that are single-family housing
- Weatherization Program was developed in 2023 as a result of community response during climate action planning, a desire for more low effort opportunities for energy efficiency
- First HES completed in May 2025 and CBO outreach conducted following
- One table, one website, residents can choose their home energy journey and have CBO support along the way

- Local partnerships, like De Colores, are the boots on the ground that make these free programs happen
 - Another example, Cool Davis, offers more technical support
- CBOs help build trust, especially in unincorporated communities
- Pilot program has up to 50 free scores, with a focus on low-income households in unincorporated communities
 - Earth Advantage and Archon Energy Solutions help
 - 100 free weatherization kits are being offered, which come with a bilingual guide that links to Yolo Energy Partnership information; this is the foot in the door to hopefully encourage greater engagement in these programs in the future
- CBOs help immensely and need to be paid for their work: outreach is a line item, not an afterthought
- Other key takeaways:
 - Give people a free item, and people are willing to talk to you more; use existing programs and see if you can bundle anything in with those (like energy hotline with local CCA); go to churches, food stops, etc. to meet people where they're at
- City of Berkeley has ambitious climate action goals, like becoming a fossil fuel free city ASAP
 - Buildings are second-largest source of emissions in those cities
- Berkeley Home Energy Score Program = time of sale and large scale programs
 - Time of sale program require energy assessment, HES
- Berkeley works with BAYREN, which enables them to focus on things like monitoring real estate listings, and helps reduce time and cost for the city
- Since 2015, about 500 HES each year have been conducted
- Lessons learned
 - Having energy information doesn't equal upgrades
 - Energy costs are a small fraction of homeowners expenses (average home is \$1.5 million), so there is little incentive to increase costs
- Will begin implementation in early 2026
- BESO requirements
 - Buyer has 3 years from date of sale to make changes to meet compliance
 - Homeowners get to choose which upgrades they want to complete, and upgrades have different credit values (e.g. heat pump HV/AC = 6 credits); these upgrades have to add up to a certain total amount of credits
- HES works into new phase of BESO program by guiding which upgrades homeowners want to complete in order to meet compliance
 - Will also help confirm whether homes have a heat pump system to receive an exemption
- Will begin Phase 1 of the program in 2026 with single- family homes and duplexes
- Valerie Nguyen, vnguyen@berkeley.ca.gov
- Q&A
 - Starting in 2026, trainings and bootcamps will be available to interested jurisdictions

- Will still need to be in an IOU territory in order to receive a rebate (\$250 as of now, but cost of getting a score could be \$350), but can still get HES in other areas
- Berkeley currently allows seller to defer assessment to the buyer, which helps achieve 90% compliance (as does automated outreach and using Salesforce)
- There was a directive from Berkeley city council to develop the program, which also helps with participation
- If after 3 years owners still don't comply after many reminders and lots of outreach, funds are forfeited to the city of Berkeley and directed to low-income programs to support climate goals, so no funds go wasted
- HES doesn't seem to be threatened right now, as it's not a huge part of the DOE; BAYREN meets each 1-2 months with DOE partners and they have not heard yet about any cuts to HES
- Group Share-Out
 - Who is an assessor, and what workforce development programs are needed to train assessors?
 - The audit as an entry point is a burden for the homeowner, even with the rebate
 - How to accurately evaluate the energy use of a building when there is more than average capacity
 - Lot of staff capacity and funding needed to implement these programs — where does that come from? Hopefully more RENs can fill these gaps
 - We need to know what these improvements cost and what the costs cost -> including more info on available rebates and such on the report
 - Challenging for people to allow auditors into their homes — how to mitigate the distrust? (Easier to navigate this when people are selling their homes)
 - Potential collaborations between RENs and CCAs
 - Is this the best tool available for now?
 - Who can do it for us locally? (e.g. CA Climate Action Corps; partnering with existing programs and CBOs like Rising Sun youth workforce development)
 - Increased customer engagement, like reviewing reports together
 - Have one home assessment can bundle everything together
 - It's currently pretty difficult for someone to figure out if they can even become an assessor
 - Build culturally sensitive versions of energy programs
 - Exploring optional programs (e.g. conditioning rebates on receipt of a HES)
 - Comparing scores in your neighborhood (e.g. the average score in your area is a 7) and making other areas of the report more tangible/interactive (e.g. these emissions savings are like taking xx cars off the road)
- On statewide expansion, there will hopefully be a dashboard that aggregates data for people in their area