Commercial Direct Install

No-Cost Energy Upgrades for Hard-to-Reach Businesses in Gardena

SOUTH BAY CITIES COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Southern California REGIONAL ENERGY NETWORK

24
Businesses Served

$510,000
Total incentive dollars delivered to businesses for upgrades

262,300 kWh
Of energy saved within 1 year of implementation

30,900 therms
Saved collectively by participaing businesses

$110,100
Total annual energy cost savings across businesses

Visit our website to explore participating businesses and their upgrades through our ArcGIS Story Map, and hear directly from businesses about their experiences with the program through the video.

Background & Program Overview

The South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG), in partnership with the Southern California Regional Energy Network (SoCalREN), implemented the Commercial Direct Install and Food Desert Energy Efficiency Equity Programs.

The Commercial Direct Install (CDI) Program addresses energy usage in the commercial sector while also supporting local businesses in hard-to-reach, disadvantaged communities. The CDI Program provided businesses with energy-efficient (EE) equipment at no cost, with auditing, installation, equipment, and any required site-specific accommodations free of charge. CDI Measures include water heating (gas or electric water heating, pipe insulation, low flow faucet aerators, recirculation pumps/timers, water heater insulated blankets) and lighting (lighting controls, interior/exterior replacements, screw/pin LEDs).

The Food Desert Energy Efficiency Equity (FDEEE) Program supports businesses located in a designated food desert and provides new refrigeration equipment with the goal of helping participating businesses reduce operating costs and enhance their ability to offer fresh, healthy food to the surrounding community. In addition to CDI measures and refrigeration, FDEEE businesses were offered equity measures designed to enhance the appearance, safety, and street appeal of a business in order to increase customer traffic. Equity measures can include murals, outdoor lighting, marketing campaigns, new trash cans, power washing, and other similar enhancements.

Criteria:

For businesses to qualify for these programs, the target customers have to be Hard-to-Reach based on historic inclusion and access to programs (CPUC), census tract-designated Disadvantaged Communities (CalEnviroScreen 4.0), and FDEEE required businesses to be located in Low Income Low Access communities. **Based on these qualifications, the City of Gardena was selected as the focal city for the implementation of these programs. Located in the South Bay, the city is a small, urbanized city that includes many historically disadvantaged areas.**

Implementation Strategy

1. SBCCOG strategically conducted in-person outreach, leveraging trusted community work to connect with local businesses interested in participating. SBCCOG Staff conducted initial audits for program enrollment.
2. The SoCalREN Commercial Team completed technical reviews, met with businesses to discuss project timelines and identify the EE measures, submitted permits, and coordinated installations with local contractors.
3. Throughout the implementation process, SBCCOG and SoCalREN maintained consistent communication with participating businesses.

The **primary challenges** encountered during implementation included addressing outstanding citations held by businesses before participation, as well as overcoming program skepticism and building trust with business owners. However, once trust was established with participating businesses, the program experienced strong engagement and positive outcomes.

Program Outcomes

This program not only directly benefits business owners, but also delivers energy savings that positively impact the community and the environment. Twenty-four businesses in Gardena received a total of $510,000 in energy efficiency upgrades. Within one year of implementation, these measures are expected to generate 262,300 kilowatt-hours of energy savings — equivalent to the greenhouse gas emissions associated with over 440,000 miles driven by a passenger vehicle annually.

The program completed upgrades in Spring 2026, culminating in a celebration and ribbon-cutting ceremony at Yas' Market, a participating business that received over $28,000 in energy efficiency upgrades. Measures installed included pipe insulation, faucet aerators, LED lighting, a tankless water heater, refrigeration equipment upgrades, and outdoor lighting improvements. The SBCCOG plans to implement another program cycle in the near future, continuing its efforts to connect local businesses with resources that improve energy efficiency and support the long-term sustainability of the South Bay.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at Yas' Market, a participating business a part of the CDI and FDEEE Programs (From left to right, Lujuana Medina, La Pasadita business owner Refugio Baltran, Gardena Mayor Tasha Cerda, Business owner Jesus Baltran, Bernadette Suarez)

SBCCOG Staff member capturing preliminary audit information for the SoCalREN team

An energy-efficient water heater installed at a participating business

Bernadette Suarez, SBCCOG 2026 Chair, speaking at the Yas' Market Ribbon Cutting event