



Enhancing Community Resilience with Utility Energy Efficiency Rebate Programs

Partner
Support



Energy efficiency is an important pillar of resilience planning. Efficient buildings allow occupants to comfortably shelter-in-place during power outages and fuel disruptions. Residents, businesses, and local governments that spend less on energy bills have more to spend on disaster preparedness and have more resources to outlast emergency conditions.

Communities that spend less on energy may also see local economic benefits. To spur investment in energy efficiency, Pennsylvania enacted a law that, according to the Keystone Energy Efficiency Alliance, has saved over 6.4 billion dollars and created 65,000 energy efficiency jobs in its first seven years.¹

Pennsylvania's Act 129 has done more to improve the energy efficiency of the Commonwealth's homes, businesses, local governments, and industry than any other policy in recent history. Act 129 was signed into law by Governor Ed Rendell in 2008 and continues to provide benefits through Energy Efficiency & Conservation Programs offered by Pennsylvania's seven major Electric Distribution Companies, or EDCs. These companies include

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¹ keealliance.org/act-129/

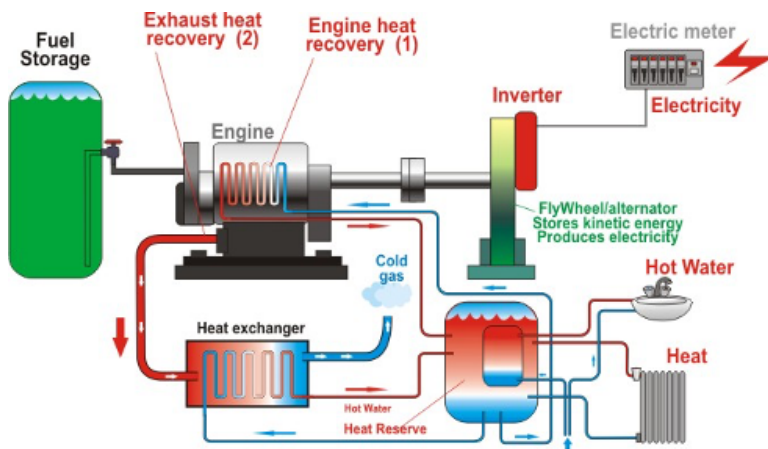
Duquesne Light, PECO, PPL, and FirstEnergy's Pennsylvania utilities – Met-Ed, Penelec, Penn Power, and West Penn Power. While not covered under Act 129, PGW and UGI gas companies also offer energy efficiency programs.

Under Act 129, the Commonwealth established electricity consumption and peak demand reduction targets. To achieve these goals, each of the seven EDCs offers a suite of financial incentives for energy efficiency measures ranging from appliance rebates to whole-building energy upgrades. Local municipal governments can take advantage of these incentives to meet their sustainability goals and help community residents and businesses access these resources.

Incentives for local governments

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, local government buildings have the potential to save 3.7 billion dollars per year by making a 20 percent improvement in energy efficiency.² Several Energy Efficiency & Conservation Programs offer assistance and incentives for government, non-profit, and educational facilities, including rebates for lighting, heating and cooling equipment, refrigeration equipment, new construction, compressed air systems, combined heat and power, traffic signal lighting, building controls, and custom measures.

Combined heat and power, or CHP, is particularly valuable for community resilience, as CHP systems generate electricity on a local scale and repurpose the waste heat to meet nearby space heating needs. This makes them highly efficient and able to provide electricity to the community during utility power outages. Duquesne Light, PECO, and PPL offer incentives for CHP systems.



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² betterbuildingsinitiative.energy.gov/challenge/sector/local-government

Another program that can help municipal governments is FirstEnergy's [Facility Audit Incentive Program](#), provides financial support for commercial, industrial, and government & institutional electricity customers who implement the recommendations of a third-party energy auditor.

If you're in southeastern Pennsylvania, consider requesting PECO's [Building Assessment Reports](#) to better understand your energy usage, prioritize your upgrades, and get access to various financial incentives.

In the Pittsburgh area, Duquesne Light offers the [Public Agency Partnership Program](#), which provides recommendations and incentives for the installation of efficient equipment for federal, state and local governments; municipalities; school districts; institutions of higher education; non-profit entities; and water and wastewater agencies.

In addition, local governments in FirstEnergy and PECO territories, can receive financial incentives for installing highly efficient LED traffic signals.

Due to high demand, PPL has a waitlist for government, non-profit, and education projects; however, it is likely that additional funds will be available in 2021.

Municipalities with natural gas service through UGI may take advantage of their Nonresidential Prescriptive Rebates Program to help defray the cost of energy efficient commercial boilers and water heaters, unit heaters, and a variety of commercial kitchen appliances. UGI also offers custom incentives for municipal (and other) buildings for a combination of natural gas space heating equipment and building shell upgrades.

Visit your local utilities' websites for more information about how to participate.

Local Governments are eligible for rebates for efficient:

- **Lighting**
- **Heating and cooling equipment**
- **Refrigeration equipment**
- **New construction**
- **Compressed air systems**
- **Combined heat and power**
- **Traffic signal lighting**
- **Building controls**
- **Custom measures**

Helping the community access incentives

Local governments can also help their communities access energy efficiency rebates by increasing awareness among residents and businesses.

Residential

Pennsylvania utilities offer a wide variety of incentives to homeowners including heating and cooling equipment, water heaters, lighting, and a variety of appliance rebates. Rebates targeting building enclosure measures like insulation, windows, and air sealing are the most effective for promoting resilience through improved passive survivability. Programs that consider an entire home, including energy audit, whole house retrofit, and new construction programs, will provide the biggest resilience benefits.



Located in Penelec service territory, State College, PA - Builder: Pleasant Pointe, LP

Multifamily

Apartment building and condo owners are eligible for many of the same types of energy efficiency rebates as homeowners, and in some cases, utility representatives will directly install measures like LED lighting and water fixture aerators.

Low income

Act 129 sets aside funding specifically for households with limited incomes, with rebates that are typically higher than market-rate incentives.

Businesses

Energy efficiency rebates for businesses are generally the same as the previously described incentives for local governments. One difference is that PPL offers efficiency rebates specifically geared toward small and medium-sized businesses. This program provides direct discounts for contractor-installed measures like lighting, compressed air, and refrigerators, and distributor discounts for qualified products purchased through participating distributors.

Taking action

Municipal governments can help improve the energy efficiency and resilience of their communities by leading by example. Consider utility Energy Efficiency & Conservation Programs when creating your next capital improvement plan or any individual remodeling or new construction project and highlight energy efficiency improvements.



PSD Staff Brandon Cornell tabling for UGI

Post links to utility Energy Efficiency & Conservation Program webpages on your municipal website and include rebate information along with other information about utility services in your area. New construction rebate webpages can be included along with building permit application information.

Request utility rebate program flyers and other marketing materials from the utility. Have this information on hand at municipal offices

Invite utility representatives to attend and table at local community events.

Final thought

Since energy efficiency improves community resilience, and utility Energy Efficiency & Conservation Programs reduce the cost of energy efficiency improvements, local electric and gas utilities are an excellent resource for municipal governments, local business, and community residents aiming to be more robust in the face of adversity.

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Resources

Resilience & Sustainability Planning

NIST Resilience Planning Guide

[nist.gov/topics/community-resilience/planning-guide](https://www.nist.gov/topics/community-resilience/planning-guide)

Sustainable Pennsylvania Communities

sustainablepa.org

Building Code Training

Pennsylvania Construction Codes Academy

paconstructioncodesacademy.org

Pennsylvania Housing Research Center

phrc.psu.edu

Financing Opportunities

The Reinvestment Fund

reinvestment.com

The Sustainable Energy Fund

thesef.org

The West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund

wppsef.org

Energy Efficiency Rebates

Columbia Gas

columbiagaspa.com/energy-efficiency/for-your-home/audits-and-rebates

Duquesne Light

duquesnelight.com/energy-money-savings/watt-choices

FirstEnergy's Pennsylvania Utilities

energysavepa.com

PPL Electric Utilities

pplelectric.com/ways-to-save

PECO

peco.com/WaystoSave

PGW

pgwenergysense.com

UGI

ugi.com

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