

Eagle County expands beneficial electrification program for low-income residents

The program will serve 125 homes by 2027

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The Beneficial Electrification for Eagle County Homes services are free for qualified renters and homeowners, and include a weatherization assistance program and energy upgrades.

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments/Courtesy photo

The Beneficial Electrification for Eagle County Homes, or BEECH program, is expanding to fund energy improvement projects for 125 homes by the end of 2027.

The [BEECH program began in 2020](#) with the goal of increasing energy efficiency and comfort for income qualified residents in Eagle County while reducing reliance on fossil fuels. The program services are free for qualified renters and homeowners, and include a weatherization assistance program and energy upgrades.

The projects are implemented by the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, which uses state and county funding, plus available rebates from energy companies, to cover the approximately \$25,000 cost of each one. Doug Jones, the council's energy program director, said that Eagle County is the first place where the program has been offered.

"We've always been good at saving energy and helping people in need, but Eagle County really inspired us to do more, and we started looking at how we could add an electrification package and save more on greenhouse gases," Jones said.

So far, the program has completed 14 beneficial electrification projects at homes in the Dotsero Mobile Home Park. Prior to BEECH, all of the homes in the park were powered and heated by propane gas. Poor insulation and high consumption appliances make this practice both expensive and bad for the environment, and was also an unreliable source of heat for many residents, who turned to space heaters to keep warm in the winter.

"They're on propane gas, and it's a high cost out there," Jones said. "We have found a lot of health and safety problems with gas leaks and carbon monoxide problems out there, so the families are in a lot of need."

The BEECH program outfits homes with state-of-the-art Air Source Heat Pump heating and cooling systems, all-electric induction ranges, heat pump water heaters and indoor air quality improvements while completing a comprehensive energy audit of the space to identify ways to improve energy efficiency. The improvements typically result in a \$600 annual deduction in heating costs, and

The projects are primarily funded by the Colorado Affordable Residential Energy Program and Weatherization Assistance Program — available for residents within the 80% area median income and 60% state median income tiers, respectively — and are supplemented with rebates from Holy Cross Energy and Walking Mountains Science Center.

On Tuesday, the Board of County Commissioners voted to approve a BEECH program budget of \$100,000 for 2022, to serve as gap funding for services that existing grants and rebates won't cover. This allocation can be adjusted in upcoming years to match the changing needs of the program. The county is also contributing \$428,000 up front as a down payment for staff and a program operations center in Eagle County.

Jones said that the council has been able to perform four to six projects a year in Eagle County so far, and the new funding will enable workers to complete 25 homes a year through 2027.

Residents at Dotsero Mobile Home Park are able to sign up for services via the MIRA Bus that visits the community on a regular basis. Jones said that after the first three homes received the BEECH improvements, 20 homes signed on the same day to receive the services, having seen the substantial economic and comfort benefits of the upgraded system.



Residents at Dotsero Mobile Home Park are able to sign up for Beneficial Electrification for Eagle County Homes services via the MIRA Bus.

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments/Courtesy photo

“Now, their family is comfortable in their mobile home,” Jones said. “They’re able to study, do school work, because they have that air conditioning. In talking to the residents, they’re just super happy with the services they’ve received.”

In addition to these benefits, the program also helps the county move forward in its Climate Action Plan. Residential buildings produce around 25% of total greenhouse gases, and the BEECH program helps achieve the county’s goal of installing beneficial electrification for 5% of existing buildings each year to reduce this environmental impact.

“It’s a huge need, and tremendously beneficial to those occupants, as well as helping us reach our greenhouse gas goals,” said County Commissioner Matt Scherr.

Those interested in applying for the BEECH program can contact the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments at 970-315-1339 or emilyh@nwccog.org.