



# ComEd CY2019 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Program

CY2019 Evaluation Report: Chicagoland Vintage Homes Association

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ComEd

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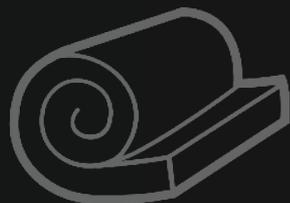
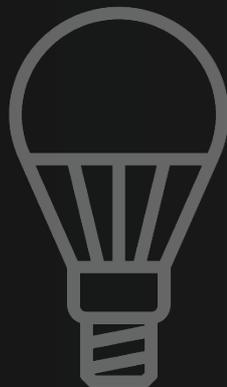
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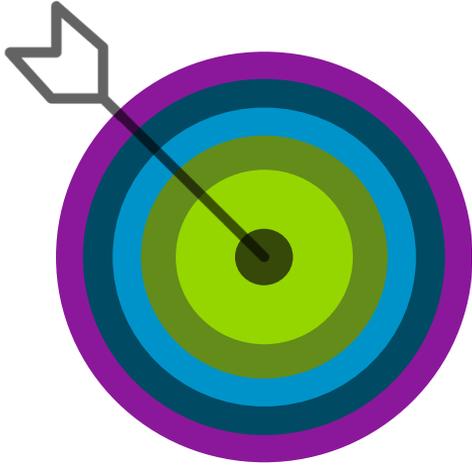
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**01**

**Program  
Details**

# What are the program goals?



## Reduce energy burden for income eligible residents residing in single family homes by:

- 1 Providing energy assessments, installing energy saving devices and systems, and improving building health and safety at no cost to participants
- 2 Educating participants about easy energy-saving actions they can take to reduce their energy bills
- 3 Developing partnerships with organizations who have experience serving income eligible communities in Illinois to deliver program services
- 4 Augmenting existing state and federal funds for income eligible weatherization

# How is the program designed to meet the goals?

The Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Program (SFR) offers free home energy assessments to participants through Energy Efficiency Service Providers (EESPs) or Community Action Agencies (CAAs). ComEd, Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas offer this program through two program components, which are implemented by two different organizations. More information about each component is on the following two slides.

## **The program offers the following measures to participants:**

- Attic and wall insulation
- Air sealing
- HVAC equipment such as boilers, furnaces, central and room air conditioners and heat pumps
- Water heaters
- Direct install measures including LED lighting, smart and programmable thermostats and low-flow aerators and showerheads
- Health and safety measures, such as installation of vents and electrical repairs

EESPs, CAAs, or program implementers install measures at no cost to participants and later apply for reimbursement from the utility. These implementation partners educate customers about the energy efficiency upgrades installed through the program. For some households, the program leverages state and federal funding sources to help cover up to 50% of the costs of the upgrades. Leveraging state and federal funds allows utility funds to cover additional households throughout the service territory.

## **The program serves single family households with incomes at or below 80% Area Median Income (AMI). The program specifically targets:**

- Older, energy-intensive residential buildings, such as bungalows
- Single family homes served by Weatherization Assistance Programs
- Homes in qualified geographic areas\*, or homes not in qualified geographic areas that can submit third-party verification of eligibility

The utilities conduct general marketing for all income eligible programs, including SFR, through their websites, bill inserts, and other mass-marketing channels. Chicago Bungalow Association and the Community Action Agencies conduct additional customer outreach via their existing networks.

\*Qualified geographic areas are defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development as Census tracts where 50% or more of the population has incomes at or below 80% AMI.

# How is the program implemented ?

## Chicago Bungalow Association



The Chicago Bungalow Association component of the program is implemented by **Chicago Bungalow Association (CBA) and Franklin Energy Services**. This part of the program targets vintage homes older than 50 years. In Chicago, the program is implemented by Chicago Bungalow Association and jointly offered by ComEd and Peoples Gas. In the southern suburbs, the program is implemented by Chicagoland Vintage Homes Association (CVHA)\* and ComEd funds both electric and gas measures.

### The CBA program component involves the following steps:

- Customer enrolls in the program through CBA or CVHA
- CBA or CVHA verifies customer eligibility
- CBA or CVHA passes customer contact information to an EESP, who sets up an appointment for a home assessment with the customer
- EESP conducts the assessment and shares the results with the customer
- Customer approves the upgrades
- EESP schedules a time to install weatherization and health and safety upgrades
- EESP installs the upgrades
- (Optional) Franklin Energy Services may schedule an additional appointment to install low-cost measures directly in the home
- (Optional) A subset of customers receive a post-installation inspection to verify installed measures
- Customer enjoys energy efficiency upgrades

\*The Chicagoland Vintage Homes Association is a branch of the Chicago Bungalow Association, which serves vintage homes outside the City of Chicago.

# How is the program implemented?

## Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program

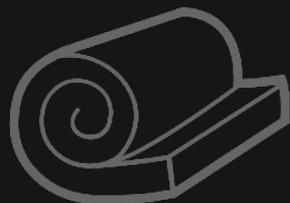
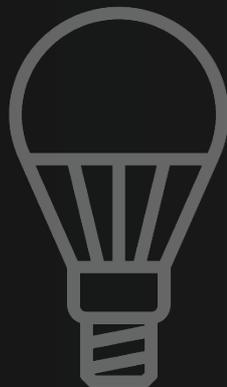


The Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP) component is implemented by **IHWAP and Resource Innovations**. The program is jointly implemented by ComEd, Peoples Gas, North Shore Gas, and Nicor Gas. The IHWAP component is offered throughout ComEd's and the gas utilities' service territories.

**The IHWAP program component involves the following steps:**

- Customer enrolls in the program through a community action agency (CAA)
- CAA verifies customer eligibility
- CAA schedules a home assessment with the customer
- CAA auditor conducts the assessment and shares results with customers
- Customer approves the upgrades
- CAA schedules a time to install weatherization and health and safety upgrades
- CAA installs the upgrades
- (Optional) A subset of customers receive a post-installation inspection to verify installed measures
- Customer enjoys energy efficiency upgrades

The contents of this report are focused on the Chicago Bungalow Association portion of the program. IHWAP respondents are scheduled to be surveyed in early CY2020.



# 02

**Program Manager  
& Implementation  
Contractor  
Interviews**

# Program Manager & Implementation Contractor Interviews



## Why Do We Interview?

By conducting interviews with key members of the program team, Guidehouse is able to tailor our evaluation activities to help make the program more effective. These annual discussions help Guidehouse understand the current status of the Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits program and explore how implementation has changed from one calendar year to the next.



## Who Did We Interview?

- ComEd Program Manager
- Chicago Bungalow Association Program Manager
- Franklin Energy Services Manager



## What Did We Cover?

- Reviewing roles and responsibilities
- Understanding year-to-year changes for various program components
- Identifying program improvements and barriers
- Documenting metrics used to monitor program success
- Understanding customer outreach, marketing, and communications
- Reviewing implementation details

# Program Manager & Implementation Contractor Interviews

## Key findings



### **Program implementers were successful in reaching Latino communities in 2019.**

- Outreach via churches and local alderman, Spanish-language materials, and Spanish-speaking crew members were key to the success of these efforts.



### **Customers are becoming more difficult to reach due to the prevalence of scam phone calls.** EESPs need to reach these customers in order to schedule an assessment.

- EESPs have adopted several strategies to reach customers including sending letters, in-person visits, and leaving door hangers when residents are away.
- While many income eligible customers are hard-to-reach participants, some are near impossible to reach, due to their financial and personal situation. Participants may be more difficult to reach in future years as easy-to-reach participants receive services through the program.



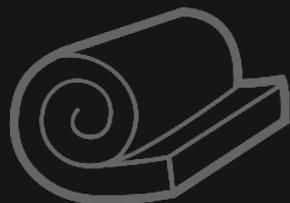
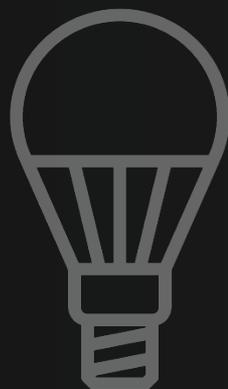
### **CBA estimates that around 30% of program applications are rejected due to existing attic insulation in the home.**

- Program requirements state that homes with existing attic insulation may not be served through the program. This may contribute to:
  - missed savings opportunities
  - increased customer acquisition costs as the EESP may discover attic insulation after enrollment during the home assessment
  - dissatisfaction, especially for participants who learn about the program through word-of mouth
- In CY2018, EESPs also noted that this requirement prevents them from serving homes with potential energy savings.



### **Customer deferrals from the program due to major home repairs remain a challenge.**

- Implementation teams have investigated partnering with organizations with funding to complete these repairs, but funding is limited.



**03**

**Participant  
Surveys**

# Research Objectives

Participant research in CY2019 focused on the Chicagoland Vintage Homes Association (CVHA) portion of the program. The CVHA portion of the program was launched in summer 2018 and expanded the reach of the SFR program to the Chicago suburbs. A new EESP was added to serve these homes.

The evaluation team surveyed this population separately from the Chicago Bungalow Association (CBA) population because:

- Guidehouse did not survey CVHA participants in CY2018.
- While the CBA portion of the program was previously established under DCEO, the CVHA portion of the program was a new offering and therefore had to establish partnerships with local municipalities, generate initial program awareness, and train a new EESP. These factors had the potential to impact the participant experience and program success.

Our research objectives were the following:



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**What are the demographic characteristics of program participants?**



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**How satisfied are program participants?**



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**What education are participants receiving from the program?**



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**What other utility energy efficiency programs have respondents participated in?**



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**What are the main sources of program awareness?**



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**How efficiently are program processes operating for participants?**



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**How could the program be improved?**

# Research Objectives

Guidehouse fielded a participant survey to CBA participants in CY2018 and CVHA participants in CY2019. The table below covers the details of the survey design and fielding methodologies.

Throughout this presentation, the evaluation team compares CY2018 CBA results to CY2019 CVHA results. Note that differences between survey results are explained by differences in the program year or by differences in the population targeted by the survey.

COMPARISON OF 2018 AND 2019 SURVEYS		
2018 v. 2019	CY2018 Chicago Bungalow Association (CBA) Survey	CY2019 Chicagoland Vintage Homes Association (CVHA) Survey
<b>Administration</b>	Administered both by a) Guidehouse through a Qualtrics email survey and b) Blackstone group on behalf of Guidehouse through telephone survey delivered to participants in Chicago	Administered by Blackstone Group on behalf of Guidehouse through telephone survey delivered to participants in the suburbs
<b>Participants</b>	The team contacted customers who participated in the program between January 2018 and July 2018 through the Chicago Bungalow Association	The team contacted customers who participated in the program between January 2019 and June 2019 through the Chicagoland Vintage Homes Association
<b>Fielding</b>	Survey fielded between December 4, 2018 – January 31, 2019	Survey fielded between August 14, 2019 – August 25, 2019
<b>Sample</b>	The population had 634 participants and achieved a total of 96 completes for a 15% response rate	The population had a total of 303 participants and achieved a total of 50 completes for a 17% response rate
<b>Focus</b>	Assess participant awareness, perspectives and satisfaction with the Single Family Retrofits Program	

# 1. What are the participant demographics?

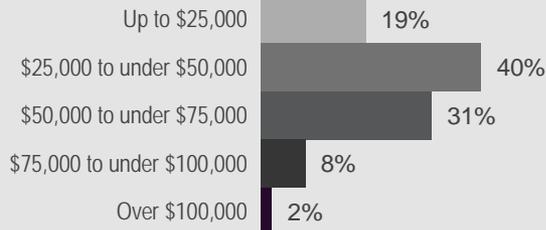
Participant demographics in the CY2019 CVHA population are similar to demographics in the CY2018 CBA population: over three quarters have household incomes under \$75,000 and over half are over 55 years old. Unlike the CBA survey, the gender of respondents in the CVHA survey is fairly evenly split between male and female.

2018 CBA

2019 CVHA

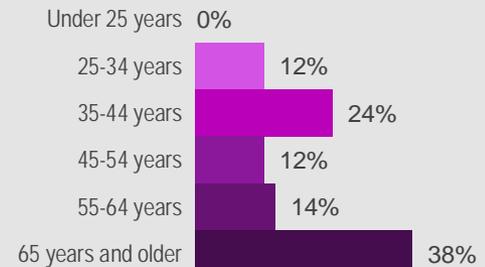
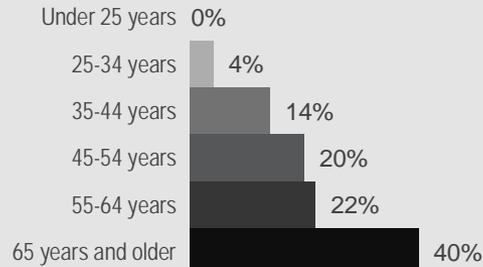
## Income

2018: n=85  
2019: n=43



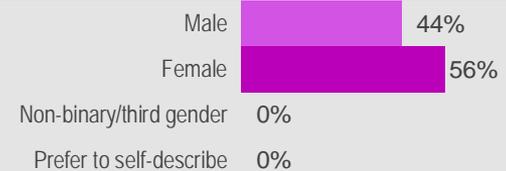
## Age

2018: n=92  
2019: n=50



## Gender

2018: n=93  
2019: n=50



Income: What was your total household income in 2017/2018 before taxes and including Social Security and other payments, if applicable?

Age: What age group do you fall in?

Gender: What gender do you identify as?

Source: CY2018 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Participant Survey (CBA), Dec 4 2018 – Jan 31 2019; CY2019 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Participant Survey (CVHA), Aug 14 2019 – Aug 25 2019

# 1. What are the participant demographics?

For the CY2019 CVHA survey, the evaluation team also collected data on race and education. This information was not collected in the CY2018 CBA survey.

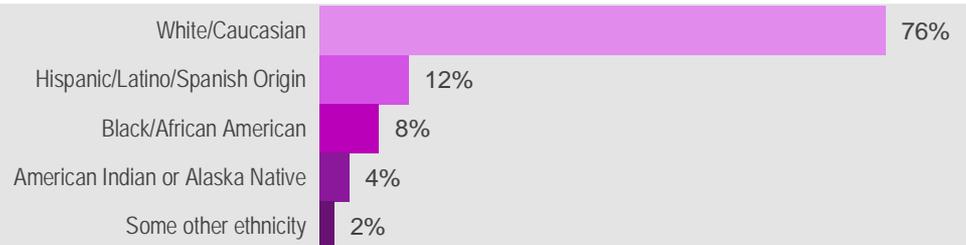
Three-quarters of CY2019 CVHA respondents were White and the other racial groups were 12 percent or less. Almost all respondents had completed a high-school degree/GED or higher with 35% of respondents completing a four-year degree or higher.

## Ethnicity

2019: n=48

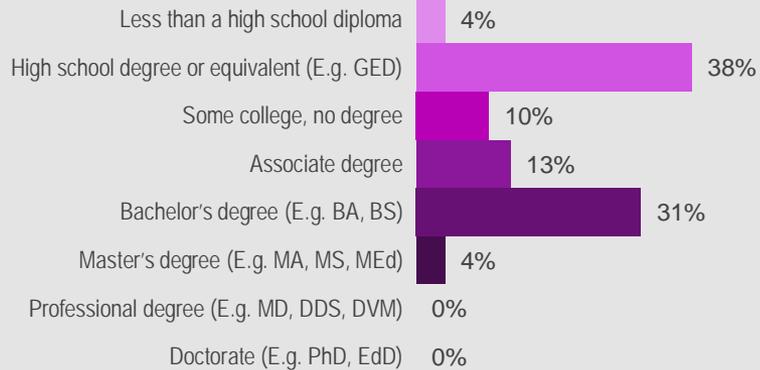


### 2019 CVHA



## Education

2019: n=48

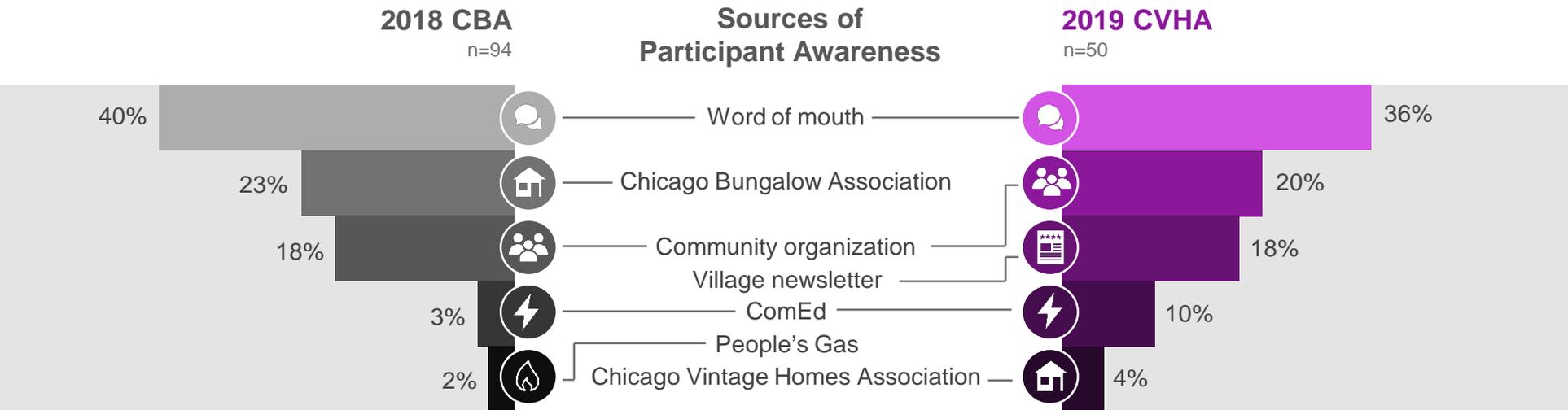


**Ethnicity:** Which of the following categories best describes your ethnicity?

**Education:** What is the highest degree of level of school you have completed?

## 2. How did participants learn about the program?

For both the CBA and CVHA portions of the program, the primary source of awareness is word of mouth. However, while the Chicago Bungalow Association is the second leading source of awareness for the CBA portion of the program, only 4% of CVHA participants heard about the program through the Chicagoland Vintage Homes Association. Instead, community organizations and village newsletters from the municipalities were leading sources of awareness. This highlights the importance of partnerships with community organizations and municipalities in raising awareness about the CVHA portion of the program.



Awareness: How did you learn about the CVHA Energy Upgrades program?

Source: CY2018 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Participant Survey (CBA), Dec 4 2018 – Jan 31 2019; CY2019 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Participant Survey (CVHA), Aug 14 2019 – Aug 25 2019

\*Respondents able to select multiple responses

### 3. How satisfied are participants with the program?

Satisfaction with all portions of the program remains high CVHA participants with over 85% of respondents rating their satisfaction with all program components as 8 or higher on a 10 point scale.

Satisfaction with	CY2019 CVHA Participant Satisfaction (8+)
Program Overall n=49	95%
Ease of Enrolling n=48	91%
Time Application to Assessment n=50	86%
Professionalism of Contractor n=49	96%
Time Assessment to Upgrade Installation n=50	92%
Energy Upgrades n=48	89%

Satisfaction: On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is very satisfied and 0 is not at all satisfied, how would you rate your satisfaction with...?

Source: CY2019 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Participant Survey (CVHA), Aug 14 2019 – Aug 25 2019

# 4. How efficiently are program processes operating for participants?

Respondents in the CY2019 CVHA survey reported shorter times between enrollment and receiving their energy assessment than CY2018 CBA respondents. In CY2019, half of respondents reported waiting less than a month to receive their assessment and no respondents waited longer than 6 months.

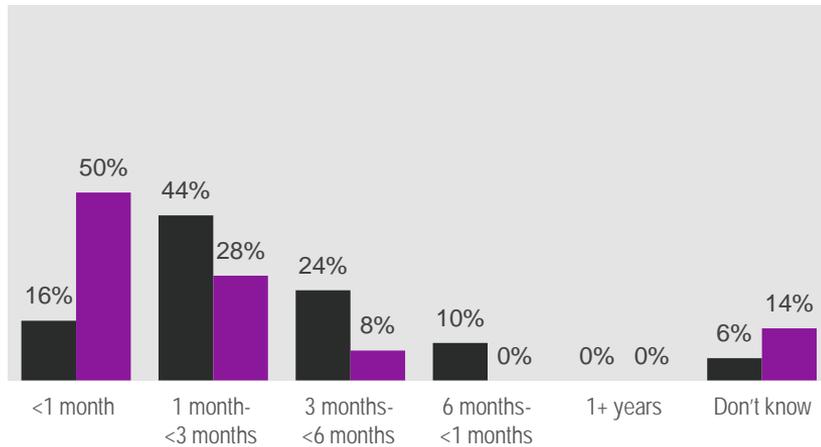
Similarly, almost all CY2019 CVHA respondents said they received their energy efficiency upgrades within 3 months of their assessment being completed. In CY2018, 15% of CBA respondents had to wait longer than 3 months to receive their energy efficiency upgrades.

In CY2018, Guidehouse found that mean satisfaction with the program overall declined as wait times between enrollment and receiving an assessment increased. The evaluation team did not find a correlation between mean program satisfaction and wait times in CY2019.

**How long after enrolling in the program did you have your energy assessment?**

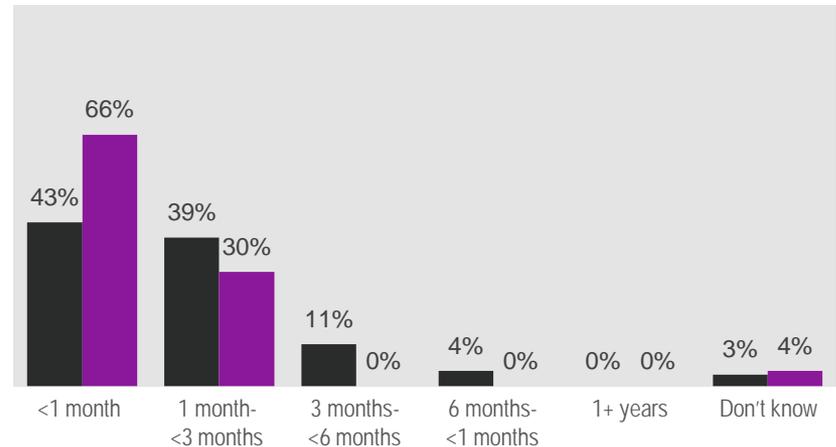
■ 2018  
■ 2019

2018: n = 93, 2019: n=50



**How long after having your energy assessment was the installation of the energy efficiency upgrades completed?**

2018: n = 94, 2019: n=50



# 5. What education are participants receiving from the program?



## Low or no-cost tips for saving energy:

Around a quarter of participants recall discussing low or no-cost actions they could take to further reduce their energy use, including changing their thermostat settings, turning off lights when not in use, changing their furnace filter, and using weather stripping on their doors in the winter.



## Recommendations for additional energy efficient upgrades not installed through the program:

Fourteen percent of respondents recall their contractor recommending additional energy efficiency upgrades, including new windows, energy efficient appliances, and water heater upgrades.

## Participants find energy saving information from EESP valuable.

- Participant recollection of discussions with their EESP on how to save energy in the home remains high with 91% of participants recalling discussing these topics with their home assessor, compared with 97% in CY2018.
- In CY2019, similar to CY2018, 87% of participants said the information provided was useful (rating of 8 or higher on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not useful at all and 10 is very useful).
- Of the 91% of participants who recalled discussing energy efficiency with their contractor, 90% recalled specific details about the topics discussed. Participants most commonly reported discussing the measures installed through the program.

Topics discussed with contractor*	Number of Respondents
Weatherization upgrades installed through the program	21
Direct install measures provided through the program	11
Low or no-cost tips for saving energy	11
Recommendations for additional energy efficiency equipment or upgrades not installed through the program	6
Health and safety measures installed through the program	4

\*What energy saving tips or information did you and your contractor discuss? (Open ended question)

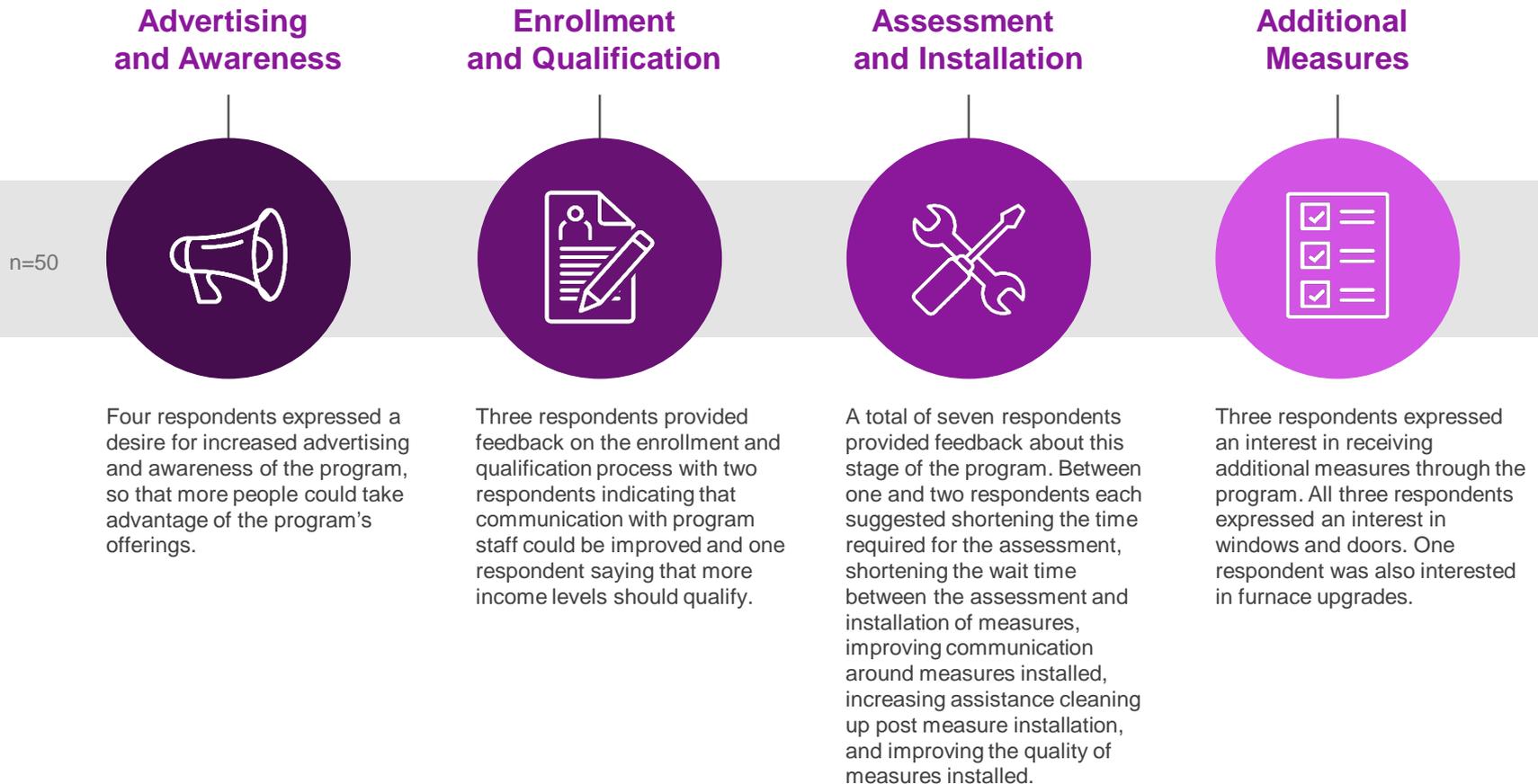
n=38 or 90% of participants who said they discussed energy efficiency with their EESP recalled the specific information they discussed

Recall: Did the contractor who visited your home to conduct the assessment talk to you about energy efficiency and how to save energy in your home?

Contractor Information: On a 0 - 10 scale, with 10 being very useful and 0 being not useful at all, how useful was the information from the contractor?

# 6. How could the program be improved?

When asked how to improve the program, 34% of customers shared suggestions. Unlike CY2018 CBA respondents, there were fewer consistent themes among suggestions for improvement by CY2019 CVHA respondents. The following suggestions were offered for each stage of the program:



Suggestions for Improvement: *How could the CVHA Energy Upgrades program be improved?*

Source: CY2019 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Participant Survey (CVHA), Aug 14 2019 – Aug 25 2019

# 7. What other utility energy efficiency programs have respondents participated in?

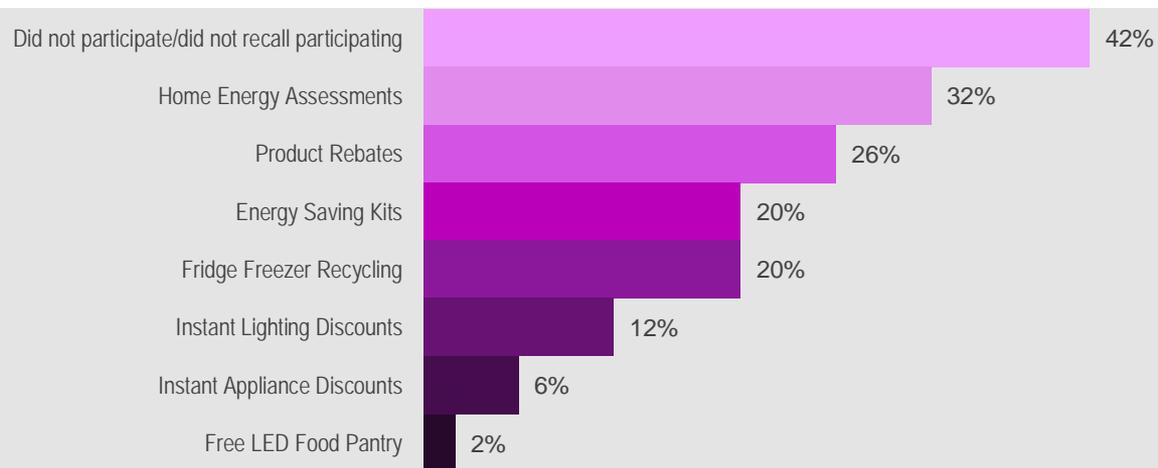
Just under half of participants indicated that they had not participated in another ComEd energy efficiency program<sup>†</sup>.

For respondents who did participate in other programs, customers most frequently reported participating in the Home Energy Assessment program. Participants also commonly reported participating in Product Rebates, Energy Saving Kits, and Fridge and Freezer Recycling.

## 2019 CVHA

### Participation in Other Programs

n=50

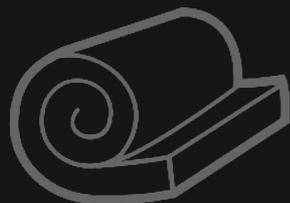
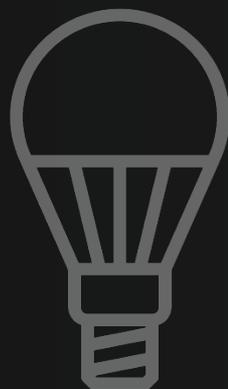


Participation: Have you participated in any other energy efficacy programs? Which ones?

Source: CY2019 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Participant Survey (CVHA), Aug 14 2019 – Aug 25 2019

\*Respondents able to select multiple responses

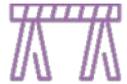
<sup>†</sup> Results are not comparable between CY2018 and CY2019, because the question was asked unaided for phone respondents in CY2018 and aided for participants in CY2019.



# 04

## Findings & Recommendations

# Findings and Recommendations



## FINDING 01

Reaching participants is becoming increasingly difficult due to increased prevalence of phone scams.

### RECOMMENDATION

1A

The SFR program should explore forming partnerships with relevant contractors, so participants can complete major repairs affordably.

1B

ComEd should consider channeling participants with existing attic insulation to another ComEd offering.

1C

Program implementers should continue to develop methods to identify attic insulation prior to home assessments to reduce participant acquisition costs. Currently, there are questions included in the intake process to identify these homes, but this issue remains a large source of participant deferrals.

### STATUS

CBA has formed a referral network for contractors who are willing to work in income eligible communities and complete projects for minimal mark-up or discounted prices. However, cost remains a barrier for customers who need to complete major repairs.

ComEd plans to launch a pilot in 2020 to serve 75 homes with existing insulation to understand what the potential energy savings would be if the program added insulation. This pilot has the potential to overcome this barrier if there are significant savings attributable to adding insulation to homes with existing attic insulation.

Guidehouse acknowledges the steps CBA is taking to identify attic insulation prior to home assessments, including checking whether homes have received attic insulation through DCEO or CEDA. Pending results of the SFR insulation pilot, this recommendation may no longer apply.

# Findings and Recommendations



## FINDING 02

Deferrals due to major repairs or existing attic insulation remain a challenge for the SFR program overall.

### RECOMMENDATION

2A

Continuing to reduce wait times between enrollment and home assessments may increase the likelihood that customers respond to attempts to contact them. Participants rated their satisfaction with wait times between enrollment and the home assessment as lower than other components of the program.

2B

Ensure that calls from EESPs come from a consistent phone number, so the program can tell participants in advance who to expect a call from. Program implementers are currently working with EESPs to execute this solution.

2C

Explore using existing partnerships with community-based organizations to reach customers who have already completed the enrollment process, but whose EESPs have been unable to contact to schedule a home assessment.

### STATUS

Guidehouse acknowledges that during the rollout of the CVHA portion of the program, unanticipated factors, including increases in program application volume due to municipal government outreach and delays in passage of ordinances to waive permitting fees for qualifying projects, may have increased wait times for customers.

CBA currently gives out the area code and first three digits of the phone number for their contractor. Guidehouse recommends continuing to move towards a consistent phone number or business name appearing on the caller ID.

Guidehouse acknowledges that CBA already uses community-based organization referrals to reach participants within the City. This is not possible in the CVHA portion of the program as customers in the suburbs are generally not referred by community-based organizations.

# Findings and Recommendations



## FINDING 03

Local community organizations or municipalities are key sources of awareness for the CVHA portion of the program.

## FINDING 04

Participants continue to identify the assessment and installation process as an area for improvement in the CY2019 CVHA survey. However, the number of complaints is lower than those observed in the CY2018 CBA survey.

### RECOMMENDATION

3

As the program expands to other municipalities, ensure that partnerships with these organizations are formed so that the program can scale up quickly.

4A

Explore additional avenues of communication with the participants regarding managing expectations for assessment and installation timing and involvement.

4B

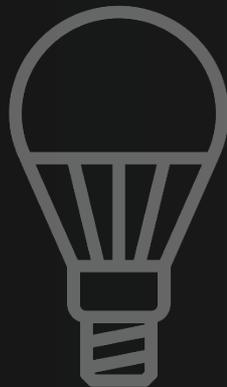
Continue to seek ways to support participants with the clean up and repainting process after upgrades are installed.

### STATUS

Guidehouse notes that ComEd is currently not planning to expand the program in CY2020.

CBA currently communicates expectations for the assessment with both mailed letters and postcards. Applicants also have the option to opt-in to text message updates. CBA reengages to hard-to-reach customer using simple, colorful postcards and door-hangers.

Guidehouse acknowledges that contractors can't move furniture or repaint for liability and funding reasons. CBA may consider forming partnerships with non-profit organizations, such as Rebuilding Together, that coordinate volunteer labor for renovation services to assist participants with cleanup or repainting tasks.



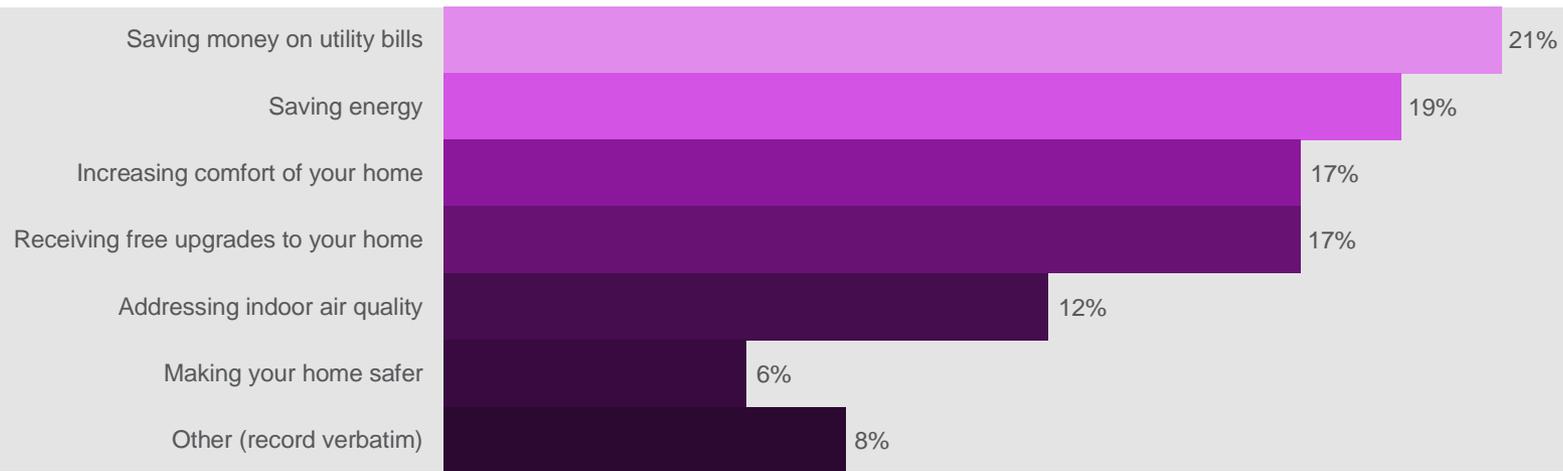
**05**

**Appendix**

# A1. What influenced your decision to participate in the program?

Saving money on utility bills was the most common motivator for participating in the SFR program for CVHA respondents. Participants were also motivated by saving energy, increasing home comfort, and receiving free upgrades. These patterns were similar to those observed in CY2018.

**2019 CVHA**  
(n=48)



Participation: *What most influenced your decision to participate in the program?*

Source: CY2019 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Participant Survey (CVHA), Aug 14 2019 – Aug 25 2019

## A2. What additional programs or measure offerings are respondents interested in?

As in CY2018, survey respondents are most receptive to appliance programs. CY2019 respondents were also interested in tips or advice for saving energy that they can access through their phone, and rewards for changing their energy use to off-peak periods.

### 2019 CVHA

(n=50)

Potential program offering*	Number of Respondents
The ability to receive appliances, such as refrigerators, freezers, room air conditioners, or clothes washers through the program	84%
Tips or advice for saving energy that I can access online or on my phone	70%
Rewards for changing when I use energy to times of day when demand for energy is lower	68%
Tools to help me manage my energy use, such as text or emails when I've used more energy than average	58%
Ways to monitor my daily energy use online or on my phone	48%
None of the above	8%

Participation: Which of the following services, if any, would you be interested in if ComEd offered them in the future?

Source: CY2019 Income Eligible Single Family Retrofits Participant Survey (CVHA), Aug 14 2019 – Aug 25 2019

\*Respondents able to select multiple responses