

Energy Efficiency in Latino Households Best Practices for Auditors and Raters



These recommendations for serving Latino households are the outcome of a multiyear research project conducted for the California Energy Commission by the Center for Sustainable Energy, Research Into Action, Ghoulem Research and Edward Vine. A full discussion of the research can be found at energycenter.org/sociocultural. For more information, please contact Laura Parsons at laura.parsons@energycenter.org or (858) 244-7288.

Marketing Recommendations

- **Partner with community-based organizations (CBOs):** CBOs are trusted sources of information and can help energy efficiency programs reach underserved communities who may have low trust in unfamiliar messengers from utilities or other institutions. Furthermore, CBOs can help screen messaging to ensure it is culturally relevant and to highlight nonenergy services to increase the overall value to households.
- **Go bilingual:** Publishing marketing collateral, websites and enrollment forms in both English and Spanish and hiring native-speaking bilingual program staff can help engage Latino households, particularly those members who are first-generation immigrants and/or less acculturated to the United States. Even for household decision-makers who are fluent in English, the ability to speak some Spanish can help establish rapport and trust with them or, sometimes, older family members who influence decisions.
- **Use relevant imagery:** When designing marketing collateral, use images that resonate with your target audience. Search for stock photography of people and houses that look like the communities you work in – or better yet, request permission from actual audit recipients to use their images for marketing purposes. Research shows that relevant imagery can increase rates of energy audit enrollments.

- **Use personal stories to demonstrate what's achievable:** Leverage previous audit recipient experiences to illustrate the benefits of energy efficiency improvements. These stories can be told, with their permission, through demonstrations or events at the audit recipient's home, written or video testimonials or case studies. Case studies can be one or two pages and include images of the home and residents as well as information on upgrades conducted, project costs, contractors used (if any), estimated savings, rebate or financing programs leveraged (if any) and quotes from the residents about the comfort, health or other benefits resulting from the upgrades. But keep it simple and understandable and not too complex or complicated.

Audit Execution Recommendations

- **Engage with visuals:** Show homeowners visual signs of poor home performance (e.g., thin or bunched attic insulation, gaps in air barrier or ducts, dirty HVAC filter). Use infrared images to show the homeowner while onsite and to include in a written report. Infrared images have been cited by homeowners as one of the more memorable parts of the audit experience.
- **Personalize recommendations:** Leverage your time in the home to inquire about the household's concerns, understand their energy use behaviors, gauge homeowners' readiness to act, determine whether they would be more interested in hiring a contractor vs. doing the project themselves and identify whether they want to discuss financial help such as rebates, loans or direct install programs. Record this information along with other audit data, and tailor your guidance according to each household's individual motivations and barriers.
- **Follow up in multiple modes:** Accommodate different learning styles and levels of technological sophistication by providing audit results and recommended action items via hard copy report, email report (including hyperlinks to resources) and/or follow-up phone calls – all in the resident's preferred language. Written reports should include images of the resident's home and systems where possible. If feasible, follow-up calls should be conducted by the auditor who examined the home firsthand and has already established rapport and identified household-specific concerns.