

Energy Efficiency in Latino Households Best Practices for Contractors



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, Ghoulam 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.

- **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 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 prior happy customers to use their images for marketing purposes.

- **Use personal stories to demonstrate what's achievable:** Leverage previous customer experience to illustrate the benefits that energy efficiency improvements can make. 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.
- **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 initial visit to the home to inquire about the household's concerns and energy use behaviors and identify whether they want to discuss financial help such as rebates, loans or direct install programs. Record this information and tailor your guidance according to each household's individual motivations and barriers.
- **Offer varied financing options:** Not all households are comfortable taking on debt for elective home improvement projects, and not all households qualify for all financing. Be prepared to offer different options, taking advantage of any local rebate programs, property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing, credit union loans or other mechanisms for which your company can provide access.