

# Utility Energy Efficiency Programs - FAQs

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## The Basics

### 1. What is the SBEA program?

The Small Business Energy Advantage (SBEA) program is designed to be a turnkey energy efficiency service that brings experts to the end-user to develop energy savings. SBEA simplifies the process for agencies to implement energy efficiency by:

- Assigning projects from a pool of high-quality contractors, eliminating the need for researching and vetting providers.
- Developing fixed pricing for the most common energy efficiency measures, determined by bids from the pool contractor bids. This ensures competitive pricing and consistency across contractors and projects.
- A published list of incentives and rebates for specific technologies and measures, including additional incentives for combo measures that together achieve higher efficiency savings.
- Offering 0% on-bill financing, eliminating the need for upfront capital to install efficiency measures.

### 2. How many projects has the state done over the years, and how much are they saving?

Over 180 state projects have been completed through the SBEA program. Since 2014, the state annually saves an estimated \$2.1m, 12.7m kWh, and 20K CCF.

## Getting Started

### 3. How do I know if my facility should participate, and what is the process for participation?

Eversource/United Illuminated (UI) recommend that all facilities go through the EE process.

### 4. Is there a limit to how many of my agency's facilities can get an audit done?

There are no limits to how many an agency can get an audit done, but there is a cap on the cumulative loans an agency can have on projects across all its facilities. This cap varies by utility territory.

### 5. Are there any criteria on building size, facility type, or energy use required for facilities to participate?

Eversource/UI has no limits on building size or facility type. Energy use is a metric but it is waived as a requirement for not-for-profit customers (such as state agencies) so that they may have access to the programs that best fit their needs.

### 6. What if I'm a tenant in a building – how do I get my landlord to participate?

An agreement would need to be reached with the landlord for any work that is outside the scope of the rental agreement. Any on-bill loan is the responsibility of the payer of the electric bill (i.e., electric account holder).

### 7. What if the audit doesn't find anything: do I need to pay for the audit services?

No, you will not need to pay for the audit.

**8. What do energy auditors look for in a building energy audit? How accurate are their estimates?**

Auditors look at lighting first, as it is the most straightforward and cost-effective of EE measures. But energy audits investigate all major electric and natural gas end-uses, including heating and cooling systems, water heating, controls, envelop improvements, etc.

**9. How do energy auditors determine what needs to be upgraded? Do the auditors look at exterior or interior building systems?**

Auditors look at equipment type and the control strategies. All building systems can be investigated.

**10. What if the measures they identify are too expensive or extensive?**

The customer can select which measures they want to address and at what time; agencies do not need to install all the projects identified by the energy audit at once. However, there's often a financing advantage to combining long-and-short payback measures to produce one comprehensive, cost effective project that might not get financed otherwise.

**11. How are contractors qualified for utility programs? What quality checks are in place to ensure accurate audit results?**

Eversource/UI, or an independent third party, regularly conducts site inspections to confirm the accuracy of audits, and after the installation is complete to guarantee the project was installed according to the scope of work.

**12. Who sees the audit results?**

Audit results will first be sent to Eversource/UI for a Quality Control of the proposal and possible pre-inspection. Once the EE team is satisfied, it will be sent to the customer/agency.

**Figuring out Financing**

**13. Do I need to use the on-bill financing option to pay for the project, or can I use other funding?**

That is up to the agency. They can use the on-bill financing or opt out and pay for the project upfront.

**14. Does the program cover any renewable energy measures such as rooftop solar panels?**

Renewable energy measures are not covered under the utility programs, but state agencies interested in installing solar at their agency facilities should contact DEEP (Ryan.Ensling@ct.gov). The state is currently partnering with the Connecticut Green Bank to develop solar through a power purchase agreement.

## Doing a Project

### **15. How long does a typical project take to implement?**

Once a contractor has been assigned and an agreed upon set of measures has taken place could have an incentive from us within a month. Installation for small projects can be completed in 30 days, larger projects take more. COVID-19 restrictions have put some delays into acquiring materials.

### **16. How do I know what incentives or rebates my project is eligible to receive?**

Eversource/UI prepares an incentive offering called a Letter of Agreement (LOA) that is signed by the impacted Agency.

### **17. How does the utility assign a contract? Do I get any say in the selection?**

Unless a specific contractor is requested, the SBEA team assigns incoming projects on a rotating basis depending on the contractor's recent performance in metrics such as delivered energy savings and inspections.

### **18. Do I need to get 3 bids on the work, or this program exempt?**

The most commonly implemented measures have fixed, published pricing and the agency does not need to conduct solicitations for providers or quotes to do the work. For measures that are not fixed price, an agency would work with DAS/Construction Services to solicit 3 bids as required by state process.

### **19. Is there a cost cap or limit to what kinds of improvements the contractors make?**

Measures would be based on the studies that were conducted, or if no study, then a BEA/SBEA contractor would walk through your building and make recommendations.

### **20. Who oversees the project? Are the utilities still involved at this stage?**

Your contractor and you would oversee the project. We will perform post-install inspections to verify the measures have been installed per the proposal.

### **21. How much staff time do I need to devote to overseeing the project?**

To be discussed with the contractor and however long it would take them to walk through the building, and to answer questions.

**22. Who do I contact if something goes wrong – deadlines not being met, problems with equipment?**

Contact the assigned contractor first. Then contact your DEEP Contact, and your Eversource/UI contact will call the contractor to get answers if you cannot get them from the contractor in a timely fashion.

**23. Do any other state agencies need to be involved?**

That is up to the agency to determine and dependent on if any non-fixed pricing measures have been identified

After the Project's Completed

**24. Are there any reporting requirements required on an agency's behalf after a project wraps up?**

Please report to DEEP (Ryan.Ensling@ct.gov) that the project is completed. Your contractor will work with you and Eversource/UI to close the project out and review to pay the incentives.

**25. Will implementing any new energy efficiency measures mean more time spent on maintenance or energy management?**

In general, you should spend less time on maintenance upon implementing new EMS measures. With lighting, you should spend considerably less time with LEDs because of their longevity. Other measures may entail new controls and fixture settings, which should be implemented in coordination with the facility manager.

**26. What if I don't see the savings I was promised on my energy bill? Is there recourse?**

The savings projections should be accurate if the building usage profile is consistent with what was modeled in the energy audit (including hours of operation, level of occupancy, etc.) But, if savings don't show up when these variables are consistent pre-and-post installation, it could be a sign of an abnormality in the installation or equipment malfunction. Eversource/UI investigates these occurrences to determine the cause.