

East Kootenay Retrofit Assist - Program Overview + Funding Request

Participant Journey

Homeowner Progress

	Applications received as of mid-March	EnerGuide Evaluations Completed	Installations Completed	ESP Participants
East Kootenay	104	35	0	8

The target for the first year of the program was to onboard 150 participants. Given that we have received over **100 applications within the first four months** of the program, we do expect to meet these targets. Note that these numbers were gathered in mid-March, 2025.

Most installations are expected to start this summer – it’s quite typical to see that no installations have been completed at this point. Most homeowners will take 6 months to 2 years to complete their upgrades.

Distribution

Community	Number of Applicants
Fernie	12
Cranbrook	12
Kimberley	19
Canal Flats	1
Sparwood	1
Elkford	0
Radium Hot Springs	3
Invermere	26
Electoral Areas of Columbia Valley	20
Electoral Areas of Elk Valley	1
Electoral Areas of Kimberley/Cranbrook	6

As seen above, program applications have been most successful in Invermere, the Electoral Areas of Columbia Valley, and Kimberley. Moving forward, we will be organizing some direct marketing in Elkford, Sparwood, Canal Flats, and the Electoral Area of Elk Valley (Area A).

EnerGuide Evaluation Subsidies

	Pre-Evaluation	Post-Evaluation	IQ Pre - Evaluation	IQ Post - Evaluation
East Kootenay	19	0	3	0

Note that the above values are based on the evaluations we have been invoiced for to date. To date, the value of subsidies distributed in East Kootenay is \$9,461 (not including travel or GST).

Feedback

Though the program is still quite new within the East Kootenay, we have already received positive feedback from our participants. The following quote is from a homeowner in the Electoral Area of Elk Valley:

“So far this process has been streamlined and efficient. The people we have dealt with have been very professional and a pleasure to work with.”

We ask all participants to complete a feedback survey halfway through the program as well as at the end. As participants continue to move through their upgrades, we will gather more feedback that can be shared with you in future reports.

Events

Homeowner

Date	Event	Format	Community
10-Nov-24	Columbia Valley Retrofit Fair	In-person	Invermere
28-Nov-24	Introduction to Retrofit Assist Financing	Online	East Kootenay
11-Feb-25	Information Session: LEEP10 and Retrofit Assist	Hybrid	Invermere
1-Mar-25	East Kootenay Retrofit Fair	In-person	Cranbrook

13-Mar	Intro to Retrofit Assist Webinar - RDEK Municipal Staff	Online	East Kootenay
20-Mar	Wildsight Webinar - Introduction to Retrofit Assist	Online	East Kootenay
26-Mar	Retrofit Assist: Radon Webinar and Q&A	Online	East Kootenay

Contractor

Date	Event	Format	Community
7-Oct-24	Builders Breakfast: Constructing Success with Retrofit Assist in Kimberley	In-person	Kimberley
8-Oct-24	Builders Breakfast: Constructing Success with Retrofit Assist in Invermere	In-person	Invermere
10-Oct-24	Constructing Success with Retrofit Assist (Virtual Session)	Virtual (Zoom)	Invermere, Kimberley
9-Dec-24	RDEK Building Official, Building Inspector & Frontline Staff Info Session	Online	East Kootenay
10-Dec-24	Growing Your Business as a Retrofit Contractor	Online	East Kootenay
20-Feb-25	HPSC: Retrofitting with House as a System Approach	In-person	Kimberly
13-Feb-25	Ask an Expert: HVAC Solutions for Your Projects	Virtual (Zoom)	East Kootenay
18-Feb-25	Understanding Impacts & Risks of Building Envelope Upgrades (pt. 2)	Webinar	East Kootenay
27-Feb-25	Ask an Expert: Building Envelope Solutions for Your Projects	Webinar	East Kootenay
12-Mar-25	Growing Your Business as a Retrofit Contractor	Online	East Kootenay
13-Mar-25	Ask an Expert: HVAC Solutions for Your Projects	Online	East Kootenay
18-Mar-25	Understanding Impacts & Risks of Building Envelope Upgrades (pt. 3)	Online	East Kootenay
24-Mar-25	All-In-One: Intro to Hydronic Heat Pumps	Online	East Kootenay
27-Mar-25	Ask an Expert: Building Envelope Solutions for Your Projects	Online	East Kootenay

As outlined in our Scope of Work, Retrofit Assist was expected to have 15 contractors attend training sessions over the first year of the program. At our October 7, 2025, Builders' Breakfast alone, we had 23 attendees, and over 190 attendees from the East Kootenays at our sessions since October.

Contractor sessions already planned for the next few months include:

- Ask an Expert – Building Envelope and HVAC
- Growing Your Business as a Retrofit Contractor
- Keeping Our Cool: How Builders can Protect Homes from Overheating
- What's Coming in Heat Pump Technology?

Program Growth and Pivots

Growth

Some of the key points of growth Retrofit Assist has experienced since November include:

\$99 EnerGuide Evaluations: This initiative significantly lowered the barrier to entry for homeowners. By offering EnerGuide Evaluations at a reduced price of \$99, we've increased accessibility and encouraged broader participation in the program. Since implementation, we have seen an increase in completed evaluations as well as applications.

LEEP10: LEEP10 is a project we have partnered with thinkBright Homes on in Invermere and Windermere to complete 10 aggregated deep energy retrofits. The project is led by thinkBright homes and Retrofit Assist is the platform to identify homeowners and potential participants. By participating in this program, homeowners receive free access to a general contractor as well as the dedicated support of Retrofit Assist. At this point, all 10 spots within the program have been claimed and work is intended to start this summer.

Homeowner Q&As: While the conversion rate of website visitors to completed application forms is positive, we noted that some interested homeowners may be reluctant to complete an application or call with questions. To provide interested homeowners an opportunity to ask questions about the program, we developed regular Homeowner Q&A sessions with the hope of increasing engagement within our communities. These sessions include a 15-minute presentation on Retrofit Assist followed by a 45-minute Q&A, where homeowners can ask any questions they may have that are preventing them from taking the first step of applying. We will be offering these virtual sessions every 3 weeks starting mid-April.

Referral program: Word-of-mouth continues to be one of the top referral sources for participants. To leverage this opportunity, in March we launched a referral program with the intention of increasing applications within our five communities. By incentivizing existing participants, contractors, and Energy Advisors to talk about the program with their friends, neighbours, and broader network, we hope to expand our reach.

Digital and physical contractor assets: Contractors are another trusted source for home retrofit information, and they have direct contact with our target audience, but they have limited capacity to create these assets. We therefore created promotional assets for contractors so they could demonstrate their leadership and expertise in the area of home energy retrofits while also increasing exposure of the program to potential participants. The digital assets include a Retrofit Assist badge that contractors can add to their website, as well as pre-made social media posts, so that the contractor can share their participation on their digital channels. The physical assets include rack cards that contractors can provide to homeowners as well as stickers for clipboards.

Proposed Year 2 Budget

The following budget provides a breakdown of the RDEK LGCAP and Match contributions for Year 2 of the Retrofit Assist program, expected to run until October 2026. The four key components are: Communications and Marketing, Participant Support; and Contractor Outreach and Training, and Evaluation, Monitoring and post-project sustainability.

Element	Details	RDEK Contribution	Match Contribution	EXPECTED IMPACT
			Various Funders Secured and Planned	
Communications, marketing and engagement	Implement regional marketing, communications and engagement strategy to grow program awareness and involvement with specific focus on under-represented communities - includes quarterly marketing reports with reach and impact, and 3 local case studies.	\$6,000	\$12,000	
Participant Support	Assist participants throughout the entire lifecycle of their project, including initial inquiry, application, onboarding, scheduling an EA visit, quote comparisons, and rebate support. Oversight and provision of dedicated Energy Advisor and technical support services.	\$60,000	\$90,000	Continued support for additional 150 applicants into the program.
Participant Subsidies	Assuming 100 residents that are onboarded move forward with EnerGuide Evaluations. \$150 municipal top-ups	\$15,000	\$55,000	100 residents incl. 10 LMI subsidies
Subsidy Administration	Municipal Subsidy Administration	\$2,250	\$2,250	
Contractor outreach and training	Continue to recruit, onboard, train, participating contractors, including planning and hosting at least 1 (and up to 3) local training sessions. Provide contractors with program and technical support as required.	\$3,000	\$22,000	Additional 5 contractors engaged to support program
Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting	Oversee implementation of evaluation and monitoring program, including evaluation of participant and stakeholder experiences, quality assurance checks, program reporting, and implementing continuous improvement initiatives aligned with Evaluation and Monitoring Framework; Sustainable business model developed for continued service in RDEK	\$3,750	\$9,500	Report provided to funders and partners.
		\$90,000	\$190,750	

Plans for Additional Enhancements

Radon Education: This year, we will be doing a pilot project in Kamloops that allows participants to borrow both short- and long-term radon test kits. Based on its success and learnings, we may implement this project across all Retrofit Assist communities, including the RDEK, in 2026. The East Kootenay region is known to have high levels of radon, and since our program is based on both home and homeowner health, we think it is extremely fitting to introduce radon education into the program.

General Contractors: Once the LEEP10 pilot project has concluded, we intend to take any learnings from it and use them in building our relationships and processes with general contractors. General contractors are a unique part of our program, and we believe there is a lot of opportunity to build on this relationship to further shape and benefit our program and participants.

Climate Resilience: As communities continue to navigate the impacts of climate change, including extreme heat and wildfire activity, CEA is exploring opportunities to embed climate mitigation information in the Retrofit Assist offer.

Board Feedback

Concern over the impact of transitioning too many homes off of fossil fuels (particularly for low-income households) resulting in increased costs for remaining customers

It's important to acknowledge that the transition to cleaner energy in East Kootenay is a gradual process, constrained by the time required for home upgrades and the relatively small percentage of the population currently undertaking these changes. Consequently, the impact on fossil fuel companies (i.e. propane distributors) and therefore the potential for drastic price increases due to diminished demand, will be mitigated in the short to medium term. The pace of change allows for a smoother market adjustment, ensuring that the existing infrastructure and pricing models remain relatively stable while we progressively shift towards more sustainable energy solutions. This measured approach provides a buffer, lessening the immediate financial burden on those who continue to rely on fossil fuels during this transition period.

Additionally, the Federal Affordability Program will be coming out soon which will focus additional resources on low-income homeowners. We intend to maximize opportunities with this program, as well as the Energy Conservation and Assistance Program and CleanBC Energy

Savings Program so that all homeowners in our communities can benefit from the available resources as possible.

Even in the absence of a retrofit program, the costs of operating and maintaining fossil fuel heating systems will continue to fluctuate and our focused efforts on building envelope improvements will help to lower energy costs, regardless of heating type.

What does long term costing and operations look like for the program?

CEA is actively exploring opportunities for long-term funding for Retrofit Assist from interested organizations and foundations, and by early 2026 expects to have a sustainable business model, including a fund development strategy, established for current and potential future communities. While there are several opportunities to leverage funding direct from the program to offset costs that will be explored (i.e. fee for service, depending on income; contractor fees to participate), CEA remains committed to ensuring that for the first few years of the program, we are removing any financial barriers to participation.

Costs were expected to be higher in the first few years of program implementation for several reasons:

- Creating regionally specific outreach and communication materials requires more resources than a generic cookie-cutter approach
- A focused effort was required to engage contractors and building industry, who are already very busy, to support the new program
- There have been constantly changing provincial and federal programs and policies that required updating of resources, information and training

Cost efficiencies will be experienced related to start up, communications and marketing over the first three years as a program reaches steady state, but we expect per-person costs to remain close to the same. The program team has found that most homeowners require substantial support to move forward with home energy upgrades and navigate the complex rebate ecosystem and wants to secure adequate resources to maintain the current level of participant support, especially as the program focus moves to support more equity deserving populations and those that meet eligibility requirements of the income-qualified programs.