



STATE ENERGY EFFICIENT APPLIANCE REBATE PROGRAM



Best Practices for an Appliance Program Launch

To help States and Territories that will be launching programs soon, DOE compiled the following list of “best practices” based on feedback from States whose programs have already launched.

Communicate Clearly and Frequently

- *Make available funds easy to find.* Post remaining funds on the program Web site and update the list daily based on applications received to date. This provides a timely estimate for consumers and retailers.

Work with the Media

- *Have a plan to deal with the media.* Be prepared to relay information quickly and effectively.
- *Develop your messaging.* Pick no more than three points to talk about your program and stick to them. Be prepared with backup information to support your talking points.
- *Send press releases often.* Provide regular, even daily, press releases about the status of the program. Use a press conference the day before to launch the program. Invite all media outlets including TV, print, and radio.
- *Free media is good.* Coordinate with existing State, Territory or utility communications staff to ensure that the press picks up on the program. This is more valuable than paid media and obviously more cost-effective.
- *Be available and responsive.* If a reporter with an immediate deadline contacts you, drop everything and try to help him/her out. Items that a reporter might ask you for include providing contact information for vendors or consumers, securing someone from your organization to talk on the record, suggesting different angles for the story, etc. Keep in mind that you are the expert.
- *Keep data consistent.* Work with your D&R Account Manager to keep information on all national Web sites, such as the ENERGY STAR rebate finder, DSIRE, and the SEEARP Web site, up to date. When the media researches stories, this is where they will look.

Work with Retailers and Trade Allies

- *Forge partnerships.* Marketing the program to retailers is money well spent. Partner with retailers to ensure that they understand and can market the program, and that they check products for proper labeling. This will prevent confusion about which models qualify.
- *Communicate.* Host a webinar for retailers and other trade allies to provide information and answer questions. Keep lines of communication open with retailers and trade allies for the duration of the program. If possible, dedicate one person to educating retailers and responding to their questions. Post information for retailers, including guidance on how they can participate and a copy of retailer participation agreements, on the program Web site.
- *Ensure quick payment.* Establishing an escrow account to fund rebates as they are approved can be an effective way to reduce the turnaround time for your participants.
- *Avoid fraud.* Instruct retailers not to alter the date of sale on receipts. This is considered fraud.

Work with Implementation Contractors and Rebate Processors

- *Establish a waiting list.* Ask the contractor/processor to set up a waiting list once the reservation list has been filled.
- *Open early.* Open the customer service phone lines at least two weeks before the program launch, and earlier if possible. One state that opened its phones and e-mail addresses a month before the program launch reported that consumers were pleased to have the opportunity to ask questions in advance.
- *Pay for service, not volume.* Negotiate a flat rate for unlimited calls with your contractor/processor to avoid draining your administrative budget.
- *Prepare for a lot of calls!* Make sure your implementer has Web site and phone systems with enough bandwidth to deal with the initial demand, as well as a phone system that can handle the traffic. Be prepared for very heavy Web traffic and call volume on the day your program begins.
- *Separate communication systems.* Make sure that phone and Internet systems are not tied together. This will avoid both systems crashing at the same time. Also avoid linking the primary phone system to the back-up system.