

The **Better Buildings Initiative** is a national initiative calling on private, public, and non-profit organizations across all sectors to make substantial commitments to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings and plants, save money, and increase competitiveness. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is expanding this initiative to engage leaders in a set of **Better Buildings Accelerators** designed to demonstrate specific innovative policies and approaches, which upon successful demonstration will accelerate investment in energy efficiency across our homes, buildings, and industrial facilities.

Each year about half of newly constructed homes and thousands of existing homes are professionally assessed to determine their level of energy efficiency; yet most home buyers and sellers do not have a way to readily access or share this information, and thereby get a more comprehensive understanding of the costs associated with maintaining a home. As a collaborative effort among national organizations, federal agencies, and regional, state, and local leaders in real estate and energy efficiency, the **Home Energy Information Accelerator** is designed to expand the availability and use of reliable home energy information at relevant points in residential real estate transactions. Accelerator Partners will develop and demonstrate replicable, sustainable approaches that make energy related information – important data for the home buying process – easily available to home buyers and sellers through multiple listing service (MLS) and other reports.

More specifically, the Accelerator will work to:

- ▶ Develop and expand the pipeline of reliable home energy information from residential energy efficiency and energy performance programs (e.g., Home Energy Scores, Zero Energy Ready Homes, ENERGY STAR Homes, Green Button data).
- ▶ Develop and implement streamlined system(s) that leverage existing data standards and protocols and enable the automated flow of voluntary home energy information from credible sources (e.g., efficiency programs or contractors) to relevant users (e.g., MLSs, property record aggregators, real estate agents, appraisers, lenders, underwriters, public records databases).
- ▶ Promote targeted outreach and training efforts for key stakeholders (e.g., efficiency contractors, real estate agents, appraisers, lenders, home inspectors, homeowners and homebuyers) regarding how to produce, access and use home energy information throughout the real estate transaction process.
- ▶ Create resources to help other communities nationwide to replicate successful approaches identified by Accelerator Partners.
- ▶ Recognize champions, highlight their successes and encourage adoption of best practices.

Why does Home Energy Information Matter in Real Estate Transactions?

Buying a home is among the most significant investment decisions Americans make. Home buyers are understandably interested in getting reliable information about the homes they are considering so that they can make informed purchase decisions. First-time home buyers, in particular, appreciate being able to predict future home expenses, such as likely maintenance, repair, and utility costs. Until recently, it's been difficult and costly to get credible information about how much energy a home is likely to use. Fortunately, new tools make it much easier to evaluate and communicate a home's energy performance to buyers and others involved in the real estate transaction. This Accelerator aims to make home energy information, such as a home's certification as meeting efficiency criteria or a its estimated energy usage, much more readily available so that in the not too distant future, finding out how much a home's energy bills are likely to run will be as easy as looking up a home's age, size, or school district.

Benefits to Accelerator Partners

- ▶ **Better insights into how homes perform.** Facilitating the generation and flow of credible and secure information to real estate agents, appraisers, lenders, and others can help reduce liability, enhance marketing opportunities, and inform mortgage portfolios.
- ▶ **Improved service to consumers.** Given easy access to reliable information about a home's likely energy costs, home buyers will appreciate the ability to more accurately predict costs associated with homeownership.
- ▶ **Enhanced tools and resources.** Accelerator Partners can gain access to tools and resources that offer technical solutions for secure and voluntary auto-populating of MLS listings, appraisal forms, and other databases with accurate home energy data.
- ▶ **National recognition.** Partners will receive national recognition for their leadership, innovation, and commitment to consumers and the environment.

The **U.S. Department of Energy** agrees to:

- ▶ **Provide support to expand** the availability of reliable information (e.g., number of Home Energy Scores, Zero Energy Ready Homes, ENERGY STAR Homes).
- ▶ **Provide technical assistance** associated with data mapping, data standards, and applications as well as related IT challenges.
- ▶ **Provide recognition** to Accelerator Partners for their leadership in addressing these issues.

National Partners agree to:

- ▶ **Overcome barriers** to accessing and using reliable energy information (e.g., Home Energy Scores, energy use data).
- ▶ **Provide data standards and technical assistance** to local partners as they design and implement effective local systems.
- ▶ **Promote Accelerator efforts and accomplishments** in relevant events, meetings, and publications.

Local Partners agree to:

- ▶ **Develop a strategy for creating a sustainable pipeline of reliable energy information** on local housing stock.
- ▶ **Select and implement a method for automated and streamlined transfer of voluntary home energy information** for use by relevant parties (e.g., property record aggregators, appraisers, real estate agents) in real estate transactions.

For More Information:

Better Buildings: <http://energy.gov/betterbuildings>