

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The Problem – Background

While many multifamily affordable housing developers and owners in Michigan are interested in energy efficiency, they don't necessarily have a clear understanding of the many benefits of and business case for making energy efficiency improvements. In addition, retrofitting developments may have significant up-front costs that at first appear to only benefit the tenants, whereas the benefits to the developer/owner may be less clear. Education and training may seem to be a logical answer, but entities offering training struggle with funding the training and having appropriate levels of participation due to a number of issues. In addition, developers of tax credit properties indicate they don't necessarily want to learn the details: they simply want to know how to achieve more points on the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP), which means they may receive tax credits, or simply have their contractors and architects help to integrate in additional energy efficiency measures. In short, developers need to know how this impacts their bottom line and makes financial sense.

Policy-Based, State-Wide Solutions for Michigan

The ideal policy for addressing training and education issues includes a variety of solutions, including potentially incentivizing or rewarding developers for increasing their knowledge base, changing state policy, and better sharing information and data. A non-exhaustive list of ideas includes:

1. **Develop Case Studies:** Develop and/or provide high-quality, relatable case studies (both local and national) of affordable multifamily properties that have successfully implemented energy efficiency improvements. Developers need to hear and see specific examples of energy-efficient developments that share similarities with their projects, as well as see evidence from larger data pools.
2. **Communicate Benefits:** Broaden the dialogue about the business case for energy efficiency to include a wider array of benefits that ultimately impact the bottom line. These benefits include lower operation and maintenance costs, reduced water usage and sewer costs, improved tenant health and comfort, community buy-in, and more, which ultimately impact vacancy rates and the development's bottom line.
3. **Widen the Training Pool:** Consider increasing the training pool to include and partner with more architects and contractors, as developers are receiving a significant amount of information from these groups.
4. **Expand the QAP:** Work with MSHDA to modify the QAP to allow for additional points if a member of a project's development team holds some type of green certification or has attended specific energy efficiency trainings geared toward multifamily buildings.
5. **Improve Communication:** Work to increase the dissemination of energy efficiency information by sending it out through multiple channels, including through trade associations, MSHDA, MEDC, financial institutions and other means including word of mouth through other building owners.

6. **Diversify Training:** Provide a variety of training mechanisms, including in-person, online, podcasts, webinars and via other means. Continue to research existing local, national and state opportunities and fill gaps.

Other Considerations

While the team assembling these recommendations represent segments of the energy efficiency and development community, this is by no means an exhaustive representation of the community. Any recommendations should be further vetted with a larger group.

Project Background

These policy options were developed by an independent team of experts in the field of housing and energy efficiency. They were brought together as part of a network of individuals and organizations working to improve energy efficiency in multifamily housing in Michigan. Partners include: Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM), Ecology Center, EcoWorks, Energy Foundation, Michigan Energy Options, Michigan Environmental Council, Elevate Energy, National Housing Trust, and Natural Resources Defense Council.