

RiverCOG Wins Competitive Grant for Energy Efficiency Outreach

November 1, 2025

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a community outreach grant for home and business energy efficiency. The funding comes from the third round of the Community Partnership Initiative, an Energize ConnecticutSM program brought to you by Energize CT Sponsors Eversource and Avangrid Inc., subsidiaries Connecticut Natural Gas, Southern Connecticut Natural Gas and United Illuminating

This grant enables education and outreach that encourages participation in two key Energize CT programs: Home Energy Solutions – Income Eligible and Small Business Energy Advantage. All residents and businesses can benefit from energy-saving measures, income eligible households and businesses in Environmental Justice communities stand to gain the most.

HeatSmart for Residents

Four RiverCOG towns—Chester, Deep River, East Hampton, and Portland—are launching HeatSmart campaigns, while Middletown, East Haddam, and Essex continue their earlier efficiency efforts. HeatSmart connects residents with utility-authorized efficiency contractors who provide Home Energy Solutions assessments and services. For income eligible residents, these assessments are at no cost and often include no-cost air sealing and up to 100% recommended insulation upgrades, plus access to enhanced incentives for further energy-saving upgrades such as heat pumps.

Local leaders are urging participation:

- Cindy Lignar, Chester First Selectwoman: “I encourage all Chester residents to participate in HeatSmart. Improving our energy efficiency is the best way to save on heating and cooling costs.”
- Carol V. Doak-Jones, Deep River First Selectwoman: “HeatSmart has been tested and refined in multiple Connecticut towns and I’m very happy that we can now offer it to Deep River residents.”
- Michael Pelton, Portland First Selectman: “Low-income residents pay a larger share of their income for energy and often live in less efficient buildings. They have the most to gain from programs like HeatSmart.”
- David Cox, East Hampton Town Manager: “This no-cost program for Income Eligible residents should not be missed. Increasing energy prices only accelerate the need for HeatSmart.

HeatSmart is open to all residents, including renters, with special outreach focused on income eligible residents and households located in Environmental Justice Communities. If residents have already participated in Home Energy Solutions, now is a great time to maximize savings by acting on any recommended energy-saving upgrades and add-on measures to capture the full benefits. More information on heat pumps and other upgrades can be found at HeatSmartCT.org.

Small Business Energy Advantage

The grant also supports outreach to small businesses through the Small Business Energy Advantage program, which connects businesses with utility-authorized contractors who provide no-cost, no-obligation energy assessments for facilities with a peak demand below 200 kW. Business owners then receive a customized plan

showing potential energy and cost savings, along with access to incentives, zero-interest financing, and on-bill repayment options.

The RiverCOG will partner with the Clinton Chamber of Commerce, Greater Old Saybrook Chamber of Commerce, and the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce, leveraging their strong ties with the small business community.

Partner Support

Utility partners highlighted the importance of the initiative:

- Stephen Bruno, Eversource Director of Energy Efficiency: “The Energize Connecticut Community Partnership Initiative is a powerful way to connect with customers in historically underserved communities. This Initiative has proven how localized outreach drives greater participation in energy efficiency programs, helping residents and business owners to reduce their energy usage year-round.
- Marissa Westbrook, Senior Manager of Conservation and Load Management at United Illuminating, Connecticut Natural Gas, and Southern Connecticut Gas: “We are eager to work with the selected participants to increase access to energy efficiency in our communities, and the participants of this year’s Community Partnership Initiative represent a range of organizations who can help make that happen. We have no doubt that each participant will go above and beyond with their energy efficiency program outreach and will see first-hand the many benefits of these important upgrades within their communities.”

How to Get Started

- Residents: Sign up for HeatSmart at HeatSmartCT.org or call Lantern Energy at 877-878-3006 ext. 105 (mention "HeatSmart").
- Small Businesses: Sign up for a Small Business Energy Advantage assessment at HeatSmartCT.org/SBEA, or call Artis Energy Solutions at 860-613-7004 to schedule your appointment (mention "HeatSmart").

For details about the Community Partnership Initiative, visit EnergizeCT.com/resources-for/community-partners.