



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

To: Finance Committee, Somerville City Council via Hannah Carrillo, Legislative Liaison

From: Garrett Anderson, Residential Decarbonization Program Manager, Office of Sustainability and Environment

Date: May 9, 2024

Regarding: Finance Committee Questions regarding Mayor's Request 24-0575 raised at 5/7/24 Meeting

In response to the questions raised at the May 7th Finance Committee I offer the following:

1. What is the average cost of decarbonizing a building?

The wide variety of building types and necessary decarbonization measures for each particular building makes a single average cost a difficult metric to develop or apply to any particular project. Another key element affecting the cost of decarbonization measures, are the ever changing number of incentives and tax credits that are available for building owners to use in offsetting their out-of-pocket costs. The Inflation Reduction Act increased the tax credit eligibility for efficiency improvements up to \$3,200 for a mixture of weatherization improvements and heat pump installations. Additionally, the MassSave Energy Efficiency program is revising its incentive structure for the 2025-2027 cycle to likely include up to \$10,000 for a whole home heat pump system or \$16,000 for an income qualified customer as well as increased incentives for weatherization and other efficiency measures.

The biggest cost in the decarbonization of a home is usually the installation of an electric heat pump system as the primary system to heat and cool the home. In 2017, the Somerville HeatSmart/CoolSmart program installed dozens of heat pump systems in the community and found that a whole home system cost ranged generally from about \$8,000-\$19,000 (an admittedly wide range due to building size, system design, and installation complexity factor). Using the average national inflation calculations from the last six years, the expected cost range would be from about ~\$10,000 to ~\$23,500 (note however this does not account for the incentive structure changes that have occurred or are anticipated for 2025). One note is the City of Somerville is undertaking an Affordable Housing Energy Efficiency Study in partnership with the Somerville Housing Authority and Somerville Community Corporation to look at a variety of building typologies and assess strategies and cost to decarbonize these buildings using current technologies and incentive structures.



CITY HALL ANNEX • 50 EVERGREEN AVENUE • SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02145
(617) 625-6600 • www.somervillema.gov/OSE
EMAIL: OSE@somervillema.gov



**2. What is the expected cost of the actual work to decarbonize, versus the cost to pay the new staff?
Can you break down how the funds will be spent?**

Enclosed is the budget for the Empower Grant. It is expected that the Micro-Grants will be used to supplement the greater amounts of incentives that are available through the MassSave program and are intended to serve as a stimulant to attract interest into the broader retrofit programs and cover minor barriers that may be preventing a building owner from undertaking a larger retrofit project.

Project Team Member	Proposed Activity	Funding Amount
City of Somerville	Hire Energy Advisor for two years (includes salary, benefits)	\$173,864
City of Somerville	Seek and offer Professional Development for Energy Advisor for two years	\$400
City of Somerville	Outreach and Marketing materials for two years (social media ads, city-wide mailer)	\$16,730
City of Somerville	Printing expenses for two years	\$1,100
City of Somerville	Translation services for one year	\$1,000
City of Somerville	Distribute micro-grants for two years	\$50,000
Total		\$243,094



3. What happens to the funds if we can't fill the position?

The Empower grant program is designed as a collaborative process between MassCEC and Somerville as the grantee. If we were unable to fill the position on our planned schedule, we would work with MassCEC to reformulate the program and reallocate the funds as necessary. One note: in the cohort of other communities undertaking this program, none have been unable to fill the Energy Advisor position in their community. The Office of Sustainability and Environment generally receives a broad number of applicants when filling any particular position.

4. What is the plan for outreach?

Enclosed is the draft initial outreach plan being developed in concert with MassCEC:

The project team anticipates a wide variety of outreach activities starting with a Fall 2024 outreach campaign that will be tied to the Energy Advisor being hired, trained, and available to the public. For the initial outreach campaign, we propose using all the tools available to the city including:

- A centralized branded webpage on the City of Somerville domain that includes general building retrofit information, a comprehensive list of incentives, an introduction to the micro-grant form with an intake survey for residents to express interest, Energy Advisor contact information, and an intake form for residents to sign up to be contacted directly by the Energy Advisor. This webpage would be translated into the five languages commonly used in the city for broad accessibility.
- Coordinated advertising of the City's Energy Advisor program across the city's social media accounts, electronic newsletters, highlighting the program on the city's homepage, inclusion of translated information in the community specific electronic newsletters used by the Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs, and other means to distribute information electronically.
- Inclusion of information inserts regarding the Energy Advisor program in citywide mailing runs such as quarterly water bills, quarterly property tax bills, or the annual census mailing as appropriate. These inserts would be translated in the five languages commonly used in the city.
- Attendance and tabling at popular public events, such as farmers' markets, city block parties, the city's Annual 'Honk' festival, and other events as appropriate.
- The grant program partners: Community Action Agency of Somerville and Mothers Out Front will supplement these outreach activities by sending out information through their own social media channels, e-newsletters, and organization websites.

After the initial outreach campaign and processing of the information collected about the program participants, we propose to supplement the general outreach activities as needed with targeted mailings to promising building typologies (i.e. Two-family buildings) within Environmental Justice Census blocks using the city's GIS mapping system and the grant budget available for outreach and marketing



CITY HALL ANNEX • 50 EVERGREEN AVENUE • SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02145
(617) 625-6600 • www.somervillema.gov/OSE
EMAIL: OSE@somervillema.gov



materials. Additional outreach opportunities would be sought as the program evolves, such as inclusion in school newsletters for parents, local signage opportunities on city assets and bus stops, or other methods of distributing information to the public as they develop. Depending on capacity we may engage in targeted canvassing activity to distribute information to specific households by leveraging volunteers through Mothers Out Front, CAAS, or recruited community members by the city of Somerville.



CITY HALL ANNEX • 50 EVERGREEN AVENUE • SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02145
(617) 625-6600 • www.somervillema.gov/OSE
EMAIL: OSE@somervillema.gov

