



NEXTZERO

EXPERIENCE WHAT'S NEXT

Connected Homes Reaches Enrollment Milestone, Launches New Pilot



The Connected Homes demand response program continues to grow and evolve.

Launched in 2020, the program now has over 4,300 devices totaling over 10 megawatts of enrolled energy curtailment, but Connected Homes continues to charge forward with new initiatives.

The program is launching an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) pilot. Through this pilot, NextZero will partner with the light department to collect AMI data to assess the customer's energy use and identify a fairly aggressive household reduction threshold that customers will have to meet to get incentivized.

This approach allows customers without specific program applicable devices to participate and reduce their energy use during peak hours in any way they can, such as dimming lights, postponing energy-intensive household tasks like dishes and laundry, and adjusting HVAC systems.

A customer must actively participate in peak reduction and reach the identified energy threshold to earn an incentive for that month. This program pilot expands the 'Shred the Peak' strategy many MLPs employ by quantifying and incentivizing the demand reduction of a behavioral program.

The pilot is available now and available to all municipal light plants.

Energy Saver Home Loan Program

Having trouble reaching your low and moderate-income customers? They may be eligible for a low interest, energy efficiency loan through the Massachusetts Community Climate Bank's Energy Saver Home Loan Program (ESHLP).

How it Works

CET, NextZero's residential energy audit provider, matches recipients with an energy service provider (ESP). The ESP will perform a free assessment to develop a plan aimed at reducing the home's energy use by at least 20%.

Eligibility

Households must be within 135% of the median income. These vary by county and are based on the total gross income of all homeowners listed on your property deed. Single-family homes and two-four-family properties are eligible. The loan is for the homeowner, and to qualify, the home must be the owner's primary residence.

The Loan

Recipients will receive a low interest, second mortgage loan to support the necessary household changes to meet the 20% energy use reduction. The program included free end-to-end support from loan closing to post installation.

Eligible Projects

The ESHLP covers a wide range of energy efficiency projects including roof replacement, oil tank removal, weatherization, electrical system upgrades, heat pumps, solar panels, battery storage, electric vehicle charging stations, and efficient appliances and fixtures.

Bonus Savings

Most of the eligible projects can be combined with NextZero rebates for extra savings!

If you'd like to receive Energy Saver Home Loan Program-specific marketing, please email Rina O'Donnell at rodonnell@mmwec.org.

Decarbonize Your Customer Base With Heat Pump Assessments

Are you configuring a plan to help your light department and town play its part in reaching the Commonwealth's decarbonization goals? Try to boost your heat pump rebate numbers by focusing on the Heat Pump Assessment program!

Through the NextZero Heat Pump Assessment program, municipal light plant customers can get a free, in-depth consultation about heat pump systems and technology.

Customers can receive an in-person or virtual energy assessment and speak with a heat pump expert about their home. They will learn how heat pumps work and what size and configuration would be optimal for their specific home. The expert will provide a list of recommended contractors and, once one is chosen, will review the heat pump design before the customer commits to it.

The expert will also introduce information on weatherization and explain how weatherizing the home before installing a heat pump system can increase efficiency and help the customer save even more energy.

Once the heat pump is purchased and installed, NextZero provides a post-installation quality assurance inspection. If applicable, NextZero will also work with the customers through the rebate application process.

If you would like to start offering heat pump consultations, please contact Zoe Eckert at zeckert@mmwec.org. If you are interested in Heat Pump Assessment marketing or targeting specific customers, reach out to Rina O'Donnell at rodonnell@mmwec.org.





NextZero Commercial Programs

Commercial and industrial (C&I) customers are eligible for rebates on energy efficiency and electrification projects from installing efficient lighting to upgrading an HVAC system. The NextZero team will work with customers in every capacity whether they have a specific project in mind or are just interested in cost savings. NextZero offers four commercial rebate programs:

Prescriptive Lighting Program: a fast track process for reviewing and implementing lighting projects where lighting fixtures have been identified by licensed electricians with cost quotations.

Prescriptive HVAC: a streamlined process for reviewing and implementing HVAC projects for customers who have procured cost quotations from licensed installers.

Custom Retrofit: an ideal fit for C&I customers who are interested in general energy efficiency upgrades, but do not have a specific project in mind.

New Construction and Major Renovations: C&I customers may qualify for co-funding of technical services, custom incentives, or prescriptive rebates to help maximize the efficiency of their construction or renovation project.

NEXTZERO

EXPERIENCE WHAT'S NEXT

Connected Buildings Coming Soon

NextZero's demand response program is expanding to the commercial and industrial customer base with Connected Buildings, a pilot program.

Connected Buildings takes a new approach to conserving energy. The program will utilize advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) data to allow the customers to adjust their energy usage themselves, expanding the program beyond the scope of specific devices and brands and increasing potential energy and cost savings for the light department.



Using AMI data, NextZero will determine the customer's baseline energy usage on like days, calculating actual energy reduction and incentivizing customers on their performance. To assist customers in making real changes, NextZero will create a customer-specific load reduction plan to outline what changes the customer can make during peak hours to reduce energy use.

This innovative behavior-based approach puts the customer in charge of their incentive by allowing the customer to be in control of the adjustments. Incentives are determined by the number of kilowatts (kW) reduced during peak hours. This approach uses the learnings gained from National Grid's 2019 Behavioral Demand Response Evaluation Findings, and pilots quantifying and incentivizing the behavioral demand response program many municipal light plants (MLPs) use.

Connected Homes is available to all MLPs, not just MMWEC Members. The pilot is expected to launch this summer and conclude at the end of December. Based on the results of the pilot, NextZero expects to share the pilot findings and open the program to all light departments in 2027.

Customer Case Study: Energy Efficiency Upgrades at Chicopee Restaurant

A 2,300 square foot restaurant in Chicopee recently made several energy efficiency updates, including upgrading its walk-in cooler and freezer evaporator fan motors to high efficiency units as well as installing a demand control kitchen ventilation (DCKV) system.

The new high efficiency evaporator fan motors operate at lower wattages and reduce overall heat load on the refrigeration equipment, resulting in energy savings. The DCKV system included installing temperature sensors and variable frequency drives to modulate exhaust fan speed based on cooking activity. The new system will result in energy savings by slowing fan speeds as well as reducing heating and cooling loads for the building.

Project Benefits

- **2.16 kW** demand reduction
- **11,605 kWh** annual electric savings
- **\$2,067** annual cost savings

Chicopee Electric Light was able to issue this project a \$1,972 rebate. The project was completed in April 2026.

