



NEXTZERO

EXPERIENCE WHAT'S NEXT



NextZero Holds Annual Participants Meeting

The NextZero Program held its annual Participants meeting in July in Shrewsbury.

At the meeting, NextZero Participants voted to officially add window heat pump units to the Appliance Rebate program. A relatively new product, window heat pumps are a smaller, more compact option ideal for renters, small spaces, or homes without ducts. Unlike a traditional heat pump system that needs to be installed by a professional, window heat pumps are a do-it-yourself, ENERGY STAR®-certified option.

NextZero also gave out three awards to Members who have shown outstanding operational practices.

Ipswich Electric Light Department received the NextZero Impact Award for pushing the envelope with innovative inclusive utility investments pilots and pioneering the decarbonization audit—an initiative that is now being rolled out as an offering to all Members.

West Boylston Municipal Light Plant and the Marblehead Municipal Light Department were both given the NextZero Innovation Award for teaming up to lead a cutting-edge pilot program with Kestrix, testing whether 3D thermal imaging can revolutionize how audits are conducted. By utilizing this advanced technology, they are exploring new ways to engage customers and successfully drive them toward energy audits, weatherization, and heat pump adoption.

Princeton Municipal Light Department (PMLD) earned the NextZero Marketing Award. Through its creative, consistent, and highly effective social media presence, PMLD has kept its community deeply engaged, informed, and excited about energy efficiency.

New England Heat Pump Accelerator Program

The New England Heat Pump Accelerator program is now available to Massachusetts residents. The program works with distributors, contractors, policymakers, and community organizations to increase the accessibility of heat pumps.

Background

A partnership between five New England states received a \$450 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grants program.

The grant includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.

How it Works

The Heat Pump Accelerator program provides incentives to participating HVAC distributors who pass the incentives along in the form of lower retail price.

Contractors buy the equipment from a participating distributor and customers receive an instant discount on their new heating and cooling system.

The Discount

Single family and multi-family homeowners in Massachusetts are eligible for instant savings on heat pump systems and heat pump water heaters. Residents can save \$650 per heat pump condenser and \$300 per heat pump water heater condensers purchased after February 1, 2026.

The program is expected to run through December 2029.

Where to Get Started

Customers can visit <https://www.nehpa.org/> to find a participating contractor and learn which distributors are eligible for the instant savings discounts.

New Energy Efficiency Demand Response Coordinator

There's a new friendly face in the NextZero program! Kaitlyn Mitchell is NextZero's new Energy Efficiency Demand Response Coordinator.

Mitchell previously worked at the Center for EcoTechnology (CET), NextZero's energy audit partner, in several different capacities. As the program's Communications and Engagement Coordinator, she managed the communication of several programs, including the First Time Home Buyers program, and worked with area libraries to create an induction stove lending pilot program. Mitchell then worked as a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Consultant, and most recently served as a Commercial Energy Consultant, conducting commercial and multi-family audits.

Michell has a B.S. in Natural Resources Conservation at UMass. While attending school, she worked with the UMass Extension program's Carbon Mitigation Committee to help plan for the university to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, which shifted her interests and career path to energy efficiency.

During her time at CET, she worked closely with the NextZero program, conducting commercial and multi-family audits for several Members, including Holyoke Gas & Electric and Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Department.

As NextZero's Energy Efficiency Demand Response Coordinator, Mitchell will be responsible for the Connected Homes program. She said she was drawn to the role as she has seen the impact demand response can have, and she looks forward to working with Members in a more customer-focused role.



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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.

Small Business Audits Rising in Popularity

NextZero's small business energy audits remain steady.

In partnership with CET, NextZero began offering small business and multi-family building energy audits in January 2024, in addition to the traditional residential energy audits CET provides. To qualify for the small business audits, businesses must be 10,000 square feet or smaller with an overall annual electric use of 1.5 million kilowatt-hours or less.

The small business audits have seen an increase this year. In June alone, CET conducted four audits for Chicopee Electric Light commercial customers: Portuguese American Club, Petros Restaurant, Romano's Pizza, and Lucky Cheng Restaurant.

The audits seek to identify opportunities for energy savings including a thorough inspection of the building, HVAC systems, hot water systems, lighting, and building envelopes. CET provides Manual N calculations to ensure accurate sizing and design of air source heat pump systems, which are critical for optimizing energy efficiency and reducing electricity consumption. Additionally, consultations and design review and approval are included in the program.

Seven NextZero Members currently participate in small business audits, including Chicopee Electric Light, Holyoke Gas & Electric, Ipswich Electric Light Department, Marblehead Municipal Light Department, South Hadley Electric Light Department, Templeton Municipal Light & Water Plant, and Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Department.

NextZero Members interested in adding small business audits to their portfolio can contact Zoe Eckert at zeckert@mmwec.org.

Customer Case Study: Heating and Cooling Upgrades at a Wakefield Church

A 9,000 square foot church in Wakefield recently installed three new air source heat pump systems.

The church was a new construction project and an analysis of different heating systems showed that the building would achieve significant cost and energy savings by heating with electricity instead of gas, while drastically improving its carbon footprint. The 33,000 BTUH heat pump systems will reduce almost 30,000 lbs of CO2 over their lifetime, which is the equivalent of taking three cars off the road for a year.

Project Benefits

- **74.04** MMBtu annual energy savings
- **888** MMBtu lifetime energy savings
- **\$230** annual savings
- **\$2,800** lifetime savings

Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Department issued this project a \$4,125 rebate. The project was completed in July 2026.

