



NEXTZERO

EXPERIENCE WHAT'S NEXT

NextZero Members Join New Programs

Several MMWEC Member municipal light plants (MLPs) have joined new NextZero programs for 2026.

Ipswich Electric Light Department (IELD) and Russell Municipal Light Department (RMLD) are both now part of the NextZero Rebate program. RMLD and IELD now offer residential rebates through NextZero including ENERGY STAR-certified appliances, heat pumps, and weatherization and IELD also offers rebates for electric yard equipment, residential batteries, and WaterSense products.

Holyoke Gas & Electric and South Hadley Electric Light Department both have added a comprehensive whole-property decarbonization audit that works with customers to identify energy and carbon-saving measures in the home and around the property by offering recommendations based on the carbon reduction significance.

In addition to evaluating the building envelope and HVAC measures, these audits include extended information on electric vehicles, solar PV, electric lawn equipment, waste management, and water conservation.

The number of Member participants in NextZero's Small Business and Multi-Family energy audits has increased. Chicopee Electric Light (CEL), Templeton Municipal Light & Water Plant, Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Department, and West Boylston Municipal Light Plant now offer Multi-Family Building energy audits.

CEL and Marblehead Municipal Light Department now offer Small Business audits to businesses that are 10,000 square feet or smaller with an overall annual electric use of 1.5 million kilowatt-hours or less.



Zero Interest "Z Loan" Program Created for Municipal Light Plants

A new energy efficiency program will be available to Massachusetts municipal light plant (MLP) customers soon.

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) is working towards creating an MLP zero-interest energy efficiency loan (MLP Z-Loan) program. Nine million dollars will be available for MLP customer energy efficiency projects and the funds are estimated to last five years. The program will be administered by ClearResult, an emission-reducing energy solutions organization, and the funds will be provided by the DOER and the federal Revolving Loan Fund. Customers can apply for a zero percent loan of up to \$25,000.

Eligible projects include:

- **Weatherization:** Attic, wall, and basement/rim joist insulation; air sealing and duct sealing/insulation
- **Heat Pumps:** Cold climate heat pumps, ducted and duct-less air-source, air to water heat pumps, and ground-source (geothermal) systems
- **Heat Pump Water Heaters**
- **Barrier Mitigation:** Vermiculite, mold abatement, combustion safety, structural concerns and knob and tube
- **Panel or service upgrades** done in conjunction with a heat pump installation

The Z Loan program will be available for new projects only on a first-come-first-serve basis. The program is expected to launch in September 2026, but customers can submit a pre-application now on the DOER [website](#).

NextZero Considers Adding Window Heat Pumps to Rebate Program

As the Commonwealth's decarbonization deadlines edge closer, NextZero is continually searching for ways to help its Members and their customers decarbonize their homes and vehicles.

One of the most impactful ways to cut down on carbon emissions in a home is to convert the heating system to a high efficiency heat pump system, but the cost of these systems is significant, especially without the benefit of federal tax credits. To help bridge the gap, NextZero is considering adding rebates for window heat pump units.



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 option. Window units cost far less than whole-home systems, while still offering efficiency and environmental benefits, and NextZero customers can save even more if the rebates are added to the program. The window units are also ENERGY Star®-certified.

A pilot window heat pump project in a New York City apartment building in 2023 concluded that apartments with window heat pumps maintained more consistent temperatures during the winter than those relying on the building's old gas-fired boiler system and used 86% less energy for heating, which cut residents' winter heating bills in half.

NextZero plans to add window heat pump rebates as a pilot in the fall and as an official program offering in 2027.



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.

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NextZero Improves Prescriptive HVAC Program Rebates

In January, NextZero modernized and increased rebate values in its Prescriptive HVAC program. The rebate application process has also been simplified.

Incentives for qualifying heat pumps have increased from \$50-\$100 per ton (12,000 btu) of cooling capacity to \$100-400 per ton.

Rebate eligibility requirements have been updated where appropriate to reflect the now common usage of SEER2 (revised Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio) IEER (Improved Energy Efficiency Ratio), and HSPF2 (revised Heating System Performance Factor).

The previously over-complicated tables of eligible equipment and incentives have been simplified to make them more user-friendly to customers and contractors.

New devices, such as packaged terminal air conditioners (PTAC) and smart thermostats have been added to the list of eligible equipment.

Nine municipal light plants offer the 2026 NextZero Prescriptive HVAC program, including: Ashburnham Municipal Light Plant, Chicopee Electric Light, Ipswich Electric Light Department, Marblehead Municipal Light Department, Peabody Municipal Light Plant, South Hadley Electric Light Department, Sterling Municipal Light Department, Templeton Municipal Light and Water Plant, and Wakefield Municipal Gas and Light Department.



Customer Case Study: Lighting Upgrades at a Food Broker Facility

An 8,000-square-foot, full-service food broker facility in Wakefield recently completed efficient lighting upgrades.

The building retrofitted 103 fluorescent fixtures with LED technology, installing 47 measure code S50 2x2 fixtures and 56 measure code S50 2x4 fixtures. The LED fixtures replaced fluorescent lights leading to significant energy savings.

Project Benefits

- **4.45 kW** demand reduction
- **11,576 kWh** annual electric savings
- **\$1,910** annual cost savings
- **\$20,991** lifetime costs savings

Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Department was able to issue this project a \$5,000 rebate. The project has a 12.84-year simple payback or a 10.22-year payback with the eligible incentives. This project was completed in November 2025.

