

I know you've seen them- the commercials with the adorable talking outlets and smart power strips chatting about getting their energy bill "in shape." Or the various billboards throughout the Chicagoland area claiming homes and businesses can easily save energy and money with the help of the ComEd Energy Efficiency Program. Yes, you read that right. ComEd, the largest electrical utility in Illinois really wants you to save energy AND money with their help. Sound too good to be true? I promise, it's not. Want to know how to reap the benefits of something you're investing into every month? Sit back, relax, and let Verde enlighten you.

What is the ComEd Energy Efficiency Program?

After Illinois passed the Future Energy Jobs Act, or FEJA, in 2016, Illinois became a leader in the clean energy world. This legislation aims to create jobs and protect low energy rates for consumers, mostly doing so by expanding the state's energy efficiency programs, including the ComEd Energy Efficiency program. This program existed pre-FEJA, but FEJA has doubled the budget for these programs, created more funding for low-income programs, and created more awareness for the incredibly lucrative energy rebates offered in Illinois.



Since the program's humble beginnings in 2007, it has grown exponentially in every aspect- the number of businesses and homes participating, the number of kWhs saved annually, the number of jobs created, and the number of energy saving measures offered. There are now rebates for just about every type of building out there, whether it's new construction or 150 year old construction, a 500 square foot building or 500,000 square foot building (we'll touch on this more later). Since the portfolio for this program is so large, ComEd relies on the help of Program Implementers and Trade Allys to manage, promote, and complete the work within the program. That's where companies like Verde come in.

How can I Participate in ComEd's Energy Savings?

To have work completed and receive ComEd rebates from the program, you must find a qualified ComEd Trade Ally to assess your building, recommend energy efficiency upgrades, and complete the physical installation. The ComEd Trade Ally network is made up of a couple dozen elite companies who specialize in various industries, such as lighting installation, lighting distribution, and energy efficiency or clean energy. These companies and their staff are heavily vetted to ensure that they are the utmost qualified to carry out the mission and values of the program. This year, under FEJA, each Trade Ally had to be ICC Certified as an Energy Efficiency Measures Installer to complete any work, ensuring even further that all Trade Allies are credible, professional, and well-trained. After you have found a Trade Ally to work with, an Energy Efficiency Analyst will come out to conduct a free Energy Assessment of your building. During this time, the analyst will walk around in search of opportunities for energy efficiency improvements, such as smart thermostats, indoor and outdoor LED lighting, daylight and motion controls, refrigeration systems, HVAC units, and compressed air to name a few. This is when the magic happens- the opportunities are noted, a copy of your ComEd bill is made, and then the Trade Ally determines what program your building falls into, and where you will receive the most rebate from. Here's a quick break down of the various programs offered:

Commercial Programs: Private Sector

Small Business Energy Saving Program (SBES): This program is for private sector buildings that fall into the 0-100 kWh usage per month category. The SBES program, administered by Nexant, is incredibly comprehensive, and has rebates for everything a small business could dream of- from air compressors to HVAC units to shiny new LED fixtures to weather stripping. This program focuses on kWh reduction, so the lower the wattage of the fixtures installed, the more money you will receive.

Standard Program: Like the SBES program, the Standard



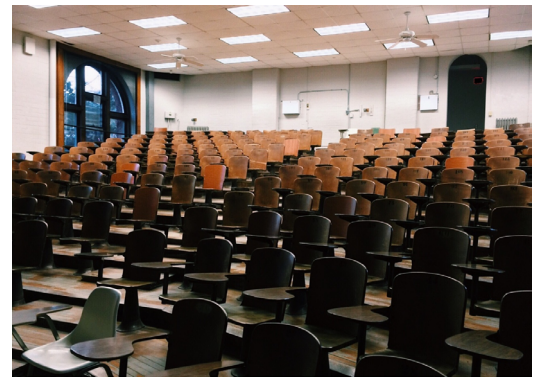
program, administered by DNV GL, offers rebates to private sector buildings that use over 100 kWhs of energy per month, which is commonly seen in warehouses, large office buildings, and sometimes a McDonald's here and there. This program is also comprehensive, and offers countless rebate opportunities for indoor lighting, outdoor lighting, and refrigeration measures. Buildings that fall into this program benefit greatly from the energy efficiency upgrades, since the amount of energy used to keep the building comfortable and safe is so much higher.

Instant Discounts: Unlike the SBES and Standard programs, Instant Discounts, administered by DNV GL, can be applied to energy efficiency measures in any commercial building, regardless of size. Instant Discounts is exactly what it says it is- instant discounts for instant LED lighting solutions and instant savings. This program focuses on screw-in LED measures (think screw-in light bulbs in the average home), and does not require installation by a Trade Ally, because the measures that receive rebate are just that easy! This program doesn't need any upfront project approval, which makes it easy for businesses to buy screw-in LEDs as needed. To make the Instant Discounts program even more attractive, it applies to both public and private sector commercial buildings, woo!

Commercial Programs: Public Sector

Small Facilities Public Sector Program: Thanks to FEJA, the Small Facilities Public Sector Program is being managed by ComEd for the first time this year. Previously this program was managed by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and is now being administered by Willdan. This program mirrors the SBES program, but is for public sector buildings that fall into the 0-100 kWh usage per month category. Verde is proud to have completed one of the first projects ever in this program- shout out to Wheeling Firehouse 23!

Large Facilities Public Sector Program: Again, thanks to FEJA ComEd is now managing the Large Facilities Public Sector Program as well! Similar to the Standard Program, DNV GL is also managing this program (they love large facilities!), and is very similar to the Standard rebates. This program houses many opportunities for large public sector buildings, such as Chicago universities, Chicago Public Schools, and government offices.



Residential Programs:

Multi-Family Energy Savings Program (Market Rate Buildings): This exciting new program, administered by Franklin Energy, provides rebates for market rate condo and apartment buildings over 3 units. This program covers both in-unit and common area measures, and is designed to make projects completely free to the customer. The Multi-Family Energy Savings Program, or MFESP, provides higher rebate levels for a lesser variety of measures, which provides no cost to the customer. This program provides rebates for LED lighting upgrades and occupancy controls.

Multi-Family Energy Savings Program (Public Housing and Income Eligible Buildings): Much like the market rate side of the program, the public housing or income eligible side has the exact same rebates and measures. Administered by Elevate Energy, and made possible by FEJA, the MFESP income eligible and public housing side has received a huge increase in funding this year. This is incredible news for Chicagoland, as low income areas need energy efficiency measures and savings the most



Other Residential Opportunities: There are many other energy efficiency upgrades homeowners can complete without getting a Trade Ally involved, such as screw-in LEDs, smart thermostats,

and replacing old appliances with Energy Star options. ComEd offers rebates for these measures, which can be applied for by the homeowner themselves, or is applied to the product at purchase (ex. Certain Energy Star rated products at Target have stickers showcasing discounts per the energy efficiency program).

Why Should I Participate in this Program?

On top of the obvious monthly savings to your bill (the average project payback is usually about a year!), There are many other amazing small and large scale benefits to participating in ComEd's Energy Efficiency Program.

Let's start small scale- as mentioned above, your energy bill will decrease, which is typically seen within the first few months after a project is completed. Who doesn't love decreasing their bills? If that alone hasn't sold you, there are many other benefits to your space when it comes to installing LED lighting and energy efficiency measures in general (see my other blog post- 'Sustainability is the New Black' for why I personally believe energy efficiency and sustainability goes far beyond the money saving aspect). Your business will be brighter, literally, and way more efficient. If you're a warehouse owner, for example, you will be able to sleep better knowing that your space is illuminated as much as possible (less injuries and mistakes due to better lighting and more comfortable working conditions in the extreme temperature months), and that you aren't paying someone to constantly change burnt out bulbs (LEDs typically last about 50,000 hours!). Hopefully these efficient changes will also reflect your positive investment in your business to your employees as well. If you own a retail spot, you'll be able to showcase your product better with brighter light, and will have more comfortable customers in your space. Improving energy efficiency in your business positively affects your productivity and bottom line. It's truly a win-win!



If you're personally passionate about the environment, sustainability, and clean energy like the Verde staff is, you'll know there are also a ton of incredibly important large scale benefits to making energy efficiency updates as well. For starters, you're lowering the carbon footprint of your business or home, meaning you're decreasing your consumption of fossil fuels, and therefore putting less stress on our planet. You're literally saving resources for your grandkids, great great grandkids, and so on. Energy reduction directly translates to greenhouse gas reduction, which means less carbon dioxide in the atmosphere contributing to climate change and the greenhouse effect (okay, done geeking out).

On top of all this, who doesn't want to be seen as an industry leader? Industry leaders are the ones making energy efficient changes and breakthroughs in their businesses, which is in turn creating further growth and development. I truly believe that as the program continues to gain momentum, partners, and support from consumers, we'll see really exciting shifts towards new clean energy technologies, such as solar and wind power. Another way to look at this is that we're also enhancing our energy independence as a country (and yours as a business owner)- talk about being an innovator, right?

Now that you know the basics of the ComEd Energy Efficiency Program, if and how it can help your business, and why it's important, it's time to take advantage of that Energy Efficiency Program Tax you're paying into every month (but seriously, go check your bill). So what's your next step? Finding a trade ally, specifically one who was voted Most Comprehensive in 2016 AND ComEd Partner of the Year in 2017 (hint hint: that's Verde!) and setting up a free assessment. From there, we do all the legwork involved in whipping your energy bill into shape!