



Case Study: Garfield Clean Energy Residential Revolving Loan Fund

Homeowners using Revolving Loan Fund to cover upfront costs of energy upgrades

Utility bill savings cover monthly loan payments for most borrowers

More homeowners are now using Garfield Clean Energy's Residential Revolving Loan Fund to save money on home energy upgrades such as furnaces, doors, windows and solar energy. And for most of them, the savings in energy costs offset the monthly loan payment.

Take Lisa Doherty, owner of an 1893 home in New Castle. After learning about the potential for home energy efficiency, she got a home energy assessment. It showed that the home's windows, doors and walls were leaking heat and wasting energy.

"Until my free energy audit, I had no idea how energy *inefficient* my home was," she said. The energy assessment report listed the upgrades that would help Doherty save energy and money. Doherty moved forward to get a price quote for replacing all of the home's 17 windows.

"Putting off an improvement, replacement or upgrade for even three years can cost thousands more in utility overpayment. The efficiency loan is an investment that has a return,"

—Chris Allen,
Climate Control Company



Lisa Doherty in front of her New Castle home. Photos by Cameron M. Burns

The quote came in at \$15,547. Doherty didn't have that kind of cash on hand, but she was able to finance the work through Garfield Clean Energy's Residential Revolving Loan Fund. Her energy bills have gone down, and she's using the money saved on utility bills to pay back the loan.

"My loan just hovers under \$300 a month, for five years," she said. "So it's definitely worth it."

Garfield Clean Energy's Residential Revolving Loan Fund is capitalized with \$300,000 from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The funds were part of a larger grant that CLEER wrote in 2009 for Garfield County.

The loan fund is managed by Funding Partners, a nonprofit based in Fort Collins that also manages affordable housing and municipal improvement loans for local governments across the state.

"One of the best things about the Revolving Loan Fund is the incredibly quick turnaround," said Energy Coach Maisa Metcalf of CLEER, who handles incoming loan requests for Garfield Clean Energy.

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The Upgrades

- Replaced old windows with new doublepane windows
- Replaced two old doors
- Added insulation in the walls

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“We can usually get a loan approval for qualified borrowers within 24 hours. That’s especially important for people who are dealing with emergencies, such as having a furnace or boiler fail during the winter.”

Homeowners who seek a loan also get free Energy Coaching services from Garfield Clean Energy. An Energy Coach helps homeowners prioritize their projects, work with contractors and make the most of available rebates.

“In addition to a low-interest loan, subsidized by the DOE, the greatest asset to me was that CLEER provided names of local contractors who had experience in this process, specifically the retrofitting of window upgrades and doors in older homes,” Doherty wrote in an email to CLEER.

Doherty said Metcalf, her energy coach, also helped keep the upgrade projects moving forward.

“If not for CLEER staff following up with me via emails and calls, I may have indefinitely deferred my energy upgrade,” Doherty wrote. “With enough support and encouragement, I proceeded, and am already experiencing the benefits of having a warmer home and curtailing heat loss.”

Like Doherty, Heidi Schultz of New Castle also replaced windows in her home.

“The loan has allowed me to pay for other energy upgrades as well, like insulating the roof and bedroom,” Schultz said.

“My energy bills have been cut almost in half and I can see out my windows in the winter,” Shultz said. She’s no longer looking through tacked-up plastic sheeting,



Above: Lisa Doherty with one of her new windows at the back of the house.

“I’m glad I applied, because now the money I’m spending on loan payments is paying for my upgrades instead of going to energy bills.”

In addition to windows and doors, the loans can also be used to finance high-efficiency furnaces, boilers and water heaters, insulation and air sealing, and solar electric or solar hot water systems, and for necessary related construction.

Revolving Loan Fund

- Favorable rates: 3.75 to 8.5 percent
- Loans from \$1,000 to \$25,000
- Terms of 5 to 10 years
- \$25 application fee; \$125 closing fee
- Do-it-yourself projects qualify
- For homeowners in Garfield County

The loan fund can also be used to help pay for health and safety upgrades such as radon, mold or asbestos mitigation, although the homeowner must also carry out one or more energy efficiency upgrades financed by the loan. The mitigation work can be up to 25 percent of the total loan amount.

The loans are also helpful to building and HVAC contractors. Several contractors that work closely with Garfield Clean Energy and CLEER have begun marketing the loans to potential customers,

which could increase their business.

Chris Allen, sales and production manager for Climate Control of Glenwood Springs, has taken it a step further. Climate Control’s technicians are running numbers to show homeowners how much they can save with energy upgrades and informing them about using the Revolving Loan Fund to cover the upfront costs.

“The energy upgrade loan allows homeowners to pay for their upgrades with the savings in operating costs,” Allen said.

“Putting off an improvement, replacement or upgrade for even three years can cost thousands more in utility overpayment. The efficiency loan is an investment that has a return,” Allen said. “The sooner the investment is made, the sooner the reward can be reaped.”

Doherty and other borrowers are reaping those financial rewards, but there are other benefits as well.

“I encourage all residents who are experiencing energy loss through poor insulation or single pane windows to get an energy audit, as soon as possible, and make the necessary changes to conserve our finite, global energy resources,” Doherty said.

“The ripple effect of these conscious changes will not only affect your wallet, but our ability to refine the implementation of renewable sources in our near and distant future,” Doherty said. “This is our ethical and communal obligation.”

More info & free energy coaching:

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Garfield Clean Energy is managed by

CLEER: Clean Energy Economy for the Region

