

Home Energy Score California FAQ

What is a Home Energy Score?

The [Home Energy Score \(HES\)](#) is a nationally recognized assessment developed by the US Department of Energy (DOE) that provides a standardized rating of a home's energy efficiency. An HES report includes the home's score ranging from 1 to 10, an estimate of energy usage and utility bills, and custom upgrade recommendations to improve a home's energy efficiency.

Trained HES Assessors collect data on the home's heating and cooling systems, water heating, insulation, duct sealing, and more, to create a report that enables a standardized comparison across different geographies and provides homeowners, buyers, and renters credible information about a home's energy assets.

What is Home Energy Score California?

The [Bay Area Regional Energy Network \(BayREN\)](#) has been running an HES program in the nine Bay Area counties since 2018 through its Green Labeling program. In the 2024-2031 BayREN Business Plan submitted to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), [BayREN proposed to expand this successful program statewide](#). Home Energy Score California will be based on the Bay Area program and will provide scores, Assessor trainings, rebates, and marketing throughout the state of California with local options for outreach and customization available. As of early 2024, the program is still being designed and is expected to launch in 2026.

What is the timeline for the Home Energy Score California program?

Home Energy Score California has received approval for CPUC funding in 2026 and 2027, and it is anticipated that the statewide program will run through at least 2031. The current BayREN program has been in operation since 2018 and the HES program elements of the Green Labeling program will be folded into Home Energy Score California upon its launch.

What types of housing are eligible for a Home Energy Score?

Home Energy Scores can be performed on single-family homes, including detached units, townhomes, and duplexes. The Home Energy Scoring tool is currently being updated by the US DOE to include some multifamily properties and manufactured housing, so it may be possible to expand eligibility in the future.

What type of training do HES Assessors need?

Training required for Assessors in the Home Energy Score California program will be consistent with training required for current BayREN Assessors. HES Assessors must hold a relevant credential as required by US DOE; the [full list can be found here](#). Assessors must then pass an online exam, sign a participation agreement, and receive mentoring from the Home Energy Score California team. After enrollment, 5% of scores statewide will receive an in-depth quality assurance review, which will include the program team re-scoring the home either virtually or by shadowing the Assessor in the field. This process will help to ensure that the score is consistent for each home no matter which Assessor has completed the HES. If a quality issue has been identified, the Assessor must receive additional training to continue scoring.

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How does the rebate process work? What is the rebate amount for an assessment?

The homeowner fills out an application form consenting to an HES. In the application, the homeowner decides whether the rebate goes to the homeowner or to the Assessor. If it goes to the Assessor, the assessment price will be discounted by the rebate amount. If it goes to the homeowner, the homeowner will pay full price and receive a rebate check in the mail. In the latter case, the customer will receive the rebate in 60 days or less. In the BayREN program, the vast majority (~95%) of homeowners choose to have the Assessor receive the rebate so that they simply pay less for the HES up front.

The BayREN rebate is up to \$250. However, the amount for the statewide rebate has not yet been determined.

How customized can the HES report be for each jurisdiction?

Home Energy Score California will create a California-specific HES report and set of home upgrade recommendations that align with Title 24, Part 6. Additionally, the Home Energy Score California report will use location-specific data to calculate energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. Jurisdictions with specific local requirements, electrification policies, or available incentive programs can work with the Home Energy Score California program team to customize the recommended measures and applicable local resources that show up on homeowners' HES report. Outreach materials can also be customized per jurisdiction or regional agency.

Will there be support for local HES programs?

Home Energy Score California will train Assessors, conduct DOE-required quality assurance checks of scores, and issue rebates (if applicable). A local jurisdiction would be responsible for passing and enforcing any ordinance that requires an HES (e.g. the [Berkeley Buildings Emissions Saving Ordinance](#)). These may include a time of listing or rental disclosure ordinance or an existing building reach code. Jurisdictions will be able to access a centralized HES database to help with enforcement. Home Energy Score California program staff can also assist with drafting local policies.

Will adopting a mandatory program change whether rebates are available?

For jurisdictions that pass an HES mandate, rebates may be available depending on the structure of the policy. In the Bay Area, rebates were initially available even for jurisdictions where mandates were present and then phased-out over time. These rebates were meant to get the program started and drive demand in the market for HES. In general, however, once an HES is mandatory, an incentive is not required to drive demand. As additional mandatory policies are implemented across the state, Home Energy Score California program staff will continue to monitor and evaluate the role that rebate offerings play in driving demand for HES and may consider phasing them out over time for areas where an HES is required.

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Are renters eligible for an HES?

As is currently the case with the BayREN HES program, single-family rental properties will be eligible for an HES with the homeowner's permission.

How is the real estate sector involved? Can HES scores be published on the MLS system under the statewide program?

As a voluntary program, Home Energy Score California will engage with real estate agents to let them know about the benefits of an HES in a real estate transaction. However, scores can be done at a variety of trigger points, including before an existing building renovation, at time of sale or rental of a property, after moving into a new building, or any time a homeowner would like to learn more. If a jurisdiction pursues an HES mandate tied to a real estate transaction, outreach to the real estate sector will be strongly encouraged.

For publicly available scores, it would be an option for an MLS to connect to the [Green Building Registry](#) to display score information. Since there are over 40 MLS systems in California and not all of them use the same software, making the connection would require coordination with the local MLS.

What are some of the non-energy benefits of a statewide HES program?

An HES provides added transparency to home buyers and renters who are often unaware of the energy efficiency features of a property, despite their significant impacts on health, comfort, and utility bill affordability. The HES is a relatively low-cost option for an in-person home energy assessment that provides information on how efficient a property is and its estimated associated energy costs. The HES report can also help to connect residents with technical and financial support for making upgrades that lower energy costs and improve health and comfort. The program team is also looking into options for partnering with existing low-income upgrade programs to incorporate scores into their offerings or to provide free scores for income-qualified customers.

Expanding the HES program statewide will also help spur the growth of green jobs in California. The Home Energy Score California team will be able to coordinate with local contractors, home inspectors, energy auditors, and workforce development programs to enroll underrepresented groups in the energy industry as HES Assessors.

Stay Updated!

Updates about Home Energy Score California can be found at www.homescoreCA.org or you can reach out the BayREN Green Labeling program lead, Emily Alvarez, at ealvarez@stopwaste.org.