

Colorado Energy Savings Navigator

CATEGORY

Digital Experience:
Agency/Program Solutions

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COLORADO

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [Colorado Energy Savings Navigator](#) (CESN) is a revolutionary digital gateway transforming how Coloradans access energy cost-savings. For too long, navigating energy incentives has been an overwhelming maze, leaving vital savings unclaimed. CESN changes that by condensing a fragmented landscape of several hundred federal, state, local, and nonprofit programs into a seamless, 10-minute screening tool that instantly matches users with over 100 current rebates, incentives and bill assistance programs.

Launched in August 2025, the state anticipates this pioneering tool will play a critical roles in advancing Colorado's climate goals, driving down household energy costs by uncovering critical, lesser-known affordability and rebate options. To address equity and accessibility in clean energy adoption, the state is investing in research to understand the most effective language, outreach and education campaigns for populations who would benefit from this information. More than just a digital tool, CESN champions energy justice. By investing in user research, the state is ensuring that the financial and environmental benefits of the green transition are delivered directly and equitably to the historically underserved communities that need these life-changing savings most.

IDEA

Addressing the Problem

Electricity prices in Colorado have [skyrocketed by approximately 30%](#) since 2021, and a staggering [93% of Coloradans now grapple with utility costs](#) as a major crisis. For too long, residents have been forced to navigate a fractured maze of assistance programs. The CESN tool shatters these barriers, transforming a fragmented system into a streamlined path to relief. It provides a vital lifeline for low-income families, renters and rural residents, cutting through technical jargon to deliver clarity and financial support where it is needed most.

Coloradans facing energy affordability challenges encountered a fragmented landscape of assistance programs scattered across multiple agencies, utilities, and jurisdictions.

Income-qualified families who could most benefit didn't know these programs existed or couldn't navigate the complex eligibility requirements. Each entity – state agencies (Public Utilities Commission (PUC), Colorado Energy Office, etc.), investor-owned utilities (Xcel Energy, Black Hills, Atmos and Colorado Natural Gas), municipal utilities and co-ops, federal programs and local

nonprofits — operates independently with separate applications, websites and qualification processes.

Why does it matter?

This fragmentation increased the administrative burden on residents, forcing them to search multiple websites and understand different eligibility criteria. It also meant missed opportunities: residents might access one program while remaining unaware of others they qualified for. Traditional procurement and development would have cost more than \$1 million and taken years. Technically, no single entity had visibility across the full landscape, in part due to regulatory barriers. Budget constraints meant no single entity could build a comprehensive solution alone, requiring creative partnership models to share costs and technical resources.

Coloradans needed a single tool to help them find utility bill assistance and energy equipment incentives for their households.

What makes it different?

The Colorado Energy Savings Navigator (CESN) didn't rely on expensive custom development; it was forged through a bold, creative public-private collaboration with MyFriendBen and Rewiring America. This partnership was a masterstroke of innovation, strategically merging existing technologies and data into a unified, powerful screening tool. By leveraging MyFriendBen's established benefits platform and integrating Rewiring America's free, readily available API, the state bypassed conventional roadblocks. This cutting-edge approach slashed development costs by an estimated \$300,000 and dramatically accelerated deployment, delivering the solution a full year ahead of schedule. The result is a model of rapid, low-cost, high-quality service, driven by the smart use of existing APIs and a flexible platform.

What makes it universal?

Amid the emergence of AI data centers that are [driving up energy demand](#), rising energy costs and affordability are top of mind across the country. In addition, eligibility for federally funded assistance programs is tightening, so income-qualified people need to learn about as many alternative affordability and assistance programs as possible. CESN's framework helps solve these problems.

On the software side, CESN keeps scalability front and center. It is a white-label version of MyFriendBen, an open-source platform. Other states can also leverage the Rewiring America database at no cost, which maintains electrification rebates for all 50 states.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Discovery for the project began in October 2024, and the build began in February 2025. By March 2025, we had an initial prototype for testing, with the final version and official launch in August 2025.
- To date, we have mapped 20 assistance programs and integrated more than 100 rebate offers.
- Forging future partnerships with local governments and utility providers to expand program screening capabilities and maintain the rigorous accuracy of assistance and rebate data.
- By early summer 2026, CESN will launch features designed to help people better understand the advantages of installing a heat pump, the impact of a heat pump on their energy bills and where to find a qualified contractor to install the unit and help them apply for as many rebates as possible.
- The longer-term vision is to scale the product's reach and impact by screening people for energy programs AFTER they have applied for a popular income-qualifying state energy program. Using the information customers have already entered in the application, we would call the CESN API and recommend additional energy-related programs that CESN screens for - as long as they consent to sharing that data.

Who was involved?

- CESN has been a cross-agency effort that includes product management, research and design, and stakeholder management from the Colorado Digital Service; software development from MyFriendBe; subject-matter expertise from the Public Utilities Commission and the Colorado Energy Office; and cross-agency goals coordination from the Governor's Office.
- External to the state teams, a user experience researcher from the Colorado Digital Service conducted 62+ user interviews in both English and Spanish, ensuring the tool met actual

resident needs. While CESN focuses on the resident experience, the state is also in lock step with the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), which is working on a contractor portal. Through a series of conference presentations, the CESN team has built relationships with utilities, municipalities and counties for future partnerships.

How did we do it?

The Process

- The Colorado Digital Service (CDS) brought together four state agencies (Public Utilities Commission, Colorado Energy Office, the Colorado Governor's Office, and Colorado Digital Service) to align on a product vision, strategy, content, and the long-term roadmap.
- CDS facilitated coordination with three major external partners (Gary Community Ventures, MyFriendBen, Rewiring America) to customize a benefits screening platform and integrate two APIs: one to screen for income-qualifying assistance programs and another to screen for energy-related rebate programs.
- The state CESN team engaged with two regional/local government partnerships (DRCOG, Building Decarbonization Network) to determine how CESN fits into the state's larger clean energy ecosystem without duplicating efforts from utilities or nonprofits.
- This "collaborative infrastructure" model demonstrates how jurisdictions can pool resources, share technical capabilities, and jointly deliver services that no single entity could provide alone.

IMPACT

User feedback, gathered through qualitative research via 1-on-1 interviews, highlights the relief of seeing program qualifications and the ease of quickly finding multiple options (e.g., finding seven programs without overwhelming information).

We conducted 62+ user interviews in both English and Spanish.

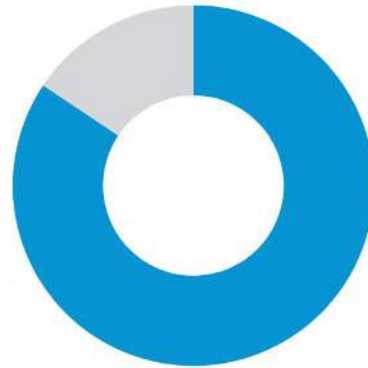
“It was honestly a big relief to see that I qualified for so many programs.” - User testing participant who received Weatherization Assistance Program assistance as a result of a referral from CESN.

“I liked how it just asked... a few questions and [then quickly] found seven programs...and I didn’t have to put in too much information that was... overwhelming.” - User testing participant.

CESN has saved hundreds of income-qualified Coloradans thousands of dollars. For example, more than 90 people have received rebates through Vehicle Exchange Colorado (VXC) thanks to referrals

from CESN. VXC offers rebates of \$6,000- \$9,000 for EVs to income-qualified Coloradans. More than 40 people have applied for home weatherization through the Colorado Energy Office’s

More than 6,100 Coloradans in 54 out of 64 counties have used the tool since it launched in August 2025.



38% of people who start the screener get the results screen
20% of people who start the screen take an action toward applying for a program they’re eligible for



Weatherization Assistance Program thanks to referrals from CESN. WAP helps income-qualified Coloradans save an average of \$350/year through free home energy upgrades.

The state saved an estimated \$300,000 by using the MyFriendBen platform rather than custom development. There was no cost to use the Rewiring America API integration (retail value approximately \$50,000+). The state shared user research costs through its partnership with Gary Community Ventures.

What did the project make better?

The project significantly exceeded the Governor's Wildly Important Goal for energy affordability. While the mandate required a website for energy assistance by June 30, 2026, the team delivered the tool 11 months ahead of schedule. The project expanded its impact by integrating screening for energy rebates alongside assistance information, providing a more comprehensive solution for Coloradans.

The CESN team was selected to speak at the Colorado Association of Municipal Utilities conference and the Rocky Mountain Utility Exchange, two key events for connecting with the state's dozens of utilities.

The project is engineered for sustainability, with projected annual maintenance costs of just \$137,000 to ensure long-term operation. Our proactive networking with municipal and co-op utilities has immediately expanded CESN's scope, successfully integrating four new local screening programs to widen benefit access for residents.

We are actively securing grant funding to guarantee the project's sustainability beyond 2026.

