



2023

Energy Smart
Annual Report



Minnesota Chamber of Commerce

ENERGY SMART

Program Summary

Energy Smart is a business energy efficiency assistance program developed by the Minnesota Waste Wise Foundation, a nonprofit affiliate of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, with the goal of leveraging connections to the business community via the Chamber.

Energy Smart provides an entry level energy efficiency consulting service, from initial meeting to project implementation. There is no cost to receive services in host utility areas. Energy Smart connects with small and medium sized businesses through direct referrals from utility websites and representatives, programs such as Xcel Energy's Partners in Energy, word-of-mouth, and business association sponsored initiatives. Energy Smart meets customers on-site to establish goals and perform walk-through consultations identifying energy efficiency opportunities. A follow-up report is then delivered to the business with actionable steps to reduce energy consumption and participate in utility conservation improvement/load management programs. To the best of our ability, we include eligible financial resources available to the business. This may include loans, matching grants, or mechanisms such as Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE). Energy Smart provides ongoing technical assistance to source and review equipment proposals, apply for utility rebates, and enroll in in-depth utility programs that may benefit the business.

Since its founding, Energy Smart has met with over 4,800 businesses. With the support of Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy, Energy Smart's implementation is unique in that we provide a full set of natural gas and electric recommendations for customers in these split service areas. Businesses with these utilities receive a single point of contact, making the process extremely convenient for small and medium-sized businesses that lack extra time and staff dedicated to these pursuits.

Program Delivery

Energy Smart - Total Program 2023		Savings	
Program Services	Actual	kWh	Dth
Unique site visits completed	269	-	-
Active CIP services	1,583	-	-
Total active participants	406	-	-
Electric upgrades	122	3,183,163	-
Natural gas upgrades*	37	-	13,864
*projects with electrical and natural gas savings counted under gas	2		

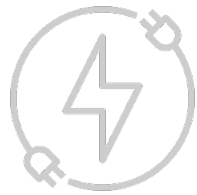
Energy Smart - Xcel Energy Electric Program 2023			Savings
Program Services	Actual	Goal	kWh
Number of site visits completed	250	420	-
Number of times specific electric CIP information given	961	1,100	-
Number of times behavioral recommendations made	524	410	-
Electric upgrades completed after Energy Smart contact	122	110	3,183,163
Internal program cost per first-year kWh saved	\$0.17	-	-

Energy Smart - Xcel Energy Natural Gas Program 2023			Savings
Program Services	Actual	Goal	Dth
Number of times specific gas CIP information given	238	170	-
Commercial streamlined assessments completed	7	5	-
Natural gas upgrades completed after Energy Smart contact	8	9	4,331
Internal program cost per first-year Dth saved	\$7.56	-	-

Energy Smart - CenterPoint Energy Program 2023			Savings
Program Services	Actual	Goal	Dth
Number of site visits completed	150	205	-
Number of times specific gas CIP information given	320	325	-
Number of times behavioral recommendations made	193	190	-
Natural gas upgrades completed after Energy Smart contact	28	35	7,281
Internal program cost per first-year Dth saved	\$25.89	-	-

Energy Smart - Other Utilites 2023		Savings
Program Services	Actual	Dth
Number of site visits	22	-
Number of times specific CIP information given	64	-
Number of times behavioral recommendations made	20	-
Number of upgrades	1	2,253

Executive Summary



3,183,163
kWh saved



13,864
Dth saved



269
on-site
consultations



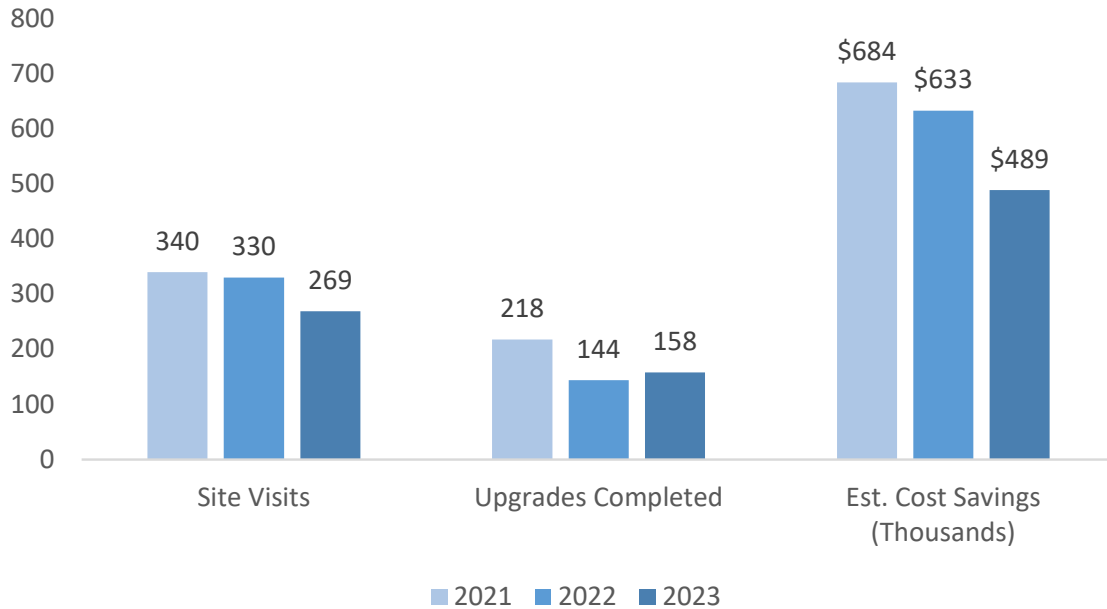
\$481,615
annual cost
savings

2023 marked a turning point for the energy landscape in Minnesota, with organizations preparing to incorporate the Energy Conservation and Optimization Act into conservation programming. Energy Smart began shifting focus to relationship building with businesses and organizations to better serve as a long-term resource. This effort will be solidified in 2024 as we incorporate a “participant” measurement into our goals, allowing credit for on-going relationships instead of solely new consultations. We are pleased with our performance in 2023, recommending 1,583 efficiency measures with 406 participants across 94 cities. Energy Smart came up short of ambitious consultation goals set pre-pandemic but had consistent results assisting with projects.

There are several strategies Energy Smart employed in 2023 contributing to this success:

1. A limited effort to achieve higher participation in CenterPoint Energy’s spring-loaded garage door hinge rebate. Energy Smart installed hinges on 24 garage doors, resulting in 307.2 annual Dth saved. While a small project, it was a great opportunity to increase confidence with small businesses taking steps to be more energy efficient.
2. Collaboration with in-depth study providers and direct referrals to these programs. Energy Smart’s technical assistance is designed for small businesses, but on occasion we connect with larger businesses that have complex facilities. It is our goal to refer these facilities to their account manager and in-depth utility programming, such as Business Energy Assessments, Natural Gas Energy Analysis, etc. In 2023, Energy Smart made 18 referrals into these programs, resulting in approximately 632,000 kWh, 285 Dth saved from direct installs or efficiency improvements completed so far.
3. Preparation for 2024 and our shift to a participant metric. Energy Smart bolstered efforts to connect with local business associations, chambers of commerce, and municipal efficiency programming to be a long-term resource for their businesses. These efforts resulted in 80 consultations completed. Being consistently present with these organizations should set Energy Smart up for continued engagement converting recommendations into projects.
4. Continued collaboration with the Minnesota Chamber’s sustainability counterpart, Waste Wise, resulting in 67 consultations scheduled. Additionally, referrals from Waste Wise’s multi-unit program were referred directly to the Multifamily Building Efficiency program (MFBE), resulting in 6 properties enrolled with 7 buildings successfully audited.

Energy Smart Results 2021-2023



2023 Cost Benefit

Xcel Energy



Upgrades Estimated kWh Saved:
3,183,163 kWh Saved



Upgrades Estimated Dth Saved:
4,330



Internal Program Cost/kWh:
\$0.17
Internal Program Cost/Dth:
\$7.56

CenterPoint Energy

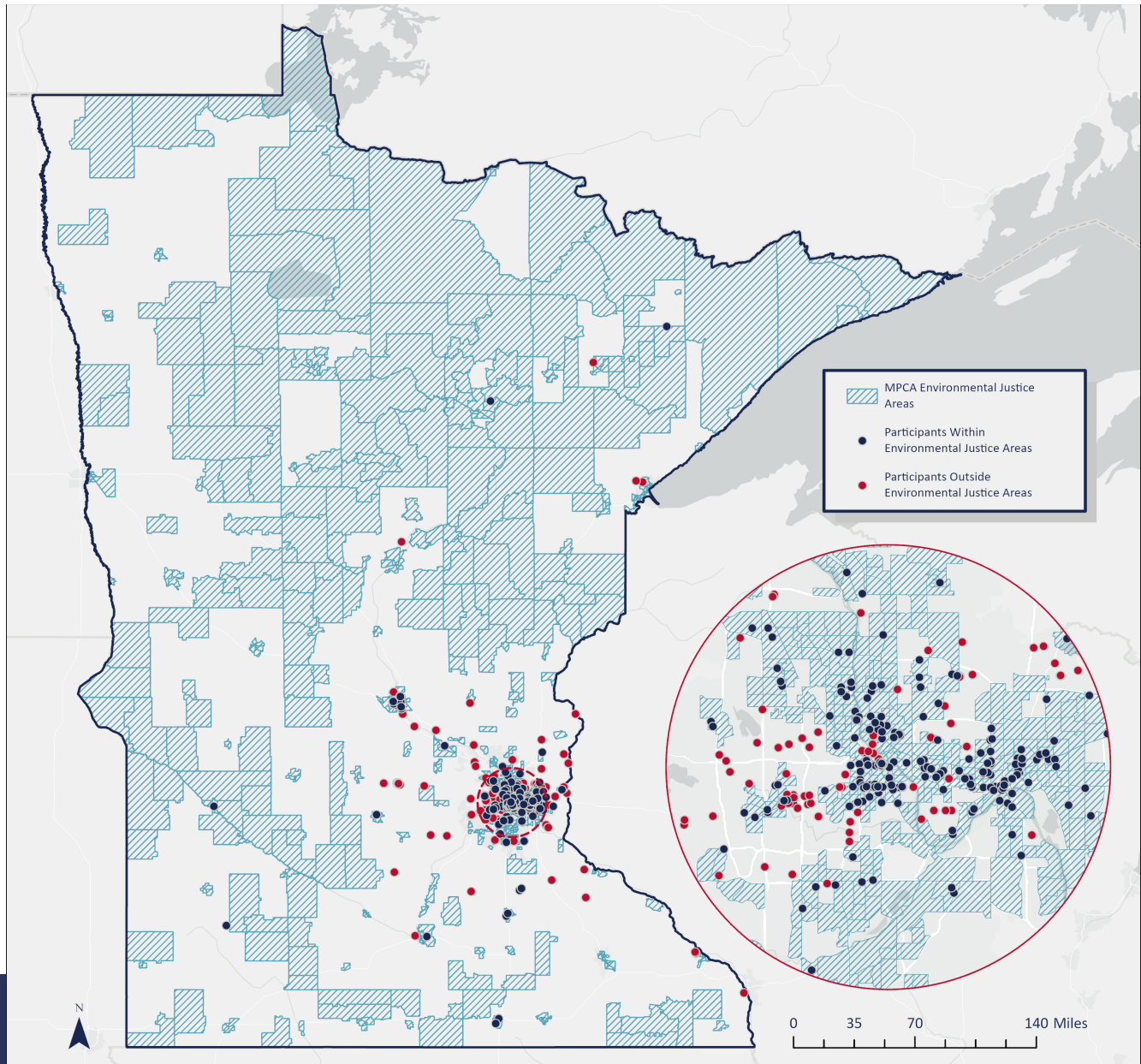


Upgrades estimated Dth saved:
7,281



Internal Program Cost/Dth:
\$25.89

Service Locations



Energy Smart provided services to 406 businesses in 94 cities across Minnesota. Of these, 71, or 17.5%, were outside the seven-county metro.

Energy Smart uses the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) areas of concern for environmental justice to evaluate program delivery to underserved areas. "The MPCA considers a census tract to be an area of concern if at least 35% of the population reported income less than 200% of the federal poverty level." In 2023, 260 or 64% of Energy Smart's participants were located within an area of concern, and 32 of those participants were also located outside the seven-county metro area.

Service Results

Xcel Energy - Electric

	Actual	Goal
Energy consultations completed	250	420
Number of times specific CIP information given	961	1,100
Number of behavioral change recommendations	524	410
Upgrades (utility rebates)	122	110

Xcel Energy - Natural Gas

	Actual	Goal
Number of times specific CIP information given	238	170
Commercial streamlined assessments	7	5
Upgrades (utility rebates)	8	9

CenterPoint Energy - Natural Gas

	Actual	Goal
Energy consultations completed	150	205
Number of times specific CIP information given	320	325
Number of behavioral change recommendations	193	190
Upgrades (utility rebates)	28	35

Top 5 Efficiency Recommendation Areas:

1. Heating systems (293)
2. Cooling and ventilation systems (288)
3. In-depth audit/study (251)
4. Smart thermostats and AC control (148)
5. Lighting (135)

Energy Smart continued to provide excellent service to businesses, with an enhanced focus on informing participants about in-depth audits or studies they may qualify for. These audits and studies provide quantified recommendations and range from a One-Stop Efficiency Shop assessment to recommissioning “Business Energy Assessments.”

Energy Smart made 1,583 efficiency recommendations at 269 new site visits in 2023, resulting in 159 efficiency projects that earned utility rebates. 122 of these projects were electric, and 37 were natural gas. 14 of these projects were at Minnesota Chamber of Commerce member businesses.

Economic Impact from these projects resulted in over \$2,122,000 of investment in energy efficiency and \$452,000 earned in utility rebates. Annual cost and carbon emissions savings to businesses are estimated to be over \$489,000 and 2,958 metric tons respectively.

Upgrade Results

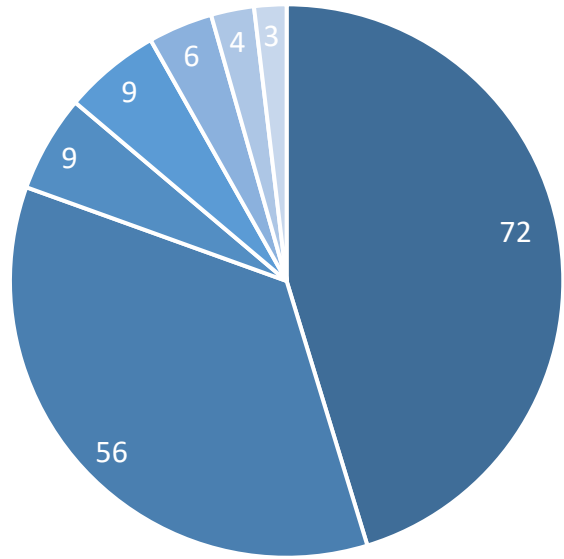
Upgrades by Technology

122
electric upgrades

37
natural gas upgrades

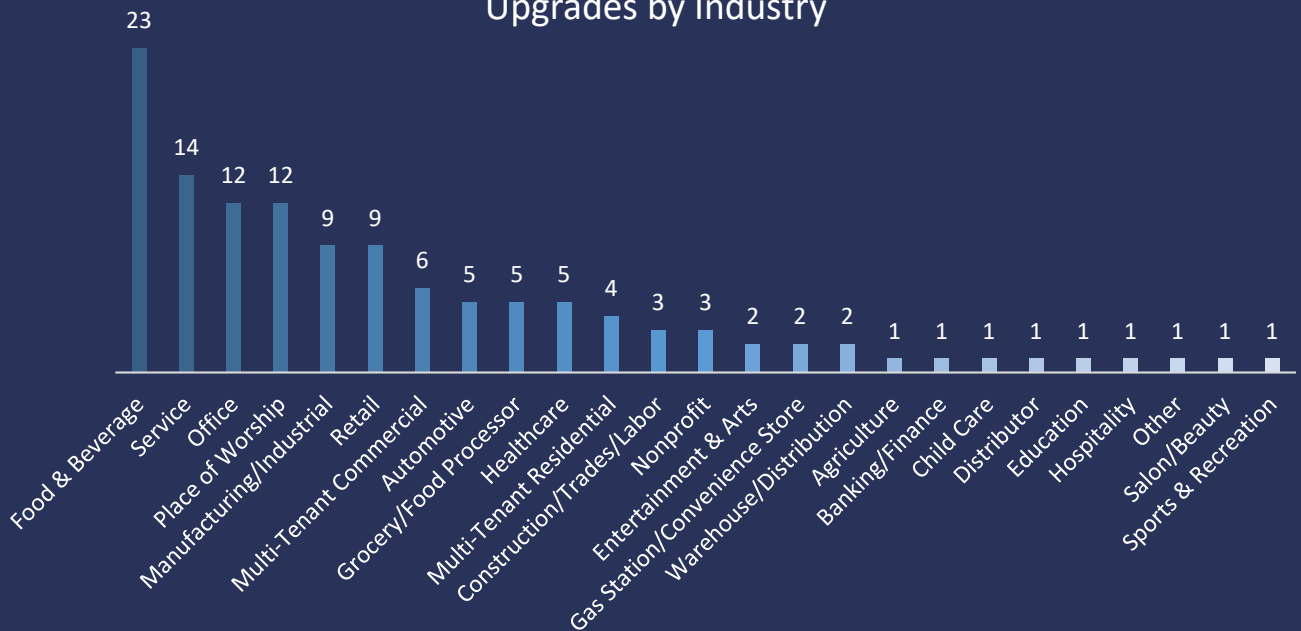
3,183,163
kWh saved

13,864
Dth saved



- Lighting (72)
- HVAC-R (56)
- Foodservice (9)
- Garage door hinges (9)
- Commercial AC Control and Smart Thermostats (6)
- Custom (4)
- In-depth energy audit savings (3)

Upgrades by Industry



Marketing and Outreach



Through on-the-ground promotion via presentations and networking, and increased efforts in the digital space, Energy Smart continues to increase the visibility of our programming and conservation programming offered in Minnesota. Approximately 80 consultations were scheduled through on the ground promotion with collaborators, and 140 inquiries for services were received through online promotion.

2023 Marketing At A Glance:

- 6 bimonthly newsletters to 2,000 contacts each, with a 39% open rate
- 7 presentations to local chambers and business association groups
- 2,600 website visits
- 150 social media posts with 271,000 impressions

CorAzoN

Partnerships and Minneapolis Green Cost Share improve business comfort

At a Lake Street Council business gathering Susan Zdon, owner of CorAzoN, learned about the free energy efficiency services of Energy Smart. Her gift shop had a dangerous rooftop HVAC unit that urgently needed replacement.

For a busy business owner, the assistance of an energy efficiency specialist was invaluable in navigating the entire replacement process.

From ensuring a good contract, to ordering a high-efficiency model and ensuring rebate and grant applications were completed, the partnership worked well in lining up the parts of the puzzle. The combined Minneapolis Green Cost Share and Business Energy Efficiency grant reduced the overall project cost by more than \$5,000 dollars.

The new HVAC unit and free smart thermostat are now operating smoothly and will keep the space affordable and comfortable for years to come.

“Energy Smart was great, from the time we connected through the Lake Street Council everyone was easy to work with and made sure communication was kept open. It was very helpful that Energy Smart was there to ask the right questions, because I am not sure I would have upgraded to high-efficiency otherwise.”

Susan Zdon
Owner, CorAzoN



Highlights:

Combined Rebate and Grant Funding: **\$5,124**

Foodist Films

Foodist Films, a solar powered farm-to-film food agency established in 2016, purchased a 115 year old building in Saint Paul to become their new home in late 2022. Early in the renovation process, Energy Smart connected with Foodist Films through the Xcel Energy Business Solutions Center for an energy consultation.

The energy efficiency specialist found an immediate opportunity to earn utility rebates by submitting documentation from a recent boiler tune-up. As part of the remodel, other pieces of equipment, such as insulation, kitchen appliances, and mini-split heat pumps were also reviewed. With goals to lower their energy footprint, mini-split heat pumps and rooftop solar were a winning combination.

After completing these efficiency projects, Foodist Films is now saving over 3,939 kWh and 113 dth a year. Their efficient heating and cooling system will save them \$1,170 on their annual costs.

"Patrick and the Energy Smart team introduced Foodist to incentivisation programs we never knew existed. They eased the financial pressure of our extensive remodel--allowing us to design a building we are truly proud of."

Steve Ray
Owner, Foodist Films



Highlights:

Total Rebates: **\$2,445**

Annual Cost Savings: **\$1,170**

8.8 metric tons CO₂ reduced annually

CenterPoint Energy's Spring Loaded Garage Door Hinges

In the dynamic landscape of energy efficiency, Energy Smart serves as a connector of knowledge and support for busy business owners and operators. In 2021, CenterPoint released a new rebate offering for garage door hinges with springs that better seal doors against weatherstripping.

Installing these hinges for businesses at no cost shows our commitment to being flexible to achieve tangible results. By completing this simple yet highly effective efficiency upgrade in-house, we take one thing off the to-list for businesses and reduce their heating and cooling demand. Over 175 hinges were installed across 22 garage doors with immediate and often visible results. Rebates are submitted to CenterPoint Energy to capture the energy savings from the projects.

“Energy Smart’s commitment to learning and adopting new technology led to the successful installation of numerous green hinges last year. They made installation simple for the customers, resulting in more installed than expected, which shows their commitment to making energy efficiency accessible and convenient.”

Jack Miller

Senior Energy Efficiency
Program Administrator,
CenterPoint Energy



Highlights:

Garage Door Energy Savings: **307.2 Dth**

16.3 metric tons CO₂ reduced

Conclusion



At the Minnesota Waste Wise Foundation, a 501C3 affiliate of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, we are honored to leverage our expertise to ensure the state’s business community thrives by improving environmental health and economic vitality through sustainability programming. By facilitating sustainability principles at Minnesota-based businesses and organizations, we help foster practices that are good for business and good for the environment.

2023 was a sea-change year as change poured into the energy industry, ramping up programming options and funding opportunities. Our team was busy staying up to speed on new technologies added to utility programs and making professional connections to continue to spur new projects. We are well-positioned going into 2024 to continue to be a resource for businesses that count on us to navigate the energy efficiency landscape.

We were also focused as ever on providing technical assistance to small businesses who need it most. While the number of consultations, energy savings, and cost savings may be slightly lower than achieved in 2022, the number of projects completed increased, indicating our efforts to help more small businesses implement high efficiency technology are paying off.

It has been a pleasure working with a diverse group of businesses and organizations throughout Minnesota this past year, and we look forward to the change that 2024 brings as ECO Act programming begins.

Vicki Stute
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Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
ENERGY SMART

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This report was submitted by the Minnesota Waste Wise Foundation on April 1, 2024.

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PROGRAM FUNDERS

