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## ***Partnering with Community Energy Challenge and Lopez Community Land Trust: Doing Together What We Can't Do Alone***

### **The partners**

**The Opportunity Council (OC)** initiated the Community Energy Challenge (CEC) in 2010. Since then, CEC and its partners have brought their energy efficiency project management expertise together with the Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP), Northwest Clean Air Agency, and utility and local funding to complete energy efficiency upgrades in over 1,100 homes and 250 small businesses in Whatcom, San Juan, Island, and Skagit counties.

**Lopez Community Land Trust (LCLT)** is a local non-profit with the mission of building a diverse, sustainable Lopez Island community through affordable housing, sustainable agriculture, and other dynamic rural development programs. LCLT developed and supports five affordable housing neighborhoods that house 39 families.

In 2014, the CEC partnered with LCLT to upgrade ten affordable housing units developed by LCLT in two neighborhoods.

**Orcas Power and Light Cooperative (OPALCO)** is a nonprofit electric utility that has served the San Juan Islands since 1937. OPALCO offers incentives for energy efficiency upgrades for electrically heated homes.

**San Juan Contractors** completed the energy upgrades.

The **Washington State University Energy Program (WSU)** manages CEEP, which was created in 2009 by the Washington State Legislature.

“The whole experience from the first contact to completion was amazingly excellent. Thank you.”

Karan – homeowner

### **The need**

- San Juan County has the largest housing affordability gap in Washington, with the highest housing costs and the lowest wages. All residents of LCLT neighborhoods must meet low- and moderate-income standards. Many are small business owners or self-employed.
- Lopez Island is remote with limited and often more costly access to energy efficiency services.
- OPALCO rebates were not available for six of the ten homes upgraded by LCLT because their primary heating source was propane (five homes) or wood (one home).
- Two older affordable housing neighborhoods, Common Ground and Coho, were targeted for their energy efficiency needs.

### **An opportunity to build on success**

The OC – with its technical knowledge, experience in home energy assessments, and well-trained and extensively vetted contractor network – was an effective partner for LCLT. OC ensured that the right work was done and the work was done right. In addition, OC's partnerships and ability to leverage and blend multiple funding sources assured that the financial resources needed to do the work were in place. Bundling projects, coordinating schedules, and OC project management helped keep the cost down.

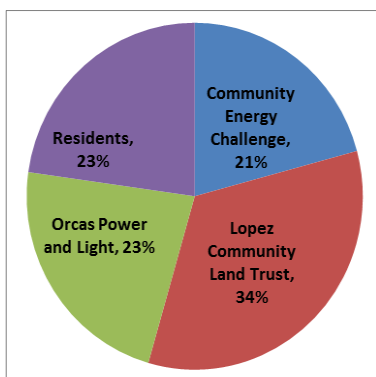
The LCLT community network brought local credibility, raised community awareness of CEC, and worked with residents to identify and prioritize more than a dozen additional homes in need of energy efficiency upgrades.

Using local contractors helps build lasting relationships among the partners and clients. The four participating contractors will continue to receive business from this program from return customers and referrals.

## Creative cost sharing

Almost \$70,000 was invested to complete upgrades in these ten projects:

- LCLT contributed \$2,200 per project for heating system upgrades and covered the \$195 CEC energy assessment fee if that was a significant barrier for the homeowner.
- OC provided matching rebates for heating system upgrades that were not eligible for OPALCO incentives and matched utility rebates if the upgrade was eligible.
- OC also rebated \$95 of the \$195 assessment fee once upgrades were completed.
- The occupants covered the remaining cost of the project to ensure they were invested in the outcome.



LCLT Upgrade Cost Share

## Results

- Ten inefficient heating systems were replaced with ductless heat pumps.
- Three of the projects included air sealing and insulation measures.
- An estimated 39,000 annual kWh were saved and 12.5 tons of carbon were mitigated.
- Four local island contractors received 250 hours of work directly related to the projects.
- The average annual energy bills were reduced by \$200 to \$300 per household.



Home in need of energy efficiency upgrades in a LCLT neighborhood

## How it works: innovations

The CEC innovative approach combined three strategies:

- Partnering with local organizations that serve hard-to-access populations,
- A one-stop shop service delivery model, and
- Bundling service delivery to reduce installation and travel costs in an isolated rural setting.

This approach is being adopted for future partnerships and projects, including an effort being planned with the Lummi Nation.

For more information, please see:

- LCLT – [lopezclt.org/](http://lopezclt.org/)
- CEC – [sustainableconnections.org/energy/energychallenge/](http://sustainableconnections.org/energy/energychallenge/)
- WSU Energy Program – [energy.wsu.edu](http://energy.wsu.edu)

### CEEP partnerships are the key to success

CEEP partners with community-based organizations, utilities, and governments to support energy efficiency upgrades in households and buildings in harder-to-serve markets, including:

- Moderate-income households
- Rental housing
- Manufactured housing
- Rural communities
- Homes heated with oil, propane, and wood
- Small businesses

CEEP improves the quality and affordability of homes and businesses by:

- Helping households and business qualify for existing utility energy efficiency programs
- Providing additional CEEP incentives for upgrades
- Encouraging the use of specially trained contractor workforce and quality standards.