

Case Study: Making Efficient Electrification Upgrades More Accessible



Leveraging Inclusive Utility Investments with the Kansas Weatherization Assistance Program

[How\\$mart®](#) is an Inclusive Utility Investment program of Midwest Energy - a customer-owned electric and gas cooperative in western Kansas. The program successfully collaborates with the Kansas Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) to make efficiency upgrades accessible to more of its members. The collaboration came about through weatherization program staff and Midwest's auditors attending the same trainings and certification programs. The natural synergy between the programs led to a partnership that assists members who are eligible for WAP to obtain more comprehensive energy efficiency upgrades that WAP funds would not cover. They found that the WAP program could fund and implement air sealing, insulation, and duct sealing upgrades, and How\$mart® could fund installations of heating and cooling systems. Over the past twelve years, How\$mart® has successfully referred hundreds of members to the Kansas WAP program and 90 members have been referred by the Kansas WAP to Midwest Energy's program.

In Hays, Kansas, Frida Smith's¹ home was drafty, with a failing air conditioner and furnace. High energy bills forced her to cut back on other necessities. There was no room in her fixed income budget to pay for home improvements. Fortunately, she was able to request a home audit to weatherize her home at no cost through the Department of Energy's WAP run through her local Kansas weatherization provider. Her WAP auditor recommended installing attic insulation, air sealing, a furnace, and an ENERGY STAR certified air conditioner. Based on the savings and cost estimates, the auditor determined that only the attic insulation, air sealing, and furnace could be funded by the weatherization program. Thanks to the relationship between the WAP and Midwest Energy auditors, Frida was able to leverage How\$mart® to fund the installation of a new air conditioner at no upfront cost. The cost of the air conditioner is recovered by the utility through a tariff of about \$20/month on her bill that stays with the premises should she decide to move. The combined upgrades are saving her more than \$53 a month on utility bills. This successful collaboration resulted in a safer, more comfortable, and more efficient home, with dependable and lower cost heating and cooling that frees up almost \$400 annually for other priorities.

Midwest Energy is a customer-owned electric and natural gas cooperative, serving 93,000 customers in 40 counties in central and western Kansas. Their How\$mart® program allows for cost recovery over a period of up to 15 years based on the life of the equipment. Unlike most Inclusive Utility Investment programs using the Pay As You Save® system, How\$mart® allows members to pay off the tariff early, though 80% of members to date have not opted to pay off the tariff when selling their property. For more information about the How\$mart® program, please contact Brian Dreiling at bdreiling@mwenergy.com

For more information on Inclusive Utility Investment visit www.energystar.gov/IUI.
Learn about the ENERGY STAR Home Upgrade at www.energystar.gov/Homeupgrade.



¹ Note: the name in the case study has been changed to protect the member's privacy.