



Empower Me Impact Report 2020

empowerme.ca



Empower Me[®]



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Empower Me® is Canada's only energy conservation and behaviour change program designed for and delivered by members of diverse, multicultural and multilingual communities. The program's delivery model overcomes trust and language barriers by connecting to the community through its own members.

Together with our funding partners, the Empower Me program helps under-prioritized groups access and understand important climate, housing, and energy information – all within a trusted context and in language. Program participants tell us time and again that they do not receive this information any other way.

Empower Me began in BC in 2012 and expanded to Alberta in 2018. The program includes and educates communities usually left out of energy discussions by virtue of language, trust barriers and information access.



2020 Impact in Numbers

	2020	Alberta	BC
 Total Impressions	1,345,863	431,061	914,802
 In-Person Impressions	54,266	44,581	9,685
 Energy Savings (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	9,210	5,593	3,617
 Empowered People	4,424	3,252	1,172
 Program Participants	1,557	733	824
 Workshops	128	64	64

9,210 tonnes energy savings is equivalent to the CO₂ emissions from 1,063 homes' energy use for one year.

Total Impressions: All impressions – in person and online.

In-Person Impressions: Number of times Empower Me and our funders' content is seen in person - at a workshop or event.

Energy Savings: Based on Energy Saving Kits and behaviour change of participants.

Empowered People: Those enabled by Empower Me to change their lifestyle or implement changes in their homes to reduce energy usage and/or take advantage of our funders' programs.

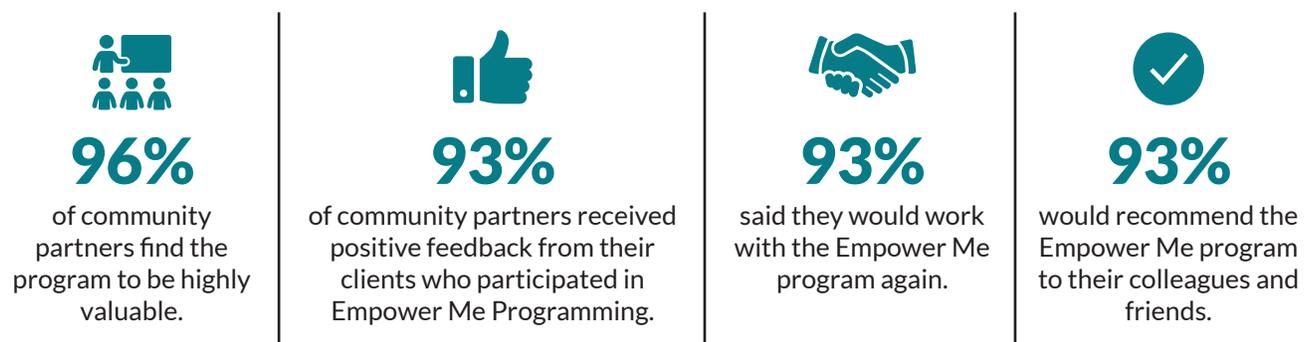
Program Participants: Received 90 minutes of education and an energy saving kit.

Workshops: 90- minute workshop - online or in person.

Community Insights

Empower Me's community partners include immigrant serving organizations, faith-based groups, community associations, cultural groups, settlement workers in schools and more. Empower Me has worked with these partners since our inception in 2012. Last December we asked for their feedback to identify their level of satisfaction and perceived impact of the Empower Me program, and areas where we could improve. 29 BC community partners answered our survey.

The survey demonstrated a high level of community partner satisfaction with Empower Me:



Before Empower Me:



76%

of community partners felt their clients had little to no familiarity with reading their energy bills pre-Empower Me.

Whereas post-Empower Me:



83%

of community partners felt their clients were well-equipped to make meaningful energy-related changes as a result of the Empower Me program.

Recognition

- 2013 Surrey Board of Trade Environment and Business Achievement Award
- 2014 Association of Energy Service Professionals Best Residential Program of the Year for Program Design and Implementation
- 2015 Recognized at the E Source conference as an important approach for reaching multicultural communities
- 2016 Climate & Energy Action Awards honourable mention in the Public Sector Organization & Local Government Collaboration Category
- 2019 Emerald Award for Public Education and Outreach
- 2020 nominated for a ROOPH award (Recognizing Outstanding Organizations and People in Housing)

Looking back at 2020

The global pandemic overshadowed all else in 2020. In Canada and around the world, lives were changed. Gatherings were cancelled, schooling interrupted; community groups and immigrant serving organizations could no longer meet; workplaces closed – temporarily and permanently. The communities Empower Me works with were faster to close down than the general population, as they were witnessing the pandemic in their home countries. As a result, many trusted community supports were unavailable when they were needed most.

The pandemic touched every life, but impacted newcomers, people of colour and immigrant communities disproportionately.

Communities of colour, newcomers to Canada, Indigenous peoples, seniors and those with low incomes were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, with an increased risk of infection from COVID-19 due to the high number of these groups employed on the front lines as essential workers and the tendency for many in these groups to live in multi-generational households¹.

In a year of seclusion and restrictions, the Empower Me program worked quickly and effectively to meet communities' needs.

The Empower Me Pivot

- Empower Me completed a needs analysis with our community partners to inform our creation of an interactive online solution for communities and their clients
- Within five weeks of the World Health Organization declaring a global pandemic, Empower Me transitioned to online interactive workshops
- The program delivered trusted, relevant and much needed information to our communities when others were not able to
- Empower Me expanded our offering of equity-based consulting and community engagement services

The move to online workshops

As provincial restrictions forced cancellation of in-person events, most of Empower Me's 2020 workshops were delivered online. Communities embraced the program's online offerings wholeheartedly. In fact, **Empower Me saw a 200% increase in online workshop participation compared to in-person workshops delivered before the pandemic.**

The Empower Me program, our partners and community members got creative with information delivery. We are proud to have taken part in:

- Telephone workshops for seniors uncomfortable with internet technology
- Workshops where community members teamed up to share technical knowledge – inviting those who needed help to join them for online workshops while maintaining social distance
- Outside workshops in the warmer months
- Edmonton's Filipino Heritage Month Vehicle Train – an in-person, distanced summer event
- Calgary's first-ever Mayor's Virtual Environment Expo
- Virtual newcomer fairs
- Workshops on WeChat and Telegram (social networks used by the Chinese and Farsi-speaking communities)





Looking forward to 2021

Moving forward, the Empower Me program will return to in-person workshops when it is safe to do so, and online offerings will continue to be part of our portfolio. As we continue to leverage the power and possibilities of online offerings, we are keen to enrich our program. The Empower Me program will continue to support and invest in an enhanced online education portal in 2021 and beyond, including online live workshops, pre-recorded materials and an energy education resource library.



Our community members and staff that attended all took some new information away with them and those who received the kits were very pleased. I feel your program is truly empowering and valuable to the community. The presenters were amazing and very personable. All around, we are very impressed with how interactive the presentation was, the support the Mentors and the Empower Me program provides to newcomers of all ages – including parents, seniors and families of all ages and background. This program really does help people understand subjects like their utilities that seemed “hands off” before and provide a safe place to ask questions about energy, safety information and how a home works in Canada. We appreciate the hard work and fully endorse expanding their services to help more people.

Shama Musani, Community Connections - Aspen Family and Community Network Society



Empower Me Program Offerings

- Energy and climate education and support for newcomer and immigrant residents (in person and online)
- Energy and climate education and support for industry: delivering construction, energy and building code information to immigrant and newcomers in the construction industry
- Equity based consulting and community engagement: working with governments and utilities to ensure equitable access to programming across customer segments

Empower Me 2020 Sponsors

Sponsorship of the Empower Me Program provides a proven and effective opportunity to reach new Canadians and multilingual communities through a trusted, local program that delivers energy literacy education, greenhouse gas reductions, energy conservation and cost savings, while supporting local green jobs, raising public awareness of important climate change actions, and enhancing the overall health and well-being of the community.

Empower Me sponsors gain access to feedback collected from customers, enhanced brand awareness, increased community trust, and receive progress reports on energy usage, energy savings, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, customer engagement and overall community outreach and engagement.





Community Testimonials



Over 40% of the population in Metro Vancouver is foreign-born. For many newcomers, energy efficiency is a new concept. Additionally, newcomers are often not familiar with how Canadian homes work and how energy systems connect to their comfort or health. As a result, many newcomer families may experience high energy bills, damp or drafty homes, and even mould, mildew or leaking gas.

We have been working with the Empower Me program for more than five years. In our experience, the program has become a trusted source of energy efficiency and home safety information to members of diverse, multilingual communities. Empower Me has been valuable to our clients and has become a powerful resource in newcomers' successful settlement and integration processes in Canada.

The Energy Mentors at Empower Me provide workshops in an interactive and personable manner; they help our clients understand important messages in their first language about energy efficiency, water usage, recycling, safety, and health and provide an avenue to ask questions about energy, safety and how newcomers can make their homes more energy efficient. We intend to continue partnering with Empower Me to support their important work and to reach underserved and hard to reach communities in British Columbia.

Queenie Choo, Chief Executive Officer, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.



Thank you so much for your presentation and great contribution on September 25th at ASSIST Community Services Centre, we had 41 clients with two staff and two volunteers totally 45 participants. It couldn't be such a great success without your support. We got positive feedback from our clients, they obtained the information they needed, getting to know how to access the information and resources to address their needs, and increased their ability to deal with the basics of everyday. They are all satisfied with this workshop and hope to have more opportunities to learn more.

Cindy Chen, ASSIST Community Services, Edmonton



The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues is pleased to support Empower Me, a program that helps families in diverse communities save energy, save money and increase the comfort and safety of their homes.

The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues serves neighbourhood leagues throughout the City. We believe our leagues will benefit from the Empower Me program through increased energy literacy and awareness. Further, we believe Empower Me will draw our leagues' more diverse members into the fold – encouraging them to become more involved with their community association and its activities.

The Empower Me program aligns with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues' vision and values. We see the program becoming an integral part of Edmonton communities, and look forward to working in partnership with them to achieve our shared goals.

Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues



We are pleased to offer our support to Empower Me. Recent feedback we have collected from our LINC instructors has indicated the education is highly valuable for our newcomer client base, (specifically for clients that are functioning at an intermediate level of English and above). The Empower Me presentations empower our LINC clients to feel more in control of their energy bills and energy use, as well as become more knowledgeable about the Alberta energy landscape. The home safety tips have helped our clients feel more comfortable and safer in their homes, while assisting them in utilizing various cost-saving tips on their energy bills. We appreciate Empower Me's knowledgeable Energy Mentors and staff and enthusiastically endorse the expansion of their services across Alberta. There is tremendous value in the Empower Me program's education as well as our clients' ability to ask questions in their own language and receive important messages in a culturally appropriate way.

Richard LeBlanc, Director, Language and Childcare Program, The Immigrant Education Society, Calgary