

## Attachment 1

### *Empower Me Program Impact Report*

## Empower Me: An Overview

Empower Me is a unique energy conservation and education program, designed by and for diverse, multilingual, and underserved communities. The program offers education and support to create pathways to ensure all residents of New Westminster can access the benefits of climate and energy efficiency programs.

## Empower Me, City of New Westminster & Energy Save New West (ESNW)

Empower Me began its partnership with the City of New Westminster in 2021 to support its newcomer and immigrant residents. Conversations over the last 3 years have uncovered that even with the availability of important climate information and programs, unfortunately, these resources often do not address the unique needs of these new residents. Together with the City of New Westminster, working with its Energy Save New West program, Empower Me created and offered tailored education and support to underserved residents in the City to access and understand energy-focused topics such as energy literacy, energy conservation, information about ESNW, and how to read their utility bills. This partnership ensures equity in the delivery of city programming, educates underserved populations in the City about ESNW, and brings the Empower Me energy efficiency, education, and behaviour change program to these communities - all within a trusted context.

As of November 2023, this partnership has:

- Supported **269 multilingual and multicultural families** in New Westminster, delivering important messages about City initiatives such as City Climate Emergency as well as promoting city rebates, top-ups, and new programs.
- **Distributed 51 energy savings kits** to workshop participants between August 2022 to July 2023.
- Delivered **34 energy literacy and EV 101 workshops** to New Westminster households.
- **Partnered with 14 community organizations** that serve the City's newcomer and immigrant households.
- **Supported residents in 5 immigrant languages**, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese Hokkien, Punjabi and Tagalog
- **Launched 3 new workshops** for City residents to increase education and support for Seniors, renters and residents interested in clean transportation.
- **Hired, trained and employed 2 City residents** to support the program locally.

### Extreme Heat and Cooling:

In August of 2023, Empower Me also supported the City of New Westminster with Extreme Heat Preparedness messaging to community groups in the City. Empower Me team engaged with 10 community groups to share information, answer questions, and offer support to the organizations and their clients in accessing these services. The team also supported residents in navigating the process of accessing air conditioners through the new ECAP offer. Mentors assisted 15 families with language support in filling out the application and understanding the

program. Without Empower Me, these 15 families would not have had the understanding or ability to apply for this offer. This is something the team hears time and again – Empower serves as an important bridge between residents and programs, creating pathways for these households to impactfully and appropriately engage in climate initiatives.

## Community partners

At the start of the partnership, Empower Me began its outreach and work with 2 key organizations: SUCCESS and the Family Services of Greater Vancouver. The team also created Facebook and WeChat groups that would share messaging, in language, to the City’s Chinese residents. Over the last 2 years, the list of community groups continued to grow, and the team is now working with over 14 organizations including:

- SUCCESS
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- New Westminister Public Library
- Purpose Society
- ISSofBC
- Aunt Leah's Place
- MOSAIC
- Welcome Centre (School District 40)
- WINs Committee
- Gurdwara Sahib Sukh Sagar
- KDS Ross Sikh Temple
- WeChat New Westminister Chinese groups
- Yorkville University
- Centre House Association

Through experience, the team has observed that these community organizations exercise careful consideration when choosing partners to offer additional services and opportunities to their clients. This approach is important for maintaining the safe and supportive environments the organizations aim to provide. Empower Me invests time in building trust-based, long-term relationships with these organizations. Empower Me’s commitment to hiring from the community and working with these residents to build the program and its relationships, combined with the program’s community-led approach, allows the team to be welcomed into these organizations as valued partners.

## “We love this program”: Community Feedback

Participants have shared that the support offered through Empower Me has encouraged them to change their energy consumption habits and explore programs that will offer them rebates on their utility bills as well as energy upgrades. Residents have also expressed interest in learning more about:

- Electric Vehicles and EV rebates
- Benefits and installation of weather stripping
- Heat pumps
- Smoke alarms
- Energy efficiency and conservation tips for everyday living

## Measuring Impact

In 2023, Empower Me took an important step forward in augmenting its program evaluation and participant engagement by introducing impact questionnaires as a key component of its in-person workshops. These questionnaires were carefully designed to serve as tools for highlighting the impact that the Empower Me program has on its participants.

Questions were designed to establish a baseline understanding of each participant's energy literacy and learning level before they started working with Empower Me. This initial assessment provided insight into the starting point of each participant, allowing Empower Me to tailor their engagement more effectively. At the end of the workshops, these impact questionnaires tracked their growth and development. Questions captured the knowledge learned, as well as the potential changes in participants' perspectives and behaviours.

Below are the results from the initial surveys:  
n = 16 responses



78%

of participants share this is their first experience learning about energy bills and utilities.



78%

of participants say they wanted more information about their utility providers and not knowing where to get it.



0%

of participants have ever applied for an energy efficiency rebate program.



50%

of participants currently try to save energy in their daily life



44%

of participants plan to apply for any of the programs they learned in the workshop



89%

of participants says they feel like the better understand their energy bill after the workshop



**100%** of participants will take what they learned in the workshop and change their energy use at home

**100%** of participants says the Empower Me workshop is clear and easy to understand

## The Magic of Empower Me

Empower Me addresses the limitations of traditional climate programs, which often impose one-size-fits-all solutions without considering specific community needs. Instead, it adopts a community-centered approach, involving community members in curriculum design and content delivery, creating a dynamic feedback loop. The program offers multilingual education and support delivered by members of the community itself.

Over the past 3 years, Empower Me has successfully implemented this award-winning approach with the city's immigrant and newcomer communities, addressing their unique needs and identifying gaps in existing climate programs. The program's team represents the communities it serves, fostering an open and safe environment for community members to share their experiences and needs. By embracing community leadership and collaboration, Empower Me effectively meets participants where they are, driving positive change in the communities it serves.

Through its community-led approach, Empower Me addresses barriers to promoting equity and easier access to programming for these households:

1. **Language:** all communications are delivered in the appropriate language for our audience. In addition to translation, climate information is culturally contextualized, referencing community norms and artifacts such as home types, clothing, and foods when speaking about cooking. As of 2023, Empower Me offers its programming and support in 9 immigrant languages.
2. **Trust:** 87% of the project team identifies as an immigrant or person of colour. All project activities are delivered by the community itself to address trust barriers.
3. **Education:** the education curriculum addresses the unique needs of immigrants, offering information about how homes in New Westminster "work," how a home uses energy, local utility and energy companies, and how to read a bill.
4. **Ongoing support:** the project offers wrap-around, concierge-style support to households, providing one-on-one assistance to answer questions and participate in climate programming.

Empower Me hires trusted individuals who are from and/or have a deep understanding of the community it serves. This practice ensures that Empower Me can tap into local knowledge, expertise, and cultural competence, which ultimately leads to more effective and impactful programming. As a result of the embedded trust of the team, Empower Me fosters mutually beneficial partnerships with local organizations as community partners. Rather than simply providing services to the community, Empower Me is built on:

1. **Cultural competence:** Hiring multilingual community members who are familiar with the community's culture and language can help bridge communication gaps and facilitate a better understanding of the community's needs and concerns. It also ensures that program contact is designed with cultural context and relatable examples for participants to model.
2. **Language accessibility:** Providing education and outreach programs in multiple languages can help ensure that all members of the community can access and participate in Empower Me's programs. Language barriers are minimized, and everyone has an opportunity to share their stories in their languages of comfort.
3. **Trust and relationship-building:** Hiring multilingual community members to deliver outreach programs builds trust and establishes strong relationships between the community and Empower Me. Community members feel comfortable sharing their feedback and ideas without fear of judgement.
4. **Continuous feedback Loops:** Offering multilingual education and support programs provides a platform for participants to share their feedback directly with Empower Me. This creates a collaborative environment where participants feel empowered to provide constructive feedback, knowing that their input will be heard and considered.

## Empower Me Education and Curricula

Empower Me provides City residents with holistic services, including workshops, educational resources, and one-on-one support. The program is community-led and incorporates a feedback loop that encourages residents to regularly share their insights, ensuring that workshops are continuously improved to meet the evolving needs of the community. In response to residents' requests and feedback, the team has recently introduced two new workshops. Below is an overview of all the workshops available through Empower Me.

Workshop	Details
Energy Savings Workshop with Bill Reading	Energy literacy and conservation education with an emphasis on bill reading, utility programming and energy-saving tips
Safe At Home	Climate change education & discussion, how to be prepared for extreme weather events and top energy-saving tips

<b>Energy Savings Workshop with Bill Reading for Seniors</b> – <b>NEW IN 2023!</b>	Energy literacy and conservation education with an emphasis on bill reading, utility programming and energy-saving tips specifically for Senior residents who wish to age in place.
<b>Energy Savings Workshop with Bill Reading for Renters</b> – <b>NEW IN 2023!</b>	Energy literacy and conservation education with an emphasis on bill reading, utility programming and energy-saving tips specifically for renters who are unable to make permanent changes to their homes.
<b>Rebates 101</b>	A hands-on workshop covering how to use Greener Homes rebates and CleanBC rebates

Empower Me offers all workshops and support services in both online and in-person formats, tailored to the preferences of the community. In response to the community's requests, our workshops are delivered in various levels of English, and languages such as Arabic, Farsi, Hindi, Punjabi, Tagalog, Taiwanese Hokkien, Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Korean, as well as two Indigenous languages (Okanagan and Dene).

Empower Me’s education and language support covers the top four immigrant languages spoken by City residents.