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South Carolinians could get money for energy-saving home improvements under delayed programs

SC is seeking a contractor to oversee the rebate programs. But federal funding to start them is on hold indefinitely.

By: Jessica Holdman

South Carolina lawmakers and utility executives have been grappling with how to meet the state's growing power needs. But the state has been slow to make use of federal programs that aid the energy crunch from another direction — by reducing the amount of power used.

That could change, pending final approval from the U.S. Department of Energy.

South Carolina's Energy Office is expected to award the operator contract for a pair of consumer rebate programs by Jan. 14, according to a state procurement notice, nearly 3½ years after the passage of the Biden administration's hallmark clean energy package that funded them.

How long it will take for the state's \$137 million share to go out after the contractor is chosen remains to be seen. The federal energy agency has

left other states in limbo for months.

What the programs do The Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates program reimburses up to \$14,000 to low- and middle-income residents who install high-efficiency electric appliances in their homes.

Another program is available to homeowners of all income levels. The Home Efficiency Rebates program, dubbed HOMES, pays for home improvements. That could include insulating and sealing homes or installing smart thermostats that automatically reduce heating and cooling use during hours when no one is home.

While any homeowner can apply for HOMES, low-income families are allowed the biggest rebates. Caps range from \$2,000 to \$16,000, depending on applicants' income and their project's estimated energy savings.

Renters may be eligible for either program with written permission from the property owner, according to the state Energy Office.

And residents that meet income eligibility, earning no more than one and a half times the area median income for their county, can apply for funding under both programs. To qualify for appliance rebates in Richland County, for example, a household income can't exceed \$139,000. In Charleston County, the income cap is about \$166,000. In Greenville County, it's about \$146,000.

South Carolina's share of the federal funding package is to be split almost evenly between the two programs, according to a database maintained by Atlas Public Policy, a Washington, D.C., climate policy research firm.

Where the programs stand A handful of states had fully executed contracts and access



Eli Jones, an electric meter technician for Grid One Solutions, a subcontractor for Rhode Island Energy, installs two smart meters on a house in Newport on Friday, Sept. 12, 2025. Pending federal approval, South Carolina plans to roll out its own energy-saving program for homeowners. (Photo by Janine L. Weisman/Rhode Island Current)

to funding before President Joe Biden left office. Five states, including North Carolina and Georgia, as well as Washington, D.C., already have both programs in place, according to the database. Seven other states have at least one of the programs in operation.

North Carolina's programs have been running since Jan. 16, 2025. Georgia started with a pilot program in November 2024 and began full operations in March 2025.

As of Dec. 2, 2025, Georgia had paid out \$1.9 million total to 184 households under the appliance-rebate program. Its

HOMES program had awarded 684 households a total of \$7.1 million, according to the state's online dashboard.

North Carolina is rolling its programs out one county at a time. As of June 13, the state had received more than 4,100 applications.

But the U.S. Department of Energy has slow-walked a review of Biden-era funding, leaving the remaining 36 states and five territories that applied wondering whether their share of funding will actually come.

South Carolina's Energy Office started the application

process near the end of September 2023, which included opting to participate. Nearly 1½ years later, in mid-January 2025, the U.S. Department of Energy gave the initial funding nod, but the state still had to come up with a plan for how to give those funds out and what to focus the spending on.

Five days later, President Donald Trump took office.

On day one, the president signed an executive order freezing clean energy-related

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