How to Improve EV Charging Incentive Programs:

7 Ways for Grant and Rebate Administrators to Streamline Their Processes, Administer More Funds, and Increase the Installation of Electric Vehicle Chargers

Written by: Ben Nussbaum, Partner EVx Advisors

The adoption of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure at multifamily housing (MFH) properties depends heavily on the availability and efficiency of utility- and state-administered incentive programs. These programs are essential to spur adoption, but the effectiveness of these funds is often stifled by the outdated processes and administrative burden built into them. Despite good intentions, many incentive programs are not functioning optimally, resulting in fewer installations than desired, slower buildouts, and the continued rate of EV adoption outpacing reliable and affordable access to on-site charging for MFH residents.

This article provides seven specific recommendations for incentive administrators to increase disbursement efficiency and ensure that more funds reach projects in the field. In many of the recommendations below, EVx has provided examples from specific programs that have adopted effective ways to administer funds, and other program administrators should consider adopting similar practices to increase their rate of fund disbursement.

1. Application Tracking and Visibility

The number one issue that installers and customers experience in the rebate process is a lack of visibility during the application process. Programs should implement centralized online portals that allow applicants, contractors, and administrators to submit, track, and update applications in real time. Without these systems, applicants must rely on emails or phone calls, creating inefficiencies, cost increases, and delays for all parties. A modern portal, similar to a standard customer relationship management (CRM) system with similar pipeline fields, ensures accountability, improves transparency, and streamlines the application lifecycle. Some programs are so outdated that postage stamps and fax machines are still used for parts of the paperwork filing process.

A good example of transparency comes from Con Edison, which has deployed a Salesforce-based (CRM) portal that allows real-time tracking. These systems can speed up the back-and-forth process, particularly around requests or clarification on program documents. Notification features or alerts dramatically speed up the filing process.

As a general rule, these systems should support multi-party logins for administrators, contractors, and customers.

2. Better Ways to Get in Contact with Program Admins and Support Services

Programs should expand applicant support beyond program guides, implications manuals, and generic email addresses by offering structured advisory services. Dedicated support channels improve response times, help applicants interpret program rules, and ultimately drive more completed applications. Support services should be a core part of program design and budgeted for during the program creation phase, not an afterthought.

PSEG Long Island Fleet Advisory, Mass Fleet Advisors, and Cal Fleet Advisors are three examples of free advisor services available directly to end customers to help them make informed decisions and select the right vendors in their electrification journey.

Other ways to expand access with a potentially less costly approach are by imitating what the New Jersey Department of Energy (NJDEP) has done. By contracting a help center to Rutgers University, EVx has noticed quick response times on application support, and the rapid rate of fund disbursement across their EV charging incentive programs shows that support leads to more applications awarded.

Additionally, calendar links or open office hours are two ways to increase communication between potential applicants and program admins. Without these support services, it is common to see program administrators get back to applications in 30 days or longer, with some programs never answering at all. 24-48 hours should be the maximum allowable time for an application to get in contact with a live person.

3. Clear, Non-Ambiguous Definitions

Eligibility requirements should be written with clarity so that applicants can pre-qualify themselves without lengthy case-by-case reviews. Ambiguity discourages applications, creates unnecessary back-and-forth, and slows down approvals. Programs must define terms like "affordable housing" or "low-income" with explicit, consistent criteria to minimize confusion.

A good example of a clear definition is typically regarding 'Disadvantaged Communities' (DACs). Often, bonuses are issued for DAC-qualifying sites, and applicants can use public mapping tools to qualify themselves without the need for any manual review by program admins.

Bad examples include definitions specific to "affordable housing". Certain programs will allow applications to submit tax documents or other income reports on their tenants, creating a back-and-forth negotiation process between the applicant's accounting department and these applicable programs. This process all creates unfairness, as MFH property owners who have access to professional services, such as those from EVx, are far more likely to be approved for funding during a negotiation process with a utility or state-funded incentive administrator.

4. Modernizing Networking Requirements

Legacy definitions of networked chargers exclude newer technologies that can still provide the required usage data. Programs should broaden their criteria to include chargers using alternative methods to transmit and record data. This ensures that innovative solutions are not excluded and that applicants can adopt the latest, most reliable technologies.

Multiple EV charging providers have been ineligible for many programs because they are using token systems or other new technologies to report on usage data. In certain situations, these charging solutions are critical for subterranean and other garage spaces that have limited or no internet access without adding considerable networking costs through cellular repeaters, WiFi boosters, or Ethernet wires.

EVx advises all admin groups to accept or at least consider newer technologies that can satisfy the same or similar reporting and compliance standards. Many of these innovative networking technologies can lower costs and increase uptime for EV-driving residents. Incentive program designers (utility transportation electrification team leadership, state department leads, and contracted administrators) must evaluate their core program objectives when defining terms in a way that categorically excludes solutions. If programs were open to modernizing their definitions, that should allow program design to keep pace with evolving market technologies.

5. Adopting Standardized Eligible Charger Lists

Grant and utility administrators should coordinate and standardize their approved vendor lists nationally. With over 1000 active programs in the United States, many programs have their own unique registration processes and approved vendor lists, creating a massive administrative burden for EV charging manufacturers looking to make their product lineup accessible to MFH owners.

To streamline this process, EVx recommends that incentive program administrators consider using a standardized list, such as that from ERPI, rather than creating their own unique standards for accepting products into their programs. With so many active incentive programs, the administrative burden placed on charging vendors to get listed on multiple programs favors larger existing companies that have the capital and time to navigate these processes, whereas new companies typically start in smaller urban areas before expanding across the nation. This administrative burden is exacerbated by the approved vendor lists requiring hyper-specific charger naming conventions, such as each SKU or model year being continuously updated. If most or all programs were to adopt a standardized eligible charger list, much of this issue would be solved.

Taken cumulatively, the gatekeeping effect of these approved vendor lists slows a company's ability to grow, deliver products across multiple states, and can delay a nationwide rollout by over 12 months, ultimately harming the EV-driving residents most in need of these charging solutions.

6. Publishing Up-to-Date Data on Available Funding

Programs should provide applicants with timely, transparent updates on how much funding remains available. Applicants frequently submit applications to programs that are already oversubscribed, wasting both their own resources and program administrator time. Publishing real-time, weekly, or at least monthly updates on reserved and disbursed funds would reduce inefficiency and improve applicant trust.

Good examples include the Joint Utilities of New York Make-Ready program, which publishes a total funding breakdown updated monthly. EVx has seen many applications apply for rebate funding on programs that are long oversubscribed. This creates an administrative waste, but also delays equipment deployments and thus slows the adoption of EVs at MFH properties.

Furthermore, programs should act urgently to update their websites or resources when funding is no longer available. It is not uncommon to see programs advertising rebate money to MFH owners when these programs have been closed for a year or longer. As general advice, MFH owners and managers should check with program admins or groups like EVx before moving forward with any applications.

7. More Lenient Requirements on Pre-Purchasing Equipment

Programs should allow flexibility for applicants who purchase equipment in advance. It is common for large MFH owners to purchase equipment in bulk to access volume discounts. With the current requirements in place, many owners are forced to order equipment on a per-site basis, increasing their project costs, which are almost always passed through to individual residents in the form of per-kWh markups and parking fee increases.

A more lenient approach should better understand and reflect the procurement strategies of MFH owners managing multiple sites, which can ultimately reduce total project costs, reduce delays, and get more parking spaces electrified.

EVx estimates that well over 50% of all EV charger incentive programs have strict pre-purchasing disqualifications.

Conclusion

Adopting these seven measures will make EV charging incentive programs more transparent, more accessible, and more effective. By modernizing definitions, simplifying requirements, and leveraging technology, administrators can disburse more funds, reduce barriers for applicants, and accelerate EV charger deployment.

Written by Ben Nussbaum, Partner at ReForm by EVx

About ReForm by EVx Advisors

ReForm by EVx Advisors is the leading provider of rebate and grant support services for EV charging companies nationwide. To date, ReForm has secured over $20 million in rebates on behalf of clients, offering expertise in navigating utility and state-level incentive programs. With proven processes and deep industry knowledge, ReForm ensures that applicants maximize available funding and accelerate charger installations. Learn more at www.startreform.com.

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