



ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

RESTORATION URBAN MINISTRIES LIGHTS UP LIVES - AND NEW LEDS

AMEREN ILLINOIS & ILBCC PARTNER TO BRING ZERO-COST LIGHTING TO NONPROFIT



Food for the hungry. Shelter for the homeless. Faith for the forgotten. It's all in a day's work at Restoration Urban Ministries in Champaign. Since its humble beginnings serving food from the back of a truck, the ministry founded by Reverend Ervin T. Williams in 1993 has grown to include a church, transitional housing, addiction recovery programs, and a food and clothing pantry that serves thousands every year.

Subsisting solely on private donations, many projects and priorities compete for the nonprofit's limited budget dollars. Williams knew that a lighting upgrade could help lower the ministry's operating and maintenance costs — and that Ameren Illinois could help.

"Ameren Illinois is committed to bringing the benefits of energy efficiency to every customer," says Kristol Simms, Director of Energy Efficiency, Strategy & Innovation, Ameren Illinois. "Our Small Business Direct Install (SBDI) Initiative offers eligible small business, nonprofit, and public sector customers an increased level of incentives over standard business incentives, as well as, a free, no-obligation assessment of their facility."

Working with an Ameren Illinois Program Ally, Restoration Urban Ministries completed an assessment in early 2020. Unfortunately, even with utility incentives available at the time, the nonprofit could not move forward with the lighting upgrades.

"New lighting was definitely something we desired to do. But we just didn't have the funds, so we had to table the project," says Reverend Williams. "Every penny in our budget is usually spoken for."

Zero-Cost Lighting Upgrades?

Recognizing that energy efficiency projects often get placed on the back burner due to budget constraints, Ameren Illinois launched the SBDI Co-Pay Assistance Grant in 2020 to provide additional financial help to underserved small business and nonprofit customers.

The Co-Pay Assistance Grant was designed to cover the portion of project costs



Let There Be (LED) Light

Lighting accounts for **20-50%** percent of the average organization's electricity consumption. That means that even simple lighting improvements can lead to significant savings.

ENERGY STAR® qualified LED lighting uses at least **80%** less energy than incandescent lighting, which cuts operating costs. And because it lasts 35 to 50 times longer than incandescent lighting — and up to five times longer than fluorescent lighting — you'll save on maintenance costs, too. Ameren Illinois offers cash incentives for a variety of lighting projects.

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Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program Small Business Initiative



\$12,961,000

incentives distributed



2,550

projects completed

33%

of projects completed at no cost to the customer



12 months average time for simple return on investment when applicable



145

trained Program Allies

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typically paid by the customer after incentives are applied — creating an opportunity for the customer to complete major lighting upgrades at zero cost. Launched at the height of the COVID-19 crisis, the SBDI Co-Pay Assistance Grant offered meaningful assistance to help customers make upgrades that would improve comfort, manage usage, and reduce costs.

The grant targeted customers that received an assessment in 2020, but did not move forward with upgrades due to financial constraints. To make sure eligible customers were aware of this rare opportunity, Ameren Illinois partnered with the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce (ILBCC) and other community-based organizations for help reaching additional underserved customers.

The Power of Partnership

“Across our territory, Ameren Illinois partners with community-based organizations like the ILBCC to engage customers in energy efficiency,” says Simms. “These trusted and established organizations help bridge the gap between underserved customers and incentives available to them.”

Along with identifying members who would most benefit from the SBDI Co-Pay Assistance Grant, the ILBCC conducted energy efficiency education and outreach with the small business and nonprofit community it serves. In addition to heavy use of social media, Chamber members made personal phone calls and arranged meetings to ensure that this opportunity did not go unnoticed.

“Ameren Illinois has great energy efficiency programs, but some customers may not take advantage of them because they have so many competing priorities. A random flyer simply may not get their attention,” says Will Kyles, Regional Vice President for the ILBCC. “We were able to leverage our relationships with members to help organizations like Restoration Urban Ministries get connected to these cash incentives.”

Providing Comfort at Less Cost

Thanks to the ILBCC’s outreach efforts, Restoration Urban Ministries received more than \$10,000 in incentives and grant funds from Ameren Illinois. Those funds covered 100 percent of the cost to upgrade to state-of-the-art LED lighting in the administrative offices and the sanctuary.

In addition to these up-front savings, the new lighting will save the Champaign nonprofit more than \$3,500 every year. Every dollar saved is a dollar that can be used to serve the underserved.

“The new lighting has already made a noticeable difference as far as the power bill goes. I didn’t realize how much brighter it would make the place,” notes Reverend Williams. “Our buildings are old and require a lot of upkeep. Any money we save makes a major difference.”

The ILBCC plans to continue making a difference as well.

“We have a great partnership with Ameren Illinois. It’s important to us, and it’s been a blessing to our members,” says Kyles. “The Chamber wants to see members succeed, and we plan to continue finding opportunities for nonprofits and small businesses around Central Illinois to save.”

With help from Ameren Illinois and the ILBCC, Restoration Urban Ministries shows that even a saving grace in the community can save energy, too.

“The new lighting has already made a noticeable difference as far as the power bill goes. Any money we save on energy makes a major difference.”

— Rev. Ervin Williams,
Restoration Urban Ministries