

Scaling in the Rural SE: Upgrades with SOUL

Delivering energy upgrades that improve housing equity

Groundswell, in collaboration with West GA Star and EUtility, will develop the plan and supporting partnerships needed to expand and scale our Save On Utilities Long-Term Program (SOUL), which delivers energy efficiency upgrades and improves housing equity in disadvantaged, rural areas.

Key Challenges:

- Extensive housing repairs required prior to energy efficiency upgrades
- Small, under-resourced rural and local municipal utilities with limited program implementation capacity

Strategy

- Expand on SOUL in Troup County, replicating in West GA and East AL by aggregating program financing across multiple small rural utilities
- Stack and focus grant programs on repair and maintenance to enable subsequent energy upgrades
- Maximize access and savings by pairing grant and rebate-funded upgrades with the PAYS model as a sustainable, revolving fund model to enable energy upgrades with strong and verifiable savings
- Implement community Advisory Councils to keep people at the center of SOUL

Innovations:

- Stacking multiple sources of energy upgrade and home repair funding/financing sources to meet holistic needs of residents
- Aggregating program financing and implementation across multiple small municipal and rural utilities serving geographic areas with similar characteristics

Residential Energy Upgrades

- Weatherization
- High efficiency electric heating and cooling
- Electric hot water heaters
- Potential for solar + storage

Benefits

- Measurable household energy bill reductions
- Improved home comfort & resident wellbeing
- Preservation of affordable and multi-generational housing
- Local jobs



The Strong Family (SOUL participants) & Leon Childs (Groundswell)



Earnest Pickett (West GA Star) performing home assessment