Zero Emission Vehicle Incentive Program Implementation Plan

Final Report

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SANDAG

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Executive Summary

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) partnered with the County of San Diego on a Caltrans planning grant to develop a regional zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) incentive program (ZEVIP). The program would promote a regional shift to electric vehicles (EVs), lowering greenhouse gases (GHG) and enhancing air quality. SANDAG's 2021 Regional Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy called for the establishment of a ZEVIP to promote ZEV adoption, especially in equity-focused communities. The ZEVIP Implementation Plan (hereby referred to as "the Plan") provides recommendations for program implementation to enable SANDAG to meet its program priorities of reducing GHGs and helping low-income residents to buy or lease, new or used, light-duty EVs. The program is expected to launch in fiscal year 2026, once program funding is secured.

The Plan follows the ZEVIP Strategy[1], which provided recommendations on program design, including incentive-setting, eligibility criteria, and rebate redemption approaches. The Plan focuses on the implementation of those recommended strategies and includes revisions to the Strategy based on stakeholder feedback collected since the publication of the Strategy.

To develop this implementation roadmap, the project consultant team from Arcadis and ICF (hereby referred to as "project team") built upon an analysis of the existing conditions in the San Diego region, related federal, state, and local incentive programs, and input on implementation practices from relevant industry and community stakeholders.

The project team's key recommendations for ZEVIP's implementation, discussed in the Plan, include practices for budget management, website and application design, program administrator solicitation, and collaboration and outreach. These recommendations are summarized below:

- A redemption model entailing pre-approval for eligibility to avail a point-of-sale rebate will help streamline transactions, reduce fraud risk, and lower the administrative burden associated with handling ineligible or incomplete applications for participating dealers. This will result in a smoother experience for both customers and dealers.
- Establishing a procedure to track program participation, predict future involvement, and adapt eligibility criteria for vehicles and participants is critical. Additionally, maintaining contingency funds will help manage any budgetary discrepancies.
- A dedicated user-friendly program website with mobile responsiveness, personalized recommendation assessments, and bilingual support features will enhance accessibility and overall applicant experience.
- Customer reviews and in-person experience like test drives influence low- and middle-income buyers more than traditional ads, and, therefore, should be included in marketing efforts.
- Dealer involvement is essential to the effective delivery of a point-of-sale rebate program, particularly as dealers largely serve as the first point-of-contact for program participants. As the program administrator, establishing robust relationships with participating dealers and providing ongoing technical support can help transform dealers into reliable program advocates.
- Transportation network companies offer a large consumer base due to their fleet electrification goals under the Clean Miles Standard (CMS), making them valuable partners for collaborative outreach efforts.

[1] Available at: https://www.sandag.org/-/media/SANDAG/Documents/PDF/projects-and-programs/innovative-mobility/clean-transportation/incentive-programs/zev-incentive-program-strategy-report-2024-08-23.pdf

Background

This Plan expands upon the ZEVIP Strategy, converting it into executable steps for the forthcoming ZEVIP rollout. The Strategy included a thorough assessment of ZEVIP's target market and its purchasing behaviors. This document outlines how best to engage the target market, focusing on ensuring the program is accessible and effectively delivered. Stakeholder feedback was pivotal in shaping this Plan, as it allowed the team to understand the practical challenges of past and current incentive programs; this has resulted in a roadmap that allocates resources efficiently, reaches target consumers more effectively, fosters collaboration with industry players, and maximizes program participation. For example, the ZEVIP Strategy identified two primary approaches for rebate redemption and application processing on both the consumer and dealer ends. These methods have been improved with input from both groups to strategically distribute administrative burdens and financial risks. Stakeholder feedback highlighted key areas of improvement and allowed for a more responsive and efficient redemption strategy.

Several critical industry stakeholders, including dealer association and transportation network companies (TNCs), were engaged to better understand the challenges and best practices for implementing the ZEVIP. Dealer associations offered localized insights into buying and leasing trends and key lessons learned from administering state and federal incentive programs. This allowed the project team to refine its proposed approach to rebate processing. Under the revised redemption model, dealers are positioned as important implementation partners, given their ability to shape customer behavior and enable effective program delivery. On the other hand, TNCs provided information about their own fleet electrification plans and highlighted opportunities for collaborative outreach and incentive-stacking between ZEVIP and their own programs. Partnering with TNCs could help SANDAG access a broader base of potential applicants, and lend credibility to its efforts, considering the significant market presence TNCs have in the San Diego region.

Previous engagements with community-based organizations (CBOs) also contributed valuable insights into implementation planning. For example, in-person or offline events may be more effective in reaching community members than online advertisements. Additionally, a simple and straightforward application process is critical to attract more customers. This information helped ensure the development of implementation strategies that are practical, aligned with consumers' preferences, and reflective of the needs and limitations of underserved populations. A complete list of stakeholders whose perspectives informed the Plan is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Stakeholders Interviewed for Implementation Planning

Stakeholder	Description
New Car Dealers Association San Diego County (NCDA)	NCDA[2] represents 115 car dealerships that sell both new and used or pre-owned vehicles. Additionally, NCDA provides training, networking, and compliance support while also serving as an advocate for its members on regulatory and economic issues.
Independent Automobile Dealers Association of California (IADAC)	IADAC[3] represents used car dealerships across California, providing members with industry resources, sales training, and guidance on regulatory compliance.
Carvana	Carvana[4] is an online-only used car retailer. Customers can buy, sell, and trade-in vehicles on Carvana's

[2] New Car Dealers Association, https://www.ncda.com/
[3] Independent Automobile Dealers Association of California (IADAC), https://www.iadac.org/
[4] Carvana, https://www.carvana.com/

Stakeholder	Description
	platform. Carvana also offers financing options with minimal credit impact to credit challenged customers.
Lyft	Lyft[5] is a transportation network company that offers on-demand ridesharing and vehicle rentals, among other services. The company has ambitious fleet electrification goals and offers financing support to interested drivers.
United Taxi Workers of San Diego (UTWSD)	UTWSD[6] is an advocacy organization representing taxi drivers and other rideshare workers, many of whom are from low-income and immigrant communities. It supports workers' rights on issues like fair wages and provides drivers with industry training, legal assistance, and other resources. UTWSD had previously supported taxi drivers transition from gas to hybrid vehicles.

[5] Lyft, https://www.lyft.com/
[6] United Taxi Workers of San Diego (UTWSD), https://utwsd.org/

Budget and Fiscal Management

This section explores key practices for budget and fiscal management of the incentive funds and program administration, including recommended forecasting tools and trends for effective budget development; standard program management procedures followed by other incentive program administrators; and updates to the rebate administration model recommended in the ZEVIP Strategy.

Forecasting Tools and Trends

To enable ZEVIP's long-term financial sustainability, using robust forecasting methods as part of the budget development process is recommended. Estimating program demand early on can allow for accurate budgeting, thereby reducing the risk of cost overruns and underruns. As such, the project team explored leveraging quantitative forecasting tools, along with an understanding of emerging market trends, to effectively forecast program demand.

Forecasting Tools

Statistical and quantitative forecasting models can be employed to estimate future demand for the ZEVIP by analyzing data from previous program participants and current market conditions. For instance, the Center for Sustainable Energy (CSE) used Prophet to project funding demand for the California Clean Vehicle Rebate Project (CVRP). Prophet is an open-source modeling software designed by the Facebook team at Meta to reliably forecast time-series data for future decision-making.[7] Using past CVRP registration data, Prophet projected that the total rebates required over the next three years of the program from May 2021 to June 2024 could range between 130,000 and 340,000.[8] This equates to a total funding demand of approximately $356 million to $911 million. According to CSE's program report published in June 2024, the actual number of rebates administered during the projected period totaled 168,000 and amounted to $532 million, both values within the range predicted by Prophet.[9] This demonstrates the tool's effectiveness, and the utility of such forecasting tools for adequately estimating future budgetary needs.

Several factors make Prophet a viable option for ZEVIP participation forecasting: (1) It is designed to be used by both experts and non-experts, automating most operations for the user, including detecting changes in trends; (2) It allows users to add qualitative context that quantitative data alone might not be able to capture, such as changes in regulation that impact rebate or vehicle availability, which in turn allows for more comprehensive and accurate forecasting; (3) The tool is shown to perform well when working on sparse and noisy data, and is robust when dealing with missing data, changing trends, and outliers, which could make it particularly useful for ZEVIP given its smaller scale compared to CVRP.[10] To maximize the capabilities of quantitative tools like Prophet, previous program data such as participants from past years and regional market conditions will be needed as input. Due to the absence of relevant data at the start of the program, it is recommended that Prophet be prioritized for future use, for instance, after three or more years' worth of data becomes available.

An alternative method to estimate program participation, particularly at the start of the program, is to utilize historical data from other comparable programs. For instance, Energy Solutions used historical CVRP data to estimate participation for the Washington Electric Vehicle Instant Rebates program.[11] Note that it is unclear which forecasting tool was used to conduct this analysis. Though Washington's is a point-of-sale rebate whereas CVRP was a post-sale rebate, using CVRP data allowed for a statewide program point of

[7] https://facebook.github.io/prophet/
[8] https://cleanvehiclerebate.org/en/content/preliminary-2021%E2%80%932023-cvrp-projections-update-4
[9] Center for Sustainable Energy (2024). California Air Resources Board Clean Vehicle Rebate Project, Rebate Statistics. Data last updated 6/5/2024. Retrieved 10/31/2024 from https://cleanvehiclerebate.org/eng/rebate-statistics
[10] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0360544223010319
[11] Washington EV Phase 1 Program Design Recommendations Report. Energy Solutions, 2024.

comparison, after which minor adjustments were made to account for changing market conditions and program specific criteria.

EV Market Trends

EV leasing is gaining popularity and is expected to significantly increase the number of affordable EVs available for secondhand purchase. This trend was a key factor in estimating participation rates for the Washington EV Incentive Program and is equally important to consider when forecasting for ZEVIP. Research suggests that leasing has surpassed financing as the preferred option for EVs due to their high upfront cost. In 2024, nearly half of all new EVs recorded nationally in the second quarter were leased, up from about a third in the previous year.[12] Many dealerships and manufacturers now offer leases for around $300 or less per month, typically lasting up to three years. For instance, Nissan Leaf's 2025 Leaf SV Plus model is available for $279 per month for 36 months, whereas several Hyundai and Kia models can be leased for under $200.[13,14] Kearny Mesa Ford, a Ford dealership, leases 2024 Ford Lightening and Mach-E models in San Diego for $339 per month for 36 months.[15] Once an EV lease expires, the vehicle is turned over to the secondhand market in most cases.[16] Given that EVs depreciate faster (31.8%) than conventional vehicles (3.6%) due to battery degradation concerns and incentives lowering the original purchase price, their resale value is often considerably lower than what they may actually be worth.[17] This is especially true for newer EV models, given how rapidly battery technology, and thus battery life, are improving. Based on a study of 20,000 vehicles by Recurrent, under 1% of Model Year (MY) 2016 or newer vehicles needed battery replacement compared to 13% for MY 2015 or older.[18] Across all years and models, only 2.5% of vehicles needed battery replacement outside of big recalls by manufacturers. Additionally, a growing number of warranties or certifications available for used vehicles, as reported by the NCDA, indicates that used EVs are becoming an increasingly reliable alternative to new EVs. As such, it is recommended that ongoing and expected developments in the used EV market be considered in the forecasting process.

Budget Management Practices

Based on lessons from other EV incentive programs regarding budget management, the following best practices are recommended:

- Regular budget tracking and reporting are critical to ensure that financial resources are aligned with program needs. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) mandates quarterly reporting on information regarding project administration and consumer surveys for its programs, CVRP and Clean Cars for All (CC4A) San Diego, enabling early detection of budget changes on both the administration and consumer sides.[19] This information is combined with stakeholder feedback and analysis of the state of the light duty vehicle market to determine future funding needs. The reporting templates for CVRP and CC4A (along with GHG quantification methodologies and tools) are available on CARB's website and could be leveraged to build a template for ZEVIP reporting.[20]
- Adjusting eligibility criteria in cases of budget overruns or unspent funds can help align spending with current demand. When CC4A faced a surplus of funds in fiscal year (FY) 2020-2021 that had

[12] https://www.kbb.com/car-news/report-almost-half-of-electric-cars-are-leased/
[13] https://www.nissanusa.com/vehicles/electric-cars/leaf/deals-incentives-offers.html?dcp=psr.5870000 8712787719&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiArva5BhBiEiwA-oTnXaa8f6QrnYruP8NPeVHxnlu75-JmDTCn5McNicMXQqwGEg4bHI5_zxoCWbkQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds
[14] https://www.carfax.com/blog/electric-car-lease-deals
[15] https://www.kearnymesaford.com/new-vehicles/new-ev-specials/
[16] https://electrek.co/2024/09/13/evs-lease-under-300-month-september-updated/
[17] https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/southern-california/transportation/2024/03/11/used-evs-depreciate-10x-faster-than-gas-powered-cars#:~:text=Used%20electric%20vehicles%20are%20depreciating,with%20a%203.6%25%20decline%20overall.
[18] https://www.recurrentauto.com/research/how-long-do-ev-batteries-last
[19] https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/proposed_fy2020-21_fundingplan.pdf
[20] https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/cci-quantification-benefits-and-reporting-materials

carried over from the previous fiscal year, CARB proposed adjustments to income criteria and the definition of household used for low-income applicants. This broughtCC4A in line with other programs under CARB's mandate, enabling incentive-stacking and a clearer understanding of the program among the target population.[19] Conversely, in cases of budget overruns, eligibility was tightened by limiting the range of eligible plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs), reducing the manufacturer's suggested retail price cap for cars, and adjusting income caps (e.g., from 400% to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level [FPL]), among other changes.[21]

- Reallocating excess funds to other project areas that could benefit from additional support can help with meeting statutory expenditure deadlines. Given that CC4A is administered through multiple districts, CARB conducts periodic evaluations to determine consumer demand in each district, and allocates or reallocates funds accordingly.[19] In the case of ZEVIP, funds could be directed to other project components, such as outreach and marketing, or bringing on additional application processing specialists for faster processing times if the budget allows.
- Continuous monitoring of market data is crucial for adapting to shifts in consumer demand, vehicle costs, and manufacturing trends. CARB's FY 2021-2022 surplus, mentioned above, highlights the impact of disruptive events like economic crises, new EV model releases, or supply chain delays on demand. Such events require real-time adjustments to funding to keep a rebate program responsive and effective.[22]
- Contingency provisions provide the flexibility needed to address unforeseen circumstances and changing program needs. By establishing a reserve of funds, the program can quickly respond to unexpected challenges, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively. CARB funding allocations often include a fiscal reserve to serve as a buffer against "revenue uncertainty" when such uncertainty is expected. Future evaluations of actual revenue and project needs determine how this reserve is ultimately used.[19]

Redemption Model Adjustments

The ZEVIP Strategy outlined two approaches for point-of-sale rebate applications. Approach A entailed an automatic price deduction at an eligible dealership, whereby applicants could directly go to a participating dealer with their eligibility documents and purchase a vehicle at the discounted rebate price. Under this approach, the burden to verify applicant eligibility falls on the dealer, and dealer reimbursement for the rebated amount depends on the post-sale eligibility verification result. Approach B entailed applying for a discount before going in to buy or lease a car, whereby potential buyers would use an online platform to submit an incentive application and receive approval on the transaction beforehand. This approach places both responsibility and uncertainty on the consumer, who needs to select a vehicle or dealership beforehand, requiring considerable planning time and offering no assurance that the chosen model will be available on the day of purchase.

Following stakeholder engagement with both dealers and residents (i.e., potential customers), a third approach (hereby referred to as "Approach C") is recommended. Approach C follows the overall structure of Approach B, adopting only certain elements of Approach A. Specifically, customers will be expected to verify their eligibility before visiting the dealership but are not expected to choose a vehicle model in advance. In stakeholder discussions, dealers highlighted that post-sale eligibility verification, as suggested under Approach A, posed a liability and added burden when fraudulent claims are filed, or rebate redemption is delayed, and would discourage dealers' participation. On the flip side, buyers expressed concerns about having to choose a vehicle before visiting a dealership, as required in Approach B, finding

[21] https://cleanvehiclerebate.org/en/program-reports
[22] https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/fy21-22_fundingplan.pdf

the experience discouraging. Thus, Approach C offers a middle ground meeting both dealer and customer needs and allowing for a more balanced distribution of the responsibilities associated with applying for and availing the rebate. Additionally, this approach entails a more refined process for dealer reimbursement to encourage their participation in ZEVIP. Approach C has demonstrated considerable effectiveness, as shown by its application in the Washington Electric Vehicle Instant Rebates program. [11]

Under Approach C, potential customers are required to use an online platform to submit an incentive application before going in to purchase a vehicle. During the application process, the applicant must provide necessary documentation, such as household size and income. A pre-qualification feature could be integrated into the ZEVIP website to allow applicants to check their eligibility before submitting their application. Additionally, customer support resources available on the website, including a hotline and email address for quick support, should be highlighted throughout the application to allow applicants ready access to these resources. The program administrator application-processing specialist team will then conduct a verification process to ensure that applicant eligibility criteria are met, followed by a quality assurance check of 20% of randomly selected applications. During periods of higher-than-average application volume, quality assurance checks can be reduced to 10-15% of total applications. Upon confirmation, the applicant will receive proof of approval (e.g., approval letter with an application number) or a voucher. The applicant will be required to present this proof at the point-of-sale to an eligible dealer who will review and confirm the approved application.

On the dealers' end, participating dealers must register with the program administrator using a regional online registration system, like the IRS Energy Credits Online website.[23] This platform will serve as the central hub for managing incentive transactions. Once an applicant has provided the dealer with proof of their eligibility and selected a vehicle, the dealer can choose to lower the cost of the vehicle by the corresponding incentive amount at the point of sale. Alternatively, dealers may offer consumers a cash equivalent of the incentive, providing flexibility in how the incentive is utilized. In either scenario, dealers will be reimbursed for incentive money, providing them with the discretion to pass the savings directly to the consumer or adjust the vehicle's price accordingly.

Once the sale is complete, the dealer is required to report it to the program administrator through an online system. Upon approval and verification of the reported sale, the administrator will promptly issue an Automated Clearing House (ACH) payment to the dealer for the corresponding incentive amount. A strict timeframe of 48-72 hours is recommended for delivering the reimbursement to the dealer. If issues arise related to the verification or reimbursement process, a notice should be sent to the dealer informing them about the revised timeframe for the approval process and expected reimbursement delivery. In such cases, the program administrator should work closely with the dealer where possible to resolve issues, keeping dealers informed in real-time of any developments.

Approach C provides all the benefits associated with Approach B, as outlined in the ZEVIP Strategy, while also ensuring buyers have access to the support they need. Given that dealers are often more adept at understanding and addressing customer needs and concerns to complete a sale, this approach is likely to result in higher adoption rates.[11] A summarized overview of this approach and the exact responsibilities of each party involved in the process is provided in Table 2. In terms of drawbacks and risks, this approach would increase dealer involvement in customer purchases and could lead to dissatisfied customers. However, the training program for dealers outlined in the Plan's Collaboration and Outreach section will help to ensure that dealers are equipped to take on customer questions and concerns and provide adequate support.

[23] https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/register-your-dealership-to-enable-credits-for-clean-vehicle-buyers

Table 2. Summarized Overview of Redemption Model Approach C

Customer	Dealer	Program Administrator
• Submit incentive application • Receive pre-approval • Provide proof of pre-approval at the point-of-sale	• Assist customer with vehicle purchase decision • Provide incentive as a price discount or cash equivalent • Report sale to program administrator through the designated online portal	Once an application has been submitted: • Review customer application and verify eligibility • Conduct quality assurance check on a subset of applications to ensure proper verification • Submit application decision Once a sale has been reported by a dealer: • Conduct post-sale verification • Reimburse the dealer within 48-72 hours • Actively work with dealer to address any issues with sale verification or reimbursement

Website and Application Design

This section dives into the logistics of a future ZEVIP website and program application that will be applicant-facing and enable incentive processing. This section provides recommendations on key considerations and best practices for website development to enable a successful applicant experience. Additionally, it explores Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the review and processing of applications, based on industry-wide best practices.

Website Design Considerations

The project team reviewed websites from over 20 incentive programs (listed in Appendix A), along with general design principles and stakeholder feedback, to identify key considerations for the ZEVIP applicant-facing website. The review focused on interface design, information architecture, branding, visualization, marketing, and inclusivity. The team recommends the following design elements for developing a comprehensive, functional, organized, and visually engaging ZEVIP website.

Table 3. Recommended Considerations for Website Design

Category	Recommended Strategy	Description
Interface Design	A stand-alone program website for the ZEVIP	A website, instead of a webpage or a subdomain, would enable ZEVIP-specific branding, easier discoverability, and a simpler end-user experience. Examples of stand-alone program websites include CVRP, CC4A, Clean Vehicle Assistance Program (CVAP), Delaware CVRP, and Massachusetts Offers Rebates for Electric Vehicles (MOR-EV).
	Mobile responsive website design	This entails optimizing a website for mobile use and allowing adaptability based on screen size and operating system. Mobile responsiveness is essential given that many ZEVIP applicants, particularly those without personal computers, may use their mobile phones to access the website and upload application documents.
Information Architecture	Call-to-action (CTA) buttons	A CTA on the landing page that calls on users to "Apply Now" or "Learn More" would prompt immediate action, taking the applicant directly to the application portal. When the application window is closed, this space could provide the next application date. Additionally, this could direct applicants to other incentive websites (e.g., CVRP's CTA is linked to CARB's DriveClean website).
	Simpler navigation through grouping	Grouping similar topics together under dropdown menus and limiting the number of menu items to four or five would help conserve screen space, reduce clutter, and allow for easier navigation (see CVAP's homepage). This should be coupled with a search bar and sidebar dropdown menus on subpages.
Website Content	Program tagline	Taglines can be helpful for describing an otherwise complicated offering in a simple and memorable way. An effective tagline establishes a program's identity

Category	Recommended Strategy	Description
		and reinforces its core objective concisely, ideally in no more than eight words. For ZEVIP, this could highlight the program's equity focus and point-of-sale delivery mechanism. CVAP's tagline serves as a good example: *Helping individuals access affordable clean vehicles*.[24]
	Key program statistics display on the landing page	Highlighting ZEVIP's accomplishments in real-time (e.g., the amount of funds or number of rebates disbursed) would enhance program transparency and credibility, encouraging buy-in (see NYSERDA's Drive Clean Rebate for Electric Cars program and CVAP).[25] In the long term, this section could be supplemented with a program dashboard. The dashboard could be housed on a separate webpage on the website and linked on the landing page. Dashboards provide a more comprehensive overview of program outcomes (see CVRP's CALZI Dashboard).[26]
	Defining the type and amount of each rebate being provided under ZEVIP	Communicate ZEVIP's distinct offerings, i.e. point-of-sale delivery and application to both new and used vehicles, would allow the program to reach its intended audience. CVAP's landing page similarly highlights the program's distinctions, i.e. that it offers grants, not rebates, which do not need to be repaid.[27] Eligibility criteria should be similarly outlined.
	Short questionnaires that provide personalized recommendations and eligibility screening based on applicant responses	CVAP's website provides a vehicle recommendation quiz, prompting information on travel distance and charging access and delivering a recommendation for the type of ZEV best suited to the applicants' needs. Such personalized assessments allow for efficiently accessing relevant information and simplify decision-making. As mentioned above, a preliminary pre-qualification eligibility quiz would similarly enhance decision-making, thereby reducing ineligible applications.
	Sample calculations of what users can expect to save or spend under ZEVIP	Such examples enhance applicants' understanding of the program's costs and benefits. The Washington EV Instant Rebate Program website provides an example of the estimated monthly cost applicants should expect when using the rebate as a down payment for a ZEV.[28]
	"Why Transition?" section	Given the general lack of awareness about lifetime savings from ZEV ownership, sharing ZEV benefits,

[24] https://cleanvehiclegrants.org/
[25] https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Drive-Clean-Rebate
[26] https://www.calzevinsights.org/
[27] https://cleanvehiclegrants.org/
[28] https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growing-the-economy/energy/electric-vehicles/ev-instant-rebate-program/

Category	Recommended Strategy	Description
		especially quantifiable savings, is a key step in promoting buy-in. Battery range concerns could also be addressed here. In terms of placement, this section could either go on the homepage (see CC4A San Diego's homepage) or a separate webpage (see CVAP).[29] This section should be kept short, providing only highlights, with more in-depth information shared through links to informational videos, articles, etc. on established external websites (e.g. San Diego County's Benefits of Owning an Electric Vehicle article).[30]
	'Resources' section for reports or other data publications, including progress updates	Publicly sharing the program's progress, new developments, and quantifiable impacts can enhance program credibility and transparency, and help establish an informed applicant base. This section could also include information or external links to relevant financial literacy tools and resources, e.g. auto loan and EV affordability calculators.
Branding and Visualization	Clean overall look with a consistent color palette and sufficient white space	This would allow for easier readability and an aesthetically pleasing experience. Light, relaxing shades are shown to keep visitors longer on a website, whereas bright colors tend to attract attention and encourage action. Finding the right color combination (e.g., light shades for the base palette and bright colors for CTAs and key statistics) could be key for driving engagement. Color use should be limited to one to two primary colors or one to three shades of a color. Similarly, having sufficient white space allows the content to "breathe" and drives the focus to the website's core messaging. Having white space around important elements (e.g., CTAs) can increase their prominence and the reader's comprehension of these elements.
	Minimize clutter	Details should be provided in short, simple, and punchy sentences, and longer explanations should be provided as attached documents. For example, the website could include a brief step-by-step application guide coupled with a longer, detailed version provided in PDF format and available for download.
	Logos of associated or partnering programs	Given that ZEVIP is a new program, associating its brand image with the established image of associated agencies or programs would help enhance credibility.
	Interactive map of charging stations in San Diego County	Given widespread battery range anxiety, it is important to inform applicants about their public charging access, including to existing and upcoming stations.

[29] https://cleanvehiclegrants.org/vehicles/
[30] https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/sustainability/ev-consumerguide/benefits.html

Category	Recommended Strategy	Description
Marketing	Visual aids for delivering key information and instructions	Such aids allow for an interactive, easy to follow learning experience for the applicant. Short graphical videos could be used to communicate the benefits of transitioning to a ZEV, the ZEVIP application process, and other critical information in a simplified, efficient manner.
	Live webinars and tutorials	Offering webinars and tutorials would enable more in-depth learning and real-time engagement with participants. These formats would be especially valuable during initial ZEVIP phases, helping to address common challenges, capture early feedback, and build trust. Additionally, they would help to create a sense of community among applicants. To maximize accessibility, recordings of all webinars and tutorials should be published on the website after the sessions.
	Testimonies from program participants	Testimonials and reviews from current participants promote engagement by enhancing trust, decision-making, and perceived program value. Additionally, they add a human element to an otherwise digital process. A focus group conducted by CVRP for low- to moderate-income (LMI) participants highlighted the importance of personal testimonies, particularly those from participants, online reviewers, or reliable mechanics.[31] CVRP's website provides examples of such testimonies.
	Using portraits instead of stock photos in marketing materials	Portraits of real people should be used in place of stock photos for testimonials, staff profiles, blog posts, etc. Images of real individuals have been shown to positively influence first impressions, enhancing the website's perceived trustworthiness.
	Search engine optimization and online advertisements	Search engine optimization is essential for increasing visibility and driving long-term, organic web traffic. This should be combined with online advertising, which allows for more precise targeting of the intended program audience.
Inclusivity	Spanish language option, instructional videos, dedicated helpline for Spanish speakers	To enhance ZEVIP's accessibility, the incentive application should be available in both English and Spanish as well as any educational materials related to the benefits of the program or EVs in general. The option to translate the website and all included materials to Spanish should also be provided. Additionally, SANDAG should consider other possible language needs of its target population and integrate these into the website either through Translation

[31] https://cleanvehiclerebate.org/en/content/lmi-focus-group-supplemental-report

Category	Recommended Strategy	Description
		Management Systems or as additional language options. In the future, audio translations could be added to further enhance accessibility for non-readers, based on demand. Technical assistance for should also be provided through a dedicated bilingual helpline to support communities with limited literacy skills, in English and/or Spanish. Callers may use this channel to learn more about EV benefits, ZEVIP, and the application process and address any related questions. Helpline operators may also take callers step-by-step through the application process if needed. Finally, website content should be kept jargon-free, with short sentences and basic vocabulary, to cater to audiences of all reading levels.

Application Design and Processing

Design Recommendations

An effective application design balances simplicity for the applicant and thoroughness for the program administrator. The project team reviewed several incentive program applications to determine key considerations for developing such an application, and recommends the following features. Note that several of the website design components also apply to the application itself and were recommended with this in mind. Additionally note that a sample application form is provided in Appendix C (accompanying document) to serve as a reference for the program administrator as they develop the official program application.

To ensure simplicity and user-friendliness the application should:

- Provide an intuitive interface that is easy to navigate with clear instructions and simple, logical steps. The application should be kept short with four to five steps in total, requesting only the essential information needed to determine eligibility (e.g., contact information, household income, zip code) and process the incentive.
- Integrate drag-and-drop features for attaching documents and allow direct uploads to the application. Additionally, include a document checklist to serve as a reminder and increase the likelihood of applications being complete at submission. Enable auto-saving so that applicants can save progress and return to complete the application later.
- Allow the system to auto-fill fields where applicable and use the integration feature to verify applicant data automatically against external databases (e.g., Medicaid for FPL determination). Additionally, integrate real-time error-checking to alert applicants if they missed a required field or entered incorrect information (e.g., invalid email format).

For clear and concise instructions:

- Offer a downloadable step-by-step instruction manual with graphics that take the applicant through each step and provide links to additional resources, including FAQs and customer service channels.
- Clearly outline eligibility criteria upfront to manage expectations and integrate pre-screening tools.

- Maintain multiple communication channels to timely address applicant questions, including a toll-free customer service hotline during standard business hours and an email address.

For data security:

- Enable data encryption and provide a privacy statement explaining how applicant data will be used, shared, and protected.

To enhance accessibility and transparency:

- Allow applicants to request a physical copy of the application and/or to submit their submission via the customer service hotline, email address, or U.S. Postal Service.
- Enable application tracking so that applicants can see their application progress in real-time. This could be as simple as providing the status: "under review" with an estimated timeline for approval.
- Send automated notifications to confirm application submission, keep applicants informed about their application status, and provide other relevant updates.
- In addition to providing translations and language support for non-English speakers, ensure the application complies with ADA guidance on web accessibility and other applicable standards.[32]

Application Processing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Application processing speed and accuracy are important indicators of program success. A short time window from when an interested buyer fills out an application to when they receive approval ensures a satisfactory experience for the applicant and encourages participation from prospective applicants, particularly those wanting an immediate vehicle replacement. For LMI communities, this could be a significant factor in choosing the program given the emphasis they place on personal testimonies and positive word-of-mouth.[33] In general, LMI communities are more likely to opt for a program with fast turnover, as they may not have access to an alternative means of transportation when their vehicle breaks down or requires immediate replacement. On the dealer side, faster processing allows for quicker reimbursement and less administrative burden. As such, the best practices identified in Table 4 are recommended.

Table 4. Recommended SOP Practices for Application Processing

Category	Recommended Practices
Application Review	• Bring on rebate-processing specialists (consider a rate of roughly 5,000 applications per specialist per year based on CVRP reporting)[34] and ensure adequate staffing through periodic reviews to adjust staff levels as application volumes change. • Set standard processing time targets (e.g., within 3-5 calendar days from document receipt to approval) and monitor adherence to these targets. • Encourage online document submission and review.
Quality Control (QC)	• Implement an automated quality control process to flag a subset of applications from each specialist for secondary review by the program administrator prior to approval to ensure accuracy and identify training needs. • Conduct regular data validation procedures to identify and correct any discrepancies in project data to maintain data integrity.

[32] https://www.ada.gov/resources/web-guidance/#:~:text=Use%20of%20color%20alone%20to,Clear%20instructions;%20and
[33] https://cleanvehiclerebate.org/en/content/lmi-focus-group-supplemental-report
[34] https://cleanvehiclerebate.org/content/cvrp-final-report-2014-2015

Category	Recommended Practices
	• Use flexible reporting tools to assess individual processor performance, identify areas for improvement, and track overall processing accuracy. • Require regular reporting on application volume, approval rates, processing times, and issues encountered. • Provide applicants with clear timelines and information on how decisions are made to ensure transparency and accountability.
Specialist Training	• Implement a standardized training program for staff processing applications to ensure consistent processing standards and skills development. • Provide oversight from experienced staff and opportunities for continuous training based on QC feedback.
Security	• Integrate prescreening tools to flag ineligible applicants early on and automated data validation checks to prevent duplicate rebates and ensure data integrity.
Applicant Experience	• Collect feedback through surveys regarding applicants' experience. • Ensure all inquiries and complaints are documented and resolved promptly.

Solicitation for Program Administrator

As part of the implementation plan for ZEVIP, a thorough evaluation of existing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) related to ZEV rebate programs was conducted. The evaluation of RFPs aimed to identify best practices and key components to inform the drafting and execution of a new RFP for ZEVIP implementation. This review encompassed various state programs, including the Washington Electric Vehicle Incentive Program, Massachusetts Offers Rebates for Electric Vehicles (MOR-EV), Peninsula Clean Energy Used EV Rebate Program, Delaware Clean Vehicle Rebate Program, and PG&E Pre-Owned EV Rebate Program. Summary information on each program can be found in Table B1 of Appendix B.

The evaluation focused on several critical elements, including the timeline and budget, scope of work, minimum qualifications, and evaluation criteria, as well as program focus and target audience. After thoroughly reviewing existing RFPs for EV rebate programs, the project team has identified the following essential components to be included in the development of RFP for the ZEVIP program administrator:

RFP Objective

The RFP should clearly define the purpose of the RFP, focusing on program implementation. It must specify that the program's design has already been established, and the selected contractor will be responsible for executing tasks such as application management, public outreach and marketing, reporting and performance tracking, providing technical assistance to applicants. Regional climate goals as well as previous planning and design efforts for the ZEVIP should be described, including the ZEVIP main characteristics, such as vehicle and applicant eligibility, incentive amounts and redemption models.

Contract Timeline and Milestones

The RFP should establish key milestones (such as contract launch and end) but leave it to the contractor to develop a detailed timeline for implementation, including deliverables. Performance durations typically range from one to three years, with options for extensions based on funding availability. For example, the Peninsula Clean Energy Used EV Rebate Program has a contract duration of three years, while others may allow for one-year contracts with up to two one-year renewals.

Budget Structure and Allocation

The RFP should clearly outline the budget components, including funding for the incentives (rebates) and contractor services. Drawing from example RFPs and feedback from managers of existing vehicle incentive programs, typical costs for third-party administration typically fall within 10%-15% of the total program budget. Given that ZEVIP requires significant outreach efforts, it may be prudent to allocate resources closer to the higher end of this range (up to 15%) to ensure effective program implementation and engagement.

Scope of Work

The RFP should describe the key tasks that the contractor will be responsible for in implementing the program. These tasks may include but are not limited to the following (further described below):

- Management and Administration
- Marketing and Outreach
- Application Review and Rebate Processing
- Reporting

The **Management and Administration** of the program may involve organizing and conducting kickoff meetings with key stakeholders to establish a clear understanding of the project's goals, deliverables, and

timelines. These meetings could be followed by regular strategy sessions aimed at keeping the project on track, assessing ongoing progress, and making any necessary adjustments to address challenges.

For **Marketing and Outreach,** the contractor may lead targeted outreach and education efforts aimed at specific demographics, including prospective dealers and ZEVIP's target participants. This could include developing content for outreach materials that clearly explain the program's benefits, eligibility criteria, and application process. In terms of education, this could include designing and developing dealer training manuals and training session materials. Marketing and outreach materials may need to be accessible and translated where necessary to cater for non-English-speakers. Beyond content development, the contractor may coordinate outreach efforts with CBOs and other industry partners to leverage their localized insights and networks for maximizing engagement with the intended audience. The contractor may also determine with the help of CBOs where bilingual marketing and outreach may be targeted and how the content may be tailored to resonate with bilingual audiences. Additionally, the contractor may be responsible for managing inbound interest, including responding to customer inquiries and overseeing the processing of interest forms submitted through various channels.

To ensure the effectiveness of these outreach efforts, the RFP may also specify measurable outcomes. Key performance indicators (KPIs) may include metrics such as media reach and engagement (e.g., media impressions, social media interactions), participation rates across geographic or demographic segments, and conversion rates from outreach to rebate applications (which may be determined through either follow-up surveys to attendees of outreach events asking if they intend to apply for ZEVIP or by including a survey question in the application itself prompting applicants to share where they heard about ZEVIP). Furthermore, the RFP may clarify that prior public outreach initiatives (e.g., surveys or interview sessions) have already been conducted at the ZEVIP design stage, and a summary of these efforts, along with any available results, can be provided as an Appendix. This context will help the contractor understand the baseline and build upon past efforts effectively.

Regarding **Application Review and Rebate Processing**, the contractor would be expected to maintain a comprehensive and informative website to provide a user-friendly platform for applicants. Key contractor responsibilities include managing the entire rebate application process, including reviewing eligibility documents, verifying compliance with program requirements, and overseeing the issuance of rebate checks or direct payments to participating dealers. Throughout this process, the contractor will also provide responsive support to applicants and participating dealers to help them understand the application steps and complete necessary documentation, while ensuring timely approval and reimbursement.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the RFP emphasize the importance of data security within the application portal. Contractors may be required to ensure that the platform meets stringent data security standards, safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of applicants' personal information. Additionally, it is suggested that the RFP asks contractors to explain how they plan to safeguard user data and comply with privacy regulations.

In terms of **Reporting,** the contractor may submit regular (e.g., monthly) detailed transaction reports (similar to the MOR-EV RFP requirement) that include metrics on the number of applications processed, rebates issued, and funds disbursed. These reports would help ensure transparency and enable ongoing assessment of the program's impact. Additionally, the contractor may submit six-month and annual final reports summarizing program activities, performance indicators and outcomes, as well as any challenges encountered. These reports may include both quantitative data and qualitative assessments of the program's overall effectiveness, such as the success of outreach efforts and feedback from participants. As part of reporting, the RFP could also recommend the development of a web-based dashboard to allow real-time tracking of program performance. This dashboard would enable continuous monitoring of

important metrics such as application volume, rebate distribution, and the effectiveness of outreach efforts, ensuring timely adjustments can be made to improve program outcomes. Additionally, this dashboard can feed into website content.

Contractor Evaluation Criteria

The RFP should outline specific contractor performance requirements, informed by insights from previous example RFPs. The contractor may be required to demonstrate that they are fully licensed to operate in California. This ensures legal compliance and the ability to effectively function within the jurisdictions impacted by ZEVIP. To ensure the selection of a competent and effective third-party administrator, the contractor evaluation criteria may focus on assessing respondents' experience in program management and stakeholder engagement. Key factors to be considered in the evaluation process include:

- Alignment with program goals and deadlines.
- Added value and cost-effectiveness.
- Promotion of diverse contractor participation.
- Thoroughness of proposals, quality of references, and existing community relationships.

A more detailed description of the evaluation criteria as well as an example table (Table B2) of a points-based system for contractor evaluation is provided in the Appendix B.

Collaboration and Outreach

This section explores various opportunities to promote ZEVIP's uptake and to facilitate regional EV adoption through collaborations with important industry and community stakeholders, providing actionable recommendations for SANDAG to consider for the program implementation phase. Three main factors make collaboration and outreach a crucial part of the ZEVIP implementation strategy.

Addressing "EV anxiety" among consumers and dealers requires outreach beyond digital channels.

Despite a rapidly evolving EV industry, many consumers remain hesitant to adopt an EV due to misconceptions and a general uneasiness towards the technology, while dealers appear disinclined to participate in incentive programs due to past negative experiences, particularly with federal programs. Overcoming these challenges requires personalized outreach efforts that go beyond digital channels (which play a crucial role, nonetheless, including for low- and middle-income communities)35 and help to foster trust and relationship-building. In-person and online interactive events, such as workshops, test drives, and webinars, could be pivotal for developing consumer confidence in EV technology and encouraging participation in ZEVIP.36 Dealers can serve as key influencers if properly engaged and trained. Community outreach could also help with identifying barriers communities perceive or are experiencing to EV adoption or program participation and addressing them timely. To ensure meaningful engagement in such events, CBOs recommend providing incentives such as raffles/giveaways (e.g. on survey completion) or interactive experiences involving music and poster boards.

Industry and community stakeholders have pre-established networks and greater community reach.

Industry and community stakeholders, such as dealers, CBOs, and TNCs, have direct and trusted relationships with the communities ZEVIP aims to serve. **Dealers** are at the forefront of consumer decision-making in the vehicle market, in addition to playing a key role in rebate administration. They have significant sway in convincing potential buyers, and their in-person services, such as offering vehicle test drives and auto shows, help create a hands-on experience for customers. **CBOs** are deeply embedded within local communities and bring localized outreach expertise, insights, and established communication networks. Additionally, CBOs provide access to communities that may be underrepresented or harder to reach otherwise, e.g., low-income residents with limited online access. **TNCs** operate large driver networks, with Lyft and Uber reporting 234,768 drivers and 1.3 billion miles driven in 2021, nationally.[37] Additionally, with the CMS requiring 90% of vehicle miles driven by each TNC fleet to be electric beyond 2030,[38] these companies are already working with their drivers towards electrification. In fact, both Lyft and Uber have committed to have zero mobility emissions by 2030.[39,40] Leveraging these pre-established connections between dealers, CBOs, and TNCs and their target markets will ensure wider reach and lend further credibility to ZEVIP.

Consumer awareness about EV opportunities and technology advances is key for increasing adoption.

Although several incentive programs and EV education initiatives exist, consumers have limited awareness about these opportunities and how to access them. For instance, charging infrastructure costs are a significant barrier to adoption for many communities and although utilities and charging service providers now offer incentives and discount programs to offset costs, consumers frequently miss out on these opportunities unless they are aware of their existence and actively searching for them online. Raising

[35] https://cleanvehiclerebate.org/en/content/lmi-focus-group-supplemental-report
[36] https://cleanvehiclerebate.org/en/content/lmi-focus-group-supplemental-report
[37] https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/regulatory-services/licensing/transportation-licensing-and-analysis-branch/transportation-network-companies/tnc-data-portal
[38] https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/clean-miles-standard/about
[39] https://www.lyft.com/blog/posts/leading-the-transition-to-zero-emissions
[40] https://www.uber.com/us/en/about/sustainability/

awareness among ZEVIP's target market about such initiatives, particularly about stackable incentive programs, would enable them to avail the lowest possible costs, thereby encouraging participation. Collaborating with relevant stakeholders on outreach efforts can help reach a broader consumer base while reducing the costs of engagement and marketing. This approach would also relieve dealers from the burden of navigating and explaining the various available incentives, which can be overwhelming and time-consuming. Education is also needed to address persisting "EV anxiety"; while EV technology continues to evolve and costs are decreasing, consumer understanding has not kept pace, hampering widespread adoption. Many consumers are also unaware of cost-effective alternatives to buying a new EV at retail prices, such as leasing or purchasing secondhand EVs, both of which are reliable and increasingly accessible options.

By implementing collaboration and targeted outreach as follows, SANDAG can enhance market preparedness and program success. SANDAG should also simultaneously conduct its own ZEVIP-specific outreach, such as live webinars to provide technical assistance in the form of application walkthroughs, FAQ sessions, and general information about ZEV benefits. This could be executed through ZEVIP and SANDAG's own channels. All marketing and outreach efforts in general, particularly educational materials, may be conducted in both English and Spanish to maximize accessibility but if resource constraints arise, bilingual support should be prioritized for efforts focusing on bilingual audiences.

Recommended Strategies

Strategy #1: Training Program for Dealers

Dealer training and development will help achieve two key objectives: (1) enhance dealers' understanding of ZEVIP's application process, particularly the point-of-sale delivery and reimbursement mechanisms, and help foster trust between the program administration and participating dealers; and (2) equip dealers with the means to adequately guide consumer-decision making and onboard dealers as program champions.

Given that dealers are often the first (human) point of contact for many buyers, achieving these objectives could be key to ZEVIP's adoption and impact. Dealers provide in-person services and experiential learning that also greatly alleviates the decision-making burden for consumers. Based on NCDA's auto show data for San Diego, 41% of the attendees were more likely to buy an EV after test-driving it, up from 18% for those who did not test-drive. Hosting collaborative events where prospective applicants can test or examine eligible vehicles could be especially effective for low- and middle-income buyers.[41] Consumers who attend these events could also be an important source for data collection and marketing (46% of NCDA's auto show attendees said they provide advice to other interested buyers 2-5 times per year). Collaborating with associations like NCDA and IADAC and dealers like Carvana would allow SANDAG to tap a significant portion of the regional market. Dealers may also have prior experience promoting electrification (e.g. NCDA-SDG&E's EV training efforts under Plug-in America) that both partners can benefit from.

Training should focus on equipping dealers with information about EV benefits and advances, followed by an in-depth overview of ZEVIP and its application and processing procedures. Trainers should walk dealers through the process as it relates to them. SANDAG should define the types of customers it expects based on its target audience (e.g., middle-income buyer with low interest in purchasing, low-income buyer with high interest but challenging credit) and trainers should provide live demos on how to engage with each customer type. Training should also be taken as an opportunity to build relations and credibility with

[41] https://cleanvehiclerebate.org/en/content/lmi-focus-group-supplemental-report

dealers, e.g., by including a tea or lunch break in the sessions and supplying the food and drinks. Sufficient time should be reserved for meaningful engagement during the Q&A portion.

When advising interested buyers during live events such as test drives or visits to a dealership, dealers should be trained to inform buyers about the suite of options available to them, tailoring the advice to the buyer's needs. In particular, if a prospective applicant is concerned about the cost of a new EV or meeting credit score requirements, dealers may promote alternatives such as purchasing a secondhand vehicle or leasing. Leasing is important in extending program benefits to those with low- to mid-level credit scores. Since it is based on a "buy here, pay here" system where the dealer acts as the bank, it removes the need for credit score eligibility, which CBOs report is a barrier for their community members who tend to have low credit scores. Additionally, it allows mid-level credit customers access to high priced cars, which may be equipped with better technology. That said, lease contracts include specific mileage limits and penalties for exceeding, which should be highlighted as well, particularly to buyers who may be driving for TNCs.

Strategy #2: Joint Outreach and Incentive Stacking with TNCs and Service Providers

Given TNCs' fleet electrification goals in line with the Clean Miles Standard, these companies provide access to a large market of prospective buyers. SANDAG should work with TNCs to inform their drivers about ZEVIP. Online information sessions should be provided to walk drivers through ZEVIP's application process. Digital fliers or emails containing this information about the offering and application process should also be shared for those who cannot make it to the online sessions. Additionally, the Clean Miles Standard established a Drivers Assistance Program (DAP) to support the ZEV transition among low- and middle-income drivers. DAP will provide incentives for buying/purchasing a ZEV and assistance with identifying and applying for other incentives. Given that Uber, as the contracting agent, will oversee the DAP program administrator, SANDAG should work with Uber to ensure ZEVIP is included in DAP's list of other incentives. An in-depth information session can also be provided to the administrator. SANDAG may also want to consider opportunities like the Ford Drive program, which allows Uber drivers in San Diego to lease a Mustang Mach-E for 30 days or more at a specified rate.[42]

SANDAG should consider collaborating with stackable incentive programs (e.g., CC4A San Diego, SDG&E Pre-owned EV Program[43]) to enhance outreach and participation. Charging incentive programs by energy providers or charging companies (e.g., Electrify America's offer to get complimentary charging on a purchase or lease from a participating brand) would be particularly helpful in managing costs. EV pricing plans, such as those provided by SDG&E[44], can be promoted in conjunction with ZEVIP to inform consumers about the overall cost savings they can achieve. This approach also addresses concerns regarding potential increases in electricity bills due to EV charging.

Strategy #3: Marketing and Outreach Support from CBOs

CBOs' outreach expertise in their communities will be useful in preparing marketing and outreach materials and should be leveraged to ensure that program messaging resonates with local audiences. Website and application design plans and strategies for marketing ZEVIP, particularly surrounding the launch, can be shared with CBOs for review and feedback. Outreach should be done collaboratively, leveraging CBOs' connections, and outsourcing where feasible. CBOs can also help with reaching younger audiences for early salience-building.

[42] https://www.forddrive.com/san-diego
[43] https://evrebates.sdge.com/
[44] https://www.sdge.com/residential/pricing-plans/about-our-pricing-plans/electric-vehicle-plans

Data Collection and Monitoring Metrics

Tracking program performance is critical for ensuring effective delivery and identifying areas of improvement in a timely manner. The following list of metrics is recommended for data collection and monitoring of key aspects of ZEVIP's implementation as discussed in the Plan. Continuous monitoring of these metrics will allow for proactive adjustments based on emerging trends, allow accountability for program stakeholders and funders, and enable opportunities for collaboration and improving the overall success of the project. Note that while most of these metrics are quantitative, the team recommends collecting qualitative feedback as well to supplement performance evaluation efforts.

Table 4. Recommended Metrics for Data Collection and Monitoring

Category	Data Metrics
Budget and Financial Management	Allocated funding distribution – proportion of funds going to LMI participants vs. general spending allocation; amount allocated to administrative expenses, including application processing; amount in contingency reserve
	Cumulative funding status - funding allocated, awarded, and implemented to each project category
	Budget utilization rate – the percentage of the allocated budget spent over a fiscal year or quarter
	Average incentive amount per vehicle
	Amount of unspent or carried over funds
	Market data including real-time EV sales and leases data
	Participation rates
	Cost per GHG reduced
Application Processing	Application volume and approval rates
	Processing time per application
	Resubmission rate
	Average time to first response from program administrator
	Application start rate vs. completion rate
	Fraud detection rate
	Number of applications processed per staff member
	Average time taken to resolve issues
	Number of rebate applications approved but not used to avail rebate
Applicant Information	Demographics – income, zip code, etc.
	Home ownership vs. renting
	Employment status
	Previous vehicle ownership
	Vehicle type – type of ZEV, new vs. used
	Purchase vs. lease
	Application history – whether the applicant has applied to the program before or to other incentive programs (stackable or otherwise)
	Where applicants plan to charge their vehicle (home, work, public station, etc.)
	Time from the application to vehicle purchase/lease
	Satisfaction with the application process
Incentive-processing	Website traffic – total number of visitors in a given time
	Traffic source – origin of the website visitor (direct, organic search, social media, referrals, etc.)

Category	Data Metrics
	Conversion rate – percentage of visitors who complete an application
	Average session duration
	Page load time
	Bounce rate – percentage of visitors who leave the site after viewing only one page
	User journey analysis – paths users take through the site
	Mobile vs. desktop traffic
	Drop-off points – e.g., in the application or information process
	Click-through rate on key links and CTAs
	FAQ or support page visits
	Helpline call rates
	Search function usage – frequency and type of queries entered
	Website adherence to accessibility standards
	Download/resource access rates
	Support request rate
	Return visitor rate
	Applicant satisfaction (feedback collected through surveys or pop-up forms)
	Dealer feedback on the ease of navigating the redemption process
Collaboration and Outreach	Number of dealer training/workshop events (in-person and online) and attendance rates
	Number of dealers fully trained on ZEVIP procedures
	Dealer satisfaction and feedback on training programs
	Number of dealers actively promoting ZEVIP and EV options, including secondhand and leasing options
	Percentage of trained dealers that become active program champions
	Number of collaborations established with TNCs, CBOs, dealers, and other incentive programs
	Number of shared outreach campaigns with industry partners (e.g., co-hosted events or joint marketing initiatives)
	Success rates of joint outreach efforts, including incentive stacking participation and consumer feedback on awareness of multiple programs
	Number of in-person customer-facing events (e.g., test drives) and attendance rates
	Number of digital customer-facing outreach events (e.g., webinars) and participation rates
	Number of inquiries or applications resulting from collaborative events or marketing materials
	Participation rates among low- and moderate-income communities because of community outreach
	Adjustments made to outreach strategies based on stakeholder feedback and market behavior

Next Steps

The ZEVIP Implementation Plan provides actionable next steps for SANDAG to execute ahead of the program's expected launch date in fiscal year 2026 (contingent on funding availability). The Plan includes comprehensive frameworks for budget and fiscal management, rebate redemption procedure, website design and application processing, outreach and marketing, and program monitoring. These frameworks are accompanied by a draft ZEVIP application form (Appendix C), draft scopes of work for contracted third-party program administrator and web developer, and applicant technical assistance(Appendix D & E), and standard operating procedures for application processing ("Application Design and Processing" section).

To execute the ZEVIP Implementation Plan, the following next steps are recommended for SANDAG to undertake. SANDAG should finalize the scope of work for a program administrator and web developer, and for applicant technical assistance, and submit requests for proposals (RFPs) to solicit appropriate contractor(s). Once contractors are selected, SANDAG should provide them with detailed guidance on ZEVIP's design and planned implementation as part of the onboarding process for context-setting and informing contractors about the upcoming steps. These next steps for the contractors include:

- Defining a preliminary program budget using a forecasting tool to predict participation rates and allocating funds to different categories (e.g. website development, outreach, etc.) as well as allocating contingency funds
- Developing and testing the program website following the recommendations provided in the Plan
- Conducting outreach to dealership networks to recruit dealers and developing the dealer training program and support network
- Seeking and initiating partnerships with TNCs and local utilities to align outreach efforts and promote incentive-stacking opportunities
- Seeking opportunities to collaborate with CBOs and partner agencies on designing community outreach materials and events
- Finalizing the ZEVIP participant application form and application processing SOP
- Publishing the program website and announcing the program launch date to raise awareness about the upcoming offering and create pre-launch anticipation and enthusiasm
- Designing and executing marketing campaigns pre- and post-launch to continually build awareness and publicity among ZEVIP's target audience
- Establishing data collection protocols to track the metrics included in the Plan, identifying additional metrics, if any, and defining a timeline and strategy for evaluating the data for continuous improvement

By executing these steps, SANDAG can effectively transition from planning to execution of the strategies and goals outlined in the ZEVIP Strategy and Implementation Plan. Note that this list of next steps is by no means exhaustive, and several other opportunities or setbacks may arise and will need to be addressed during the execution of the Plan. As far as such opportunities and setbacks can be predicted, the Plan includes contingencies for addressing them. However, SANDAG should leverage the prior experience of its contractors in executing such projects to develop additional contingencies once contractors are onboarded.

Appendix A – Additional Information on Website Design

Programs Reviewed for Website Design Considerations

- Clean Vehicle Assistance Program (CVAP)
- California Clean Vehicle Rebate Program (CVRP)
- San Diego Clean Cars 4 All (CC4A SD)
- Delaware Clean Vehicle Rebate Program
- Washington EV Instant Rebate Program
- Massachusetts Offers Rebates for Electric Vehicles (MOR-EV)
- Clean Cars 4 All Bay Area
- PG&E Pre-Owned EV Rebate Program
- NYSERDA Drive Clean Rebate for Electric Cars
- California Bureau of Automotive Repair's Consumer Assistance Program
- Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District (AVAQMD) Alternative Fuel Vehicle / Battery-Electric Plug-In Vehicle Program
  Oregon Clean Vehicle Rebate Program

Appendix B – Additional Information on Program Administrator Solicitation

Programs Reviewed

Table B1: Overview of RFPs reviewed

Incentive Program Name	Incentive Program Description	Incentive Program Status	RPP Scope	Budget Reported
Washington Electric Vehicle Incentive Program	Supports low-income residents by providing between $2,500 and $9,000 off at the time of purchase or lease of a new or used BEV.	Existing	Implementation only (Phase III)	$2M
Massachusetts Offers Rebates for Electric Vehicles (MOR-EV)	Offers rebates for new and used BEVs and FCEVs at the time of purchase or lease at participating dealerships, as well as post-purchase or lease.	Existing	Design, implementation	$2M, with no more than 7% (or $140,000) for contractor administration costs
Peninsula Clean Energy Used EV Rebate Program	Provides $2,000 towards the purchase of a used plug-in hybrid or fully electric vehicle for income-qualifying residents of San Mateo County or the City of Los Banos.	Existing	Implementation only	$180K
Delaware Clean Vehicle Rebate Program Administration	Offers cash rebates for the purchase or lease of new or used plug-in hybrid or battery electric vehicles.	Existing	Update design, implementation	No specific budget information available; only total funding of $2M.
PG&E Pre-Owned EV Rebate Program	Provides up to $4,000 in rebates for PG&E customers purchasing or leasing pre-owned EVs, with rebate levels based on household income.	Existing	Implementation only	Not available

Contractor Evaluation Criteria

The following contractor evaluation criteria are recommended:

- Relevant Experience and Qualifications: Contractors should demonstrate experience in managing similar programs, with a focus on public outreach and technical assistance. A minimum of three

years of experience in multi-county or statewide program administration is advisable, as it is commonly seen in similar RFPs.

- Program Fulfillment: Proposals should clearly articulate how they align with specific ZEVIP goals and objectives. Emphasis should be placed on innovative outreach strategies and initiatives that target underserved communities.
- Timeliness: Proposals should include detailed timelines outlining project milestones and deliverables. Adherence to schedules should be a critical factor in the evaluation process.
- Value and In-Kind Services: Additional value provided by the contractor beyond the basic requirements should be assessed. This may include educational workshops or development of outreach materials at no extra cost.
- Cost Proposal and Cost Effectiveness: A thorough evaluation of the proposed budget relative to expected program outcomes is necessary. Cost structures should reflect competitive pricing and efficient allocation of resources, ensuring that administrative costs remain within specified limits.
- Diversity and Inclusion: The contractor's commitment to engaging diverse communities and subcontractors should be evaluated. This may involve the inclusion of a Supplier Diversity Plan or evidence of past collaborations with minority-owned enterprises.
- Completeness of Proposal: Proposals should comprehensively address all aspects of the RFP requirements, demonstrating clarity of understanding and the completeness of proposed solutions.
- Community Relationships: Existing or proposed partnerships with local stakeholders should be assessed to ensure effective program implementation. Collaborations with community organizations and environmental groups may enhance outreach and program effectiveness.
- Quality of References: Assessment of references should include evaluations of past performance and client satisfaction, focusing on successful project outcomes and feedback from previous clients.

The following table presents an example of a points-based system for contractor evaluation, drawing from the Washington Electric Vehicle Incentive Program's RFP.

Table B2: Example of Points-Based Contractor Evaluation System

Submitted Proposal	Points	Interview Evaluation
Program, management and reporting	15	N/A
Marketing and Outreach	15	10
Website and application design, processing and support	20	15
Platform security and liability	15	10
Risks	10	5
Deliverables and project schedule	5	N/A
Project Team Structure and Internal Controls	10	10
Qualifications and Experience	30	N/A
Total points	120	50

Appendix C – Sample ZEVIP Participant Application Form

This appendix is intended solely as a reference and design recommendation to support the development of a comprehensive participant application form. The ultimate responsibility for designing the official ZEVIP application form, including finalizing its structure, content, and functionality, rests with the program administrator. This document should not be interpreted as an official application or a mandated template.

The aim of the ZEVIP participant application form is to collect the necessary information for assessing applicant eligibility for a ZEVIP point-of-sale rebate at a participating dealership in the San Diego region. The form could additionally serve as an important data collection source for determining the effectiveness of past and ongoing ZEVIP outreach efforts and the application process itself through survey questions included at the end of the application. As such, the following strategies are recommended in relation to the application content and structure.

To ensure a user-friendly experience, the form should be limited to two pages. The first page should outline eligibility criteria, instructions, post-submission expectations (including processing times and the rebate process), and resource links for further details. Resource links may include:

- The pre-submission applicant eligibility verification quiz
- Instructional videos or PDF documents containing detailed information about the application process based on the format recommended in the ZEVIP Implementation Plan
- List of participating dealerships where applicants can avail the rebate

The second page should include the application questions, with the following two sections making up the bulk of the application: (1) applicant information, including contact details, and income eligibility and (2) supplemental survey questions for data collection and program evaluation. A sample structure is provided in Table C1 below.

Table C1: Sample Structure for the ZEVIP Participant Application Form

Section	Categories
Applicant Information	Full Name: (*First, Middle, Last*)
	Date of Birth: (*MM/DD/YYYY*)
	Household Size: (*Number of individuals supported by household income*)
	Primary Address: (*Street Address, City, State, ZIP Code*)
	Email:
	Phone Number:
Income & Eligibility	Eligibility Criteria: Applicants must meet specific income thresholds based on household size. Attach one of the following as proof of income: Most recent tax return (IRS Form 1040) Pay stubs (last 2 months) Statement of government assistance (e.g., Medicaid) For further assistance, please email at [customer service email address] or call on [customer service hotline] for more immediate support.
	Annual household income - range of incomes based on the 2024 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) guidelines
	Are you receiving assistance from any government income-based programs? (*Yes/No*)

Required Documentation	Please upload the following required documentation: A valid government-issued ID Proof of Income
Supplemental Survey Questions	How did you hear about this program? (*Select all that apply*) Social media Internet search Dealership representative or event Community outreach event or workshop Word of mouth Car manufacturer or retailer Utility provider Transportation Network Company Local government or agency website Email notification Other (Specify):
	Would you like to receive information about: Other stackable EV incentives? EV charging infrastructure incentives? Utility programs for discounted electricity rates? *Note: Options should be tailored to incentive support available through ZEVIP collaboration and outreach efforts*.
	How would you rate your experience with the application process? (*Scale: 1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent*) Any suggestions to Improve the process? (Optional)
Acknowledgment	ZEVIP application terms and conditions
	Applicant signature (electronic or printed) to serve as acknowledgement of the terms and conditions

Appendix D – Draft Scope of Work for Applicant Technical Assistance

The objective of the Applicant Technical Assistance is to enhance program accessibility by providing comprehensive, bilingual technical assistance to address common application challenges faced by underserved communities, in particular. This includes technical support with navigating eligibility requirements, filling out applications, and understanding ZEV benefits. The contractor's key tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Develop instructional materials, FAQs, and other informational resources, and direct applicants to these resources as needed
- Establish and operate dedicated channels for bilingual support, including a toll-free hotline during standard business hours and an email/chat option for flexible assistance
- Host in-person workshops and webinars to assist applicants with filling out applications and addressing queries in real time
- Provide step-by-step assistance for completing and submitting applications, including explaining eligibility criteria, helping gather and verify required documentation, and assisting with tracking application status and resolving submission issues

To provide adequate support, technical assistance staff must have bilingual proficiency in English and Spanish, with skills in both written and spoken communication; prior experience working in a similar role, providing bilingual technical support for filling out incentive program applications; knowledge of current principles and practices of customer service; and prior training in cultural sensitivity and accessibility practices. Additionally, staff must acquire a basic understanding of ZEV technology (including both BEV and PHEV) and its benefits, as well as other available incentive programs (particularly ones that are stackable with ZEVIP and for charging infrastructure). Through such support, the staff should aim to provide a seamless application process for applicants with limited literary proficiency and increase application completion rates, particularly in underserved communities.

Appendix E – Draft Scope of Work for Program Administrator and Website Developer

The program administrator will be responsible for overseeing various facets of the ZEVIP, including program management (such as budget and fiscal management), application processing, rebate processing and reimbursement, website development and maintenance, collaboration and outreach, and program monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, staff will be responsible for enhancing program accessibility through bilingual marketing and outreach efforts to support the program goal of advancing equitable EV adoption. Key tasks for the contractor should include, but are not limited to:

Under program administration

- Manage and administer the program by forecasting program participation;
- Allocate program budgets;
- Manage application reviews (including eligibility verification and quality assurance checks) and rebate processing;
- Coordinate outreach to industry and community stakeholders (including transportation network companies and energy service providers);
- Develop and execute marketing campaigns in target communities;
- Evaluate program performance by tracking program metrics and identify areas of improvements;
- Provide regular progress reports.

Under website development

- Create a mobile-responsive, stand-alone website optimized for user-friendly navigation and branding;
- Create a website that integrates interactive features, such as eligibility quizzes, real-time application status updates, and a dashboard displaying program outcomes;
- Ensure the website is accessible in English and Spanish, with additional language options based on community needs.

For bilingual marketing and outreach

- Collaborate with applicant technical assistance staff to design and implement bilingual outreach campaigns targeting underserved communities;
- Develop educational materials (e.g., videos, infographics) explaining ZEV benefits and application steps;
- Coordinate with community-based organization (CBO), utilities, and local partners to identify outreach opportunities and localize efforts;
- Organize bilingual webinars and events;
- Track engagement and participation rates from targeted communities.

By undertaking these tasks, staff should aim to achieve the program goals and its successful execution.