

ENERGY FAIR GUIDEBOOK



EGLE

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY



**GRAHAM
SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE**
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



**CATALYST
COMMUNITIES**

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Introduction

Purpose & Context

Traverse City Light & Power (referred to as TCLP throughout this guide) is Traverse City, Michigan's municipal electric utility. They are interested in putting on an Energy Fair to promote their environmental programs (such as voluntary green pricing, energy efficiency rebates, and net metering) and make sustainable energy practices more accessible to residents. Although this guidebook was created primarily with TCLP and the Traverse City context in mind, it is hoped that the ideas and strategies suggested for their Energy Fair can be broadly applied to communities across Michigan.

What Is An Energy Fair?

Also called a Green Fair, Energy Expo, or Electrification Expo, an Energy Fair is an event promoting the education and empowerment of a community's homeowners and renters to pursue electrification, decarbonization, and energy efficiency in their residences. These events are often put on by local electric utilities, governments, or environmental organizations.

An Energy Fair usually has booths showcasing demonstrations of sustainable products (like electric vehicles, LED lightbulbs, induction cooktops, etc.) and highlighting the cost, health, and environmental benefits of switching to these greener alternatives. The event also features booths run by relevant local environmental and community organizations whose work supports or is supported by sustainable energy practices. To make an Energy Fair more inviting and fun for all community members, organizers often provide food options or live music to visitors as well.

Energy Fair Examples

If you've never seen or heard of an Energy Fair before, it may be difficult to visualize what one may look like in your community. Luckily, throughout Michigan and the midwest more broadly, many communities have already put on similar events that can be looked to as examples!

Meridian Township, Michigan

The Green Team in Meridian Township hosts multiple annual Green Fairs throughout the summer season in the local farmer's market space. They often feature a native plant sale, booths from environmental organizations, local conservation volunteer opportunities, and resources to help residents adopt electric vehicles and solar panels.



(Source)

Energy Fair Examples Cont.

Ann Arbor, Michigan

In Ann Arbor, the city's Office of Sustainability and Innovations helps put on an annual Fall Green Fair, Spring Green Fair, and Home Electrification Expo. These events feature a variety of environmental-related booths, demonstrations of energy-efficient appliances by contractors, live music, and free ice cream. They are held on downtown streets and in the local farmer's market space.



(Source)

Custer, Wisconsin

As of 2023, the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) has put on an Energy Fair on their Custer fairgrounds for over 32 years! This large-scale event attracts over 11,000 annual visitors to educational sustainability workshops, demonstrations for appliances like heat pumps and induction cooktops, and showcases of energy-related nonprofits. They also feature local artisans, children's activities, a 5K race, and food trucks.

Best Practices

Managing Costs

The cost to put on an Energy Fair depends greatly on the size and features your organization determine are best for your community. Costs may include venue rental, small giveaways like pens or water bottles at booths, and marketing.

Your organization can reduce these costs by utilizing the following strategies:

- *Keep It Simple:* No need to incorporate food, live music, prizes, or other more expensive features into your Energy Fair if you don't have the budget for it!
- *Charge Vendors:* Many Energy Fair organizers charge vendors a small fee to operate a booth at the event, leading to many of the associated costs being offset completely or at least reduced.
- *Partner With Local Government:* Local government entities are often able to utilize community spaces like farmer's markets, parks, and downtown streets for reduced or no cost, so consider partnering with them.
- *Plug In To Other Events:* Incorporating your Energy Fair or elements of it into pre-existing community events like farmer's markets, art festivals, or holiday fairs can allow you to share costs with other organizers while also tapping into their more-established attendee base.
- *Apply For A Grant:* Small businesses, certain types of nonprofits, and public sector entities are eligible to apply for Sponsorship Program grants from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). They have provided up to \$2,500 for organizations putting on Energy Fairs in the past!
- *Spreading The Word:* You can ask any vendors or partners involved with your Energy Fair to post about their attendance and promote the event on social media.

Location & Layout

Most Energy Fairs feature three main types of vendor booths: Education, Demonstration, and Partner. You can find more information about each of these booth types in the next page's sample fair map and "Booth Directory" section.

When designing the layout of your Energy Fair, it is important to “mix” these three types of booths up throughout the space to keep the experience as engaging as possible for visitors. For example, instead of placing three Partner Booths in a certain area, try to place one of each kind of booth there.

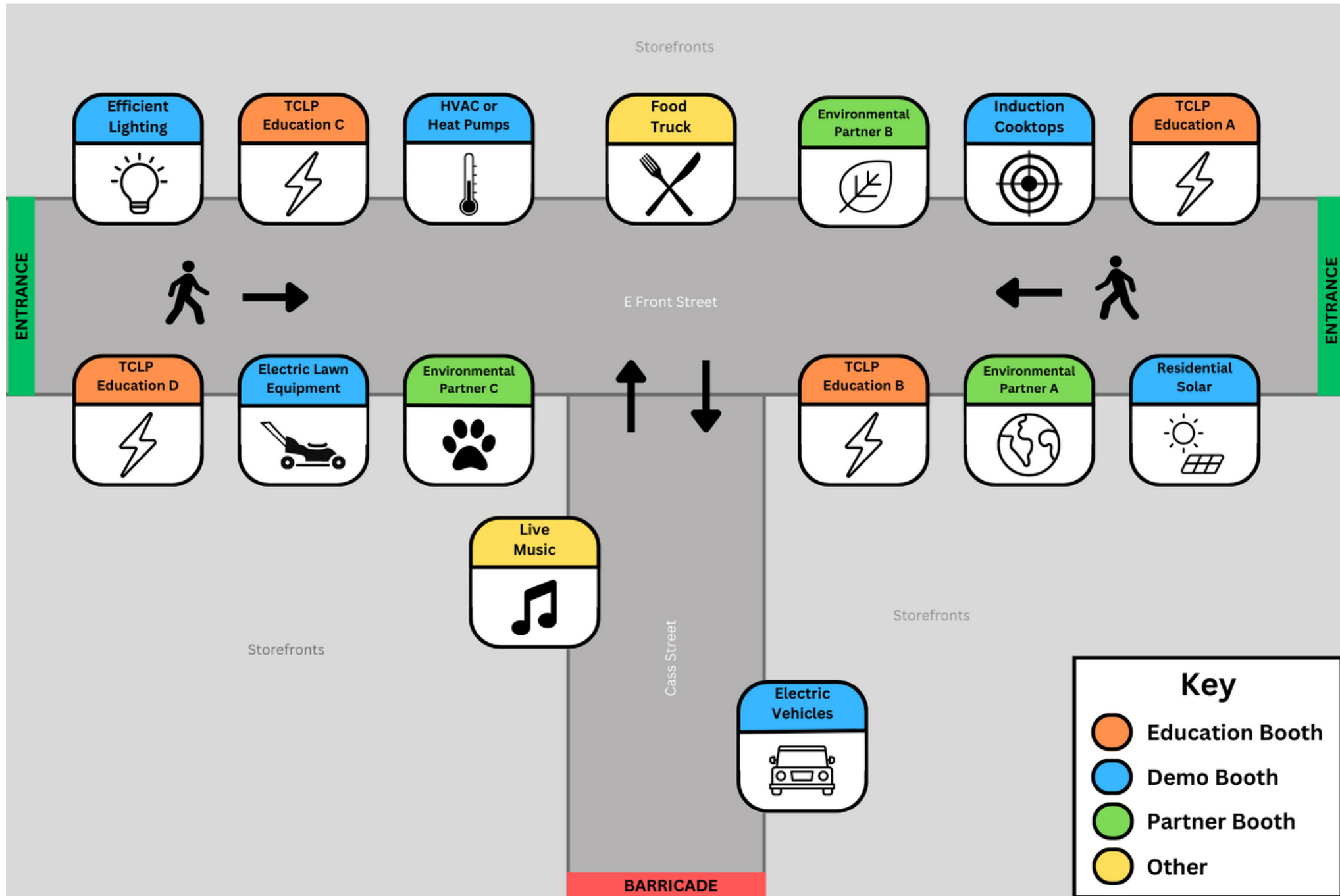
It is also crucial to mix up the location of Demonstration Booths based on the accessibility or costs associated with the products they are showcasing. For example, instead of placing solar panel and heat pump Demonstration Booths near each other (two more complex and expensive products), try placing solar panel and induction cooktop Demonstration Booths near each other (one more complex and expensive product, one less complex and expensive). Additionally, make sure you know how much space each Demonstration Booth vendor needs for their activities ahead of time- an electric vehicle Demonstration Booth probably needs more room than an LED lightbulb Demonstration Booth!

Finally, if you choose to incorporate food, live music, or other activities into your event, these should be placed around the middle of the event space to allow visitors primarily attracted by these features to still be exposed to booths as they travel throughout the Fair.



(Source)

Sample Map of TCLP Energy Fair



Booth Setup

Here are some general booth setup tips that Fair organizers can incorporate into their Education Booths or suggest to other vendors:

- Your booth should have clear and large labels indicating what organization you are representing, neatly arranged materials, and an interactive activity or eye-catching visual aid.
- Having two people managing one booth is best, as it allows one person to stand in front and greet visitors while the other is sitting or running a demonstration.
- When engaging visitors, it is always effective to use a hook or conversation starter (ex: “Hello! Are you interested in trying some electric lawn equipment?”).
- Always provide a basic information sheet about your organization to visitors.
- Visitors will be more drawn to your booth if you provide small branded giveaways like candy, pens, or water bottles with relevant messaging.
- If visitors want additional details about your organization, prepare a QR code or a sign-up sheet where they can provide their contact information.
- QR codes are a great way to reduce paper clutter at your booth!



(Source)

Promoting Your Organization

If your organization is interested in utilizing an Energy Fair to increase community engagement with certain programs like TCLP, you can employ a few additional strategies that were previously successful at similar events.

Front of Punch Card

<u>TCLP Energy Expo Punch Card</u>			
Submit to an Education Booth When Complete!			
Education	Education	Demo	Demo
Partner	Partner	Demo	Demo

Back of Punch Card

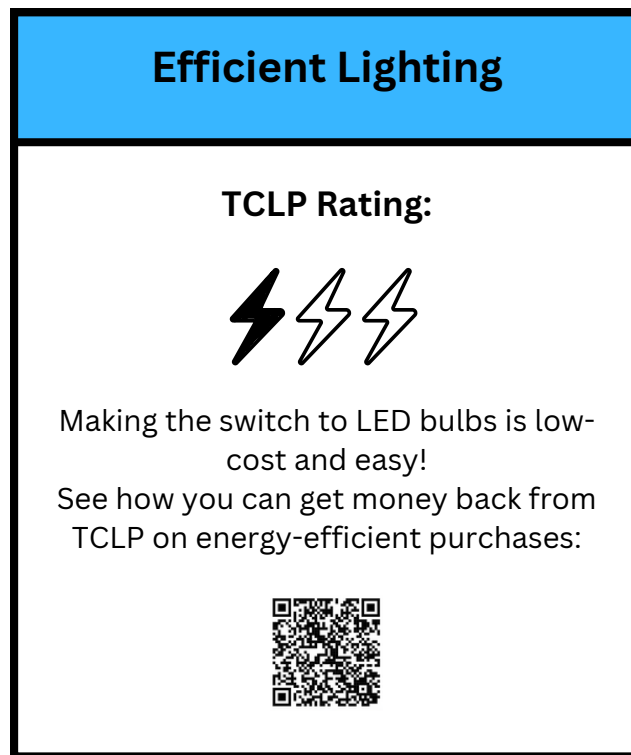
Visit two Education, two Partner, and four Demonstration booths for a chance to win prizes like:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home Energy Assessment• Solar Racer Kit• Induction Cooktop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TCLP Gear• Ring Doorbell with Solar Kit• E-Bike

Organizers can provide "punch cards" to incentivize visitors to stop at a variety of Education, Demonstration, and Partner Booths during their time at the Energy Fair. If visitors stop at the majority of booths and receive a punch through all of their punch card squares, they can be entered into a raffle to win energy-related prizes. Potential prizes include a home energy assessment, a solar racer kit, an induction cooktop, an electric bicycle, and branded organization merchandise like tote bags, hats, or mugs.

It is important to keep in mind with this strategy that some visitors may not engage as meaningfully with booths if they are focused on collecting punches, as well as that vendors must be willing to punch visitor punch cards as well as manage their booth.

Promoting Your Organization Cont.

Demonstration Booth Sign



Another strategy organizers can utilize is providing informational signs or flyers to booths that connect the focus of that booth to your organization's programs. As seen in the below example, TCLP can create signs for each Demonstration Booth with "ratings" to indicate how difficult or costly switching to the sustainable alternative showcased would be (with one lightning bolt indicating the least difficult and costly type of switch, two indicating a moderately difficult or costly type of switch, and three indicating the most difficult or costly type of switch). These signs will also provide a QR code with information about relevant TCLP programs that support these switches.

Measuring Success

In order to measure the success of an Energy Fair, organizers should outline their goals for the event during the planning process. This will allow them to reflect on their goals afterwards and determine whether or not they were met.

Organizers should also collect data on the number of visitors, raffle entries, signups for more information, and minutes an average visitor stays at the event. Although not all of your impacts can be quantified, this is a good start.

Additionally, organizers should also connect with partners running Demonstration and Partner Booths after the Fair is over. Gaining their perspective on the engagement they experienced from visitors as well as how they believe your partnership could be strengthened in the future is extremely valuable.



(Source)

Booth Directory

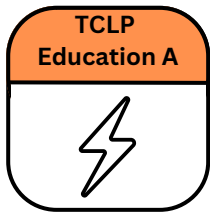
Education Booths

Education Booths are run by the primary organization that puts on an Energy Fair. They promote the organization, provide general information about the event, and connect the booths by educating visitors about the importance of sustainable energy practices. These booths should be found at entrances, exits, and throughout the Fair to create a welcoming environment for visitors, establish high visibility, and answer questions.

On the next page is a sample setup for a TCLP Education Booth.

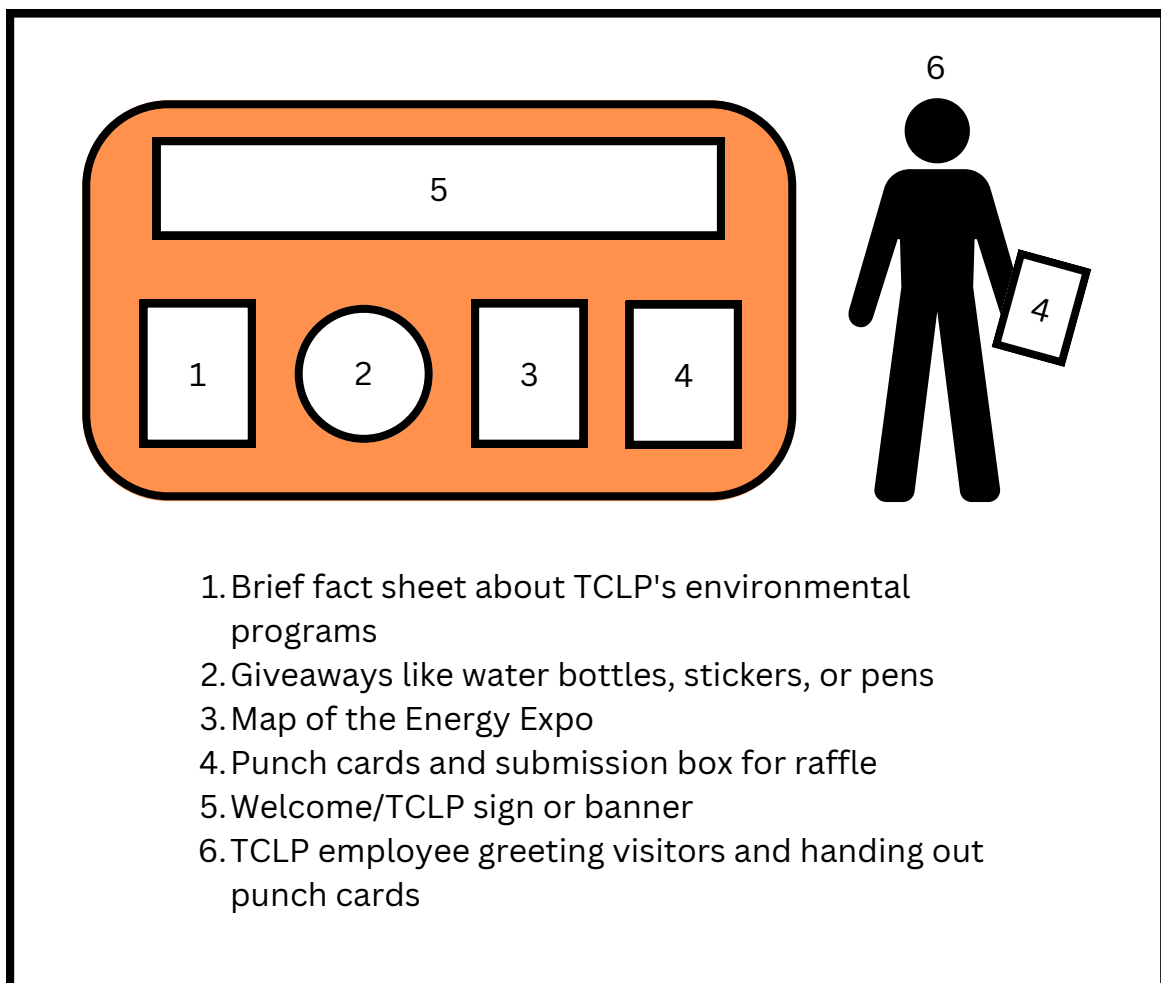


(Source)



Sample TCLP Education Booth

This booth will serve as one of the entrance/exit booths for the Energy Expo. To help welcome/see off visitors and familiarize them with TCLP, this booth will include things like a TCLP program fact sheet, small giveaways, and a map of the Expo. Visitors can also pick up and submit punch cards here.



Demonstration Booths

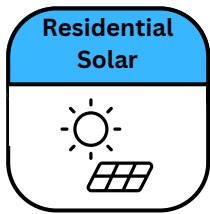
Demonstration Booths are run by local contractors and companies. They provide interactive demonstrations of and information about sustainable products like electric vehicles, LED lightbulbs, and induction cooktops.

The following pages contain a list of possible Demonstration Booths with their descriptions, relevant TCLP programs, TCLP ratings, and potential partners in both Traverse City and Michigan-wide contexts.

Because these booths are effectively "selling" something, there should be resources like information and funding opportunities supporting these purchases being offered at other booths. It is crucial that the sustainable swaps showcased can be affordable and accessible for visitors of all backgrounds.



(Source)



Residential Solar

This booth will provide information about residential solar panels, including associated costs and benefits, potential contractors, and relevant TCLP solar programs.

TCLP Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

Relevant TCLP Programs: Energy Saver, Net Metering, Voluntary Green Pricing

Traverse City Partners:

- Windemuller
- Traverse Solar
- Leelanau Solar

General Partners:

- Local solar installers



Efficient Lighting

This booth will showcase the differences in appearance, energy use, and lifespan of incandescent, fluorescent, and LED bulbs.

TCLP Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

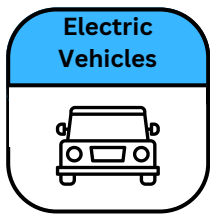
Relevant TCLP Programs: Energy Saver, Time of Use

Traverse City Partners:

- Batteries Plus Bulbs

General Partners:

- Local Home Depot/Ace Hardware/Lowe's



Electric Vehicles

This booth could showcase cars, bicycles, and/or scooters. It will be located on an adjacent street to ensure there is enough room for vehicles be parked and tested by visitors.

TCLP Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

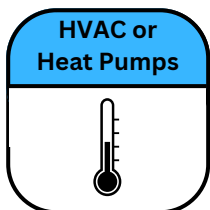
Relevant TCLP Programs: Energy Saver

Traverse City Partners:

- Fox Grand Traverse Ford Dealership
- City Bike Shop
- Bayfront Scooters

General Partners:

- Local electric car/bicycle/scooter sellers
-



HVAC or Heat Pumps

This booth will provide information about and a demonstration of energy-efficient HVAC or heat pump systems.

TCLP Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

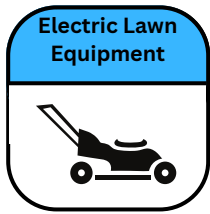
Relevant TCLP Programs: On-Bill Financing, Energy Saver, Air Conditioner Recycling

Traverse City Partners:

- Team Bob's
- Carrier Great Lakes
- Walters & Hemming Inc.

General Partners:

- Local HVAC installers
- Local heat pump installers



Electric Lawn Equipment

This booth will allow visitors to either watch a vendor demonstrate electric lawn equipment or try out it themselves.

TCLP Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

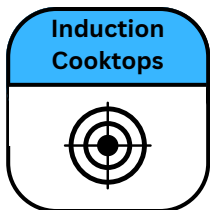
Relevant TCLP Programs: Energy Saver

Traverse City Partners:

- Ferguson's Lawn Equipment
- DeWeese Hardware

General Partners:

- Local Home Depot/Ace Hardware/Lowe's



Induction Cooktops

This booth will highlight the environmental and health benefits of electric versus natural gas appliances. Visitors will either watch a vendor demonstrate induction cooktops or be allowed to try them themselves.

TCLP Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

Relevant TCLP Programs: Energy Saver

Traverse City Partners:

- Great Lakes Culinary Institute
- Northwest Food Coalition
- Munson Healthcare

General Partners:

- Local Home Depot/Ace Hardware/Lowe's/ABC Warehouse
- Local food banks
- Local hospitals

Partner Booths



Partner Booths are run by relevant local organizations whose work supports or is supported by sustainable energy practices. They help connect the goals of the Demonstration and Education Booths to impacts on the broader community.

Traverse City Partners:

- Great Lakes Children's Museum
- Grand Traverse Conservation District
- SEEDS Ecology & Nature Center
- Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council
- Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities

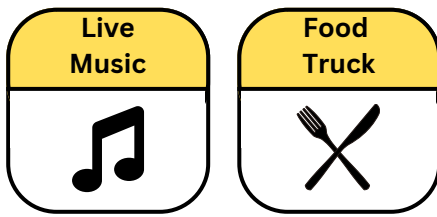
General Partners:

- GreenHome Institute
- Michigan Energy Options
- Local environment and community-based organizations
- Local utilities



(Source)

Other Booths



Although extra features like live music and food trucks can help draw visitors to the Energy Fair, they are not necessary!

Traverse City Partners:

- The Little Fleet food trucks
- Interlochen Center for the Arts
- Encore 201
- Traverse City Area Public Schools
- Traverse City Downtown Development Authority

General Partners:

- Local food trucks/restaurants
- Local music venues
- Local high school bands
- Local Downtown Development Authority



(Source)

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