

EV Affordability Toolkit

Talking about EVs During a Cost-of-Living Crisis

This toolkit provides guidance for positioning EVs as practical, cost-saving vehicles that are accessible and relevant to everyday Americans. It emphasizes telling the best story we can in any given situation — using relatable anecdotes and personal experiences — rather than telling the whole story with a heavy focus on technical benefits or abstract data points.

By telling relatable stories about EV drivers saving money, we can position EVs as solutions to the affordability crisis, making it easier for mayors, governors, and state and local policymakers to advance good EV programs and policies.

Key assumptions:

- **Primary decision-makers:** governors, mayors and state and local policy makers
- **Timeframe:** 2026-2028
- **Goal:** Shift public perception of EVs and affordability through relatable stories, making it easier for decisionmakers to act

Key principles

- **Focus on practicality, not technology.** Start with the rising cost of living and position EVs—especially used EVs and fleets—as practical solutions for everyday people and businesses to save money.
- **Lead with personal stories.** In lieu of high-level facts and data points (e.g., consumers on average save...), lead with compelling personal stories. Highlight real drivers and their monthly savings and other tangible benefits in their words.
- **Reinforce identity.** Position EV drivers as everyday people who are practical, savvy and prepared (e.g., moms, rural Americans, tradespeople), not virtuous or elite.
- **Tell the best, truest story for the moment.** Avoid overloading your messaging with caveats and data points. The goal is not to prove EVs work for every person in every context, but to share real stories where EVs are helping drivers save money. For example:
 - Instead of explaining total cost of ownership, driving patterns, geographic differences, etc., highlight specific situations. For example, *“Meet Rosa, a single mom in Phoenix who cut her monthly transportation costs by \$200 after switching to a used EV, and put her savings toward childcare.”*

- Instead of explaining every incentive, rebate, and rate structure, zero in on one story. For example, “A [insert specific city] fleet saved enough on fuel and maintenance in one year to fund other essential services.”

Core messages

EVs are a practical, cost-saving upgrade for a changing economy.

Transportation is one of the biggest and most volatile expenses for American households and businesses. EVs—especially used EVs—are one way many Americans are lowering and stabilizing costs.

- EVs help practical, prepared people get ahead.
- Smart shoppers are switching to EVs and enjoying immediate monthly savings.
- Used EVs are much cheaper to buy than many gas cars.
- Lower fuel and maintenance costs mean lower monthly bills and fewer monthly surprises.
- Businesses and local government agencies are saving money and reducing uncertainty by investing in EVs for their fleet and business transportation needs.

Storytelling strategies

The most compelling messages about EVs and affordability are rooted in everyday life (e.g., monthly savings instead of total cost of ownership); highlight benefits that people feel immediately (e.g., charge while you sleep) and which are simple and resonate emotionally (e.g., never pay for gas or an oil change again). Some storytelling strategies include:

- **Center everyday people.** Use one relatable person to illustrate a broader trend. “Meet Nina, she just switched to an EV and is saving \$X thousand on gas and loves her commute more.”
- **Emphasize shared identities.** Build credibility and extend your reach by using shared identities, such as a mom/caregiver balancing the family budget; a rural farmer using gas savings toward farm expenses; a tradesperson whose vehicle is essential to their livelihood.
- **Use relatable, surprising story arcs.** Feature unexpected EV converts with “I wasn’t planning to switch, but [add surprising savings]” stories and highlight surprising benefits through “I bought it for the savings but stayed for the [add unique benefit]” stories.
- **Highlight real savings and practical benefits.** Use clear, compelling one-liners such as “No more \$80 fill-ups. No more oil changes. Charge while you sleep. Skip the gas station forever. Fewer moving parts and fewer trips to the mechanic.”

Visual recommendations

The goal is for visuals to reinforce EVs as affordable and EV drivers as practical and prepared.

- **Use real, authentic photos that challenge assumptions about who EVs are for and how they're used** by featuring rural drivers, women, young families, tradespeople, college students and everyday moments like tailgates, camping trips and farmers markets.
- **Avoid technical visuals** that confuse audiences **or luxury settings** that alienate them.