

Preaching by Example: Government Buildings to Improve Efficiency and Conservation of Energy

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In January 2010, the Hamilton County Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grant (EECBG-Formula) was initiated. As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Hamilton County was awarded a total of \$4,841,600 for its EECBG Formula Grant. Of that total, \$919,495 was committed to the Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance <http://greatercea.org/> to implement its energy efficiency upgrade programs that would offer energy audits, retrofit services, education and innovative financing to residences, small businesses and non-profits in Hamilton County.

The majority of the EECBG Formula Grant, \$3,417,617 will be utilized for investment in energy efficiency improvements to County buildings and other public buildings of participating jurisdictions in Hamilton County. Specifically \$1,873,000 is committed to public buildings (other than County buildings) and \$1,100,000 for County-owned buildings. An energy performance-contracting (EPC) process will be employed whereby energy service companies (ESCOs) will identify and evaluate energy-saving opportunities for each building and recommend a package of improvements to be paid out of the energy savings reaped from the improvements. All told, the ESCOs will identify and evaluate energy-saving opportunities, develop engineering designs and specifications, manage the project from design to installation to monitoring, arrange for financing, train building staff and provide ongoing maintenance services and guarantee that savings will cover all project costs.

The money allocated from the EECBG Formula Grant for the energy performance contracting will be used to “buy down” the cost of the energy efficiency projects for County and other Public buildings identified by the ESCOs. The basic premise of this program is to bring in private capital as “leverage” to available EECBG funding, so that many more facilities can improve their energy efficiency than could be covered by simply expending the federal dollars on a small number of pressing projects.

In January, a request was sent to Hamilton County jurisdictions to complete an energy survey (questionnaire) about energy usage, costs and systems for existing buildings. In mid-March, a follow-up request was sent for completing the energy survey and also requesting that jurisdictions send back a letter of intent to participate. By late-March, the following communities had sent back completed energy surveys: Village of Golf Manor, City of Blue Ash, City of Silverton, City of Forest Park, City of Reading, City of Sprindale, Delhi Township, Village of Woodlawn, City of Sharonville, Village of Glendale, City of Wyoming, City of Harrison, Village of Mariemont, Village of Terrace Park, Village of

Fairfax, City of Cheviot, Village of Lockland, City of Norwood, Symmes Township and Amberley Village.

The next steps in the implementation process for the EPC program would be to release a Request for Proposal to qualify energy service companies (ESCOs), meet with participating communities, select the winning ESCOs and have these ESCOs initiate detailed energy efficiency (EE) / renewable energy (RE) audits with participating communities. To help manage this process and ensure its quality and fairness, the County has engaged Clean Energy Solutions, Inc. (CESI) and its engineering subcontractor Facility Strategies Group to provide technical and contracting support. CESI will offer, to the participating Communities, assistance in compiling data, pre-qualifying facilities for EPCs, reviewing any existing EE or RE reports, explaining and assisting with the EPC process, managing RFP(s) for energy service companies (ESCOs), supporting negotiations with the winning bidder(s), ensuring fair and transparent contracts, providing quality assurance, verifying savings, and documenting results.

The approximate near-term timeline for the EPC program is:

- March 31: Community data and signed letter of intent due
- March 31: Meetings scheduled with participating communities
- April 2: RFP for ESCOs released
- Early April: Meetings with Phase I communities
- Mid April: Bidders Conference with ESCOs. Communities are welcome to attend
- April 23: ESCO responses due
- Mid May: ESCOs selected
- June 1: ESCOs schedule detailed EE/RE audits with participating communities