BETTER BUILDINGS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Spotlight on Seattle, Washington:

Community Partnerships Work to Extend Program Reach

Key Takeaways

- Engage potential partners early to identify opportunities to expand your program's impact
- Tap into other city programs and local utility expertise to learn quickly
- Connect with local and regional experts for guidance on how to reach your goals

BetterBuildings is a pioneering program from the U.S. Department of Energy that is improving lives and communities across the country.

To learn how BetterBuildings is making homes more comfortable and businesses more lucrative and to read more from this Spotlight series, visit betterbuildings.energy.gov.

Seattle Moves the Needle With the Help of Its Partners

Seattle's Community Power Works (CPW) program has engaged a vast network of partners to build on existing capacity and knowledge, extending the reach of its program in a short period of time. By evaluating potential partnerships and identifying strategic opportunities to augment and enhance local ideas and programs, CPW is able to leverage its BetterBuildings seed funding to serve all building sectors within a diverse area in the city of Seattle. Simultaneously, CPW is set to achieve significant energy, climate, and economic development goals with its 40 partners—setting the city up for program sustainability.

Leverage Existing Initiatives To Expand Reach

CPW's small number of employees have become masters at strategically leveraging their partnerships, and especially their funding, to help get creative ideas off the ground. In Seattle's large commercial sector, CPW was able to build on existing momentum and provide the needed seed funding to launch a new financing option for large building owners in downtown Seattle. The funds will allow more loans to be available at lower interest rates than would otherwise have been the case—resulting in a higher likelihood of achieving energy, greenhouse gas, and bottom-line savings for businesses in the community.

A local energy services company (ESCO),[1] MacDonald-Miller Facility Solutions, identified an opportunity for energy efficiency upgrades among heating utility Seattle Steam's 200 business district customers, who represent more than 20 million square feet of space. MacDonald-Miller completes the building upgrades and offers building owners an energy services agreement that ensures project performance. Customers then repay the project costs over time as part of their Seattle Steam bill.

CPW's contribution will be $1.3 million of its BetterBuildings seed funding used for a variety of credit enhancements to make the financing more widely available at lower interest rates and attract private capital partners. The city's funds will be used for subordinated debt and a debt service reserve fund to attract additional private funding anticipated at roughly $10 million, as well as grants based on carbon emission reductions to further incent significant energy savings.

Tap Into Diverse Regional Expertise To Save Time and Resources

To leapfrog the learning process in effectively reaching its target audiences in the residential and small business communities, CPW took note of its available resources as part of Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment to develop relationships with other city offices that

1 Traditionally, building upgrades are paid for upfront. In contrast, energy service companies offer financing options and/or performance guarantees that allow commercial building owners to pay back upgrade costs over time with the savings achieved through energy efficiency upgrades.

had experience working with similar community members. Seattle's Office of Economic Development (OED) had already run healthy food programs in CPW's target neighborhoods, so CPW approached OED staff to learn from their experiences with conducting outreach in the community and their relationships with local organizations. CPW plans to leverage OED connections with the Seattle business community to engage potential participants in this small business upgrade program. In addition, CPW tapped Seattle's Office of Housing to gain insights into effective technical, marketing, and communication approaches based on its experience administering Seattle's low-income weatherization program.

Extending its reach farther into the region, CPW has developed a close relationship with Clean Energy Works Oregon (CEWO), a nearby BetterBuildings community that also inspired

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CPW to develop its Community Workforce Agreement. CEWO used "energy advisors" to guide residential participants through its pilot program and found the service to be useful but quite expensive. As a result of discussions with CEWO, CPW will be offering a more flexible energy expert service to program participants, prioritized based on homeowner request or CPW's identified need for additional support. Instead of requiring all homeowners to frequently engage with resource-intensive energy advisors, homeowners will be able to choose the level of assistance they would like from energy experts. In addition, CPW will have the energy experts provide some targeted support to applicants who are moving more slowly through the process. CPW and CEWO have strengthened their partnership even further through a joint contractual relationship for the development of information technology services that they will both use to manage and monitor their programs—further minimizing the learning curve and leveraging their funds.

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Engage Partners Early and Often To Expand Program Reach

Because Seattle is home to many environmental and energy-related efforts, CPW made a point early on of engaging utilities with complementary efficiency programs, organizations that offered expertise in areas that CPW staff lacked, and respected local political leaders. These partnerships were extremely important to focus CPW's efforts where it could add value and complement, rather than duplicate, the work of other organizations.

Develop Strategic Partnerships

CPW has formed unique partnerships with three local utilities to increase its marketing and program reach beyond its seed funding.

- Seattle City Light, the city's municipal electric utility, is running a new on-bill financing program for residential customers, offering an attractive option for homeowners to fund CPW efficiency upgrade work with low or no upfront costs. Seattle City Light is also co-marketing CPW's upgrade program by providing CPW information in mailers to all Seattle City Light customers and delivering CPW program materials when Seattle City Light representatives go door to door to deliver compact fluorescent light bulbs and low-flow showerheads.
- Puget Sound Energy, a regulated utility providing natural gas service to the Puget Sound region, is offering rebates for energy efficiency measures in the CPW program territory. These measures are being co-marketed by CPW—saving program funds while attracting additional interest in upgrades.
- Seattle Steam, which provides heat to Seattle's Central Business District, is delivering information about energy efficiency program offerings to some of the large commercial, university, and hospital customers in the CPW territory and will also offer an on-bill repayment program for energy upgrades.

Extensive work by CPW staff focused on the program's potential to help meet many of Seattle's economic development and climate goals, gaining valuable political support and buy-in from both the mayor's office and city council for the program. Through regular communications, CPW has been able to actively engage with the mayor's staff and council members on coordinated press releases as well as press events. This strategic partnership has garnered press attention and high visibility for CPW's efforts and events without expensive media campaigns.

Partner With Experts to Help Meet Your Goals

CPW wants to ensure that employment, training, and business opportunities will stay in the community, and that the program will create and retain career jobs for area residents while saving energy. In keeping with its partnering approach, CPW tapped two nonprofit organizations, Emerald Cities Seattle and Green for All, for their experience in coalition building and designing agreements that support the development of quality job opportunities. CPW also reached out to labor groups, community members, contractors, and training providers to determine how to meet its goals. The nonprofits helped CPW define program requirements for contractors who would be eligible to complete energy efficiency upgrade work and ensure that the contractor jobs created by CPW are good jobs. CPW's efforts culminated in a Community Workforce Agreement,[2] which establishes high contractor standards in order to be eligible for CPW jobs, encourages training and hiring within the community, aims for significant small business participation, and defines labor provisions beneficial to and for contractors.

2 Seattle's Workforce Agreement is available at http://www.communitypowerworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Community-High-Road-Agreement.pdf.

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Seattle, Washington

Accomplishments

Within Six Months of Program Launch

- Signed Community High-Road Agreement
- Launched large commercial, hospital, and municipal program

Program Elements

Driving Demand

- Reaching out through multiple partners
- Energy experts

Workforce

- Community Workforce Agreement
- Preapproved list of local contractors

Financing

- Unsecured residential loans with on-bill repayment
- On-bill commercial financing

Program Facts

- DOE Seed Funding: $20 million
- Building Types: Residential (single and multi-family), commercial, small business, hospitals, industrial, municipal, and facilities
- Building Upgrade Goals: 2,000 homes; 25 large commercial buildings; 4 hospitals; 14 municipal buildings; 70 multi-family buildings; 120 small commercial buildings
- Energy Savings Goal: 15 to 45 percent in each upgraded building

BetterBuildings: Community Power Works

Utilities in the Seattle region have offered energy efficiency incentives for many years, but none of these programs has attempted to reach the breadth of customer types and depth of savings that Community Power Works (CPW) is targeting with its seed funding from BetterBuildings. Operated by the city of Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment and staffed by city employees, CPW is leveraging numerous efforts and innovations to create a comprehensive energy efficiency program to serve all building sectors in Seattle, starting with a large and extremely diverse region in southeast Seattle.

Learn More

www.communitypowerworks.org

BetterBuildings: Community Power Works Contact

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