
Retail Merchants Association of NH

Energy Efficiency Program – Final Report

Julie Karaba, RMANH Energy
Efficiency Program Manager



Program Type

As reported in the 2009/2010 Retail Merchants Association Grant Proposal:

The first phase of this Program will include a number of elements or “types of programs” including the following (as numbered in Puc 2604.01 (c)):

1. Energy audits;
2. Weatherization of New Hampshire commercial buildings;
4. Revolving loan funds for efficiency related investment;
8. Programs to improve the electric and thermal energy efficiency of existing commercial buildings;
10. Education, outreach and information programs that promote energy efficiency, conservation, and demand response;
11. Demand response;
12. Other: civic leadership; creation of larger public education campaign which will target retail transactions as learning opportunities.

Potential elements which may be included:

- 5: Energy efficiency related work force training and development;
6. Integration of passive solar heating and ventilation;
7. Programs to increase compliance with the building energy code

Summary of Work

Using Exhibit A of the RMANH contract as an outline, the work completed throughout the duration of the grant period is summarized as follows:

Task 1: Establish Administrative Structure

Program Manager (Julie Skarritt-Karaba) was hired in August, 2009 to develop and oversee the program. Subcontractors (The Dupont Group and the Jordan Institute) were also contracted to design survey and data collection instruments. Additionally, RMANH membership was surveyed in the early stages of the program, in an effort to identify and pre-enroll program participants.

Task 2: Launch Education and Communications Campaign

In the first months of the program, the existing RMANH website was expanded to include an energy page. Elements of the energy page are the enrollment application, press releases, and announcements to the membership regarding the launch of the new Energy Efficiency Program.

Printed brochures, membership brochure inserts, a detailed enrollment letter, FAQs, project folders, and a post-card mailer were developed and used in geographically targeted postal campaigns to generate interest in the program. These items were also distributed at energy forums, business expos and trade show events and seminars attended by RMANH representatives throughout the year. Along with these media pieces, a tabletop display board was created for used at various functions, and available for viewing at RMANH's Annual Legislative Reception, an event attended by numerous state government officials.

Late in the grant year, an Energy Tool Kit was developed as a leave-behind education packet for business members not yet ready to enroll in the program. It is designed to educate retailers on current energy use, where energy can be saved, rebate programs, quick solutions, long-term investments, etc. Once they have a certain

level of comfort with the idea of energy efficiency, we can then approach them with our energy efficiency program, and encourage them to take advantage of our rebates and financial program assistance.

Two energy efficiency seminars were coordinated by RMANH, and RMANH's EEP Program Manager has twice been invited to Green Alliance functions, as a guest and as a speaker. Julie has participated in numerous chamber, rotary, and business trade organization events throughout NH towns and cities, including Manchester, Rochester, Nashua, Portsmouth, and Concord.

An energy newsletter was created and distributed to RMANH members and an additional mailing list of NH business owners approximately every six weeks. Copies of the newsletters are made available on the energy page of the RMANH web site. Additionally, printed copies of the energy newsletter have been included as inserts in the RMANH "Retail Recap" member newsletter (hard copy), distributed to RMANH membership on a quarterly basis.

Task 3: Deploy Member Inventory and Enrollment

Research was conducted by the Dupont Group in other states with regard to demand response programs. Initial results suggested that a changing and smaller NE-ISO Demand response program might make it difficult to develop a RMANH program.

However, RMANH met with an energy market provider to learn about energy commodity programs that might include demand response, and would bring value to EEP members. Based on information learned in this meeting, RMANH chose not to bring this information to its membership.

Program Manager Julie Skarritt-Karaba met with other RGGI grant recipients to discuss program/project overlap, and where there is overlap into the communities served by our respective programs.

RMANH was also represented at monthly EESE Board meetings, Green Alliance meetings, Climate Collaborative meetings, and Green Concord meetings.

Task 4: Conduct Energy Efficiency Evaluations and Audits

The Energy Efficiency Program is divided into three phases, with a number of audits to be undertaken in phases one two. The audits were completed by The Jordan Institute, and include:

- Onsite visits and analysis of energy use, including fuel oil, and cost.
- Blower door and infrared envelope analysis, lighting census, evaluation of natural lighting options, and HVAC system evaluation and suggested upgrades.
- Evaluate potential heating, cooling, air exchange, envelope, lighting, and all electric usage options.
- Review efficiency, demand reduction, and peak shaving potential of more efficient alternative fuel systems for each building, including biomass, solar (thermal and PV), combined heat and power, and possible district heating collaborations where appropriate.
- Provide both an energy model and a financial model of all the various viable alternatives and work with the owner to determine an implementation plan.
- Assign each resultant "implementation project" to a case manager who will work with the business to structure the project management which will include seeking bids, ordering materials, enrolling in utility programs, engineering and contracting.
- Select a smaller group of ten to twelve candidates for a full Assessment and Evaluation for their commercial building.

Results:

- In Phase I: 25 total, or 100%, of reports were completed and presented to the enrolled member as of July, 2010.
- In Phase II: 13 out of 10 contracts, or 130%, of reports were completed and delivered to the enrolled member as of January, 2011. In several cases, the Phase II results were further evaluated at the request of the business owner and additional energy efficiency upgrade information will be furnished to the enrolled member after the reporting period.

Task 5: Develop Project Financing and Implementation

Contracts were developed for each phase of the program, to address the needs of the member, RMANH, The Jordan Institute, and the contractor. These legal documents outline project deliverables, identify responsible parties, outline the payment schedule and rebate process.

Additionally, a unique cost-sharing financial package was developed for each project using the best available project data. As new rebates, tax incentives, or loan programs become available, the package is re-evaluated to make the best opportunities available to the business owner. To that end, an energy program Case manager, Joe Lajewski, was hired in May 2010 to assume the responsibilities of coordinating financial resources. A financial guide was developed late in 2010 to serve as resource for the business owner, to help them understand the various programs and incentives that might be available to help fund a potential project. A primary responsibility of the case manager will be to assist with the completion of rebate, credit, loan of incentive energy efficiency applications where applicable.

Task 6: Establish Civic Leadership Program

The development of in-store and table-top displays, media campaigns, and defining energy “champions” throughout NH communities is an important part of the education of the public and members of the retail community. White Birch Communications and RMANH developed a three panel display to be used at trade shows, community centers, retail centers, chambers of commerce, and expo events to publicize the program and participating members. As more information is generated in the community with regard to ongoing project work, it is assumed that like-minded business members will make some effort to join our program, or a program like it.

Task 7: Establish Measurement and Verification of Energy Use

As part of the Phase I audit, pre-project energy use and energy expenditures based on at least three years of data was collected for each enrolled business. This data was entered into Portfolio Manager and used to benchmark the project. A comparison was drawn between the business and the energy performance of other similarly situated businesses in New England. This evaluation and analysis was provided by The Jordan Institute.

Post-project energy use data will be collected for several years after renovations are completed to determine which measures are most effective. This information will be shared with Carbon Solutions New England and the business owner in an effort to make necessary improvements and adjustments to operating procedures.

Job Creation

Two full time jobs were created as a result of this grant: the Program Manager and Case Manager positions.

Obstacles

The biggest obstacles are seasonality and the economy. The retail market effectively closes down for the three month period of October to December, for the holiday season. Throughout the winter months, they operate on a lean budget, while planning for the influx of the summer tourist season. There is a narrow window of opportunity within which to engage this group of the business community. Furthermore, the period 2009/2010 was one of the most challenging economically for the retail sector, in the midst of a national recession. Recovery, not energy efficiency, was at the forefront of most business owners minds.

The concept of energy efficiency is interesting to most business owners, when presented as a means to reduce operating expenses. If an audit is free, or considerably subsidized, the recruitment process is fairly straightforward. When the investment involves more than a 5 year payback, we saw little interest in proceeding with the retrofit project. The idea of undertaking a project strictly for carbon reduction purposes, although noble, was simply not an effective means of marketing this program. Under the current economic conditions, cost was the most important factor in the decision-making process.

Beyond the Funding

A considerable amount of work remains to be done to educate, engage, and recruit the retail community into participating in the many levels of energy efficiency that are available to business owners and commercial space investors. Future grant years will focus on these efforts, and the implementation of deep retrofit projects throughout NH communities.

Attachments

Brochures
Newsletters
Rack cards

GHGERF Budget Spreadsheet 2009/2010