



Governor’s Best Practices in Workforce & Economic Development Award Nomination Application

Nominated Project Title: Community Energy Challenge

Project Lead Name: Shawn Collins **Phone number** 360 733-6559 **E-mail**
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Summary of nominated project (No more than two sentences.): The Community Energy Challenge (CEC) is a collaborative program in Whatcom County, WA, which is piloting an innovative approach to achieving energy efficiency in homes and small businesses while saving money, reducing pollution and creating green jobs.

Region and/or communities benefitting from project: Whatcom County

When (month and year) did nominated project launch: July 2010

Has the project/activity operated continuously since then: yes
If not, explain:

Start-up costs \$198,780 **Most recent annual budget:** \$1,909,110

List your major funding sources, including tax credits or incentives, grants, and other private sector support: WSU Community Energy Efficiency Pilot Program, EPA Climate Showcase Grant, Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant, Energy Efficiency Credit Enhancement, Homeowner contributions, Puget Sound Energy, Cascade Natural Gas, ARRA Community Service Block Grant, Community Foundations and Fundraising,

Describe the purpose (need) and the unique approach taken by the nominated project to satisfy the stated need (450 words or less)

The CEC makes achieving energy efficiency as easy as possible from start to finish. We provide each participating household and business with quality information, a full energy assessment, and a customized energy action plan. Our comprehensive plan details cost-effective measures, assistance with utility and tax rebates, attractive and accessible financing opportunities, reliable contractors, and quality assurance.

The CEC represents a unique opportunity to begin to realize the massive energy savings potential in the small commercial and residential sectors. By aggregating customers for loan products and contractors/installers, we are achieving the economies of scale needed to make numerous small weatherization project efforts both cost effective from a conservation perspective and worthwhile from a business perspective.

As of July 2011, the program has been operational for nearly one year and has performed assessments on more than 500 homes and completed 200 projects, with another 100 in progress. Based on the average homeowner’s energy consumption in Washington State, our projects are saving homeowners 20% of their energy costs each year, or nearly \$300 each and every year. More than 80 businesses are participating and we have documented thousands of dollars in energy savings. More than 60 jobs are being supported by the project – the equivalent of 17 FTEs being created by this project.

The CEC’s one-stop-shop approach to energy efficiency for small businesses and homeowners provides multiple unique advantages:

- Energy efficiency is among the most cost effective ways to reduce greenhouse gases. Participants in the CEC pay the majority of the project costs and realize payback over time through reduced energy bills.
- We are able to offer a very high rate of leveraged funding as a result of utilizing private (building owner or financial institution) funds to cover the majority of costs associated with an energy efficiency project.
- The expertise of staff and quality of work performed by the CEC and its participating contractors is unparalleled. Contractors are trained and held to rigorous standards. 100% of our projects receive quality assurance by experts with years of experience in the field.
- The CEC has been recognized in several forums, including the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency, as a national leader in the effectiveness of our partnership building efforts.
- The CEC is already achieving significant success in engaging the community to make lasting changes in the efficiency of their homes. The residential program is seeing more than 60% of all homeowners who participate in the program implement at least one recommended capital measure.
- By coordinating contractors, vendors, customers and service providers such as financial institutions and real estate agents we are achieving market transformation that will have impact well beyond our specific projects.

Describe how the nominated project incorporates both workforce and economic development practices and provides a benefit to workers and employers. (See cover page) (250 words or less) By prioritizing local businesses in the program design, the CEC is utilizing more than twenty local contractors to perform the energy efficiency improvement work. Since becoming fully operational, the residential projects coordinated through the program have totaled more than \$1 million, which has helped to keep businesses involved in the construction industry viable in these tough economic times. The CEC is responsible for creating seventeen new jobs and is currently supporting more than sixty positions throughout the community.

All work completed through the CEC adheres to the WA State prevailing wage standards, which helps to ensure that these are living wage jobs being supported in the community. CEC program staff work with the staff of local contractors to provide support in navigating the various processes associated with Labor and Industries, Department of Historic Preservation, etc. This is particularly important for smaller firms with limited staff support.

The CEC provides in depth job training to perspective employees, as well as staff of current participating CEC contractors. These contractors have been able to adjust their business models with the CEC's help to expand the variety of services that they provide in the community, which increases their customer base.

Another result of the work completed in both the residential and small commercial sectors has been to reduce energy costs for clients. This has the result of increasing the amount of money available to these customers. We estimate that the average residential project through the CEC saves \$250 annually because of the work completed.

Will the nominated project continue into the future? Yes

If yes, how will it be funded and sustained. (200 words) The CEC will continue to operate into the future with a variety of funds generated through participant fees, grant funds, and contributions from local governments and utilities.

In an attachment, demonstrate how this project/activity has made a quantifiable difference to the economic health of working people and employers. (Tables and graphs based on verifiable numbers. Words should be used only to support the data and should be kept to a minimum)

Check when done.

A short concluding statement on why you believe this project/activity is noteworthy or unique and should serve as a best practice model. (100 words or less) The CEC program is making available to the community at large the best practices in energy efficiency that have been developed in the low-income weatherization programs. The Building Performance Center, under sponsorship from the Opportunity Council has provided the leadership and technical training capacity to make world class

residential energy efficiency available to all households in Whatcom County. The model of service delivery they have developed is replicable in Counties across the State and Country

Program or Project's website or webpage: www.communityenergychallenge.org

List the leading individual(s) or organization(s) that should receive special recognition for their role in the project or activity. Please provide name, title, role, address and phone number.

**John Davies
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**Name and contact information of person completing this nomination form: David Ott
Snohomish County Human Services Weatherization Program 425-388-7249**



8/17/2011

Completed home energy assessments	500
Completed residential EE retrofits	205
Active projects to be completed (a small number of these people will drop out)	110
Uptake rate (% of people receiving assessments that complete a project)	63%
Avg. annual WA household's energy consumption (KWH equivalent)	25,100
Average estimated annual KWH (equivalent) reduction per project	4428
Estimated % reduction in energy consumption	18%
Average estimated annual dollar savings per project	\$251.00
Dollar value of projects to date	\$1,017,838.00
CEC \$ contributed to projects to date	\$236,016.00
Dollar value of Utility incentives accessed by projects	\$75,595.00
Average reduction of project cost through CEC incentives only	23%
Average total reduction in average project cost from Utility rebates only	7%
Total average reduction in project cost from CEC & Utilities rebates and incentives combined	31%
Average project cost pre-incentives/rebates	\$4,965
Average out of pocket cost per project for homeowners after incentives and rebates (not including tax ir	\$3,445
Average Simple Payback period for homeowners (years)	14
Average service delivery time (from the time the contractor arrives on site until quality assurance inspe	17 days
New Jobs Created (FTE)	17
Number of positions supported	60

CHRISTINE O. GREGOIRE
Governor



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Greetings from the Governor
August 15, 2011

I am pleased to extend warm greetings to all of those attending tonight's Community Energy Challenge (CEC) celebration, marking the completion of 500 home energy assessments and more than 200 local energy efficiency retrofits. Congratulations on this exciting milestone!

Your outstanding work reduces energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, while helping local residents see real savings in their energy bills. That's truly a win-win scenario, and I commend Sustainable Connections, the Opportunity Council, and all of their partners for their commitment to furthering sustainable practices in your local community and beyond.

Today, more than ever before, we face environmental and economic challenges that require change, and your work nicely complements our statewide efforts to reduce our carbon footprint; create family-wage, green collar jobs; and achieve sustainability. I applaud your spirit of action, and I hope your example will motivate others to exercise leadership in energy efficiency measures.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication, and please accept my best wishes for a memorable time of celebration and continued success in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine O. Gregoire".

Christine O. Gregoire
Governor