

## EPA Climate Showcase Community – MWCOG proposal / energy outreach program and competition

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) is seeking support from EPA for a regional energy outreach program to motivate residents to reduce their electricity and gas consumption in the Washington region, using online energy monitoring tools, innovative incentives, grassroots approach and competition.

The key components of the proposed project are:

- **Online energy monitoring platform** made available to all residential customers in the region. This platform, connected to individual utility accounts from which data will be automatically retrieved, will enable online tracking of energy consumption, month after month. It will be hosted on a web portal providing tips on energy savings and access to MWCOG partners' programs,
- **Outreach activities** to promote the program, recruit participants and engage communities in energy savings that reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
- **Innovative incentives:** reward program for individuals in proportion to achieved energy savings compared to the previous year baseline, competition between communities throughout the region for biggest consolidated energy savings.

### Project Tasks

#### **Task 1. Develop technical tools**

MWCOG proposes to work with a contractor to develop version 2.0 of energy monitoring platform and regional energy and climate portal.

Version 1.0 will be developed for the pilot phase expected to begin on October 2010. For the version 2.0, the contractor selected by COG will be responsible for developing new contents and capabilities (eg: video contents).

#### **Task 2. Design challenge and competition**

During this phase, MWCOG will work with the program steering committee to design the competition part of the program. Competition rules will be established.

MWCOG will also hire a contractor for sponsor research to establish a reward program that will reward individuals and teams in proportion to achieved energy savings. This contractor will establish a sponsorship strategy, research sponsors and negotiate their participation in the program. MWCOG objective will be to establish a reward program that is primarily geared toward energy-efficient products, in order to create a "virtuous circle" for energy savings.

#### **Task 3. Develop marketing and outreach strategy**

For task 3, MWCOG will work with a public relation and communication professional to develop a marketing plan. The overarching goal of the plan will be to foster the program's potential to become "viral". The plan shall identify target audiences, draw on existing market research, define marketing objectives, recommend marketing strategies and recommend detailed action plans to achieve the stated objectives.

#### **Task 4. Prepare grassroots campaign and Energy Leaders program**

For this part, MWCOG will work a grassroots coordinator or partner with a couple of organizations that already have field organizing experience in energy performance (eg: weatherization providers, green jobs training centers, Home Performance with energy star partners). Their mission will be to:

- Identify local community groups that can support and publicize the regional program,
- reach out to them, secure their engagement in the program, provide them on-going support,
- Coordinate grassroots activities, track and document initiatives taken by these groups to promote participation in MWCOG program.

In addition of creating and sustaining this broad network of community organizations supportive of the program, MWCOG also proposes to develop an innovative approach to community engagement, by setting up a “community Energy Leaders” program. These individuals will be trained by MWCOG and will be required to commit to a certain amount of time for the program. COG is studying an incentive plan that could motivate people to apply.

The steps to create the Community Energy Leader Program are the following:

- Develop training curriculum for Energy Leaders, on home energy conservation and outreach techniques.
- Develop an “energy leader toolkit” (print, energy leaders blogs),
- Recruit approximately 30 Energy Leaders for Season 1, train them and coordinate the Community Energy Leaders network and activities.

MWCOG Community Energy Leader program will build on a similar program that will be tested in one of COG member jurisdiction (Montgomery County) in the coming months.

#### **Task 5 - Launch and implement “season 1” of the program**

This phase will begin with the official launch of the program’s “SEASON 1” (6 months, during winter). Recruitment of new participants will be on-going through implementation of the marketing campaign and grassroots activities.

The content of the marketing campaign will depend of the strategy recommended in task 4. Given the nature of the proposed program, preliminary research let us think that the campaign should focus on targeted web advertisement and a strong presence on social media and blogs.

The grassroots activities will include implementation of the Community Energy Leaders program, kick-off meetings, local “home energy forums”, energy workshops, participation in local events with schools, churches, community centers and other community groups. This part will be overseen by the grassroots coordinator (or contractor?) hired by MWCOG.

Progress in participation rate per jurisdiction and per state, energy savings achieved by participants will be tracked monthly during season 1 and reporting to the program steering committee as well as to EPA. Based on monthly reporting, MWCOG will adjust the program if needed.

Season 1 will end with the publication of the final results and an award ceremony for best performing teams, communities and/or jurisdictions.

**Task 6. Evaluate Season 1**

In this phase, the outcomes of Season 1’s outcomes will be consolidated by MWCOG in a final report. This report will also identify the lessons learned for Season 2 and the adjustments that need to be made to the program.

**Task 7. Implement Season 2**

Season 2 will follow basically the same scheme as season 1, but will happen during spring / summer. This will enables to test new messages fitted to the season. MWCOG will work with the same contractors as for Season 1.

**Task 8. Conduct final evaluation, design strategy for program continuation and replication in other communities**

This final task is a “wrap-up” phase for the entire program. MWCOG will produce a final evaluation report that will include a strategy for program continuation in the Washington region as well as guidelines for other regions / cities that would like to replicate a similar program in their communities.

Deliverables

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>
Task 1. Develop technical tools	Energy monitoring tool and regional energy and climate web portal version 2.0
Task 2. Design challenge and competition	Competition rules Reward program
Task 3. Develop marketing and outreach strategy	Marketing and outreach plan
Task 4. Prepare grassroots campaign	Outreach strategy and plan Community Energy Leader Training Program Toolkit for Energy Leaders
Task 5 - Launch and implement “season 1” of the program	Monthly progress reports
Task 6. Evaluate Season 1	Evaluation report on Season 1
Task 7. Implement Season 2	Monthly progress reports
Task 8. Conduct final evaluation, Design strategy for program continuation and replication in other communities	Final evaluation report and guideline for program replication

## Project Time line

Tasks and activities	Time	24-Month Project Date	Responsible party
<b>Task 1. Develop technical tools</b>			
Develop version 2.0 of energy monitoring platform and regional energy and climate portal	2 months	Feb- April 2011	MWCOG + Web/ IT contractor
<b>Task 2. Design challenge and competition</b>			
Design competition rules Hire PR/marketing firm Research sponsors for reward program	2 months	Feb - April 2011	MWCOG + partners <sup>(*)</sup> + PR/ marketing firm
<b>Task 3. Develop marketing and outreach strategy</b>			
Develop marketing strategy Media buy, research sponsors for media campaign	4 months	Feb – May 2011	MWCOG + partners <sup>(*)</sup> + PR/ marketing firm
<b>Task 4. Prepare grassroots campaign</b>			
Hire grassroots coordinator + 2 interns Hire consultant for Community Leaders program (curriculum development, training) Develop Community Energy Leaders program Prepare program launch with community groups	4 months	Feb 2011 March – July 2011	MWCOG MWCOG MWCOG MWCOG
<b>Task 5 - Launch and implement “season 1” of the program</b>			
Implement marketing campaign and grassroots activities, including Community Energy Leaders program Recruit participants and track progress	6 months	Sept - Feb 2011	MWCOG and partners <sup>(*)</sup>
<b>Task 6. Evaluate Season 1</b>			
Consolidate Season 1’s outcomes Identify adjustments for season 2	2 months	March- April 2012	MWCOG
<b>Task 7. Implement Season 2</b>			
	6 months	May – Oct 2012	MWCOG and partners <sup>(*)</sup>
<b>Task 8. Conduct final evaluation, Design strategy for program continuation and replication in other communities</b>			
	2 months	Nov –Dec 2012	MWCOG

<sup>(\*)</sup> utilities, local jurisdictions, state energy agencies