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Eight West Central Minnesota projects receive CERTs Seed Grants for community-based clean energy efforts

SAINT PAUL, Minn. (01/22/2024)—Minnesota’s Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) is awarding seed grants to 45 energy efficiency and renewable energy projects—including eight within the west central region of Minnesota. The projects range from skill-building for clean energy careers, to educational outreach on clean energy incentives, to energy efficiency for manufactured homes.

Seed grants strive to support historically underserved communities.¹ Underserved communities include Minnesota populations with high energy burdens, where households spend more than 5% of their annual income on energy costs (compared to 2% for the average Minnesota household). For example, Neighbors United Resource Center Food Shelf will make energy efficiency upgrades to their facility so they can save money previously spent on energy and use it to better serve the community.

Financial and programmatic support comes from CERTs’ partner the Minnesota Department of Commerce, with additional support from the Morgan Family Foundation. Minnesota’s seven regions are each receiving \$43,000. The support will be distributed among the projects which were selected by panels of local residents known as CERTs Regional Steering Committees.

“This new round of CERTs Seed Grants will support community-identified initiatives, help provide jobs and training opportunities, plus engage communities in reaching their clean energy goals,” says Joel Haskard, CERTs co-director.

CERTs Seed Grants encourage projects that help people see clean energy working in their own communities. With over \$1.98 million awarded to 509 projects since 2006, the newly funded 2024 projects will provide more opportunities for Minnesota communities to tangibly learn about and experience the benefits of clean energy.

For more information, visit CleanEnergyResourceTeams.org/2024grants

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¹ CERTs defines underserved communities as energy burdened communities—those who spend more than 5% of their income on energy costs—and groups historically excluded from energy decisions and opportunities. This includes (but is not limited to) Black, Indigenous, people of color, women, immigrant, low-income, disabled, LGBTQ+, and geographically-isolated communities.

CERTS SEED GRANTS | WEST CENTRAL REGION

City of Morris: Exploring Opportunities for Heat Pump Electrification

Morris, Minn.—Exploring the feasibility, adoption, and performance of heat pumps within cold climate zones, this project will improve understanding of pathways for decarbonizing thermal loads in municipal and residential buildings.

City of St. Cloud: Public Outreach on Green Hydrogen Production at St. Cloud Recovery Facility

St. Cloud, Minn.—Translate project materials into Spanish and Somali to ensure more communities are informed of the benefits of Green Hydrogen.

City of Willmar Parks and Recreation: Willmar Civic Center Scoreboard Lighting Upgrade

Willmar, Minn.—Remove gas-powered equipment from the sports fields and install LED light scoreboards to reduce energy costs and eliminate localized pollution fumes and noise.

Neighbors United Resource Center Food Shelf: Food Shelf Energy Saving Initiative

Granite Falls, Minn.—Neighbors United will make energy efficiency upgrades in order to free up funds to better serve the community, decrease the carbon footprint of the building, and create a more inviting, inclusive, and accessible environment for shoppers.

River of Life Lutheran Church: Friends Building Lighting Upgrade

St. Peter, Minn.—LED lighting upgrade to the Friends Building, which hosts the St. Peter Food Shelf, Children's Weekend Food Program, St. Peter Community Free Clinic, and Mankato Rehabilitation Center Inc.

Slipstream Group, Inc: Manufactured Home Building Basics Training

West Central MN—This project will develop a curriculum to provide contractors and weatherization staff with a foundation of knowledge on manufactured home structures, heating systems, ductwork, and building science principles.

Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership: Air Source Heat Pump Feasibility Assessments

West Central MN—Feasibility assessments and estimated costs associated with the conversion of heating and water heating systems to heat pumps in three of 66 multifamily residential properties.

United Community Action Partnership: Home Education and Energy Saving Program

West Central MN—Staff will provide energy-saving ideas, install low-cost energy saving products (LED bulbs, pipe wrap, etc.), update appliances with energy-efficient ones available through local utility providers, as well as perform energy audits.

Statewide project details are available: CleanEnergyResourceTeams.org/2024grants

For more info from the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Resources Division and to sign up for the New Energy Programs newsletter: mn.gov/commerce/energy

About the Clean Energy Resource Teams: The Clean Energy Resource Teams, or CERTs, connects individuals and communities in Minnesota to the resources they need to identify and implement community-based clean energy projects. CERTs is a partnership of the University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, Minnesota Department of Commerce, Southwest Regional Development Commission, and the Great Plains Institute. Learn more: CleanEnergyResourceTeams.org

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