MD Smart Energy Communities

Program Overview: To be designated as a Smart Energy Community, a Maryland local government must adopt a set of policies specified by the Maryland Energy Administration. There are three potential policies - one each related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, and transportation petroleum reduction - and becoming a Smart Energy Community requires adopting two of the three policies. Once the policies are adopted, the local government becomes eligible for grant funding for energy-related projects.

Eligibility: Any Maryland local government (city, town, or county) can become a Maryland Smart Energy Community.

Goals: The overall goal of the program is to have local governments adopt policies and commit to them for the long term, leading to sustained energy savings and additional opportunities for renewable energy development.

MEA will provide technical assistance and support to the local governments as they adopt the policies. The University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center will also be available for technical guidance and support.

Incentives and Benefits of Participating:

Upon adopting the policies, local governments become eligible for grant funding from MEA to be used for energy-related projects. Becoming a Smart Energy Community will result in:

- Reduced utility and fuel expenses
- Support of local sustainability initiatives
- Greenhouse gas emissions reduction
- Statewide recognition as a leader in energy and sustainability

Project Requirements:

Local governments must adopt two of the three of the following policies:

1. Energy Efficiency
   - Establish an energy consumption baseline and develop a plan with the goal of reducing energy consumption of city/town or county-owned buildings by 15% within five (5) years of the baseline year.

2. Renewable Energy
   - Reduce conventional centralized electricity generation serving a local government’s buildings by meeting 20% of those buildings’ electricity demand with distributed, renewable energy generation by 2022.

3. Transportation Petroleum Reduction
   - A local government must establish a petroleum consumption baseline for all local government vehicles, and put in place a comprehensive program designed to reduce the baseline by 20 percent within five (5) years of the baseline year.
How To Apply: To be designated as a Smart Energy Community, applicants must follow a sequence of steps.

1. Review the policy guidance documents (online) for each of the required policies to ensure that you fully understand what is required.

2. Application (Late 2014)
The local government will apply to be designated as a Maryland Smart Energy Community and to receive grant funding. The next application period is anticipated to be at the end of 2014, but communities interested in learning more about the program, gaining early technical assistance, or simply understanding the application process are encouraged to contact the individuals listed below. The application involves getting sign-off from the city/county council or other governing body that they intend to pursue the policies within the allotted amount of time.

   For Additional Information
   Go to: http://energy.maryland.gov/Govt/smartenergycommunities/
   Or contact Lauren Urbanek from MEA at lauren.urbanek@maryland.gov or Call at 410-260-7522

   Or contact Sean Williamson at the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center at Srw46@umd.edu or Call at 301-405-8259

3. MEA Application Review (Early 2015)
MEA will evaluate applications based on multiple criteria including the local government’s capacity to pass policies within the given timeframe, ability to commit staff to the initiative, application completeness, and other factors (please see website for full list). If a local government is accepted into the program, they become eligible for grant funding for specific energy-related projects.

4. Implementation Agreements (Early 2015)
Once applications are approved, each participating local government will sign implementation agreements with MEA. The agreement will state that the local government will pass two of the three policies by October 31, 2015, and upon doing so will be eligible for a set amount of funding for an energy efficiency, renewable energy and/or transportation project, to be approved by MEA.

5. Policies Adopted (October 31, 2015)
Local governments must adopt the two policies and create the relevant baselines and plans by October 31, 2015. If communities do not pass the policies by this date, they are not eligible for project funding in the first round, though they may be eligible in future years. MEA and MEA’s technical support provider, the University of Maryland’s Environmental Finance Center, are available to help communities meet the program deliverables.

6. Funding for Energy-Related Project (To be spent by June 2016)
Once a local government passes the policies, they become designated as a Maryland Smart Energy Community and can access the project funding. All projects must be related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, and/or transportation and must be approved by MEA. A separate project proposal form will be available to local governments upon being accepted into the program. Projects are subject to MEA’s terms and conditions. Projects must be complete and invoiced by June 2016.