introduction

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) formed a partnership with a consortium of city and county governments entitled the Regional Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategic Initiative (REECS) in 2009. The consortium was made up of 11 of the 14 local jurisdictions in the Kansas City metropolitan region that received Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) funds from the U.S. Department of Energy. The funding was intended to assist U.S. cities and counties to develop, promote, implement and manage energy efficiency and conservation projects and programs designed to:

• Reduce fossil fuel emissions;
• Reduce the total energy use of the eligible entities;
• Improve energy efficiency in the transportation, building, and other appropriate sectors; and
• Create and retain jobs.

Through formula grants, the EECBG program empowered local communities to make strategic investments to meet the nation’s long-term goals for energy independence and leadership on climate change.

The REECS project sought to further DOE’s grant goals by fostering energy sustainability in the Greater Kansas City region through collaboration, education and outreach. Participants in the REECS initiative included:

Blue Springs, Mo.
Clay County, Mo.
Independence, Mo.
Jackson County, Mo.
Johnson County, Kan.
Kansas City, Mo.
Lee’s Summit, Mo.
Lenexa, Kan.
Olathe, Kan.
Shawnee, Kan.
Wyandotte County, Kansas City, Kan.

Background

For the past three years MARC and its partners have worked diligently to accomplish the short-term goals set out in the Regional Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategic Framework. The framework’s eight categories are:

1. Lead by example by implementing innovative energy conservation and efficiency practices in local government
2. Develop adoption and implementation strategies for local building and development codes, specifications and standards
3. Establish effective partnerships among state, regional and local energy programs
4. Implement education, outreach and citizen engagement strategies and programs
5. Create incentives for energy efficiency and conservation
6. Link energy strategies with related sustainability efforts
7. Assess, monitor and report the effectiveness of clean energy strategies
8. Promote emerging solutions and technologies to encourage market transformation

Four of the above were deemed top priorities (signified in bold print) and garnered the greatest efforts of the REECS project team. The funding provided by the member jurisdictions of REECS, a portion of their EECBG grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, allowed significant progress to be made in these four goals. Key findings and top accomplishments are listed below.
Stronger Energy Code adoption

MARC facilitated many meetings and discussion forums over the last two years among community stakeholders to help identify key issues for consideration by local governments. The purpose of this dialogue was to promote understanding of the new energy code provisions, and the potential impacts on homeowners and the building industry. Discussions were informed by national experts (Building Codes Assistance Project or BCAP and the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance or MEAA), local code officials, and the Home Builders Association of Greater Kansas City (HBA). Research was also completed reflecting the impact of adopting energy codes to energy consumption and expenditures. As of the date of this report, Jackson County, Mo., and the Unified Government of Wyandotte/Kansas City, Kan., have adopted the 2009 IECC and the City of Kansas City, Mo., has adopted 2012 IECC building and energy codes, with amendments that mirror amendments made by the City of Overland Park, Kan. (Although not a financial contributor to REECS, the city of Overland Park actively participated in the region’s discussions on energy codes adoption.) Before year’s end it is expected that a significant number of local jurisdictions will follow in adopting stronger energy codes. The ultimate goal of creating regionally consistent codes is on the path to be realized through the REECS project.

Best Practices in Local Government and Sustainable Success Stories

Twenty-seven sustainable success stories have been selected through the REECS program in the last three years, highlighting best practices by local governments, nonprofit organizations and private corporations that exemplify sustainability. This annual recognition provides a means to celebrate the successes in the region and to acknowledge innovations that can be replicated.

Education and Outreach

Wide communications were accomplished through educational events, a regional citizen survey and public outreach materials. Thirteen workshops were held, with 1,050 participants; 450 regional constituents participated in a survey gauging knowledge and current usage of energy conservation measures; 13,000 Green Idea Books were printed and partially distributed; two 30-second commercials were created to be aired on public access channels and other media outlets; and six news articles were written for local governments to run in their newsletters and or websites.

Research

Ten reports have been issued under the REECS project. Most of the documents provide information to guide residents, local governments’ staff, elected officials, private-sector professionals and other stakeholder groups that have an interest in energy efficiency and conservation. The report that required the most research and has provided the greatest insights is the “Impact of the Adoption of International Energy Conservation Codes on Energy Consumption and Expenditures.” Using modeling software, MARC was able to predict the estimated percentage savings the owner of a new home built to the 2009 IECC standards would have for the different communities as a part of the REECS project. Research also demonstrated that simple behavioral changes can have large impacts on household energy expenditures and consumption. Further research was done using 2012 IECC standards providing cost analysis and energy savings.

CONCLUSION

The greater Kansas City region has seen significant, positive movement in energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy in the past three years. This can be directly attributed to the efforts of the Regional Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy initiative, its members and the support provided by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

The initial white paper, describing the strategic framework set out in the REECS project, identified success criteria to measure the impact of the regional strategies over time. The success criteria included: integration, viability, cost-effectiveness; equity; implementation feasibility; economic stimulus; engagement; and capacity building. The accomplishments listed in this final report verify that these success criteria are being met. There continues to be positive momentum in the Kansas City region to advance this strategic framework – providing certainty that further achievements and successful outcomes are forthcoming.

Acknowledgments: “This research is based upon work supported in whole or in part by the Department of Energy – Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy – Office of Energy Efficiency. This work is funded through the Better Buildings Southeast Area Technical Assistance Center (Contract Number DE-AC02-06CH11357) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (RECOVERY ACT) of 2009.” Disclaimer: “This report, document or project was prepared as an account of work sponsored by an agency of the United States Government. Neither the United States Government nor any agency thereof, nor any of their employees, makes any warranty, express or implied, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed, or represents that its use would not infringe privately owned rights. Reference herein to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the United States Government or any agency thereof. The views and opinions of authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the United States Government or any agency thereof.”