

Energy Initiative Project: Building a Green Village
A Multi-Sector Collaboration Project and Policy Proposal

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2008 brought flood damage to numerous communities in Iowa and now they have the arduous task of rebuilding. As catastrophic as the destruction is, we should use this opportunity to implement Governor Chet Culver's energy mission (2006), to revise building standards and to encourage technology that improves energy efficiency. Add to these natural disasters a deepening recession that is making things worse. This project incorporates elements of project in San Diego studied by Coburn and Farhar (2008) and suggestions from Pollin, Garret-Pelter, Heintz and Scharber (2008) to encourage "green recovery" to create over 21,000 new jobs. This green village project is the first part of a four part energy initiative proposal that creates an environment to encourage innovative and intelligent energy practices for residential uses and the power utility industry.

The village development proposal is intended to divert current Iowa Power Fund and Vision Iowa money to fund innovative builders and technology creators while they help to rebuild storm damaged cities (Hansen, Jan 2009). The aforementioned San Diego project examined upper-class developments with near-zero to zero energy consumption housing (Coburn & Farhar, 2008). This proposed project will focus upon making similar technology more affordable with the help of using tax incentives and awards as well as the state of Iowa's ability to negotiate interest rates for the developments (especially for the disaster areas). This project will attempt to stimulate innovation, reduce energy consumption, and encourage sustainable economic development. The project will require cooperation between several stakeholders in the three different sectors of the economy (government, philanthropy and business).

Agency, Scope, Oversight, Expectations, and Logic Model

This project will be an agency oversight board as part of the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) and coincides with Gov. Culver's executive orders (Culver, 2006). As well, IDED may examine existing boards and funds to be reformulated to fund and to manage this project. The oversight board will have to be represented in a bipartisan manner, represent the cities, represent the residents and reflect some business interests in the project. The "political time" (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004: 384) and the project time for the initial plan is projected to span two governor terms and three legislative races. The success of this project may not be available (or reliably calculated) in time for the initial sponsoring officials to "get credit" for the project. The project focuses upon a five-year plan, and based upon the progress, the program will be evaluated for process impacts and future development to encourage research and development.

The project is focusing upon affordable energy efficient housing development for the disaster areas consisting of multiple and single dwelling units. The project envisions use of wind turbine electricity and effective energy conservation to encourage innovation (like better solar conductors) (Guzek, 2008). Thus, the size and initiation of the initial project will be tied to the capacity of the power production built for the project. Portions of the project will be funded through tax incentives, government grants, and research grants as recommended by Metcalf (2008) and Alan Stone of Forbes.com while the state of Iowa can negotiate with banks to get residents into the new homes.

The general expected outcomes are graphed using a logic model recommended from the University of Wisconsin extension (see Figure 1). If the project can produce technologies that can as well be transferred to existing structures, we should be able to observe a general decline in

energy consumption in the state where the power companies can sell the excess energy to other markets. We should also see a rise in innovation marked by higher number of patents submitted. We should be able to observe a positive cost savings between near-zero and zero-energy homes to standard homes.

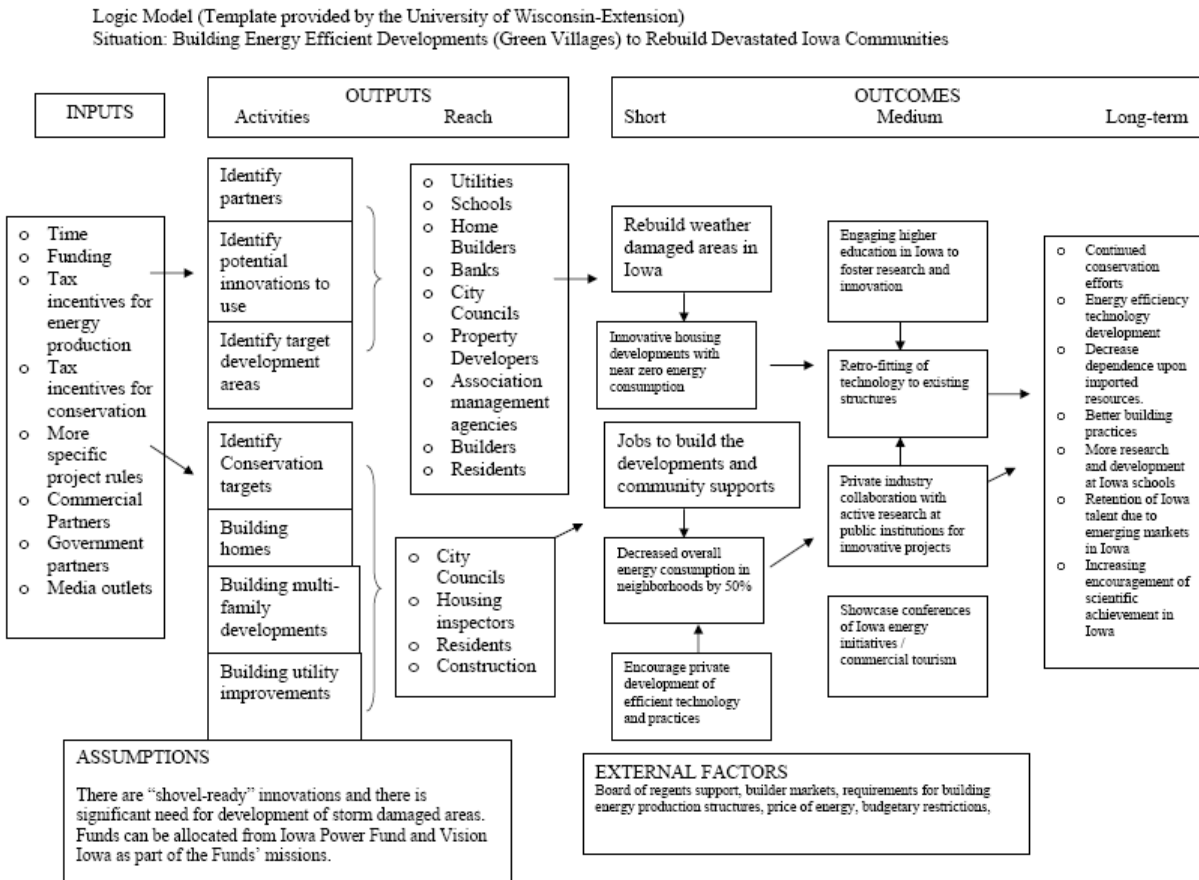


Figure 1. Program Logic Model (Taylor-Powell, n.d.)

This project requires the collaboration of different businesses to cooperate with building, powering, and financing the developments as illustrated in the logic model graphic. The collaboration begins across sectors and within the sectors. Government can provide the coordination of efforts here since most organizations and businesses are more specifically

focused to a service or product. Within each sector, there will also need to be coordination between businesses and organizations as supported by the project efforts.

Collaborations between Each Sector.

This requires collaborations between the sectors of NGO expertise, government and business to ensure that guidance. The only entity large enough to provide the coordination between multiple businesses and NGOs is the government. In Iowa, the state has already had experience with developing funds for innovation and tourism development (e.g. Iowa Power Fund and the Vision Iowa). This project coordinates and expands those efforts to a more targeted development of low-energy houses that should provoke the industry to creatively develop innovative and energy efficient technologies.

We can aim for the zero-energy houses concepts that were in the Corburn and Farhar (2008) study, and we can encourage Iowa firms to think more economically about the technologies for dwelling structures. Thus, this project will require government to coordinate efforts between the sectors and set up guidelines or rules for that collaboration in order for all participants to clearly comprehend their tasks and responsibilities. As well, the project will have to provide a process for submitting bids, to develop communication services for required research information, and to develop a set of standards for awards to mitigate potential preferential treatment claims.

Since this is focused upon Iowa firms, media outlets of radio, TV, and newspapers from Iowa as well as Internet communications should be used to publicize the program. This media blitz can be the start of collaborations that can be used as well to invite information requests or project bids from developers. This will invite scrutiny from those media outlets over the

program and public funds. This scrutiny will oblige the program administrators and collaborators to work ethically and to be mindful of public attention upon the project.

Collaborations with Government

This project requires the coordination of government between state and local officials to make sure that project funds are being appropriated correctly and that regulations are helping the projects. The state agency will have to keep communications with local officials (where the initial project is located) to understand any obstacles that may impede the project. Ordinances and zoning may have to be reconsidered in order to allow for certain utility power production systems to be included in residential zones. If the project site requires infrastructure changes for roads, bridges, power lines and other access points, those needs may slow the progress of the project. Thus, communication of these code or infrastructure changes will have to be relayed to other sectors and partners of the project.

The project agency may also participate in legislative processes or executive orders to help some code issues if necessary. This participatory process is highly suggested by Hodson (2003) and Snyder and de Souza Briggs (2003) in order to keep legislation in line with the project's goals and to keep legislators understanding the importance of the project.

In additions, residents of the developments would be contracted as part of the project research goals for five years. These residents would be encouraged to participate in neighborhood associations within the development. Thus, the neighborhood associations governing or advising the new developments would be responsible for implementing conservation rules appropriate for their neighborhood. Thus, the project would rely upon these associations in order to realize some of the project goals. Neighborhood associations also

provide a channel for communicating with households about research needs and allows for local-grassroots solutions to develop when needed.

Collaborations within Business Sector

This project requires the collaboration of different businesses to cooperate with building houses, power production, and financing the developments. A bidding process will be initiated by the project for low cost loans or government grants to build the project where the objective is to build zero-energy homes and non-carbon power production systems. Once the initial bidding is completed the project will keep regular communication with the participants to understand any needs, to communicate changes, to realize any obstacles or potentials issues in the project, and to keep progress moving forward with the project.

Collaboration with the businesses will connect the project to the market environment. By providing plans and processes, we can help the companies find opportunity in the hard economic time. By emphasizing the aspect of investing in opportunities for their future, the project can attract entrepreneurial individuals and create jobs (possible 21,000 as estimated by Pollin, Garret-Pelter, Heintz and Scharber (2008)).

Again, the project administrators, using good communication, should be aware of disputes between vendors, work to resolve any differences that may have arisen due to the project, and attempt to mitigate those disputes without getting caught in between the vendor dispute. The agency will need to present an unbiased or non-politically motivated view in order to avoid a preferential treatment stigma or even legal issues.

Applying Creative Thinking and Problem Solving: “Suspend Judgment”

This proposed project has identified varied industry interests and government interests in that may have short term conflicting goals. The agency should avoid being a conduit of task delegation between partners or the agency may risk losing partners to over-zealous business objectives. The idea is to cooperate and to use innovative techniques to build energy efficient and affordable homes. Thus, participants and program administrators can suggest to program participants visions of the project but will have to “suspend judgment” with regard to potential specific interests in the project in order to see a successful conclusion (Walden University, n.d.).

Trust and action are mutually binding within these collaborations (Hansen, Feb 2009:4). Trust the expertise that is in the field and trust will gain future reciprocity. If the program conducts appropriate due diligence on the partners, the administrators can recognize the expertise that exists in the network (Agranoff, 2003) especially since there are several stakeholders in different industries and sectors involved with this project. By attempting to get the interests to cooperate, administrators have to realize that they do not have to be the expert on all matters, and they should encourage those whom have the knowledge or capability to help others understand that part of the process.

The green village proposal will attempt to solidify an environment in Iowa that encourages inventive creativity with practicality and affordability as guidelines. Companies may find that they have a new market for a product and increase efforts or production outside of the project and research. The administrators can not hold the companies to just compete within sphere of the project or attempt to compete against the companies for ideas. By letting the companies and individuals build and leverage markets, the project is fulfilling a goal of green recovery and economic opportunity.

Awards and innovation will require oversight by the board without prejudice of market actions or of the companies themselves but on the merits of the work provided in the project. Neighborhood associations will also be flexible in implementing identified project goals through legal and ethical means, and thus, the administrators will have to leave certain decisions to the discretion of those individuals.

"Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration" (Edison, as quoted by Walden University)

Ideas require effective implementation in order to be successful. One can not simply state that something is good without providing a means to achieving the good and following through to the achievement. This requires strategy and project planning to make sure that the development and subsequent studies are done appropriately to the benefit of the residents in the developments.

With collaborations across networks, time and patience become important (Agranoff, 2003). Further, Schorr (1997) and Agranoff (2003) suggest that planning network engagements requires a sense of reciprocity among the partners because the partners have organizational responsibilities of their own. The project administrator should attempt to encourage more collaboration between the participants and to share ideas about leadership, logistics, support, and operations. The summative evaluation of the project will then be able to help formulate duplicate models of the project that are independent of the players in this project (Schorr, 1997).

We can not simply have success without putting effort towards accomplishing the goals. This requires defining the goals as has been done here, but the work of the project administrators and the partners will be work over the years of the program.

By engaging the different sectors in the project outcome, we make them a participant and invested in the well-being of the state as well as recognition of their leadership in the

community. Each participant is helping to further the stewardship of future generations' abilities. The administrator will work with government and the participants to resolve conflicts and to keep the progress moving forward and may have to mediate interests towards the project goals. As with leadership, there will be an incentive to prove that leadership by delivering the products and services.

At the same time, they have a mutual incentive to see the project work if we can deliver products, technology and services for the state, the country and the world. This will, in the hopeful, long term perspective, bring more opportunities to the state for science, engineering and other creative processes in addition to business and finance.

"Expect the unexpected..." (Walden University, n.d.)

Mitigation of unintended consequences, whether environmental or directly related to the project, has to be planned to some degree in order that the project has flexibility to adjust to changing demands or environment. This flexibility will help realize the ultimate goals of the project because we have planned to accommodate some changes. There may be extreme circumstances that are completely out of the project's control such as the macroeconomic situation, but we can prepare the project plans and evaluation designs to discount these. As well, if the consequences are too severe, administrators have to understand what the organization could have done to prevent that if anything before trying a new program using a summative evaluation of the program (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004).

The demands of the project will be high as participation rises and so will the potential for pitfalls. The program workers will have to be conscious of changes in government, business, or community as well as between partners. Oliver and Donnelly (2007) recommend using strategic

issue management systems (SIMS) in order to keep issues from becoming threats. This requires the staff to be aware of issues and maintain communications with partners.

By keeping communications, the staff can be more responsive to changes in business or government sector and effective use of their networks. The staff can then maintain accurate strengths- weaknesses- opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis to reflect the current operating environment and use the SIMS manage those threats and weakness issues realized. In this respect, businesses may appreciate this aspect that while the aim of the project is a conceptual community good, the project is planning to manage and planning contingencies throughout the project in similar aspects to business. As Carnegie suggested, the agencies should show the plan of action or the amount of good that the funds are providing rather than enriching more administration (Carnegie, 1889). As well, the project administrators will want to stress similar plans for the business vendors as part of the agreement to participate.

Delegation of tasks and responsibilities should be examined with scrutiny and due diligence checks. Further, the agreements between the program and the partnerships should be inscribed as a contract for work with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and grievance actions. Using the SIMS and clarifying expectations between business vendors, we can mitigate some of the pitfalls that may arise between the companies.

Conclusion

This project is a multi-sector collaboration effort and multi-stakeholder effort. From the levels of government and different industries, the project will have to manage the coalition partners as the strategy to achieving the project goals. By organizing in this manner, we can encourage their mutual interests and mutual benefits while planning for contingencies to mitigate the pitfalls that will occur.

Following the logic model and the summary of the program, the project administrators can provide greater details of the plan as the plan progresses and more input is provided from the participants. In this way, we can rebuild the devastated communities and at the same time, work towards the Center for American Progress's "green recovery" (Pollin, Garret-Pelter, Heintz and Scharber, 2008). Practicality and affordability of energy efficient technologies will benefit the whole community especially during hard economic times.

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