

Program Proposal for Economical Energy Development:
A Green Village and Recovery Project: Evaluation Design

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Energy Initiative Project Part 1:“A Green Village and Recovery”

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Energy Initiative Project Part 1:“A Green Village and Recovery”:

Executive Summary

2008 brought flood damage to numerous communities in Iowa like Cedar Rapids and now they have the arduous task of rebuilding (Cedar Rapids Gazette, 2008). As catastrophic as the destruction is, we should use this opportunity to revise building codes, to encourage “green recovery” and to encourage cleaner technology development that will improve the energy efficiency of dwelling structures (Pollin, Garret-Pelter, Heintz and Scharber, 2008).

The proposed project here intends to challenge Iowa business to develop technology and to work together in a coordinated effort to build (or rebuild) residential developments with energy efficiency goals. This follows the recommendations by president of MidAmerican Energy Company, David Sokol (2008), before Congress, for a proposed project on a scale similar to the Apollo project that involves many different businesses achieving a particular goal. This project also aligns with projected “green recovery” economic opportunities of sustainable job creation and cleaner technologies as suggested by U.S. Secretary of Energy Stephen Chu (2009) and Pollin, Garret-Pelter, Heintz and Scharber (2008) while focusing upon rebuilding the lives of residents in the devastated areas.

The proposal here is to develop a “green village” similar to developments in the Coburn and Farhar (2008) study. This village project would rebuild where previous developments have been destroyed by flooding (or to build the green developments as new subsections) for displaced residents of flooded cities. The village project will aim to provide for the residents affected by the massive floods through new home building, to stimulate technology innovation through research grants, and to encourage economic development through the building of the

development and supporting technologies. Additionally, the developments may be showcased as models of economic development and ingenuity with a focus upon energy efficiency goals.

The specific initial project is envisioned similar in scope and presentation to the San Diego project studied by Coburn and Farhar (2008). That project studied upper class residential developments with near-zero to zero energy consumption housing. This proposed project will attempt to build affordable housing and provide non-carbon power production and infrastructure to support the development. The project will focus upon residential cost savings through conservation and energy reduction as primary goals, and thus, the progress targets and percentage reduction in consumption will be measured against 2008 values. The project focuses upon developing energy efficiency for the community to encourage economies of scale to lower costs, curbing consumption, and keeping administrative costs low.

The project will be using evaluation monitoring to make sure that public money is transparent and provides for the economic development rather than simply making more bureaucracy. Cost-benefit analysis will be conducted to account for the money allocated compared to economic outputs and to determine the effect of each dollar spent.

This project and faithful evaluation will ensure that public money is put to proper use, and will ensure that the potential green recovery is real. The work in this program will help to fulfill the administrations' vision to encourage, stimulate and develop technology in coordination with Iowa business and industry (Culver, 2006). The green project development can be mutually beneficial to displaced residents, businesses and the future of the state of Iowa.

Evaluation Rationale, Type and Potential Findings

The overall evaluation goals include to examine, to monitor and to recommend the efficient use of public funds in the project. This evaluation is due in part to a desire by many people to see a results-oriented government (Schorr, 1997) and to relieve fears of bloated and slow bureaucracy (Jacobs, 2009). We will examine whether the project is making progress towards goals or whether the achievements are efficient use of public dollars to stimulate innovation and green development.

The program is early in design and thus, requires a formative evaluation for the program since the program is being developed (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004). The formative evaluation of this proposed program will use quantitative research designs to build credible independent reports, which examine specific attributes of this program for improvements and cost-benefit analysis (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The evaluation will be based upon the principles suggested by American Evaluation Association (n.d.) of systematic inquiry, honesty, competence, respect for people and responsibility towards the public welfare.

The findings of the evaluation will help to design future project sites and procedures for those projects (if the evaluation and project are deemed successful). The findings of the project are to examine energy usage changes with respect to energy efficient housing and non-carbon power production whereas the findings of this evaluation will determine the effectiveness of allocated funds and the progress of project goals as compared to “administrative” costs of the program and evaluations. We are going to measure the projected outcomes to the actual progress towards those outcomes.

Evaluators and stakeholders will need to understand that initial costs of the project setup may be higher than operational expenses, and then the operational program costs and monitoring should be kept to a minimum to ensure proper use of funds. The information gained from the evaluation will help to determine the productivity of the board and the appropriate use of public money. The information will provide data about use of public funds to build efficient homes affordably and promote more efficient non-carbon power production while creating thousands of jobs.

Agency Oversight

This project will have 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 and coordinate existing boards / funds to be reformulated to fund and to manage this project. In order to encourage solidarity in efforts, the board will require voting representation from the communities where the initial projects are to be built, from industry, from the developments and from legislature. 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.

Envisioned Project Specifics: Scope, Size and Consumption

This will focus upon affordability, disaster recovery and economies of scale development. The green village will consist of a development of single to multiple family dwellings (i.e. apartments or condos) that feature efficiency technologies. These developments may replace destroyed developments or may be built as new subsections to the localities that govern them. The envisioned target prices of homes will be under the median prices of homes

(especially in the flooded areas) in the localities (\$139,500 for Cedar Rapids according to Yahoo Real Estate) in order to make them attractive and affordable for middle income earners.

The pilot village project will study consumption trends based upon existing 2008 values compared to the consumption levels in the new development with a target of 25-50% reduction over four years. Specifically, the project will examine the affect of neighborhood association conservation upon individual “carbon footprint”. Residents will be contracted as part of neighborhood associations with specific expectations of waste and consumption. The neighborhood associations will be given a set of guidelines that they have autonomy to implement for their respective development. As well, Iowa may offer conservation incentives to residents of existing associations (as well to be studied). The study will examine trends of data to determine effectiveness and potentials from utilities.

The project will examine the unit cost of energy for the initial four-years. The project envisions use of wind turbine electricity and effective energy conservation to encourage innovation (like better solar conductors) (Guzek, 2008). Thus, the size of the target development will depend upon the capacity of a wind turbine to power a set of households. Proposed reductions and conservations should produce net energy to be sold back to the utility company.

Target objectives / Expected outcomes

- Envisioned target home values will be under the median prices of homes as stated before
- Significantly increase the percentage use of non-carbon energy in proportion to non-renewable sources;
- Lower the unit cost, latency and intermittency to produce and to deliver renewable energy
- Reduce individual consumption of utilities and waste by 25 to 50 %
- 60-75% reduction of dependency upon foreign resources within the developments.

- Provide incentives and awards for innovations and inventions from local companies and individuals that further cost-effective delivery and efficient consumption of energy
- Provide an affordable transition path for existing dwellings, vehicles and consumer habits into energy efficient and environmentally respectful processes
- Raise awareness of Iowa as the catalyst of energy and environmental innovation (perhaps labeled as that energy “Silicon Valley”) through conferences and expositions.

Stakeholders

A stakeholder is anyone who has an invested or legitimate interest in the outcome, the process, or the resources used to accomplish the mission of the project, and stakeholders may have differing viewpoints about a particular project that must be coordinated (Boutelle, 2004). The community has a significant interest in the project since we are using public funds. Thus, the evaluator, as only one input among many, must maintain the perspective of the community through the project and evaluation (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004: 375). The target of developments is to encourage innovation through rebuilding of the devastated communities, and therefore the residents of those affected areas are considered stakeholders of this project. Residents of the new developments and managers of multi-dwelling units will have the ultimate stake in these projects.

The project will pilot in cities in Iowa as part of Vision Iowa and the Iowa Power Fund, and these programs already have many requests for funding. Therefore, those affected by diverted funding will be indirect stakeholders to this program. Iowa Green Communities programs as well as state boards like Economic Development and Renewable Energy Infrastructure may also provide insights and directions. Utility companies may provide statistics in addition to power production, innovations for consumption (in addition to their current

programs), and energy delivery systems as part of mutual benefit programs. Homebuilders will be solicited for building innovative and affordable housing designs with specifically targeted affordable prices, and they can provide data for evaluation purposes such as building costs in addition to property value enhancements due to green technologies used.

Universities, the Iowa Board of Regents, community colleges and private colleges will have a stake in awarding funds for scientific endeavors. The governments of the state, cities and counties, as well as government boards (e.g. Iowa Utilities Board, Rebuild Iowa and Iowa Environmental Council) will have to establish rules and to designate areas for development. Oversight of funds for the project will be monitored by the IDED.

Logic model

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. This may encourage utility companies to participate in the project as they can make more money reselling the energy to higher value markets. For utilities, we will expect an increase in the percentage of non-carbon power production with better management of latency and intermittency issues (Banks, 2008). Additionally, the state should observe a general rise in innovation based upon patents submitted during the program duration.

This program is represented using a graphical three-tiered logic model as presented by the University of Wisconsin extension (Taylor-Powell, n.d.) (see Figure 1 below). Taylor-Powell proposes to examine inputs, outputs, and outcomes where the models vary based upon the complexity of the program design (see Figure 1). The designer and logic model has to connect these basic parts beyond the proverbial “miracle occurs” at this point (Taylor-Powell, n.d.: 13).

The initial project will follow this logic model, and later projects will have to re-evaluate this approach for applicability.

This project, research questions, and perceived successes are dependent upon willing participants, upon the various collaborations (Schorr, 1997), upon reported data, upon the homeowners’ financial ability, upon energy prices, upon housing market pressures and upon capacity to build near-zero energy consuming properties. As well, the project assumes there are “shovel-ready” projects and innovations that can be used to build the efficient houses.

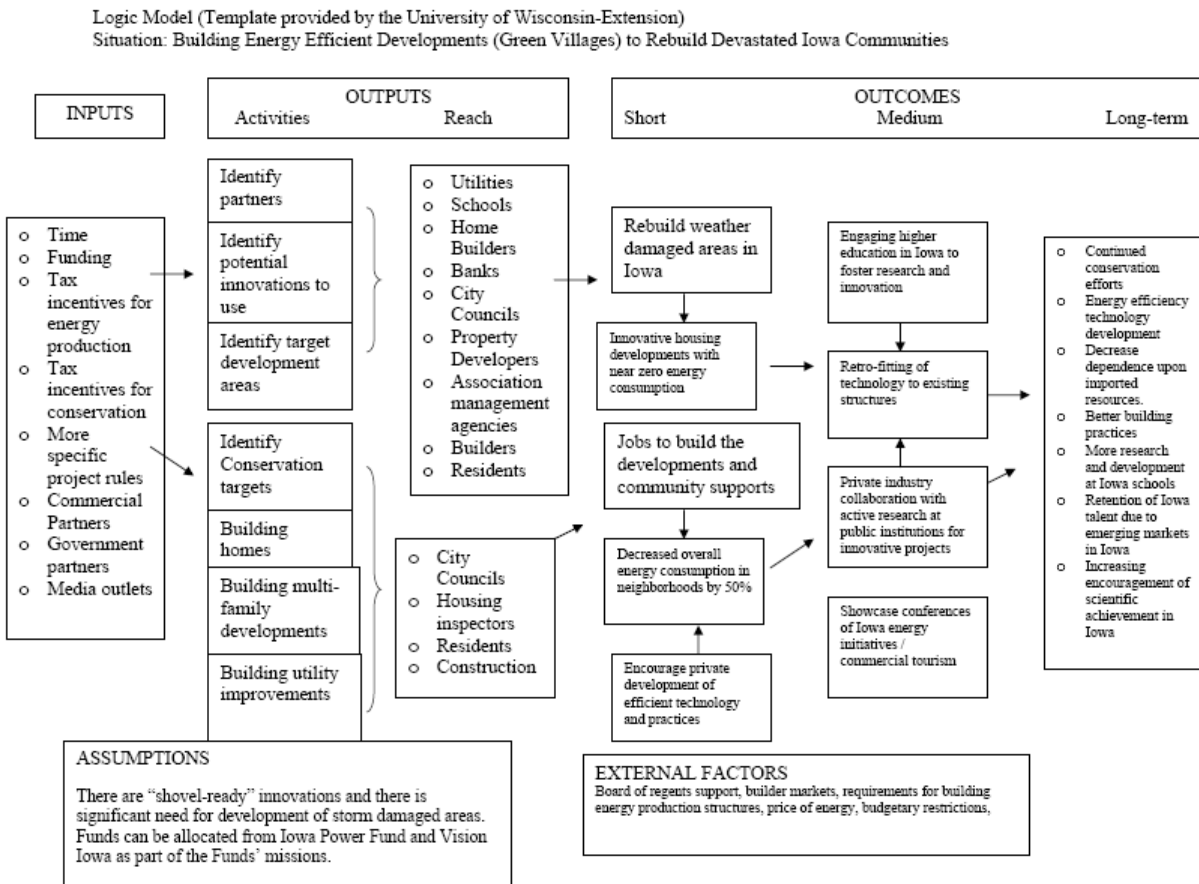


Figure 1. Program Logic Model (Taylor-Powell, n.d.)

Research questions

To evaluate the project and the theory, some research questions will attempt to answer structure and performance needs as suggested by Rossi et al (2004) and Trochim and Donnelly (2008). According to Rossi et al (2004), good evaluation questions are in the form of the functions the project must perform, and thus, performance is the crucial test. Yet, we have to identify what is measurable performance. Each question has to establish criteria, note standards, quantify performance against a standard and then build an assessment from the data.

Trochim and Donnelly (2008) suggest that evaluation questions have to identify the problem and the scope being considered. Further, they suggest asking where the issue originates, seriousness and size of the issue. Then, we must consider how the program addresses this issue and how well is the delivery of the program (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The evaluation questions will answer characteristics of the program, and then, we can monitor the development of program theory with respect to specifically defined “outcomes” and “efficiency” goals (Rossi et al, 2004, 77). This follows Taylor-Powell’s (n.d.) recommendation that you have to be able to measure results to determine success.

An objective of the project is to establish the best ways that government can encourage innovation by examining the mix of via tax incentives, research programs, grant awards or subsidies prior to and during the program as compared to patents submitted. Any awards presented for research will have to show progress towards patents. The evaluation questions will need to determine levels of consumption by the population in development in comparison to standard developments with respect to the public funds delivered to homebuilders, homeowners, and administrative needs. The characteristics (e.g. income, age, commute distances, and what

utility services they use) of that population may help to identify potential beneficial improvements.

For the project, available “shovel-ready” projects at utilities and education institutions may provide energy efficiencies ready for current development. We can monitor if the awards expedite any of these projects or what they need to become marketable technology. This can quicken the progress of the project as we can locate usable technologies immediately for use in the projects. For residential customers, the evaluation will monitor what types of construction enhancements improve energy efficiency the most and at what cost they can be implemented. The evaluation can work with waste systems to determine how many pounds of garbage a household produces in one month or one year in comparison to other developments? We also can review how well community association rules influence conservation by examining the amount garbage collected in developments. This may give an indication of what degree community associations (like condo associations) affect an individual’s conservation efforts as well as whether tax incentives for green housing encourages more conservation or construction enhancements.

A more difficult question might examine what level of collaboration yields the most effective government help to industry innovation by investigating the effect of standard regulations, new regulations for new developments, and through tax policy. For this we have to determine what is collaboration and the “levels” whether simple co-sponsorship, co-development, funding for research, or solo innovation. This might require survey qualitative research techniques to determine attitudes towards collaboration. Open communication, as part of the proposal and evaluation, between project administrators and business partners should be discussing the mix of government incentives to encourage more participation and more

innovation as suggested by Alan Stone of Forbes.com (2009) and the open communication will be critical to overall program success (Agranoff, 2003).

Issue based questions tend to be more general (Rossi et al, 2004) and more politically motivated questions where subjective opinion may affect the assessment. In these cases, we have to define the issue as well as the surrounding assumptions made, and then determine whether an issue may be pertinent to the program or outcome. For example, we might observe what type of regulation is an individual willing to abide for energy or environment purposes. What variables (e.g. income, convenience, energy price, or commute distance) correlate with a range of energy consumption?

Questions of fact are questions that are referenced from fact and evidence. These would be researched to determine the political and social environment of the program. For this project, we should determine how much does a unit of energy cost by production source (natural gas, wind, coal, gasoline, nuclear). What are the current tax incentives in place that influence those prices and improvements of power production? We can examine if government awards affect non-carbon development and to how much. During implementation of the program, we can monitor what changes, if any, occurs in the matrix of energy prices.

Methodology

We may be able to use the evaluation results to determine the utility of public funds with respect specific stakeholders as part of quantitative cost-benefit analysis conducted (Patton, 1997). The utility can help to influence a results-orientation of the program instead of just funding more government oversight (Schorr, 1997). The administration has to be considerate of cost control measures in order to justify continued funding of the project or any costly evaluation method like a mixed-method approach (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

For residents of the developments and affected areas as ultimate stakeholders, the program evaluation will have to reveal wise spending of public funds with low overhead bureaucracy, more people getting into permanent housing, and sustainable jobs creation. Again, considering the fears by legislators towards “bloated, slow moving bureaucracy” of the current rebuild Iowa task force and public money stories surrounding (e.g. CIETC and Federal Troubled Assets Relief Program or TARP), use of public funds will be harshly criticized and thus, must be scrutinized to minimize improper use (Jacobs, 2009).

The evaluation will need to review data from various sources like utility production percentages, housing assessed values, employment numbers, energy consumption and administrative costs. The evaluation will need to compare the dollar value of program administration to the program outputs as well as the program project outcomes (e.g. cost savings, incomes created, market expansion). The formative evaluation will monitor the use of the funds in percentage of the outflows to participants and their subsequent use of the funds to build the project or develop technology as mark of service utilization compared to administrative costs.

Program progress will be the defining factor of the program potential in other areas. As the program progresses, data collection from the utilities and housing assessments will provide more usable data. A series of pattern-matching techniques and regression analysis for correlations of public money to economic outputs will help to compare the efficiency of administration and the program, and may even reveal areas to modify practices to be more efficient. These findings would be released publicly as a set of descriptive statistics on a periodic basis to illustrate progress of project and costs for public dissemination.

Specific questions examples to consider would be increase in non-carbon power production systems or improvements in latency and intermittency (making the wind turbine

technology more reliable and efficient). We will want to examine the costs of building the green homes and their subsequent values as compared to standard home building. We can determine if there is a general decline in energy consumption in the developments that technology can be retrofitted to existing structures. The findings can be compared to those of current Iowa Power Fund and Vision Iowa grants to clarify possible opportunity cost issues comparing the green development grants to current tourism money and grants provided in the two current funds.

The limitation of the evaluation is whether the funding data is available in some cases, the political bias of stakeholders, and the environment of the projects may influence participation. Iowa Power Fund has only given information about where funds are going but not asking for any information about economic impact after receiving the money. Companies that are reducing labor have fewer resources to help build the project, and thus any company/industry dependent data may also be impacted. Political bias of legislators and stakeholders may have other interests of using the funds for alternative projects or may have an objection to the funds altogether. These biases will need to be minimized in order to move the project and subsequent evaluation forward (Rossi et al, 2004; Trochim and Donnelly, 2008).

Project Summary

The question becomes can government spur innovation and to what extent this can be done in a project like this. The project and the evaluation will monitor public funds used to promote innovation and green economic development in comparison to administrative costs. These require quantitative methods of regression analysis, significance, correlations, and progressions (Trochim and Donnelly, 2008; Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004). The formative evaluation, by using quantitative methods, will work to minimize bias and present accurate descriptive statistics for the public and legislators to understand the project progression.

Thus, the overall goal and mission is to build affordable and efficient houses that encourage technology innovation for all structures. In addition, the goal includes to create green jobs as part of the green recovery concepts and to showcase Iowa ingenuity. These developments will encourage energy efficiency, new technology, and reduced consumer consumption overall across multiple sectors and industries. Each of these can be measured by examining and monitoring fund expenditures to projected economic outputs.

The project aims to provide a path for lawmakers to develop an economic energy policy that is mutually beneficial for the industry, the consumer, the state and the environment. The investment in this project will return opportunities for Iowa to build and to profit from efficiency technologies. The evaluation will help lawmakers understand the true impact of the program.

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