

CONNECTICUT Town&City

Power Moves

New CCM programs to help manage energy costs

As local government leaders are well aware, electricity bills take a big bite out of a municipal budget. CCM has been a proactive partner in offering ways to lighten the load of energy bills and put more savings back into communities.

CCM has launched two new programs available to help members reduce energy use and maintain energy reliability: The Owner's Representation Service for Energy Saving Performance Contracting (ESPC), and Municipal Microgrid projects. These programs presents effective ways to save money, reallocate funds, and help communities become more resilient in weathering damaging storms. Following a competitive bid process by CCM members, these projects are now being rolled out.

Energy Saving Performance Contracting (ESPC)

The ESPC process is a partnership that will help reduce maintenance costs by replacing expensive old and inefficient equipment. Cities and towns can reallocate that spending to new energy-efficient infrastructure, and project finance costs and payments for drastically reduced maintenance.

This program has no upfront costs. An Energy Services Company (ESCO), which implements energy conservation measures, is paid during project constructions from an escrow account funded by a municipal lease, bond, etc. Upon the project's completion, energy savings are then used to pay the lender over time. The program comes with a guarantee – the ESCo guarantees that annual savings will be equal to or greater than annual costs for every year of the program.

Municipal Microgrids

A municipal microgrid is a local energy grid that can help communities recover faster from a natural disaster. A municipal microgrid can operate while connected to the main grid, or on its own in "island mode." While in "island mode," the microgrid provides power to essential resources in order to maintain essential services. Microgrids can generate their own energy locally, powered by renewable sources (like solar panels, wind and hydro), fuel cells, batteries, and/or fossil fuels.

The state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) has described having a microgrid as something akin to a community garden. You can always buy your produce from the grocery store, but in times of food shortage, the community garden is there to supply your needs until the store can be restocked.

Municipal microgrids can help municipalities reduce their dependence on fossil fuels, and shrink their carbon footprint. Microgrids are smart planning, a way to keep more energy dollars in the community and engage citizen participation in the clean energy market.

In 2013, the state launched the first-in-the-nation statewide microgrid pilot program and made more than \$30 million available for funding. Municipalities and other program participants that wish to make their critical facilities more resilient through a microgrid may apply for grant funding to CT DEEP, and may be eligible for financing offered through the Connecticut Green Bank.

For more information on the ESPC and/or the microgrid project, contact CCM's Andy Merola, at (203) 498-3056 or amerola@ccm-ct.org, for assistance.

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