



Home > Publications > New Hampshire Town and City > Article Index

ShareThis

New Hampshire Town and City Article Index

Energy Technical Assistance and Planning for New Hampshire Communities

New Hampshire Town and City, February 2011

By Eric Halter

Advertising Opportunities

Available Publications

New Hampshire Town and City

[Article Index](#)
[Recent Issues](#)

Newsletters

Is your town hall drafty? Do your employees complain that parts of the buildings are freezing and others sweltering? Are your municipal energy bills too high? Do you feel stuck knowing that you need to make energy improvements, but not knowing where to start? Making progress on solving these problems can take a back seat to more pressing municipal issues. But, given the challenging economy, now is the time to find ways to reduce your costs by addressing energy efficiency.

The New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning can help. Energy Technical Assistance and Planning for New Hampshire Communities (ETAP) is a federally-funded program designed to raise awareness of the benefits of energy efficiency planning and provide the technical assistance to realize those benefits. The ETAP program strives to save taxpayers money through reduced utility bills on municipal facilities and reduce the environmental impact of energy consumption. Best of all, these services are provided at *no cost* to any New Hampshire municipality.

ETAP is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) through the Department of Energy and administered by the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning. The ETAP team is comprised of staff from 12 organizations: CLF Ventures, the nonprofit consulting affiliate of the Conservation Law Foundation; Peregrine Energy Group, Inc., an energy consulting firm; Clean Air-Cool Planet and the nine New Hampshire Regional Planning Commissions.

The program assists municipalities with energy planning in two ways. Since "you can't manage what you can't measure," ETAP provides a web-based energy usage tracking tool for your municipal buildings. The tool provides graphical representation of energy usage, making it easy to identify the highest energy users as well as track progress on energy savings. Additionally, while the program does not provide money for funding projects, ETAP provides a variety of technical assistance, including:

- General planning and prioritization of energy projects
- Building energy assessments
- RFP creation and evaluation of submitted bid proposals
- Creation of specifications for mechanical systems
- Review of plans for new buildings
- Planning services, including energy chapters of master plans, regulatory audits and capital improvement programs
- Grant writing assistance

The following are examples of how ETAP has already helped New Hampshire towns with energy efficiency planning.

The 'Getting Started' Town

A town administrator heard about the program through his regional planning commission (RPC).

He knew there were energy issues with town buildings, but he did not have the money or the expertise to assess where to start and what to do. The ETAP team began by helping the town consolidate its building energy information into the inventory tool, enabling the town to track energy usage over time and identify buildings with the highest energy usage per square foot. At the same time, the ETAP team met with the town's facilities manager and town administrator to discuss opportunities for assisting with energy efficiency.

It was agreed that a *building assessment* of the town's five buildings was a good place to start. ETAP does not call these assessments "audits," as we do not conduct thermography or blower door testing. Our assessments include tours of town buildings led by engineers with experience in building envelopes and building systems. We toured the buildings, inspecting mechanical systems, lighting and insulation. From this work and energy usage data received from the town, the team prepared a report providing the town with recommendations for short- and long-term improvements, including calculations on the estimated cost and return on investment of each of the recommendations.

During a review of the assessment, ETAP helped the town prioritize the projects. The town administrator was then able to prepare a formal request to the Board of Selectman to use funds in the existing Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for doing the two highest priority projects.

The 'Money to Spend' Town

A town's Local Energy Committee (LEC) successfully wrote a proposal and received a grant for replacing the boiler in the town hall, which had failed numerous times the previous winter. After meeting with town officials, the ETAP team agreed to assist the town in writing specifications for the new system to ensure that potential contractors submitted bids for the most energy efficient and correctly sized unit the building required. We encourage towns to find their own contractors, who then provide design/build bids for the work, thus creating local jobs through our work.

In another case, a town had received federal funds for conducting audits on their town buildings. The ETAP team assisted in writing an RFP with the correct specifications for the audits and then assisted the town in reviewing the bids and choosing the best company for the work.

A third town was ready to build a new fire station and had initial plans from their architect. The ETAP team reviewed the plans and suggested changes in building design and mechanical systems that cost less and save energy in the new building.

The 'Next Step' Town

Town officials and the LEC successfully identified energy-saving projects that led to improvements in their buildings. The town wanted to take the next step and ensure that goals for energy efficiency improvements throughout the town, such as the use of renewable energy, were not hampered by existing town ordinances and zoning. The town contacted their local RPC and requested assistance in writing an energy chapter for the town's master plan; ETAP funded this work by the RPC.

How Can ETAP Help You?

These are just a few examples of some of the ways we've already assisted more than 50 New Hampshire cities and towns to improve their energy efficiency and save their taxpayers' money on energy costs. To learn more about accessing ETAP's free services to benefit your community, visit [ETAP](#) or contact your local regional planning commission today.

Eric Halter is program director for the Energy Technical Assistance and Planning for New Hampshire Communities program. Contact Eric at 603.225.3060, ext. 14, or [by email](#).

Energy Happenings

Here are some energy-related innovations from New Hampshire municipalities and schools:

Exeter High School boasts a 465-panel solar array on school grounds, providing supplemental power to the school and serving as an education tool for students. It is among the largest arrays in the state, and innovative financing made the project a reality with no upfront costs for the school. Curriculum to engage students is currently in development.

New London will soon launch a feasibility study for hydro-electric power to assess opportunities for nearby resources. Funded by an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant, project goals include creation of a road map to guide other municipalities. New London is also studying wind feasibility, led by Colby-Sawyer College.

Meredith hosted a regional Energy Fair on Saturday, January 15, featuring 11 informational sessions and an array of vendor booths showcasing services including solar and geothermal, as well as a case study of a "zero-energy" home.

Concord is piloting anti-idling equipment in eight vehicles, including seven trucks and one police sedan. For more details, turn to the "Community Spotlight" on page 29.

Jaffrey recently installed new high-efficiency streetlight bulbs through the Public Service of New Hampshire SmartStart program. Town officials expect to pay off the loan (paid through savings on the energy bill) within five years.

Interested in what other municipalities and schools are doing? Looking for first-hand experience and advice in your region? Do you have success stories to share? Efforts are underway to develop an information sharing network to help municipalities share information and experiences. Many municipal energy committees share information online at the [NH Energy Project](#).

Visit [LGC Energy Efficiency](#) for links to government and nonprofit resources for municipalities and schools. Plans for the 2011 Local Energy Solutions Conference are underway; look for details coming soon.

NHLGC.org is owned and operated by the Local Government Center, Inc. The content of NHLGC.org's web pages, including the design, text, graphics and arrangement thereof, is the property of the Local Government Center, Inc. Information on NHLGC.org does not constitute and should not substitute for actual legal advice. Copyright © 2011, Local Government Center, Inc. All rights reserved. For permission to reprint and reuse material from NHLGC.org, call 603.224.7447.