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Six Northwest Minnesota projects receive CERTs Seed Grants for community-based clean energy efforts

SAINT PAUL, Minn. (01/22/2024)—Minnesota’s Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) is awarding seed grants to 45 energy efficiency and renewable energy projects—including six within the northwest region of Minnesota. The projects range from educational outreach on clean energy incentives, to energy efficiency for manufactured homes, to skill-building for clean energy careers.

Seed grants strive to support historically underserved communities.¹ Underserved communities include Minnesota populations with high energy burdens, where households spend more than 5% of their annual income on energy costs (compared to 2% for the average Minnesota household). For example, Thief River Falls Food Shelf plans to make energy efficiency upgrades to their space and share energy saving opportunities with their visitors.

Financial and programmatic support comes from CERTs’ partner the Minnesota Department of Commerce, with additional support from the Morgan Family Foundation. Minnesota’s seven regions are each receiving \$43,000. The support will be distributed among the projects which were selected by panels of local residents known as CERTs Regional Steering Committees.

“I’m excited to work with this new round of CERTs Seed Grants that will support community-identified initiatives while achieving clean energy goals. Many of this year’s projects are improving the quality of life for those who reside in the Northwest, and that is largely why I do this job,” says Anna Peterson, Northwest CERT Regional Coordinator

CERTs Seed Grants encourage projects that help people see clean energy working in their own communities. With over \$1.98 million awarded to 509 projects since 2006, the newly funded 2024 projects will provide more opportunities for Minnesota communities to tangibly learn about and experience the benefits of clean energy.

For more information, visit CleanEnergyResourceTeams.org/2024grants

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¹ CERTs defines underserved communities as energy burdened communities—those who spend more than 5% of their income on energy costs—and groups historically excluded from energy decisions and opportunities. This includes (but is not limited to) Black, Indigenous, people of color, women, immigrant, low-income, disabled, LGBTQ+, and geographically-isolated communities.

CERTS SEED GRANTS | NORTHWEST REGION

Aaron's Grocery: Energy Efficiency Cooling Equipment

Fertile, Minn.—Aaron's Grocery is one of the few places in the area where people can purchase fresh produce, meats, and cheeses. Installation of coolers with doors will reduce energy use, provide additional space for perishable food, and extend product shelf life.

Care and Share of Crookston: Energy Efficient Utilities Upgrade

Crookston, Minn.—Investing in homeless shelter upgrades can increase capacity to serve more unsheltered people within communities. This project will use insulation to increase the shelter's energy efficiency and will use air quality assessments and appliance safety checks to improve the safety of the space.

City of Halstad: Wimmer Home HVAC Efficiency Pilot

Halstad, Minn.—Wimmer Homes were originally built in the 1960s for low-income, elderly people to preserve independence. An HVAC pilot project in the shared laundry unit will add a high-efficiency cold climate mini split with storage heat.

Midwest Tribal Energy Resources Association: Gap Funding to Pursue Federal Funding for Tribal Clean Energy Projects

Northwest MN—MTERA will provide resources directly to Tribes to fund necessary aspects of clean energy project development and implementation, such as funding grant writers or hiring contractors for specific aspects of projects outside of their or MTERA's expertise.

Thief River Falls Food Shelf: Going Green, Going Clean

Thief River Falls, Minn.—Energy efficiency upgrades to this "Super Shelf" food shelf will include LED lighting, HVAC upgrades, and additional insulation. The project will save the food shelf energy and offer education opportunities on going green for visitors.

West Central Initiative: What Fuels You? Ways That Make 'Cents' Video Series

Northwest MN—The video series will educate and inspire viewers by featuring Minnesotans using clean energy resources within their homes, businesses, and communities.

Statewide project details are available: CleanEnergyResourceTeams.org/2024grants

For more info from the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Resources Division and to sign up for the New Energy Programs newsletter: mn.gov/commerce/energy/

About the Clean Energy Resource Teams: The Clean Energy Resource Teams, or CERTs, connects individuals and communities in Minnesota to the resources they need to identify and implement community-based clean energy projects. CERTs is a partnership of the University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, Minnesota Department of Commerce, Southwest Regional Development Commission, and the Great Plains Institute. Learn more:

CleanEnergyResourceTeams.org