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Six Southeast 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 southeast 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, Growing Up Healthy’s project will work with residents of manufactured home parks on home repairs to improve energy efficiency and save money.

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.

“This new round of CERTs Seed Grants will support community-identified initiatives, help provide jobs and training opportunities, plus engage communities in reaching their clean energy goals,” says Joel Haskard, CERTs co-director.

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 | SOUTHEAST REGION

City of Faribault: Energy Assessment Tool Library

Faribault, Minn.—The City of Faribault will compile a tool and resource library for residents to use to conduct small-scale energy efficiency assessments and to calculate potential savings. The project aims to increase public awareness around energy efficiency and participation in incentive programs, as well as reduce energy consumption and costs.

Growing Up Healthy: Weatherization for Mobile Home Residents

Rice County, Minn.—Growing Up Healthy will assist residents who may not be eligible for weatherization programs with home repairs to improve energy efficiency and save money.

LifeGate Services: Clean Energy for African Immigrant Communities

Rochester and Austin, Minn.—LifeGate will create energy educational materials to distribute within the African immigrant communities in Rochester and Austin.

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

Southeast 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.

Project FINE: Energy Efficiency Outreach

Winona, St. Charles, Lewiston, Altura, Minnesota City, Goodview, Minn.—Project FINE will provide information to refugees and immigrants about ways to improve the energy efficiency in their homes and learn about the benefits of clean energy.

Slipstream Group, Inc: Manufactured Home Building Basics Training

Southeast MN—This project will develop a curriculum to provide contractors and weatherization staff with a foundation of knowledge on manufactured home structures, heating systems, ductwork, and building science principles.

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