



*helping Minnesota communities determine their energy future*

#### **CERTS PARTNERS**

*University of Minnesota  
Regional Sustainable  
Development  
Partnerships*

*The Minnesota Project*

*Southwest Regional  
Development  
Commission*

*The Green Institute*

*Minnesota Office of  
Energy Security,  
Department of  
Commerce*



## **Clean Energy Resource Teams Milestones**

The following outlines major CERT milestones. While significant, these milestones are unable to convey the major impact CERT members have had on the program. Since its official launch in 2003, CERT members from across the state have made tremendous on-going contributions to CERTs via participation in regional CERT Steering Committees (4-6 meetings/year/region), at quarterly team meetings, workshops and tours (3-4 meetings/year/region), and at local (mini) CERT meetings and events. Indeed, these community volunteers have contributed over 10,000 hours to CERTs in the past five years. Without the dedication of these community members the milestones listed below would not have been possible.

**2001** University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (Regional Partnerships) host "Sharing the Load: Local Electric Energy Generation and Distribution" (this event demonstrates the broad interest in community energy and catalyzes further community energy discussions).

**2002** Janet Streff of the Minnesota Department of Commerce State Energy Office and Diane Jensen, then of the Minnesota Project, conceive of the original idea for the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) – modeling it after local soil and water planning boards – coin the CERT name, and submit a proposal for CERT funding to the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR).

The Minnesota Project, in collaboration with the Regional Partnerships and Minnesota Department of Commerce, begins to develop the CERT Manual entitled, "Designing a Clean Energy Future: A Resource Manual".

**2003** CERTs is awarded Phase I funding by the LCMR. This funding, along with funding from the Minnesota Department of Commerce, formally launches the CERT program and brings on the original CERT partners: Minnesota Project, University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, Southwest Regional Development Commission (at that point staffing the Rural Minnesota Energy Task Force) and Hennepin County (at that point staffing the Metro County Energy Task Force). The Phase I Work Plan stipulates that each CERT will convene interested stakeholders from their communities and develop a common level of technical understanding, perform a conservation and renewable energy resource inventory relevant to the resource availability and the community needs, develop an energy action plan that prioritizes cost- and community-effective energy projects, and work to implement projects to the extent possible in each region.

CERT Manual is published in July 2003.

During fall 2003 the Regional Partnerships hire Lissa Pawlisch as their CERTs Coordinator and hosts the first CERT meetings in the Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and West Central Regions.

**2004** Teams hold quarterly meetings, workshops and tours. Teams gather regional energy usage, efficiency and renewable energy data, establish organizational missions and begin drafting their Regional Strategic Energy Plans. Teams also hire students from University of Minnesota Duluth, University of Minnesota Morris, University of Minnesota Twin Cities and Bemidji State University to help assist in with the research needed for the Strategic Energy Plans.

Regional Partnerships hire Joel Haskard as the Assistant CERT Coordinator with funding from the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

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**2004** CERTs receive funding from the Blandin Foundation.

In January 2004, Southwest Regional Development Commission staff, Annette Bair hosted the first CERT meeting in Southwest Minnesota. Professors Steve Hoffman and Angela High-Pippert of the University of St. Thomas begin their CERT evaluation work with site visits and a written survey distributed to regional meeting participants.

**2005** CERT Partners host their first statewide conference, “Tomorrow’s Energy in Communities Today”.

January 1, 2005 the Rural Minnesota Energy Board, a joint powers board is formed (formally the Rural Minnesota Energy Task Force). Teams release their Regional Strategic Energy Plans in June 2005. The Plans catalogue regional energy usage and energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities. Each Team’s Plan also sets forth its regional energy priorities based on the region’s best bet energy options. Drs. Steve Hoffman and Angela High-Pippert issue their first CERT Evaluation Report in May 2005. CERTs receive a second round of funding from LCMR to implement Phase II. This phase is to focus on building local capacity to sustain the CERTs framework within each region, to overcome challenges to project implementation, use the resource inventories, implement the plans, and put finished projects on the ground.

**2006** CERT Program is awarded the Minnesota Environmental Initiative’s Partnership of the Year Award.

Teams release their first Request for Proposals for technical assistance and fund a total of 15 projects. In fall of 2006 and spring of 2007 CERTs co-hosts Energy Efficiency Workshops for school and local government building operators in each of the six Greater Minnesota CERT regions that attract 275 attendees.

**2007** CERT Partners host their second statewide conference “Local Energy/Local Opportunities.” The event is a huge success and attracts over 400 attendees.

In January 2007 CERT evaluators, Drs. Steve Hoffman and Angela High-Pippert, issue their second CERT evaluation survey, this time utilizing an online format. According to this 2007 survey, 95 percent of active CERT members believe that the program has been a success in the state of Minnesota. CERT Program is written into Minnesota State Statute, and Governor Tim Pawlenty signs SF 2096—the Omnibus Energy and Natural Resources finance bill which contains provisions to continue funding CERTs with \$625,000 each year in fiscal years 2008 and 2009. This funding includes substantial support for implementing community-scale clean energy projects in existing CERT regions across the state, and additional funding to foster creation of Metro CERTs.

The Green Institute is selected to coordinate the Twin Cities Metro CERTs Network. CERTs receive funding from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to catalyze local clean energy projects. Greater Minnesota teams release their second Request for Proposals for technical assistance and fund a total of 32 projects.

**2008** CERTs staff work through a complete Web site redesign, with a new site launched May 5, 2008.

Host Metro CERTs Network kick-off event. Greater Minnesota teams release their third Request for Proposals for technical assistance and fund a total of 37 projects.

**2009** CERTs hosts its third statewide conference in St. Cloud on February 10th and 11th, 2009, attracting more than 500 attendees.

With several partners, CERTs completes program design for *GreenStep Cities*, an initiative to assist local governments with sustainability. CERTs launches the *Minnesota Schools Cutting Carbon* program to help 103 public schools dramatically reduce their carbon footprints. On May 7, 2009 Governor Pawlenty signed the Environment Budget bill, which included \$1.25 million over the biennium for CERTs to help local groups develop project ideas, find technical and financial resources, and organize and implement projects in their communities. CERTs received \$450,000 over two years from the Bush Foundation to help Minnesota communities save 30.7 billion BTUs each year. All seven CERTs regions released a Request for Proposals for technical assistance seed grants, with funding to be announced in January 2010.