

Rebuild New York's Communities

New York State

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), under its Rebuild New York's Communities initiative, has brought the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Rebuild America program to communities throughout New York State. The goals of Rebuild New York's Communities are to (1) encourage consumer demand for energy-efficient products and services, (2) enhance the local infrastructure to respond to consumer demand for such products and services, and (3) support local communities in the process of identifying objectives and structuring and implementing an action plan to meet each objective. Towards this end, Rebuild America is a voluntary program in which communities can form partnerships with other members of the program and DOE in order to make profitable investments in existing buildings through energy-efficient technologies. The program enhances awareness among local leaders about the high cost of inefficient buildings and ways in which saved energy dollars can be redirected to pay for building improvements and other community needs. Improving energy use in buildings can also help to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), which contribute to climate change. Communities can tailor their efforts to meet local needs by choosing which buildings to renovate and deciding how much energy to save; what technology is best to use; and which local, state, and federal resources can help bring projects to fruition.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

NYSERDA originally joined the Rebuild America program as an administrator in 1996, targeting health care facilities. This effort featured the Energy Conservation for Healthcare Organizations (ECHO) program, which offered facilities cost-shared technical assistance for energy efficiency projects. Rebuild New York's Communities was established in 1999 to encompass an overall community approach to energy efficiency involving all building sectors.

In addition to the Rebuild America program, NY-

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Jurisdiction

New York State

Population

18 million

Local Contact

Peggie Neville

Assistant Project Manager

Residential Energy Affordability Program

New York State Energy Research and
Development Authority

286 Washington Avenue Extension
Albany, NY 12203-6399

Phone: 518/862-1090

Fax: 518/862-1091

Website

www.nyserda.org

Local Solutions to Global Climate Change

SERDA administers the New York Energy \$martSM program, which is designed to support certain public-benefit programs during the transition to a more competitive electricity market. Funded by a charge on the electricity transmitted and distributed by most of the state's investor-owned utilities, the New York Energy \$martSM program includes energy efficiency services, including those directed at the low-income sector; research and development; and environmental protection activities.

NYSERDA views Rebuild New York's Communities as an umbrella program that will incorporate a number of New York Energy \$martSM initiatives such as the ENERGY STAR[®] Public Awareness Campaign and the ENERGY STAR[®] Market Transformation program. The program's community focus allows NYSERDA to inform stakeholders at the local level of the various of programs and opportunities available.

When communities join the Rebuild New York's Communities effort, they agree to two provisions. First, they agree to develop action items that plan, organize, and describe the buildings' energy-efficiency retrofits and other energy activities to be completed. These action items may include—but are not limited to—an account of proposed energy efficiency measures, a strategy to carry those measures out, and expected costs and savings. In addition, these items should identify the means to verify the types and numbers of buildings treated, the resultant energy savings, and the nature of technical assistance desired. Second, the communities agree to promote their participation in the Rebuild America program, using the DOE Rebuild America logo prominently on all marketing and information materials.

Rebuild New York's Communities is initially concentrating on Long Island and the regions surrounding the cities of Buffalo, Albany, Syracuse, Binghamton, Poughkeepsie, and Plattsburgh. Under the program, each region must develop action plans specifically focusing on important community issues and ways to improve the energy efficiency of the region's building stock. The ultimate goal of the program is to have every area of the state covered by a Rebuild New York's Communities region.

Each of the regional partnerships has been

structured to provide a forum for networking opportunities, discussion of energy issues and projects, and presentations on a variety of topics relating to energy efficiency at either quarterly or monthly meetings. These topics may include energy performance contracting, financing options, geothermal heat pump technology, the Rebuild America Business Partners program, energy-efficient mortgages, ENERGY STAR[®] appliance and lighting products, ENERGY STAR[®] Homes, and aggregation.

In addition to DOE's *Partner Update Newsletter*, Rebuild New York's Communities also offers partners a New York-specific newsletter that will highlight partnerships' successes, suggests additional resources to be considered in implementing projects, and announces seminars, trainings, and conferences that may be of interest.

RESOURCES USED

NYSERDA is working in coordination with DOE and representatives from the various regions that are participating in the program. DOE awarded funding to NYSERDA in 1999 and 2000 under its Region I State Energy Program—Special Projects to establish and maintain a Rebuild America program representative in New York State. The program representative devotes 100 percent of her time to develop Rebuild New York's Communities partnerships in the targeted areas throughout the state. Funding is also available through the Rebuild New York's Communities program to establish regional coordinator positions in the targeted areas where communities can demonstrate matching resources and in-kind support. Currently, \$300,000 is available to support the regional coordinators. It is important to note that although the program has defined target communities to work with, NYSERDA, as the New York State administrator for the Rebuild America program, will provide assistance to any community that is interested in developing a partnership.

LESSONS LEARNED

The success of the program comes from the enthusiasm, commitment, and hard work of the local stakeholders in identifying the vision for their communities and developing action plans to achieve this vision. Although NYSERDA offers assistance to the regional partnerships through its position as an

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administrator and through resources from its programs, the idea of the Rebuild New York's Communities' partnerships is to focus on the individual communities—their goals and resources. The agency's role in this process is to truly be a partner to the partnership. While the program is still in its early stage, NYSERDA is working hard with the communities to make each partnership a success. This is important in maintaining the level of momentum realized when each partnership is established and in giving stakeholders a real example of the programs benefits.

RESULTS

Rebuild New York's Communities is striving to develop diverse partnerships. In the three partnerships currently operating—Rebuild Niagara Frontier, Rebuild Long Island, and Rebuild Capital/Saratoga—stakeholders have included local governments, building performance professionals, colleges and universities, environmental advocates, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, utilities, engineering and architectural firms, private businesses, financial institutions, weatherization agencies, and energy service companies. NYSERDA is working to establish the remaining four regional

partnerships over the next eighteen months. Rebuild New York's Communities will continue not only to package NYSERDA's many programs and opportunities that are available to local communities, but to partner with other state agencies as well. DOE reports that by the year 2003, Rebuild America partnerships will be involved in over 2 billion square feet of building renovations. These projects will reduce CO₂ emissions by an estimated 1.6 million tons per year and generate \$3 billion in private community investment.

NYSERDA continues to learn more from the local partnerships about their concerns. A few common themes that have emerged are smart growth, rehabilitation of historic and urban core buildings, affordable housing, and energy education for K-12 students as well as for the general population. The agency will be working on identifying the resources that communities need to address these issues and others as they arise. Overall, the goal of Rebuild New York's Communities is to use energy efficiency as a means to address important local issues and, as a result, to save money, promote economic growth, create jobs, and help to protect the environment.