

and loan programs like the State Energy Conservation Office's LoanSTAR program and the Texas Maintenance and Improvement Fund. Many of these mechanisms allow a city to pay for equipment by using the savings from energy bills over time, enabling a city to implement upgrades on an accelerated timeline with little or no up-front investment on the city's part.

"Now more than ever, managing operating costs is a key component to successful budgetary planning," said Ed King, a senior advisor with Government Capital, a firm specializing in energy efficiency financing. "The right financing structure can enable an agency to move forward with its energy efficiency program in less than 30 days without disturbing fund balances or funding for other capital projects, thereby realizing energy savings sooner."

Another popular way to finance energy efficiency upgrades is through a performance contract. In a performance contract, the company that performs the upgrades effectively guarantees that the improvements made will result in significant energy savings. While each is structured differently according to the types of projects included, performance contracts are designed to allow the participating organization to pay for the work over time using the savings that the improvement project generates.

The City of Abilene recently installed a wide range of improvements using a performance contract. In 2008,

specific, CLEA's built vice president of engineering. "While high efficiency equipment can cost more compared to standard equipment of equal size, incorporating high efficiency designs into all aspects of a project allows smaller individual units to provide the same result as larger, less efficient ones. For example, high efficiency windows and lighting help reduce the size of the air conditioning system necessary to keep the building comfortable."

CitySmart isn't the only voluntary program available to cities. As part of its "Take a Load Off, Texas" energy efficiency portfolio, Oncor also offers the City Matching Grant Program, which is ideal for cities that have already identified viable projects. It provides matching grants of up to \$10,000 for the implementation of energy efficiency projects.

Communicating Success

Recognizing the importance of public support to fund efficiency projects, CitySmart also provides public relations and communications assistance. This ranges from press releases announcing significant achievements to the coordination and arrangement of television news coverage. CitySmart partners have been featured in a number of print publications, and News 8 Austin recently ran a story on the City of Temple's library upgrades.

It is a difficult time for cities across the state, and citizens