

Spokane County Partnership

Jurisdictions and Geography

The Spokane County RCM partnership is the only partnership that formed in Eastern Washington. It is comprised of Spokane County, the City of Ritzville and the Central Valley School District. The City of Ritzville is in Adams County, making this the only partnership to span more than one county.

Originally, the city of Deer Park was involved instead of Ritzville; Ritzville was part of another potential Shared RCM partnership with Lincoln County and Davenport. When that partnership did not materialize and Deer Park backed out of the Spokane County partnership, Ritzville stepped in as the needed second city or county per grant requirements.

Partnership Details

The inclusion of the City of Ritzville is not optimal because it is about an hour's drive from Spokane. However, the grant program was set up such that a partnership needed at least two city or county entities and no other jurisdiction closer to Spokane was interested in participating. Because Ritzville's allocation of time per utility expenditures was about one percent, the RCM did not spend much time in Ritzville.

Spokane County received an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG), out of which some of this program's costs were paid.

The Spokane County grants administrator is the contact for the county as lead. She is also a champion of the program, without whom the program would likely have folded long ago. As noted below, there were major RCM changes, yet the administrator's belief in the RCM concept helped the partnership overcome those difficulties.

In November 2011, when there was a changeover in RCMs (as described in "Hiring Process"), the Central Valley School District opted out of the program. The school district indicated discontent that no RCM work was being done for them. There had been a turnover in key personnel at the school district (the original champion no longer worked there) and the RCM expressed frustration that school facilities staff were not responding to his attempts to reach them because they were too busy and overworked due to budget and staffing issues.

Program Timeline

Project Milestones	
1/15/2010	Phase 1 application received
4/1/2010 (signed 3/9)	Inter-local agreement adopted
4/1/2010	Commerce contract start date
4/2 to 4/16/2010	Position open, 19 applications were submitted
5/20/2010	Three applicants interviewed. Job offered to top candidate, who declined.

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Shared Resource Conservation Manager Program Report

Washington State University Energy Program, March 2013

Project Milestones	
6/1 to 6/18/2010	Position was reopened
7/22/2010	Second round of interviews
8/4/2010	Offer to top candidate was declined
8/2010	Shared RCM hired
11/1/2010	RCM started work
11/2/2010	Kick-off meeting
3/10 and 3/11/2011	First site technical visit by WSU Energy Program staff
10/21/2011	RCM left employment
11/17/2011	Second Shared RCM, the initial applicant who declined the job, was hired
6/30/2012	Commerce contract end date

Hiring Process

Three applicants were interviewed from a pool of 19 in May 2010. The chosen candidate, an experienced RCM, turned the job down because he was not available to work full time. The hiring committee chose to repost the position, feeling that the second tier of applicants was not strong enough. In the second round, three people were interviewed. Again, the top candidate declined the offer. The position was offered to the next candidate, who had interviewed from abroad over the phone. He accepted the offer, but left his position less than a year after beginning work. His stated reason was that he was rehired at his previous firm for an overseas position.

The second RCM had accomplished little work and was uncommunicative with the partner agencies about his lack of progress. It is hard to say exactly why he was unable to show progress. Looking back, it is possible that a combination of factors, including a complex database, difficult communication with some of the partners and lack of clear guidance with a new approach such as RCM, may have contributed to these problems.

About one month later, in November 2011, the first top candidate who had been offered the job began work as the Shared RCM with a professional services contract (less than full-time) with the county. At this point, Ritzville was still involved but the Central Valley School District had left the partnership.

The RCM, in addition to being experienced and technically capable, is personable and optimistic.

NOTE: FOR PURPOSES OF THIS REPORT, "RCM" INDICATES THE CURRENT RCM WHO REPLACED THE FIRST ONE.

RCM Tasks

Facility Assessments

The first RCM did some site visits, primarily with WSU Energy Program technical staff and mostly at Ritzville and the Geiger sites at Spokane County.

The current RCM spent much of his first months doing site visits and talking with facility staff. He was able to complete the facility assessments within his first few months on the job.

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Data Tracking

The first Shared RCM was provided with EnergyCAP software but had difficulty gathering and entering data into the program. At the time of the RCM's resignation in October 2011, WSU Energy Program staff were working with Avista Utilities to get billing data in a form appropriate for easy download into EnergyCAP. However, support provided by the WSU Energy Program, Avista and EnergyCAP was not sufficient to make this application effective, so resource use and costs were not tracked during that RCM's time with the partnership.

When the county hired the second Shared RCM, he requested use of Utility Manager because he was already experienced with that software, so the county purchased it. The RCM was able to enter 24 months of data for Ritzville (53 accounts) by the end of December 2011 and for Spokane County (422 accounts) by the end of January 2012. With this data entered, reports could be generated that prioritized the facilities that needed attention first. In general, the reports corroborated what was observed and learned from the site visits. The RCM is also transferring data to ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager.

Reports

What the WSU Energy Program generally calls facility action plans, this RCM calls building surveys, which follow the same format and provide information about the building, building systems and recommendations for energy efficiency measures. The RCM was able to do walk-throughs and write up the building surveys by February 2012, a few months after being hired. Very simple resource conservation management plans were written for Ritzville and Spokane County.

Resource Conservation Projects

The current RCM has identified lighting retrofit projects for both partners, with substantial incentives from the utility, Avista. He continues to monitor and assess facilities for optimal performance and make recommendations that will result in utility and maintenance cost savings.

A central steam plant provides heat to various buildings on the main campus that is home to the majority of Spokane County facilities and departments. There is no steam-metering capability and it was unclear how steam was charged to the different facilities. The cost of the steam is excessive compared to calculations of average use for the buildings. Thermal images confirmed heat loss, as did estimates on realistic heat loss given by Avista. A WSU Energy Program engineer assisted the RCM with the heat loss assessment, and the RCM is working on recommendations for solutions, including hiring an energy services company (ESCO) and decentralizing the energy source at the campus.

Spokane County contracted with ESCOs through the Washington Department of Enterprise Services (DES) in April 2012. The RCM assists those firms by providing baseline utility information and trends, as well as results from the preliminary building audits he conducted. The RCM is also assisting the county by pursuing additional sources of funding for retrofit and energy savings projects.

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While Ritzville garners less attention because of its size, the RCM recommended replacing a boiler at the Ritzville museum and provided information about a state grant opportunity to help fund the project.

Communication Activities

The RCM is extremely personable and easily makes connections with facilities personnel. He wrote newsletters for distribution to staff and has made presentations to commissioners and department heads. He has also set up a communications link with the county to provide managers with relevant and timely information.

Challenges

Changes in primary personnel at the Central Valley School District in mid-2011 created difficulty for the first RCM.

The new RCM found, upon site visits to Ritzville, that staff there were primarily concerned about cost, not energy use. Based on this observation, the RCM made it a point to discuss energy *and* cost issues before proposing certain measures.

Spokane County has over 60 buildings and 24 vendors, with departments that tend to be autonomous. This de-centralized arrangement meant that the RCM had to work harder to collect data.

It was unclear the amount of work the first RCM accomplished. He was frustrated by the difficulty of getting the resource accounting database up and running, and thought that he needed to do that before writing plans and making recommendations for energy-saving measures.

Results

Because the new RCM began work in November 2011, savings resulting from his efforts are not immediately evident. The most current data the WSU Energy Program has in Utility Manager goes through March 2012 because there is a time lag for downloading data and the grant program ended June 2012. The RCM noted in the May 2012 monthly report that the main county buildings showed a 6.1 percent decrease in energy use during the first quarter of 2012 compared to the same three months the year before. This is a 11.1 percent cost savings.

Spokane County Savings 2012 Compared to 2011		
Site	kWh Savings	THERMS Savings
Community Services	138,019	14,426
Public Health	164,144	52,234
Gardner (Elections)*	55,403	
Geiger*	144,188	
Signs & Signals*	16,708	
Engineering Building*	19,109	
ERR Garages*	78,980	
Public Works*	209,369	
Total	825,920	66,660
Projected savings	Elec @ .075 Kwh	\$ 61,944
	Gas @ .71 therm	\$ 47,329
	Total:	\$ 109,273

* projects completed as of 12/20/2012

Source: Annual report for Avista

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A 2012 annual report written for Avista states that savings for facilities where projects were completed or projected were 825,920 kWh and 66,660 therms, for total cost savings of \$109,273. The report goes on to state that savings were produced in most facilities. Increased awareness by occupants and attention to detail by maintenance staff have contributed to these results.

Energy and cost savings as reported in the partnership's closeout report for April 2011 through March 2012 are presented in the table below.

Substantiated Energy & Cost Savings – April 2011 through March 2012, baseline year 2010							
Partner Entity	Electricity (kWh)	Electricity \$ Saved	Natural Gas (therms)	Natural Gas \$ Saved	Water (CCF)	Water \$ Saved*	Total \$ Saved
Spokane County	194,494	\$17,695	41,599	\$31,516	27,093	\$39,284	\$88,495
City of Ritzville	31,544	\$3,028	1595	\$1212			\$1,816
Totals	226,038	\$20,723	43,194	\$32,728	27,093	\$39,284	\$90,311

* Water savings in part the result of very wet spring weather

Looking Ahead

The bulk of the energy and cost savings will be seen in future periods. The vision and persistence of the champion at Spokane County saved the program, even if only with two partners. The RCM's contract runs through December 2013 and it is not anticipated that the RCM program will continue with both Ritzville and Spokane County beyond that date. However, the RCM is training his replacement and Spokane County is planning to continue the RCM approach in one form or another into the future.

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