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OKLAHOMA'S ENERGY EXTENSION SERVICE PROGRAM
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

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Abstract

The U. S. Department of Energy's Plan for a nationwide Energy Extension Service (EES) provides a genuine opportunity for states to establish a positive energy outreach program. This paper summarizes Oklahoma's previous involvement in EES and outlines items that should be considered in design of the future program.

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Energy Extension Service Act passed by Congress in 1977 provided for the establishment of a comprehensive Energy Extension Service (EES) Program in two phases. The first phase was initiated in April, 1977 when ten states were competitively selected to participate in an eighteen month pilot program. Alabama, Connecticut, Michigan, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming were awarded individual grants of approximately 1.1 million dollars. Grants of \$30,000 each were made to forty-five nonparticipating states and territories in support of state activities designed to observe pilot state programs, understand the lessons learned by pilot states, and use those lessons as a basis for planning participation in a nationwide EES. The second phase involves implementation of the nationwide EES Program.

The purpose of the EES Program is to offer practical energy savings information and advice to small energy users such as individuals, small businesses and agricultural operations, schools, hospitals, and state and local governments, and to encourage the use of solar and other renewable resources. Small

energy users were selected as the target audience because there is a significant potential for energy savings by this group. In addition, small energy users have had little access to reliable and convenient sources of personalized assistance.

States have an important role in the comprehensive EES. The program works through the states that design and implement activities to provide direct, personalized information and assistance. This paper summarizes Oklahoma's previous involvement in EES and outlines items that should be considered in design of the future program.

2. PAST EES ACTIVITIES

2.1 PROPOSAL FOR PILOT PROGRAM

Oklahoma submitted a proposal for participation in the Energy Extension Service Pilot Program in June, 1977. The proposal consisted of two major groupings of activities: (1) a set of general services available on demand from anyone in the state, and (2) a set of specific services tailored to the needs of selected small energy users and influencers. The specific services to be offered were determined by analyzing the needs of selected target audiences. These services were then

grouped into six major program elements which are listed below:

- (1) Energy Information Center
 - (a) Technical Library
 - (b) Hot-Line
 - (c) Referral Service
 - (d) Film/Tape Loan
 - (e) Printed Materials Provision
- (2) Energy Awareness Programs
 - (a) Newsletters/Energy Awareness Updates
 - (b) Speaker's Bureau
 - (c) Liasion with Groups
 - (d) General Education Programs
 - (e) Programs for Schools
 - (f) Demonstrations/Exhibits
 - (g) News Releases, Media Liasion
- (3) Field Services
 - (a) Technical Assistance to Users
 - (b) Energy Audits
 - (c) Thermogram Field Services
 - (d) Demonstrations, Workshops
 - (e) User Need Determination
 - (f) Training Services
- (4) Publications
 - (a) Collect, Analyze, Translate
 - (b) Fact Sheets
 - (c) Workshop Materials
 - (d) Quality Control Check
- (5) Technical Projects for Users
 - (a) Energy Management for Small Retailers
 - (b) Energy Management for Small Manufacturers
 - (c) Energy Management for Small Municipalities
 - (d) Residential Energy Conservation Programs.

(6) Technical Project for Influencers

(a) Energy Efficiency in Consumption

In addition to services offered, the proposal contained activities associated with program evaluation, coordination and management. The management structure consisted of a combination of personnel in the Oklahoma Department of Energy and Oklahoma State University.

The pilot proposal was not selected primarily because of organizational deficiencies and lack of sufficiently detailed specifications. In the opinion of the evaluators, lines of authority and relationship of EES to the Governor's Office were not clearly specified. Further, the evaluators believed that the large array of program elements was rather diffuse and lacked focus.

2.2 NON-PILOT STATE GRANT

In January, 1978, Oklahoma received a \$30,000 grant to assist in tracking the progress of the pilot program and preparing for participation in the comprehensive EES program. By accepting the grant, Oklahoma assumed responsibilities in four main areas: (1) Information collection and review, (2) Information dissemination and liasion, (3) EES technical library and (4) Pilot results alternatives study. Each area is briefly described herein.

Information collection and review. The State agreed to work closely and cooperatively with the U. S. Department of Energy, pilot states and the evaluation contractor to identify all available information relating to a variety of energy technologies and pilot state programs. State energy staff members were assigned to collect and review all information to determine which specific energy technologies and forms of technical assistance are appropriate to the needs of the state.

Information dissemination and liasion. The State agreed to ensure that the lessons learned during the pilot program were understood and widely disseminated. The Oklahoma Department of Energy serves as a focal point for access to pilot program results and for dissemination of this information.

EES technical library. The EES library is

specifically designed to support the State's ongoing energy outreach efforts and preparations for participation in the nationwide EES. The library will contain reports and other materials which present pilot program results, evaluation contractor plans, and pilot state EES proposals. It will also contain basic and current publications on energy conservation, alternate energy sources, specific techniques and technologies, financial aspects of differing technologies, status of energy related legislation, and other pertinent information, both technical and non-technical.

Pilot results alternatives study. An overall assessment of pilot programs results will be made upon completion of the program to identify policy options and recommend specific action programs for the State.

3. PRESENT EES ACTIVITIES

The current EES activities can be grouped into two main areas: (1) monitoring pilot progress, and (2) developing the comprehensive EES State planning framework.

Monitoring pilot progress. The state is working closely and cooperatively with the EES office of the U. S. Department of Energy to identify and collect information relating to pilot state programs and operation of an effective extension service. The EES office has been very helpful by hosting meetings and forwarding special mailings of relevant information sources and lessons learned in the pilot program. Based on observations of the pilot program and knowledge of successful extension activities, the following comments appear to be true:

- (1) Access to information is not enough. Just giving people access to information will not work. No matter how easy, or sophisticated, access to information is made, past experience has shown usage will be limited without additional steps. People require assistance to make informed energy decisions. Generalized awareness programs alone are not adequate in terms of the types of assistance needed. We do not mean to imply that information

is not a critical ingredient. We mean that emphasis should also be placed on getting the information applied connecting energy users with practical energy-savings opportunities.

- (2) Information must be translated. Most generalized information must be put into a form understandable by the user in the context of the user's problem. Heavy emphasis should be put on translating information to meet specific user needs. This is expensive and time consuming. It also means using people to do more than "broadcast" information. We believe a translation capability, even for sophisticated users, is a basic ingredient that must be part of the overall program. We do not mean to imply that the EES should not concentrate on searching for and using existing materials to the extent practicable. The important point here is the recognition through design that the EES must have a strong technical base to translate information.
- (3) Develop credible technical base. The strongest pilot state programs have clear-cut technical services, with clearly projected dollar and energy savings and people with solid technical outreach skills.
- (4) Face-to-face assistance is best. Past experience has shown that there is no substitute for face-to-face technical assistance. It has been identified as a gap in several existing energy programs. Personal contact is the single most important channel through which technical information is obtained--three times more important than printed materials in technological innovation. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on providing direct, personalized information and assistance by persons credible to the users.
- (5) Meet the needs of the energy users. The EES must deliver programs that the

users need. The only way to induce energy users to save energy or to convert to other energy sources is to show them that it is in their best interest to do so. This means that the EES program should be strongly oriented to meeting users needs. The process of determining needs is complex and costly. We believe to find out what users need, ask them.

- (6) Field test projects. In view of possible credibility problems, it is of utmost importance that EES projects be field tested and refined on a small scale at selected user sites prior to statewide implementation.
- (7) Don't reinvent the wheel. In designing the EES, the state should draw upon the wealth of experience that others have encountered in setting up their EES programs. States have much to offer each other on energy related outreach resources and capabilities.

Developing planning framework. The methodology employed in developing the comprehensive state EES plan required the formation of an advisory committee and project team. The project team has responsibility for plan development and the advisory committee functions in an overall advisory capacity. The objectives of the advisory committee are to (1) ensure the state EES plan is responsive to community needs, (2) ensure public involvement in plan development, and (3) approve the final plan.

The advisory committee is generally representative of statewide interests and includes members from state and local government, private industry, utility companies, local civic and consumer groups, trade associations and the major state universities. This type of participation ensures a broad perspective for identifying and responding to the needs of specific target audiences in the state. In addition, the committee members may be willing to provide technical assistance to the project team, distribute information, and publicize EES services.

4. FUTURE EES ACTIVITIES

The State already knows a great deal about how to design a successful EES program. There is little need to test or experiment with new mechanisms since most have been well tried in a wide variety of settings. It is strongly recommended that the following suggestions be incorporated in the design of state EES programs.

Mission. The mission of the Energy Extension Service should be to encourage small energy consumers to adopt measures which conserve energy or utilize nondepletable energy sources. These groups now have difficulty in obtaining reliable information on a variety of practical energy measures from convenient, objective sources in which they have confidence. The Energy Extension Service would assist these small energy users by providing, on a personalized basis, information and assistance regarding the availability, technical details, and energy cost savings potential of energy-efficient techniques.

Strategies. The mission can be best carried out by adopting a strategy of program design and operations aimed at (1) integrating the EES into a comprehensive plan, and (2) developing the infrastructure needed to provide direct, personalized information and assistance.

Integrating programs. Since a variety of programs and networks for distributing information about energy technologies and other activities are already operating at the local and state levels, the state should seek to structure its EES in a manner that (1) supports and supplements ongoing energy programs, and (2) makes optimum use of existing information networks, distribution channels, and delivery mechanisms. This approach will enhance program development by building upon the credibility of locally accepted organizations and personnel with established constituencies.

Developing infrastructure. A number of managerial, professional and support efforts are needed to operate EES programs. The state should develop a set of baseline programs to provide for these important

functions. One recommended set is as follows:

- (1) Planning and evaluation. A focused program of planning and evaluation should be conducted to maintain a close orientation to national energy policy, state and local government policies, the changing state needs and the evolving status of energy techniques and technologies. Planning and evaluation should operate across all EES program and organizational areas.
- (2) Intergovernmental coordination. The comprehensive nature of EES will cause it to interact with various government agencies and organizations. To ensure that EES interacts effectively at all levels, staff specialists should be assigned to coordinate EES program planning and implementation with related programs.
- (3) Technical support. One of the critical functions within the EES program is to develop a strong technical base to support individual program development and implementation. For this reason, a professional staff should be developed and maintained as an important resource.
- (4) Information services. EES has an immediate mandate due to its mission of direct, personalized information and assistance to establish itself as a highly regarded, credible and responsive source of timely and accurate information on a wide range of subjects. Trained and experienced public information specialists should be assigned to perform this vital function.

5. SUMMARY

The proposed EES has the potential of becoming a highly successful program. The reasons for this optimism lie in the fact that the Federal Government is delegating clear responsibility to states to design programs in their own way to meet local needs. Also, there is general agreement that most people will accept and act on personalized

information and assistance received from credible sources. However, it is important to recognize that most states will not be able to carry on the same number and variety of programs as the pilot states due to funding limitations. The EES infrastructure alone will use a large proportion of the available fundings and severely impact the number of projects which can be undertaken. Thus, a credible job of providing personalized assistance and information can only be accomplished by using all conservation resources in a supportive and complimentary manner without duplicating services.