



Whatcom County News



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Whatcom County awarded Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.

The U.S. Department of Energy via the Recovery Act is distributing Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG). **Whatcom County** has been awarded a formula grant in the amount of \$470,000. that will be expended over three years. Desired outcomes of the EECBG project include:

- Increased energy efficiency, reduced energy consumption and reduced energy costs
- New jobs and increased productivity
- Accelerated deployment of market-ready renewable energy technologies
- Improved air quality and related environmental and health indicators associated with the reduction of fossil fuel emissions
- Improved coordination of energy-related policies and programs across jurisdictional levels of governance and local/community level programs
- Increased security, resilience, and reliability of energy generation and transmission infrastructure
- Leveraging of the resource of federal, state and local governments, utilities and utility regulators, private sector and non-profit organizations to maximize the resulting energy, economic and environmental benefits
- Widespread use of innovative financial mechanisms that transform energy markets.

EECBG application:

The Administration proposed that Whatcom County's application include three primary components.

1. \$250,000. Community Energy Challenge:

Whatcom County has been working with Sustainable Connections and the city of Bellingham to utilize a portion of the grant as leverage for a community wide loan program to be used for residential/commercial energy efficiency retrofits. Under this approach the County would commit \$250K and the City of Bellingham would commit \$250K to the project. Sustainable Connections in partnership with the County, the City of Bellingham, the Opportunity Council and other partners would manage the Energy Efficiency Community Challenge program (EECC) targeting residential and commercial sectors. Sustainable Connections and Opportunity Council will create a "one-stop shop" for property owners to get assistance to develop and implement energy efficiency projects in their buildings and market the Program together with the County, City and other partners.

An essential part of the Program is to arrange financing solutions for participating energy users, allowing them to overcome the first cost barrier and pay for energy efficiency improvements over time, matching energy cost savings with loan payments. To this end, **Whatcom County** and the City will contract with Sustainable Connections which in turn will sub-contract with the Energy Efficiency Finance Corporation (EEFC) to develop and oversee the financing component of the Program. This program would be matched or "leveraged" by loans through Banks and Credit Unions to create a self-sustaining program that could last for years. County and City grant funds along with local bank resources would be loaned to residential and commercial energy users for energy efficiency investments. The loans repaid over time would fuel other loans for the same purposes. The County and City respectively have committed in principal to devote \$250,000

each of their federal Energy and Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) funds to provide credit enhancement and/other incentives supporting the planned commercial financing program. The County and City are also working on applying for separate State energy grant funds to enhance this program.

2. \$160,000 .8 FTE for Resource Conservation Manager (grant funded)

Whatcom County would like to utilize a portion of the grant to refill a vacant position. This position is vital to the organization to achieve increased energy efficiency, reduced energy consumption and reduced energy costs. This position would also be responsible for pursuing grants for energy efficient capital projects including retrofits. The grant would cover all benefits and wages over the three years of the grant.

3. \$60,000. Smart Trips

Whatcom County through the award of this grant will support the Council of Government's Whatcom Smart Trips program for the on-line trip recording process that generates data and statistics resulting from the program. Program user data is anticipated to reflect decreases in greenhouse gases, fossil fuel usage, and reduction in vehicle miles.

The **Whatcom County** grant award this week is in addition to the City of Bellingham grant award of \$780,000, two separate amounts of money from the same program that amount to 1.25 million.

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