



Thetford Home Energy Action Team Weatherization Program

Project Goal

To implement a comprehensive program of community-based social marketing initiatives to promote home weatherization in the town of Thetford, putting it on par to match Vermont's statewide climate change goals.

Brief Description

In 2011, the Sustainable Energy Resource Group (SERG) worked with the Thetford Energy Committee (TEC) to promote home weatherization using an ingenious community-based social marketing initiative. The primary goal of this project was to triple the amount of homes being weatherized every year in Thetford, starting from 12 to 36.

The project was developed and implemented by the Sustainable Energy Resource Group (SERG) which was a not-for profit organization that helped communities use less energy while saving money, and the official town energy committee of Thetford – SERG has since merged into another nonprofit called Vital Communities. Both organizations have successful track records of local energy projects, which made developing a work plan for implementation easier to achieve. Funding for the program, which included technical and material support, was obtained from a broad selection of grant funding including: the High Meadows Fund, Granite United Way, VECAN, Clean Air – Cool Planet, Ben and Jerry's Community Action Team, and local Thetford business sponsors.

To achieve the desired goal of tripling homes being weatherized, the two organizations collaborated and branded a Home Energy Action Team, now referred to as HEAT. HEAT was made up of past community volunteers and weatherization participants, but also included a diverse range of community and neighborhood groups brought on through a broad outreach process. After the recruiting process, HEAT was at fifty volunteers strong, which is impressive for a town of only 2,500.

Before volunteers began their community outreach process, they were thoroughly educated and trained on the importance of home weatherization. After being trained, HEAT members organized and deployed an intensive town-wide door to door outreach effort. The main goal of the outreach was to visit or send information to every home in the town of Thetford. This effort included educating homeowners about home weatherization, providing resource lists, distributing free CFL bulbs, and assisting homeowners in figuring out the efficiency of their homes.

One of the most important aspects of the HEAT volunteer program was the implementation of a cohesive program branding strategy. The branding included bags, t-shirts, letterhead and flyers all uniformly labeled with the Thetford HEAT logo. This strategy was encouraged in part to make the program easily identifiable, and to develop a complete sense of community effort.

After the door to door process was completed, the volunteers were able to distribute information packets to 650 homes, distributed and installed 158 free 25-watt CFLs in homes, and collected home energy surveys on 240 Thetford homes.

Previous to the development of the HEAT program, the town of Thetford also received a \$24,000 federal stimulus grant to provide incentives, matching those provided by Efficiency Vermont (EVT). The matching funds were available to homeowners who weatherized their homes through the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program (HPwES). Thetford HEAT was able to develop two successful Thetford case studies that were previously financed through HPwES funds. The case studies were included in information packets handed out during the door to door outreach.

Lessons to Share

The Thetford Heat program, combined with HPwES initiatives, delivered solid measureable results. In less than 6 months time, 18 homes weatherized. In the next 6 months, another 12 homes so a total of 30 homes were completed in the year of Thetford HEAT through Thetford incentives. Almost all of the homes weatherized can be directly connected to the HEAT volunteer's activism and outreach.

A quote from one of the project participants sums up the success of this program well. Dennis Donahue of Thetford Center stated, *"The door-to-door HEAT program was the tipping point for me. THWIP/HEAT was/is a block-buster. Very clever. And for me the reminder I could do something to save money, reduce energy consumption, and be more comfortable. The SERG general energy calculation results caused me to try to reduce energy use."*

Some of the more telling measureable results are highly indicative of the program's success. The results also show that the primary goal of tripling the amount of weatherized homes set by SERG was *very* close to being achieved. The economic driver of the HEAT outreach can easily be seen in the cost savings obtained by homeowners that participated and the subsequent impact the work had on the local economy. The 18 homes weatherized are projected to save each homeowner approximately \$914 a year, and the local economic stimulation was projected at over \$160,000 total.

The development and implementation of HEAT worked very well from a community engagement and activation strategy. It is apparent some of the biggest strengths of this strategy were utilizing a broad based community effort, combined with intuitive program branding to gain the trust of local residents. This trust was critical in obtaining the appropriate level of engagement to meet the goals set by SERG and the TEC. Having both strong ties within the community, and being able to leverage the respect of the organizations helped propel this project to success.

For More Information

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Community Served: Thetford, Vermont

Role in the Region: Upper Valley Bedroom Community

	2000	2010
Total Population	1,659	2,588
Median Age	40	46
Total Households	734	1,097
Family Households	485	734
Nonfamily Households	249	363
<i>ACS Year</i>	1999	2009-13
Median Household Income	\$48,333	\$76,923