

## GOING GREEN

## State, federal funds can aid efficiency investments

Utilities  
WatchBY RACHEL ASLIN  
GOLDWASSER

Perhaps your company is smarting from high energy costs or perhaps our mild winter has left some room in the budget for investment in the future. Either way, while energy prices continue to be volatile, there are several programs to help businesses invest in efficiency measures and save money in the future.

Energy efficiency is about the bottom line. General Electric's CEO, Jeffrey Immelt, is well known for his company's "Ecomagination" energy-efficiency and sustainable energy strategy. Immelt's focus is not driven by environmentalism, but instead by the bottom line. In fact, he is famed for saying that the closest he comes to nature is playing golf.

His claim regarding efficiency? "Green is green" -- efficiency is good for the bottom line. Efficiency measures can provide a buffer from volatile energy prices and many investments pay back in surprisingly short periods of time. If your business is committed to investigating efficiency measures, but you are not sure where to start, you have some powerful tools to help you get started.

The first tool is offered by your gas or electric utility. Efficiency programs for all residential and commercial customers are implemented by New Hampshire's electric and gas service providers via the "CORE Programs," which are regulated by the Public Utilities Commission. These programs are funded by the System Benefits Charge, which is paid by all electric ratepayers in New Hampshire as a small portion of their electric bill.

The CORE programs may be able to help your company perform a technical assessment of its energy needs at little or no cost, and then provide incentives to cover some of the costs of the investment.

Your company may be eligible for low-cost audits and incentives for performing efficiency measures. If your company is considering investing in new equipment and/or new construction, your provider may have a program that will further offset costs. Working with

your gas and electric utilities' energy-efficiency experts is a good way to become educated about your facilities and investments, which will pay back in the short- and long-term. Call your utility or go to [nhsaves.com](http://nhsaves.com) for more information.

## Many opportunities

The second tool takes many different forms, but it is funded by the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. Currently, New Hampshire participates in RGGI, which is a market-based program intended to limit greenhouse gas emissions in New England and mid-Atlantic states.

While RGGI has been the source of political debate in Concord with many lawmakers seeking either to withdraw New Hampshire from RGGI or to change how funds are used, the state currently continues to participate. The Public Utilities Commission administers RGGI funds, which currently support several programs that help businesses, municipalities and individuals implement energy efficiency.

From a business perspective, one very successful program is operated by the Retail Merchants Association of New Hampshire. The program helps commercial businesses with energy assessment, audit and imple-

mentation of energy-efficiency measures. (To obtain more information, visit [rmanheep.com](http://rmanheep.com).)

Another successful business-oriented RGGI funded program is operated by the Business Finance Authority and provides low-cost financing for energy efficiency projects that cost at least \$100,000. (More

information: [nhcdfa.org/web/erp/eeef/eeef\\_overview.html](http://nhcdfa.org/web/erp/eeef/eeef_overview.html).)

Finally, if your company is located in one of three New Hampshire communities -- Berlin, Nashua or Plymouth -- it can participate in the Better Buildings program, which provides special financial incentives and financing arrangements for efficiency and renewable energy projects.

The program is funded by ARRA through the Department of Energy. Your business can contact the Better Buildings program via its website, [betterbuildingsnh.com](http://betterbuildingsnh.com).

These are only a few of the many opportunities for New Hampshire businesses to obtain assistance with energy-efficiency investments. Whether you operate a small business or work for a large corporation, energy-efficiency investments can lower your bottom line and reduce the impact of rising and unpredictable energy prices.

These programs can help you get started on the road to becoming a more efficient, lower-cost business. **NHBR**

Rachel Aslin Goldwasser, an attorney with the Concord-based law firm of Orr & Reno, focuses her practice on energy and land use law.

*Now is the time  
to consider boosting  
your company's  
energy-efficiency efforts*

information can be found at [nhbfa.com/BFA\\_LoanPlans\\_BizEnergy.html](http://nhbfa.com/BFA_LoanPlans_BizEnergy.html).)

Similarly, the third tool is programs funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and also takes many shapes. Some of the ARRA-funded programs have been closed, but a few remain open and available for New Hampshire businesses.

For example, the Community Development Finance Authority offers financing as well as grants for audits and energy efficiency measures. The beauty of this pro-

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