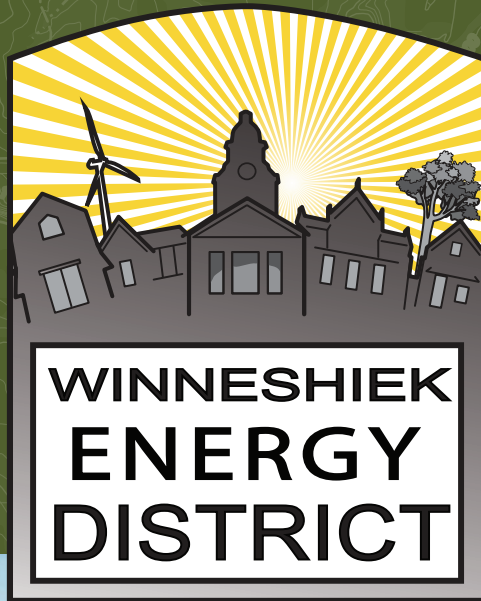


A Geography of Change



Energy Districts are spreading inclusive, locally-owned energy prosperity and climate stewardship in the Heartland



Aerial photo of Decorah, Iowa where the Energy District movement began

THE BACKSTORY

A New Energy Consciousness in the Heartland

I have long been fascinated by how change happens: as a parent watching the kids grow; as a conservationist and farmer partnering with the land community; and as a citizen believer in both liberty and the common good.

The older we get, the more we realize change is the normal state of affairs. Life and society carry the natural momentum of a river flowing through time.

*When that momentum is on a collision course with the common good, the real question becomes how to achieve **necessary** change. When there is trouble in the fields of society, how do we change course, especially when the challenges are large?*

Upon returning to the family farm in northeast Iowa with my wife and daughters, I was fortunate to join conversations already happening in our rural community around the major challenges of energy economics, and a changing climate.

It was the summer of 2008, and Middle America was deep into the Great Recession. Unemployment was rising, gasoline was near \$4/gallon, households were struggling to pay the electric and gas bills, and energy was increasingly understood as a perpetual drain on local economies.

That same summer, much of Iowa was hit with sustained, torrential rains. The state was experiencing its own “sea level rise,” and heat waves were growing. Was “hell and high water” coming to the heartland?

This perfect storm of economic and ecological challenge mirrored another perfect storm, from generations earlier. And like that time, it was stimulating creative thinking and problem-solving capable of building new models for locally-led change (page 2 sidebar).

While most in the change-making business turn first toward state and federal policy solutions, the local conversations were asking more can-do questions: how can we move the entire community and region towards clean energy benefitting all? Can we create a successful and truly replicable model, and then scale it?

This story presents our can-do answers.

Energy efficiency and locally-owned renewables hold near-endless opportunity yet also require quality, universal technical assistance. Clean energy champions are everywhere, and local institutions are powerful enabling tools for implementing change. Clean energy institutions called Energy Districts can be geographically and socioeconomically inclusive, and efficiently replicated on a large scale.

We believe that clean energy prosperity and climate stewardship are possible everywhere, and the Energy District model represents this Geography of Change. We invite you to roll up your sleeves and join in.

Andy Johnson

Founding Team Member and Executive Director
Winneshiek Energy District



Johnson family on their farm in northeast Iowa

A Change Model Called Energy Districts

Energy Districts are grounded in history, are boots-on-the-ground “doers,” are fully inclusive and scaleable, and build civitas and community. By institutionalizing locally-led and locally-owned clean energy everywhere, they represent the best of American localism and federalism.

Energy Districts lead, implement, and accelerate the locally-owned clean energy transition (in this document, “clean” includes both energy efficiency and renewable energy). In the process, they create local jobs and retain and grow wealth (the green of energy prosperity), and simultaneously reduce carbon emissions and air pollution (the green of climate stewardship). A win-win for everyone, and the right thing to do.

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From Tried and True Innovation

Iowans are good at local, and Energy Districts are modeled after a vital, local movement from the first half of the 20th century—Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).

The 1930s brought the greatest of perfect storms to Middle America: the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Local champions of conservation farming needed structure and resources, and federal agencies needed local partners to help put boots on the ground and unify communities.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts became the “universal local” solution in nearly every county in the country within a decade. As locally-formed and elected entities authorized by states, they provided leadership and leveraged state and federal resources to implement solutions with both ecological and economic impact.

This model from our past is a solution for our present. Energy Districts hold tremendous opportunity as the missing link in clean energy leadership, acceleration, and implementation.



THE MODEL

From Winneshiek Energy District

Winneshiek Energy District (WED) incorporated in 2010 to lead, implement, and accelerate the clean energy transition in Winneshiek County, Northeast Iowa.

We intended to create a replicable model based upon the following key principles:

Local leadership exists everywhere. Energy Districts create independent, “universal-local” institutions to empower those with a passion for clean energy and dedication to driving change. (deeper dive on Localism p. 5-6, and on Institutions as Geography of Change on p. 17-18).

Energy is complicated, and Energy Districts lead by doing. Quality technical assistance (energy planning) for energy users, paired with active market transformation, enables widespread energy efficiency and solar ownership and builds a flywheel of momentum. (deeper dive on Key Strategies p. 7-8, Energy Planning p. 9-10, and Accomplishments p. 11-12).

When Green Meets Green, communities unite and thrive. Locally owned energy efficiency and renewables create jobs, retain wealth, and build energy prosperity (one Green), and simultaneously advance climate stewardship (another Green). (deeper dive on Energy Prosperity p. 13-14 and Impacts p. 15-16).

Energy Districts are geographically and socio-economically inclusive, and universal replication is fully possible with existing resources. We all do better when we all do better, and the clean energy future will happen of, by, and for the people. (deeper dive on Financials of Network Growth p. 19-20, and Roadmap to Everywhere p. 21-22).

OUR VISION: 100% LOCAL RENEWABLE EFFICIENT ENERGY BY 2050

The vision is big, bold, and entails ownership—both literal and metaphorical.

Local means locally-led, locally-implemented, and locally-owned. Both locally-owned energy efficiency and renewable energy (mainly solar) create local jobs and keep energy dollars in the community. They replace the “giant sucking sound” of energy dollars leaving local economies in perpetuity, with a “giant churning” of economic activity and local wealth creation and retention, forever.

Finally, while creating energy prosperity, Energy Districts help local communities transition to a healthier climate and a more livable home place for our children and all of the other forms of life we depend on. Our vision unites people; it's the right thing to do.

To Replication and “Universal Local”

The Winneshiek Energy District team began in 2010 with the audacity to believe we were creating a model applicable everywhere, and the humility to focus on making it work somewhere, first.

It didn't take too long for our work to spill over county lines. Seeing the impacts, neighbors asked, “how do we do that?” The map to the right shows the network growth through 2018.

There is no doubt that champions with a passion for clean energy transition exist in every county and community in the country. They are ready to roll up their sleeves and get to work. **Energy Districts provide a “universal local” model** for enabling and institutionalizing change leadership and action, everywhere.

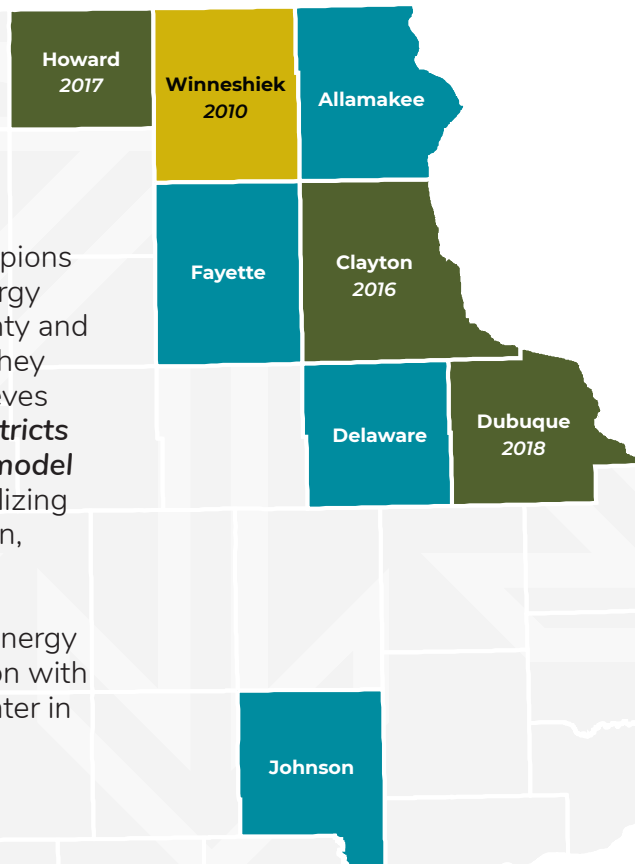
We return to this theme of energy district model universalization with a roadmap and discussion later in this document.

Energy Districts

The Original

Established

Planning Phase



THE MODEL



“Universal local” is a concept that can be applied to achieving a public purpose by making use of a geographical/political area that is human society friendly. It is particularly applicable to problems that require a degree of technical expertise to implement most effectively. We are just applying it to energy, as has been done with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).



Lyle Luzum, current Chair, Winneshiek Energy District

Common sense cuts across party lines. We help homeowners, farmers, and businesses tap the financial benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy systems. When those savings are recycled in the local economy everyone benefits.



Jim Martin-Schramm, founding Chair, Winneshiek Energy District

LOCALISM

Iowans Do Local Well

Iowa is a leader in local leadership, and problem-solving institutions: from the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of the 1930s and 40s, to the County Conservation Boards of the 1990s, and the recently created Watershed Management Authorities.

Now Energy Districts are growing, from the same seeds of challenges, opportunities, and a can-do attitude. Localism is (or was) as American as apple pie: when something needs doing, we roll up our sleeves, put boots on the ground, and get to work.

Social scientists and evolutionary biologists would probably tell us *human beings* do local well. It is where our relationships are. It is community. It is home.



WED partnering with local schools

Localism as Can-Do Federalism

Localism does not reject the importance of a strong federal government and the unique state-federal power-sharing federalism of America's founding documents. Rather, it adds to the mix a recognition of the critical importance of strong local leadership in both policy innovation and efficient and effective implementation structures.

The Home Rule concept recognizes the legal foundation of localism as a separation of powers between state and local governments. The principle of subsidiarity goes further, in recognizing a *moral and social economy of scale*, which proposes that any activity that can be performed by a more decentralized entity should be, and that societal activities are often *best done by entities closest to home*.

It is no wonder that Americans do local well, and that local institutions are often the most valued and trusted. With appropriate state-federal partnership, local civil society and government turn the “should-do” of societal imperatives into the “can-do” of ownership, impact, and identity. ***For necessary change to happen everywhere, local institutions are the foundation of that geography of change.***

The Power of Universal Local

The creation of soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) as a new “universal local” institution to lead the private lands conservation movement was a good idea born in Washington that took root in every county in America.

The SWCDs grew out of an economic and ecological imperative too great for existing institutions to address. And they created a strong local-state-federal partnership structure that enabled local leadership and channeled resources to local implementers.

Energy Districts are “universal local” institutions also born of great economic and ecological imperatives, capable of harnessing the power of local leadership everywhere to implement inclusive clean energy prosperity and stewardship. They are a good idea rooted in northeast Iowa, ready to spread through the Heartland.

They fill a similar missing link of local leadership and implementation, and represent a similar opportunity for strong local-state-federal partnership. Significant clean energy funding exists in most states, and just a small fraction of existing clean energy funding in state and federal programs could efficiently support and leverage the power of localism everywhere (we return to this on p. 19-22).

LOCALISM



Winneshiek Energy District’s work within our county has been incredibly impactful. Economic development is about creating an environment for collaborative success in support of new and existing businesses. WED provides a service to our community that supports long term resiliency and community vitality and we are very fortunate to have them.



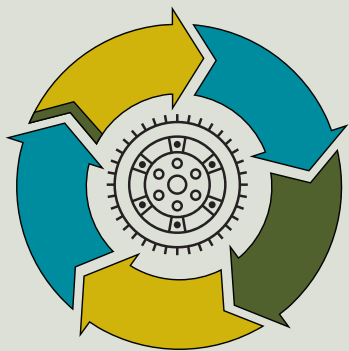
**Stephanie Fromm, Executive Director,
Winneshiek County Development, Inc.**

HOW WE WORK

Energy District Strategies for Universal Implementation

Energy Districts utilize a number of key strategies to lead, accelerate, and implement the clean energy transition.

Together, they feed the **flywheel of momentum** at the community level, crossing **tipping points of acceptance and adoption**, and accelerating change with **positive feedback loops**, leading to ever greater momentum towards a healthier, wealthier future.



Energy Planning is energy auditing that works. Every energy user—farm, home, business, institution—has opportunity to invest and save through energy efficiency, and many have similar opportunity to own renewable energy such as solar. Most energy users sense this, yet very few even know where to start. Quality diagnostics, economic analysis, planning, and follow-through can help virtually every energy user invest in—and own—their energy future.

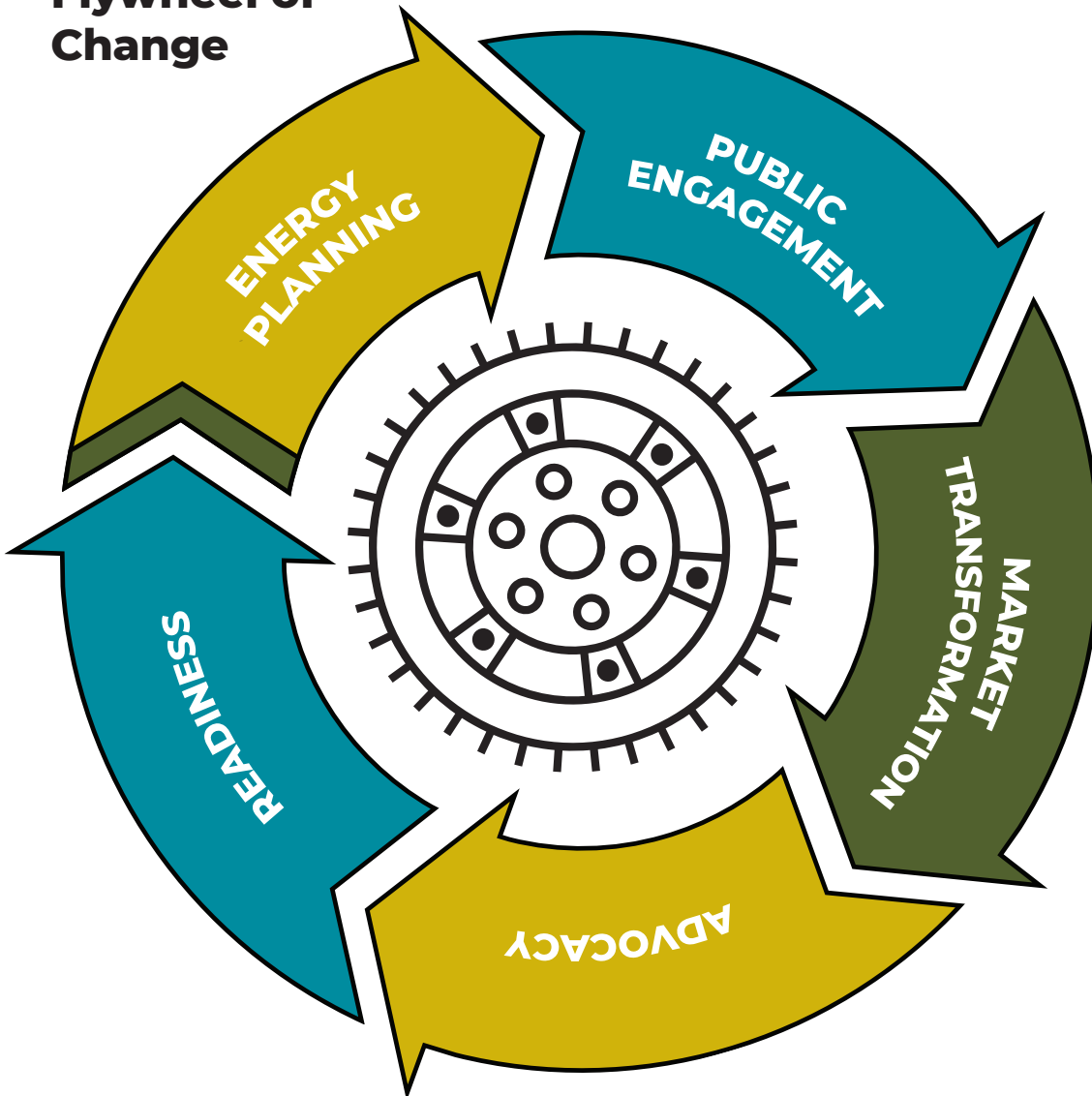
Public Engagement is the broad swath of education, awareness, and communications activities that change organizations are so good at: workshops, tours, speakers, newsletters, school programs, festivals, media outreach, energy breakfasts and so on! Energy Districts do all this, but also lead with Energy Planning and Market Transformation efforts wherever possible, thus practicing what they preach. This builds institutional credibility, and leverages the impact of engagement efforts.

Market Transformation is a wonky term for a fundamental concept. A bad spark plug in a car often causes trouble starting, poor acceleration, and inefficient operation. Energy Districts partner to tune up all cylinders of the clean energy economy, through contractor workshops and trainings; community college programs and opportunities; financial sector knowledge building; vendors and dealerships; real estate tools; and more. The smoothly accelerating clean energy economy supports local contractors and businesses, keeps energy dollars local, creates good jobs, and promotes energy prosperity and stewardship for generations.

Advocacy at the state and local levels grows from the implementation work. Locally, it is about partnership—being the resource that local officials trust, and bringing community-building options and opportunities to the fore. At the state level, it is about communicating and clarifying the policy impacts of locally-owned clean energy transition, and empowering local actors to have a voice. Energy Districts become important political voices by bridging ideological boundaries.

Readiness is also known as climate preparedness, or adaptation. Communities and local leaders everywhere increasingly understand the challenges, including flooding and infrastructure threats, agricultural impacts, vector-borne diseases, and other public health impacts. As we build community consensus around these challenges and resilience-building solutions, ideologies fade and consensus also emerges around the importance of prevention and mitigation efforts, from energy planning and market transformation to policy advocacy.

Flywheel of Change



HOW WE WORK

“

Investing in the local work of the Winneshiek Energy District is an opportunity to be a part of the re-birth of rural communities transitioning to renewable energy practices.

This community-based organization has provided education, thorough assessments, advice and energy-saving infrastructure improvements in a way that is accessible to many residents and business owners in our community.

Supporting this important work is a chance for our community to invest long term in community revitalization.



Ann Mansfield, Coordinator, Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative

ENERGY PLANNING

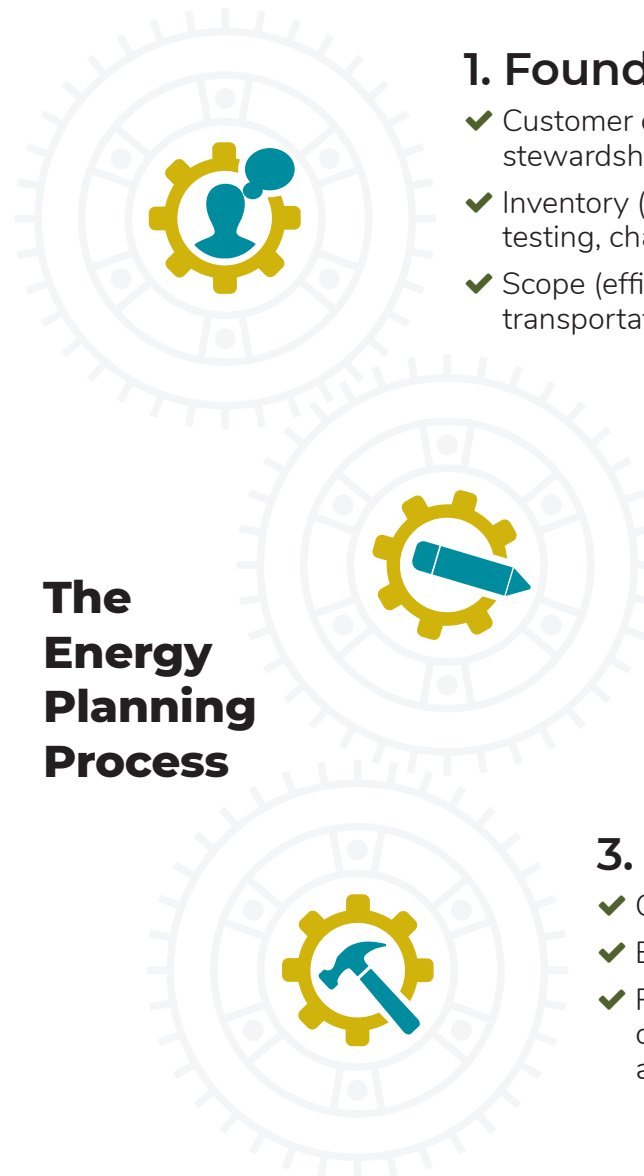
Three Steps From “Honey-Do” to DONE

As we said before, energy planning is essentially energy auditing that works. So what’s the difference?

- **Process.** As the graphic shows, energy planning is a customer-driven process designed to address customer goals and get a job done. Energy auditing too often has been a utility program-driven product with little depth, follow-through, or impact.
- **Quality and Comprehensive.** Audits often cover just one energy source, provide only rebate solutions, and lack financial analysis. Energy Planning includes diagnostics and financial analysis on all energy sources and uses (including transportation and solar where there is interest) to support decision-making and action.
- **Local, Independent, and Trusted.** When conducted by trusted local professionals, independent of utilities or contractors selling products, customers are much more likely to invest with confidence.

The Upshot?

- **Priority:** Quality energy planning takes the customer from back-burner “should-do” to high priority “honey-do” and DONE.
- **Conversion:** Many utility programs have seen just 5-20% “conversion” rates over the years (the portion of audit customers that actually implement significant practices). WED energy planning conversion rates average above 75%.
- **Momentum:** As Energy Districts reach critical masses of customers served the direct impacts accumulate, interest becomes contagious, markets transform, and the flywheel of momentum grows.



1. Foundation

- ✓ Customer objectives (money, stewardship, comfort, safety)
- ✓ Inventory (energy bills, diagnostic testing, characteristics)
- ✓ Scope (efficiency, renewables, transportation, carbon footprint)

2. Planning

- ✓ Technical and economic analysis
- ✓ Customer discussion and prioritization
- ✓ Decision support and planning

3. Implementation

- ✓ Get to work
- ✓ Evaluate, verify functionality
- ✓ Revisit objectives, opportunities and priorities as appropriate

The Great Energy Efficiency (Productivity) Opportunity



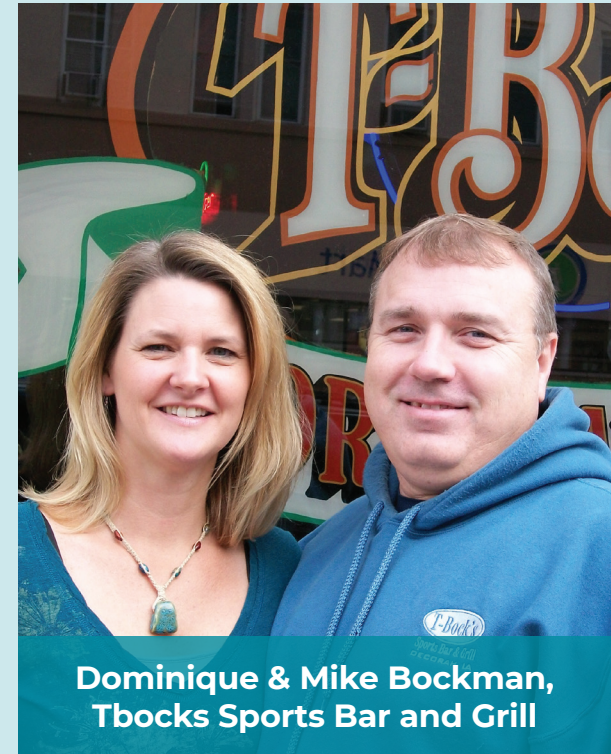
Rocky Mountain Institute and others have been telling us about the multi-trillion dollar opportunity in existing, cost-effective energy efficiency for decades, yet it's still here. Why have we accomplished so relatively little?

We strongly believe that a key missing link is the lack of a universal local delivery system capable of providing quality energy planning to all. Most households, businesses, and institutions will not put finances at risk and disrupt activity without in-depth, technical and economic information and advice from someone they trust. The confusing rebate buffets and superficial audits (if available at all) offered by utility programs have failed to provide this foundation.

Universally available energy planning through Energy Districts can leverage existing program funds into widespread and deep energy efficiency gains. They can include often unserved or underserved customers (from minorities to farms and rural residents). And they can cultivate energy prosperity for generations, because energy efficiency is not one-and-done: the low hanging fruit grows back quickly, and major technologies are constantly evolving.

Working with the WED was an amazing experience. Their knowledge and dedication to energy savings was incredibly useful as we tried to make some improvements to our building.

We achieved the goals set out before us, as specified in an energy audit, and it was simple to see the immediate savings from the work we implemented. From the simple, “low hanging fruit” ideas, to the more complex structural updates we worked on, the WED staff was helpful, offered great advice and was a wonderful motivating factor in helping us to get the work done!



**Dominique & Mike Bockman,
Tbocks Sports Bar and Grill**

I didn't know anything about it—the LED lighting or solar PV—they helped me through the whole process.



**Ryan Oberbroeckling,
Northeast Iowa Hog Producer**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over \$1 Million in Local Annual Energy Savings, and Growing

Public Engagement

- Thousands have participated in hundreds of events!
- At schools, energy breakfasts, workshops, solar tours, festivals, fairs, bike to work weeks
- Innovative tools developed for home energy scoring, ridesharing, farm energy, and more

Millions in Ag Opportunity identified with Farm Energy app

agreport.energydistrict.org

Energy Planning

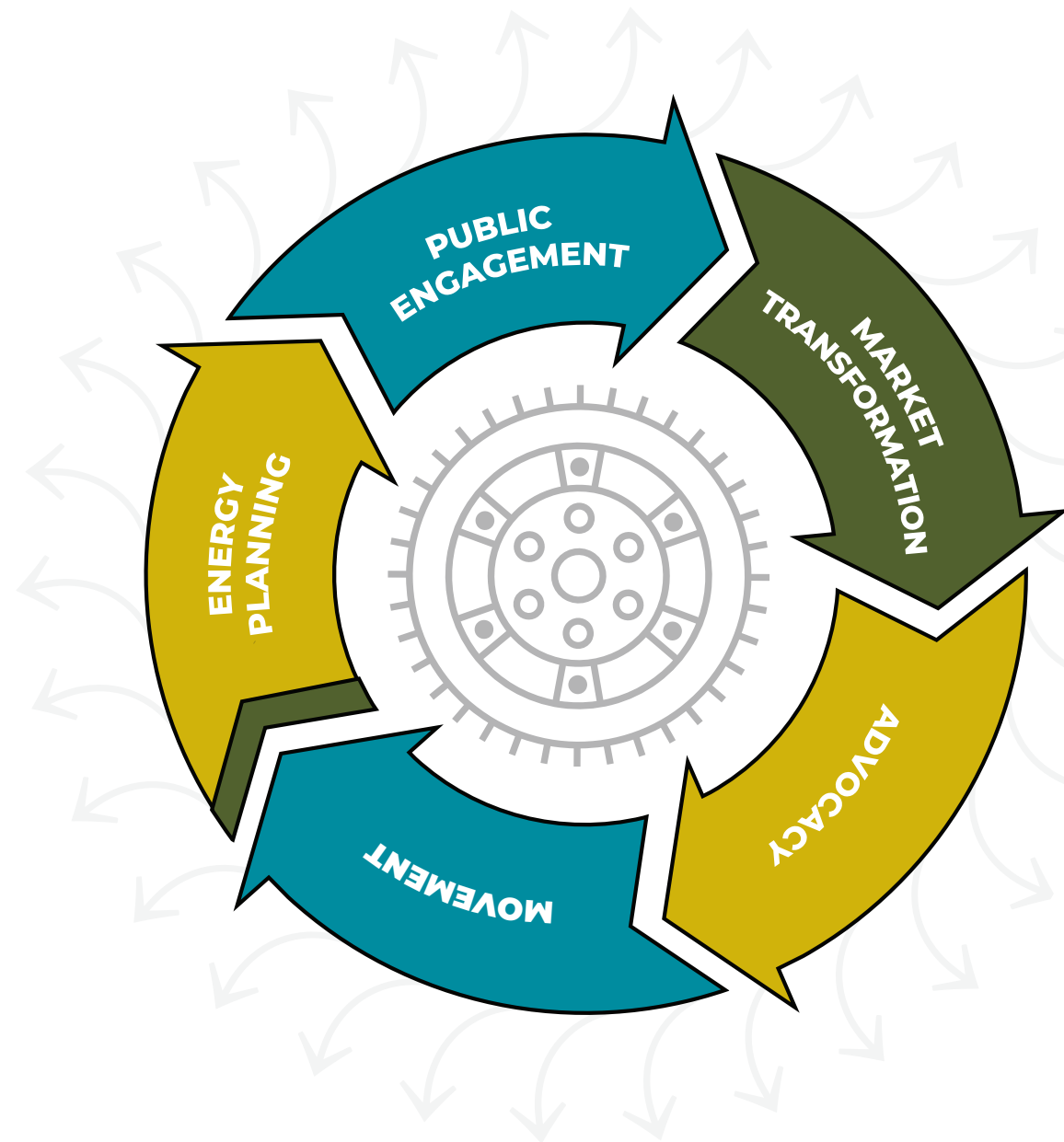
- Over 1,000 households served, over 80% qualifying for free installation of efficiency measures!
- Growing farm energy planning program already served over 60 operations
- Highest levels of Home Performance with Energy Star and Energy Star Business in Iowa

90% Conversion Rate in pilot of 50 hometown business

Building a Locally-Led, Locally-Owned Movement

- Four more counties in energy district planning process!
- Leading efforts towards association, resources and toolkit development
- Hosted major conference, and continue work on state authorizing legislation

FOUR functioning Energy Districts



10X Average Solar Ownership

Market Transformation

- Close partnership with community college on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and green building training
- Dozens of events involving contractor, finance, and real estate sectors
- First in the Midwest “Oneota Tag” local carbon market
- Local solar ownership at 10x state/regional levels

10X Solar Ownership compared to state average

Advocacy and Policy

- Active, successful participation in multiple Iowa Utilities Board dockets, including protection of net metering, and strengthening energy efficiency programs
- Extensive knowledge and relationship building with legislators, including numerous solar and energy efficiency tours.
- Partnerships with numerous local governments and other entities
- Laid foundation and advocated for creation of municipal electric utility

Saved Net Metering together with Iowa partners

Partnerships



Energy Districts don't exist in a vacuum. As the universal local clean energy implementer, they are great at partnerships and convening. From local governments to economic development to farm groups, Energy Districts partner to leverage both local and outside resources.

An especially productive partnership has been with the Green Iowa AmeriCorps (GIA) program of the UNI Center for Energy and Environmental Education. Winneshiek Energy District GIA teams have contributed enthusiastic boots-on-the-ground towards both public engagement, and in-home “direct installation” of energy efficiency measures (especially focused on lower income, elderly, disabled, and veteran households), including:

- Over 1,000 households
- Over \$100,000 annual energy savings
- Over 1,000 metric tons of annual carbon savings



Winneshiek Energy District's GIA team

ENERGY PROSPERITY

Investment: How Clean Energy Builds Communities

“The ten grand LED lighting project is going to pay for itself in a couple years” said the car dealer to the congressman, on a local clean energy tour. “The solar system on the roof will take a few years longer, but it’s still great for the bottom line”. Then after a brief pause, he added “and it’s the right thing to do.”

Local leaders and implementers of the clean energy transition throughout the heartland hear a similar message from farmers, households, business owners, and institutional leaders. The narratives of economic investment and stewardship are not mutually exclusive, though for any given customer, one may be a stronger motivator than the other. Clean energy investment combines them into one powerful community-building narrative.



From Economic Leakage to Hometown Energy Prosperity

Energy is a major drain—or leak—in most local economies. Spending on electricity, natural gas, propane, gasoline, diesel, and even ammonia (principal agricultural fertilizer, with natural gas as feedstock and energy source) represents a giant sucking sound of wealth leaving most communities.

Plugging those very large leaks through energy efficiency and locally-owned renewable energy (like solar) keeps more capital in the bucket to circulate locally. AND it creates a giant churning sound of economic activity involving contractors, suppliers, bankers and others to accomplish the change.

Winneshiek County, for example, spends very roughly \$100 million/year on energy inputs to all economic sectors. Estimates suggest that roughly 80% of these dollars leave the county.

Replacing just 10% of these energy-related economic outflows with local clean energy would not only keep \$8 million every year in local pocketbooks and balance sheets, but would ALSO require a local investment of \$40-50 million to achieve, most of which supports local jobs. Over just a generation (say 25 years), this represents over \$250 million to the local economy, even before counting multiplier effects, rising energy costs, or compounding returns. And there is no reason to stop at ten percent!

At the state level, Iowans spend roughly \$13 billion each year on energy. Roughly half of that leaves the state directly as energy trade deficit. The clean energy transition is the greatest economic opportunity for local economies of the 21st century, and it can continue and multiply in impact for generations.

Ownership Matters

Question for policymakers: Want to create hundreds of jobs and thousands of “energy entrepreneurs” in your communities and counties?” Ensure that energy policy empowers local implementers, enables local owners, and maintains an open door to the grid and energy markets on fair terms to all players.

Every home, farm, or business that invests in solar becomes both consumer AND energy producer—and requires a robust new contractor support infrastructure. Every community that decides to manage the energy distribution system and invest in clean energy will accrue positive returns for generations.

Currently, the energy policy deck is stacked in favor of investor-owned utilities owning the clean energy future, and the giant sucking sound growing ever larger. It doesn’t need to be this way. Regulators grant monopoly territories to utilities, but should formally recognize that the *first monopoly* belongs to customers and communities: every home, farm, business, institution and locality has a right to produce clean energy on fair terms with fair grid access.

Distributed clean energy = distributed investment, distributed jobs, distributed returns, and distributed energy prosperity.

The climate stewardship imperative suggests that we need to transition our energy system quickly, and this will include large scale renewables owned by large utilities. But the economic opportunity imperative demands that utility ownership not preclude or exclude customer and community ownership, investment, wealth creation, and resilience building in every town and county in Iowa, and America.



As community foundation leaders, we applaud the energy district movement. Energy dollars saved both by families and organizations month by month help sustain and create local wealth. The movement is a companion strategy to our mission of endowment building, whereby individuals and organizations invest in the long-term future of communities they love.



**MJ Smith, Community Foundation
of Greater Dubuque**

ACCELERATING IMPACT

Green + Green = Energy Prosperity + Stewardship

The purpose energy districts is to put boots on the ground, empower leadership in community, and make clean energy change happen.

The cumulative impacts of these strategies cross tipping points of local adoption and acceptance. The impact flywheel steadily accelerates, creating the unstoppable momentum of clean energy community building.

We don't claim direct credit for every light bulb or solar panel, but we have (as examples) changed over 10,000 light bulbs, assisted hundreds with technical assistance and energy planning, and created market conditions resulting in 10x the Iowa average of customer-owned solar.

The flywheel is spinning at a healthy speed, and the community building results are becoming increasingly visible.

As we've pointed out, a core concept of energy districts is the local opportunity space where green (\$\$) meets green (stewardship), depicted in the graphic to the right.

In Winneshiek County Alone...



\$14 million
Local investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy to date



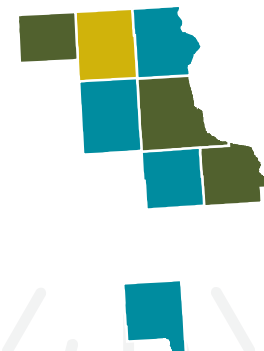
100+ jobs
Created or retained



100,000 tons
Carbon emissions reduced



Priceless
A rapidly growing, community-wide, energy stewardship and prosperity identity



Tip of the Iceberg

These numbers are significant, but they are also just the tip of the iceberg. They represent possibly 5 percent of the economically and technologically viable potential for locally-owned energy efficiency and renewable energy.

We intend to continue driving change, accelerating the flywheel of momentum, and building:

Energy Prosperity and Community Resilience

A Healthier World for our Kids

Community Clean Energy Identity



PAST
FUTURE

ACCELERATING IMPACT

“

We are accustomed, arguably conditioned, to look to state and federal government for help on local issues. We ought to look to local initiatives and leadership. The WED exemplifies local leadership in clean energy. It is an agent of change in Winneshiek County. Need proof? Count installations of solar panels in towns and the countryside. Note solar technologies and consulting on offer from a new segment of our local economy. Or attend WED's regularly scheduled and regularly packed Energy Breakfasts for information about energy matters.

Geography of Change shows how to do local. How the WED helps chart a sustainable course for clean energy across the cultural and economic landscape we call home. WED's influence (the energy district concept, rapid adoption of sustainable energy, expressions of an energy conservation ethic) is a sign of hope about our future. And that hope is spreading to neighboring counties where new energy districts have been or are being formed. We are fortunate to have the WED. Its vision and momentum need our support.



**Dean Thompson, Winneshiek
County Supervisor**

A GEOGRAPHY OF CHANGE

On Community and *Civitas*

A Question of Change

How does purposeful, necessary change happen, especially in an increasingly polarized society?

If society is like the Titanic, chugging ahead largely through inherent social, economic, and technological momentum, how is it turned for the common good?

Many would say high-level policy is the only force capable of a purposeful turning of the societal *Titanic*. Thomas Hobbes' social contract entrusts government with carrying out the most critical interests of the governed, and we give up certain liberties (and resources!) to enable government action.

The social contract between citizen and the state is increasingly strained, however, and national institutions such as higher political bodies and the media suffer from falling public trust. Meanwhile, communities and localities remain surprisingly strong and functional, and local governments and civic institutions remain highly effective.

What does this mean for purposeful change? Why and how does community still “work” across much of America? The answer may lie in *civitas*, a Latin term that refers to the social body of citizens. Citizens hold rights, but also responsibilities, to the public entity that is the community. Where Hobbes' social contract evolved into a largely vertical relationship between a national government and its citizens, *civitas* is more of a horizontal “civil contract” among citizens living in community.

The civil contract suggests that “community citizenship” carries responsibilities to make community work. This de facto community work ethic or “can-do attitude” is why localism is alive and well throughout much of America today.



On Institutions

If *civitas* is the responsibility of all members to make community work and contribute to the common good, institutions are the organizational tools through which most of that work happens. Local governmental, quasi-governmental, and “nonprofit” (civil) institutions remain effective because—by geography and necessity—they remain of, by, and for the people.

In 1960 Wallace Stegner described the remaining American wilderness as a fundamental part of a “geography of hope”. The frontier landscape had contributed to the American spirit, and in losing wilderness we would lose an important component of character and capacities. We could similarly describe civitas—the landscape of citizens in communities, and the institutions through which they pursue the common good—as fundamental to an American “Geography of Change.”

In this light, local institutions are neither unresponsive government bureaucracy, nor too expensive, nor unnecessary, but rather our best hope for turning the *Titanic*. Want high ROI for public or philanthropic funds? Invest in universal local institutions as leaders and implementers, and harness the power of *civitas* that enables localities (from rural counties, to communities to metro areas) to be the true laboratories for innovation and creative construction of a free, just, and inclusive society.

Energy Districts—like the Soil and Water Conservation Districts that preceded them—are the universal local institutions that can lead, implement, and accelerate the clean energy transition in every county and community in America. They are civitas, a geography of change.

On Preaching and Doing

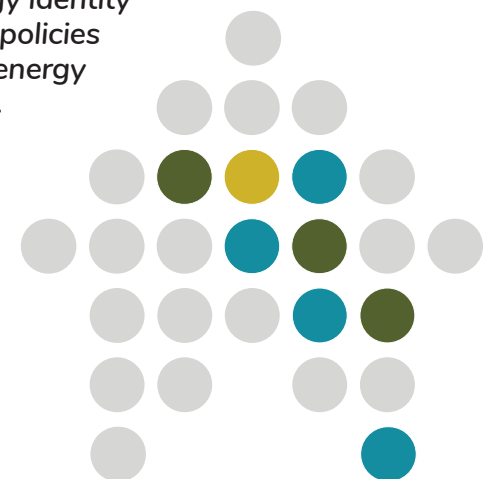
Many clean energy and climate funders, advocates, and supportive elected officials tout the importance of “grassroots communications” and “community organizing” for policy support.

Meanwhile most of us are just trying to get the kids to school, laundry done, and healthy food on the table, around our own jobs! We don’t really want to be preached at, even if from friends.

Energy districts are doers. We meet people and partners where they’re at, and implement the clean energy transition from the ground up. Boots on the ground, creating ownership, jobs, and stewardship. Community building, versus community organizing—there’s a difference.

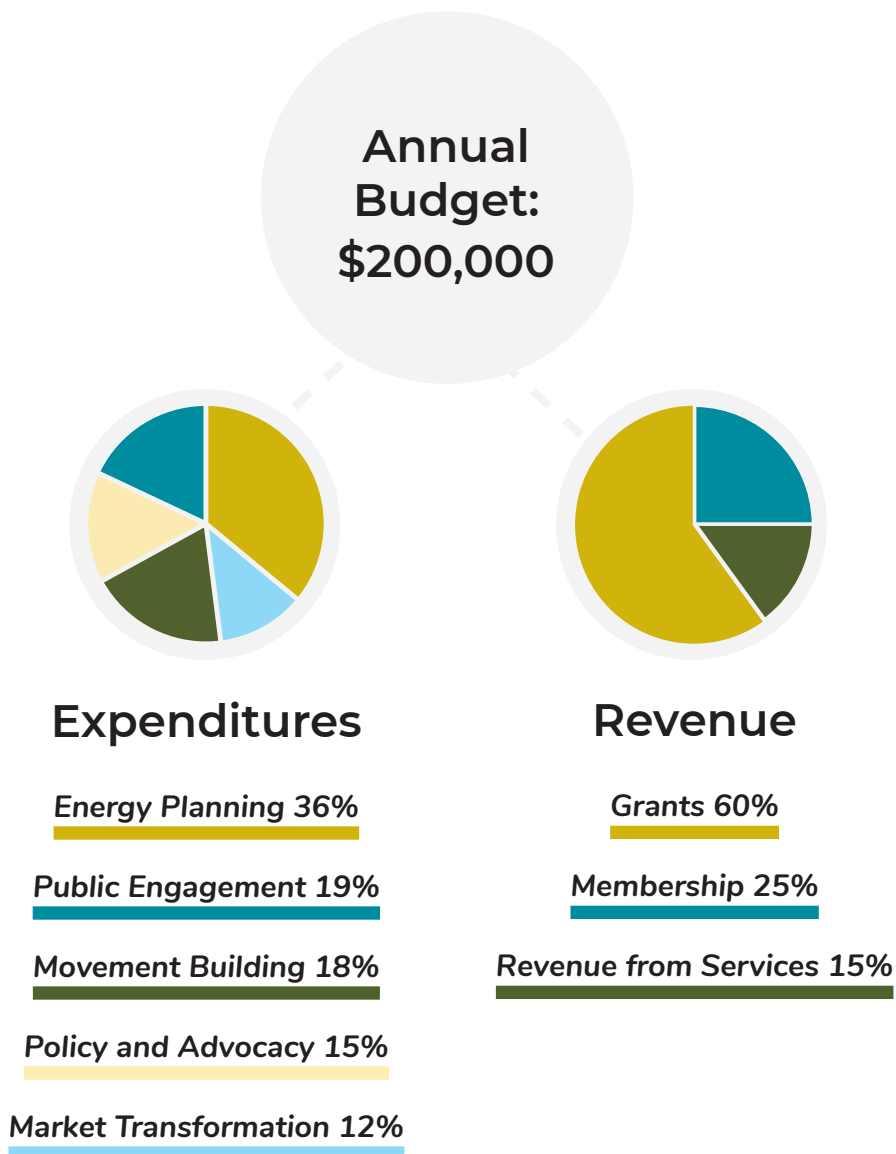
A friendly suggestion to lawmakers and funders: If you want to build support for a cleaner energy future, enable and empower the local champions and doers, and help them build universal-local institutions like energy districts, everywhere.

Because localism works by WORKING. As we implement the clean energy transition and create impact, we also build a common clean energy identity and strengthen support for policies that enable universal clean energy prosperity and stewardship.



FINANCIALS OF SCALING

Winneshiek Numbers



Innovation + Stability

Long-term, stable funding for universal Energy Districts should be innovative, learn from past models, and leverage existing funding streams.

It can combine the stability of “tried and true” approaches such as SWCDs, with the dynamism and creativity of markets and local entrepreneurialism, to bring energy prosperity and stewardship to every county in Iowa.

- A level of operational support for each district is necessary, to support 1-2 positions in leadership coordination, market transformation, public engagement and collaborations. *Initial seed funding of \$10-20K will allow for baseline operations, and (eventually) \$50-100K per district will support transformational programming. This would require but a fraction of current “administrative” funds in the state energy efficiency programs to support districts throughout Iowa.*
- Universal energy planning (as described earlier in this document) is critical to achieving the combination of deep, sustained energy efficiency gains and locally-owned renewables. A technical assistance “open market” fund holding just 25% of energy efficiency program resources and managed by a neutral third party could support district staff on an earned revenue basis, provide equal access to every Iowa energy user, and show the nation how universal technical assistance WORKS.
- *Local district leadership will be innovative and entrepreneurial. It will leverage public and ratepayer operational support with local membership and partnerships, and be the innovation labs for imagining and testing new approaches to the clean energy transition.*

Leading the Movement

Winneshiek Energy District and regional collaborators have led the model development and network growth to date. **An Association of Energy Districts is needed to take up the mantle to guide and accelerate growth.** Principal responsibilities of this coordinating body will include:

- Coaching for new district formation and early stage operation, and development of a toolkit to assist this effort
- Policy research and analysis for landmark model authorizing legislation and funding mechanisms, and coalition building for implementation
- Advocacy for clean energy policy, legislative and regulatory
- Communications, for the Association AND to build common platforms (eg web) and create shared content for member Districts
- Technical energy planning toolkit and training for members
- Information Technology, for the Association AND common platforms (e.g., financial, CRM) for member districts

The degree of network strength and scaling will depend on resources. We anticipate the Association can form and focus on key priorities (first 2-3 in above list) with a budget of \$100K/year, though full function will require 2-3x more. Success will leverage this investment into millions in sustainable annual funding for the growing network of locally-led, locally-owned Energy Districts.



Winneshiek Energy District is a sound investment. It is seed money multiplying its impact throughout Decorah and Winneshiek County in ways both measurable and immeasurable. It is putting us on the map. It is the right thing to do.



**Larry Grimstad, Retired Owner/Manager,
Decorah Bank and Trust Company**

A ROADMAP

From Scaling and Proving with Visionary Foundations

Fields of Prosperity and Stewardship

The inspirational Iowa baseball movie “Field of Dreams” spawned widespread use of the memorable and metaphorical statement “Build it and they will come.”

In late 2016, we held a tri-state Energy District conference in Decorah, Iowa, to share our experience and discuss whether an energy district movement might have legs. The answer from a number of policy people present was “absolutely, build it and they will come”.

The suggestions were that continued movement growth would demonstrate viability and build the support for policy action. We are now four Districts, with that many more in active planning.

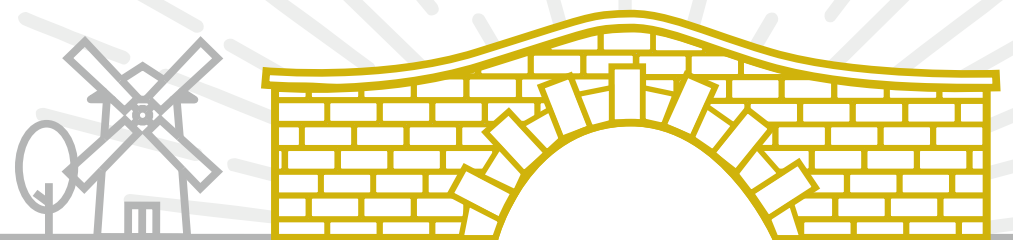
We have a roadmap in sight, and are eager for partners ready to help build the universal-local clean energy leadership and implementation infrastructure—the Geography of Change.

This story has demonstrated that Energy Districts are a model capable of harnessing local leadership and achieving clean energy prosperity and stewardship everywhere. To scale from a handful of districts to a state and beyond requires firmer financial and legal footing, which is achievable through two major steps:

- Visionary foundations willing to invest in Energy District network growth during a multi-year bridge period, to build impact and credibility and lay the foundation for...
- State level policy and financial support akin to that which supports SWCDs, as described on the next page (and fully possible with existing revenue). States are good at copying impactful policy: success in Iowa will spread!

Strong and sustained network growth will require a two-pronged investment in both a guiding association, and seed funds for individual districts, as described on the previous spread. Resources can flow through Winneshiek Energy District or regional partners at the moment, and most logically through the association soon (formation anticipated first half of 2019).

We look forward to partnering with foundations interested in the high-impact investment capable of building the bridge from today’s strong and successful Energy District foundation, to the innovative local-state policy partnerships that will underpin an Energy District Geography of Change throughout the Heartland.



TO EVERYWHERE

To Innovative Policy Partnership

The genius of the Soil and Water District model was in harnessing our federalist system of national-state-local partnership to both 1) create a universal-local legal structure to empower local champions to drive change, and 2) provide very modest but critically effective financial and technical resources to support local implementation efforts.

For energy districts to universalize will require similar policy leadership and innovation. Two specific legislative opportunities exist, potentially requiring no new funding.

- **Most states have energy efficiency or clean energy financial incentive programs**, generally funded from a small surcharge on energy sales. These programs often provide a wide range of rebates, as well as funding “energy audits” for customers. The programs could be adjusted to channel this technical assistance funding (audits in utility parlance, energy planning in energy districts) through the local implementation structure of energy districts, provided by qualified, locally-based professionals.
- **Energy District authorizing legislation**, similar to the soil and water district authorizing legislation, would set the stage for local establishment and functioning. Base operating budgets could be established, and separate funding for universal energy planning on an earned revenue basis as described above.



THANK YOU

The Energy District story is so much larger than Winneshiek Energy District.

To the dozens of partner organizations and hundreds of champions, members, and sponsors:

THANK YOU and ONWARDS!

Together, we will continue to create the Geography of Change.

The WED team
January 2019

Board

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Kyra Bellrichard
David Carlson
Larry Grimstad
Jim Martin-Schramm
Barbara Massman
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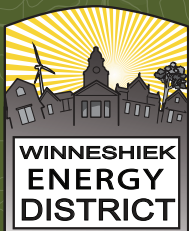
Support

Nina Taylor
Nathan Dirks
Scott Bassford

2018-19 Green Iowa

AmeriCorps

Briana Burke
Gracie Engle
Katherine Hannigan
Maddy Knutson



Thanks to the Winneshiek Energy District we made significant improvements in our heating efficiency and their encouragement helped us decide to go solar in terms of producing our own electricity. With their support we reduced our energy use, reduced our carbon footprint, and saved some money. We helped create a better place for future generations. That's one of the most important issues to us, doing what we can to make our planet a place where future generations can enjoy living in a sustainable and supportive community.



Lee Zook & Jan Heikes,
Community Leaders