

## Executive Director's Report September 2024

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**Staff Changes** – It's been a challenging summer with staff changes. Athena moved with her family to California leaving a void in Evaluation, Measurement, and Verification (EM&V) and research programs. Keith moved on to grow his photography and marketing business leaving a void in our commercial programs. We are actively working to fill these positions.

**Building Update** – In July, our suites were completed with new floors after the water leaks. Additionally, the building was recently sold to new owners.

**Program Partner Contracts** – For the first time, we included energy savings performance goals in our contracts. Achieving our goals of a five percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions can only be achieved through our programs and partners.

**Pre-Weatherization** – At the board meeting in May, you approved moving forward with an RFP for Pre-Weatherization services. I'm happy to report that Energy Efficient Earth and Applied Energy Group have been hired to administer our Pre-Weatherization program. They have already hit the ground running and have nearly 100 jobs ready for pre-weatherization work.

*Testimonial: This includes a job where a homeowner has to walk on floor joist when they get out of bed in order to move around their home.*

**Value of Solar Study** – Similar to Pre-Weatherization, an RFP was conducted for the Value of Solar Study and Gabel and Associates, Inc. was retained. They have already developed discovery questions to the utilities and a follow up meeting to discuss those questions was held this week.

**Utility Program Partnership** – Earlier this month, we signed an MOU with Chesapeake Utilities to run the first natural gas energy efficiency program in the state. Chesapeake is partnering with our Home Energy Counseling and Checkup program as well as our Home Performance with Energy Star™ program. They will pay for direct install measures as well as incentives for more efficient equipment.

**UD Study on Comprehensive Plans and Climate Change** – Senate Bill 237, sponsored by Senator Hansen and Representative Heffernan, will require municipalities with populations greater than 2,000 to increase community resiliency and address the impacts of climate change through their comprehensive plans. In partnership with the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration, we are engaging with stakeholders to gather information to advance effective implementation of SB 237 by the county and municipal governments.

**Center for the Inland Bays Collaboration** – Our most difficult initiative is 'Natural Climate Solutions and Conservation.' In August, we began discussions with the Center for the Inland Bays on how we can partner with their programs, improve the ecosystem, and increase environmental resiliency. We hope to have more information on this potential partnership at the November board meeting.

**Affordable Multifamily Prescriptive Pathway** – Our Affordable Multifamily efficiency program has always focused on the ‘whole building’ approach. As Weatherization assists affordable multifamily properties, we are collaborating with DNREC to create a prescriptive pathway in our program to utilize both DNREC’s Weatherization and our Affordable Multifamily programs. For instance, if Weatherization can pay for insulation but needs help with HVAC, we could provide an incentive to cover HVAC costs while Weatherization provides insulation. This collaboration would allow a ‘whole unit’ approach and benefit both programs simultaneously.

**SREC Auction** – We are scheduling the next SREC Auction to occur within the first two weeks of November after approval from the Public Service Commission.

**Commercial Loans – Looking Forward** – The USDA Rural Energy for American Program (REAP) may change their grant from 50 percent of total project cost up to \$1 million to a lesser amount beginning in the new federal fiscal year (October 1<sup>st</sup>). Many of our commercial loans are already in the queue for REAP grants but those that may rely on REAP going forward could face new challenges with a lesser grant amount in the new fiscal year. Going forward, we will consider whether to capture the entire REAP grant through the commercial loan. Currently, only some require REAP towards the loan where USDA does not have a requirement on how REAP funds must be spent.

**Website Redesign** – We have received bids to redesign the website and will execute a contract in the next month to begin the website redesign. Our hope is to incorporate all our Energize Delaware websites in one place on the EnergizeDelaware.org website. In addition, we aim to make the site more user-friendly, informative, and engaging.

**Innovation and Energy Equity** – We will be redesigning the Empowerment program to focus on innovation and energy equity in our communities. One of the challenges in our grant programs was the year-round open applications so we’re going to work on bi-annual competitive applications focused on opportunities that align with our strategic plan initiatives.