

Profile

Smith Tackles the Rockies



Linda Smith

Rebuild America's message to make buildings more energy efficient has found fertile soil in Rocky Mountain country. Under the capable leadership of Linda Smith, program

manager with the Governor's Office of Energy Conservation, **Rebuild Colorado** has signed on 66 partners across the state, including school districts, colleges, cities, counties, hospitals and public housing complexes. Most joined within the last eight months.

Five state agencies that served as the program's "training ground" are saving the state \$8 million annually through performance contracting, which allows tomorrow's energy savings to pay for today's investments in efficient equipment.

What accounts for the enthusiastic response in Colorado? For starters, the message of improving facilities with no up-front expenditures resonates well among building managers. Then add the program's inclusive approach to attracting key players and its educational efforts to stimulate interest in performance contracting.

"Our hallmark is to offer free on-site, hands-on assistance," Smith says. "When we visit a school district we try to meet with the facilities manager,

Performance Contracting in Colorado

Continued from page 1

superintendent, financial officer and purchasing manager because performance contracting cuts across many disciplines. Providing written materials is not enough. You must be a resource throughout the entire process to build strong participation.”

Opening New Avenues

When Rebuild America first came to Smith’s attention, she saw it as a perfect complement to her work helping building owners arrange performance contracts. She credits Rebuild America with helping her significantly expand the state’s activities.

“Developing the Rebuild Colorado action plan encouraged me to seek partnerships and allies that I otherwise might have overlooked,” says Smith. “This provided the backbone of the program. Without Rebuild America, our program would have had a lower profile and progress would have been much slower.”

Rebuild Colorado has taken its Rebuild America connection one step further by joining a new, multi-state partnership led by Utah’s Office of Energy Services.

Building Awareness

“I hope Rebuild Colorado will increase awareness among building owners that energy performance contracting is a viable and beneficial way to upgrade facilities,” Smith says.

Having enough staff has made a big difference in advancing the program, she says. Smith and an associate, Alan Nagle, have a full-time commitment to Rebuild Colorado and are supported by four “top-notch” consultants.

Smith says a big challenge is to ensure they don’t oversell performance contracting to smaller communities that have a marginal

opportunity for success. Rebuild Colorado uses careful pre-screening to avoid this.

“ESCOs (energy service companies) have a threshold,” Smith notes. “They need projects of a minimal size to ensure that the capital investment and savings potential are there.”

A long-time energy conservation advocate, Smith has made her passion the focus of her career. She’s worked to reduce energy use in commercial and government buildings for over 12 years.

A lifelong Colorado resident, Smith and her husband are building a passive solar “dream house” in the mountains. In her spare time she shops for building materials – and is amused to find that an indispensable part of her wardrobe these days is a fully equipped tool belt.

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**—Linda Smith,
Rebuild Colorado**