

Profile



Voris Williams

America's Heartland Benefits from EnergyWorks

A handful of partnerships marked Rebuild America's launch back in 1995.

Among them was

EnergyWorks, which is

spearheaded by the Metropolitan Energy Center

(MEC) in Kansas City, MO. EnergyWorks was among the initial Rebuild America partnerships that were awarded grants from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and received \$500,000 in "seed money" for new partnerships.

The partnership, which targets schools, local government and nonprofit buildings in the Kansas City metropolitan area for energy-efficiency improvements, is responsible for the retrofit of 4.3 million square feet comprising 58 buildings and energy savings of \$2.3 million per year. Its parent organization, MEC, is an established nonprofit that has focused on improving energy efficiency and environmental quality in the Kansas City metropolitan area since its inception in 1981. At the helm of EnergyWorks for the past two years is **Voris Williams**, formerly an ozone compliance specialist with the Mid-America Regional Council in Kansas City, MO.

EnergyWorks met with success early on and attracted a wide range of partners including

national labs, ESCOs (Energy Masters, Viron, Johnson Controls), state energy office, City of Kansas City (MO), Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, and the Environmental Improvement and Energy Resources Authority of Missouri.

Project retrofits have been funded through public and private grants, low-interest loans, performance contracts, internal organizational funds, Williams notes.

Williams says DOE resources such as consulting assistance from national labs and the Facility Energy Decision System (FEDS) analytical software helped boost the partnership's efforts.

The program's biggest achievement to date has been its role in assisting the City of Kansas City (MO) in the retrofit of 3.5 million square feet of convention and entertainment facilities including Bartle Hall and the American Royal and Kemper Arena. The project entails about \$12 million in improvements in lighting, HVAC and building controls that are guaranteed to save \$1.6 million per year for 10 years through a performance contract with Johnson Controls. Williams says the performance contract made it possible for the project to proceed.

EnergyWorks has also assisted Kansas City with two outdoor lighting retrofit projects to replace aging, inefficient mercury vapor street lights with high-pressure sodium and to replace red traffic signals with LEDs (light-emitting diodes).

Funding for the Future

The biggest challenge facing EnergyWorks is finding a way to become self-sustaining once its DOE funding runs out in less than a year, notes Williams. MEC receives funding from DOE, the

Environmental Protection Agency, the Kansas and Missouri energy offices and private foundations.

"We're working on establishing a fee structure for our services," he says.

"EnergyWorks is in the process of expanding its scope in several directions. About a year ago, we teamed with the local council of governments to provide a five-part energy management training program for local government personnel. This was very well received. We are also looking to offer an energy/environmental curriculum component to our projects involving schools."

EnergyWorks is also developing the Heart of America Smart Builder Program to incorporate energy- and resource-efficient technologies into new construction in the Kansas City area.

As have many of his Rebuild America colleagues, Williams, a native of Chattanooga, TN, took a circuitous path to his current post in the energy field. Armed with a communications degree, he worked as a newspaper reporter covering politics for The Knoxville (TN)

Journal in the late 1980s. By 1990 he had a master's in public administration from Indiana University and moved to Kansas City to take an auditing position with the City Auditor's Office. He became interested in the energy sector while working in air quality at his next post with the Mid-America Regional Council. He found himself drawn to EnergyWorks when he saw that the program produced tangible environmental, as well as economic, results and came on board two years ago. Williams served on the Planning Committee for the 1999 Rebuild America National Forum.

In his spare time, Williams enjoys playing the piano, hiking, and on clear nights, tracking satellites in the sky. He is part of SETI@home, a worldwide, Internet-based scientific experiment that is engaged in the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI).

For more information, contact Voris Williams at 816-531-7283 or e-mail voris@toto.net.

EnergyWorks At-A-Glance (data as of July 1999)

Buildings analyzed	= 107
Total sq. ft.	= 7.4 million
Buildings retrofitted	= 58
Total sq. ft.	= 4.3 million
Capital investment	= more than \$23 million
Estimated savings of retrofits to date	= \$2.3 million per year
Potential additional savings if analyzed buildings are retrofitted	= \$1.4 million per year
Total savings if all were retrofitted	= \$3.7 million per year

