

Energy & Water Savings

BY MINDY LONG

Changing light fixtures, reclaiming water and swapping out cooler doors are just a few of the things truckstops and travel plazas can do to reduce expenses. Lower bills are nice, but even better is the fact that many organizations and government agencies have funding available to make the projects happen.

"There is a ton of free money out there," said Michael Lawshe, president and chief executive officer of Paragon Solutions. "It is really just a matter of filling out the right paperwork." Lawshe has several convenience store clients who have successfully obtained funding and is currently working with several truckstop operators.

Funding can come in the form of programs, tax incentives or outright grants. But before locations begin looking for free money or filling out the paperwork, they must first decide which areas of their business they'd like to improve.

Saving Money

Retailers can hire firms like Lawshe's to conduct a green assessment, or they can create spreadsheets of their own to help determine what their return on investment would be. "In an existing facility, some things make sense to change and some things don't," Lawshe said.


Attract Drivers Who Are Going Green

Cascade Sierra Solutions (CSS) is a non-profit organization that reaches out to long-haul operators to help them save fuel and reduce emissions. The organization is

in the process of establishing outreach centers strategically located with major truckstops to display the latest truck equipment technologies and match drivers with available financing programs.

CSS operates in Washington, Oregon

and California and has locations at the Sacramento 49er in Sacramento, Calif., next to the Truck 'N Travel TA in Coburg, Ore., and next to the Jubitz Travel Center in Portland, Ore. Learn more at www.cascadesierrasolutions.org.



Randy Markham is in the process of building an all green truckstop in Howell, Mich. He is working with Lawshe and hopes to obtain funding for his green initiatives, which he said will save him money in operating expenses in the long run, especially if he can obtain additional funding. "We know there are grants out there, but we haven't gone out there for them yet," he said.

Several of Lawshe's convenience store clients have obtained grants. One location in Nevada obtained a grant from Nevada Power and Light to switch to more efficient lighting. "It paid for 80 percent of the

cost of re-lamping," Lawshe said. He advised retailers to read the details of funding programs closely, because in this case, for example, the client had to re-lamp at a certain point in the remodel process to qualify. "Knowing little things can make a difference," he said.

Many municipalities will waive impact fees on new builds if locations find ways to be more efficient. One of Lawshe's clients was facing a \$20,000 impact fee, but was able to avoid it by installing a water-reclaim system for the car wash. "We went to the municipality and told them about the system. They said they'd waive the water-impact fee," Lawshe said. The cost of the system was \$20,000, so the location essentially broke even and then benefited from reduced water bills long term.

Finding the funds to reduce expenses

Funding Sources

Retailers who are interested in grants can visit grants.gov — a central information center for over 1,000 grant programs through 26 federal grant-making agencies. Grants.gov provides access to approximately \$500 billion in awards annually.

Terry Levinson, senior project manager for the Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory, said, "There are some grants out there that have no strings." Other grants are cost-shared, meaning that the grantor puts in some percentage of the money and the retailer puts in the rest. Some federal money is limited to non-profits. "If you want to try to get some of that, you'll have to find a partner," Levinson said.

When applying for grants, retailers will need to plan ahead since it can be a lengthy process. "For example, the DOE Clean Cities program has a solicitation on the street right now that closes on Feb. 27. My guess is that the winners will be announced by the end of the fiscal year, which is Sept. 30," Levinson said.

Lawshe recommends retailers turn to the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency Web site at www.dsireusa.org. "This is a resource I use extensively, and NATSO members can do it themselves." The Web site breaks down funding and programs by state and region among other categories.

Levinson publishes the National Idling Reduction Network News, which usually lists solicitations for funding for idle-reduction projects. The newsletter is available at www.eere.energy.gov, in the "Vehicle Technologies" section, under "Information Resources." (Click on "Newsletters.")

Tisha Petteway, a spokesperson for the Environmental Protection Agency, said, "EPA does do a variety of grants and funding, through both headquarters and the regional offices." She recommended retailers visit EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov and click on "Grants." She added that retailers can learn more on specific grants by contacting EPA's regional offices — retailers can access contact informa-



Where to Turn

A quick Google search will turn up thousands of Web sites geared towards going green. Here are just a few more sites retailers can turn to when considering making changes at their locations.

BuildingGreen.com:

www.buildinggreen.com

EPA's National Clean Diesel Campaign:

www.epa.gov/cleandiesel/grantfund.htm

Forest Stewardship Council:

www.fsc.org

U.S. Green Building Council:

www.usgbc.org

Sustainable Forest Initiative:

www.sfiprogram.org

The 2009 Green Book:

www.edcmag.com/greenbook

National Association of State Energy Officials:

www.naseo.org

tion by clicking on the link "Find the closest EPA grants management office" in that section.

The DOE Clean Cities program has almost 90 coalitions around the country, which are listed at www.afdc.energy.gov under "Clean Cities." Click on "Coalitions" and then "Coalition Locations."

"Each coalition has a variety of members from many different organizations, and it's quite possible that they would be interested in helping you improve air quality and reduce energy use," Levinson said.

Contacting a state energy office, department of environmental protection, or department of economic development may also yield some good information. "They may point you toward companies that conduct energy audits, which could show where greater efficiencies can be gained, or companies that help your business reduce emissions," Levinson said.

Additional programs are available from Metropolitan Planning Organizations — transportation-planning cooperative efforts between local government and transportation authorities. Projects are listed by state at www.bts.gov. Click on "External Links," then "Metropolitan Planning Organizations."

Retailers can also look for projects through the Congestion Mitigation and Air

Quality Improvement Program that is jointly administered by the FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration. The program provides funding in areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards as well as former nonattainment areas that are now in compliance. Learn more at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/cmaqpgs/.

While going green does benefit the environment, Lawshe said the most important thing for retailers is that it benefits the bottom line. For example, he said, stores that are 10-15 years old typically save between \$1,300 and \$2,500 a year after replacing their cooler doors.

He added that one of the biggest misconceptions in the green movement is that the programs and equipment are expensive. "The technology changes so quickly. Something that was cost prohibitive a year ago could be affordable now," he said. ●