A Metropolitan Partnership for Energy

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ABSTRACT

A unique partnership was recently formed in the metropolitan San Antonio area, to focus on energy efficiency and environmental issues. It is significant that this region, which has traditionally not been known for being on the leading edge of environmental awareness, has so rapidly recognized the importance of energy planning, and institutionalized it. The parties involved in the new partnership include the city, county, municipal utility, transportation authority, area council of governments, council of the county's mayors, a state university energy laboratory, and a local non-profit agency. These organizations combined forces to create a non-profit corporation, the Metropolitan Partnership for Energy, with a dedicated staff and budget and in-kind support from the partners. The goals of this partnership are to ensure regional cooperation on energy issues, develop a vision and plan for sustainable energy, educate and inform the public, and improve the local economy and environment. One specific challenge faced by the Partnership is providing assistance to local jurisdictions in complying with new Texas legislation requiring all governmental entities within targeted urban counties to achieve five percent electrical energy savings each year for five years. The Partnership hopes to serve as a model for providing effective coordination and technical assistance to other local entities within Texas.

This paper describes the Partnership, the forces leading to its creation, the organizational challenges it faced, and its early plans and successes. Particular attention is paid to the unique aspects of the organization, such as the way a city, county, and municipal utility work together for a regional approach appropriate for meeting regional challenges. Attention is also paid to how the method taken by this organization can be applied in other communities.

Introduction

Texas is a state with a long history in the energy industry. Most of that history, however, has been related to oil production, however, rather than energy efficiency. With the exception of a fairly thriving environmental movement in Austin, Texas has not been known for environmental awareness. San Antonio, Austin's neighbor to the south, in particular has not had a track record of environmental activity.

However, in the past two years, a critical mass of activity has coalesced in the San Antonio region, and energy programs are springing up rapidly. Non-profits have been formed, utility programs have been developed, innovative efficiency projects have been demonstrated, and legislation has been passed. The region has rapidly recognized that a comprehensive and institutionalized effort to promote the responsible use of energy would have the most impact in the community, and a partnership has been formed with that mission.

The Metropolitan Partnership for Energy (MPE) was created in 2001. The partners include the city, county, municipal utility, transportation authority, area council of governments, council of the county's mayors, a state university energy laboratory, and a local non-profit organization. These organizations combined forces to create a non-profit corporation with a dedicated staff and budget, with in-kind support from the partners. The goals of this partnership are to ensure regional cooperation on energy issues, develop a vision and plan for sustainable energy, educate and inform the public, and improve the local economy and environment.

This paper describes the Partnership, the forces leading to its creation, the organizational challenges it faced, and its early plans and successes. Particular attention is paid to the unique aspects of the organization, such as the way a city, county, and municipal utility work together for a regional approach appropriate for meeting regional challenges. Attention is also paid to how the method taken by this organization can be applied in other communities.

To understand the way that the Metropolitan Partnership for Energy evolved, and its role in the community, one must first get a feel for what the metropolitan San Antonio region is like.

Introduction to San Antonio

San Antonio, with a population of more than 1.14 million growing at two percent per year, is the eighth largest city in the United States and the second largest city in Texas. The population is over 50% Hispanic. All of South Texas is one of the most economically disadvantaged regions in the United States. San Antonio's economy is anchored by four key industries: health care/biomedical (with 100,000 jobs, contributing $7 billion), tourism (60,000 jobs, contributing $3.5 billion), the military (150,000 employees on 4 bases), and agri-business ($1.2 billion). In general, research and development, technology, telecommunications and international trade are important to the city's economic well-being. One of the other significant employment sectors is telemarketing and call centers. The City of San Antonio employs more than 12,000 and operates with an annual budget of more than $1.3 billion.

The City owns and operates the country's second largest municipal utility, serving more than 560,000 electric customers and about 302,000 natural gas customers. Revenues from City Public Service (CPS) pay for approximately one third of the San Antonio city budget. The utility has almost 4000 employees. Electric sales in 2000 were almost 18 billion kWh, and gas sales were about 25 million MCF (26 billion MJ). Installed capacity is about 5 GW, and the peak load in 2000 (experienced in September) was about 4 GW. CPS owns its own power plants, and its electric rates are among the lowest in Texas, and the country. In 2000, CPS's generation came from approximately 47% coal, 29% nuclear, 22% gas and oil,

and a small amount of purchased power. The utility recently purchased a major wind farm in west Texas, which currently supplies 3% of the utility's generation.

The Energy Industry in San Antonio

Texas has long been a center of activity for the energy industry, traditionally related to fossil fuels. However, fossil fuel production is waning, and Texas has recently joined the ranks of net energy importers for the first time in many years. The economy of San Antonio is in need of revitalization, and there is significant commitment in the community to ensuring that growth sectors in the national economy are well represented in the region. The community expects that energy technology will play a big part in that growth.

At the same time, San Antonio is facing environmental issues as well. San Antonio is a near-non-attainment area, meaning that air quality is approaching acceptable limits. Water is also a concern for San Antonio. The Edwards Aquifer is the primary source of water for Central Texas. This limited resource is becoming stressed by growth, in terms of water quality and availability.

Economic and environmental considerations have caused the community to take a new interest in energy efficiency. Several organizations have recently formed or moved to the area. Taken together, the activities of these new players in energy efficiency are an indication of a new environmental movement:

Solar San Antonio. This recently-formed non profit agency has a mission to be a leader in sustainable and renewable energy through creative, state-of the-art construction designs and legislation, working together with citizens, government, business, private and public educational groups, creating positive relationships to solve energy issues, decrease overall energy costs and improve quality of life. They accomplish this through creating and nurturing a community of advocates of sustainable energy, and through educating citizens and local government, and serving as a source of information related to technologies and policies. Solar San Antonio is currently administering a program for the federal Economic Development Administration to evaluate the feasibility of establishing South Texas as a center of excellence in renewable energy use, production, and technology. This study is being conducted by the University of Texas at San Antonio, and the Brooks Energy and Sustainability Laboratory.

The Brooks Energy and Sustainability Lab. The Brooks Energy and Sustainability Lab (BESL) is a consortium of the Texas Engineering Experiment Station (part of Texas A&M University System), the Georgia Tech Research Institute, and the University of South Carolina's Center for Environmental Policy. The lab was formed in 2001, to conduct technology transfer in the areas of energy management, measurement and verification, commissioning of new and existing buildings, sustainable facility design and operation, and indoor air quality. They provide services in military energy programs, and participate with San Antonio's local governments and utilities in energy conservation programs and technologies. BESL's offices are located at the Brooks Air Force Base, the ownership of which is currently being transferred to the City, as a model alternative to base closure. After

ownership is transferred, the site will still be leased in large part to the Air Force, although parts will be developed as a Technology Transfer and Research Park.

City Public Service. The local municipal utility has recently been quite innovative in energy research. They are conducting several demonstrations of energy efficiency measures and innovative distributed generation applications. They are constructing a customer service center with state of the art sustainability features, including 5,000 square feet of solar panels for heating and cooling; a 2,000-square-foot photovoltaic system; gas-fired absorption chillers for cooling; salvaged, recycled, low emission and natural materials for carpet, tile, cabinets, and paint; concrete containing fly-ash recovered from coal power plants; and a roof rain water collection system to irrigate the landscape. This building is seeking a LEED certification. CPS is conducting a demonstration of building combined cooling, heat and power (BCHP). With the support of a Department of Energy demonstration program, the utility is purchasing a gas turbine and absorption chillers, and locating this equipment at a customer facility—Brooks Air Force Base. The utility will sell the resulting power, steam, and chilled water to the base. The utility is also involved in a demonstration program for residential-scale fuel cells, along with the South West Research Institute and St. Phillips College. This study is funded by the US Army Construction Engineering Research Lab. CPS has a group addressing Urban Heat Island effects. CPS obtains some of its energy from landfill biogas. Due to the upcoming deregulation of the electric industry in Texas, all utilities, even municipal utilities that were not required to opt into deregulation, are looking at how best to position themselves for a new kind of business environment.

St. Philip's College. St. Philip's College has been an important part of the local energy research and education community, and the director of their Advanced Energy Technologies Laboratory is a leader in industry development of fuel cells. The college aims to ensure that when fuel cells and other advanced and renewable energy technologies begin to make an impact on the energy industry, San Antonio will have the manufacturing capability and the trained workforce necessary to support these industries. This is being done by setting up a technology development and demonstration center, and incorporating energy technologies into its vocational and academic programs (for example, a unique program for Honors Students provides an interdisciplinary view of energy by incorporating energy considerations into all of the students' other coursework). St. Philip's College is a campus of the Alamo Community College District, and is a Historically Black College and Hispanic Serving Institution with a semester enrollment of over 8,000. Located in an economically disadvantaged part of San Antonio, St. Philip's is among the oldest and most diverse community colleges in the nation.

The State of Texas. The electric restructuring bill in Texas, Senate Bill 7, has caused a shifting of emphasis in the San Antonio metropolitan area. The bill required a renewable energy portfolio and conservation goals. Again, while the municipal utilities were not required to do this, they all knew that they should prepare to meet the requirements so that they could opt into competition if that proved to be a better business strategy.

In 2001, the Texas State legislature also passed the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan, Senate Bill 5 (SB5). While the major focus of this act was to reduce emissions, it had a small but powerful section on building energy use reductions. It required the adoption of an energy code into local building codes, and it required specific conservation targets for political entities to achieve. It required local jurisdictions (cities, counties, water districts,) to reduce the electricity consumed by their facilities by five percent per year, for five years. This substantial reduction target will be quite difficult for local jurisdictions to meet.

In addition to these legislative activities, the State of Texas, through it's State Energy Conservation Office, has sponsored many activities in the area, some of them through the Department of Energy's Rebuild America program.

Formation of the Metropolitan Partnership for Energy

It is in the context of these new forces that leaders in the metropolitan San Antonio area decided to integrate and institutionalize local efforts to pursue sustainable energy production and use, and to form the Metropolitan Partnership for Energy. This movement was spearheaded by one highly respected and influential individual, who took on the cause of bringing change to how energy is used. He approached the city, county, and municipal utility with a proposal to form a regional energy planning organization.

There were many reasons why the partner organizations agreed to join. After deregulation, the utility recognized that playing a part within a larger organization would help to enhance customer relations, as their customers see them as more community-focused. SB5 added even more support to the idea that the local governments should formally address renewables and energy efficiency. However, the local governments also recognized that this legislation would require energy management practices that none of the entities had much experience with, and that a coordinated approach would provide the support and assistance that they would need to comply. There was also recognition by all the entities involved that the economic and environmental problems in the region could never be addressed by a single existing entity, acting on its own. A coordinated approach was needed.

With the utility seeing a legitimate business reason to engage in energy efficiency, the City and County seeing a legislative requirement plus recognizing the benefits of cooperatively addressing efficiency and renewables, and a committed champion to give consistency toward a proactive effort, a critical mass of support and interest was reached. The first three members made financial commitments to support the resulting partnership, which ensured that the planning activity would result in something specific.

Additional entities quickly joined the City, County and municipal utility: Solar San Antonio, the local transit authority, the water district, the area council of governments, and a council of mayors from outlying cities within the county. A commitment was made to form a partnership.

Organizational Elements

An organization was set up remarkably quickly, due to the commitment of the leaders of each of the partner organizations. The development of this organization began as a concept in July 2001 and progressed to a staffed non-profit corporation in February 2002. To

get the organization started, an ad-hoc working group was formed, consisting of staff representing the partners. One of the first tasks was to conceive of an organizational structure and allocate resources toward that task as well as the job of getting an operational entity established. In this case, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assigned a staff person to facilitate the process. HUD was interested in seeing an organization form that could benefit lower income citizens in an area of economic vulnerability – energy costs.

Weekly facilitated meetings brought about a relatively rapid creation of this organization. Each of the partner organizations was called upon to provide staff to support the initiating efforts. Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, legal status, office rental and furnishing, and advertising and hiring of an Executive Director proceeded smoothly, primarily because of the staff time that was devoted to the organization activities–one partner provided legal services, one identified and arranged for space, one provided computers, one coordinated the executive director search, etc. Consistent facilitated meetings were important to avoid slippage in the process.

The Metropolitan Partnership for Energy. A decision was made to form a separate non-profit and not integrate energy efficiency improvements into an existing political or utility entity. Only by having a funded activity could the group ensure that the programs would not be laid aside as soon as local priorities shifted to another topic. One reason for organizing the activity as a non-profit agency rather than housing it in one of the partners' organizations is that it can be more independent of any one of the partners. It is also an easier mechanism for developing a cooperative partnership, which can then leverage economies of scale in expertise investment and possibly implementation protocols. Another reason is that a smaller non-profit can act quickly in developing policy recommendations, designing programs, and contracting services useful for implementing efficiency improvements. It is sometimes difficult for large bureaucracies to create and act upon new initiatives. An additional reason is that although the glory of success must be shared in a cooperative relationship, there is also no one single entity at risk if there is a failure. Using the partnership model seemed politically palatable in that it also demonstrated a cooperative spirit between typically disparate entities known primarily for their regulatory and fiscal powers affecting citizens in sometimes-contradictory ways.

Although there is a single Partnership, there are three distinct bodies that conduct the Partnership's business:

- *Board of Directors***.** The organizational structure that was developed calls for a cross representational Board of Directors that will encompass the main political entities in the county. Each entity has a board representative with the chairman and vice chairman reserved for the top political entities- the City and the County. This was done to respect the size of their respective spheres of influence and gain the benefit of highest profile local leadership. The top CEOs of each partnering organization holds all board positions. For example, the County Judge (the chair of the board of County Commissioners) represents the County, the City Mayor represents the City. The balance of the Board was filled out by the transit authority, regional Council of Government, and Council of Mayors representing the incorporated cities in the

County besides San Antonio. It was considered important to have the top person in each of the partner organizations serve on the Board, to demonstrate their level of commitment, both within the organizations, and within the community as a whole. The Board meets quarterly.

- *Metropolitan Energy Office***.** An executive director was hired, to head up the Energy Office. The Energy Office develops and implements the programs and other actions to address the objectives of the Partnership. The Executive Director interfaces directly with the Board of Directors. The role of the energy office is to develop and deliver programs for the community, serve as a clearinghouse for information for the different partners, and to coordinate energy planning. There will eventually be one to two additional full time employees. If the Office develops grants or contracts for programs, there may be additional employees.
- *Council of Technical and Community Advisors***.** In order to broaden the base of support for the MPE's overall operation and objectives, a council of Technical and Community Advisors has also been formed. Since the Board is composed of the top individuals in each of the partner organizations, there was a need for this body to provide more in-depth review of issues and to make recommendations for Board action. The intention is that the Board would be able to more readily respond to policy and programmatic suggestions with the understanding that they have had a level of feasibility review from technical and community representatives.

Goals and Activities of the Partnership

The structure of the Metropolitan Partnership for Energy was designed to provide the best balance of high-level commitment, dedicated and sustained effort, and opportunities for community input. A set of goals was established early in the planning process, and was then elaborated into a work-plan. This helped to ensure that the structure that was put in place was appropriate to the mission of the Partnership.

Partnership Goals

The goals of the Metropolitan Partnership for Energy are:

- Cooperate regionally on energy issues
- Develop a sustainable energy vision and plan
- Increase energy efficiency
- Meet energy conservation goals of SB5
- Identify opportunities to improve energy efficiency in affordable housing
- Increase the utilization of renewable energy
- Improve the local economy and environment
- Educate and inform the public

In addition to setting these specific goals, it was important for the creators of the organization to make it clear what the organization would *not* do: the MPE will not have permitting, regulatory, policing, zoning or enforcement authority. It will not have the

authority to levy taxes, fees, fines or other financial assessments. And it will not have oversight or review authority over any County, City or independent agency or office. Establishing this at the outset helped to reassure reluctant participants that the Partnership would not overstep its bounds. It would have been helpful to also establish at the outset what influence the Partnership *was* expected to have. This was not done, and it remains to be seen whether the Partnership will ensure that all the parties involved will successfully embrace any controversial recommendations.

Activities of the Partnership

The activities of the Partnership were established early in the formation process, and a work-plan was developed. This helped to inform the qualifications sought in the hiring of the Executive Director of the Energy Office. The action items for the first year of the Partnership include a wide array of programs. The activities and programs described below represent a significant amount of work, and it will surely not all be accomplished in the first year. In the first year, there will be a special emphasis on Technology Transfer and SB5 assistance. One challenge that will surely be faced as the year progresses is managing the expectations of the Partner organizations. The Partnership is not intended to be a replacement for energy program delivery or planning within the individual organizations, and it will be important to clearly define the Partnership's role in facilitating, coordinating, and enabling these activities.

Core programs. Some of the core activities of the Partnership will include:

- *Facilitate Development of a Regional Energy Plan***:** This would be one of the most important initiatives of the MPE, requiring a significant degree of commitment from partner organizations and community input. This will include benchmarking, goal setting, providing a clearinghouse of information on local programs, and possibly providing advocacy for energy strategies within partner organizations. Part of this activity will include compiling data on energy use in different sectors of the community, and benchmarking.
- *Cities for Climate Protection*: The City of San Antonio has expressed a desire to take part in the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program, which is a campaign of the International Council for Local Environmental, and the Energy Office will help provide assistance in defining this program, as a pilot for the entire metropolitan community. The CCP program includes activities to benchmark energy and environmental performance in the community, forecast future performance, .develop plans to impact future performance, implement those plans, and evaluate whether the goals are achieved.
- *Establish Green Building Guidelines and Program*: Several cities have voluntary programs to recognize sustainable buildings, and the development of such a program in this region is a major goal of the MPE. The development of Guidelines will include review of established models for institutional and commercial structures. Guidelines for the residential sector will involve working with the homebuilders to set

up a likely voluntary standard. If the MPE will conduct the program, it will be self-funding and a staff person will be assigned.

- *Establish/Recommend Purchasing Standards***:** This action item involves creating guidelines for efficient replacement/maintenance investments. It would also provide guidelines for best decisions in new capital improvements. This action item would primarily identify established standards that can be adopted by the Partner organizations.
- *Develop/Conduct Semi-Annual Recognition Awards***:** The MPE may create an award related energy activity for youth to coincide with Earth Day. It may also develop a competition within the private commercial sector (and possibly others such as residential, and institutional) to show their best practices in energy related actions. This latter program would use a model similar to the BEST (Businesses for an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow) awards used in Portland, OR and Austin, TX. Both events would help stir interest in the Partnership goals and keep a high visibility plus create a compendium of local best practices useful for motivating and informing replication.

Technology transfer. Beyond these core programs, one of the significant focus areas of activity for the Partnership is technology transfer. Providing technical assistance and information to different populations within the community is a clear role for the Partnership. Several activities are related to this.

- *Create MPE Logo, Website, Brochure/Flyer***:** Informing individuals and organizations within the community of the actions of the Partnership is important to achieving the Partnership's mission. There are many mechanisms that will have to be pursued.
- *Develop/Conduct Education/Training programs***:** This action item involves programs for many different types of audiences such as children, professional associations, local government staff, homeowners, interested individuals, businesses, etc.
- *Energy Code Implementation Support***:** The requirement to adopt an energy code in local building codes (a key requirement of SB5) took many communities by surprise. The Energy Office must provide a significant amount of help in educating both codes officials and the broader building community.
- *Develop and Conduct Annual Conference***:** To assist in the technology transfer and educational goals of the MPE, it is planned to conduct an annual conference, on topics related to MPE activities. The first year will likely involve partnering with an existing conference or with other groups as the workload in establishing an effective conference is substantial.
- *Create/Operate Public Relations/Educational Campaign***:** There is a broad range of actions that can be evaluated with possible professional assistance for implementation. The energy office might establish a relationship as a contributing writer to existing newsletters, journals, newspaper, etc., as a starting point for direct communication to the community. This might include sponsoring or cosponsoring existing events for various audiences. This will be a major action item for the Energy Office.

Senate Bill 5 campaign. The unique and significant requirements put on local governments by SB5 will be a large burden to these entities. Helping the local jurisdictions to comply with the bill's requirements was a major objective of the Partnership, and is expected to be a major thrust of activity in the first year. The Partnership has already begun some of these activities, including holding workshops for builders and local governments, and interacting with the State to clarify the Bill's requirements. Some of the planned activities related to SB5 include:

- *Establish Baselines and Energy Use Profiles*: This action item will involve a close working relationship with CPS to acquire data on the energy used by all municipal facilities within the region. Data will need to show energy use over an adequate period of time to help understand the energy use characteristics. The activities within the buildings will need to be profiled as well as a range of additional evaluation criteria. These data will be reported to the State, and will also be used to help in planning for compliance with SB5. This is expected to be a substantial task. While compiling these data is required for SB5, it is also an important part of developing an energy plan for the region, and an important responsibility any public entity.
- *Create/Maintain Monitoring /Assessment System*: This action item involves taking the data for the Partner facilities and putting it into a form that allows analysis and a basis for developing improvement strategies. It will also be the system that allows identification of the benefits of improvement actions implemented in the buildings.
- *Establish/Maintain Clearinghouse Relationship with Affected Entities*: There will be a need to provide clear information regarding the rules and resources associated with SB5 as they are developed at the state level and in other areas. This action item creates essentially a one-stop access to information for addressing SB5 for the Partners.
- *Establish/Recommend Efficiency Improvement Prioritization and Schedule*: This action item starts after the raw data are acquired and analyzed. It will involve consultations with owners, maintenance staff, budget staff, public works staff, technical service providers, vendors, and others to ascertain a strategic and affordable method of meeting the SB5 efficiency targets.
- *Identify Resources and Methods for Financing/Implementing Improvements*: State law allows public entities to contract with Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) to finance energy saving improvements. Negotiating effective contracts with ESCOs, monitoring performance, and verifying results can be some areas that the Energy Office will offer assistance. Other ideas can include the developing of a revolving loan fund, assessing in-house incentive possibilities and developing potential means of local capacity to finance improvements.
- *Prepare/Provide Reports to State*: There is a requirement for annual reports to the State indicating compliance with the 5% annual savings goals. The Partnership Energy Office can potentially streamline this activity from its role as a central repository of building, lighting, pumping and other electrical performance data.
- *Monitor State Actions*: Rules are being developed that will affect how to handle the SB5 reporting requirements plus there will be additional discussions and actions about the SB5 requirements within agencies and upcoming legislative sessions. The

Energy Office will need to stay informed and provide input on these matters on behalf of the Partners.

Administrative. In addition to all these programmatic activities, the Partnership will have to conduct all the typical administrative tasks necessary to establish and maintain a non-profit corporation. This includes tasks to establish /finalize accounting management procedures, establish/finalize personnel policies, finalize initial phase of staffing, identify and seek additional funding, establish progress reporting/records system, establish logistics for Partnership regular meetings and Council of Technical and Community advisors, prepare and present progress reports, establish working partnerships (regional and beyond), and identify and inventory existing energy programs and initiatives within Partnership and beyond.

Conclusions

The regional level is one of the most important and effective areas to do energy planning. Each community has its own goals and barriers to face, and when a community joins together to achieve something, it is most likely to succeed, and to bring an even stronger sense of community.

The Metropolitan Partnership for Energy evolved due to a particular set of challenges and resources, although many aspects of its evolution can serve as a model for other communities. Some conclusions reached by the formers of this organization might provide recommendations to other communities:

- It is important to have a single influential individual spearheading efforts to achieve change. This individual must be influential, but not perceived as partisan.
- It is important to institutionalize a regional planning activity as a formal funded organization. If it is merely an ad-hoc committee of interested parties, it will likely not have influence, and may fade away as priorities shift.
- Commitments for funding should be made as early as possible, as this helps to communicate a higher level of commitment throughout the formation process.
- The support from the highest level of an organization (mayor, CEO, …) is crucial to ensure that the effort to institutionalize planning activities does not get set aside or diverted due to new priorities. This support must be communicated clearly to staff.
- Goals must be set early.
- It is helpful to identify what the group will *not* have the authority to do.
- There are multiple "hoops" that must be jumped through on the way to becoming an established organization. It is helpful to have legal and logistical assistance donated by partner organizations even before the group has become official to get through these hoops.
- If the organization has a mission to address a problem that is a common concern of all partners, it is likely to be successful. In this case, the requirement of SB5 that all local jurisdictions must reduce energy use was this common theme. All parties recognized the value of having a broader organization to help them meet these requirements.

- Developing a detailed first year work plan for the organization during the formation stages helps to define the scope of the organization.
- It is important to ensure that individuals at all levels of the community can have the most appropriate role in the organization. For example, it was judged not to be realistic to expect that the Board of Directors (including the Mayor, County Judge, and CEO of the municipal utility) would meet monthly, and address administrative issues. An organization should be formed that will allow these leaders to provide overall direction, while their staffs meet more frequently and provide day-to-day guidance. This combination of high-level leaders, lower-level facilitators, paid staff implementers, and community advisors was deemed to be the most effective.
- One of the most important and useful roles of an organization such as this one is to help the community to understand its current energy use, and to help them plan for making an impact on that use. Benchmarking the energy used by different sectors, entities, or facilities in the community is a crucial first step.

This is a new organization, and there are challenges still to be faced. For example, it remains to be seen what kind of influence this Partnership will have on the policies and activities of the member organizations. However, it is well positioned to effect significant change in the community, and metropolitan San Antonio should soon be ranked among the leading communities in the US in sustainable energy practices and policies.