TerraVerde
Renewable Partners

The most transformative strategy for creating multiple and lasting benefits is one that fundamentally changes public awareness and behavior around the use of energy. The strategy starts with children, and the schools where they learn about how their choices impact the environment.

I will illustrate this with a story. My company helps schools explore the financial feasibility of investing in energy management measures, including solar. In the fall of 2009, one District decided to go ahead with a 1.06 MW solar project serving two high schools. Nine months before the project "went online", the District also began implementation of an energy awareness program that focused on changing the behavior of teachers, staff and students in their use of energy at their schools. While they were able to achieve some energy use reductions in the first several months of the program, these efforts "plateau-ed" after 2 or 3 months. However, within days after the solar project went online, there was a marked reduction is electricity usage. Further analysis showed that the presence of the solar project created a concrete picture of the importance of alternative approaches to energy and helped reinforce the messages and desired behaviors of the awareness program.

By the way, the solar project itself has resulted in over $200,000/year in net savings to the school district and an estimated annual reduction of 1.9 MM lbs of GHGs.

With this in mind, we recommend that at least 20% of all proceeds be made available to California School Districts for energy conservation and renewable energy projects in the form of low interest loans (>2%, no less than 20 year term) and some grants, administered through the CEC. Further we recommend that at least 50% of the funds be reserved for grants and loans to schools in disadvantaged communities, as defined by having student populations of at least 35% eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Finally, requirements for awarding the loans and grants should include:

1. An independent, 3rd party analysis of the school's energy usage (Note: grants could be used to fund the analysis), and
2. Some form of competitive bid process; i.e., restrictions on use of a sole source contract to implement the energy conservation or renewable energy measures.

This approach satisfies several key criteria that we believe should be applied to any allocation of these funds:

A. Leverage: i.e., investment of proceeds has a multiplier impact.
B. Speed of execution, i.e., money must be spent within a specified timeframe (6-12 months)
C. Quality of execution, i.e., 3rd party independent review of proposed use of proceeds and verification that proceeds were used as proposed and produced results as proposed.

For further information or questions, please feel free to contact us at the following email address or phone number. Rick Brown: Rick.Brown@TVRPLLC.com,or, 707-953-2885.