

Implementing ARRA

Design Snapshot

Scaling Up for Regional Sustainability: Puget Sound New Energy Solutions

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To realize new opportunities for clean energy leadership—both through ARRA and other federal policies—Puget Sound leaders have established a new, multi-jurisdictional, multi-sector, and multi-focus collaborative partnership to advance innovative sustainability solutions for the region. Puget Sound New Energy Solutions coordinates regional stakeholders around their investments in energy efficiency, clean mobility, and smart grids to get the most out of stimulus formula allocations and be better positioned to win competitive grant awards now and in the future.

Puget Sound New Energy Solutions (PSNES) is a multi-jurisdictional effort—motivated by stimulus funding opportunities—designed to promote and support regional sustainability initiatives. A growing number of local governments across Puget Sound in King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties—representing a regional concentration of residents, big businesses, buildings, and traffic flows—have been joining this consortium to coordinate work on retrofits, grid upgrades, and transport system modernization.

Puget Sound New Energy Solutions	
Purpose:	Aligns stimulus investments to demonstrate the catalytic potential of innovative sustainability initiatives
Lead entity:	County and metropolitan planning organization
Partners:	Cities, counties, regional and local utilities
ARRA focus:	Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants, Clean Cities, and smart grid matching fund
Scale:	Four-county area
Strategies:	Reflects a long-term regional vision; adopts multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral approaches; embraces integrated solutions
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The multidimensional sustainability approach pursued by PSNES integrates the buildings, vehicles, and electricity grids vital for fully realizing new clean energy benefits. By working toward the widespread and coordinated deployment of smart grids, clean mobility options (e.g., electrified transportation), and energy efficient buildings, PSNES seeks to align and leverage separate funding resources and projects to maximize impact from stimulus funding. This includes new retrofit programs funded through the [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant \(EECBG\)](#); collective stimulus grant proposals for competitive Clean Cities funding; and multi-party applications for ARRA’s federal matching fund for smart grid investment costs. With this “whole systems” strategy, PSNES aims to raise the entire region’s profile as a sustainability innovator and to

establish it as a credible brand to help win competitive awards through ARRA and future federal policies. Listed in the regional ARRA web-clearinghouse developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council, PSNES is one the leading efforts among the various collaborative ARRA initiatives discussed for the region (described in “Facilitating Regional Stimulus Applications,” another profile in this Brookings series).

The PSNES consortium involves multi-sector participation. To date, 17 city and county governments, including King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties and the cities of Seattle, Bellevue, and Redmond have signed letters declaring their intent to cooperate in advancing the PSNES regional sustainability framework. Seattle is supporting this regional initiative at the same time as it launches its own citywide ARRA-funded energy efficiency retrofit program (described in “Partnering for Citywide Retrofits,” another profile in this Brookings series). All four regional utilities, [Puget Sound Energy](#), [Tacoma Public Utilities](#), [Snohomish County Public Utility District](#), and [Seattle City Light](#), have all signed on to this effort. And this consortium will likely grow further to encompass labor advocates, private industry, and education institutions.

Through the PSNES network, individual entities can form new connections, exchange information on related activities, and find new ways of working together. For example, in the arena of energy efficiency, PSNES is guiding participating municipalities to coordinate their individual EECBG applications and establish common measurement and performance outcomes to better achieve region-wide impact. One goal that PSNES is working toward in this regard, in conjunction with municipalities, utilities, and community colleges, is the creation of a single “energy service corps” that would draw on locally-trained professionals to contact businesses and residents door-to-door thereby addressing some utilities’ concerns of not having the outreach capacity necessary for delivering a region-wide retrofit effort.

Although initiated in the stimulus context, PSNES promotes a new long-range plan for regional sustainability. In development since February 2009, the PSNES strategy views stimulus resources as only the first steps to fully realizing a clean energy future for Puget Sound and emphasizes spending ARRA dollars on demonstrating the potential of innovative sustainability initiatives—especially those that can be truly catalytic when delivered to the right geographic area at the right scale. Accordingly, PSNES has facilitated competitive ARRA grant proposals for ambitious projects that have the potential to transform the region if appropriately expanded by future federal and other funding flows. For example, one proposed demonstration project would combine some local EECBG dollars, competitive [Clean Cities](#) awards, and other public, utility, and private funds to develop a new, transit-oriented, 9.8 acre urban village that integrates features like 146 units of super-efficient affordable housing, a network of smart-grid plug-in vehicle charging stations, and onsite grid-connected renewable power generation.

The Implementing ARRA Series

America's current economic crisis is not only a national crisis. It is also a metropolitan crisis. Therefore, it is critical to monitor the progress of creative metropolitan leaders who are leveraging the myriad resources provided by the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). To that end, the Metropolitan Policy Program's Implementing ARRA Series is tracking the implementation work of metropolitan leaders, assessing their progress and struggles, and extracting from the innovators' experiences ideas for short- and long-term federal policy reforms. Ultimately it is hoped the series will serve as a resource for best-practice exchange among regions and a source of ideas for designing the next generation of metro-friendly federal policies.

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