

Building capacity in Asia


CSG's State Environmental Initiative exports best practices

**BY KAREN MARSHALL
AND AMANDA MAYS**

For nearly a decade state government agencies have accepted the challenge posed by The Council of State Governments' State Environmental Initiative to transfer the environmental and economic development practices they perform so well at home to an international landscape. Since 1994, states have led and assisted their counterparts in 11 Asian countries with 44 projects designed to improve environmental management in the industrial and urban sectors. SEI projects involved the development of policies and action plans, pilot demonstrations, distributorships, training workshops, feasibility studies and extension centers. States have adapted their programs to complement Asian political, cultural and demographic characteristics at every jurisdictional level.

The 24 states that applied successfully to the SEI grants competitions have deployed more than \$5 million of program funding and invested more than \$11 million of their own resources in the cause.

"On the one hand, SEI brings to the developing world community a consistent assistance of the U.S. government to those emerging countries. On the other hand, it helps U.S. companies expand their business globally. SEI Grant is a perfect place where the two countries meet on the basis of mutual benefit," said Tran Luong Son, International Fellow at the Kenan Institute.



The changing Asian culture is emphasized by traditional architecture sitting beside a modern high-rise building

The SEI program is sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development through the U.S.-Asia Environmental Partnership. US-AEP is a public-private initiative that promotes environmentally sustainable development in Asia. US-AEP works in four program areas – policy, urban, industry and technology cooperation – and embodies a model of cooperative development that encourages U.S. and Asian partnerships, engaging key decision-makers who affect economic change and environmental awareness in Asia and the U.S. With a wide range of partners – governments, nongovernmental organizations, academia and the private sector – US-AEP has become a flexible, responsive and cost effective vehicle for delivering timely answers to environmental questions.

The SEI projects are demonstrating that the approaches that work for CSG's membership – multi-level and multi-state

collaboration, public/private partnerships and sustainable practices – also work well in Asia.

"I have always felt imposed by the USA because of its sheer size. However, when the Colorado-Malaysia program began, I could not help but feel that 'It is only Colorado after all.' I think the success of this program ... will have been because of this strategy," said Thaya Kulenthran, president of Greenfields Consulting in Malaysia.

"Interorganizational collaboration between groups in Minnesota has been enhanced. For example, our advisory board is unique in that it is the only forum that brings together the economic development, environmental, trade and nonprofit sectors in Minnesota. Our involvement has also enhanced Minnesota's reputation as a serious and successful player in the international environmental arena," said Kevin

O'Donnell, Industry Advisor, Minnesota Technology, Inc.

The SEI program took the partnership approach one step further by sponsoring specific consulting teams to solve particular problems with the host countries. The lead state agencies organize teams of government, NGO, academic and private sector players to provide a unique and targeted set of skills to tackle the situation presented to them in Asia. The teams then collaborate with specific partners in the host country to fine-tune and implement a project that will achieve the desired results.

Learning to fish

The SEI projects have conducted dozens of training workshops on subjects

"We must get away from the old way of thinking and realize that economic development and the environment are two sides of the same coin – for one to be strong, the other must be just as strong. If we are to improve the quality of life for our citizens – whether in Maryland or in Asia – we must improve our economy and protect the environment and public health. The State of Maryland has been honored to participate in this initiative. Our activities have ranged from helping to bring solar power to Indonesia and the Solomon Islands to working with the people of Thailand on air and water quality issues, enabling Maryland to export our environmental technology, share our environmental expertise, and enhance the quality of life for our fellow nations."

— Maryland Gov. and CSG president Parris N. Glendening.

Region	Grant	State Investment	Number of States
East	\$624,560	\$2,943,389	6
Midwest	\$556,851	\$845,000	4
Southern	\$1,612,072	\$3,519,165	15
Western	\$2,598,790	\$3,973,402	9
Total:	\$5,392,273	\$11,280,956	34

such as environmental accounting, materials productivity, air and water quality monitoring, public education and waste management. However, to ensure that the training "sticks" and is passed on to future personnel, many projects incorporate train-the-trainer techniques and in-country extension centers to provide continuing professional development for the Asian partners. Projects led by California, Hawaii, Tennessee and Washington have established extension centers at De La Salle University in the Philippines, Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the Philippines Industrial Technology Development Institute.

Seeing is believing

Pilot or technology demonstrations are important components for many of the SEI projects, providing potential users the chance to "kick the tires" on environmental equipment and processes they may be interested in purchasing. The generation of characterization and performance-test data under local conditions over an extended period of time builds confidence in the available technologies and the U.S. companies that back them.

The policy arena

As the implementers of extensive environmental policies, state-led teams have provided policy frameworks for topics such as environmental management systems, greening the supply chain and model energy performance contracts. The grant-funded projects have developed a medical waste-management plan for Nepal, an air-quality management plan for Chiang Mai, cleaner production plans for four industrial organizations in

Malaysia and a business plan for clean energy in Taiwan. The partnerships have activated sister lakes, city and state/province agreements to work at all levels of government.

Agency	U.S.	Asian
Federal	6	15
State	42	8
Local	12	5

"Success and publicity with the US-AEP/CSG activity also helped us receive a two-year grant from the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy within the U.S. Department of Energy to pursue further studies in the Philippines," said Jim Dorian of the Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism.

Conclusion

Key to the success of these projects has been flexibility, relationship building, partner investment and sincere interest in achieving long-term solutions – factors that are often missing from big business contractual arrangements. CSG looks forward to continuing and expanding the engagement of the states and their environmental businesses as Asia pursues a cleaner environment. ★

— Karen Marshall is a senior environmental policy analyst at The Council for State Governments and Amanda Mays is a research associate at The Council of State Governments.