



Harbor Light
Harbor Springs
Michigan

Community Foundations awarded grant to support combined clean energy efforts in the region

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Last year the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, in partnership with the Charlevoix County and Petoskey-Harbor Springs Community Foundations, received a \$60,000 grant award from the C.S. Mott Foundation to support combined clean energy efforts in the region.

This work focuses on building new and stronger relationships and partnerships, supporting greater community understanding and increased engagement with clean energy efforts, and supporting the three municipalities (Charlevoix, Petoskey, and Traverse City) in moving renewable energy and energy efficiency work forward within their communities and city facilities to create regional resiliency.

When local governments lead by example, they help to advance renewable and energy-efficient practices in the region by promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewables in their own operations.

“We saw that there was a lot of momentum in Northern Michigan related to clean energy and reducing energy consumption,” said Sarah Ford, community and donor engagement officer at Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation. “And with our partnerships across sectors, Community Foundations are in the unique position to bring together partners to collaborate, share knowledge and galvanize action to create more sustainable communities.”

The three Community Foundations have committed funding for several projects across the region, enlisting the help of local nonprofit partners Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities, SEEDS, and Michigan Environmental Council (MEC). The projects include solar mapping, energy benchmarking, and the development of a sustainability plan for the region.

“We hope to advance the use of clean and renewable energy in our respective communities,” said Gina Thornbury, program officer at the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation. “There are already several organizations and businesses in our region working toward a clean and sustainable future; our goal is to support and amplify that existing work and to serve as a catalyst for greater sustainability efforts.”

The first grants to the nonprofit partners were awarded in October of 2018 to move the initiative from planning to implementation. One of these first grants supported SEEDS, which used funding to complete a three-part Energy Management Workshop Series teaching unique energy and cost-saving solutions to local municipalities, organizations, and businesses.

“Workshop participants benchmarked their energy use trends and are now developing prioritized implementation measures that will save energy, be cost effective, and support sustainability goals in their communities,” said Kevin Summers, energy education specialist at SEEDS. “The three municipalities continue to learn from and inspire one another toward cleaner infrastructure and investment strategies that bolster community resilience.”

MEC is continuing efforts around supporting Traverse City’s 100% renewable energy goal, as well as working with Petoskey and Charlevoix in considering their renewable energy goals.

“This collaborative grant has given us the resources and new connections needed to reach community leaders in our region,” said Kate Madigan, energy and climate specialist at MEC.

The Groundwork Center is working with Charlevoix and Petoskey on solar mapping and identifying potential solar sites, as well as developing a Green Rate Marketing and Competition plan for Traverse City, Petoskey, and Charlevoix’s voluntary green rate.

“The support these three Community Foundations and the funding they’ve leveraged from Mott, along with the partnership with MEC and SEEDS, has been just what we needed to drive clean electricity progress in our region,” said Dan Worth, Groundwork clean energy program director.

Maureen Radke, program officer for Charlevoix County Community Foundation noted that the community foundations are excited to support the municipalities in pursuing their clean energy goals.

“With this collaborative effort, we are hopeful that northern Michigan will be a leader in renewable and sustainable energy,” said Radke.