

Inclusive Energy Innovation Prize



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

The South Memphis Energy Consortium

Building a Clean Energy Future for South City

<https://memphis.ensemblevideo.com/Watch/Tp4b7PCm>

Memphis, TN

Energy burden, or the proportion of income that needs to be spent for energy in a year, is a significant concern for many and especially impacts low-income households. This is particularly true for the city of Memphis, which has one of the nation's highest energy cost burden rates. Memphians pay on average over 6% of their income on energy bills, and this number increases to over 25% for some low-income households, despite having some of the nation's lowest electricity and natural gas prices. The target area for Phase I will be the 38126 area code, also known as South City, which has for decades suffered from the highest poverty rates in Memphis, a city that ranks highly for poverty rates nationally. This is a predominantly African American (approximately 95%) neighborhood of around 6,400 residents with a child poverty rate in excess of 80%. Our proposal focuses on decreasing the financial burden of energy costs and increasing employment opportunities in the growing clean energy space to help improve the long-term health of the community. We will also use the proposed program to continue energy-focused assistance in this area. This program will:

1. Reduce the negative impact of electricity supply issues for disadvantaged communities by reducing electricity consumption and renewable energy production. This will be accomplished through energy efficiency educational outreach, weatherization and home health improvement programs.
2. Increase access to clean energy jobs and energy project funding opportunities through outreach between the university, local non-profit organizations, and the community.
3. Establish a modest solar and battery system at a community location in South City to provide tangible benefits to residents and serve as a focal point for future funding opportunities for the community.

Our team is composed of faculty and staff from the University of Memphis (UofM), the second largest research university in Tennessee. UofM has a long history of community outreach through the work of the West TN STEM Hub and collaborations with other local organizations serving South City. For this proposal, UofM has partnered with three non-profit organizations: Knowledge Quest, the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative, and the South Memphis Renewal Community Development Corporation. These organizations have long standing community ties with the target population, including job training, K-12 education, and home health/energy efficiency programs.

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