

## Follow the LEED

> *As the government puts increasing emphasis on green technologies, A/E and environmental services firms stand to benefit.*

Right now, there is \$2.7 billion available in stimulus money for green projects from just the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Are you ready to grab it?

That money is part of \$3.2 billion from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program, one of many programs receiving funding for green projects under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), otherwise known as the economic stimulus package. Other programs in the DOE include \$5 billion for the Weatherization Assistance Program and \$3 billion for the State Energy Program, for example. The programs are examples of how firms can put their **U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC)** (Washington, DC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) abilities to work, since most projects are required to meet a LEED silver rating.

**Reaping the benefits Sullivan International Group, Inc.** (San Diego, CA), a 55-person applied science, engineering, and technology firm, is aggressively pursuing energy-related contract opportunities stemming from the stimulus package. The firm already won a \$540,000 contract from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service in March for an office energy efficiency refurbishing project at California's San Bernardino National Forest. Currently, the firm is pursuing opportunities with the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). As part of that effort, the firm created a spreadsheet identifying dozens of energy projects it could pursue. For example, there is a \$38 million plan to construct renewably fueled cogeneration systems at up to nine sites, and \$750,000 to install renewable energy systems at facilities in Cheyenne, Wisconsin.

CEO Steven Sullivan says the potential opportunities represent an emerging market.

"I personally believe this industry is still in development and many current and future political and regulatory drivers will end up establishing the final set of rules for this industry," he says. "The key now is to focus on energy projects and opportunities that make economical sense for our client and our firm, while still providing a springboard for future growth in a better defined business environment."

Sullivan International Group's energy program efforts will continue to focus on LEED certification support and implementation, energy auditing, facility energy upgrades, and a special focus on plasma ARC technology, Sullivan says. The firm currently has a half dozen LEED-certified staff and several going through the training and exam preparation. The firm will continue to develop additional staff to support anticipated growth in 2010 and beyond, he says. Sullivan says there are still plenty of opportunities to pursue LEED work stemming from the stimulus package. Sullivan says that firms should, for example, obtain LEED certifications for their engineers, which would make them more versatile by marrying traditional engineering skills with green credentials.

## Waiting on the wings

James Tyler, a partner and principal at **EAPC** (Fargo, ND), a 93-person architecture, engineering, and construction management services firm, says the economic stimulus package— specifically the EECBG program— has produced several recent requests for proposals in the North Dakota region. Therefore,

Tyler says the firm is anticipating an increase in LEED work due to the new administration's emphasis on green construction.

"We are pursuing LEED projects and are preparing ourselves for these types of projects by becoming more knowledgeable in LEED design," Tyler says. "Currently, we employ three LEED-accredited professionals in our firm (two architects and one electrical engineer). We also have four additional individuals, including two architects, one interior designer, and one mechanical engineer, preparing to take the exam in the next 30 days (prior to June 30)."

Tyler says that while EAPC's strategic planning takes into consideration the proliferation of LEED projects, he's not yet sure it will become the industry standard.

"Certainly legislation can be put in place for government or public projects, but it will be difficult to legislate for the private sector," he says. "We have had several clients recently who have voted for first cost reduction at the expense of energy efficient systems with reduced lifecycle costs."

### **Many looking**

**James Lemay**, a principal in the audit department of accounting firm **DiCicco, Gulman & Company LLP** (Woburn, MA), says A/E and environmental services clients are narrowing on opportunities for LEED silver work as they try to recover from the slump.

In many cases, these are firms that already employ LEED-certified staff who are trying to shift from the private sector into the public arena.

Lemay has advised firms to put their portfolios in order and get LEED qualifications documented. Federal agencies will look at portfolios, qualifications, and financial stability as they award work under the stimulus package and keep a tight oversight on performance, he says.—

JOÃO FERREIRA