

Alliance to Save Energy's Charles Percy Award Nomination – Craig Smith

“As an adolescent, I received training as a community organizer and completed internships with housing and community development organizations. Ever since then I’ve been passionate about empowering others to achieve shared goals.” – Craig Smith

Craig Smith has indeed helped others achieve shared goals. He has used his experience to help unite the Northwest region toward achieving its energy efficiency goals through his work as the Chair of the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance and the Assistant General Manager for Snohomish County PUD in Everett, Washington. Whether in his role at the head of the board room or behind the scenes quietly promoting the cause, Craig is a well respected energy efficiency leader and has been a regional force to promote collaboration and expansion of energy-efficient programs, products and services in this region.

Craig has 25 years of experience in the electric utility industry and joined Snohomish County PUD in 1998. During his time there, Craig is credited with building a strong leadership team, leading the utility to achieve energy savings well beyond its share of the Northwest region’s aggressive goals, for the past two years.

In late 2007, Craig was voted in as the Chair of the Board for the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (NEEA). He was voted in at a time when the governance structure of NEEA was changing to create a smaller strategy and a policy-focused board for the organization. NEEA is an energy efficiency alliance consisting of 11 Northwest utilities, the Energy Trust of Oregon and the Bonneville Power Administration on behalf of more than 130 Northwest public utilities. NEEA delivers energy efficiency savings and services across a diverse region through its market transformation initiatives.

Craig faced three challenges in this new leadership role at NEEA. The first was that the existing NEEA Executive Director had just left the organization, so Craig had to take on some of those responsibilities while NEEA searched for a replacement. Craig successfully steered NEEA through the executive search process and to the leadership change in 2008. This led to the hiring of Claire Fulenwider as NEEA’s new executive director. Claire’s 30 years of leadership experience in the energy industry made her the perfect choice to lead NEEA. Under Craig’s guidance, she has successfully taken over the helm of the organization.

His next challenge was to help NEEA deliver on the commitments and value it promised its funders and stakeholders in its 2005-2009 business plan. He helped NEEA stay on track, communicate goals and results to NEEA’s funders, and look for opportunities to seed savings for the next business plan cycle.

The third challenge was that in 2008, NEEA headed into its strategic planning process for 2010-2014. With the myriad of energy, economic and environmental issues facing the industry and the region, he challenged NEEA to think and act more strategically. He facilitated opening up the NEEA strategic planning process to the region for input and collaboration. Under his leadership NEEA conducted 58 in-person meetings, seven regional workshops with a total of 200 participants, and implemented an active online participation process that included surveys and the ability to comment on strategic planning documents. Based on the input of this process, the region united around a common vision of the unique roles that NEEA can play in providing marketplace leverage, investing in emerging technologies and influencing codes and standards.

Craig has devoted much of his career to increasing energy efficiency in the Northwest through innovation and thought leadership. His accomplishments have helped the region push the energy efficiency envelope leading to a more efficient region.