

The 2009 Stars of Energy Efficiency Annual Awards” Nomination for Stephen Cowell (CSG)

Cowell, chairman and CEO of Conservation Services Group (CSG), has made a lifetime commitment to the promotion of energy efficiency (ee) and public service. Throughout his 30+ year career, he has advocated for economic advances and energy policy changes that continually create opportunities for ee programs around the country.

Cowell’s dedication to policy and public service began early. Instead of living in a comfortable, Ivy league dormitory, he chose to live in the housing projects. He believed that the best way to be a public housing advocate was to live among the tenants. Soon, he set up a health clinic, a tenants’ union and helped students get involved in urban issues. After graduation, he obtained various positions in private firms and state government. As director of the Mass. Office of Citizen Participation, Cowell spearheaded a pilot program to help low income residents cut power consumption. The program provided ee services to 200,000 low income households from 1979-1982. This initiative was so successful, it became a model for other projects around the country. When Cowell learned of the direct connection between energy and politics, he was “hooked.” In 1984, Cowell founded CSG as a way to become more involved in promoting ee and in shaping public policy.

Cowell was instrumental in shaping deregulation that paved the way for ee provisions throughout the ‘80s. Working with utilities, consumer and environmental groups, he helped lead demand-side management regulatory and program development. CSG then implemented the leading residential DSM program in Mass. In the 1990s, Cowell founded the Northeast Energy Efficiency Council (NEEC) and led the successful fight for more than \$1 billion in ee funding in Mass., Conn. and R.I. In 1999 he advocated for the founding of the “Sixth Sector” of the New England Power Pool, allowing ee to participate in the governance of the power grid. Due to Cowell’s influence, ISO-NE now recognizes ee as a distinct resource, with an equal voice to other energy sources, in making policy decisions.

This year, CSG is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Under Cowell’s leadership, CSG has grown from one Boston office to 14 locations nationwide, implementing ee work in 22 states. Jobs at CSG have increased more than 20 percent on average during the last four years. Cowell has built a \$62 million firm, which represents a 77 percent increase in revenue in four years. CSG has helped two million U.S. households and businesses save energy through innovative, award winning programs. In late 2008, CSG procured more than \$100 million of new contracts for ee program implementation in 2009 and beyond.

Following is a summary of highlights that illustrate Cowell’s commitment to ee:

- * 2008 – 2009: Cowell helped lead the National SAVE Energy Coalition advocating for more ee provisions in the federal stimulus budget and recruiting new members. As a result, funding for state programs went from \$.5 billion to \$3.1 billion. Money for the DOE’s weatherization Assistance Program increased to \$5 billion, from \$2.6 billion. Coalition membership has doubled.
- * 2006: Cowell successfully advocated for ee as an economically viable power supply option
- * 2004: Cowell received the 2004 “Champion of Energy Efficiency Award” from the ACEEE.
- * 2003: CSG successfully bid to include ee in a plan to reduce strain on the Power Grid from SW Conn. The landmark measure with ISO-NE represented the first time that the group awarded a contract to purchase on-peak MW savings from ee measures.
- * 1998: Cowell played a significant role in the restructuring (deregulation) of the energy market. His influence ensured ee benefits would be maintained and promoted. He also founded Sun Power Electric, the nation’s first all-solar utility, giving consumers a choice to purchase clean energy.
- * While president of NEEC, the group secured more than \$1 billion in funding for ee programs.
- * Cowell developed Affordable Comfort, Inc. to promote building more energy efficient, healthy, safe and comfortable homes.
- * Under Cowell’s leadership, CSG has won dozens of awards for its programs over the years from the EPA, the Edison Electric Institute and the DOE.
- * Cowell walks the walk: He renovated a 6,500 sq. ft. historic Shaker barn in the Berkshires for his family to live in. It is so energy efficient, it only costs \$400 per year to heat.
- * Cowell has been on the board of directors for NEEP, BPI, SEBANE and NAESCO, to name a few industry organizations he serves. He is also co-policy chair of the New England Clean Energy Council.