

Nomination Summary: Edgar Villaseñor for ASE “I-STAR” Award

The PEPS (Promoting an Energy-Efficient Public Sector) initiative in Mexico has been a rags-to-riches story. Led by Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, PEPS began working with the Mexican national government (CONAE, the national commission for energy savings) in 1999. The goal was to create an energy-efficient purchasing program in the Mexican federal government. A combination of the failure to get an early foothold and a high turnover among the key advocates in CONAE left the program un-launched, with no savings achieved, three years later.

Due to a partnership between LBNL and ICLEI (and the financial support of USAID), however, the PEPS purchasing effort got a second chance in Mexico. ICLEI rallied the eight Mexican cities in its “Cities for Climate Protection” campaign around the idea of reducing their emissions, and saving money, through their routine procurement of energy-using products. Taking advantage of the presence of both the Sello FIDE and ENERGY STAR[®] labels in the Mexican marketplace, ICLEI and LBNL created a program manual that identified market-leading efficiency levels for, initially, just eight products, covering lighting and office equipment. The program was launched at a two-day workshop in Toluca, Mexico in September, 2004.

In the next three years, ICLEI-Mexico’s Edgar Villaseñor almost single-handedly recruited an additional 34 cities and four states to join PEPS-Mexico and expanded the program’s product scope to include motors, air conditioners, and vehicles. In 2007 alone, tallying just the results of twelve reporting cities, the program showed savings of over 8 million kWh and 650 thousand liters of vehicle fuel; this translates to approximately US\$1,730,000 in avoided energy costs.

Among Mr. Villaseñor’s tactics in promoting PEPS was to require that a city’s mayor officially sign up for the program, committing his or her government to the principle of buying efficient products and to pursuing purchasing policies and/or regulations that permit, encourage, or even require energy-efficient purchasing. By the end of 2007, 15 cities had passed such “Normas” and 22 were actively pursuing them. To keep the cities’ momentum, semi-annual PEPS workshops were held, to which participating cities generally sent one or more representatives. The annually updated manual, a website, and Mr. Villaseñor’s constant support have been the other key program tools.

The direct savings of the PEPS-Mexico program over its three years have grown impressively, and will continue to. However, the impact has spread beyond the participating cities and states. A PEPS-led purchasing effort that drew heavily from the Mexican experience has recently been launched in the Chile’s public sector (including the national government as well as state and municipal governments) and a similar effort is in development in India. Moreover, Mexico’s CONAE has renewed its interest in the program, leading to hope that energy-efficient purchasing may get another chance at the national government level.

While there have been many actors that helped turn the PEPS-Mexico purchasing program into a huge success, ranging from LBNL to ICLEI-USA – which initially hired Mr. Villaseñor as a consultant – to CONAE, which now generously houses him, it has been the intelligence, savvy, and persistence of Mr. Villaseñor himself that has driven the program to succeed where it once failed.