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Discounted Energy Audits Can Find Savings For Businesses

by CATHY BONNSTETTER For The State Journal Feb 12, 2017



James

Downstream Strategies and the **Morgantown Municipal Green Team** have joined up to encourage participation in a statewide energy audit program aimed at helping small businesses reduce their energy costs.

The program, which is sponsored by the **U.S. Department of Agriculture**, brings energy efficiency experts from **West Virginia University's** Industrial Assessment Center to interested small businesses to complete a comprehensive energy audit. Using the detailed report generated after the audit, businesses can apply for financial assistance through the USDA guaranteed loan and Rural Energy for America Program to make any necessary efficiency improvements.

“For a small business, a little bit of money saved on lighting costs can go a long way,” said **Joey James**, project scientist at Downstream Strategies and chair of Morgantown Municipal

Green Team. "The IAC is offering their services at an extreme discount."



This type of audit typically costs about \$3,000, but through the statewide program, it costs businesses \$125. The IAC usually focuses on large industrial complexes, but James explained their services are available to small business through the grant.

The IAC's recommendations typically save a business between 5 percent and 10 percent of their total energy costs; however if a business utilizes high energy consuming tools or appliances, savings could be much higher.

"The majority of the recommendations involve lighting and heating systems," James said. "Oftentimes it's not a really big thing, just a lot of little, cheap things that drain unnecessary energy. It's a great opportunity for small businesses.

"The payback period for making most of these suggested changes is about a year. Even with more complicated retrofits the payback is almost always less than five years."

West Virginia University industrial engineering student **Zela**

Wyrosdick does the marketing and recruiting for the grant. She said seven audits had been completed since October. The IAC must complete 25 audits by the middle of May to continue receiving the grant money.



“My partner and I go after every kind of business — retail, hair salons, butcher shops,” she said. “We will talk to anyone, but those who stand to reap the most benefits are those in old buildings or those with high energy costs — people who have a lot of lighting, such as jewelry shops.”

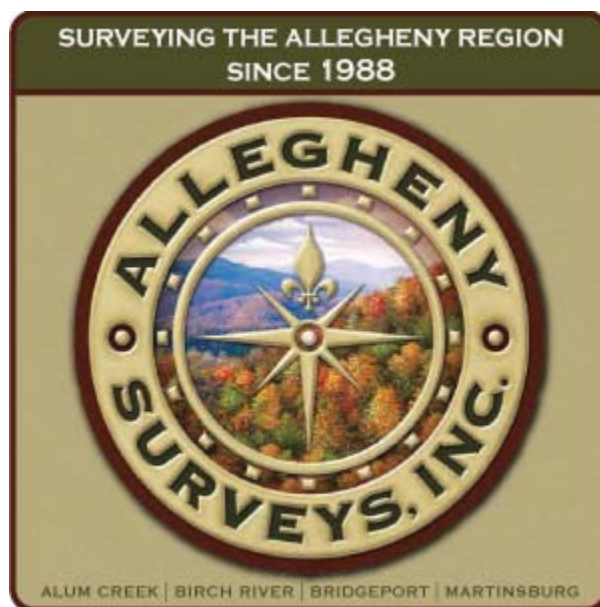
The program is for rural agricultural producers and for-profit small businesses. A for-profit small business is defined as any business that employs fewer than 500 people in a designated rural area and, based on the type of business, makes less than a certain amount of revenue. James said most of the state, with the exception of small portions of Kanawha and Cabell counties, is considered rural.

Wyrosdick said with the exception of chain stores, most businesses in the state qualify for the program. The grant runs for one year, and there is no limit as to the number of audits the IAC is allowed to do at the discounted price. So far, the cities with the most participation have been Morgantown and

Huntington.

The program also leads to an overall reduction the commercial sector's carbon footprint.

"Morgantown's commercial sector has been identified as the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, the largest consumer of energy from fossil fuels and is responsible for 40 percent of all emissions from the Morgantown community," James said. "Our goal is to reduce total emissions across all sectors."



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A yellow banner advertisement for Joe R. Pyle. On the left is a logo featuring a red house with a white circle and a black hammer icon. To the right of the logo, the text reads "COMPLETE AUCTION & REALTY SERVICE" in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, the name "JOE R. PYLE" is written in bold, blue letters. To the right of the name is the phone number "888.875.1599" in large, bold, red letters. Further right, the slogan "We Don't Just List Your Property We Sell It!" is written in red. At the bottom left, the address "5546 Benedum Drive • Shinnston • West Virginia" is listed in small black text. At the bottom right, "W212 Joe Pyle, Brok" is written in small black text.

A blue banner advertisement for ShaleEnergyLawBlog.com. On the left is a small image of an oil rig. To the right of the image, the text "ShaleEnergyLawBlog.com" is written in large, bold, white letters. To the right of this, the name "Babst Calland" is written in white, with "Attorneys at Law" in smaller white text below it. At the bottom, a dark blue banner lists the office locations: "CHARLESTON, WV | PITTSBURGH, PA | STATE COLLEGE, PA | WASHINGTON, DC | CANTON, OH | SEWELL, N."