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Grants and incentives support sustainable construction projects

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Property developers and business owners building new facilities or renovating existing space stand to achieve significant savings by investing upfront in high efficiency building design. However, tight budgets and limited resources can prevent companies from assessing construction projects as part of an energy-saving plan - potentially missing out on the long-term cost-saving strategy.

The United Illuminating Company, in partnership with Energize Connecticut, offers a unique program for businesses looking to construct or renovate large facilities, such as warehouses and manufacturing sites. Identifying energy efficiency solutions and technologies to reduce energy costs, UI collaborates with businesses and their design teams to integrate smart building practices from the project onset. The utility also explores whether companies are eligible for several design and construction grants and incentives available through the Energy Efficiency Fund to help offset project costs.

Design Grants

Assessing energy-efficient options early in the design process allows companies to achieve optimal operational and energy savings. Computer-simulated energy modeling is a critical step within the early planning stage, allowing companies to compare a baseline, code-compliant building with a high-efficiency model. For buildings 30,000 s/f or larger, UI provides a \$3,000 incentive through the Fund to help cover the cost of the initial simulation and offers an additional \$3,000 incentive for the final simulation showing an as-constructed building model with high efficiency measures implemented.

Design grants are also available as incentives for design firms to prioritize efficiency in the planning stages for businesses renovating buildings 30,000 s/f or larger. By brainstorming a full range of potential efficiency measures prior to any construction, design firms are able to develop a plan to meet optimal energy goals and are eligible to receive an incentive payment of \$2,500 from the Fund.

Quality Hyundai turned to UI for technical guidance throughout the construction of its New Haven, CT, auto dealership, which involved the gut renovation of a former U.S. Post Office processing center. Utilizing a design grant, Quality Hyundai was able to integrate comprehensive, energy-saving opportunities into every facet of the project.

"Energy efficiency was a priority for us but we wanted to make sure we made smart decisions and would get the most out of our investment," said Joe Blichfeldt Sr., Quality Hyundai owner. "The design grant allowed us to craft a custom energy strategy and ensured we would maximize the long-term cost-saving and environmental benefits of energy efficiency while providing a top customer experience."

Quality Hyundai successfully implemented a variety of electric and thermal upgrades, exceeding

code energy performance requirements by a combined 30% and generating an estimated \$20,790 saved on energy costs annually. The auto dealership also installed more than 500 rooftop solar panels through the Zero Emission Renewable Energy Credit (ZREC) Program, generating enough energy to fully power the facility.

Whole-Building

Performance Incentives

Once the project is completed, financial incentives are available based on the energy performance of the building. Design firms can receive up to \$15,000 in incentives if the performance of the completed building achieves at least a 25% reduction in energy saving from the baseline model.

Additionally, whole-building performance project incentives are available to building owners that achieve more than 10% energy savings above the state energy code minimum.

Prescriptive Design Grant

For commercial and industrial UI customers, further incentive opportunities are available for new construction and renovation projects involving buildings 50,000 s/f or larger. The prescriptive design grant provides funding for blueprints, material and equipment lists, and all information necessary to calculate energy savings and corresponding incentives. The total design grant is calculated based on building size for new construction projects or prorated based on individual efficiency measures of non-comprehensive projects, including lighting, heating equipment, HVAC systems and motors.

Prescriptive HVAC

and Lighting Incentives

Through the Energy Conscious Blueprint Program, companies with buildings or facilities of various sizes undergoing major renovations can also qualify for additional prescriptive grants, encompassing interior and exterior lighting and HVAC upgrades. Prescriptive HVAC incentives are based on improvements of HVAC equipment, including chillers, motors and variable frequency drives.

Prescriptive lighting incentives for LED lights and fluorescent systems are based on state energy code requirements, with businesses securing incentives for designs at least 10% better than code. Businesses can also receive incentives based on fixture type, ranging from \$30 - \$150 per light fixture.

Energize Connecticut programs are designed to provide the technical know-how for businesses striving to implement energy efficiency measures into the earliest phase of construction projects. The programs also provide an opportunity for businesses and design firms to connect with available grants and incentives to support the design process and implementation of energy efficiency upgrades.

Information on energy efficiency programs can be found at EnergizeCT.com.

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