

SCOTTSBLUFF GROUP

Nebraska Energy Office Focus Group
Scottsbluff, Nebraska May 19, 1988

Moderator Comments

My name is (name), I'm from (town) High School and I'm head custodian.

My name is (name), I'm from the (town) Public Schools and head of the maintenance department.

I'm (name) from (town) and I'm in maintenance.

I'm (name) with the (town) City Schools, I'm the business manager.

I'm (name), I'm with (town) Public Schools, I'm assistant principal at the high school.

(name), business manager with (town) Public Schools.

(name), contract cleaning with (town) School System.

(name), assistant superintendent of (town) district and I'm located at the (town) site.

(name), (town) school board.

(name), (town) principal.

(name), District (number), I'm board president.

(name), (town), school board.

I'm (name), superintendent, (town) Nebraska.

(M) Great. So you can see we've gotten a cross-section of a lot of different people and a lot of different communities. With that in mind, and keep in mind, there are no wrong answers, and if there's something I ask that doesn't make sense, please let me know, because we want to know that too. Let me start out by saying, have you ever read, seen or heard anything about the Nebraska Energy Efficiency School Loan Program? The Nebraska Energy Efficiency School Loan Program. Are any of you familiar with that program? (Name)?

We're in the process of trying to get a loan from the Nebraska Energy Office. What you have to do is have a study of your buildings and then an application and if I understand right, then you have to repay the loan that's approved and you get up to 14 years to repay it. And if the savings is can be saved in approximately 7 years, then you should come out pretty well on this situation.

(M) Any of the rest of you? Excellent description of it.

I believe in (town) that was our, we got a grant for replacing some windows and doing some energy efficient things to our buildings. From a maintenance standpoint, it was fantastic.

(M) How many of you have been involved in either a grant or loan program through the energy office? I'm going to count hands here. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. So about half of you have in your schools had a grant or a loan program in the past. For those of you that maybe haven't been involved in the program, when you hear the idea of the energy efficiency, everyone looked up,

(laughing)

The ceiling's coming down, that's in worse shape than mine is.

I think the energy office better do something about this.

(M) We'll take a break while I go talk to them here. In addition to the rain, what comes to mind first when you hear the idea of an energy efficiency school loan program? Those of you that maybe aren't familiar with it, when you hear that term, what do you think of first?

I think of payback, when I hear the word "loan."

(M) Payback? The loan idea hits you first, o.k. Anything else? Are any of you aware of any schools who've received any grants or loans under the program, those of you that are not aware? Are you aware of other schools? O.K. Yeah?

Back when they first came out with this and the grant process, they were going to allow us I think \$5,000 some dollars. And to get the study done, our architect who had the plans for the building and everything else, wanted \$5,000 to make the study so we dropped it right then and we haven't proceeded anymore.

(M) That was my next question. Why you hadn't maybe pursued it? So you're saying the cost of the study was the thing that...o.k., (Name)?

We just had the study done this year, matter of fact, we just completed it, and we didn't go in the program, but the way as I understand it, the way it would work in our case, they pay they just told us that if we went ahead and had the study done, then they'd pay for the study regardless of whether we went ahead with the program or not.

The one we worked with was one of the first ones that came out.

The present system, it has changed. We didn't go into it because the payback wasn't that great on it. One thing that surprised us was the fact that windows was one of the things they backed off

of. Windows are one of the big deals, and now they've backed way off from windows. We have an old building with windows that are 10 foot high and they backed way off from windows, they wouldn't do any of our windows.

On the one we're doing, they allowed up to \$2,500 per building to do the study and ours was a little bit under that on all three of the buildings we had.

I believe that in our case, the architectural costs were right in with the program, that was part of the loan program.

Tell me, what was the purpose of the change from a grant program to a loan program?

(M) These programs, the school loan program is funded by severance tax that comes from pumping gas and oil and it's a state program that was set up by the legislature and the legislature set it up as a loan program, that was in the

The first one was a grant program

(M) There are other programs, the federal program is a grant program, there's a federal program that's a 50-50 kind of program. There's also a state program that's a grant program that's for schools, hospitals, a broader construction kind of program.

Is that a grant program too?

(M) Yes. And I think it's an 80-20 under the state.

I guess the last information that I've been receiving has been geared strictly to the loan program. Is the department sending out anything relative to grants themselves? Because I've been talking to an engineering company about possibly doing a technical assistance study for a couple of our schools and he tells me that the only thing available is a loan rather than a grant. Is that true?

(M) Partially true but I'm going to go ahead and jump ahead here and answer your question by posing another question. Are you aware that up to \$2,500 per building is available from the state energy office to pay for an energy audit?

Yes, I'm aware of that, I'm aware that there are no strings attached to that other than the district is obligated to perform those non-monetary functions, is that correct? You know, like caulking the windows and those sorts of things. Those are the obligations that are placed upon districts if you choose to participate in the technical assistance step. Right?

(M) I'm going to say that I'm not a representative of the energy office so a few of these questions, I'm going to beg off on for the specifics.

That's an understanding I have, you know, the only thing you have to do is perform the non-monetary functions.

(M) But how many of you were, I'm going to get a raise of hands here, and then I'll come back and answer your question, (Name), about the technical assistance program. How many of you were aware that up to \$2,500 per building is available to do, from the energy office, to do an energy audit? Can you kind of raise your hands? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. So only about half of you were aware that...now that is, in effect, a grant. That's money that's available if you apply for it, \$2,500 to do an energy audit. As (Name) said a minute ago, that's per building really too, and you're not obligated to go ahead and apply for the loan, that's only to do an analysis to help you understand your current energy savings potential if you do certain things.

My understanding is you can back out of any part of it or all of it at any time, in fact, we are going to go ahead and take bids on most of the things that were on there, with the understanding that we may when we get the bids decide not to go through with some of it.

We backed off completely at this point, we got the audit _____? because we didn't think it was worth it.

(M) What was your payback, (Name)? I heard you say the savings wasn't great enough to go ahead.

It was over 10 years and there's a real question whether the building or the school system is going to be in existence in 10 years. That's one of the reasons why they backed off.

(M) So it wasn't an absolute dollar amount but the fact that it would take 10 years to get it...

Right, because we just didn't think it would be economical. We didn't think we'd save that much money over that long of a payback period on it.

(M) One of the things we're researching is what your awareness is of these programs and then once we've talked about them and those of you that maybe weren't aware, become aware. Would you be interested in doing it or not and why or why not? And so I want to ask, have you ever conducted an energy analysis or audit of your energy usage in your school building in the past? All of you have done..you've not, (name), o.k.

I'm not aware that we have.

(M) Two of you have not done any. Of those that have done it in the past, how many have done it within the past three years? 1, 2, 3, 4. About a third of you. So some of these analyses are over 4 years old of those of you that have done it. Knowing that up to \$2,500 per building is available as a grant, would you be interested now in applying for this type of program? Would any of you say, no, I don't really think we need it, or I'm not really sure at this point? Don't have to say your name, you can just....

I feel like I ought to lay something on the table here since I'm apparently coming at this in a little different manner than most of the rest. We've been through the auditing and so forth and we did have about 5 years in a row that we had nice grants from the energy office. They did a lot of things for us. Put all new windows in 4 of our 5 buildings, we did an awfully lot of relighting and plastering, we had incandescent lamps before, we have florescents now, did a lot of insulating even down as far as insulation in roofs, we took care of the roofing part, they took care of the insulation. We found them to be very good to work with, they stayed behind what they said they would do and we went through a lot of dollars there. But our particular feeling right now is we probably always will have needs for energy, to keep improving, but we hope that we're doing that on our own now and we really don't have the large project that we cannot afford to do. And so our board feels that they don't want to get involved at this time because all they'd be doing is just establishing a debt for the future that maybe we don't need. So I feel like the energy office has pretty well taken of us and got us going the route they would like to see people go, to pick it up on their own, so that's one reason why I'm kind of a negative here in this group because we are not interested in because we've done a lot with it.

(M) You feel you've done everything you can do at this point.

Yeah, we couldn't have done it without the help.

(M) How about the rest of you that have done energy audits, do you think they've been helpful?

Well, the audit or we went ahead with the..kind of echo what he said over here, they did a lot for us, in three of our buildings.

(M) Have they been in a form that you felt were understandable, were they easy to understand, or were they too technical, how do you feel about the format, the way they were presented to you.

Well, that is the understanding that I got from those who worked directly with this, that the forms were easy to understand and they were very cooperative and there was no hassle over anything that was done. I mean it was they just....

The place where I don't feel like we're helping them now with their follow-up, their study, is for several years we were able to

send in our lighting and our utilization and heat, cubic feet of gas used in each of the buildings, etc. Then we got kind of all mixed up in the whole thing because we ended up adding 4 big additions onto 4 of the buildings and right now we have no base. We can't tell them whether we're continuing to see some efficiency from it or not because with the additional space, well the costs...

(M) You almost need a new analysis of sorts.

Yeah, we should start another base if they want us to and start from there.

One thing we brought out in our study, one of the reasons ours didn't, they aren't, the payback is getting longer on them because they pointed out to us that the costs, the energy costs, are not as high as they were, so formerly you get to payback on some of these things you guys did earlier, you could get a quicker payback on them so more people would do them, where now, like I say, our payback was so long because of the difference in the energy costs, the energy costs have gone back down so, that's one of the reasons why we backed off it. And that's why it takes longer to payback today.

(M) That's a good thought. Yeah, because the payback is based upon what you would say. You do the analysis of what you are spending now and if you go ahead and make these improvements through the loan, a savings will result, according to the analysis, and then your payback is based on that savings so if it's a \$10,000 savings, you pay, you're saving \$2,000 year, I mean, it's a \$10,000 improvement and you're saving \$2,000 a year, it'll pay for itself in 5 years, where really, you have 10 years to pay it back because you pay...you have half the savings and the loan generates the other half of the savings.

We've gone so far as to get to the point where the engineer submitted a contract to us on a couple of our buildings, I guess, we've backed off from that knowing that really there's no cost because we have some concerns larger than energy savings, its called asbestos. We feel we may have a need for money in that area and divert our funds to that direction and take care of those needs rather than trying to get into energy efficiency.

(M) I've heard that before in other sessions that 5 years ago it was energy, and today it's asbestos.

We had one thing during the years that we were running with the energy group, one thing that I didn't necessarily agree with them on but I understand their side of it, I'd like to throw it out just because it is a little bit unusual. We had a gymnasium in an old building that was below ground and of course, when that was built back in 1915 or whatever, why in this gymnasium, it had 8 light fixtures in it. And they weren't good light fixtures, they were like 150 watt bulb or 300 watts or something like that.

So the gym was just real dim, it was not good at all. And of course, every time I would submit that, it would get thrown out because there wasn't any way we were going to relight it and save on energy.

(M) Now what point in time would this have been? How long ago?

Oh, five years ago. Because to brighten the room up, it was going to take more energy than less so that's one of the areas where our board had to do that on our own because it was not saving energy.

(M) One of the things I want to get back to...2 issues, one is the analysis and the people that you had do the analysis, many of you have had analyses done. How did you feel about, in most instances, these are conducted by outside engineering firms or architectural firms. How did you feel about the analysis and the analysis costs you got? (name) you made a comment that your analysis cost was pretty high, have any of the...

As high as the grant, so we didn't go, I thought, that was when we first started and I thought they were really out of line on what they wanted to charge us.

(M) That would have been, when you did that, that's been quite a few years ago? Any other people have experiences you want to share about.....?

The last engineering firm we had, whatever we paid them, it wasn't worth it, because the energy savings ideas that they come up with a 6th grade kid could have come up with the same thing.

(M) How long ago was that, (Name)?

This year.

(M) This year. o.k. Anyone else had experiences with, because I'm asking this, before I get into the specifics of the loan program because I'm trying to understand your familiarity and awareness of this new program. I'm going to get into more specifics now about the school loan program. How many of you were aware that this is a no-interest loan program? Shucks! One, raise your hand again. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, so most of you are aware, it's a no-interest loan, o.k. Another part of the program is, we've talked about that you have \$2,500 to do the analysis, this program is different from past federal programs in a couple of ways, operationally. Under the school loan program that is paid for by severance tax from gas and oil, the situation now is, the firm that does the analysis is not eligible to do the construction or improvements. How many of you were aware of that? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. So again, I guess most of you are aware of that part of it, which, that's good to know. Given the fact that it's

a no-interest loan situation, and that there's money for an analysis, can you tell me anything else about why you may or may not be interested in considering it?

The asbestos, I guess. More primary concerns than that. We've got some asbestos in our school, for all practical purposes, before this is going to be all over with, that bigger issue, we're going to need to remove it and we've encapsulated it and encapsulation removal was significantly more expensive than a dry removal of something that's not been encapsulated, so I guess if I had a priority, I'd say the first thing that we would do is make sure we had sufficient funds available to pay off that and after we get rid of that stuff, then we can turn around and reassess our positions.

(M) So you see that need as being greater than energy savings right now?

Well, we have, of course, the asbestos too, everybody does, but we feel that we're going to have some storm windows put on and some ceilings lowered and some incandescent lights changed to florescent and all these things not only are going to save energy, but they're also going to help the appearance of our buildings and help the comfort of the children so we feel it's probably going to be well worth it.

(M) Anyone else, thoughts? Have any of you talked, I may have asked this earlier, talked with other schools that have been through the process? You've not. How have you become aware of the school loan program? What sources of information have you used to become aware of it?

We got information from the state energy office.

(M) Mailings? O.K. Any other ways that any of you can recall? O.K. so that's been the primary way, the direct mail information you get from the...what about those of you that are on school boards, etc., how have you, I know some of you have been aware of the loan program. Do you recall how you became aware of it?

Well, personally I had read about it in the newspaper, when I spoke to the administration, they'd already received information in the mail.

(M) So you heard about it through the newspaper?

Yes, that and the administration.

(M) One of the things that happens with the loan program or the grant program is that 1, 2, and 3 years after the actual improvements have been made, schools receive a score card identifying dollar and energy savings resulting from their

building improvements. Were you aware of this ongoing energy score card information?

Yes, almost every year they called me and on we go, so

(M) So you're providing the information to put it together. To put the energy score card together, you submit your energy consumption information for the past year and then that's put into the computer to project your savings prior to the improvements _____? When you've received these score cards, have you shared the information with other people in your school system? A couple of people are nodding. 1, 2, o.k.

We shared ours in the manner of reporting to the board and then the energy office sent out some good detailed information telling us just exactly what the savings were and everything and that made nice articles for the newspapers in the community. If we all had to sit down and write the article, why we probably would have shunned it aside but they did supply it, so that was worthwhile too.

(M) When you submit the energy consumption information, do you view putting that information to be more of a help or a hindrance?

Help, all the way.

(M) Because I've heard some comments in previous groups that it takes so much paperwork you know, that there's some comments about that, that maybe it isn't as helpful as they'd like. I don't hear that tonight, I guess.

In the old grant program, did they put this back to us, I don't remember ever getting anything back from them other than we had to send it in to them, but I don't think....

It came back _____?

(M) Yeah, it's been with the grant program as well as the loan program as far as I'm aware of. O.K. I'd like to go a little bit more into specifically. Do you feel that the current no-interest loan program is administratively efficient, or too complicated? Those of you that have been involved in it.

We're not far enough along where I guess I can really comment on it.

(M) If you could design an ideal program for promoting more energy efficient usage in your school building facilities, what would you recommend? If you could change what's available now, what would you recommend?

The one thing I'd like to see would be if it would be speeded up in some way so that isn't such a long time lapse from the time you get started until you actually, it can be as high as 2 years or more from the time you start till you get it done.

(M) Why do you think it takes that amount of time?

Oh, I think there're probably going to need to be shorter deadlines on both ends.

(M) Is it the fact of the paper work or is it the people doing the analysis or what parts of that do you....

Well, probably the one thing that, our engineer that's working on it probably slowed us up as much as anything. I don't know how that can be controlled too much.

(M) O.K. Any other comments, or any suggestions you'd have for improving a program such as this? Another idea that's being tossed around is to establish a program which would be a shared savings program where basically an analysis would be conducted, a savings would be computed and the savings on that, you would share in as well as the energy office. So if the savings was projected out to be, again I'll use the analysis of say, \$10,000, if you make these kinds of improvements, you can save \$2,000 per year on your energy usage. And that then will be paid for, the payback would be 5 years, you'd have 10 years to pay off the improvements. You would be sharing in the savings and the funding source, the energy office, would be sharing in the savings. Rather than have it be a no-interest loan, it would be a shared-savings program. What's your reaction to that?

I think it would probably help, it would keep everybody aware of the energy usage year after year after year and someone there to monitor it.

(M) O.K. you want me to repeat the shared savings part of it? An analysis is done and indicates that if you make these improvements, you can save about \$2,000 a year in your energy costs. You make the improvements and in 5 years then, and put in \$10,000 worth of improvements, and 5 years, if you're saving \$2,000 a year, in 5 years you will have paid for those improvements. Now, so 5 years is the break-even point. However, you have 10 years to pay for the improvements, so you're sharing in the savings and the energy office is sharing in the savings.

I guess my first question to that would be, how much of a gamble is it?

(M) I know what you're saying, be more specific. Can you tell me what you're thinking?

Well, I just think if it's anything like buying blue chip stock or any stock, one way is pretty shrewd and one way is a gamble? I guess I would want to know that we would definitely come up with that \$2,000 savings each year.

(M) Part of that is a function of energy costs too, which, if energy costs go up, the savings may be greater. If energy costs go down, you may not save that amount. Getting back to what (Name) said, that with today's energy costs, the payback period is a little longer. The whole jist of this, I guess is the term "loan" has certain connotations. The idea of sharing in your savings may have a different type of connotation. I don't know if that makes any difference to you or not. Whether you refer to it as shared savings and compute it that way. Operationally, in terms of your cash flow and your budget, if you don't make the improvements, you're going to be spending that \$2,000 a year for energy costs anyway, so if you don't go ahead with it, it's going to cost you \$2,000. Assuming energy usage stays the same. If you do make the improvements, the savings that \$2,000 per year savings, will pay for the improvements. So from a cash flow budgeting standpoint, the cash going out is the same, you're getting the improvements and in 10 years you'll have those improvements paid for. Now does that begin to make sense? Are you tracking with me? It's like if your utility bill is \$2,000 a month, more if you don't make these improvements. Well, you make these improvements, you just keep paying that \$2,000 even though it supposedly is going to be less than that. Because you're going to save money if you do the insulation and do the recommendations. So from a cash standpoint, it should be the same and what you've saved ends up paying for the improvements. Am I explaining that? O.K. Given that, how likely would you be to go ahead and apply for this type of shared savings program?

Very likely.

(M) How about the rest of you? Not sure yet because the...

We have taken the attitude, as (Name) said, (town) is not going to do, if we do it, we'll pay for it ourselves.

(M) I've heard that too.

(Name) was saying their asbestos problems, when it first came out we had one and we took it all out. We paid for it.

It's kind of matter of priority but right now I think the asbestos has taken the front seat.

We thought we were done with it and now we find out we've got all these other problems.

(M) But I think that's a real key statement. I've heard it a couple of times (name), if we have a problem, we'll take care of it, you know, we'll set our priorities and we'll take care of it. Is that what I'm kind of hearing?

Well, that's kind of the way our district operates.

(M) I've heard that in other groups too.

We don't have as much money as these other guys.

I was going to say, that makes a lot of difference. How much money you've got in your district, and what your evaluation is too. We are about at the other end of the spectrum as far as money is concerned, so if the problem looks bad enough that we need to take care of it, we need all the help we can get.

Its different where you are.

If you were sitting here this evening offering loans on the asbestos, we'd be right in line for it.

Some of us are facing really stiff expenditures in the next 5 years, 10 years, whenever ...

I think that the federal government is pulling that down tighter and tighter and in order for us to just eliminate that problem, and just get the whole thing over with, we're just going to have to remove all that asbestos and then when we're done with that, then we'll have to remove all the fiber glass, I see in the paper where that's now the new thing. Was it today? Now it's the great fiber glass _____? Maybe it's the same disease, I don't know but...

(M) So it's a matter of priorities and it's some other things that you have concerns about too that effect this whole process.

We have a choice on the energy, on the asbestos, we don't. Federal law mandates.

(M) You feel you have more choice on the energy situation where you're under more mandate for health and safety and those types of things.

And also going along with that, you can choose which projects you want to do that particular year and finally get them all done, except for asbestos, it's got to be done within whatever the time limit is.

(M) I've heard these same themes in a couple of other areas so don't feel like you're the only ones, the asbestos issue is something that's come out throughout the week and there's been some other groups who experience parts of this program a little bit more than many of you. Many of you are considering the loan program or have been involved in these programs in the past, but many of you have not been involved at all in the loan programs, too. I'd like to get at a little bit about again, the idea of learning about the program and what would be the best ways to

inform you about a program such as this. We're going to take about a 5, 10 minute break here. You might be thinking about this while we do the break. What would be the best ways to inform you about some of these programs and then what's the decision making process that you go through as you set priorities in your school district. So with that in mind, why don't we take about a 5 minute break and we'll reconvene here for the last half.

(M) I've gone about 2/3's of the way through the questions, so I'm anticipating we've got about another half hour. We'll be done on time so I always feel that's a good motivator for everyone. I'd like to get back to the idea of an ideal kind of situation, an ideal program that you may or may not be interested in or thinking about, but I'd like you first to think about, in terms of energy savings, which this, we're really talking about, an analysis to save energy in your school system, let's think beyond the terms of the school building for a minute. Not just the building itself, but just energy utilization throughout your school district. What other areas do you see as being places that are costly as far as energy usage, or places where maybe you could be more efficient if you had some assistance in analyzing that.

Vehicles.

Or boilers.

Football field lighting.

(M) Football field lighting? Vehicles, what do you mean? Football field lighting and boilers... by vehicles, can you be more specific.

It could be gas versus LP, fuel injection situations, some of us are still, we still have a lot of vehicles in our fleet that were prior to fuel injection.

(M) Have you done any analysis on that type of energy utilization or any projections?

The state sent out some people 5 years ago, and they came out to the community and they set up a regular lab and they'd run all of your school vehicles through and when they'd get through with each vehicle, they had a nice report written up about what you could do with that vehicle to make it become more efficient and I thought that was a real nice service that they provided. They did no work on any, they just told you what you could do to improve and then you can take them to a garage and have it done if you want to. But that's the last I heard about that.

That just happened one time, as far as I know.

(M) Was that under the education?

I don't know what department it was under, I think it was transportation.

Transportation, I believe.

But that was a pretty good program if it would have just, if they'd come back every six months or so, so a person could...

Has the department of energy done anything relative to school buildings and solar energy too, utilization of solar energy?

(M) The guidelines on this particular program talk about ways to save energy and again, it was set up by the legislature as a program, as a loan rather than a grant but there, the thing I want to hear from you or probe, is if you could think about an ideal kind of loan program that might go into some other areas besides the typical building for developing strategies to save energy. What are some other areas besides your buildings that, and you told me, the lighting, the vehicles, because all of these kinds of things have the potential for ultimately saving energy. (silence) One of the things with the new program and many of you were relating earlier your experiences under the grant program, an analysis you had done five years ago, the loan program is somewhat more flexible or open-ended about what may or may not qualify for no-interest loans. Rather than having a program that will say, we will pay for this or this or this, you make application of all these things that could save energy and then the whole package is put together. Any other? on vehicles, automobiles,

How'd you ever make out with your vans, because we're not using vans, and that's a lot cheaper than running a bus.

But we don't have any of the vans yet that are fuel injected.

We were having with them meeting the safety standards.

What that was was our school attorney informed us we shouldn't be using the vans that we were using because they had one too many seats in them so that went back through the state Board of Education and they set up a ruling. Now if we have a van that holds 12 people, counting the driver, we have to take the front passenger seat out. So if you've got a big enough one, if you get a 15 passenger, and take the back seat out, you're all right.

We didn't take any seats out. All they told us we had to do was we had to put signs on them that the capacity was 10 plus the driver and we didn't have to touch a seat. And we've used it all year that way.

We went to the state and you have to have it.

The way we read the law about it, is don't have

The state is the one who told us that.

(M) Let me ask this question, we've talked about the no-interest loans for improvements in the building, and I'm just brainstorming here, what if there were funds available, loan monies, to make equipment improvements outside of the building. Would that have any greater appeal to you than just equipment improvements within the building? I.E., equipment improvements for lighting, equipment improvements for transportation, equipment improvements for boilers, that's within the building, but if that definition of "building" were expanded to equipment, would that have some appeal to you as far as energy savings.

I think it would have appeal, I don't know if it would have any greater appeal, it would be interesting.

I agree with him.

Probably see a lot more new school buses running up and down the road, the bus companies would love you.

(M) Well, that isn't my goal.

I meant if the program was expanded to cover those things.

(M) Yeah, that's the kind of thing though I'm really asking you about and I, again, I'm not an official of the energy office, but I'm from a market research standpoint, trying to identify what some of your needs or perceptions are.

I think we could improve on the gas mileage by going to fuel injection but it would take a long time to pay for a bus in savings.

We've studied something else now too, Gary, I'll just throw it out here. We talked about the 4-day school week because if you close down for three days over a weekend, you could shut your furnaces back and so forth, have more time to do that and then we figured if a lot of schools were to do that, why, say it's Friday that you cut out, we could schedule all your football games for Friday, not miss any school, you could play during the daytime, not use any football lights, do the same with track, it has some merit, but there again everybody would have to be doing the same thing or it wouldn't fit their schedule either.

(M) O.K. Another element of this, what I'm calling an ideal program, or maybe making some changes in the existing program, might be to provide you with some more information about technical assistance. Analysis capability within your schools, offering perhaps seminars or training sessions with maintenance engineers, custodial staff or with board members, to talk about ways to save energy, to offer workshops, seminars, that type of thing. What would be your interest in having something like that available?

I would like that very much.

There's nothing wrong with an ongoing program. There's always new things coming down the pike and I think you should always be aware of ways to improve. This type of thing accelerates it or spurs the interest, than if you just sit back and talk among yourselves about what to do.

(M) So the seminar/workshop idea has some appeal in terms of keeping up to date.

The only thing that bothers me about it, and I'm talking from a strictly small school standpoint, you get in a school the size of ours and you have one fulltime administrator and one parttime administrator who teaches and one custodian etc., you could spend all your time out of the building at seminars and workshops and things like this. Where you've got buildings where you've got business managers and head custodians and people that can go, that's fine, but you get in a Class D school where you've got one person of each category, I know this year myself even, with two administrators, I've spent more time at conference meetings and district meetings and all this, you know, you can go three days a week to seminars and stuff, then your school just foots the costs.

(M) You're spread pretty thin. . . . For a smaller school Don, and I hear exactly what you're saying, I've heard that 2, 3 other times earlier in the week. What do you think is an efficient way to put out the word, I guess. Or is there a more efficient way?

I really wouldn't have any idea. I don't have an answer, I'm just throwing this out as something...

(M) And I'm not I've heard that from the smaller, we had a principal and maintenance person from a smaller school in (town), and they said the same thing, you know, gosh, we just barely get the classrooms cleaned with the staff we have, there's just not enough time or resources. What about, we talked about direct mail as a way that many of you, or newspaper, what about association meetings, things of that sort? Do you feel that you learn about some of these state programs from association meetings?

Out here, our western Nebraska administrators is as good a source of information we have.

(M) Western Nebraska administrators group?

I know the energy office came into the School Business Officials state convention two different times. There's where you have a captive group that's all thinking alike.

How about if you put the workshop or the seminar on a video tape and made it available?

(M) Good idea for the smaller schools too, (Name).

Right, because you make it available on video tape then they can use it. A lot of times, you know, you can find 45 minutes or something in your school day when you aren't doing anything, you could sit down and watch a video tape.

(M) And have updates even periodically mailed with VCR, what kinds of things are available or what.... o.k. You think video tape would be more effective than regional meetings?

I don't think so, you need those ideas thrown out in your meetings. I think you need those yet.

You need those, a lot of times things get discussed that presentors never bring up and folks get to visit with other fellows of their own trade, and its amazing how much information gets passed over a cup of coffee.

I think it depends on how far you're going to have to go for those meetings. If you have to travel very far, why some of us are just not going to do it.

Anything west of Grand Island, why, we appreciate it. Anybody that comes out, all the way out west.

Even if they go to western Nebraska, you end up at Kearney, it's still a long way for us to go.

Even if it ended up at Ogallala, that's further than I'm going to go for a meeting. I'm just not going to do it.

(M) So the distance factor is especially critical for you.

I think, you know, the smaller school folks would have a better opportunity of allowing their people to go, if you scheduled them during the summer when there isn't quite the need to have everything done immediately, like your classrooms swept and the like. You have a better opportunity to get them there if you had them during the summer. Not only small schools, but the large schools too.

You get into the same situation, like, for instance, I have 45 working days to clean six buildings and get everything repaired, that's pretty hectic. I would rather see it operating during the year for my purposes.

(M) So the maintenance group, you're busier in the summer then whereas in the administrative area, the summer is probably a little better.

Let's face it, you're supposed to work 12 months out of the year.

(M) These are issues in terms of increasing awareness and specified, because the loan program is considerably different than the grant program. The loan program is more flexible about what can qualify and what cannot. Most of you are aware of the \$2,500 per building available for an analysis. This is the first group where that many people out of the group, I saw 9 hands go up, maybe 2 of you just weren't quite sure, but I think I saw a lot of positiveness, most of you were saying, yeah, I knew that. Other groups we've done, not that many people were aware there was \$2,500 per building available, so there are parts of this that tell me you are aware of some of these things but you've also been telling me you don't see the need to go ahead with them, or there are other priorities like asbestos that are a little bit higher right now. Another creative idea. What if the asbestos situation is related to energy usage? That is, as you think about handling your asbestos problem, you find that there would be some efficiencies to doing some energy improvements at that time too. Would that be attractive? (Name?)

One of our board members put that exact question to the people that did our audit. If the two could be combined and if there would be a possibility of using one and the other at the same time, so I think it has some merit.

(M) The board member asked the design firm whether there was a relationship.

Yeah, the board member came up with that idea because they knew that this other thing was coming up and they wondered if they could combine the two, and it would, to me, I don't know that much about it but to me it makes sense, to do, if the two could be combined if, you know...

That really shouldn't be any different than putting on a roof when all the energy paid for was the insulation under that roof.

(M) Because as you remove the asbestos, there would be opportunities to do some energy things at the same time. First time I've seen some kind of interest all of a sudden. I saw some ears perk up there tonight, all of a sudden. Tell me more about that? Have any of the rest of you talked about that?

We've tried to find sources of money to help with asbestos, we couldn't find any.

(M) So it would have appeal if there was a way to correlate the two. One of the issues, a lot of asbestos around plumbing, there are new kinds of plumbing, of course, that conserve heat loss and there are some ways that the two interrelate and those of you in the maintenance area, as you think about these two problems, you will need to be the ones, you know, that raise the issue and the application process probably, but the way the loan program is designed, is a little bit more flexible because its basically to

demonstrate energy efficiency. Have any, besides (Name's) school board member, have any of the rest of you had people ask you about that? (silence) So it's a new idea, you hadn't thought about it other than the board member asking about.

We considered it.

(M) You had, (Name)?

We don't have that much asbestos, and that's one of the reasons _____ most of our plumbing _____.

(M) Because if you're removing asbestos around there, at the same time you could be redoing some other capital improvements to save energy as well. O.K. I want to talk the last part of our evening about the decision making process in your schools as you set priorities and you think about energy efficiency or asbestos, who in your organization is most likely to initiate some type of grant or loan application? Let's not think just about energy efficiency, but just grant or loan applications in general. Who in your organization is most likely to initiate that?

Administrators.

(M) Administrators? And you feel that's their responsibility area of expertise, that's where it's going to be initiated?

Well, they deal directly with the board and the board makes the final decisions so we really don't have the right to do that...

We feel that in the little larger schools, why we need a business manager.

Generally your superintendent's, your business manager's the one who receives the information in the first place, that are aware of those grants through their, you know, through mailings or professional organizations and whatever. So generally they're the ones who would make the initial...

Sometimes your board members through the school board association, they may receive some of that but a lot of times they don't, they've got other jobs too, and a lot of times they don't pay too much attention to it unless the administrator feels it is important enough. That's what he's paid for, I mean, most boards feel like that's what he's paid for.

I think he should be on the mailing list.

(M) We had a couple of board members make the comment, that's what they're being paid for, in other sessions, ... Now let's talk about the mailing list, because you bring up something here that I... How would you feel about if information about the energy efficiency program, loan program, shared savings program,

whatever, were sent directly to board members as well as administrators, do you think that's appropriate or necessary or helpful or inappropriate, not very helpful?

My thought on that is it's going to be a waste of your paper.

Quite honestly, a lot of the information that administrators send to board members, most of its good stuff, but they just don't have the time to read it, they really don't, and I kind of believe that you'd be wasting your time and your money.

Some of my board members....

If you send them a technical manual that may be 50 or 100 pages long, they aren't going to take the time to read it. They're going to bring it in to the superintendent or the business manager and say, what does this mean?

Some of my board members might scan at it, but at the next board meeting, why they'd bring it in and hand it to me.

And they'll say, what do you think of it, or have you seen this? Then they come back to you _____? If you make the suggestion or think it's reasonable, then they'd probably listen to it.

I think if you're creating an awareness through the professional publications from the school board association or something like that, saying, hey, these programs are out there and conceptually, this is what they do, that would be probably about the best you could do. If there's any in greater detail than that, just going to be overwhelming. Cause they have lots of information coming to them and honestly, it's a bit much.

I kind of half way take exception to that, I'll agree with what he said at the end. Being just a little school out in the country, we don't have administrators. We have a head teacher. We need that kind of information because we're not aware of it.

(M) So as you get into the real small school situation....

Yeah, I think the school boards need some information, maybe something capsulated, you need something so we can know what's going on.

Most boards, like I said, awareness kinds of thing, but you start putting out the whole, give them the whole load, why, they're not going, it's just overwhelming, and they're not going ...

Couldn't the county superintendent help you out on those things?

I've only got about 8 months in and I'd say no.

There's another thing, if the board was really something that they really needed to be filled in on, again maybe a video tape might be a good way to do that too, something that you can get over with pretty fast and they could own.

Get on the agenda down at the board convention in Omaha. A lot of board members that can be reached there, a section of the

(M) So again, board agenda meetings, the State School Boards Association meetings. That's an interesting comment (Name), that in the smaller, really small school districts, board members in many ways overlap in terms of communication with administrators, in other words, if county superintendents would theoretically be a resource but again, distance here is a big factor at times even for that.

A lot of county superintendents, the larger counties anymore, the county superintendent is a half time job at best or the local high school superintendent's the county superintendent.

(M) The county superintendent.

Not only does

Educational service units.....might be another way.

(M) ESU's?

That's probably one of our biggest resources.

That might be a way to, especially out in this area, your service units do a lot of that.

Some counties aren't covered by the service units, however.

(M) But that's the kind of feedback that I think, well, yeah, and some of them have no ESU at all.

Some towns too.

(M) Well, they have them but they don't have the staff hired, that's the other part of it that we run into. One of the things that we've observed, at least that I've seen in talking with the energy office staff, and again, I'm not speaking for the energy office, I'm speaking as an outside market research person here, and what I'm hearing from consumers is that the larger schools have tended to apply for and use the grants, loan monies, if you go from the eastern part of the state to the western part of the state, the farther west you get and the more rural you get or you go into the northeast, there aren't as many people that have used

these funds and the issue becomes, well is it awareness, is it resources, is it need? Why is it? And so I'm just going to ask, candid, what's your opinion about that?

I think, like I said a while ago, I think it's just lack, you just spread your personnel too thin. The smaller schools, you just spread, I mean, if you got two administrators and one of them's teaching like I am, and you got two buildings, they've got to have an administrator in each building, you just spread yourself so thin and there is just so much you can do, where guys, if they've got business managers, I mean, those guys can sit there and zero in on that. But my superintendent's got to be

_____? but the superintendent on a school, a small school, I think that's why small schools don't do it, cause the superintendent is, they do the things that, like somebody said awhile ago, like he said on the asbestos, they do the things that are the most important, the most immediate need and the things they can get by without doing, they push to the background and then you do those if you have the time.

Where I'm currently at, it isn't a matter of knowledge for me really, because I'm familiar with these programs and the concepts of it but it boiled down to an item that was mentioned here earlier too, and that's money. I don't know whether the schools in the northeast part of the state, I don't know their financial status..... a little further west you get, some of us are not.....

(M) Any area that's agriculturally based is confronting that, I mean that's just a reality right now, the whole state is from that standpoint.

The school is going to do it anyway, they've made their mind up to do it and then like the sup will say, hey, I know where I can get this loan and it's going to save us some money, so we're going to do it, let's do it this way. The financing of the loan.

That's where a lot comes in.

(M) Well, what could the energy office do to help those of you in that small school situation? You're talking about lack of resources, do you have any thoughts about what they could do to help you through this process?

I think that what (Name) said awhile ago about having some of these seminar meetings in the summer time, because most of your superintendents of small schools are contracted, they're all contracted on a 12 month basis. And I think probably they'd have more time to attend some of those types of meetings in the summertime than they would during the year when they have more meetings.

I think a thing that you could do to help some of the smaller schools and some of us larger schools too who are not as wealthy as other districts, maybe take a look at some sort of formula that would for the district, that maybe you could give a grant and a loan combination based upon some sort of magic formula that would determine that if you're a real poor district, you're going to get 100% grant and if you're a real wealthy district, you're going to get an interest-free loan, and if you're in the middle, you get 50-50, you know, some magic formula that would determine that the poorer school districts with a very poor ability to pay might be able to get a grant, more of a grant and less of a loan.

(M) One thing I want to keep in mind, is this is set up by the legislature so it's not policy all the time that, it's been set up legislatively to be a loan program at this point and would to have to legislatively change for this severance tax funding.

It might be something the department of energy could assess, say, who's got these loans and what's their financial status relative to the district's that don't have these, you might be able to make a case there. I don't know, I think you know in (town) case, I know I think that part of it is money.

Don't you think you could go back to the same split though that we got into on state aid. Are you going to split the schools all over the state?

Somebody use _____?

(M) I was thinking in terms of not necessarily funding differential but maybe staff assistance, if there's anything from a staff standpoint the energy office could do to help smaller schools.

One thing they might do for the smaller schools, they might have a person who could come out and do some of the leg work or the work within the school system to begin the process and help the superintendent do some of this stuff, you know what I mean? As a consulting basis type of thing.

(M) The application process.....

Because a lot of the smaller schools, they, if they had some help, where they didn't have to sit down and wade through this and call the energy office 15 times while they're wading through it, if they had a guy come out and say to (town) and say be in (town) for 2 weeks and schedule (town), (town), and (town) and whatever, you know, schedule one day to go in with them if they're interested, have them contact him and say, well, I'd like to have you come out and sit down and spend a day with you and we'll go over.....

(M) Make some suggestions.

At least so far I haven't found the paperwork to be any real tremendous amount on this. Once we signed a contract with the engineer, they've taken care of the paper work, basically.

(M) But I think maybe if I'm understanding (Name) correctly, of maybe also giving you ideas, not just paperwork assistance, but also idea assistance.

Yeah, tell 'em, kind of what to expect, because that's the first question my board asked, was when Mr. (name) had brought it up, and (Name) had done quite a bit of research on it and he'd been involved in research grants in other places and one of the first things they asked was what can we get out of it, how are we going to, what is available, what can we do with it, how's it going to help us? And maybe the guy could even come out, attend a board meeting, help answer those questions, this type of thing.

(M) (Name), how would you feel about that? Do you think it would be worthwhile to have a staff person come out and kind of give you some think tank ideas?

You bet.

(M) Not just paperwork assistance, but some thinking assistance perhaps.

That's what we need in small schools.

(M) Because one of the things you know we're trying to research is, what is it that's creating this differential between utilization of funds in larger schools and not in smaller schools.

What did they call the firm that, the engineer would come out and go through your school, he looked everything over, he'd write everything up, he'd submit the applications, they had a.....

(M) Technical assistance?

Well, it was similar to that, but they just did the whole thing, like if I were to go into a small school and would write up the application to improve the heating system and some lighting and some windows and so forth, and submit the application for (town), and...

That was under the grant program wasn't it?

Yeah, that was under the grant program.

(M) See, the thing that, the grant program gave an incentive for companies to come out and do analysis, because then they could be involved in the construction. Because of perceived conflicts of interests there, real or unreal, that was changed and so this program has not had as many people out doing analysis because that's all they can do is the analysis part, they cannot be involved in the improvement part. Now the analysis for the loan program is less rigid, it only requires a registered engineer doing the analysis. You can do your own analysis if you had a

registered engineer on your staff. Some larger school districts have a registered engineer and they do their own analysis without hiring a firm. The department of energy also now has a registered engineer but that person's time is pulled a lot of different ways, but one of the things might be you know, that they provide some technical assistance in that way too, but this new program, and I keep coming back, those of you that are talking about the grant program, there are still grant programs around, the old programs are still there. They're not likely to cease to exist, but the loan program is different in the sense that the analysis is different and the process is different. O.K. well, you've helped me in terms of kind of understanding I think, let me kind of recapitulate what I've heard tonight and if I'm interpreting correctly, if you disagree with my interpretation, correct me. What I've heard tonight is that quite a few of you are aware of the loan program, you're aware that it's a no-interest loan or energy savings, shared savings loan program. Quite a few of you have done energy analysis but not really within the last two or three years. Many of those analyses are five and six years old. As far as what you see as a perceived need, there are other needs that maybe have a little bit higher priority than this program, particularly the asbestos issue. That's not to say, some of you are interested or involved in the loan program and you have a need, but some of you have done the analysis and have determined that the payback is not great enough to go ahead with it. In terms of awareness and how to become aware of it, the administrator, the superintendents really the major point of information, but in the smaller schools, it might be appropriate to think about ESUs, school board members, county superintendents, other people being on the mailing lists as well. And then in terms of the small school district feedback I got the latter part of the evening, you'd be very interested to have someone come out and work with you not so much on the paperwork but maybe just in terms of what qualifies, what doesn't, or some suggestions, idea-wise of what may be worthwhile to go ahead and apply for. Now have I overstated anything or is that, is there anything in addition to that that you think is really important for us to remember from tonight? There are many things that I've got down here and will be in here but I'm just trying to refocus on some things we've talked and make sure I didn't miss anything. Is there anything I've missed or that we haven't talked about that you think is important? O.K. I appreciate having you come, I have a little paperwork here to do. I'd like each of you to sign this receipt, this is so the people in my company know that I didn't spend all this money myself. I have to have as many signatures as envelopes that I hand out.....

closing comments

Scottsbluff Focus Group Participants

Mr. W.D. Brawner

Mr. Donald Hanks

Mr. Bob Duryea

Mr. Donald Cook

Ms. June M. Brown

Mr. Robert G. Waite

Mr. Martin Jacoby

Ms. Marilyn Wimmer

Mr. Ron Hessler

Mr. Darrell Frank

Mr. Bruce Epstein

Mr. Joe Shelar

Mr. Harold Kaus