

US invests US\$3.2 billion in new energy efficiency plans

US Vice President Joe Biden and Energy Secretary Steven Chu have announced plans to invest US\$3.2 billion in energy efficiency and conservation projects. The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, will provide formula grants for projects that reduce total energy use and fossil fuel emissions, and improve energy efficiency nationwide. "Local leaders will have the flexibility in how they put these resources to work – but we will hold them accountable for making the investments quickly and wisely to spur the local economy and cut energy use," says Biden. The funding will support energy audits and energy efficiency retrofits in residential and commercial buildings, the development and implementation of advanced building codes and inspections, and the creation of financial incentive programs for energy efficiency improvements. Other activities eligible for use of grant funds include projects to reduce and capture methane and other greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, renewable energy installations on government buildings, and deployment of combined heat and power and district heating and cooling systems. To ensure accountability, the Department of Energy will provide guidance and require grant recipients to report on the number of jobs created or retained, energy saved, renewable energy capacity installed, greenhouse gas emissions reduced, and funds leveraged. Funding is based on a formula that accounts for population and energy use. This announcement is in addition to DOE's recent release of nearly US\$8 billion to support weatherisation and state energy projects.

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