



FACT SHEET

October 3, 2008

**NYSERDA**  
**New York State Energy Research and Development Authority<sup>1</sup>**  
Jenna Piasecki  
University at Buffalo Law Student

**1) What is the agency's website and contact information?**

<http://www.nyserda.org>

telephone: general number 1866nyserda

fax: (518) 862 1091

mail: New York State Energy Research and Development Authority

17 Columbia Circle

Albany, New York 12203

Economic development department:

Contact Donald LaVada at (518) 862 1090 ext 3428

Fax: (518) 862 1091<sup>2</sup>

**2) What geographic area does it serve?**

New York State<sup>3</sup>

**3) Who runs the agency?**

As of Fall 2008 The Board of Directors is:

Chairman: Vincent DeIorio, Esq.

Robert Catell- Chairman of U.S. National Grid

George Akel Jr.- President of Akel Wholesale Grocery

Michael Townsend- Acting Chairman of New York Power Authority

Parker Mathusa- Research scientist

William Edwards- Executive Vice President of U.S. Shared services, National Grid

Elizabeth Thorndike Ph.D.- Founder and Director of Center for Environmental

Information

Jay Gottlieb- Economist

Alexander Grannis- Commissioner of NYS Department of Environmental Conservatism

Garry Brown- Chairman of Public Service Commission

Astrid Glynn- Commissioner NYS Department of Transportation

Roger Kelly- Public member<sup>4</sup>



#### **4) How are the directors appointed?**

The Chair is appointed by the Governor of the State of New York. The Authority appoints the rest of the seats on the board.<sup>5</sup>

#### **5) How is the agency staffed?**

There are Four regional offices located in Albany, New York City, Buffalo, and West Valley.<sup>6</sup> The major staff is broken into three subgroups. Energy Analysis has 21 staff members, most with the title of project manager. Energy Efficiency Services has 34 staff members at the main office, 5 in New York City, and 1 in Buffalo. The Residential Efficiency and Affordability Program staffs 29 employees at the main office, 4 in New York City, and 2 in Buffalo.<sup>7</sup> The Research and Development team staffs employees in the areas of buildings, clean energy and market development, energy resources, environment, industry, and transportation and power systems.<sup>8</sup> Other staff members fall into the categories of administrative services, counsel, marketing and economic development, executive, finance and contracts, and the West Valley Site Management.<sup>9</sup>

#### **6) What is the annual budget?**

Approximately \$423 million<sup>10</sup>

#### **7) How is the budget funded?**

The state provides \$57 million according to NYSERDA,<sup>11</sup> but it is \$27 million according to New York State Division of the Budget (DOB).<sup>12</sup> Federal grants supply \$9 million. The system benefits charge (SBC) funds almost half of the budget with \$172 million.<sup>13</sup> The SBC was ordered in 1996 by the New York State Public Service Commission to pay for “public policy initiatives.”<sup>14</sup> The charge is collected as an added fee on customers’ energy bills.<sup>15</sup> The annual funding level provided by SBCs is approximately \$243 million, \$172 of which goes to NYSERDA. NYSERDA was appointed to administer the SBC program.<sup>16</sup> Other income (see chart below) adds up to fund the remaining \$185 million.

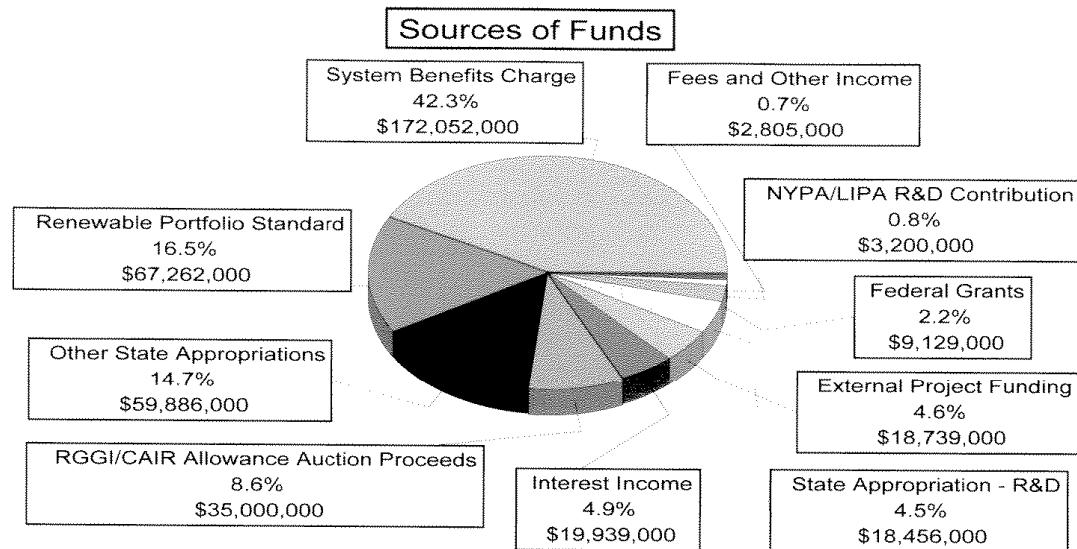
#### **8) How is the budget spent?**

It is projected that the \$27 million provided by the state will be spent as follows:

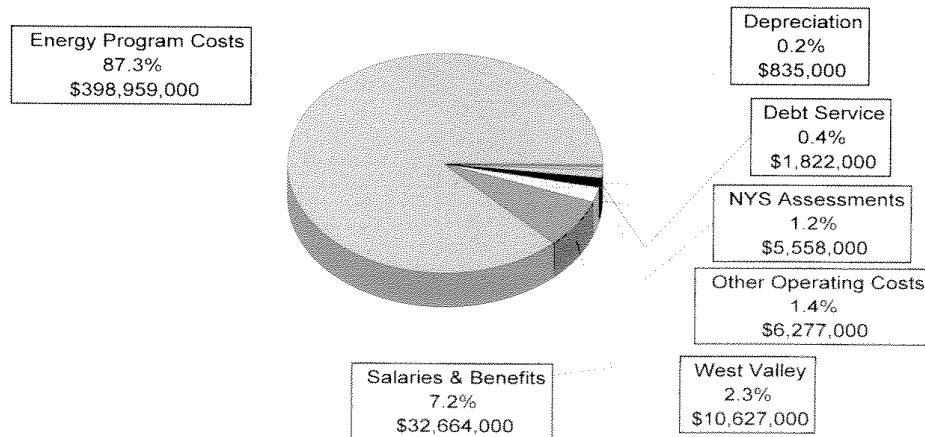
- capital projects: \$9,630,000
- general state charges: \$1,664,000
- grants to local government: \$10,301,000
- state operations: \$6,115,000<sup>17</sup>

NYSERDA's general expenses consist of:  
Salaries and benefits- \$33 million  
Operating costs- \$6 million  
Program expenditures- \$410 million  
West Valley Bond principal- \$2 million  
NYS assessments- \$6 million<sup>18</sup>

## NYSERDA FY 2008-09 Budget



**Uses of Funds**



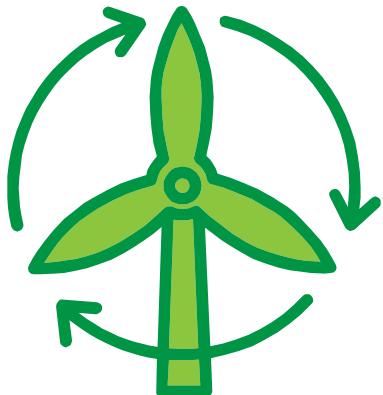
## **9) What type of subsidies and services does the agency give?**

For current subsidies available, go to [www.nyserda.org](http://www.nyserda.org) and click on “funding opportunities”

Some common subsidies offered are:

- ENERGY STAR rebates when appliances are purchased
- clean air school bus grants
- solar electric grants
- low interest loans on energy improvements
- biofueling station grants<sup>20</sup>

One recent example is a subsidy provided in Buffalo to three local nonprofit housing groups to assist them in making existing homes habitable and building new homes for low income Buffalo residents.<sup>21</sup> The bulk of the funding for the project will come from home renovation funds in New York, but \$50,000 to go towards energy efficient products for the homes will be funded by NYSERDA.<sup>22</sup>



NYSERDA gives the following services:

- Agriculture: energy audits and feasibility studies to indicate energy saving improvements that could be implemented to reduce costs
- Commercial Real Estate: assists property owners with increasing energy efficiency to increase the property value
- Health Care: funding energy-performance improvements in health care facilities and creating energy efficient building plans for new facilities
- Hospitality: assisting restaurant owners develop energy savings plans and purchase improvements to reduce water and energy consumption
- Con Edison Gas: helps customers manage their gas costs
- National Fuel Customers: Conservation Incentive Program offers information and rebates as well as gas efficiency services with rebates for purchasing ENERGY STAR rated thermostats and appliances
- Municipalities: promoting energy efficiency with street lights and water treatment, updating energy efficiency in municipal housing and upgrading the fuel efficiency of vehicle fleets
- Residential: assisting residents reduce their costs as well as providing training to contractors on how to build energy efficient housing
- Schools: K-12 districts are able to access programs offering information, technical assistance, and financial incentives to conserve energy and teach students about green energy
- State Government: coordination of services on energy efficiency<sup>23</sup>



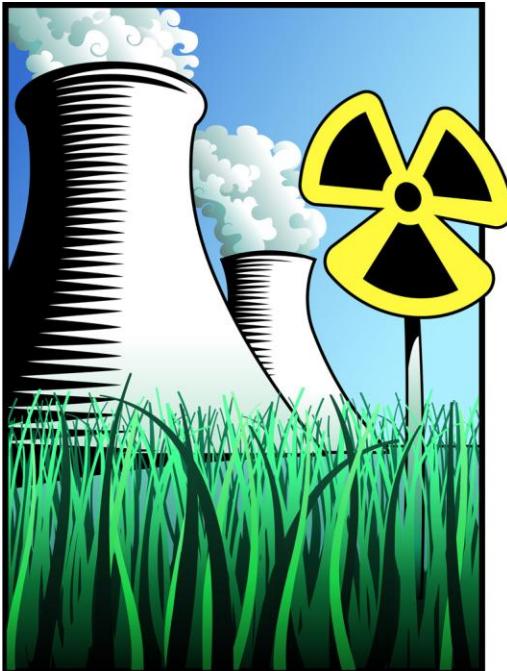
## **11) What are some examples of the agency's projects?**

August 18<sup>th</sup> NYSERDA released information on the new public access to traffic video program. Live feeds will be available in major cities in New York in order for drivers to access traffic information and make more informed decisions about traveling. This should improve fuel conservation as well as assist traffic and road service organizations in the state. These video feeds will be available on [www.trafficland.com](http://www.trafficland.com)<sup>24</sup>

The West Valley Demonstration Project is a 3,300 acre piece of land in West Valley, NY that NYSERDA took over several years ago.<sup>25</sup> It has been used since the '60s as a disposal site for radioactive waste, but currently the tanks that have been buried underground are leaking. NYSERDA is currently running two radioactive waste disposal units at the site and is cleaning up the leaking radioactive waste.<sup>26</sup>

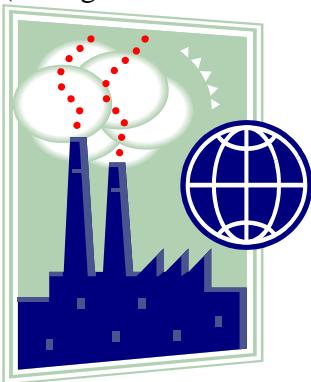
According to NYSERDA, the New York Energy \$mart Program has saved \$570 million in energy costs for customers in New York through grants to customers and energy reduction techniques.<sup>27</sup> The program provides low income customers with direct savings, on average a \$120 reduction per year for low income customers.<sup>28</sup> Energy \$mart, which has encouraged the reduction of energy use overall has lowered the peak demand from 650MW to 550MW.<sup>29</sup> Appliances that use less electricity have been a large part of this program, with NYSERDA providing grants to customers and businesses to purchase them. Along with reducing energy use, NYSERDA has also installed wind turbines to increase the availability of green energy in the state.<sup>30</sup>

NYSERDA's economic development program operates out of its main (Albany) and two regional offices (Buffalo and New York City).<sup>31</sup> NYSERDA provides technical and financial assistance to companies that are interested in energy reduction and environmental impact.<sup>32</sup>



## **12) How does the agency measure its success?**

A good example, is the Energy \$mart program mentioned above. NYSERDA measured its success on that project in average savings to the customer, peak energy draw reduction, the number of low income customers assisted, and the environmental impact (through reduction in carbon emissions).<sup>33</sup>



## **13) How does the agency report to the public?**

The most used source appears to be the agency's website which provides access to a large amount of reports from NYSERDA. Press releases are also common and can be found at [www.nyserda.org](http://www.nyserda.org) under the press releases hyperlink.

## **15) Who benefits from this agency's work?**

Most New York residents are affected in some way. Incentives are given to residents, businesses, schools, and cities. Environmental impacts will hopefully affect all New Yorkers eventually and the reduction in energy costs has an impact on consumers.

Recently in conjunction with Gov. Patterson, NYSERDA announced additional energy cost reductions for low income NYS residents this winter, anticipating an expensive

winter in home heating for state residents.<sup>34</sup> The program will combine workshops, education, energy saving home upgrade grants, and low-income resident utility grants.<sup>35</sup>

## **17) What issues have been raised about the agency?**

Generally, NYSERDA seems to have a lot of public and media support in a time of energy crisis. Most people are in favor of its energy programs so publicly there is not much criticism of the agency, but a few issues have been raised.

New York has the third highest energy costs in the nation according to the Energy Information Administration.<sup>36</sup> NYSERDA's response has been to reduce energy use and redistribute the funding they receive from energy bill charges and tax dollars to offset costs to some lower income customers. Even if less energy is used, the larger issue of the per-unit cost of electricity is not addressed by NYSERDA.

Anti-wind groups have criticized NYSERDA's funding of 100 ft and over wind turbines in rural areas. Many rural groups encourage smaller wind turbines that do not interfere with the landscape in the country as much.<sup>37</sup>

A small business advocate in Buffalo mentioned the disproportionate funding of grants to large businesses instead of small, locally owned businesses in the Buffalo area that might be more needing of the grants.<sup>38</sup>

## **21) How do I learn more about this agency?**

The most reliable resource on NYSERDA is their website at [www.nyserda.org](http://www.nyserda.org). It is very comprehensive and offers a vast amount of information on their grants, incentives, and programs offered.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow "contact us" hyperlink).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow "contact us" hyperlink; then follow "board of directors" hyperlink).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow "contact us" hyperlink; then follow "board of directors" hyperlink; then follow "board governance" hyperlink; then follow "by laws" hyperlink).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow "contact us" hyperlink).

<sup>7</sup> Id.

<sup>8</sup> Id.

<sup>9</sup> Id.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow "financial and other reports" hyperlink, then follow the "fiscal year budget 08-09" hyperlink).

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow "financial and other reports" hyperlink, then follow the "fiscal year budget 08-09" hyperlink).

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.budget.state.ny.us> (follow "2008-09 financial plan update" hyperlink; then follow "spending by agency" hyperlink; then follow "economic development" hyperlink; then follow the "Energy Research and Development Authority" hyperlink).

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow "financial and other reports" hyperlink, then follow the "fiscal year budget 08-09" hyperlink).

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.dps.state.ny.us/sbc.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow "press releases" hyperlink; then follow "energy smart" hyperlink).

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<sup>16</sup> Id.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.budget.state.ny.us> (follow “2008-09 financial plan update” hyperlink; then follow “spending by agency” hyperlink; then follow “economic development” hyperlink; then follow the “Energy Research and Development Authority” hyperlink).

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow “financial and other reports” hyperlink, then follow the “fiscal year budget 08-09” hyperlink).

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow “financial and other reports” hyperlink, then follow the “fiscal year budget 08-09” hyperlink).

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow “funding opportunities” hyperlink; then follow “current opportunities” hyperlink).

<sup>21</sup> Tracy Drury, Housing Grants Flow to Non-Profits, Business First Buffalo, Sept 17, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Id.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow “incentives” hyperlink).

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow “press releases” hyperlink; then follow “8/18/2007” hyperlink).

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow “financial and other reports” hyperlink, then follow the “Annual Report of Operations and Accomplishments March 08” hyperlink).

<sup>26</sup> Id.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow “press releases” hyperlink; then follow “energy smart” hyperlink).

<sup>28</sup> Id.

<sup>29</sup> Id.

<sup>30</sup> Id.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow “economic development” hyperlink).

<sup>32</sup> Id.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org> (follow “press releases” hyperlink; then follow “energy smart” hyperlink).

<sup>34</sup> Daily Record, The Daily Record Rochester, Sept. 15, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Id.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.eia.doe.gov>.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.wind-watch.org>

<sup>38</sup> Discussion with Susan McCartney, Director, Buffalo Small Business Development Center (Sept. 26, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.nyserda.org>.