



Case Study of Capitol Education Center

Keys to Success



Project Description



Economic Value



Challenges & Advice



Benefits



Stewardship Meaning



Each year, more than 60,000 students, teachers and other guests visit the Capitol Campus. However, there was no space for

the visitors to gather or eat lunch that would shield them from the elements, which sparked an idea in First Lady Jane Beshear—create a welcome and education center for visitors to congregate when they arrive on the campus.

Fortunately, there was an unused building on the campus offering the perfect size and location for a welcome center. The building was originally constructed in 1988 as a heating and cooling facility, but became too small to support the needs of the other campus buildings.

To coincide with Gov. Steve Beshear’s energy policy, the facility was retrofitted to be as “green” and energy-efficient as possible. As a former teacher, Mrs. Beshear saw the new welcome facility as an ideal opportunity to teach students and visitors about energy efficiency and sustainability. The idea to incorporate an

educational component to the building grew, and it now offers information on Kentucky history, civics, tourism, geography and more.

The center’s interior has many energy-efficient features, including recycled denim insulation, automated building controls, LED lighting, low-VOC paint

and occupancy sensors that switch the lights off when no one is in the facility. Floor tiles are made of recycled materials and the building’s gray water system collects rainwater to flush the toilets.

Interior signage describes the green features. The

center is outfitted with multimedia kiosks, interactive exhibits and eco-screens showing how much energy the building generates and uses in real time.

“Students are fascinated and have said they love spending time in the new center, especially interacting with the kinetic displays,” said Mrs. Beshear.

The center’s roof has more energy-

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efficient features, including a wind turbine to provide power to the Capitol grid, solar panels to heat the HVAC system, a white, reflective coating to reduce the energy required by the HVAC and a rooftop garden with native Kentucky plantings to help insulate the building. Visitors can access the roof via stairs or they can see it from a video screen inside of the center.



Funding for the project was provided by the Kentucky Finance and Administration Cabinet (\$1.1 million) and Duke Energy (\$250,000).



“The problem with projects like this is always finding the funding. Be creative and think outside the box,” advised Mrs. Beshear.

The project was made possible through the combined efforts and donations of several partners:



Interactive exhibits offer a hands-on learning experience for students.

The Kentucky Environmental Education Council and Kentucky Educational Television selected and provided the educational content inside several of the learning kiosks. The University of Kentucky and University of Louisville built and provided interactive exhibits that offer a hands-on opportunity to learn about energy efficiency and a variety of diverse energy sources. General Electric donated energy-efficient appliances for the center’s kitchen, where produce from the governor’s garden will be used to demonstrate healthy eating.

“We brought teachers in for suggestions about how to engage children. It needed a Wow! factor,” said Mrs. Beshear.

Other state government agencies involved in the educational components were the Department of Energy Development and Independence, Department of Education, Division for Air Quality, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Historical Society and Commonwealth Office of Technology.



If young people realize, through visiting the center, that there are things they can do to reduce their



Wall displays and even recycling bins at the center teach sustainability.

carbon footprint, then they will be more likely to make that effort in their own lives.

Teachers can access lessons featured on the center’s kiosks on the KET website or on the center’s website at www.cec.org.



“Students are the best conduit to get the message out,” said Mrs. Beshear. “Children will tell their family members about what they learned, and hopefully how to introduce energy-efficient practices into their own households.”

HELPFUL HINT: One way children learn is by example. Show them how to live sustainably and explain how to protect our environment.