



Grant Writing and Sustainable Development in Greater MN

The Morris Model

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Model



My Position: Sustainability Coordinator

- Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) appropriates money from Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)
- MN Lottery
- M.L. 2019
 - Modeling energy and environmental roadmaps for Minnesota Communities
- ML 2022
 - Morris GHG emissions inventory and mitigation Strategies
- Energizing Rural Communities Prize



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The Partnership: The Morris Model

- The Morris Model is a nationally recognized community partnership working to advance sustainability in rural Minnesota.
- Morris Model Partners from their planning, projects, and community building around the 5 Morris Model focus areas: Energy Conservation, Clean Energy, Community Resilience, Cultural Exchange, and Celebration.

Examples of Morris Model Partner Projects

30+ Interns and Greencorps

CSM Partner interns, student interns, and Greencorps members that support the work of the Morris Model partners and add critical capacity.

Green Ammonia Production

UMN WCROC has one of the first wind to ammonia gensets in the country and will upgrade it to be the largest in the country this summer.

240 kW Agri - voltaic Solar

UMN Morris and UMN WCROC collaborated to install an array that allows cattle and other livestock to graze and rest beneath.

LFP Battery Demonstration

UMN Morris installed a 90 KWH LFP battery that virtually powers the green prairie learning community student housing.

Daycare Pods Model

Stevens county used ARPA funds to construct 6 daycare pods starting 5 new businesses and adding 60+ daycare spots.

150 kW solar on Municipal Builds.

Solar panels were installed in 2021 and 2022 and have saved the City of Morris over \$20,000 on their utility bills so far and reduced grid energy use by 30% in city buildings.



Sustainable Development Funding Challenges in Greater MN

Rural cities, counties, and townships lack the financial capital necessary to even consider large sustainable development projects let alone finance them. Luckily this can be addressed by IRA, IJJA, and other state and federal programs.

Capacity to apply for large grants is often limited at an organizational level leaving 1 or 2 individuals to complete massive proposals. This is another prohibitive challenge to rural sustainable development. This can be solved through Institutional Partnerships.

Broad coalitions of stakeholders are required which often means a variety of views and opinions working together which can further hinder progress. This can be solved through framing.

Lack of specific technical knowledge can increase the difficulty of applying for state and federal funds that have specific reporting or performance requirements. This can be solved through working with young professionals and institutions.





Staff Capacity

By hiring a dedicated staff position to focus on sustainability and climate, other positions aren't forced to take on additional work they may not be familiar with.

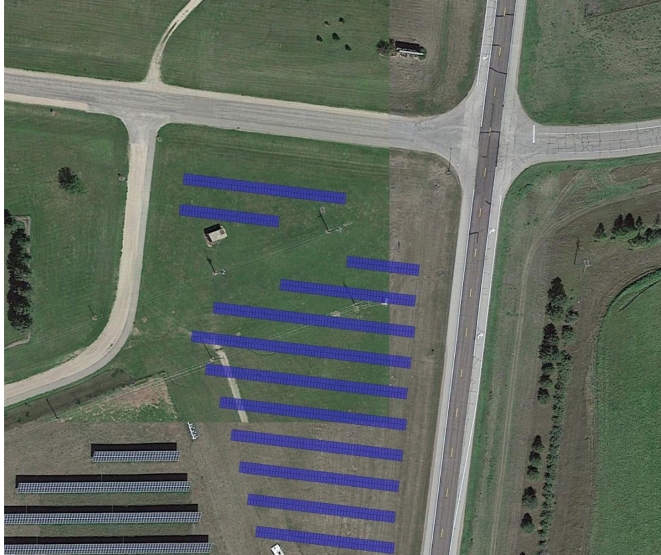
It's a cross sectional position that works across all departments to realize sustainability initiatives in different areas of city operations.

There's a huge opportunity to employ young people like me and give them the opportunity to have tangible impacts in small communities in attracting significant state and federal energy and climate investments.



Staff Capacity

- Staff capacity was one of the first issues we solved in Morris by hiring the coordinator position.
- UMN Sustainability Director, Troy Goodnough, helped the city write the LCCMR grant that funds the coordinator position.
- The position acts as a launch pad for sustainability professionals giving them broad experience with a high level of responsibility.
- By having a dedicated sustainability position, the city administrator is able to continue to focus on day to day operations while the coordinator does in depth study and research.



Financial Capital

Most small towns have limited capital year to year to complete various projects that may or may not include sustainability projects.

Luckily we are in the perfect time to be funding clean energy projects with significant federal and state funding unlocked through the IRA and IIJA.

Plus the MN Green Bank MN -CIFA will help bridge the gap between receiving tax credits and utility rebates and the initial capital needed to construct the project.



Financial Capital

- Financial Capital has always been a question for projects happening in Morris through the Morris Model. The city funds the vast majority of its sustainability planning and projects through regional, state, and federal grants and other funding.
- When we wanted to design an educational interpretive pathway in our downtown last year we were able to use CERTS funds to offset the costs of designing, purchasing, and installing the pathway.



Working Across Broad Coalitions

- One of the keys to the success of the Morris Model is working across broad coalitions of folks.
- There are folks within our morris model team who have vastly different views and opinions, yet we all agree that we want our community to be better for the next generation and that it should be a sustainable one.
- This requires strategic framing.
- Extreme weather vs climate change
- Local resources vs clean energy

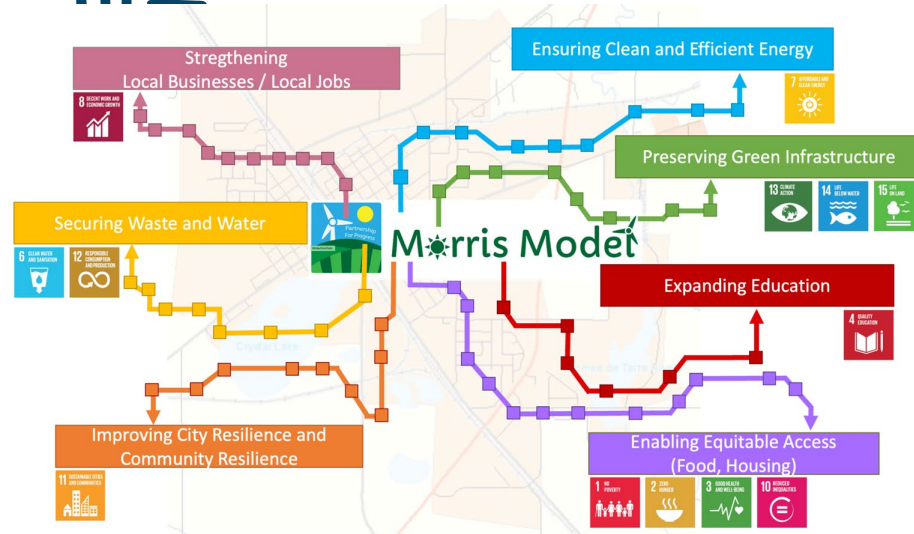


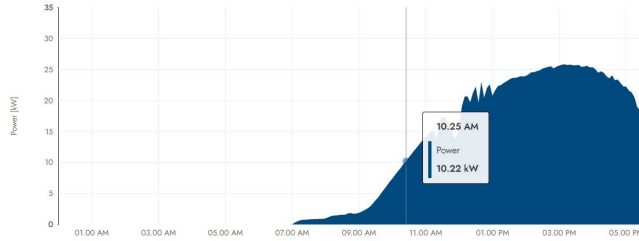
Working Across Broad Coalitions

When we began updating our sustainability strategic plan, we wanted to expand the goals of the Morris Model to address sustainability as a system within our community.

Using the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework, I was able to bring people opposed to clean energy to the table to talk about access to food and health services.

This also created new connections within the community facilitating greater collaboration on projects unrelated to our sustainability vision.





"Understanding the Performance of a New Water Treatment Plant to Improve Water Quality Outcomes in Rural Minnesota"



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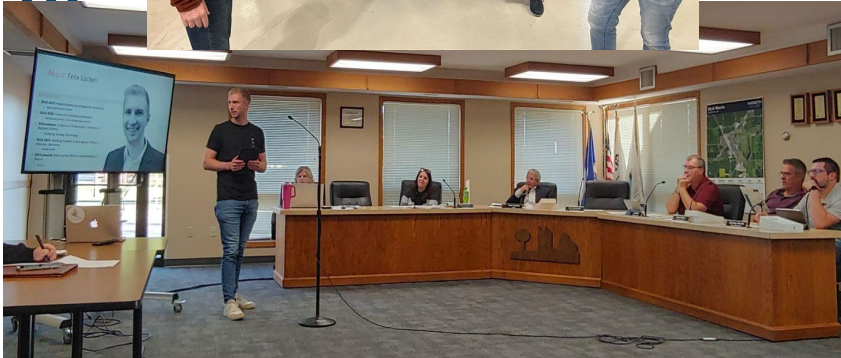


Technical Capacity

A student intern or service position can provide the necessary technical capacity to a city or county to navigate the complex reporting requirements that often come with federal and state funding.

For example a grant may require a city to have 1 year of GHG emissions data. The average city employee isn't trained to gather and analyze these data, let alone reporting the data in a digestible format.

This benefits both parties by giving the city critical data to pursue federal funds while giving young professionals opportunities to get direct experience in the field that had a direct and tangible impact on a local issue.



Technical Capacity

- My position is fairly technical but my degree is still a BA.
- Working with CSM student interns from the Muenster school of engineering has provided our city with advanced engineering analysis other municipalities may pay \$5,000 - \$10,000 for a firm to complete.
- Water Treatment Plant Performance Analysis
- Solar PV on City Buildings Performance Analysis
- Heat Pump Adoption and Feasibility in West Central Minnesota.



Thank you!

Any Questions?

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