



## ***NOPEC ready to hand out \$1.2M to county members***

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— Tens of thousands of dollars await more than two dozen Ashtabula County communities willing to put the money into energy-saving projects.

The Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council, which hunts down utility discounts for its 129 member communities, is ready to distribute \$1.2 million in energy grants to members in Ashtabula County, said Ron McVoy, who represents the county on NOPEC's board of directors.

Each community will receive at least \$50,000, while others will get more depending on how many power customers live within their borders, he said.

The grant program is part of an agreement reached last fall between NOPEC and First Energy Solutions Corp. to provide long-term discounts to NOPEC electric communities. The money is meant to be used for energy-related projects, but communities can apply to use the funds for other uses, McVoy said.

Nearly every city, village and township in Ashtabula County are members of NOPEC, comprised of nine counties that banded together years ago to lobby for lower utility rates. NOPEC uses the guarantee of volume business to convince utilities to drop their prices for its members.

"NOPEC has saved northeast Ohio members \$120 million (since its start)," McVoy said.

Applications have already been sent to eligible communities. The forms must be returned by the end of the month.

If problems are found with an application, it will be returned, not scrapped, McVoy said. Unlike other funding providers, NOPEC will give communities a second chance, he said.

"We want them to have this money," McVoy said.

Money could start flowing sometime in April, McVoy said.

The funds can be used for a variety of projects, including energy conservation, energy education and economic development.

Upgrades to heating and ventilation systems, lighting upgrades and building insulation all qualify, McVoy said.

"The intent is to cut energy costs and cut wasted energy usage," he said.

Cash-starved communities can ask to use the money for other purposes, but they will need to provide proof of their poverty, McVoy said.

McVoy will talk about the grant program with Ashtabula County commissioners on Monday, he said.

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