

POWERFUL CHOICES!

10 YEAR COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

**POWERFUL
CHOICES** 

a sustainable energy project for river falls

Acknowledgements

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The River Falls Sunshine Fund is a valued partner in our efforts to improve the community. POWERful Choices! aided with a ball toss fundraiser at the River Falls High School.

Section 1 – Introduction

This report reviews the POWERful Choices! program’s first ten years and provides goals for the future.

POWERful Choices! is the brand used for all conservation, efficiency, renewable energy and low-income programs. The POWERful Choices! mission, whether referring to the programs offered or the advisory group, is to instill a community wide conservation ethic demonstrating the effectiveness of energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy.

In developing POWERful Choices! programming, staff and community leaders utilized best management practices from throughout the energy industry. POWERful Choices! programming uses demand side management methodology to modify consumer demand for energy through various methods such as direct install, financial incentives, behavioral science and education.

[Demand side management](#) is a commonly used practice by many utilities to keep utility rates low.

Advisory groups are commonly paired with demand side management programming to ensure relevancy and community engagement. The POWERful Choices! committee primarily serves as an advisory and marketing focus group.

More awareness of the POWERful Choices! brand, programs and committee will lead to greater benefits to the community in which we all serve.

To promote community education and participation, a peer advisory group is utilized by POWERful Choices! The group, open to any interested party, meets monthly to learn about RFMU programming and provide feedback. The peer advisory group, also called POWERful Choices! has been tremendously successful in not only marketing, but also in bringing forth ideas and opportunities for the community.

POWERful Choices! would like to thank our residential, business, and governmental partners and supporters for making the first 10 years of the program a success and for continuing to promote sustainable energy in River Falls. Partners include those who attend and contribute to monthly POWERful Choices! meetings, trade allies such as Steiner Plumbing, the River Falls School district and UW-River Falls, elected and appointed City officials, WPPI Energy and Focus on Energy staff, as well as, businesses throughout the community.



Mission Statement

A community-wide effort of instilling strong conservation ethics while demonstrating the effectiveness of energy efficiency, conservation and renewable resource development.

Vision Statement

Achieve a sustainable energy future for the River Falls community through conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy production and purchases.

Section 2 – Program History

This section discusses the history and support made by progressive, committed entities to create and further POWERFUL Choices! A great deal of credit goes to the leaders listed below for their wisdom, forward thinking, and commitment to the community of River Falls by approving and moving forward with the POWERful Choices! initiative. The River Falls Municipal Utilities customers have benefited from the efficiency tools to lower energy consumption, and from stable rates due to the delayed cost of new generation.

2006

- In September of 2006, Governor Jim Doyle announced his selection of University of Wisconsin-River Falls as one of four University of Wisconsin campuses that will participate in his “**Off the Grid**” **Initiative** to achieve “energy independence” within five years. While this was a stretch goal it did prompt WPPI Energy and RFMU to develop the POWERful Choices! initiative.

2007

- To further support the Governor’s initiative, a **Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, River Falls Municipal Utilities and WPPI Energy** to identify the framework of cooperation among all parties to that will be leveraged to develop mutually beneficial renewable energy and energy conservation programs, projects and educational activities within the community and on campus.

2008

- WPPI Energy worked with member municipal electric utilities and local officials to install as much as 25 megawatts of wind power in member communities. **EcoEnergy** of Madison, Wisconsin, expressed interest in having a utility-sized wind turbine generator placed in River Falls. A site was selected on the high ground in the Whitetail Ridge Corporate Park, just west of State Highway 35, and a wind test tower was constructed.

2009

- River Falls was the first community in Wisconsin and the Midwest to be designated a **Green Power Community**, ranking Number 10 on the Environmental Protection Agency’s list. Green Power Communities are cities, towns and villages in which local government, businesses and residents collectively buy green power in amounts that meet or exceed the EPA’s purchase requirements. The requirements for a community our size is a minimum of 10% green power. River Falls was at 15% green power usage.

2010

- With many beneficial partnerships established, POWERful Choices! shifted focus to large commercial and industrial efficiency opportunities. Energy education programing was also a focal point for POWERful Choices!

2011

- River Falls Municipal Utilities, along with all other Wisconsin WPPI Energy member utilities agreed to send all **Commitment to Community (CTC)- State** funds to Focus on Energy. It was determined that municipalities could better leverage their CTC funds by being full participants in the Focus on Energy program. This has held true as the River Falls community has greatly benefitted from the diverse programs and expertise at Focus on Energy.

Section 2 – Program History Continued

2012

- Focus on Energy had scheduled River Falls to receive access to free energy kits called **Express Energy Efficiency** in 2015. Through negotiations we were able to bring the kits to River Falls 3 years earlier than expected.
- City of River Falls, River Falls School District and the University of Wisconsin River Falls collaborated on a [sustainability resolution](#). The resolution as an Aspiring Sustainable Community, provided a common language and set of goals that facilitate sustainability in the community of River Falls.

2013

- Minnesota Rubber and InterFacial Solutions each received detailed energy assessments through a \$10,000 Federal “Save Energy Now” grant, written by RFMU staff.

2014

- Began converting streetlights to LED. Took advantage of small eligibility window at Focus on Energy to get 3 years of preapproval for the project resulting in over \$32,000 in incentives. Also received a \$10,000 grant from the Office of Energy Innovation for the project.

2015

- Created the state’s first Community Solar project. The development of the Community Solar was in response to the record levels of customer participation in renewable energy programs such as green blocks, installations on home and businesses. Community solar allowed for smaller purchases of solar and for those who cannot panels on their home due to shading, roof angle or age.
- Redesigned RFMU’s Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program to allow for financing for panels of community solar
- Began free bike share program called Blue Bikes

2016

- River Falls Municipal Utilities was awarded American Public Power Association’s prestigious, singular Award of Continued Excellence for the work done through POWERful Choices!
- Began offering free electronics recycling events for RFMU customers. Collected over 43,000 pounds of electronic scrap and over 3,500 light bulbs of various styles.

2017

- Made concerted effort to enroll every new incoming business into the New Construction Design Assistance program.
- POWERful choices! programming resulted in over \$250,000 in incentives from Focus on Energy coming back to River Falls.

2018

- Reached our goal of 10% customer participation in the renewable energy block program. This achievement puts the River Falls community 1st in the State of Wisconsin and 5th in the Nation.

Section 3 – Funding Sources

The POWERful Choices! program is supported by four funding sources. Each of these stand-alone funding sources contain limitations and restrictions, often mandated by the WI Public Service Commission. This section provides an overview of funding sources available to River Falls’ electric customers in 2018, as well has a brief explanation of each funding sector.

POWERful Choices!

Annual Funding Allocation 2018: \$211,691

Funding Origin: Local Leadership Decision with WI Public Service Commission Approval

Details:

- Approved in 2007 by City Council Resolution 4940 and Utility Commission Resolution 960 to dedicate 1% of electric revenues.
- \$110,000 was allocated by calculating 1% of the 2007 electric revenue.
- This funding include salary and benefits for Conservation and Efficiency Coordinator.

Program Highlights:

- Focus on Energy incentive matching
- Home Performance Testing
- Customer Appreciation Event
- Retro Commissioning of schools
- Program Marketing
- Training
- 1 FTE position



Savings happen all over the community to make saving energy impactful for everyone. Here the City of River Falls receives rebate incentives for the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Section 3 – Additional Funding Sources Continued

Focus on Energy

Annual Amount 2018: \$53,000

Funding Origin: Mandated by WI Public Service Commission for all WI Municipal and Investor Owned Electric Utilities

Details:

- Equivalent to \$8 per meter
- All collected funds are sent to the state.
- RFMU has been very successful in utilizing the Focus on Energy programs and resulted in over \$2 returned for every \$1 sent to the state.
- Developed excellent relationships with Focus on Energy staff to help River Falls customers

Program Examples:

- Residential commercial and industrial upgrades
- Wastewater treatment facility upgrades
- Home Performance Audits for low income
- Efficient Lighting Rebates
- New Construction Design Assistance Support
- Small Business Program



Customers recycled inefficient strands of holiday lights in exchange for light-emitting diode (LED) strands as part of the annual Holiday Light Exchange.

Low Income

Annual Amount 2018: \$52,000

Funding Origin: Mandated by WI Public Service Commission for all Wisconsin Municipal Electric Utilities

Details:

- Equivalent for \$8 per meter
- Funds chosen to be administered locally.
- RFMU can provide greater assistance to the community by administering the funds rather than sending them to the state for redistribution
- River Falls can provide 150% of what the state would provide through customer bill pay assistance

Program Examples:

- Bill Pay Assistance
- Community Education scholarships
- Appliance Replacement

Section 3 – Additional Funding Sources Continued

WPPI Energy

Approximate Amount from 2018: \$23,000

Funding Origin: WPPI Energy

Details:

- Equivalent to \$3 per meter since 2012
- This contribution is available pending annual WPPI Executive Committee approval.
- Funds are to be used to for local educational and energy efficiency measures
- Funds can be used for qualified programs or projects at the discretion of the member utility



Program examples:

- Downtown Holiday Lighting
- National Theater for Children
- Energy educator in the schools
- *Landlord Connections*
- Scholarships
- Public Power awareness activities
- Community support promotions

Energy efficient lights help to make Main Street festive for the holiday season

Annual Funding Allocation totals

POWERful Choices!.....	\$211,691
Focus on Energy	\$53,000
Low Income	\$53,000
WPPI Energy	\$23,000
Total	\$340,691

Section 4 – Program Highlights

Educational Opportunities

Educational programs are developed to target specific customer classes and energy savings opportunities. The educational efforts are effective as evidenced by the success of the programs and by River Falls being recognized as a leader in the field of conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Project	Description	Results
LED Holiday Light Exchange	Allowed customers, to bring in old strands of incandescent holiday lights (working or not working) and exchange them for new LED holiday light at no charge. The old lighting is recycled through Recycle Your Holidays™ program created and managed by the Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM).	Over 6000 strings of LED holiday lights were distributed between 2010 – 2016. Over 15,000 old strands of lights were recycled during that same time. This program ended in 2016.
Energy Education in Schools	Partnered with Miller E.S.C.A.P.E. and RFSD to develop a science-based curriculum to teach 2 nd and 4 th grade students about energy, water, conservation and efficiency.	Over 500 students are educated yearly.
Customer Appreciation Event	Increased the educational content of the event every year since the inception of POWERful Choices!	Attendance of the event has grown from approximately 75 in 2007 to over 800 in 2018.
POWERful Choices! monthly peer advisory meetings	A monthly open forum meeting is held at City Hall for community members to learn about POWERful Choices! opportunities, provide suggestions and share events in the community.	Result is POWERful Choices! has been more responsive to the community.
Landlord Connections	A forum specific to addressing the needs and concerns of landlords. A quarterly breakfast where guest speakers and city staff listen and provide guidance to attendees.	Improved communication, relationship and participation in City and RFMU programs.
Breaking the Cycle	A budgeting education program for income qualified RFMU customers.	We were able to help our customers and reduce the number of issues associated with billing.
Electronics Recycling Events	Staff provides every customer with pertinent POWERful Choices! programming materials. Examples include our Home Performance Testing program or Business efficiency program.	Aids in diverting massive amounts of electronics and hazardous waste from the landfill.
Public Power Week	Celebrate Public Power during the first week of October. A week of informational materials regarding the value of having a municipal utility.	Resulted in a more knowledgeable populace of the value of RFMU.
Leadership River Falls	Facilitate natural resources days for both adult and youth Leadership programs.	Educated the cohorts on City/RFMU services and opportunities for partnership.
Delivering Energy Efficiency Together	4 elementary schools are participating in a Focus on Energy program where the school receives an incentive for reduction in energy consumption through behavior changes. All incentives were given to each school to decide how to use the funds.	Participating schools reduced their bills considerably and received incentives which were used to purchase shares in Community solar.
National Theatre for Children	Annually, River Falls Municipal Utilities offers traveling performances focusing on electricity, energy conservation and efficiency.	Performances are viewed by over 1,600 River Falls elementary school students annually.
Demand Control and MyMeter web portal	A one hour, breakfast presentation to large power customers on the energy and cost savings opportunities through energy demand control as well as how to best utilize the data on the MyMeter web portal.	Resulted in multiple energy demand evaluations and improvements. Also helped customers be more proactive in their energy use.
CFL, battery and mercury thermostat recycling	RFMU recycles alkaline batteries at City hall year-round. The battery recycling program is in partnership with the UWRF. Light and thermostat recycling is also available year-round.	Our customers see RFMU as an environmentally responsible organization and a trusted resource in the community.

Section 4 – Program Highlights Continued

Rebate Incentive Program Opportunities

Rebate and incentive programs encourage desired customer action by providing a cash reward, a standard practice by essentially all utilities. Incentives nudge customers to make a decision that results in conservation or energy efficiency and consequently lower utility bills. Incentives vary per rate class and year to year. In addition to energy efficiency, these programs provide an opportunity for excellent customer service, education and partnerships. The rebate and incentive programs generate the greatest positive feedback from our customers. The rebates are well thought out, evaluated annually and successful.

Project	Description	Results
Focus on Energy	RFMU actively promotes energy efficiency programs offered by Focus on Energy. Free residential offerings include LED kits, Nest E thermostats, smart power strips and water conservation devices.	Since 2016, River Falls residents have received over 1,200 kits.
ENERGY STAR® Appliances	Rewards customers for the purchase an appliance such as a clothes washer, refrigerator, freezer, and/or dishwasher that carries the ENERGY STAR® label.	350 rebates have been processed since 2007.
Appliance Turn-in	POWERful Choices! utilizes the Focus on Energy recycling program that was created in April 2012. The program recycles old appliances and provides customers with a \$35 incentive.	89 appliances have been recycled since 2007.
Central Air Tune-up	Program encourages customers to have regular maintenance tune-ups on their central air conditioning units and receive a \$50 rebate.	137 rebates have been processed since 2007.
Programmable Thermostats	Cash back incentives are available to encourage customers to purchase programmable and wi-fi enabled thermostats.	153 rebates have been processed since 2007.
Tree Power	Properly planted around a home, shade trees can lower cooling costs in summer and provide carbon sequestration. Tree program originated as an inactive to buy a tree at a local nursery. In 2017 RFMU partnered with the City Forestry department to grow and sell trees for this program.	74 rebates have been processed since 2007.
Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®	This program incentivizes the upfront cost and provides a match of the Focus on Energy incentives. Assessments included infrared scanning, combustion safety and blower door testing. Improvements included added insulation, air sealing, and bath fan replacement.	307 homes received assessments.

Section 4 – Program Highlights Continued

Community Programs

Benefits to River Falls are not always reflected in immediate energy savings. Outcomes of these programs include improved community relations, environmental stewardship, or providing our customers with unique opportunities for participation. These programs are at a very low cost yet yield some great benefits such as continued state and national recognition for local Renewable Energy Finance Programs or the public seeing RFMU as a community asset.

Project	Description	Results
Utility Box Beautification	Partnered with Community Arts Base to commission artists to beautify utility boxes. The art adds to the culture of River Falls and deters graffiti.	15 boxes have been painted. The results have been positive and RFMU has received significant interest from other cities wanting to replicate the program.
LED Exit Signs	Partnering with the River Falls Fire Department, LED exit signs are offered to local businesses that are noncompliant in the exit sign code. If installed by the following inception the business avoids a violation.	130 exit signs have been updated through the program. Goodwill has been improved between the Fire Department and local businesses.
Blue Bike program	Many opportunities for community engagement to donate, maintain, paint and provide guidance in the direction of the program.	Resulted in a popular program and more people riding bikes. Green Travel WI Certified.
Research and Development	Partnered with UWRF and American Public Power Association to fund and perform research on carbon sequestration in agricultural plots, payback on net zero homes and pollinator friendly plantings under community solar panels.	Over \$15,000 in grants received. Results have been used by Habitat for Humanity, UWRF, American Public Power Association and RFMU.

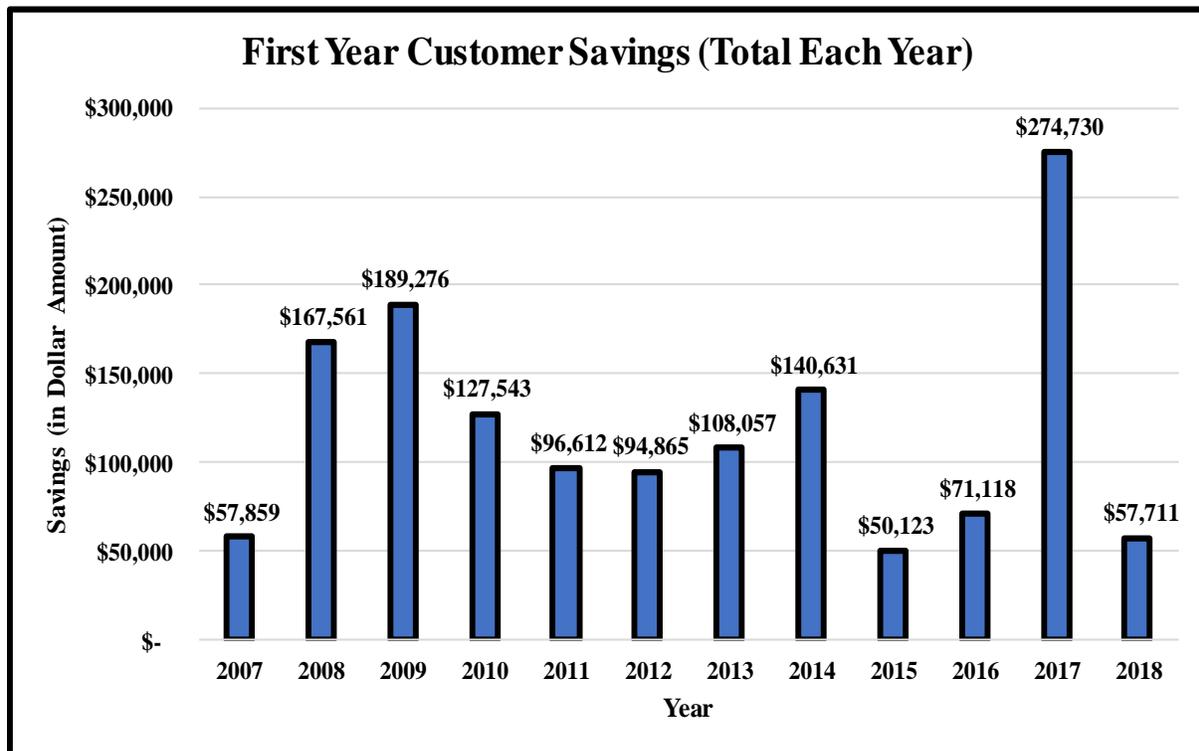
Section 4 – Program Highlights Continued

Energy Savings

Various programs were utilized to provide financial assistance to move community projects forward. Included with this report is a non-exhaustive list of some projects assisted by the POWERful Choices! initiative. Assistance may include, but not limited to: technical and non-technical advice, and funding from POWERful Choices! to leverage state, federal and private funds. It is important to note that the industry standard is to report first year energy savings; clearly the energy savings goes beyond the first year.

First Year Energy Savings

First year savings is a way that POWERful Choices! illustrates how energy efficiency projects impact customers. Although programs typically account for the energy and cost savings in the year in which the measures were performed, the value of the energy efficiency improvements provide lasting effects for the customer's energy bill, as well as the cost of purchased power by River Falls Municipal Utilities. Industry standards assume first-year savings continue to be realized for the next 6 years.



Total kWh Savings (2007-2018)	Total First Year Savings (2007-2018)
17,951,059	\$1,436,085

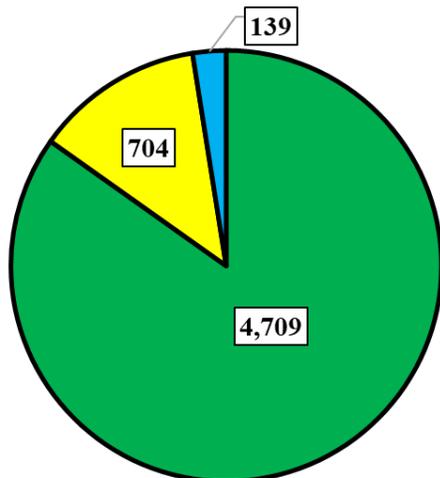
Note: As of September 2018

Section 4 – Program Highlights Continued

Incentives

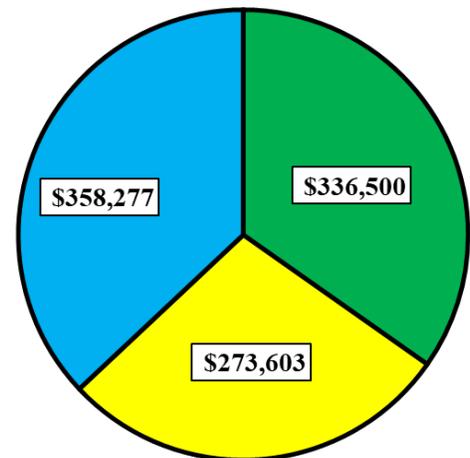
The graphs below show the number of incentives received by community members from 2012-2018 as well as the allocation of the monetary incentives given over that time span. The projects on the next page were selected as highlight projects that resulted in significant energy savings. Additionally, these projects provide improved working conditions, productivity, or other non-energy benefits that make these businesses or institutions better (e.g. improved lighting, improved temperature control, increased product output, and reduced product waste).

Number of Incentives Given (2012-2018)
5,552 Total



Monetary Incentives Given (2012-2018)
\$968,380 Total

- Residential
- Commercial and Industrial
- Schools and Government



Note: As of September 2018

Section 4 – Program Highlights Continued

Major Energy Saving Projects

<i>Year</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>First Year Estimated kWh Savings</i>	<i>First Year Estimated Cost Savings</i>	<i>Total Incentives Paid (RFMU, WPPI & FOE)</i>
2007	<i>O'Keefe Inc.</i>	<i>Compressed Air Upgrade</i>	<i>71,700</i>	<i>\$5,736</i>	<i>\$3,483</i>
	<i>River Falls School District</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting Upgrade</i>	<i>38,300</i>	<i>\$3,064</i>	<i>\$4,650</i>
	<i>City of River Falls</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting Upgrade</i>	<i>35,500</i>	<i>\$2,840</i>	<i>\$5,928</i>
	<i>QMR Plastics</i>	<i>Chiller Upgrade</i>	<i>415,500</i>	<i>\$33,240</i>	<i>\$45,704</i>
2008	<i>River Falls School District</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting Upgrade</i>	<i>193,100</i>	<i>\$15,448</i>	<i>\$17,026</i>
	<i>City of River Falls</i>	<i>LED Traffic Signal Upgrade</i>	<i>49,300</i>	<i>\$3,944</i>	<i>\$4,702</i>
	<i>MN Rubber & Plastics</i>	<i>Central Resin Drying Project</i>	<i>1,362,000</i>	<i>\$108,960</i>	<i>\$116,900</i>
2009	<i>Moody's Inc.</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting Upgrade</i>	<i>51,100</i>	<i>\$4,088</i>	<i>\$5,310</i>
	<i>City of River Falls</i>	<i>New Construction Measures</i>	<i>43,800</i>	<i>\$3,504</i>	<i>\$7,067</i>
	<i>River Falls School District</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting Upgrade</i>	<i>43,300</i>	<i>\$3,464</i>	<i>\$3,689</i>
	<i>UW-River Falls</i>	<i>Energy Efficient Chiller</i>	<i>1,200,000</i>	<i>\$96,000</i>	<i>\$55,000</i>
2010	<i>Crystal Finishing</i>	<i>Lighting & Compressed Air</i>	<i>47,400</i>	<i>\$3,792</i>	<i>\$2,320</i>
	<i>Interfacial Solutions</i>	<i>New Construction Measures</i>	<i>68,800</i>	<i>\$5,504</i>	<i>\$6,372</i>
	<i>River Falls Area Hospital</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting Upgrade</i>	<i>71,100</i>	<i>\$5,688</i>	<i>\$1,077</i>
	<i>River Falls Industrial Center</i>	<i>Lighting & Compressed Air</i>	<i>332,500</i>	<i>\$26,600</i>	<i>\$9,66</i>
	<i>River Falls School District</i>	<i>Chiller Tune-Up</i>	<i>86,800</i>	<i>\$6,944</i>	<i>\$219</i>
	<i>UW-River Falls</i>	<i>Lighting & Motors</i>	<i>217,000</i>	<i>\$17,360</i>	<i>\$5,423</i>
2011	<i>Dick's Market</i>	<i>Refrigeration & Lighting</i>	<i>193,900</i>	<i>\$15,512</i>	<i>\$5,776</i>
	<i>Kwik Trip</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting & Refrigeration</i>	<i>71,700</i>	<i>\$5,736</i>	<i>\$4,082</i>
	<i>NCCM Co.</i>	<i>Efficient Oven Controls</i>	<i>322,000</i>	<i>\$25,760</i>	<i>\$11,952</i>
	<i>NELA Ternes</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting Upgrade</i>	<i>102,900</i>	<i>\$8,232</i>	<i>\$8,026</i>
	<i>River Falls Area Hospital</i>	<i>Efficient HVAC Upgrade</i>	<i>132,500</i>	<i>\$10,600</i>	<i>\$1,200</i>
	<i>River Falls EDC</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting Upgrade</i>	<i>36,800</i>	<i>\$2,944</i>	<i>\$4,000</i>
	<i>St Bridget School</i>	<i>Efficient Lighting Upgrade</i>	<i>4,000</i>	<i>\$320.</i>	<i>\$1,507</i>

2012	Family Fresh	Refrigerated Case Improvements	347,874	\$27,829	\$7,950
	First Congregational	New Construction Measures	25,863	\$2,069	\$1,670
	River Falls High School	EMS / Commissioning	920,366	\$73,629	\$50,000
	River Falls Industrial Center	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	32,532	\$2602	\$958
	River Falls Library	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	30,324	\$2,425	\$10,000
	River Falls State Bank	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	23,517	\$1,881	\$1,642
	River Falls Youth Hockey	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	50,160	\$4,012	\$12,825
	Shopko	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	104,700	\$8,376	\$16,752
	UW-River Falls	Efficient Lighting Upgrade / VFD	41,017	\$3,281	\$4,052
2013	Country Inn and Suites	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	323,050	\$23,370	\$5,913
	Crystal Finishing's	Energy Recover Ventilators	24,640	\$1,200	\$1,400
	Econo Lodge	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	51,146	\$3,838	\$2,939
2014	River Falls School District	Energy Management	961,828	\$75,709	\$90,506
	Dick's Fresh Market	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	45,770	\$2,648	\$,484
2015	NCCM Co.	Lighting and VFD's	80,192	\$6,754	\$5,843
	UW-River Falls	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	44,216	\$4,209	\$12,159
	Westconsin Credit Union	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	26,276	\$1,490	\$1,185
2016	Chippewa Valley Technical College	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	2,148	\$5,155	\$1,100
	Wastewater Treatment Facility	New Construction Design Assistance	462,504	\$34,840	\$32,464
	MN Rubber & Plastics	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	109,003	\$11,881	\$11,215
	Minnesota Best Made Cookie Co	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	40,692	\$3,255	\$3,906
2017	UW-River Falls	New Construction Design Assistance	818,020	\$65,441	\$95,945
	TW Equities	New Construction Design Assistance	293,319	\$12,150	\$16,581
	Best Maid Cookies	Efficient Lighting Upgrade	195,197	\$10,025	\$8,961

**River Falls Municipal Utilities' participation in Focus on Energy enables a customer to submit incentive documentation directly to the Focus program. Several of the measures on this project list include incentives in which the customer made the submission directly to Focus.*

***Project costs for these projects were not reported to River Falls Municipal Utilities. Generally, Focus on Energy incentives range from 10% to 30% of project costs.*

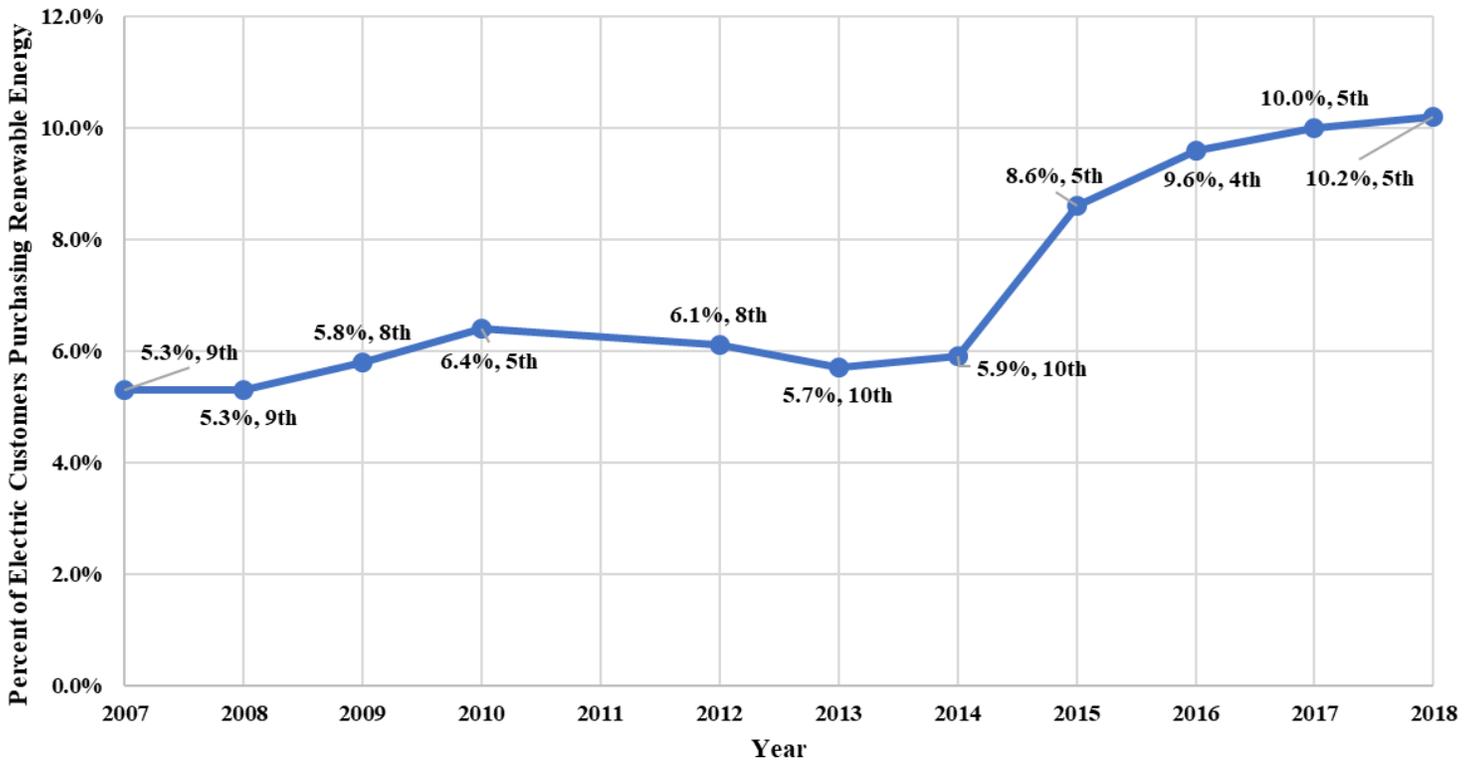
****\$.08 per kWh used based on blended rate.*

Section 4 – Program Highlights Continued

Renewable Energy Participation

Since 2007, River Falls Municipal Utilities has offered a voluntary program where customers can voluntarily purchase a “block” of renewable energy for an additional \$3 per 300 kWh of energy. River Falls repeatedly ranks in the top ten of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory’s (NREL) rankings in customer participation. River Falls took a significant jump in participation in 2014, because a new goal was set of 10% customer participation.

Renewable Energy Participation and National Ranking



Note: Data was not collected in 2011

Section 5 – Goals and Impacts

Background

The goals of POWERful Choices! were adopted by the Utility Commission and then by the City Council in April of 2007 and have been amended several times to reflect the state of electric utility industry. The goals were conceptualized by analyzing several performance measures:

- The analysis from the Energy Center of Wisconsin outlined that the highest performing energy efficiency programs in the nation achieve energy use reductions of 1.5% to 2% of total annual electric sales annually.
- Reduced community demand for electricity should target energy savings (kilowatt-hours and peak demand shaving for commercial and industrial customers).
- Following the industry standard to evaluate program performance on first year energy savings.
- Program impacts of 11,492,100 kWh of first year energy savings would fulfill this goal.

From there, POWERful Choices! outlined its three original goals and corresponding results.

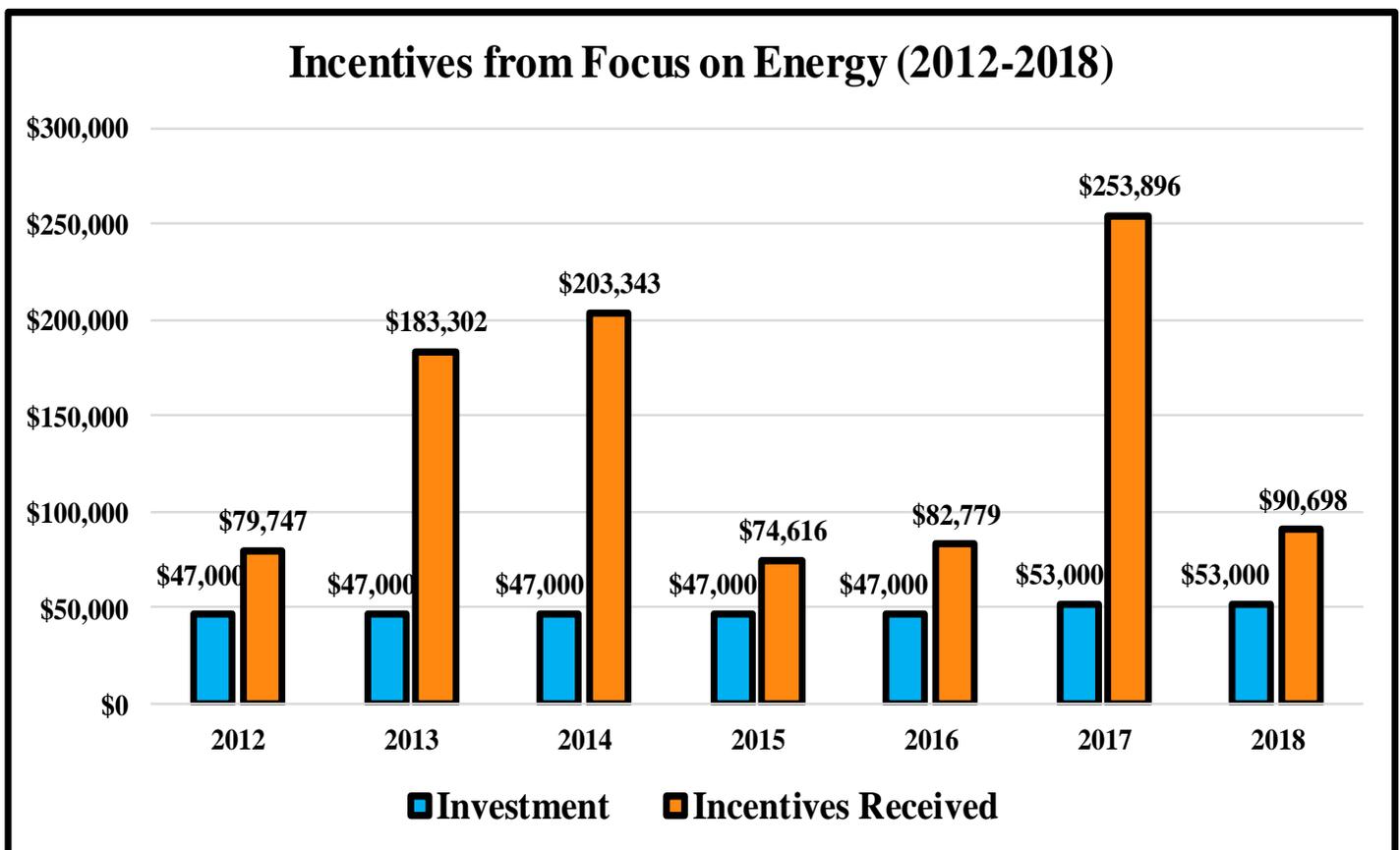
Original Goals	Results
Program impact of 11,492,100 kWh in first year energy savings.	The first-year energy saving on the projects involved in the program topped 16,400,000 kwh .
With Renewable Energy Program customer participation in 2009 at 6.2 %, the goal was established to increase this to 6.8% in 2010.	The 2010 goal of 6.8% customer participation was reached so the goal was revised in 2014 with the goal of 10% . The goal was achieved in 2017.
With River Falls Municipal Utilities’ full participation in the Focus on Energy program beginning in 2011, a goal to bring back \$2 to the River Falls community for every \$1 that is sent to the state for the Focus on Energy program was established.	Since 2007 River Falls has paid approximately \$475,000 to participate in Focus on Energy. In that same timeframe the River Falls community has received over \$1,300,000 in incentives from Focus on Energy. In the 10 years River Falls has received almost \$3 for every \$1 sent to Focus on Energy.

Section 5 – Goals and Impacts Continued

Focus on Energy – Return on Investment

From 2008-2010, WPPI Energy made an investment in the Focus on Energy program on behalf of its Wisconsin members. This allowed customers in all member communities to access the full program. Starting in 2011 and every year since all the WPPI Energy members, including River Falls, began making the direct payment to the state program.

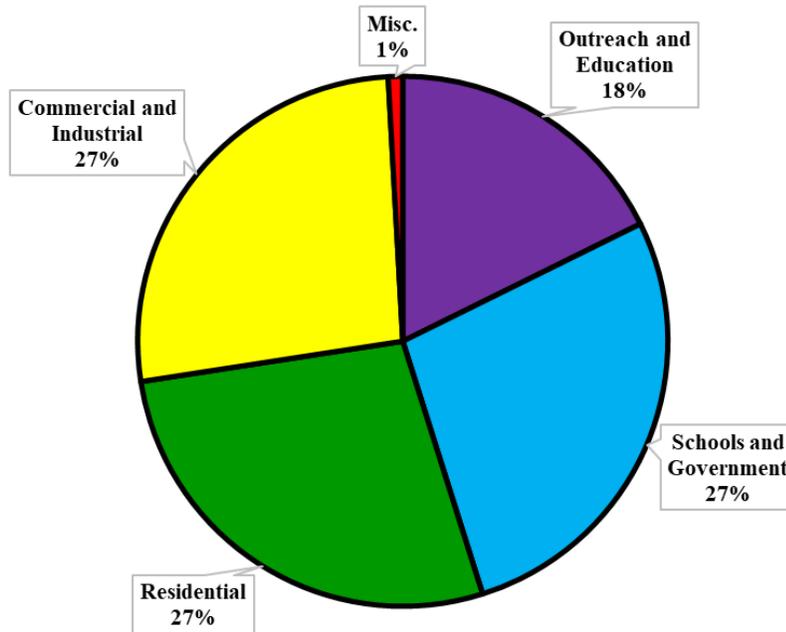
During this 10-year period, approximately **\$475,000** was paid into the state program on behalf of or by River Falls Municipal Utilities. Direct program incentives paid to River Falls Municipal Utilities customers during this time reached approximately **\$1,300,000**.



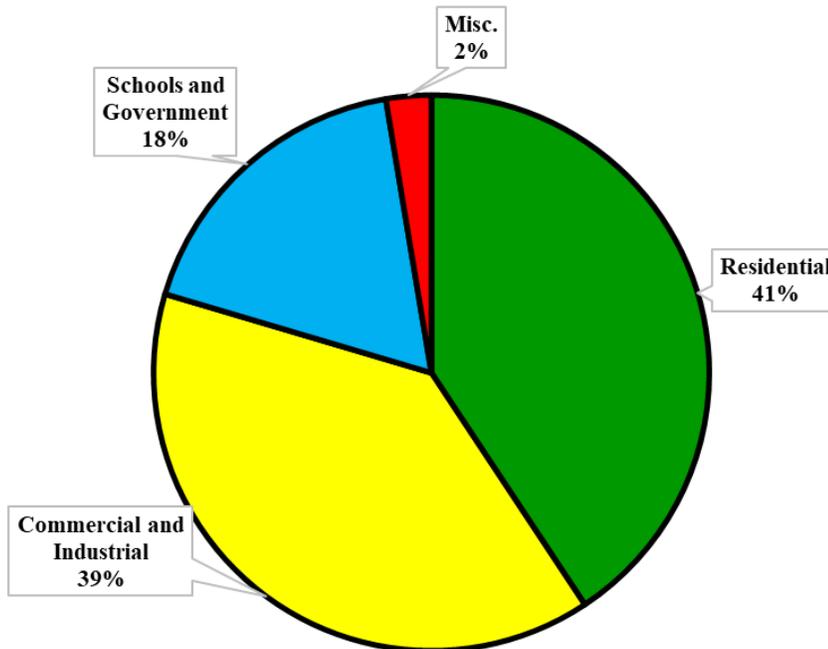
Note: 2018 incentives as of September 2018

Section 5 – Goals and Impacts Continued

2018 POWERful Choices! Budget Breakdown



2018 Projected Revenue By Customer Class

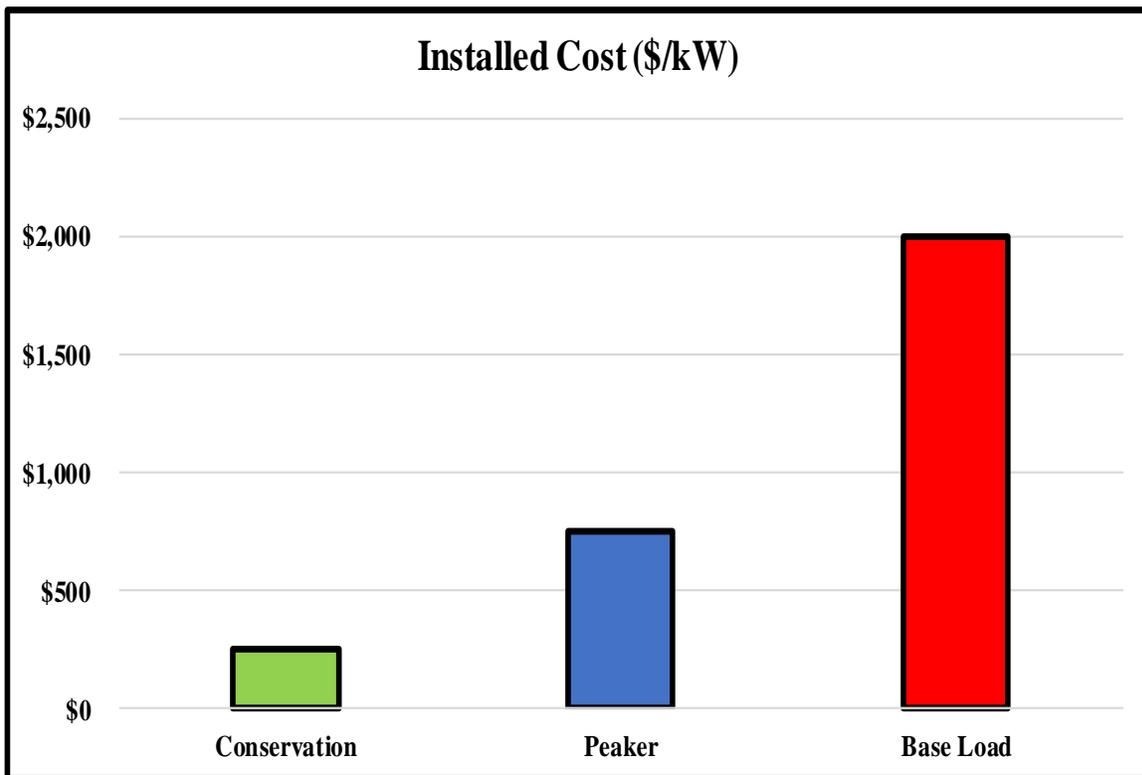


Section 5 – Goals and Impacts Continued

Energy Efficiency as a Power Supply Resource

Energy saving projects are often analyzed by their benefit relative to procuring the next power supply resource.

Savings from POWERful Choices! projects yielded approximately 1,957 kW of peak demand reduction. To add generation to meet the 1,957 kW demand would cost \$3.9 million.



Section 6 – Legislative Background

Policy

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Public Service Commission (PSC) ordered the large electric and gas utilities to conduct a variety of programs to promote energy efficiency and the use of energy derived from renewable resources under its general rate-making authority and a statutory requirement that utilities spend at least 0.5% of their annual operating revenues on such programs

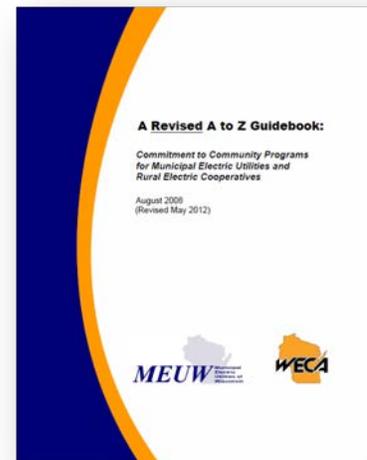
The Legislature, through 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, replaced these programs with similar programs known generically as “public benefits” programs. The Act provides that the Department of Administration (DOA) administer statewide energy efficiency and renewable resource programs and contract with third parties to implement the programs. Major components of the program were marketed under the name Focus on Energy and came to be known by that name.

Act 9 required retail electric utilities to fund the programs through two mechanisms: a public benefits fee that the utilities collected directly from their customers; and mandatory utility “contributions,” which the utilities recovered from customers in rates. The amount of the contributions was based on levels of utility expenditures for the programs in effect prior to the enactment of Act 9; the fee was in addition to that.

2005 Act 141 substantially revised the structure of the statewide energy efficiency and renewable resources programs administered by the DOA and utilities. The revised structure is broadly based on the structure of the programs that existed prior to Act 9. In brief, the concept was to have utilities pay directly for public benefits programs, so that the money is never placed in a state fund from which transfers could be made.

Pursuant to [Wisconsin Statutes 16.957\(5\)](#) and [196.374\(7\)](#), each municipal electric utility must collect an average of \$16 per meter per year. Fifty percent of the fees charged by the municipal utility shall be used for low-income assistance programs and the remainder will be used for energy efficiency programs. Low-income programs may include assistance to low-income households for weatherization and other energy conservation services, payment of energy bills or early identification or prevention of energy crisis.

To assist in the interpretation of the various regulations, an "A to Z Guidebook: Commitment to Community Programs for Municipal Electric Utilities and Rural Electric Cooperatives" has been prepared for members of MEUW (Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin) and WECA (Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association). The overriding purpose of this Guidebook is to provide a one-stop resource regarding Commitment to Community (CTC) programs. This Guidebook can be downloaded by following [this link](#).



Section 7– Going Forward

The POWERful Choices! initiative, as evidenced by the accomplishments of the programs, has positioned River Falls Municipal Utilities and the City of River Falls as state and national leaders in the field of conservation, efficiency and renewable energy. As all good programs do, we periodically reevaluate the POWERful Choices! structure and programs to determine if improvements can be made.

Funding Sources and Scope

- Since the 5-year report in 2012 the scope of POWERful Choices! has been broadened to serve the community as a public power entity. Projects including electronics recycling, sponsorships and advanced metering infrastructure have been added to the slate of projects.
- The changes in the next 10 years in the utility industry, technology and customer expectations will necessitate changes to the scope of work for POWERful Choices! Expected changes in the next 10 years include the electrification of transportation and small engines, battery storage, advances in metering and communication, distributed generation and cybersecurity.



Incentive check awarded to University Village owners for energy efficiency upgrades. Pictured left to right are Dan Hanson of Focus on Energy, Dough Cudd co-owner, Jerry Morrow co-owner and Mike Noreen Conservation and Efficiency Coordinator