




# Leaping Before Looking

Lessons Learned from the  
Cambridge Energy Alliance  
Experience.

Behavioral Energy & Climate Change  
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...public innovators are pragmatic idealists, people who thrive on change and are impelled by a strong sense of urgency, yet are rarely satisfied with minor or incremental changes.

At bottom, their work is impelled by an animating sense of public purpose and moral responsibility.”

Scott London, *Public Innovators: Forces For Social Change and Civic Renewal*, 2008

# Lessons Learned



- Understand the system you want to change**
  - Meet and Engage** Formal and informal networks and leaders
  - Ask** what they need, what *they* want to change
  - Plan together** how to change system and the story
  - Do, Learn, Adjust, again and again.
  
- Start simple because Everything is more complicated than it seems.**
  
- Promise only what's deliverable and deliver as promised.**

# Landscape in 2005



- Federal administration indifferent to hostile on climate change
- Little public pressure, “An Inconvenient Truth” film a year away
- No national energy policy (but)
  - Below the radar efficiency codes and standards slowly increasing
  - Quiet building of technical/information resources DOE, EPA
  - Energy Star an increasing factor in the marketplace
- Most active energy efficiency efforts at state level
  - California, Pacific Northwest, New England, Upper Midwest,**

# Massachusetts: leader in doldrums



- » Utility Energy Efficiency active 1980's to mid-1990's

Something **more** was needed

- » Utility restructuring all but killed efficiency efforts

- » Legislation for efficiency
- » Char



- » Good year invested but didn't begin to address long term efficiency needs.

# Change the Paradigm



**Achieve broad, deep energy and water efficiency changes across an entire community in a way that had not been done before.**

- One Stop shopping for all types of residences and businesses.
- Develop *unstoppable momentum*.

## **Serve as a laboratory**

- Test Organizational and funding models that had not been tried before
- Develop replicable for other communities

# Cambridge MA: Small, Diverse, Active



# Why Cambridge?



- Urban
- Dense
- Diverse Population, Housing
- High Tech
- Educated
- Institutions: Harvard, MIT
- Progressive City Government
- “People’s Republic”
- Foundation early support



# Why Not Cambridge?



## TRUST

- Who are these outsiders?
- What will they do for us?
- Can we believe them?

## Different existing agendas

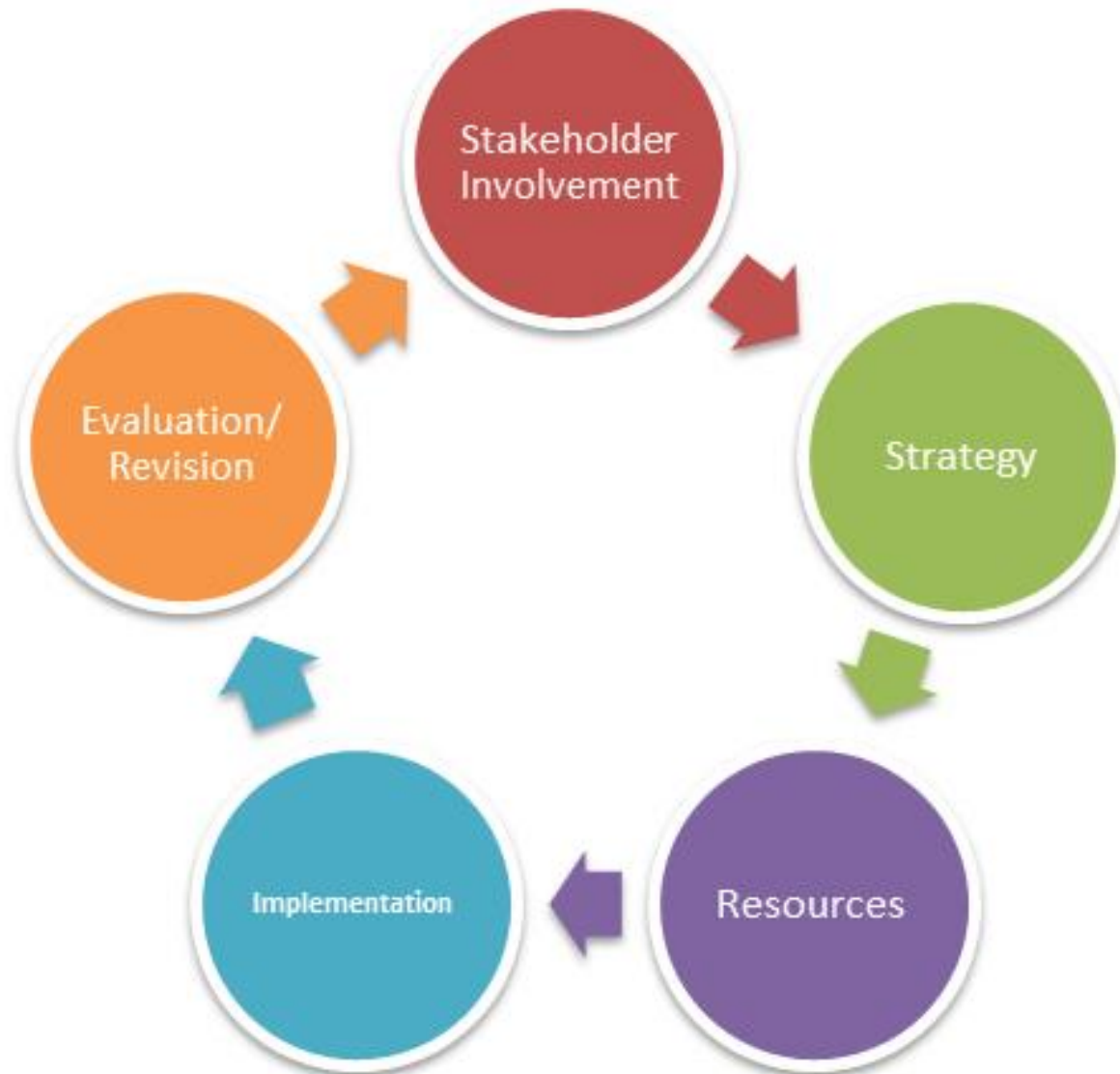
- City's needs and priorities, politics
- Community Groups
- Institutions and businesses following their own plans

# Cambridge Energy Alliance



- Non –Profit Business – Hybrid Approach
- Seasoned Energy Professionals as Board
- Be Public, Be bold
- Establish a signature project and build from there
- Establish sustainable funding

# Cycle of Community Engagement



# Promises, promises, where's the money?



- ❑ **City Manager:** state law wouldn't allow sole source work to CEA without specific permission from the legislature – 18 month delay killed signature project
- ❑ **State Government** - would not commit. Did not believe.
- ❑ **Forward Capacity Market** – potential revenue stream but many months to qualify and then only limited opportunities
- ❑ **Energy Services Companies** – approached 100 largest customers but deals including fees for CEA too costly
- ❑ **Utility Energy Efficiency programs** – supported with community-based initiative grant but otherwise limited

# Complications



- Announced CEA before there anything in place
- IRS didn't understand the hybrid organization – delayed non-profit status
- CEA didn't understand hybrid organization – staff churn
- Staff too few and doing too many things at once – changing and diluted focus was frustrating.
- Relationship with utility frustrating on all sides

# Good Things happened



- ❑ CEA dramatically increased home energy audits in Cambridge and raised profile of energy efficiency
- ❑ Raised the profile of community-based efforts nationally
- ❑ Advised the state, DOE (especially stimulus-oriented programmers) and nascent community-based efforts on design and implementation issues.
- ❑ Some Cambridge business took their CEA-supplied audits and did their own energy efficiency projects.

# Questions?



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*FINAL REPORT: CAMBRIDGE ENERGY ALLIANCE – LESSONS LEARNED FROM A  
TRANSFORMATIONAL INITIATIVE*

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