



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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## Our Mission

Provide simple, valuable, and reliable public energy programs that help our communities achieve their local energy and sustainability goals.

## Summary

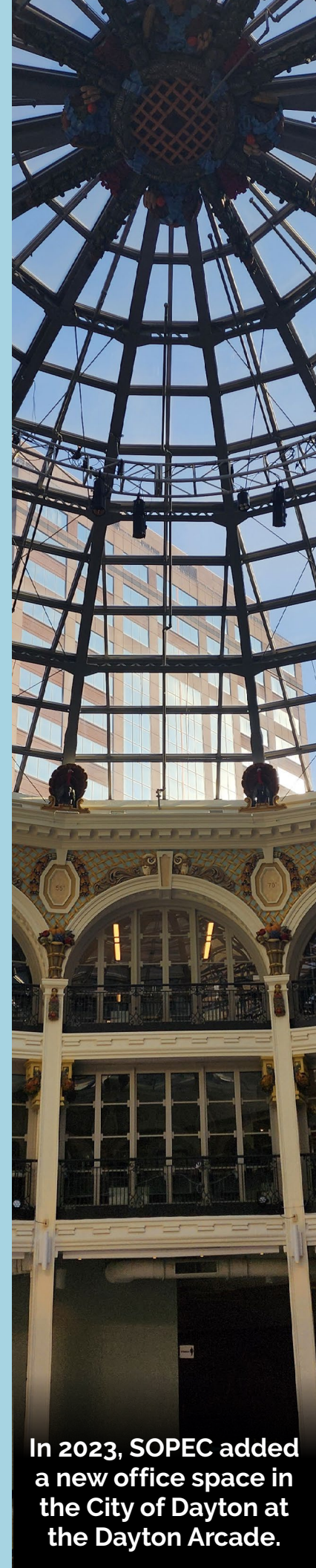
In this annual report, learn about how SOPEC supported its member communities in their sustainability goals through community grants, community choice aggregation and grant writing. Notably, SOPEC's staff doubled in size and the organization added 13 new members in 2023, which marks a year of immense growth for SOPEC. Learn about how SOPEC evolved in 2023 to better adapt to the needs of its members through grant support, capacity building, and innovative problem solving.

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**Follow us on social media!**



**In 2023, SOPEC added a new office space in the City of Dayton at the Dayton Arcade.**



# A Letter from our Executive Director

SOPEC Members:

The year 2023 was marked by unprecedented growth and success for the Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC). We have made significant strides this year, building on our mission to provide simple, valuable, and reliable public energy programs while providing tangible benefits to our members.

One of our most notable achievements in 2023 was the expansion of our team, which doubled in size to better support our growing membership and initiatives. This growth was essential as SOPEC welcomed 13 new members, including Athens-Hocking Solid Waste District, the City of Cleveland, Five Rivers MetroParks, the Village of Hemlock, Hocking Conservancy District, the Village of Marble Cliff, the Village of New Concord, the Village of Norwich, the Village of Piqueton, the City of Riverside, Unity Township, the City of Upper Arlington, and the Village of Yellow Springs. These new partnerships are a testament to the increasing recognition of SOPEC's value in fostering sustainable energy solutions across Ohio.

Through our community choice aggregation program, we provided an estimated 687 billion kWh of electricity to over 108,000 accounts, resulting in savings of approximately \$14 million compared to the standard service offers. This program continues to demonstrate the power of collective action in driving down costs and promoting green energy alternatives.

Our commitment to community development was further underscored by the flourishing of SOPEC's community grant program. In 2023, we distributed community grant funds to support local projects, such as the improvement of the City of Belpre's community pool, the installation of the Village of Rio Grande's electric vehicle chargers, and the supporting of the Old North Dayton access road project to prevent the need for residents to drive through a Superfund site to get to their homes, making a meaningful impact on the communities we serve. Additionally, SOPEC was awarded over half a million dollars federal in grants during 2023, with an additional \$12 million secured in early 2024. These funds will be instrumental in continuing our work in renewable energy, efficiency, and the electrification of the transportation sector.

SOPEC also played a pivotal role in the expansion of electric vehicle and solar infrastructure across the state, positioning Ohio as a leader in sustainable energy initiatives. Our work in this area is a critical component of our broader strategy to create a resilient and sustainable energy future for all Ohioans.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2023, we are more energized than ever to continue our work together, driving innovation and sustainability across the state. Thank you for your unwavering support and partnership.

Sincerely,  
Luke Sulfridge, Executive Director, SOPEC

## Our 2023 Board

**Chris Chmiel**, Chair

**Gary Goosman**, Treasurer

**Steve Patterson**, Vice Chair

**Susan Miller**, Secretary

**David Ferguson, Austin Davis, Tim Pritchard, Josh Rauch, Bev Trovato, Josué Salmeron, Matt Joseph, Craig Butler, Greg Fraunfelter, Chad Hubbard**



# Our Growth

## Our Staff



**Luke Sulfridge**  
Executive Director



**Phil Leppa**  
Deputy Director & In-House Counsel



**Erin Stevens**  
Southeast Ohio Community Liaison



**Mat Roberts**  
Director of Special Programs



**Emily Bails**  
Programs Associate



**Dana Vingris**  
Director of Grants and Development



**Melissa Dalton**  
Director of Administration



**Chloe Musick**  
Director of Public Affairs and Marketing



**Jennifer McMillin**  
Regional Director of Northeast Ohio

Everyone in the second row joined in 2023!



## Key Events Attended in 2023

Mayor's Partnership for Progress • Ohio Energy Conference • MORPC Summit on Sustainability  
Cleveland Sustainability Summit • Decarbonization Summit • Midwest Sustainability Summit  
Ohio City and County Management Association • BYG Luncheons • PIVOT Conference  
PJM Cities and Communities Coalition • Appalachian Energy Summit  
IEEFA Energy Finance Conference • ARC Appalachia Rises Conference  
Appalachian Studies Association • Great Miami Riverway Summit  
Appalachian Ohio State of the Region

**12**

conferences and major events attended

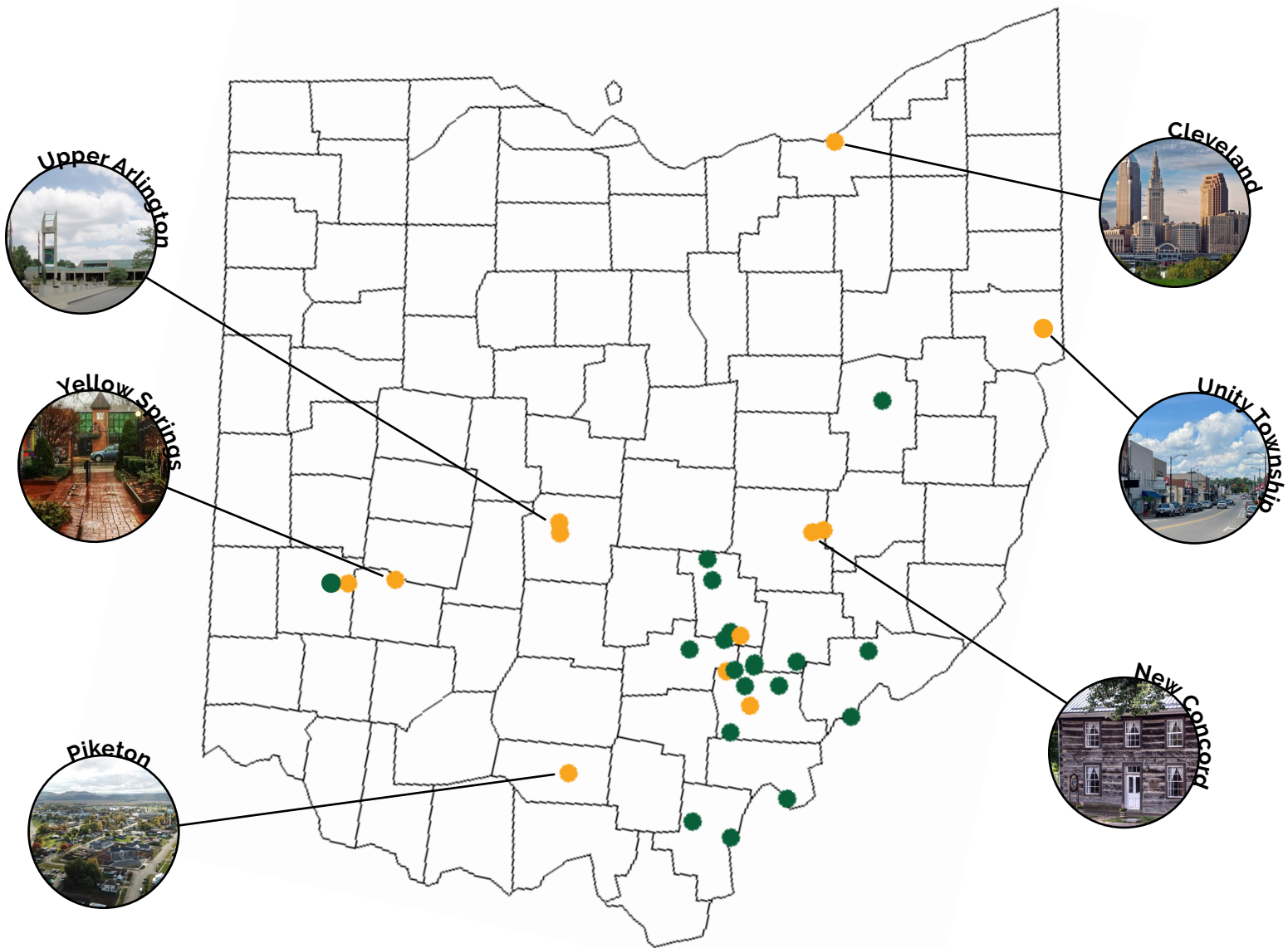
**2**

grants submitted on behalf of other communities

**61**

city council and chamber of commerce meetings attended

# Our Members



Albany • Amesville • Athens • Athens County • **Athens-Hocking Solid Waste District** • Belpre  
Buchtel • Chauncey • Chesterhill • **Cleveland** • Dayton • **Five Rivers MetroParks** • Gallipolis  
Glenford • **Hemlock** • **Hocking Conservancy District** • Jacksonville • Logan • Lowell  
**Marble Cliff** • Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District • **New Concord** • New Straitsville  
**Norwich** • **Piketon** • Racine • Rio Grande • **Riverside** • Shawnee • Somerset • Syracuse Racine  
Regional Sewer District • Trimble • **Unity Township** • **Upper Arlington** • **Yellow Springs**

Members that joined SOPEC in 2023 are represented by orange dots and bolded text.

# Community Choice Aggregation

**687**

billion kWh  
of electricity provided

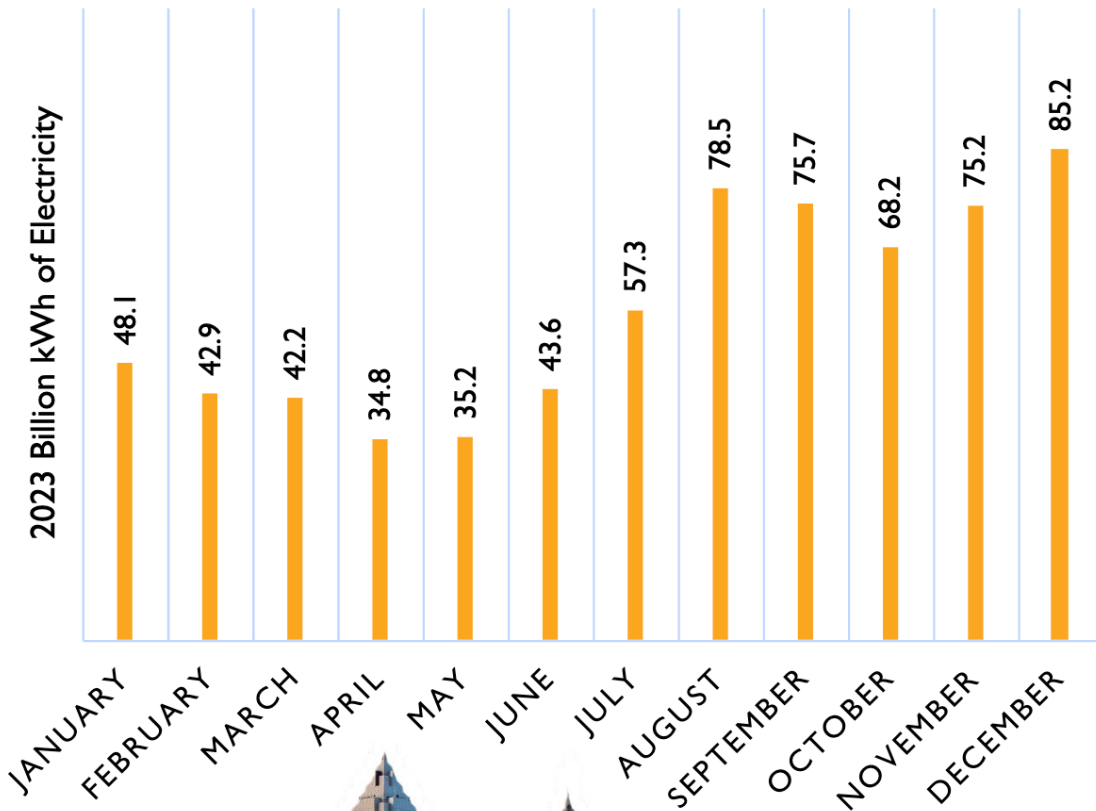
**\$14**

million  
in estimated combined  
savings against the SSO

**108k**

accounts served

Energy Consumption in 2023



SOPEC Member,  
Cleveland, Ohio



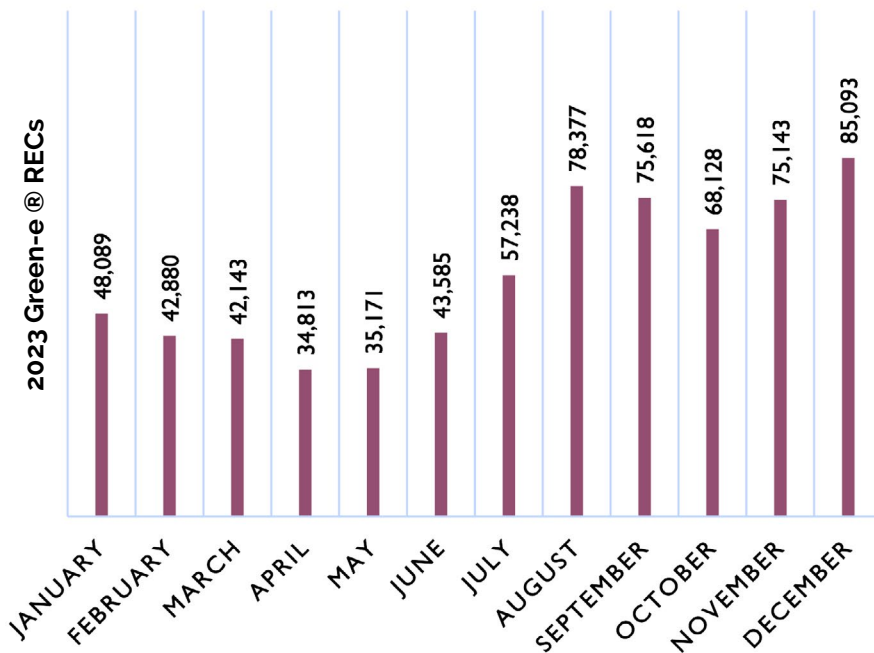
- 2014**  
Amesville  
Athens  
Athens County
- 2015**  
Trimble
- 2016**  
Buchtel
- 2017**  
Chauncey  
New Straitsville  
Shawnee  
Somerset
- 2018**  
Logan
- 2019**  
Albany  
Glenford  
Jacksonville  
Racine
- 2020**  
Belpre  
Chesterhill  
Gallipolis  
Lowell  
Syracuse Racine  
Regional Sewer District  
Rio Grande
- 2021**  
Dayton  
Muskingum Watershed  
Conservancy District
- 2023**  
Athens-Hocking Solid  
Waste District  
Cleveland  
Five Rivers MetroParks  
Hemlock  
Hocking Conservancy  
District  
Marble Cliff  
New Concord  
Norwich  
Piketon  
Riverside  
Unity Township  
Upper Arlington  
Yellow Springs

# Community Choice Aggregation

## What is a Green-e® Renewable Energy Credit?

A renewable energy certificate (REC) represents the property rights to the environmental, social, and other non-power attributes of renewable electricity generation. RECs are issued when one megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity is generated and delivered to the electricity grid from a renewable energy resource. Because the physical electricity we receive through the utility grid says nothing of its origin or how it was generated, RECs play an important role in accounting, tracking, and assigning ownership to renewable electricity generation and use. Overall, their use supports sustainable energy efforts and increase grid resiliency through diversification of assets.

### Renewable Energy Credits Purchased in 2023



Based on national electricity emissions, SOPEC's purchase of green power is:

Equivalent to greenhouse gas emissions from:

**66**  
million

gasoline-powered passenger vehicles driven for one year

Equivalent to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from:

**332**  
billion

pounds of coal burned

Equivalent to carbon sequestered by:

**354**  
million

acres of U.S. forests in one year

Equivalent to the amount of green power to support

**1.9**  
trillion

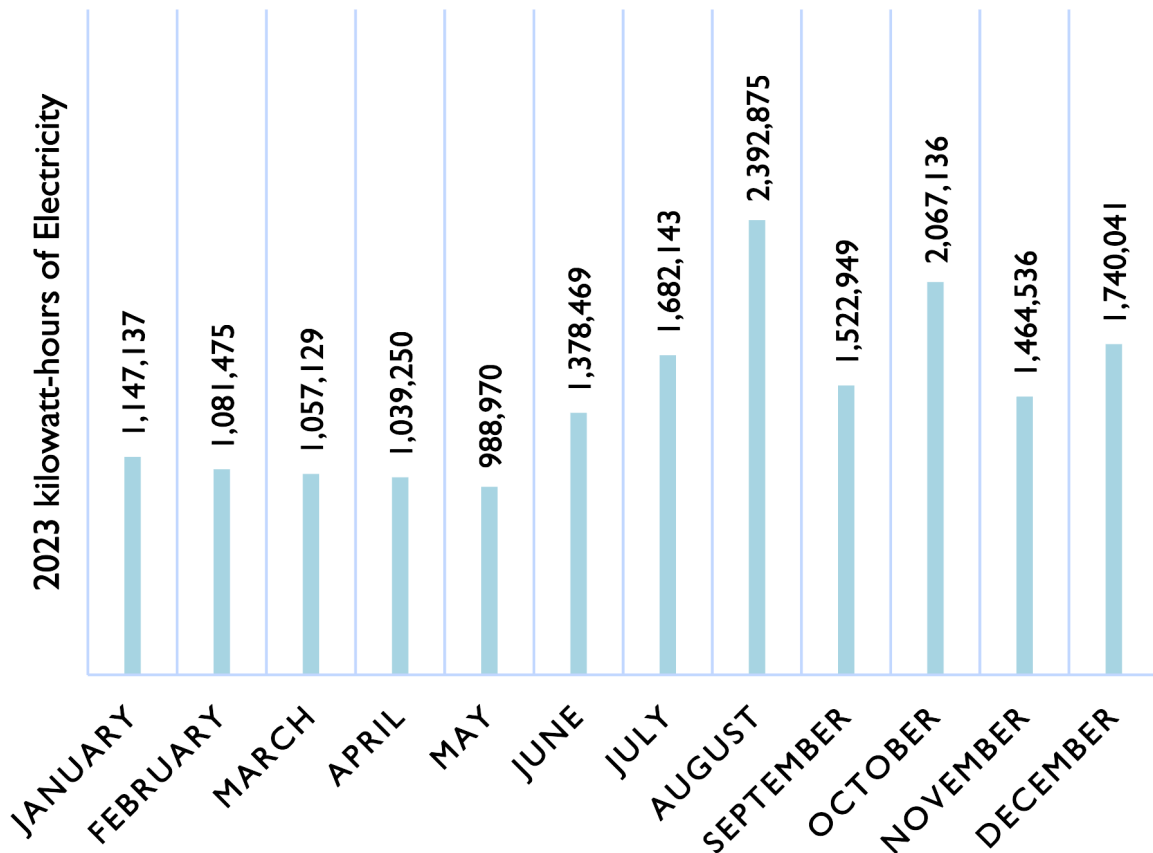
miles driven by an electric vehicle

# Public Pricing Program

The Public Pricing Program (P3) provides a competitive, opt-in electric supply rate for public-sector customers, including local governments (cities, villages, counties, townships), political subdivisions of Ohio, non-profit and faith-based organizations, and other public agencies with service located in a SOPEC member community. Any SOPEC member political subdivisions of Ohio can join, too.

The P3 helps our public-serving customers achieve a competitive electric supply rate on their electric bill - an estimated average of 28% lower than the current SOPEC opt-out electric aggregation rate in Southeast Ohio.

Energy Consumption by the Public Pricing Program in 2023



**28**  
customers  
served

**17.6 million**  
kWh  
provided

**541**  
accounts  
served

# Supporting our Members

## What are Community Grants?

Member communities of SOPEC with an active opt-out electric aggregation program have the option to participate in the SOPEC Community Grant Program, which provides funding for local governments to invest in energy efficiency measures and sustainable energy projects. Typically member communities request the funds when they have a project ready for funding. In the past, communities have used their funds for LED lighting upgrades, EV chargers, and more.

### Community Grant Program Funds Breakdown:

**70%** - Per meter basis for member communities

**20%** - Revolving loan fund

**10%** - Regional grant bucket

## What is the Athens Carbon Fee?

On May 8, 2018, voters in the City of Athens, Ohio, approved a first-of-its-kind fee to be added to the electric bill of any residential and small business enrolled in the SOPEC Electric Aggregation Program. The measure was approved with 76% of voters in favor of the Athens Carbon Fee – which would be officially added to the supply contract for Athens' customers enrolled in the 2020 electric aggregation program rate.

In late 2022, the City of Athens made its first request for the Athens Eastside Solar Project. The initial \$77,740.55 was provided to enhance the electric grid's capabilities to accept solar power production from a 2.123 MW DC of installed solar arrays that began providing new, sustainable power for the Athens Wastewater Treatment Plant, the Athens City Pool, and the Athens Community Center in late 2023. A ribbon-cutting event celebrating the final and largest solar array getting turned on was held on February 8, 2024.

The fund collects roughly \$100,000 per year from residential and small commercial customers enrolled in the Athens electric aggregation program and has over \$247,000 as of March 2024. The average residential customer pays less than \$2 per month for the Athens Carbon Fee. This fee is included in the generation/supply rate provided by AEP Energy, SOPEC's supply partner, on one's AEP Ohio bill.



**SOPEC attends ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of the Eastside Solar Project, which included the construction of three solar arrays to offset power at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, Athens Community Center, and Athens City Pool in Athens, Ohio.**

# Community Grants

## City of Belpre | \$15,000

The City of Belpre was awarded a community grant to support a new variable flow drive motor and water chemistry controller for its community pool in Belpre's Civitan Park. The new parts funded by the community grant will not only fix the pool, but also improve its overall energy efficiency.

## City of Gallipolis | \$9,167

The community grant awarded to the City of Gallipolis will support the purchase of a new pump for its municipal pool, which will not only allow the community to utilize the pool in the summer, but also improve the pool's overall energy efficiency.

## Village of Rio Grande | \$1,472

SOPEC previously provided the Village of Rio Grande with a Level 2 EV charger. On May 4, 2023, the SOPEC General Assembly approved a community grant of \$1,472 for the additional assistance of the installation of the Level 2 charger.

## City of Dayton | \$32,656

The City of Dayton utilized approximately \$6,000 of its community grant funds for a Sustainability Fellow named Katy Buddelmeyer, to carry forward the LEED Platinum certification process. The program required Dayton to benchmark a wide variety of metrics focused on sustainable practices.

Approximately, \$27,000 to support the closing of the Valleycrest landfill access road and the reopening of the main stretch of Valleycrest Drive, allowing Dayton residents a safe route to their home that avoids traveling through landfill property.

The City of Belpre accepts its community grant with council member Dave Ferguson, Mayor Susan Abdella, council member Lyndsay Dennis, and outgoing Mayor Mike Lorentz

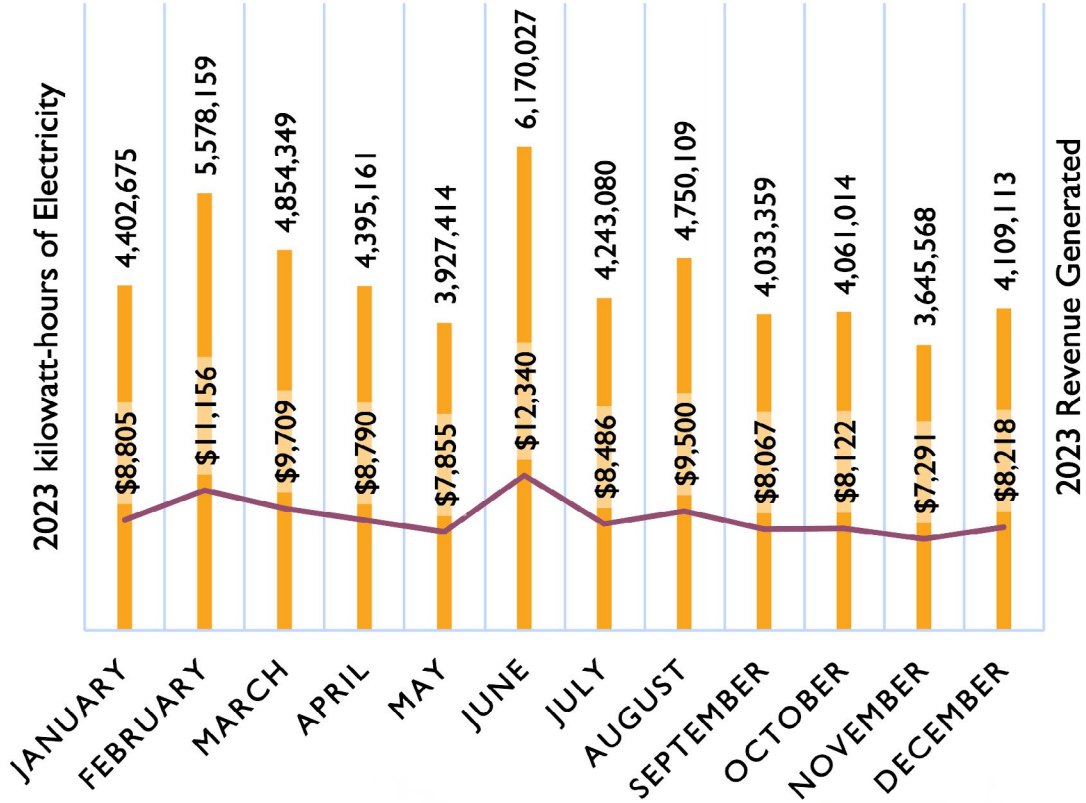


Gallipolis Municipal Pool, photo courtesy of the City of Gallipolis



# Athens Carbon Fee

An Overview of the Athens Carbon Fee in 2023



**\$108**

thousand

revenue generated  
in 2023

**54**

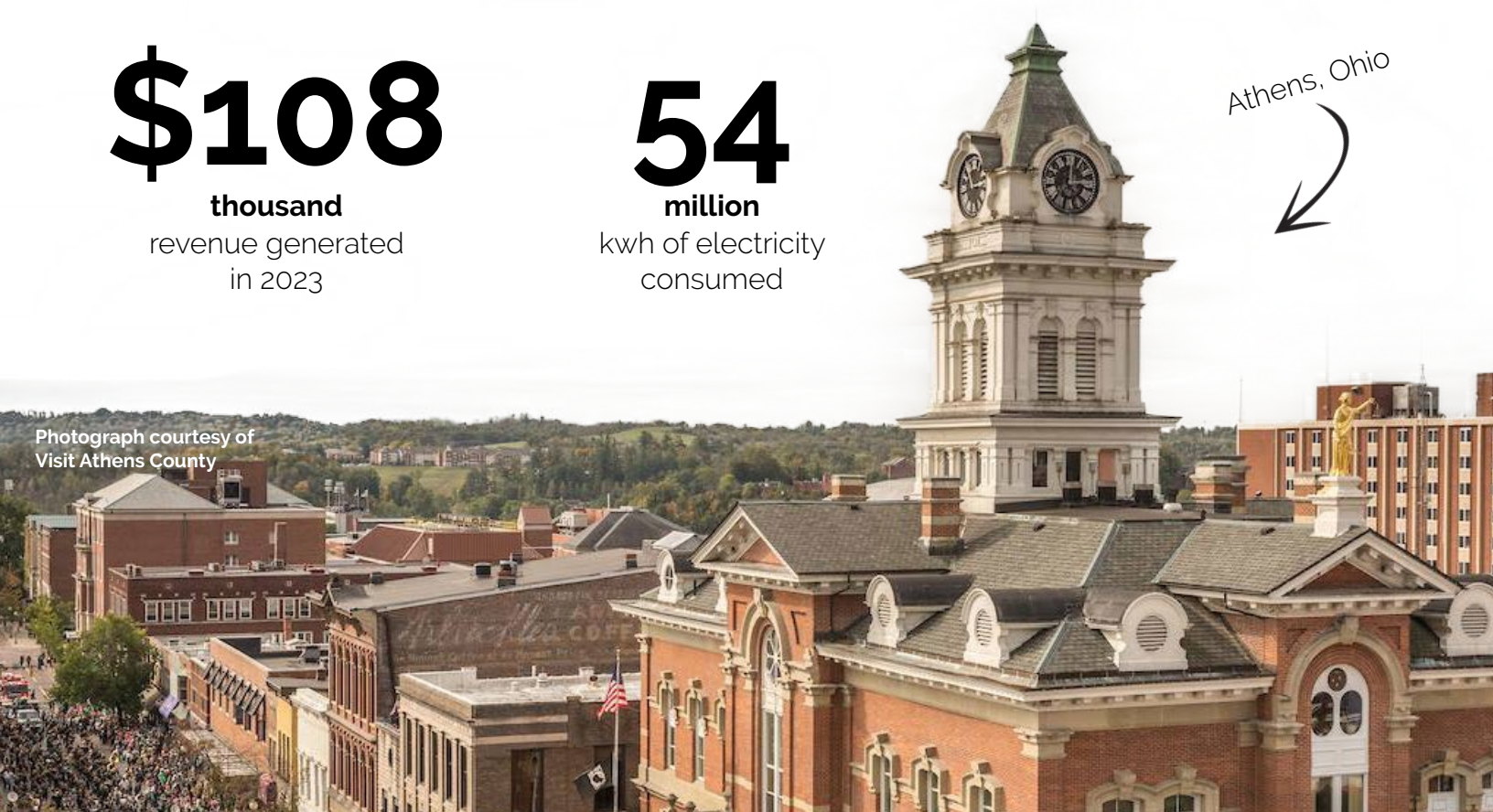
million

kwh of electricity  
consumed

Athens, Ohio



Photograph courtesy of  
Visit Athens County



# City of Dayton earns *LEED for Cities Platinum*

LEED for Cities and Communities is the leading global rating system and certification program for evaluating the sustainability and quality of life in a city or community. Dayton is the first city in Ohio, and just one of several across the nation, to earn a LEED for Cities Platinum status from the U.S. Green Building Council. The City of Dayton utilized approximately \$6,000 of its community grant funds for a Sustainability Fellow named Katy Buddelmeyer, to carry forward the LEED certification process. The program required Dayton to benchmark a wide variety of metrics to establish a baseline of performance regarding integrative planning processes, natural systems and ecology, transportation and land use, water efficiency, energy and greenhouse gas emissions, materials and resources, and overall quality of life within the city limits. Parallel to the benchmarking effort, Dayton continued to make progress in improving these performance indicators, with the SOPEC Electric Aggregation Program providing a significant boost in supporting energy and greenhouse gas emission reductions.

**“We appreciate SOPEC’s work to build a more sustainable energy infrastructure in the region.”**

**-Shelley Dickstein,  
City Manager, City of Dayton**

# 1<sup>st</sup>

**city in Ohio to earn  
LEED for Cities  
Platinum certification**



**The SOPEC Team and key leaders in the City of Dayton including, Commissioner Matt Joseph, Dayton Energy Collaborative’s Aileen Hull, City Manager Shelley Dickstein, Sustainability Fellow Katy Buddelmeyer, Mayor Jeffrey J. Mims Jr., and City of Dayton Sustainability Manager Meg Maloney celebrate LEED for Cities Platinum.**

# SolSmart

## What is SolSmart?

The SolSmart program has two key parts. First, the program provides no-cost technical assistance to help local governments follow national best practices to expand solar energy use in their jurisdictions. Second, it recognizes and celebrates these communities with SolSmart designations of Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze.

## How does SOPEC help communities with SolSmart?

- helping with their SolSmart scorecard
- highlighting the prerequisites and potential credits for Silver and Gold designation statuses
- collecting permitting and inspection training
- organizing press releases for solar projects
- creating a Solar Step by Step Guide template that could be customized for each community
- organizing a list of solar installers in the area and state policies

## Meet the SOPEC and SolSmart communities:

- Amesville (Gold, 2023)
- Athens (Gold, 2023)
- Athens County (Bronze, 2017)
- Cleveland (Bronze, 2017)
- Somerset (Bronze, 2017)
- Upper Arlington (Gold, 2022)

## Did you know?

- Amesville is the smallest SolSmart designee in the nation
- Both Amesville and Athens elected to go straight from Bronze to Gold status without submitting for Silver separately



# Federal Grants

## Overview

In 2023, SOPEC expanded organizational capacity to support a dedicated grant effort and development strategy that would capitalize on an influx of federal funding opportunities advancing clean energy resulting from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act. The strategy centers around serving our communities and increasing access to resources and funding opportunities for our membership that assist in advancing member sustainability goals.

The SOPEC grant program emphasizes the value of a collective and aims to increase the ability and capacity of our membership to apply for and receive funding that would be difficult and often unattainable without outside support. The SOPEC grants team evaluates available grant programs and selects opportunities that reflect the needs and interests of our communities and political subdivisions. In 2023, this included grants supporting multi-region green infrastructure projects, technical assistance programs supporting the advancement of clean energy for municipalities and small businesses, and planning grants aiming to reduce energy burden for our members and their residents.

Moving forward, SOPEC will continue its commitment to securing funding and resources that advance a clean, sustainable, and resilient future for those we serve.

**Grants  
Impact**

**26**

proposed community  
partnerships in grant  
proposals

**30**

proposed program  
partnerships in grant  
proposals

**10**

proposed program  
stakeholders in grant  
proposals



# Federal Grants

## Renewable Energy Development Assistance

**\$100,000** awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture

This program will...

- Provide free on-site solar assessments to rural, small businesses and agricultural producers in Ohio, including urban farms that meet the criteria.
- Outline the economic, market, technical, financial, and management feasibility of a proposed solar installation

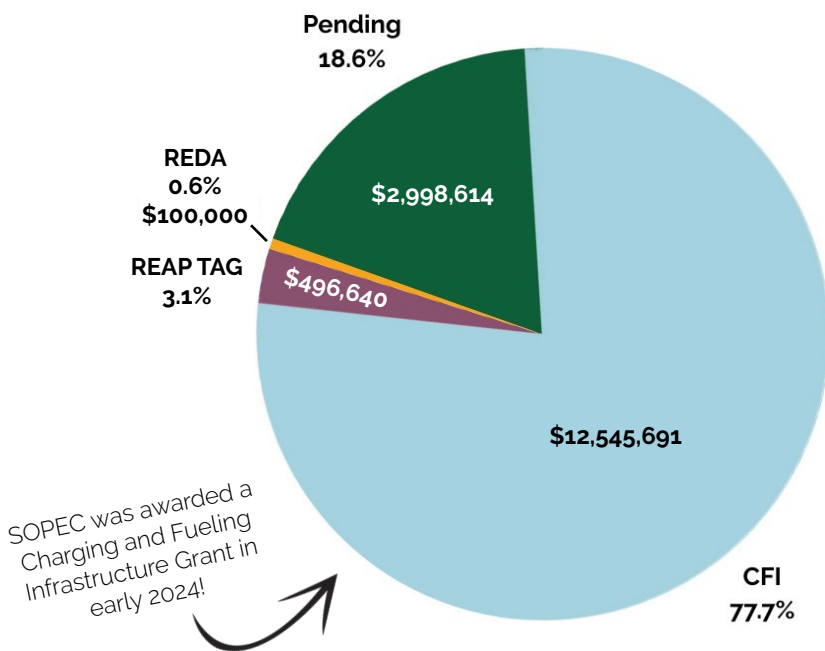
## Rural Energy for America Program Technical Assistance Grant

**\$496,640** awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture

The program will...

- Partner with Rural Action and leverage existing SOPEC and RA programs to identify applicants
- Support 12% of the qualified applicant pool
- Target REAP projects that will request \$20,000 or less
- Focus on applicants in distressed and disadvantaged communities

## Grant Activity in 2023



# Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

As part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Discretionary Grant Program, the Southeast to Southwest Ohio Responsive Interregional Deployment of Electrification Solutions (RIDES) program, funded in 2024, aims to expand electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure in southeast and southwest Ohio communities to support travel and tourism throughout the region that had not been previously possible.

**50**

charging stations

**16**

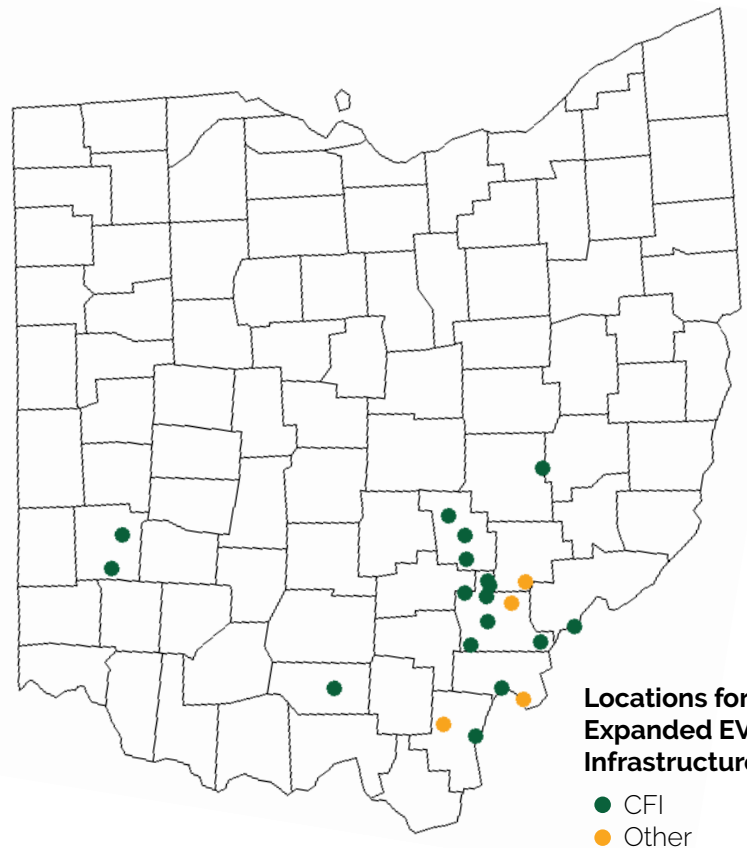
partner communities

**200**

Level 2 charging ports

**30**

Level 3 charging ports



An EV charges at the Village of Rio Grande's Level 2 charger.



# Renewable Energy Development Assistance Grant

SOPEC's Solar Access Pathways program, supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Renewable Energy Development Assistance (REDA) grant, continued to provide consumer-focused education and baseline feasibility studies for clients interested in pursuing the production of on-site solar power for their rural small business or agricultural operation, including urban farms that meet the criteria. Each qualified client was visited by one of the program's solar assessment providers and, after the on-site solar assessment, received a report that outlined the economic, market, technical, financial, and management feasibility of a proposed solar PV (renewable energy) project. SOPEC's goal with this program is for clients to feel more empowered and informed to select a vendor and move forward on a solar investment.



**By the Numbers**

**\$72,254**

in the federal share provided for the program

**54**

solar assessments  
conducted

**29**

counties in Ohio  
assessments were  
conducted

**2,650 kW**

of proposed solar capacity from assessments

# Contact Us

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Cover Photo:  
Tappan Lake, Harrison County, Ohio,  
Part of the Muskingum Watershed  
Conservancy District