

## **Vendor Engagement**

As the Atlanta BBC (“**ABBC**”) increases the demand market for energy and water efficiency (“**EE**”) retrofit equipment (in the participants) by creating awareness of energy savings potential through free building assessments, educational opportunities, and networking events, encouraging and engaging the supply market for EE retrofit equipment and services becomes an increasingly important task. The ABBC’s role as facilitator of the relationships between participants and vendors requires setting the stage for vendor engagement: the ABBC must create various avenues and venues for these relationships to develop as well as create a forum for business development for vendors, which will be the focus of this section.

## **Buyer’s Guide**

In its efforts to further engage vendors in the program, the ABBC intends to create a Buyer’s Guide that provides an overview of various EE retrofitting topics for building owners. In order to have such an overview available, the ABBC has created an extensive list of the various primary substantive components of an EE retrofit project, with those substantive areas forming the topics for chapters in the guide. The ABBC has solicited product manufacturers, vendors, and other subject matter experts to author chapters for the Buyer’s Guide in their specific areas of specialty (e.g., Acuity Brands, an ABBC sponsor, will author a chapter focusing on energy efficient lighting solutions). The chapters will provide valuable information such as current EE technologies and basic terms, ways to assess if your building is a candidate for an EE retrofit, and case studies of a typical successful retrofit from the building owner’s perspective. The chapter would also include resources for support, including information about vendors and manufacturers.

By engaging the vendors to provide noncommercial content for the Buyer’s Guide, participants will not only become more knowledgeable about specific EE retrofitting topics and whether they will pursue certain types of EE retrofits, but will also learn about what types of EE equipment the vendors provide and who to contact with questions. The Buyer’s Guide provides an additional opportunity for vendors to increase their market exposure to ABBC participants while giving the participants invaluable knowledge about the EE retrofitting process.

## **“Meet Your Match” Event – Summer 2012**

Once the participants have had the opportunity to learn about the EE technologies available in the market for their potential EE retrofitting projects and coinciding with their receipt of their building’s assessment report, the ABBC organized an event where building owners could interact with local service providers, industry professionals, and vendors. To create such an opportunity, the ABBC launched its first “Meet Your Match” event in June 2012, bringing together approximately 250 participants and experts to discuss EE products and services available for the participants’ recommended EE retrofits. During the event, participants were able to sit with a vendor for a five minute “table date” in which the vendor would educate the participant on its products and services, hoping to set the stage for the participants’ EE project needs. In so doing, “Meet Your Match” provides vendors and participants a platform to discuss EE equipment for the recommended retrofits outlined in the participants’ audits, both increasing the vendors’ business opportunities by pitching their

products and services to each participant in attendance and the participants' opportunity to see which vendor works best for their project.

### **Lunch and Learns**

Another method for engaging vendors with the ABBC and its participants beyond the Meet Your Match event is through Lunch and Learns targeted specifically for vendors. As previously discussed, Lunch and Learns provide participants the opportunity hear expert panelists discuss a particular EE subject. The Lunch and Learns also provided the opportunity for vendors, who often are the presenting panelists, to interact with participants, allowing participants to seek advice from vendors in the initial phases of joining the ABBC.

Currently, the ABBC is exploring another innovative way to use Lunch and Learns as an engagement tool for vendors: to provide Lunch and Learns for vendors in order to introduce them to the Skye Energy Data Management System. As the first phase participants have received their building assessments and the energy usage data is beginning to accrue, Skye Energy Data Management System will become an increasing important part of the implementation of the ABBC. Skye Energy System has substantial value to vendors inherently, as it provides all the data on participants' energy usage in one place, allowing vendors to determine immediately whether a project is an actual prospect without having to go through the cold calling process. This system allows vendors to reduce transaction costs by reducing their dependence on the cold calling process and time spent on the phone, trying to find new leads. Ideally, once the vendors learn how to effectively use the Skye Energy software following the Lunch and Learn, they would use it to interact with the ABBC participants. Vendors would be able look at the energy usage data to determine what types of EE retrofits may be implemented and when the participant may begin such EE retrofits. Based on the alignments between participant needs and vendor EE equipment offerings, the vendors would decide which participants they may have a "fit" with and begin building the relationship from that point. If adopted, the ABBC would provide the opportunity for the relationships to be created, but the vendors and participants would be the parties actually responsible for making the decisions relating to the EE retrofit equipment used for the projects.

### **Conclusion**

Maintaining solid vendor engagement with the participants becomes increasingly necessary as participants start the building assessment process and receive the completed audits. Participants are given a list of recommendations to provide increased energy savings through specific EE measures. In order for vendors to provide the supply of EE equipment demanded, vendors require methods of relationship building with the participants. The ABBC, in its facilitating role, provides such opportunities for a vendor to become engaged in the program and increase its business potential among program participants.