Harris County Schools

Over the last several years, Joel Lowry from ABM Building & Energy Solutions (ABES) had been working hard to develop a Bundled Energy Solutions that met the financial, operational and sustainability goals of Harris County Schools. With perseverance, OneABM collaboration, and some good timing, Joel’s persistence eventually paid off big!

Joel had built a long-standing relationship with several people at Southern Management, including Trey Brock. Trey let him know that he would happy to help Joel get involved with Harris County when the time was right. So earlier this year, when it was determined the time was finally right, Joel ignited the collaboration process!

Joel and ABES employee Frank Foster called a meeting with Trey and Harris County executives, including Arville Moody as part of the Harris maintenance team to get the ball rolling. Together, they determined Harris County’s challenges were caused by aging equipment at several of the schools. There was also concern about the environmental impact of this obsolete equipment. Additionally, they determined the county had no funds available for the upgrades and the financial model had to pay for the new equipment exclusively through energy savings.

After several verification meetings bringing in Clint Knudson from ABES, the scope was developed to include a self-funded $5.5M project that would pay for itself through guaranteed energy savings. Then came a potential setback – the possibility of school closures meant the project had to be postponed for a year, or scaled back significantly to only $2M, which would have a lot less impact to the district.

Joel, used to perseverance, relied on collaboration of the team once again to find a strategy to successfully resolve the issue. Keith Cowne from ABES played a critical role here, facilitating a one-on-one meeting with the superintendent. After that meeting, followed by a meeting with all of the ABM players and the school district, the project was back on track for the original amount and approved by the board within a couple of weeks!

The case study in Energy Manager Today magazine features other examples of schools funding their improvements through guaranteed energy savings is a testimony to ABM’s national effort towards energy performance contracting.
Congratulations to Joel, and the whole ABM team for making this deal happen despite the obstacles! It is a testament to the fact that teamwork and collaboration continue to help build value for our clients -- not only for Harris County, but for many other schools across the country that are leveraging our capabilities to “Solve One More” challenge AND reduce their utility bills significantly!”