How small U.S. grants cut energy costs

special writer

Community leaders in southeastern
Michigan are mourning the end of a
federal program which produced several energy-avolvig ideas.

"We were sorry to see the program
end. Our project was very successful,"
said Genevieve Rakocy of Wayne County Catholic Social Services. Her oneyear, \$12,000 project cut energy bills
for Detroit bomcowners and netted
several jobs.
"People around here look more kindly toward financing solar retrofits,
thanks to that program," added Cynthia Conkiln of the Ann Arbor community development department.

nity development department.

THEY SPOKE fondly of the U.S. De-

partment of Energy's Appropriate
Technology Small Grants Program.
Hatched in 1978 by the Carter Administration, Appropriate Technology
(called "AT") was a strategy of funding
small-scale energy projects aimed at
making the nation energy independent.
The grant-glving stage eneed in 1981.
Congress currently is funding only
technical assistance and Information
activities.
Wheterical "Activities"

activities.

What actually was accomplished?

In four years, the Department of Energy funneled \$2.7. million in AT grants in amounts up to \$30,000 to individuals and groups with energy-asyling ideas. The theory was that local groups were best able to solve local problems.

The aim was to encourage more "elegant" and "appropriate" solutions to conserving energy by using technologies and materials that meshed well

Good Day!



with local needs add resources.

ACCORDING TO Rakocy, Catholic
Social Services managed to solve two
local problems with its federal grant.

"We were able to provide job train
of the second conservation," and omner
to the second conservation," she said.
Volunteers from Hamtramck and Highland Park hejed Detroit bomeowners
install insulation, weatherstripping and
furnace flue dampers.

A second result was that some of the
trained volunteers were able to step
into full-time jobs.

AT grants to Ann Arbor totaled near-

into full-time jobs.

AT grants to Ann Arbor totaled nearly \$50,000. They helped fund solar and conservation retrofits for five low-income housing units.

"We showed that solar technology can work in rehab projects," Conklin said. "Over all, the program helped lo-cal people try out ideas in their own communities."

ELSEWHERE in the nation, 2,058
AT grants were awarded in several basic categories: conservation, solar blomass, geothermal, bydropower, integrated systems and information-education. They went not only to local government and non-profit groups but to individuals and small businesses as

well.

Among 25 Michigan projects were an advanced greenhouse with water ceiling, a shower waste heat recouperator, an electric producing wind turbine demonstration, and a method to pro-

How many will ever hit the commer-

How many will ever hit the commer-cial market?
It's hard to tell, answered Tom Stan-ton, director of the Michigan Energy Administration clearinghouse. "Some projects are coming onto the market right now Of course, not all of the proje-cial comments of the comments of the com-"I believe the program money was well spent. We saw that there are so many opportunities to switch technology to small appropriate uses."
Figures on actual dollars aswed by AT grants are unavailable. But the De-partment of Energy calculated that every \$2 of federal assistance attract-ed \$1 from non-federal sources be-tween fiscal 1978 and 1983.

A FREQUENT criticism is that the AT program ended too soon.

Ann Arbor administrator Conklin said an influx of government funds is necessary to encourage a national movement toward energy independence. "Before, we had a combined strategy on national and state levels to

encourage energy innovation and commercialization," she said. "Now that has all ended."
The state has a series of 13 free self-help publications describing the experiences of, and lessons learned by, AT grantees. The pamphlets describe methods of dealing with invalation and moisture in the home, heat recovery techniques and alternative heating options such as sunspaces.
A limited number of these publications may be requested from the Michigan Energy Administration at 1-800-192-4704.
In addition, a databank on all projects in the AT program is maintained by the National Appropriate Technology Assistance Service (NATAS) in Butte, Monlana, Information about in-dividual AT projects, along with energy restructives, selectific and technical

dividual AT projects, along with energy engineering, scientific and technical assistance, may be obtained by calling 1-800-428-2525.

Next: The Michigan energy devel-opment grant program awarded \$200,000 to three Michigan inventors in 1982.

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