DEcision support tools needed for renewable energy development in small rural and remote municipalities

Ken Swanson
Renewable Energy Project Coordinator,
Municipality of Norsjö, Sweden

ABSTRACT
The move to more sustainable and climate friendly energy solutions is generally accepted as good and necessary but in small rural and remote municipalities this is not always enough to make the move to these renewable energy alternatives. As with any decision in these often resource-limited communities struggling with rural decay and other issues of survivability, any development effort always comes down to financial questions, namely “what is the return on the investment made?”

We know that energy is always a huge economic component in any community big or small so localised production is usually very beneficial. When looking at development efforts such as locally produced energy versus imported energy, the benefits are often stated in multiplier effects and other metrics usually supported by in-depth, detailed input-output studies that require large resources and significant amounts of time to complete. Most often, it is not feasible for small rural and remote communities to complete such analysis due to resource constraints. With this in mind, a suite of relatively generic decision support tools would be extremely valuable in assisting small rural and remote municipalities in making the move to more sustainable and climate friendly energy solutions on the basis of economic impact..

Keywords: Decision support tools, localised production, renewable energy, remote communities