

Plans for supercomputer include energy efficiency

By The Associated Press

CHEYENNE - Developers of a proposed climate-modeling supercomputer said they have been studying ways to make the project environmentally friendly as they wait for approval from the National Science Foundation.

After delaying a decision on the project in December, a National Science Foundation geosciences committee plans to discuss the \$60 million Cheyenne supercomputer in mid-April when it receives a report from an advisory board, said Jarvis Moyers, the foundation's assistant director of geosciences.

Moyers said the committee could approve the project at its April 16 meeting or could wait another month.

"The major issues are what are the needs and how much are they going to cost," Moyers said Tuesday.

In the meantime, designers are exploring ways the project could harness geothermal and solar power for needs such as heating and cooling the building, said Krista Laursen, project director for the National Center for Atmospheric Research.

Laursen said the Boulder, Colo.-based center held a meeting to generate ideas with representatives from the University of Wyoming, the nonprofit business-development group Cheyenne LEADS and the Wyoming Business Council. The 100,000-square-foot structure, which is slated for the North Range Business Park, would consume quite a bit of energy if the center doesn't use efficient technology, she said.

"We really want to maximize efficiency and have been told that using a maximum efficiency structure will probably bring costs down," Laursen said.

Laursen said the center was planning to apply for LEED certification, a national benchmark given by the U.S. Green Building Council for designing, constructing and operating green buildings.

She said the center is shopping for architectural and engineering firms to design and construct the project. The long list of candidates includes some Rocky Mountain-area firms, Laursen said.

Wyoming state leaders and the Cheyenne-area business community have embraced the project since the center announced in January 2007 that it planned to place the 15,000-square-foot supercomputer in Cheyenne.

The Wyoming Legislature appropriated \$21 million last year for the facility's construction. The University of Wyoming pledged \$2 million.

The project is expected to bring at least 40 employees to Cheyenne and has been widely hailed as a project that could trigger more tech development in southeastern Wyoming.

The latest estimates call for the supercomputer to become operational in May 2012, as much as two years later than originally predicted.