

White Paper – Weatherization Assistance Program and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Implementation Additional Considerations

Prepared for Governor Freudenthal by the Department of Family Services,

Tony Lewis, Director, February 20, 2009

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Executive Summary

The Weatherization Assistance Program provides home repairs to low income families and individuals to reduce energy consumption and residential heating costs. The goals of the ARRA Weatherization funding include the ability to weatherize more homes, create local jobs and purchase the necessary equipment and vehicles to perform these tasks.

The ARRA funding for Wyoming is \$10,239,261. This represents an increase of approximately 850% for the Wyoming DOE Weatherization program. In addition to the ARRA funding, the agency will continue to receive annual DOE Weatherization appropriations of approximately \$1.5 million. Federal and State LIEAP dollars can also be used towards weatherization depending on funding availability.

The ability to develop and implement a plan that incorporates all funding sources, deadlines and ARRA expectations will be a challenge.

Implementation Issues

The agency continues to receive grant guidance from DOE. Of significance is that DOE has extended the performance time line on ARRA funds. The agency must obligate the funds by September 30, 2010 and has until March 31, 2012 to spend the funds.

The planning time line is as follows:

Date	Action Item
4/8	FFY 2010 State Plan completed
4/9 to 4/22	Subcommittee and Division draft ARRA plan and application
4/23 to 4/27	Division finish ARRA application and plan
4/28	ARRA application and plan and the FFY 2010 State Plan completed ARRA application and plan submitted to the Governor
4/29	Two public hearings held for the ARRA application and plan and the FFY 2010 State Plan
4/30	FFY 2010 State Plan due to DOE Weatherization Advisory Group Meeting
5/6	Anticipated submission date for ARRA application and plan to DOE
5/12	Last day for submission of ARRA application and plan to DOE

The agency has formed a Weatherization Advisory Group to help develop the implementation plan and monitor the ARRA activities. This group is comprised of representatives from current contractors, community colleges, Community College Commission, WCDA, private utility companies, local community members, community housing agencies, AARP, and the Wyoming Audubon Society, Wyoming Business Council, Department of Workforce Services, Governor's Office, etc. Three subcommittees have been established to work on client education/outreach, workforce development/training, and administration/oversight.

The plan must specifically address an increased production schedule; energy savings; training, technical assistance and monitoring activities; what remedies will be put in place to address subgrantees who fall below performance expectations; how subgrantees will increase staff; and demonstrate an expedited schedule.

Major challenges for successful implementation of the plan include the following:

- Determining the actual production schedule and timeline of ARRA funds, other DOE funds, and LIEAP weatherization funds and truly having the ability to meet the schedule of multiple simultaneous funding sources. We are working quickly to put this matrix together. It will provide the road map for planning activities.
- Monitoring: DOE requires a 5% on-site monitoring of units funded through ARRA. It is anticipated that this requirement will carry over to all DOE funded weatherization. Approximately 2,000 units could be weatherized by all DOE funding sources (regular grants and ARRA) from July 2009 through June 2012. This would mean the agency will need to monitor/audit 100 units. The agency has one full time equivalent position dedicated to both weatherization and LIEAP. Back up and support is also provided within the Division. The agency will put forth a monitoring plan, but it may or may not be acceptable to the DOE. We are exploring peer monitoring, virtual monitoring etc. Monitoring could likely be the biggest challenge for the agency.
- There is concern that some of the current providers may not be able to keep up with production requirements. Bringing new providers on board who *meet the competency criteria* for the Weatherization Assistance Program and do so in a *timely* fashion (to keep up with ARRA implementation requirements) will be difficult. We will release an RFP for providers in an effort to expand our pool of providers. In addition, the administration/oversight committee will work with the agency to track production and other performance trends to address issues before they get too large that a contract has to be terminated. The agency will also work with each subcontracting agency and the subcommittees to develop on-going workforce development and training partnerships.
- There will be a large purchase of equipment and vehicles. A process will need to be set up to track the purchases to ensure proper oversight and management.
- If the plan submitted does not meet the requirements of DOE, there will be opportunity to address the deficient areas of the plan. Ultimately, if the plan is not accepted by DOE, the agency will continue business as usual with the program.

