

WAP Corner:

Weatherization and the Green Economy

by Bob Scott

It's all around us. The political and media attention to the rapidly emerging green economy is growing by leaps and bounds. You have probably heard of at least one of the variations – Middle Class Weatherization, Recovery Through Retrofit, or Cash for Caulkers. The Weatherization network has been hearing about it since WAP was allocated \$5 Billion in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Long time energy advocates within the WAP have long promoted that Weatherization programs not only assist needy families by making their homes healthier and lowering fuel bills, but also provide jobs, reduce carbon emissions, and help support local economies. President Obama echoed those points in an interview with CBS News Anchor Katie Couric shortly before passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The \$5 Billion allocated to WAP through ARRA is more than just a means to weatherize hundreds of thousands of low-income homes. It is also an important step in training workers and moving to create a successful home energy retrofit market for all economic classes. If low-income Weatherization has been successful, then is it not reasonable to expand it to a broader market so that more energy can be saved, more people can be employed, and an even greater reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved? This sound logic is picking up momentum.

In October 2009, Vice-President Biden unveiled Recovery Through Retrofit, a report that “builds on the foundation laid in the Recovery Act to expand green job opportunities and boost energy savings by making homes more energy efficient.” Vice President Biden said, “Recovery Through Retrofit is a blueprint that will create good green jobs – jobs that can't be outsourced, and jobs that will be the cornerstones of a 21st-Century economy ... And, thanks to the Recovery Act's unprecedented investments in energy efficiency, we are making it easier for American families to retrofit their homes - helping them save money while reducing carbon emissions and creating a healthier environment for our

families.”

On November 18, 2009, David Leonhardt wrote an article in the *New York Times* “Economic Scene” section titled “A Stimulus That Could Save Money” about the prospect for a plan to weatherize non-low-income homes, concluding that “unlike many other climate-friendly policies, it would not cost money over the long term. Done right, cash for caulkers would be precisely the kind of stimulus that makes the most sense: spending money now to save money later.”

The recently published draft WAP National Training and Technical Assistance Plan helps bridge the potential for WAP to be a gateway to the green economy and new residential energy efficiency initiatives. The plan acknowledges that DOE intends to “ensure Recovery Act investments help build a better, stronger Weatherization network that provides the foundation needed for a national energy efficiency retrofit market.” The Training Plan notes that creating a well-trained workforce with opportunities for worker mobility and career pathways is a key component toward linking WAP with the emerging national retrofit industry.

The WAP network is already embedded in the biggest challenge of its 30+ year history, trying to increase its production significantly without any decline in work quality and energy savings, while dealing with the unexpected difficulties in program implementation, such as the Davis Bacon prevailing wages and Historic Preservation rules. The timing of asking the network to consider further expansion and to take a lead role in an emerging green economy seems very bad - to most it seems overwhelming. Everyone in the network has their hands full with the tasks already at hand. All the obstacles faced by the network in implementing ARRA funds slowed production and expenditures to the point where most states are just now beginning to meet anticipated monthly production goals. After the slow start, meeting ARRA goals within the grant time period would be a great success.

WAP providers are wondering what will happen when ARRA funds are expended. Do we return to a \$200 million program? Certainly nobody within the WAP network wants that to happen. The additional challenge is to position the WAP network to be a key player in the Recovery Through Retrofit initiative.

I asked a long time WAP professional about such prospects. Quite honestly, he sighed, shook his head, and expressed some doubts. But when we discussed it a bit more, we both realized that it is imperative that WAP sits at the table and becomes a leader on any such initiatives. It may not benefit only our own future as a continued expert and principal in residential energy efficiency, but also may be key to the success of the new programs. Weatherization professionals have been

passionate about developing and fine-tuning the science of weatherization over the years, and are concerned that a mass marketing of the “Weatherization” outside of the low-income WAP network may not carry over the highest standards for auditing, measure selection, diagnostics, and installations. The WAP network has the expertise to help guide the residential retrofit component of the emerging green economy, and it is our next challenge to position ourselves to do so. The WAP network can lend its vast collective experience in state of the art weatherization techniques that the network developed and help ensure the quality and integrity of future related initiatives. Both the low-income Weatherization Assistance Program and future broader residential energy efficiency undertakings will greatly benefit as a result.

Recovery Act Success Story: Ohio

by Rebecca Stewart

This is the first in a series of articles which will take a closer look at some state and local programs that have excelled in rolling out American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and rapidly ramped up their programs to meet the Obama Administration’s goals.

Ohio has long been a leader in providing Weatherization services. In fact, it was one of the first states to incorporate blower-door usage, combustion appliance analysis testing for efficiency and safety, and client education as an integral part of the program. The Ohio Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) has weatherized more than 304,000 dwellings in Ohio since 1977. After Weatherization, Ohio households that heat with natural gas reduce space heating consumption by an average of 24.7%, and electrically heated homes reduce usage on average of 13%. HWAP participants increased the percentage of utility bills that they pay and the rate of disconnections of utility service for this group decreased by 50%. This will result in a reduction of 376 million pounds of CO2 emissions, 840 thousand pounds of Nitrogen Oxide and 2.3 million pounds of Sulfur Oxide, which are all environmentally harmful emissions. It has become the model for Ohio’s utility companies when developing their own energy efficiency programs. With the state slated to receive \$266,781,409 in ARRA funds, Ohio was already

well positioned to ramp up its program, having established the Ohio Weatherization Training Center and having a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation program already in place.

As of early November 2009, 3,231 units have been weatherized using ARRA funds. Nick Milano, HWAP manager says, “We really have not had any specific issues with production.” This was accomplished through state-wide coordination of activities, training on a large scale, and a solid monitoring system that was already in place. In fact, all programs are monitored annually for cost-effectiveness and accountability by Department of Development staff. Periodically, the State contracts with independent experts for statewide program evaluations. The 2006 evaluation, which evaluated the 2003 program year, found that the program is cost-effective. Key Findings of the 2003 program year evaluation are:

- HWAP saves low-income households who heat with natural gas, a net average of 21% or \$213.62 (\$318 at today’s natural gas rates) per year.
- Participants that heat with electric saved an average of 7% or \$147.30 per year.
- The program itself, in terms of energy savings and total