

WAP Recovery Act Success Story: New Mexico

This is the ninth in a series of articles which will take a closer look at some state and local programs which have excelled in rolling out American Recovery and Reinvestment (ARRA) funds and rapidly ramped up their programs to meet the Obama Administration's goals. States already highlighted: Ohio, Colorado, Idaho, Washington, Mississippi, Massachusetts, Nevada, and North Dakota.

Written by Leann Holt, MFA Communications Manager

Edited by Rebecca Stewart, NASCSP

For decades, Juan DeLeon and his wife lived in a small South Valley home, surrounded by family and lifelong friends. But their home was poorly insulated and cold air poured in through door jambs and windows in the winter and leaked cooler air in the summer. Unbeknownst to Mr. DeLeon, his wife applied for weatherization services last fall. By the time local agency employees came to the house a few weeks later, Mrs. DeLeon had passed away. After a new furnace, refrigerator, doors and windows were installed, Mr. DeLeon said, "It's like my wife is still taking care of me from the grave." Mr. DeLeon said he was looking forward to having his family come to his renovated home for a warm holiday meal.

This is just one example of how the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA), which operates the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) in the state, makes a difference every day. New Mexico has been in the spotlight because of their successful program and especially since the infusion of \$26,855,604 in ARRA funding that MFA will use to weatherize almost 3,000 homes by March 31, 2012, in contrast to their FY 2009 DOE funding level of \$1,900,941. Despite this significant increase, the program is thriving.



MFA has dispersed 100 percent of the stimulus funding to three sub-contractors: Los Amigos Educational Resource Center in Santa Fe; Central New Mexico Housing Corporation in Albuquerque; CAA of Southern New Mexico in Las Cruces.

MFA and their service providers exceeded their year one production targets, weatherizing over 1,000 units. Indeed, the Department of Energy recently issued a press release congratulating MFA on being one of the country's weatherization leaders.

New Mexico grappled with many of the same the challenges as other states, due to Davis-Bacon Prevailing Wage issues, Historic Preservation and the general challenges of rapid expansion. MFA waited until the Department of Labor provided Davis-Bacon wage rates and worked cooperatively with the State Historic Preservation office to develop a working relationship that ensures that potentially historic homes are identified and retrofitted in accordance with federal law.

DOE recently awarded MFA nearly \$1 million in additional T & TA funding as part of the competitive Weatherization Training Centers grant. "This additional stimulus money will allow our weatherization program to grow into one of the best in the nation," said Lt. Governor Diane Denish, chairwoman of the MFA board. "The state-of-the-art training we can now provide to our weatherization professionals will not only increase the quality and cost efficiency of their work, but it will prepare them to move into the private weatherization market when the stimulus funding is gone."

MFA's weatherization training will be a multi-tiered approach that includes:

- On-line curriculum covering weatherization theory and procedure
- Classroom instruction using props to illustrate how energy flows throughout a house in a controlled environment
- House of Pressure, a miniature house that uses smoke and fans to demonstrate how everyday household
- Show how activities impact the energy efficiency of a home and other weatherization training props
- Field training rig containing every piece of equipment needed to weatherize homes in New Mexico
- On-site training providing hands-on training in typical New Mexico homes
- Client education on comprehensive energy efficiency practices

"This is another good investment in New Mexico's workforce with long-term benefits as we continue training for a green economy," said former Governor Toney Anaya, executive director of the New Mexico Office of Recovery and Reinvestment. "Stimulus funds continue to employ thousands, rebuild our infrastructure and support public schools across the state."

Thus far, 55 employees have been trained using the new training format. MFA expects to train the entire weatherization workforce of over 120 people by the end of ARRA.

When asked for tips and advice for ARRA implementation and success, Michael Furze, MFA Program Specialist said, "Working with service providers as partners to identify program needs from the ground up has been essential to developing a program that meets the needs of all stakeholders. MFA has worked side by side with our partners to integrate building science best practices that build on the decades of experience that some weatherization crews, auditors and managers bring to the table."

New Mexico is truly a model of success using cutting edge technologies, new training techniques, and helping people every day. They show us all how Weatherization Works!