

**Norcross, Frank**

---

**From:** Michael Roberson [MichaelR@lakecaa.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 04, 2010 6:04 PM  
**To:** Norcross, Frank  
**Cc:** megpower@ncaf.org; James Lowe; Tim Bridges  
**Subject:** Comments on Weatherization ARRA Reporting  
**Importance:** High  
**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Red

We are Lake Community Action Agency, Inc. located in Lake County FL. We have been providing services in the county for forty-three years. We administer self-reliant programs throughout Lake County with the Department of Community Affairs, Health and Human Services, Community Service Block Grant, United States Department of Energy, US Department of Agriculture, local and state funds.

Our agency is currently involved in Weatherizing Homes under the ARRA-WAP. Lake County's allocation under the ARRA WAP is a little over 1.2 million. Our obligation of weatherized units are 160 Homes by March 2011. Currently, our agency is on target to meet that obligation. However, it's not without some tough challenges.

Please read below:

When it was first rumored in late 2008 about the possibility of The Weatherization Program receiving more funding and that it could be up to 4 times the normal amount, agencies across the country including our local agency was thrilled! We collectively expressed that "Finally, we will have the ability to reach more clients that are in desperate need of these services and make a more meaningful impact in the lives of the clients we serve".

With the new funding, we were issued a challenge of Weatherizing one (1) million homes nationwide. Our local agency including the network believed that the challenge was an achievable goal with the increased dollars provided by the stimulus fund. Something happened. A breakdown occurred where certain expectations at the agency level were assumed vs. the Federal level, that were not articulated in a way that both sides had the correct understanding of what was to take place with this challenge. Let's look at what the agencies expected, including our agency:

Expectations:

- Basic Logistics of the ARRA WAP Program would remain in "most part" the same as the regular WAP.
- Increased dollars per home to double, "truly weatherizing the home."

- Administration Fees to increase to cover agency overhead
- Fee for service to remain the same for sub grantees
- Program can operate as "Self Sufficient"
- Scope of work to be expanded i.e. Minor Roof repairs
- Possible Salary Increases for Existing Weatherization Staff
- Existing Weatherization Jobs protected
- Hire additional competent staff at competitive wages
- Contractors to prefer work on Weatherization Projects as opposed to others

The recovery act has allowed several positive things to happen for our local agency.

#### Positives:

- Enabled our agency to create a new Weatherization Department that consisted of four (4) new Hires.
- Enabled our agency to sign under contract nine (9) new contractors
- Lease additional office space for new hires
- Increased discounts with local suppliers
- New Partnerships with local vendors & agencies
- Purchase better tools & equipment for audits & inspections
- Increased community awareness of clients in need

Our agency felt that many of the expectations listed above were realistic to foster the production necessary to meet the national goals as well as state goals. Over the course of year from late 2008 to August 2009 the program requirements increased exponentially and the ability to deliver quality services to the client decreased.

#### Disappointments:

- **Amount per home not at levels needed to truly weatherize-** Leaves many homes unfinished and forces our agency to spend valuable time on the budget of the home instead of completing the priority list that best reduces the energy bill of that client. (Pick & Choose strategy)
- **Administration fees reduced from 10% to 5.25%** - Hampered ability to hire highly skilled staff at competitive wages and retain existing weatherization staff. (Network lost 3 qualified coordinators).
- Contractors complain of inability to make money to pay staff to meet production.
- **Increased monitoring from yearly to monthly-** slows production-increased paperwork to complete and submit. Increase by an **additional 3 ½ hours**. Monitoring should be on a quarterly basis. Too much time is being spent on paperwork & scheduling.
- **Davis-bacon requirements for contractors-** forced contractors that for years operated on a biweekly and sometimes monthly basis to weekly. \$\$\$

additional cost to contractor. Wages set by DOL forced contractors to pay unrealistic wages to employees. Caused local agencies to absorb additional administrative cost to monitor certified payrolls. Administrative nightmare.

- **LSW Requirements added additional cost to Contractors:** - No additional dollars provided to cover increased precautions and labor required to meet standards. Contractors losing enthusiasm to work on weatherization projects. \$1,000-\$2,000 are needed to cover increased labor demands to safe home

There are some additional operational issues, but these are the most impactful we believe that has caused some stumbling blocks in not meeting our overall state production goals. Our local agency has met the goals established in the ARRA contract. However, we know that when one fails, we all fail. We intend to make the program better in every way that we can.

Lake Community Action Agency is proud of what the Recovery Act has been able to accomplish thus far, but we know that it can do so much more with a little modification and advice from the sub-grantees that administer the program locally. We are poised to meet the challenge put forth by our President and intend to succeed in meeting all of our established goals. Again, Lake Community Action Agency is proud to be a part of the nation's best kept secret, The Weatherization Program.

*Michael*



**Michael D. Roberson, HHS**  
Weatherization Program Director

Lake Community Action Agency, Inc.  
Weatherization Department  
1217 Huffstetler Drive, Suite 12  
Eustis, FL 32726  
Office 352-602-4488  
Fax: 352-602-4663  
[michaelr@lakecaa.org](mailto:michaelr@lakecaa.org)