Philadelphia Task Force
on
Weatherization and the Workforce

Final Report

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Background

In the fall of 2009, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's allocation of Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) funding for the city of Philadelphia was increased by more than 300%, from $6 million in 2007 to more than $20 million for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. This increased funding came as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) with a dual goal of lowering the energy burden for low income Americans and putting idled workers back to work.

At the same time, Philadelphia's natural gas and electric utilities, PGW and PECO Energy, announced plans to significantly expand their demand side management (DSM) programs. Other new public funding for building retrofits were being made available to the Philadelphia marketplace from federal and state financing initiatives. Combined, these sources building energy conservation amounted to more than $200 million in new revenue that could help stimulate a relatively fledgling building retrofit industry in the city if properly disseminated. These sources are:

PGW DSM - $54 million to Philadelphia

PECO Act 129 - $80 million to Philadelphia

Section 8, HUD 202 and 811 conservation funding - $2.25 billion nationally

Public Housing weatherization - $13 billion nationally

Energy Efficiency Block Grant, $20 - $40 million to Philadelphia

Keystone HELP Energy Efficiency Loan $4.5 million to PA

State Energy Program, $99.6 million to PA

Recognizing that these funds would likely be disseminated in an uncoordinated way given their disparate sources, the City of Philadelphia's Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development embarked on a short term planning project to look at these sources as a means of generating a cohesive industry expansion that could maximizing energy savings and consolidate effort to train the new workers that will be needed for this industry expansion. The planning effort also sought ways to integrate the service delivery systems for extant residential conservation programs.

The threshold goals of the planning process were:

1. Establish methods for **integrating and coordinating** Philadelphia's historically disparate private and public conservation services programs in order to maximize the savings impact for service recipients.
2. Establish a weatherization-specific **workforce development** model to create uniform training curricula and hiring protocols for existing Philadelphia Weatherization providers and to establish linkages with existing Philadelphia Building Trades apprenticeship programs in order to foster greater participation by women and minority workers in unionize building trades.

Goal 1: Integration and Coordination

The first step taken toward the development of a coordinated approach to the delivery of energy conservation services in Philadelphia was to develop a working group comprised of the "owners" in the industry, including private industry practitioners, weatherization agencies, State WAP administrators, gas and electric utility executives, and city housing planners. This group comprised the Weatherization Advisory Task Force that was charged with a limited agenda and provided with discrete benchmarks and firm deadlines for formulating an outline for a coordinated Weatherization policy in the City. The Task Force was asked to identify the hurdles – administrative, workforce, equipment, products, training, etc. – to ramping up the delivery capacity of current and new weatherization providers to meet the stimulus-related demand. The Task Force participants were:

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), the administrator of PA's WAP program and State agency responsible for the planning and expenditure of $270 million in ARRA WAP funds.

Philadelphia's local WAP providers: The Energy Coordinating Agency (ECA) and the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation (PHDC)

The Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW), which operates a sizable DSM program.

PECO, the electric utility that also operates a sizeable and growing DSM program.

The City of Philadelphia's Office of the Deputy Mayor of Planning and Development, which oversees both the City's housing initiatives and its commerce and workforce development activities.

The City of Philadelphia's Office of the City Solicitor, which works with utilities on regulatory and tariff matters, including the development and operation of their DSM programs.

The chief tasks for this working group included:

- Review prior efforts to integrate WAP with utility and housing resources and summarize lessons learned;
- Delineate the regulatory, administrative, political and technical hurdles to integrating these services, and explore how the overlapping and complimentary services could be administratively coordinated;
- Delineate the disparate scopes of services between WAP and DSM programs on a measure-by-measure basis to identify where services of each overlap, compliment or mutually exclude the other;
- Determine the field-verified energy and cost savings potential for typical WAP measures and develop a consensus priority for treatments that produce the maximum savings while proving enhancing health, safety, home maintenance and comfort;
- Determine how the end-users (e.g. WAP applicants, rate payers, tax rebate applicants) are identified, prioritized and selected; how "high users" can be targeted, how eligibility and intake processed can be unified or coordinated; and
- Outline and document the administrative mechanism for on-going integration.

Goal 2: Workforce Development

A separate group of "owners" of workforce development efforts in Philadelphia were called on individually and collectively to advise the project on ways of developing a skilled labor force to manage the new stimulus-related demand and to help establish a sustainable home energy conservation contactor/labor pool for the anticipated continuation of demand for conservation services in the post-stimulus marketplace. The group was charged with the task of considering ways in which WAP and Utility conservation program funding could be used as a catalyst for the increasing the participation of women and minority workers in union building trades and to explore ways in which the union trades and their preexisting apprenticeship programs could be included in this process. The group included:

> The Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board (WIB), the City's workforce policy and planning arm.
>
> The Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation (PWDC), the City's workforce program implementer.
>
> ECA, a primary trainer of new weatherization workers in Philadelphia.
>
> The Philadelphia Area Labor Management Committee (PALM), which facilitates labor-management communication on union construction projects and advocates for public policy positions in that context.

Together with these workforce development advisors, the project team set out to:

- Map skills required to meet labor demand for new weatherization work.
- Determine the curriculum standards needed to develop those skills.
- Examine the availability of new and existing private sector employers of new weatherization workers.
- Assess weatherization training curriculum standards used by Pennsylvania College of Technology's (Weatherization Training Center)
- Examine the effect WAP Davis Bacon wage requirements on hiring and contracting
- Assist PA Labor and Industry (L&I) to develop a statewide training and certification standard.
- Meet with Labor representatives and the Philadelphia Labor Management Committee to discuss trade union involvement in WAP training and service delivery, including apprenticeship plan for 'step-up' program with Building Trades Council.
- Meet with PA L&I re Building Trades apprenticeship plan to solicit support for Philadelphia's 'step-up' program
- Examine BPI training curriculum and certification requirements for WAP installers, crew leaders, and auditors.
- Provide input to workforce development agency development of a unified curriculum and certification process for all WAP and utility conservation services workers, and the coordination of same.

Metrics for the Determining the Project's Success

Energy Reductions/Utility Cost Savings

Using PGW's evaluation of its CWP program in 2008 as the basis for estimating the potential energy savings impact of newly funded conservation services, the project team estimated that the increase in weatherization activity could produce a reduction in energy usage of about 3.8 million CCF of gas, worth approximately $8 million in cost savings for the low income residents of the city.

Energy Savings Metric - Expected Savings (in ccf of gas) for Weatherization Measures

	CURRENT Baseline Allocation	Units	Per unit Savings CCF	Total Savings CCF	New Allocation	Unit	Per unit Savings CCF	Total Savings CCF
WAP Shell	$3,200,000	1280	344	440,320	$24,000,000	8000	344	2,752,000
WAP Heating	$3,000,000	750	548	411,000	$7,680,000	1920	548	1,052,160
CWP	$2,000,000	2558	344	879,795	$6,975,142	3834	344	1,318,896
LIURP	$5,197,526	5280	43	227,040	$10,395,053	10560	43	454,080
PGW-Heating	$29,784	8	548	4,384	$1,253,908	337	548	184,567
TOTAL	$13,397,526	9876	1827	1,962,539	$50,304,103	24651	1827	5,761,703
Value of CCF Saved				**$4,219,460**				**$12,387,661**

Although there has been no recent evaluation done to quantify the effectiveness of WAP weatherization measures, the measures undertaken by PGW's CWP program are essentially similar to those used in WAP and can stand as a suitable proxy for the missing WAP data.

In PGW's most recent evaluation, PWG found that the average gas customer uses 1540 CCF annually (prior to treatment). The same study found that insulation of the roof cavity reduces consumption by 122 CCF per year; blower door-guided air sealing by 30 CCF; and other core weatherization treatments such as wrapping water heaters and replacing heating system filters by 51 CCF per year. Installing a setback thermostat, when combined with education, reduced annual consumption by 141 CCF. The installation of a high-efficiency condensing heating system reduces gas consumption by a remarkable 584 CCF per year. When all of these measures are combined for a savings of 928 CCF per year, the potential reduction in customer expense nears $166 per month, a savings of nearly 60% of their pre-treatment utility cost.

Cost Savings Metric - Expected Savings (in ccf of gas and $ of income) for Integrated Weatherization Measures

	CCF/yr	Cost, $/yr	Cost, $/month
Pre-measure usage	*1540*	*$3,311.00*	*$275.92*
Measure	**Savings, CCF/yr**	**Savings, $/yr**	**Savings, $/month**
Roof insulation	122	$262.30	$21.86
Blower door-guided air sealing	30	$64.50	$5.38
Core weatherization treatments	51	$109.65	$9.14
SUBTOTAL	203	$436.45	**$36.37**
Add:			
Setback Thermostats	141	$303.15	$25.26
Condensing heating system	584	$1,255.60	$104.63
TOTAL	928	$1,995.20	**$166.27**

The integration of DSM and WAP would permit the installation of comfort measures and the stabilization of the home's major systems. The result is a comfortable home with less than half of its prior energy load with critical major systems stabilized for the long term.

Workforce Development

In order to estimate the scale of new labor that would be required to meet the demand of the new DSM and WAP activity, the project team compared the prior year budget allocations for WAP, PGW and PECO conservations programs to the expected 2010 allocations, and estimated that there would be a need for approximately 265 additional trained weatherization field workers. We estimated that the need for new Energy Auditors and other support personnel would add another 10% to this number.

Labor Allocation Metric - Current Programs to Projected 2010 Programs

	CURRENT			Person-Days			NEW			Person-Days			
	Allocation	Units	Cost/Unit	Per Unit	Per Year	Persons	Allocation	Units	Cost/Unit	Per Unit	Per Year	Persons	% Incr.
WAP Shell	$3,200,000	1422	$2,250	4.2	5973	29.9	$24,000,000	6857	3,500	6.5	44800	224.0	650%
WAP Heating	$3,000,000	750	$4,000	3.0	2250	11.3	$7,680,000	1920	4,000	3.0	5760	28.8	156%
CWP	$2,000,000	2558	$782	1.5	3733	18.7	$6,975,142	3834	1,819	3.4	13020	65.1	249%
LIURP	$5,197,526	5280	$984	1.0	5280	26.4	$10,395,053	10560	984	1.0	10560	52.8	100%
PGW-Heating	$29,784	8	$3,723	3.0	24	0.1	$1,253,908	337	3,723	3.0	1010	5.1	4110%
TOTAL	$13,397,526	10018	$11,739	12.7	17261	86.3	$50,304,103	23508	14,027	16.9	75151	375.8	335%

From this analysis, it became clear that the massive scale workforce development effort contemplated by the City would not be needed. That realization coupled with the advent of the PA L&I mandate that all WAP workers be trained and certified by its agents, and that all new workers be identified and approved using its Career Link system, precluded the City's development of its own curriculum and workforce development system.

Therefore the primary metric for success of the City's efforts centered on the development of linkages with existing union training efforts, in concert with PA L&I's efforts to support the same, in order to use Weatherization as catalyst for increasing the participation of minority and female workers in the unionized building trades.

Structural Hurdles Encountered

WAP

DCED's initial WAP plan to DOE failed to address key issues such as how critically-needed training will be implemented statewide, the rate and mechanism for the application of prevailing wages to the program, and how allocation decisions will be implemented.

DCED also proposed to allocate only 10% of the state's ARRA allocation for the first round of contracts with its sub-recipients. Each contract would mirror each sub-grantee's base contract for 2008. For Philadelphia this was equal to $3.2 million; $1.5 million for ECA and $1.7 million for PHDC. The Plan indicated that DCED would increase these initial allocations on the basis of production and documented energy savings. Both metrics were potentially problematic, but the latter did not seem to be something that WAP providers or DCED would be able to know in time for reallocation decisions to be made. Further, the Plan's state goal, to 50% of the funds by September 2010, required that reallocation decisions would likely need to be made based more on productivity than on cost effectiveness. Even if a real-time evaluation method could be developed to allow decision making on cost-benefit data, a very long period of consumption data would be needed in order to make reasonable weather-normalized comparisons to prior usage.

Finally, these metrics meant that the City's total allocation would be completely reliant on the performance of ECA and PHDC and the competency of DCED in evaluating where funds are due, and not on the basis of need as previous allocation had been made. City would then have to

have more direct control over both PHDC or ECA and would need to closely monitor both organization's ramp-up planning and implementation.

The State's WAP Plan explicitly stated that prevailing wages would apply, but provided no specific direction as to what wage rate should be used or even where to go to find out. In the absence of clear direction on this matter, PHDC and ECA would not be able to solicit bids because they would not be able to set their pricing without knowing the labor rates that apply, and their bidders would not be able to make necessary judgments about whether participation in the program is a sound business decision.

On the matter of training, PA L&I had been tasked with the job of coordinating WAP training but it would need many months to plan and even longer to implement such a statewide program.

The Plan included a "prioritization" matrix to determine which clients should be targeted for services. The net effect of targeting the highest users (i.e. those who use the most fuel in the aggregate) will tend to disadvantage occupants of smaller living units such as apartment dwellers, who also tend to be the poorest residents in the city and state. The plan also created significant restrictions on the participation of multi-family housing developments, stymieing PHFA's initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of its affordable housing portfolio, and the City's plan to use this work as basis for its step-up activity.

PGW

PGW is embarking on an aggressive multi-year DSM plan that will attempt to reach 85,000 of its customers, both low income and non low-income. It has a huge incentive to find a way to coordinate with WAP as it looks to give priority to expensive but highly effective heating system replacements (its evaluation indicated that this single measure saves 34% on average). It cannot reach this number of customers and pay for these highly effective but expensive retrofits using its resources alone, and therefore will need buy-ins from WAP and co-pays by its non low-income customers to achieve its aggressive consumption reduction goals.

PECO

PECO's challenge in Philadelphia is to find ways, in a city without much electric heat or central air conditioning, to take credit for load reduction from work integrated with WAP and PGW. Currently the DCED plan requires that WAP providers coordinate with electric utilities but then says that utilities may not claim credit for any of the WAP measures. This would seem to be a disincentive and PECO had said as much in our meetings. PECO offers WAP an ideal integration partner as its measures, while allowed by WAP, are not the ones that are typically provided (e.g. refrigerator replacements). One area that the project team explored is the "de facto" electric heat customers: residents who use electric space heat to supplement cold parts of the house or as a means to "conserve" on gas. WAP could solve comfort issues that could allow these high load users to be taken off line.

Trade Unions

The Laborers Union asked the Mayor to designate that all of the City's WAP allocation funds be funneled through it and that the Mayor require all of the work be dedicated to union contractors. The zero sum game implication of the Laborer's request would be a challenge to a goal of coordination with other building trades and for the broader integration and a multi-pronged approach to expanding the workforce and employer base for a long term conservation industry. Nevertheless, the City will need to include the trade union in its plans for the long term expansion of the workforce and contractor base if sustainable living wage jobs are the goal of the workforce development efforts, something the current provider network does not provide.

In conversations with the Keystone Research and the Pittsburgh Foundation, the idea developed for using WAP to weatherize affordable multi-family developments in order to bifurcate the WAP market into clear union and non-union worlds. This would have the effect of increasing the capacity of the network of providers and to target the lowest income families in the state/city. It would also provide an opportunity to bifurcate WAP services allowing for a discreet and new market for union workers and signatory contractors. Perhaps the best way to achieve this goal would be to advocate for DCED to directly fund PHFA using WAP funds to administer those funds within its affordable housing portfolio. If this were to happen, coordination with Labor Union efforts to improve workforce diversity and to claim a share of the ARRA funded construction work would seem to be a natural and prudent course of action (see *Model for Integrating Trade Union Apprenticeships and Multi-Family Weatherization,* below).

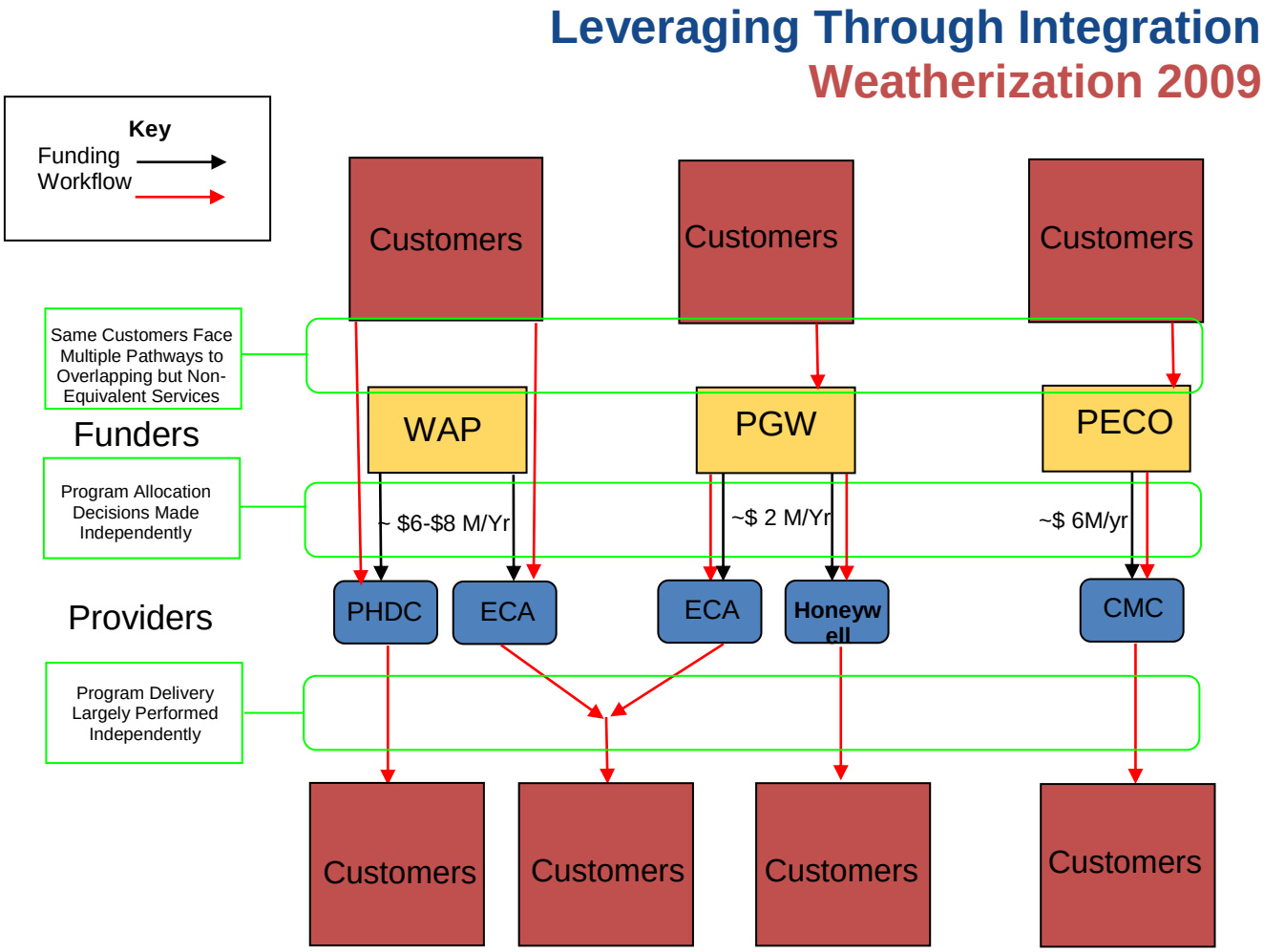
Model for Integrating Conservation Delivery Systems

In order to integrate the delivery of these programs, a coordinated delivery system is needed. That system must include the following elements:

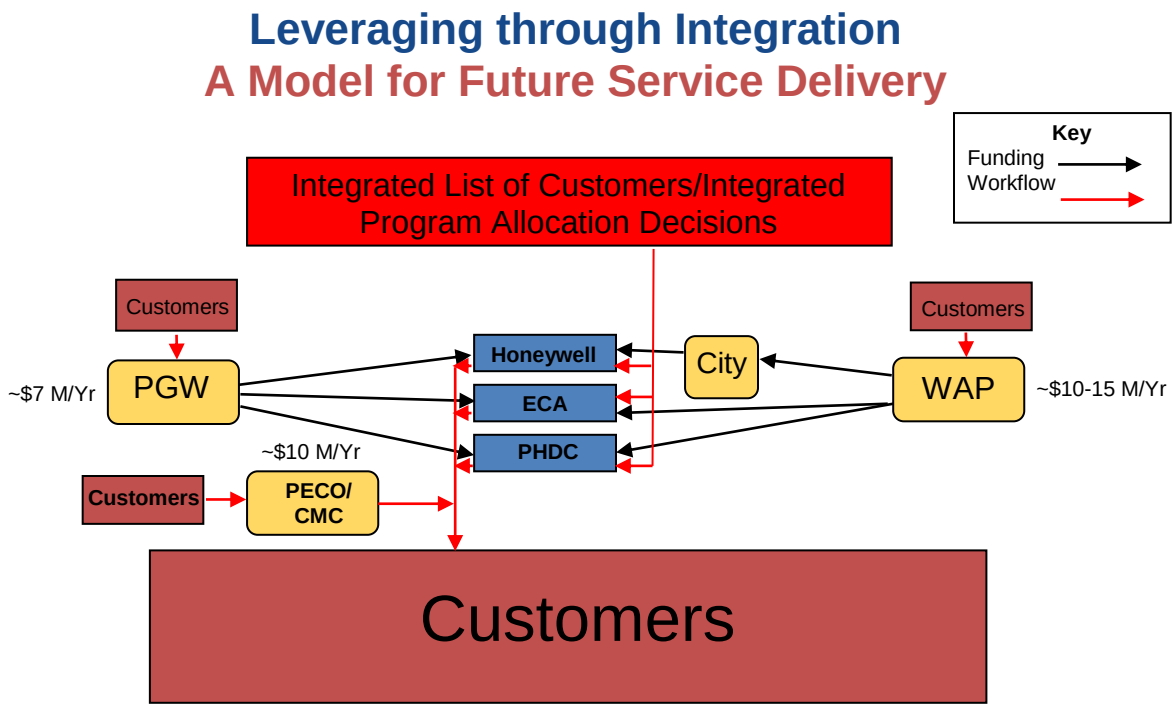
1. A unified front end to simplify eligibility determination and to identify the LIHEAP eligible 'high users' targeted by all three programs.
2. A means to contract with the two WAP sub-grantees, ECA and PHDC, to perform CWP and LUIRP services; (ECA is already a CWP contractor).
3. A means to expand the pool of primary WAP contractors beyond the two DCED sub-grantees to include PGW's and PECO's contractors that are currently neither a part of WAP or of each other's programs; (currently, Honeywell DMC is a PGW contractor but not a WAP or PECO contractor, and CMC is a PECO contractor but not a WAP or PGW contractor. Both are significant conservation services providers).
4. A means to include the WAP sub-grantees in the PGW and PECO programs; (again, ECA is currently a PGW contractor, so this essentially means PHDC).

A simplified model for achieving these elemental requirements is illustrated below.

Existing WAP/Utility DSM Delivery Model



Model for Future Service Delivery



- City, PHDC, PGW, PECO, ECA Meeting Weekly, nearing agreement on integration model
- Potential to institute **customer focused** "whole house approach" favored by DCED and DOE
- Increases total funding available to each homeowner by **>30%** Over WAP alone; increases energy savings by 300% over traditional WAP or CWP alone
- REQUIRES APPROVAL FROM HARRISBURG TO FUND CITY TO CONTRACT

This model contemplates the creation of an Intake Data Coordinating Center, a City-procured data processing contractor that will merge PGW's and PECO's 'high user' client file lists (the identical lists now sent to DCED for the development of its WAP target list) for distribution to the primary WAP contractors. Those data will be coordinated with the PA Department of Public Welfare's LIHEAP database to further conform to the targeting criteria established by DCED for WAP. The DPW data will then be used to make the determination of the customer's eligibility to receive WAP.[1]

The Intake Data Coordinating Contactor will issue customer lists per a predetermined protocol to WAP sub-grantees – PHDC, ECA, and the utility contactors procured through the City RFP. Because the model contemplates an in-common contractor pool in which all primary WAP contactors will be utility contractors and all utility contractors will be primary WAP contractors, those contactors will then perform the customer outreach as representatives of all funders. This

[1] WAP regulations allow LIHEAP eligibility to serve as "automatic" eligibility for WAP thereby greatly simplifying the approval process and significantly reducing the paperwork burden on sub-grantees and clients alike.

will necessitate the creation of a standard client outreach script that clearly indicates the participation of PECO, PGW and the Weatherization Assistance Program.

Because all contractors will be in common with WAP and the utility programs, each will able to access the full budgets of the individual conservations programs as the energy audit in the home determines the need. [2] Each contractor will also be in complete control of the flow of work: from client outreach to the energy audit, to the installation of measures, to the final inspection.

For primary WAP contractors procure through the City's RFP (i.e. the utility contractors) the City will need to establish a monitoring function to ensure quality control of work measures and client eligibility determination, as DCED will likely only wish to monitor the City and not its contractors.

It is important to note that this model has been developed to allow WAP contractors to spend only WAP dollars where no utility spending is warranted, and for utility contractors to spend only utility dollars where no WAP dollars are warranted, where the customer is not WAP eligibility, and to address the disparity of WAP production goals as compared to significantly higher production goals of the utility programs.[3]

Finally, it is essential to note that this model was developed with the active participation and full assent of PECO, PGW, the City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia's WAP subgrantees and, in the initial stages of the process, DCED.

Critical Structural Elements of the model for integrating WAP, CWP, LIURP, and Act 129 (low income):

1. An agreement with DCED, PGW and PECO would establish the terms of coordinated services, costs, audit and QC protocols, and the details of how customers are informed of the respective parts of the utilities and WAP in the services provided.

2. An agreement with DPW would give the "City" access to the LIHEP database and an agreement with DCED would allow for the use of this database to automatically determine customer eligibility for WAP.

3. The DWP database would be cross-referenced against and with merged databases provided by PGW and PECO containing all of the intended beneficiaries for their respective low income conservation programs.

4. This cross referencing and merger would be done by a Central Coordinating Contractor, which we are now thinking is NOT ECA but a firm more like TRF.

5. That CCC will be given a contract to coordinate utility lists with LIHEAP database to send automatically WAP eligible high users to WAP-CWP-LUIRP/Act129 providers.

6. Those providers will be responsible for doing outreach to the customers on the lists per some pre-established outreach protocol that is acceptable to PECO, PGW, and DCED.

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[2] A comparison of conservation measures included in CWP, LIURP/Act 129 and WAP revealed an almost perfect commonality of the measure priorities among all three programs, allowing for a potentially seamless integration of service in the field.

[3] PGW intends to treat more than 5,000 homes per year; PECO's production target for LIURP and Act 129 (low income), while not formally established for Philadelphia alone, is likely to be in the range of 15,000 to 20,000 homes per year. WAP, if funded at the projected level of $16.5 million per year, would treat fewer than 3,000 homes per year. Furthermore, WAP prohibits services to homes that were previous treated through the program after 1994, a potentially large segment of the targeted utility customers.

7. The providers will perform the energy audit to determine the appropriate mix of treatments as per the treatment priorities and work specifications of WAP, CWP and LUIRP/Act129.

8. The provider will perform their own QC and would send a bill to DCED, PECO and PGW as per the multi-agency agreement mentioned in Step 1.

9. Three separate evaluations would be done: one by WAP, one by PGW, and one by PECO. Because the WAP and PGW evaluations will be done by the same evaluator, we will be able to determine the effectiveness of WAP alone, WAP coordinated with each of the utility programs, and the utility programs alone, as that mix is likely in even the most robustly coordinated program.

Model for Integrating Trade Union Apprenticeships and Multi-Family Weatherization

A model for a partnership between Philadelphia's Building Trades and public sector funders, trainers, content experts, contractors possessing technical expertise in the areas of weatherization and energy efficiency was also studied.

Building trades unions whose traditional jurisdiction could lend skills to weatherization/energy efficiency activities in two ways. First, apprentice trainers, would participate in the development and delivery of multi skilled training for a newly defined workforce to be identified as weatherization laborers. These apprentice trainers, would in turn receive 'train the trainer' instruction identified through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as providing certification for weatherization and energy efficiency training. The apprenticeship training curriculum and worker certifications (e.g. NYSERDA curriculum and BPI certification) will need to conform to the requirements of the purchasers of weatherization/energy efficiency services (e.g. WAP providers and utilities)

A centralized training location would be identified and staffed with trainers certified through the 'train the trainer' process. These apprentice trainers in turn would provide classroom and hands on instruction to weatherization laborers. Because the nature of work is targeted minor repairs in unique work environments, forming partnerships with signatory contractors that perform weatherization/energy efficiency to provide OJT experience for trainees is an essential component to this initiative.

Weatherization/energy efficiency trainers would also train existing building trades union journeymen and foremen who would act as crew leaders in the field as well as mentors to weatherization laborers. Here again, curricula and certifications will need to conform to the requirements of the purchasers of the weatherization/energy efficiency services.

While these training activities are underway, a recruitment effort involving governmental entities as well as industry associations such as the General Building Contractors Association (GBCA), the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), the Mechanical Contractors Association (MCA), and others would recruit contractors to perform weatherization and energy efficiency activities.

Contractors interested in participating in this activity would be identified to funding organizations and given an opportunity to bid on work. The workforce for such work would be made up of both existing employees from contractors who participate in training activities as well as weatherization laborers referred by the multi training facility.

Once weatherization laborers begin working in the field, they would be given the opportunity to move into three future career pathways. First, those weatherization laborers who choose to could remain as weatherization laborers. Second, those weatherization laborers who so desire and are qualified could move up into full rate laborer journeymen status. Finally, those weatherization laborers who are qualified and interested could enter into building trades union apprenticeship programs to become members of traditional building trades unions. A number of additional issues and considerations needed to be resolve in order for this approach to be effective. These include:

- Guidelines regarding the definition of eligible work to be included in the weatherization/energy efficiency program should be determined. If the driver for these activities is energy efficiency and resulting cost savings, the possibility of including heating, plumbing and carpentry activities to the more traditional envelope air sealing and insulation efforts defined as weatherization should be considered. These additional scope inclusions might include heating system replacement, water heater replacement, appliance and lighting replacement, roof replacement, and more substantial building shell repairs.
- In order to craft a training apparatus that provides job-ready workers, it will be necessary to define the universe of tasks that a weatherization field worker will need to perform, from which we can define the skills, the curriculum and certifications needed. This will also be essential to developing a cadre of contractors for this new industry, as the training will be for naught if there are no employers to hire them.
- An effective applicant screening process to identify candidates for weatherization laborer positions needs to be developed. This screening process needs to assess individuals in a way that yields weatherization laborer candidates that not only meet the baseline requirements for weatherization/energy efficiency training, but keeps in mind that in order for individuals to advance into apprenticeship, additional educational requirements exist. BPI trainers have partnered with local community colleges to test for basic math and reading competencies, while offering remedial assistance for those with marginally acceptable abilities.
- A contractor oversight, monitoring and troubleshooting process needs to be established. In addition, attention needs to be paid to how contractors will be paid both in terms of audits of their work as well as the timeliness of reimbursement for contract work. For Weatherization Assistance Program contracts, all work will be contracted through the existing sub-recipients. This is especially concerning once Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements are lifted. In an industry where signatory contractors will be working directly alongside non-union contractors, the cost competitive disadvantage could result in the loss of union trade employment opportunities.
- A comprehensive evaluation process for reviewing the execution, quality and energy saving effect of weatherization/energy evaluation work should be established. Past weatherization initiatives have not included such a component on a comprehensive and global basis.
- The subject of prevailing wage and Davis-Bacon needs to be addressed. The current journeyman laborer rate will provide an obstacle to the market worthiness of weatherization/energy efficiency activities and create issues in developing a sustainable industry. In addition, prevailing wages for weatherization laborers need to be set so that an individual is not penalized for moving from weatherization laborer into an apprenticeship activity. This subject bears additional discussion with governmental officials, contractors and labor organizations.
- A closely coordinated partnership is needed to structure and advance these activities. This partnership needs to pay close attention to curriculum development, provision of training activities, the link between trained individuals and contractor employers, the field auditing of finished products and the efficiency of the payments process.