

Implementing ARRA Design Snapshot

Greater Flagstaff’s Integrated ARRA Initiatives: Linking Green Recovery Goals

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Faced with greater poverty rates and generally higher costs of living than the rest of the state, many residents of Flagstaff and Coconino County, AZ are burdened with increasing utility rates but lack the fiscal resources or access to affordable financing necessary to pursue energy efficiency home improvements. To address this problem, city and county leaders came together to target ARRA funds to expand residential energy efficiency services in a way that also promotes workforce training and job placement.

Integrated Solutions for a Sustainable Flagstaff / Coconino County’s Residential Energy Efficiency and Workforce Development	
Purpose:	Improve energy efficiency in the residential sector and promote workforce training and job placement
Lead entity:	City and county
Partners:	Nonprofits, utilities, and community and neighborhood groups
ARRA focus:	Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants
Scale:	City-County
Strategies:	Adopts multi-jurisdictional approaches; embraces integrated solutions; employs information management, data, and benchmarking
Points of Contact:	
Nicole Woodman Sustainability Manager, City of Flagstaff nwoodman@FlagstaffAZ.gov 928.779.7685 ext. 3208	
Jack Clark Coconino County Housing Rehabilitation Coordinator jclark@coconino.az.gov 928-679-7465	

Flagstaff and Coconino County are using ARRA’s [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants \(EECBG\)](#) to advance multi-dimensional goal setting that simultaneously promotes energy efficiency, supports workforce training and job placement, and facilitates social inclusion. Both the city’s Integrated Solutions for a Sustainable Flagstaff (ISSF) and Coconino County’s Residential Energy Efficiency and Workforce Development (REEWD) involve a two-tiered home retrofit service made available to city and county residents with workers drawn from a newly established apprenticeship program in energy efficiency. Over the next two years, ISSF and REEWD aim to conduct 770 residential energy efficiency retrofits (resulting in annual savings of 6400 megawatts of energy, \$250,000 in utility bills, and 6.9 million pounds of carbon dioxide) and create or retain eight to 12 jobs.

City-county alignment on EECBG formula allocations through ARRA is a crucial element of this retrofit scheme to ensure that it launches with sufficient scale. A total of nearly \$730,000 in EECBG funding—\$587,100 from the city and \$140,000 from the county—have been committed to the overall effort to subsidize residential retrofits and cover the program costs associated with labor, materials, equipment, training, workforce development, and performance tracking.

In the two-tiered retrofit service model at the core of both the city's ISSF and the county's REEWD programs, the first tier provides the most cost-effective, readily available energy efficiency measures, such as lighting, HVAC, and water efficiency upgrades, and the second tier involves more comprehensive work, such as pre- and post-retrofit structural energy audits, building envelope upgrades, and hot water heater insulation.

ISSF will offer both tiers of service to city residents on a stimulus-subsidized sliding payment scale, with the difference between the market rate costs of the energy efficiency improvements and the program fees covered by a fund combining \$40,000 in city EECBG dollars with participants' payments. By leveraging the private contributions of participants, the ISSF initiative intends to extend its retrofit program for at least one additional year beyond the two-year ARRA timeframe. ISSF is also exploring other avenues for extending and expanding its retrofit program, including initiating on-bill financing to pay for upgrades through the water utility bill and establishing a loan payback scheme through property tax assessments (which would require changes in state law).

The county's REEWD program will provide all tier one and tier two retrofit services at no-cost to income-eligible county residents living outside of city boundaries. REEWD intends to employ a series of criteria drawn from building age, site surveys, utility expenses, and household income to determine which homes and households will receive which level of service. The county, in conjunction with the city, may also apply for the competitive EECBG and other ARRA grant opportunities, such as [Energy Training Partnerships](#) and [Pathways out of Poverty](#), to expand its energy efficiency program model to a greater scale, perhaps to the more rural parts of Northern Arizona in a larger regional effort.

ISSF and REEWD retrofit programs include sophisticated plans for tracking the performance of the energy efficiency measures implemented. Utilizing a web-based tracking mechanism that feeds information to and from local utilities, ISSF and REEWD will collect energy consumption data from each participating household, including electricity, gas, and water usage, the equivalent in greenhouse gas emissions, and utility dollar costs. Pre- and post-retrofit tracking of monthly and accumulated data will establish a solid baseline for measuring progress, enabling cost analysis as well as quantification of the impact of energy efficiency improvements.

Both initiatives draw on a wide variety of community partners to realize workforce and social inclusion goals in combination with retrofit targets. ISSF and REEWD's workforce training and job placement goals rely on the [AmeriCorps](#) program, which received ARRA funding through the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) because it is seen as an importance resource in staffing up for recovery efforts. The local division of AmeriCorps will establish an Energy Conservation Corps (ECC) to provide apprenticeship-style training and on-the-job skill development in retrofit services ("green collar" trades) to underemployed and dislocated workers throughout the City of Flagstaff and Coconino County. ECC apprentice members will work alongside the certified building science and renewable energy professionals who are delivering the city's and county's retrofit services to build skills in residential energy efficiency processes, such as home energy audits, use of diagnostic equipment, and installation of structural conservation measures. After completing six months in ECC, the participating apprentices receive building science certifications and AmeriCorps Education Awards to support post-secondary education. In ISSF and REEWD's retrofit model, trained and certified ECC crews will be responsible for providing the lesser tier 1 retrofit services, while the more advanced tier 2 work will be performed jointly by building science professionals and ECC graduates.

Additionally, ISSF and REEWD's efforts depend on local nonprofits and neighborhood associations to reach the targeted households through appropriately designed public educational materials and effective community outreach through local schools, Head Start programs, and public libraries.

The Implementing ARRA Series

America's current economic crisis is not only a national crisis. It is also a metropolitan crisis. Therefore, it is critical to monitor the progress of creative metropolitan leaders who are leveraging the myriad resources provided by the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). To that end, the Metropolitan Policy Program's Implementing ARRA Series is tracking the implementation work of metropolitan leaders, assessing their progress and struggles, and extracting from the innovators' experiences ideas for short- and long-term federal policy reforms. Ultimately it is hoped the series will serve as a resource for best-practice exchange among regions and a source of ideas for designing the next generation of metro-friendly federal policies.

For More Information

Mark Muro
Fellow and Policy Director
Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings
mmuro@brookings.edu

Sarah Rahman
Policy Analyst
Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings
srahman@brookings.edu