

Weatherization dollars begin to flow

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Pennsylvania has \$123 million in federal stimulus funds available for weatherization of homes and another \$130 million on the way. This month, those funds will begin flowing out.

Gov. Ed Rendell's signature on a state budget Oct. 9 ended a 101-day stalemate but left a backlog in federal funding that needs to be pushed out. Weatherization will be considered a priority, said E. Craig Heim, executive director of the state Office of Energy Conservation and Weatherization.

"It will be in the interest of the state to get money out quickly; our money will be part of that," Heim said.

Weatherization funding will flow out through 43 agencies. Locally, the Philadelphia Housing and Development Corp. will receive \$15.9 million in stimulus funding over two years; Bucks County Opportunity Council Inc. will receive \$4.5 million; Community Action Agency of Delaware County will receive \$5.3 million; Montgomery County Community Action Development Commission will receive \$5 million; and Housing Development Corp. of Lancaster County, which serves Chester County, will receive \$8.8 million.

Pennsylvania's goal is to weatherize a minimum of 29,700 homes, creating nearly 1,000 jobs, with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The money will be targeted to low-income households, particularly those that get energy assistance grants.

Between three and five training centers will be set up across the state to certify people to perform the work, which the state will have in place before the end of the year, Heim said. A training center is expected to be selected and up and running in Philadelphia as early as next month, said Heim, who noted that a number of organizations are capable and interested in securing the contracts to provide the training for the state's weatherization program.

The strong interest led the state Department of Labor & Industry, which is organizing the training centers, to extend the deadline from Oct. 9 to Oct. 16 to apply for the seven \$150,000 grants being made available to prospective training providers. The grants drew the interest of 60 prospective applicants for a webinar last month — twice the amount the department expected, spokesman Christopher S. Manlove said.

Locally, the Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 19 partnered with Pathways Out of Poverty, the Philadelphia Housing Authority and Temple University to apply for one of the grants.

"What we are trying to do is create the model in this area and then we can share that model with the rest of our area," said Jo-



CURT HUDSON

Instructor Joe Frick, left, works with apprentice Gregory Bullock at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 19 on Columbus Blvd.

seph Sellers Jr., president and business manager of Local 19. "We already have the infrastructure ... to take people through the program."

For the union, which has nearly 200 contractors, work in weatherization and energy conservation has long been a focus of the industry. A partnership with the Sheet Metal Contractors Association of Philadelphia and Vicinity seeks to promote that experience.

"As a sheet metal industry we've always been conscious of this energy savings, now it seems to be everyone's concern and we thought we as an industry have a jump on this and we can help," Jim Shields of Sheet Metal Contractors Association said.



Sellers

The association launched a new Web site last month, www.greenhvacsolutions.org, to promote its ability to help Philadelphia go green.

The Energy Coordinating Agency, a nonprofit with a city network of 14 neighborhood energy centers that promote conservation, is renovating its green jobs training center and competing for a grant to provide training. ECA Director of Training Walter Yakabosky said.

"Our region expects to hire approximately 200 new hires within the 24-month period and ECA expects to hire about 35 additional people," Yakabosky said.

Workers will have to be certified and trained within 90 days of weatherization contracts being executed. ECA expects its first contract to be in place before the end of this month, Yakabosky said.

Although the state's weatherization money is finally rolling out, some expect minority-owned firms to have a difficult time connecting to it because of a lack of outreach.

"Even though the dollars are being released, there is still a lot of politics involved is what we are finding," National Alliance of Market Developers National President Norm Bond said. "Some of the people getting funds haven't done inclusive outreach in 25 years, so why expect it now."

Although the state's weatherization program offers opportunities now, funding will be gone in two years, said Robert Kirby, founder and CEO of United M.P.A.C (United Minorities of Philadelphia Association of Contractors). Businesses and homeowners have until 2016 to take advantage of stimulus-funded tax credits to become more energy efficient, said Kirby, who has partnered with Solaris Energy to launch a solar thermal training class for experienced tradesmen. The first class was held in August, and trained 20 people, another class is planned for this month. ■

STIMULUS TRACKER

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THE INSIDER

For championship Phillies tickets, it's let's make a deal

Those looking to buy tickets for Sunday's National League Championship Game at Citizens Bank Park better have deep pockets — or something valuable to trade.

Tickets listed mid-week on StubHub, the Philadelphia Phillies official fan-to-fan ticket marketplace, start at \$140 each for seats in the scoreboard porch section and go all the way up to \$3,395 for seats in the diamond club section behind home plate.

Over at Craigslist, the ticket prices are in the hundreds of dollars with many people looking to haggle prices off line.

One poster is offering a trade: his five tickets for Sunday's playoff game in section 144, row 17 in the lower level outfield section for four better seats somewhere behind the infield.

And in a sign of shifting loyalties, a Philadelphia Eagles season ticket holder is offering a pair of lower-level Eagles tickets "straight up" for Phillies' playoff tickets.

— John George

Like good neighbors

The University of Pennsylvania tied the University of Southern California for the number-one spot on a list of the nation's top 25 "Best Neighbor" universities compiled by Evan S. Dobbelle, the president of Westfield State College.

Drexel University came in 10th. Dobbelle cited Penn for the work that its Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships does in West Philadelphia and its service-learning curriculum.

He praised Drexel for fostering an entrepreneurial environment in Philadelphia through its technology transfer efforts; and acquiring and expanding the former MCP Hahnemann University medical school.

— Peter Key

CORRECTIONS

A story in the Oct. 9 edition about TD Bank's system integration problems misspelled the names of Wayne-based Evolve IP and its Chief Operating Officer Guy Fardone.

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