



Urban Weatherization Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the Urban Weatherization Initiative?

A: The Urban Weatherization Initiative (UWI) will be the single largest green jobs program in the State of Illinois. The Initiative supports the creation of local networks that train weatherization professionals, who then improve the energy efficiency of homes and lower families' utility bills. At the same time, the Initiative aims to create good wages and develop local supply chains right here in our communities. The Initiative was proposed by members of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus and is intended to serve thousands of families statewide. The Initiative will be administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Office of Urban Assistance.

Q: What is the purpose of the initiative?

A: The UWI was designed to: 1) create jobs and increase skills for the under/unemployed; 2) improve energy efficiency and reduce energy costs in disadvantaged communities; and 3) stimulate local economies.

Q: How does it work?

A: The UWI consists of many parts. First, the UWI will administer two training grants which will provide funds to organizations and companies which provide **Home Energy Auditor Training** and **Weatherization Specialist Training** and supportive services to individuals in targeted communities. The training programs must include hands-on learning and soft skills.

The grantees will then be responsible for utilizing trainees in performing weatherization services for assigned communities.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for grant funding?

A: Private, public and non-profit entities that can provide weatherization services/training while incorporating effective local employment strategies are eligible to apply. Also non-profit organizations working in partnership with contractors or technical skills providers (e.g. trade schools or community colleges) may also apply. Partnerships between sectors are encouraged.

Q: How does the Department determine who will receive the grant dollars?

A: Grants will be reviewed by the nine-member UWI Board. The Board is composed of five voting members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate and four non-voting ex officio members from the General Assembly. *Grants will be awarded via a competitive two-step process which includes: 1) Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and 2) Request for Application (RFA).*

Q: When will the RFQs be issued?

A: The **Home Energy Auditor Training RFQ** was released on September 10, 2010. The **Weatherization Specialist Training RFQ** is expected to be released in early Fall 2010. In conjunction with their release, DCEO's Office of Urban Assistance will hold numerous information sessions to explain the requirements and evaluation criteria.



Dates and times will be posted on the DCEO web site. We will also work with local elected officials and community-based organizations to publicize the meetings. At these sessions we will answer questions in detail.

Q: What is the maximum grant amount?

A: Grants cannot exceed \$500,000 per grantee, per fiscal year.

Q: What is a fiscal year?

A: A fiscal year is a 12-month accounting period. The State's fiscal year begins on July 1 and ends June 30.

Q: How can the training grant dollars be spent?

A: Grant funds must be used for technical and "soft" skills training and may be used to provide supportive services to trainees. Grant funds will also be used to provide salaries to those who complete the training program; and to purchase materials necessary for weatherizing assigned homes. *The UWI strongly encourages the use of materials purchased from local suppliers, manufacturers and distributors.*

Q: What is the maximum amount that can be spent per unit?

A: The maximum is \$6,500 per unit. However, the UWI funding for homeowners can be coupled with the \$6,500 maximum benefit available through the existing Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP), equaling a potential weatherization benefit of \$13,000 per unit.

Q: How are buildings and units "weatherized?"

A: There are many steps that can be taken to weatherize a building and make it more energy efficient. Weatherization activities include repair/replacement of inefficient heating or cooling units; addressing air infiltration issues (i.e., weather stripping, caulking, window/door replacement); repair/replacement of water heaters; and pipe or duct insulation.

Q: I am a homeowner, what are the eligibility requirements?

A: The Urban Weatherization Initiative will be available in communities with either: high rates of unemployment; high utility bills in comparison to income; or an income equal to or less than 60% of the Area Median Income.* The final eligibility requirements are being determined by the UWI Board. Generally, this program will be widely available statewide to households of varying incomes.

*Area Median Income (AMI) is used to determine eligibility in a variety of state and federal programs. This calculation analyzes the incomes in a specific geographic area. AMI generally captures a broader range of people than the federal poverty level.

Q: My question was not listed here. How can I get it answered?

A: If you have additional questions, you can email the Office of Urban Assistance at: ceo.urbanweath@illinois.gov.