



**NAVAJO NATION
DIVISION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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CONTACT: Rick Abasta
Public Information Officer
Phone: 928-871-6560
Fax: 928-871-7090
Email: rabasta@nndcd.org

Local Governance Act certified chapters execute contracting authority



Community Development Deputy Director Stanley Yazzie points out the opportunities that exist with the new memorandum of understanding between the Weatherization Assistance Program and Local Governance Act certified chapters. Yazzie said chapters have traveled a long way since enactment of LGA. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK-Recently, certified chapters took a leap forward with their authorities.

Local Governance Act certified chapters gathered at the Navajo Nation Museum and Library and set precedence with a new memorandum of understanding with the Weatherization Assistance Program on July 15, 2011.

The WAP received \$9 million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to provide repairs addressing general heat waste, insulation, storm windows and incidental repairs on Navajo Nation homes.

The MOU is created between and entered into by the Division of Community Development and Local Governance Act certified chapters as a cooperative agreement implementing the lead agency policy for procurement and project management.

Reducing heating and cooling costs for a safer energy efficient home is the goal of the WAP.

The dwelling unit must be existing and occupied by an eligible owner. The home must be substantially complete, meaning permanent foundation, floor, walls, roof, windows, doors and a heating system.

Community Development Deputy Director Stanley Yazzie said, "This contracting is an opportunity. We have funds available, ARRA money."

WAP received \$9 million in ARRA funding on April 1, 2009,

to provide services before the March 31, 2012 deadline. Under terms of the MOU, each participating certified chapter could weatherize up to 10 homes within their chapter.

"This is only contracting. You have the authority to do ordinances. And then searching for grants and other funding," Yazzie said.

He praised the certified chapters present for the orientation and said, "You're all in one effort and that is to assist the Navajo people."

"Your presence here is indicative of your interest to continue the work of your chapter," Yazzie said.

Brian Lewis, an attorney with the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, said the MOU is a contract to provide services. The DOJ will ensure terms of the agreement are met and not hindered by any conflicts of interest.

"What I look for as an attorney is are you related by blood or do you have some kind of special relationship with the person," Lewis said regarding hiring practices.

Because the MOU is the first of its kind for certified chapters, there's much potential for contracting opportunities in the future, now that the boilerplate has been developed.

"Becoming LGA certified doesn't cut you off. This is the grand misconception with a lot of the programs," Lewis said.

Conversely, Lewis said certification does not relieve chapters of their responsibilities to the Navajo Nation central government.

"You'll always be a part of the (Navajo) Nation," Lewis said.

He explained that DOJ would be ensuring policies and procedures were fulfilled. WAP would shoulder the bulk of the responsibilities.

"Weatherization would handle the big or what I call the heavy lifting," Lewis said. "The Weatherization Assistance Program will perform the procurement."

"That puts them on the hook for complying with the code as it exists," he added.

Chavez John, program supervisor for Community Housing and Infrastructure Development, congratulated the certified chapters for attending discussions on the MOU.

"You're paving the way for the rest of the chapters. This is a learning opportunity," John said.

He said the contracting opportunity with WAP would create new opportunities for other divisions and departments within the tribe.

“It may not be much but you are going to learn big things from it because we are going to open up the door for you, using this MOU,” John said.

CHID currently has open grants amounting in excess of \$39 million.

ARRA funded WAP with \$9 million, which was separated into three portions: 10 percent for administrative costs, 10 percent for training and technical assistance, and the remaining 80 percent for projects.

Prior to receiving the funding, the WAP was only funded \$200,000 to \$300,000 per year.

The multi-million dollar grant requires grants management with new provisions, policies and procedures.

“It’s up to you,” John said. “How big of a dream, how big of a contract do you want to have with these other programs?”

Stanley Pahe, program manager for the ARRA Weatherization Assistance Program, said no funds or allocations would be exchanged from the program to the chapter.

“We have processes and procedures in place,” Pahe said.

There’s currently a workforce of over 70 crewmembers in all five agencies, averaging 15-18 staff per agency.

The weatherization projects are only “patch and seal jobs,” not to be confused with renovations, remodeling, and rehab jobs, he underscored.

Weatherization personnel will assist certified chapters with new employee orientation at the chapters, reviewing the scope of work, construction safety training, material listing orientation, unauthorized work, blower door testing, and the pre and post-testing.

“Energy auditors are available at each agency. They measure the square footage, height of your house, the outside wind. They will walk throughout the home and develop the scope of work,” Pahe explained.

Utilizing high tech tools like thermal imaging equipment, the energy auditors will inspect insulation, windows, doors, and weather stripping.

They will also test levels of carbon monoxide from wood and coal stoves, and inspect for propane leaks in the kitchen.

“We will also provide technical assistance for weatherization measures, final inspections, priority listings, use of equipment, listing of duties for the lead man, confidentiality, and records management,” Pahe said.

Under terms of the agreement, four carpenters will take up to three days to weatherize a client’s home, with 10 home weatherization projects per certified chapter.

Specific details on the MOU will be discussed August 11-12 in room 7103 at San Juan College.

Community Development is currently working with the Navajo Nation Department of Personnel Management to train certified chapter staff on providing personnel assessments at the chapter.

Information: www.nndcd.org

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Donna Benally, president of Newcomb Chapter, signs the memorandum of understanding with the Weatherization Assistance Program. Under terms of the agreement, Benally will have the opportunity to weatherize up to 10 homes in her chapter. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



KinDahLichii Chapter President Johnny Curtis Sr. signs the MOU with the Weatherization Assistance Program. Only four chapters of the 27 certified chapters did not sign the contracting opportunity with WAP. The MOU is an exercise of their contracting authorities as certified chapters and will also open the door for other opportunities. (Photo by Rick Abasta)