



HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of clients and crews are paramount in the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP or Program). Expenditures can be utilized to cover the cost of eliminating energy-related health and safety hazards as necessary before, or resulting from, the installation of Energy Conservation Measures (ECM). In addition, WAP Subgrantees often use other funding sources to correct problems that are beyond the scope of allowable DOE weatherization expenditures.

WAP local providers install only energy-related health and safety measures and are instructed to report health and safety problems that cannot be remedied or mediated by weatherization activities to the appropriate state agency or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Allowable energy-related health and safety activities include, but are not limited to:

- Combustion appliance safety testing and repair.
- Electrical repair (ensuring code compliance when insulating knob-and-tube wiring and repairing overloaded electrical circuits).
- Assessment of fire hazards (identifying inadequate combustion appliance clearances and creosote build-up).
- Addressing indoor air quality issues.
- Lead-Safe Weatherization (limited to procedures for installing Weatherization measures without increasing the existing risk of exposure to lead but does not include lead abatement).

Weatherization Readiness and Deferrals

WAP, at its core, is an energy efficiency program. The Program's success is largely measured in terms of energy saved. Because of this, the list of issues WAP can address with DOE Weatherization funds is limited. However, the Program recognizes that homes and buildings work as a system of interrelated parts and applies the "House as a System" methodology to assess and treat homes. While conducting initial audits, technicians often discover issues with a home that, if not repaired, may prevent, or hinder the performance of ECM.

For instance, DOE understands it is not effective to insulate an attic if a home's roof leaks and will degrade the insulation's performance. Therefore, the roof must be repaired before any insulation is installed, or the home must





be deferred from receiving weatherization services until the roof is addressed. In recognition of the limitations of WAP funding and the funding possibilities outside of Weatherization, DOE introduced the term “weatherization readiness”.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, Congress provided the first Weatherization Readiness appropriation and DOE developed a **Weatherization Readiness Fund (WRF)** that is used by the WAP network to address necessary repairs (e.g., health and safety issues, structural issues, etc.) in dwellings that have been deferred from receiving weatherization services. This funding is specifically targeted to reduce the frequency of deferred homes that require services outside the scope of weatherization before the weatherization services can commence. Units receiving WRF must result in a DOE completion, defined as:

“A dwelling on which a DOE-approved energy audit or priority list has been applied, at least one (1) DOE funded allowable energy conservation measure is installed, and weatherization work has been completed. As funds allow, the measures installed on this unit and paid for with DOE funds have a Savings-to-Investment Ratio (SIR) of 1.0 or greater, but also may include any necessary energy-related health and safety measures, in accordance with [10 CFR 440.21\(d\)](#): “The cost of incidental repairs must be included in the cost of the package of measures installed in a dwelling and receives a final inspection.”

As part of WRF funding, each Grantee must:

- Develop a WRF Plan for DOE approval.
- Track the WRF funds for each building and unit, capturing measures/repairs and associated costs.
- Monitor these funds as part of the Grantee’s annual monitoring.

Incorporating the principle of **“weatherization readiness”** into WAP is a three-fold approach:

- Identification of homes with significant repair and health and safety needs that are deferred or may be deferred from WAP service.
- Identification on whether WRF may be used on homes that are not “weatherization ready” to correct the situation and/or work with community partners to address repair needs.
- Tracking deferrals to identify rates of deferral and the most common causes for deferral.

The Benefits:

Reduce Deferrals: By utilizing the three-fold approach to identify and apply WRF to avoid deferrals, the Program can help those most in need by improving equity of service delivery without the additional administrative complexities associated with braiding funds from other sources. Research by the Federal Reserve Bank and [PolicyMap](#) illustrates home repair needs disproportionately impact low-income households and specifically black, brown, and native households. Homes that can be made “weatherization ready” help Subgrantees avoid unnecessary deferrals.

Improve efficiency of service delivery: By ensuring the screening process identifies issues that cannot be addressed with DOE formula funds or WRF, Subgrantees can reduce those costs dedicated to initial energy audits on homes that will never be weatherized due to such deficiencies (in the program funding as well as the home itself). Time spent scheduling and conducting the initial site data collection for an energy audit is money invested in that home. DOE’s aim is that every dollar invested goes to the benefit of the eligible client, which only happens if the home gets weatherized.

Improve leveraging capacity: By tracking deferrals, Grantees gain a clearer understanding of the most common causes for deferrals in their service territories and can pursue funding to address those specific needs. For example, in many of the cold climate states, rehabilitation funds for roof repair would bring a sizeable amount of older, energy inefficient housing stock into weatherization readiness. Equipped with real data, Grantees improve their ability to secure funding from other sources in addition to DOE funding.

Non-Energy Impacts

In FY 2020, Congress amended the authorizing statute for WAP and included direction for the Program to consider Non-Energy Benefits (NEB) also referred to as Non-Energy Impacts (NEI) from weatherization. NEI are additional effects for participants in energy efficiency beyond the energy savings gained from installing energy efficiency measures.

DOE issued [WPN 22-10 Revised](#), in which DOE encourages WAP Grantees to consider adopting two types of NEI from weatherization in the determination of measures to be implemented in a home retrofit. DOE provided methods and metrics for Grantees to use in the evaluation of two types of NEI in any energy audit tool that is used to identify the most cost-effective ECM to install in a dwelling unit:

- 1) **Social Cost of Carbon**, established using national emissions.
- 2) **Water Usage Reduction**, based upon a site-specific utility cost for water savings.

DOE continues to investigate and develop other methods for valuing household health and safety benefits and other NEI resulting from weatherization for inclusion in the energy savings calculations in the future.