



State Housing Programs: Summary of Administrative and Policy Issues

Over the course of the summer and fall, VHC asked members about issues related to State funded and/or administered housing programs and policies. The Coalition will be meeting with the appropriate agencies and developing additional information about these issues. Pending a review of these findings, the Coalition will pursue advocacy strategies during the balance of 2009 and into 2010 to seek needed changes in the highest priority areas.

In November, the Board of the VHC identified the following as the highest priority concerns.

- **Indoor Plumbing Program** - funding levels and program restrictions within the program need to be re-examined. The state has made great progress toward the elimination of housing without indoor plumbing. Now is the time to begin to look at other critical housing problems – including the large number of pre-1976 mobile homes that are still occupied. These units pre-dated national codes and are substandard and unsafe.
- **Implementation of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program** : This program that focus federal stimulus funds on the purchase, rehab and re-sale of foreclosed housing units can be a great resource in stabilizing hard hit neighborhoods. The clock is ticking on the deadline for using these monies and greater flexibility is needed by localities and program providers to ensure that the funds will be spent.
- **Weatherization**: The Weatherization program funding level has been increased ten fold with Stimulus monies. The VHC supports creative approaches to ensure that all new Stimulus funding is fairly and efficiently utilized. Planning is needed for sustained expansion of the program post Stimulus money .
- **Capacity Building** at DHCD has been a victim to state budget cuts. DHCD's involvement in this area is critical as other providers have withdrawn. How can DHCD continue to play a leading role? What should it be?

The Coalition will be pursuing advocacy in these areas during the next several months and will post additional information and action steps on its website.

Other Issues and Programs that were identified by participants included the following:

Financing Programs:

- Expand the use of Indoor Plumbing to include rehab of severely deteriorated homes
- Expanded funding for well drilling with the Indoor Plumbing Program

- Integrate Weatherization funding into other housing development efforts
 - Coordination with other housing Programs
 - Direct funding to projects outside of the Wx network
 - Use for homeless & transitional housing
 - Private contractor access to Wx outside of the network
- NOVA continues to have project costs that outpace program resource limits
- Assess the fairness and current relevance of the geographic pools in the LIHTC program
- Provide support for VHDA bond programs during this period of market disruption
- Increase support for senior housing in the Low Income Housing tax Credit Plan
- More funding for Emergency Repair program / eliminate the match requirement. This program can help a lot of families with a little money.
- More funding into “Money follows the Person” – the state effort to create community based housing for persons with disabilities

Supportive Services

- Place more funding emphasis on transitional housing with support services – Permanent housing should not receive all of the new funding.
- Liberalize the Homeless Intervention Program rules to allow it to be more responsive to the foreclosure problems we are facing today.

Capacity Building / Technical Support

- Provide support to emerging non-profits – financial and technical, especially in rural areas
- Clearer / larger role for the nonprofit sector in state funded programs. Non-profits provide the benefit of permanently affordable housing.
- Increase administrative cost caps in CDBG and HOME in order to support operating costs of providers.

Planning and Program Development

- Allow for greater citizen, customer and provider participation in the planning processes for all housing and community development programs
- Provide better notice and outreach for Consolidated Plan development and funding allocation decisions
- Better use of electronic and “virtual” methods for comment and participation.
- Plan for continuation of expanded Weatherization services when Stimulus money runs out
- Coordinate VHDA and DHCD funding in a single application
- Update / Redesign the DHCD housing application
- More input into Neighborhood Stabilization Program design – greater flexibility – more transparency .