

# Washington State Weatherization Plus Health Enhanced Grantee Profiles: Yakama Nation Housing Authority

The Yakama Nation Housing Authority (YNHA) is one of two local agencies in Washington to receive an Enhanced Weatherization Plus Health (Wx + H) Start-Up Grant. These grants are intended to build on existing capacity and prepare grantees for full participation in upcoming Wx + H program cycles.

While the YNHA has been providing weatherization and minor repairs since April 2010, resources for extended Healthy Homes interventions have been limited. YNHA staff and crews had limited experience providing Healthy Homes assessments and installing Healthy Homes measures. YNHA used the funds to build internal capacity. YNHA's planned partnership with the Indian Health Service/Department of Environmental Health Services to obtain referrals and provide home visit services was slow to develop. YNHA then focused on its own clients and provided services with existing staff.

**YNHA met its goal of providing comprehensive upgrades to seven households.**

**Wx + H clients (front) and the YNHA Wx + H team (back)**



## Program Delivery Strategy

YNHA focused Wx + H resources on owner-occupied homes of tribal members that were eligible for services. YNHA screened applicants for health needs and made extensive use of peer and

## Wx + Health Program

The Wx + H Program, funded by Washington State's Energy Matchmaker Program, integrates investments in energy efficiency and Healthy Homes improvements in low-income households with education and services to reduce energy bills; increase home durability; and improve occupant health, safety, and well-being.

The initial focus of the Wx + H Enhanced Grant initiative is to assess the effectiveness of integrating weatherization and Healthy Homes services to serve households with members who have asthma or other respiratory illnesses. Enhanced grants are intended to support pilot projects to develop, test, and deploy new measures, strategies, and partnerships to deliver services.

family networks to spread word of the program and services.

The YNHA newly hired Weatherization Coordinator handled outreach, intake and application, and Healthy Homes assessment and education, and coordinated with the energy auditor. All weatherization and Healthy Homes measures were installed by YNHA crews.

Two follow-up visits at 6 and 12 months after measure installation are planned.

## Key Lessons

***There is significant demand and need for Wx + H case management and wrap-around services***

Asthma and respiratory conditions are significant concerns for members of the Yakama Nation.

According to the Washington State Department of Health (2013), the statewide asthma rate for Native Americans and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) is nearly double that of the general population.

About one-quarter of the AI/AN people with income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level have asthma.



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YNHA found many of its existing clients had respiratory conditions, and it was not difficult to find eligible household through word of mouth and informal networks after efforts to establish a formal referral relationship with the Indian Health Service, Division of Environmental Health Services (IHS/DEHS), did not work out.

### **High needs, high costs**

As with other grantees, YNHA found that the households with the highest needs lived in homes that were in very poor condition. A significant percentage of projects could not be addressed even with additional Wx + H funding because of issues like uncontrolled pets in the home, drug use, or general deterioration. Wx + H funding allowed work to be done on some homes that would otherwise be walk-aways. At the same time, YNHA reported that all Wx + H projects included one or more measure, which would have benefited the household, but could not be completed due to funding constraints.

### **Follow-up visits provided feedback to the households and YNHA**

The Weatherization Coordinator observed significant changes in the home occupants' health and well-being after measures were installed. In one household, the person with respiratory illness went from sleeping 12-18 hours a day to a normal sleeping pattern, and reengaged with family and the community. In another household, the Coordinator noticed dramatic changes in the physical appearance, energy levels, and asthma symptoms among home occupants. Many of the changes in well-being are not necessarily captured in asthma home visit protocols.

It was very powerful for program staff to see the positive impacts of their work.

### **Multiple, complex health issues**

YNHA found that household members had multiple and complex health issues. Asthma and

respiratory conditions were not often the biggest concerns or the issues that weatherization and/or Healthy Homes services would address. The focus exclusively on asthma could sometimes be a "check the box" event. It was also clear that YNHA staff, like most other weatherization staff, do not have the training and skills to address more complex health concerns.

### **Partnership challenges**

YNHA was not able to establish a working partnership with IHS/DEHS, even though there was strong potential. The IHS/DEHS has offered asthma home visit services since 2014 to members of the Yakama Nation. The IHS/DEHS has had limited resources to address underlying environmental triggers for respiratory conditions in the home.

Three factors inhibited the partnership:

- First, the start-up grant was not large or long enough for YNHA and IHS/DEHS to invest in the systems needed to integrate services.
- Second, Commerce required that all people who receive funding to provide Wx + H assessments, education, and quality control inspections have completed Healthy Homes Essentials training. Only one staff person at IHS/DEHS had completed the training. Training was not available or easy to access in a timely fashion.
- Third, it takes time and capacity to build relationships, and both entities were understaffed during start up.

### **Unique challenges with Yakama Nation**

Additional challenges are unique to tribes and tribal housing authorities. The YNHA serves all members of the Yakama Nation, regardless of where they live. Potential participants in the program live some distance away from YNHA offices and in areas served by other low-income weatherization agencies.



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Establishing client trust is particularly important. There is a heavy reliance on peer and family networks in tribal settings. Outsiders are viewed with deep skepticism and distrust. Relationships with clients or among managers take time and patience to build.

### Going Forward

The YNHA appreciated the flexibility of the Wx + H program to address additional health and safety needs in homes. There was strong interest in having the option to install additional Healthy Homes measures. With existing funding, only a handful of projects would likely get these measures. Dedicated funding would provide the opportunity to provide more of these measures.

In the near term, there is little remaining capacity to provide outreach and case management services because there continues to be turnover in the Weatherization Coordinator position. Additional and more stable funding is needed to re-establish this capacity.

### Partners

YNHA is a tribal housing authority with the mission to provide safe, decent, affordable, and healthy housing for the families of the Yakama Nation. YNHA provides services to members of the Yakama Nation living on the Yakama Indian Reservation and surrounding communities. The YNHA provides weatherization and Healthy Homes assessments and upgrades.

Efforts to establish a formal referral relationship with the IHS/DEHS did not work out.

Services provided by the YNHA are summarized in Table 1. Table 2 lists eligible Healthy Homes measures.

### Budget

- Enhanced Wx + H Start-up Grant: **\$50,000**

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## Energy Program

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**Table 1. Services Offered by the YNHA**

Service	YNHA	IHS Division of Environmental Health Services
Outreach and referrals	X	x
Intake screening/qualification	X	
Initial Healthy Homes assessment	X	
Energy audit/assessment	X	
Service coordination	X	
Weatherization	X	
Healthy Homes measures	X	
Client education and follow-up	X	
Data reporting and research	X	
Additional services (repair, social)	X	

LEAD = X, Support = x, Green shading indicates new partner or existing partner in new role

**Table 2. Percentage of Wx + H Projects with Healthy Homes and Weatherization Measure Installed (n=7)**

	Plus Health Measures			Weatherization Measures	
	All Grantees	YNHA		All Grantees	YNHA
Green cleaning kit	94%	100%	Air sealing	77%	100%
Bedding (dust mite)	71%		Floor insulation	44%	86%
Mechanical ventilation	65%	71%	Attic insulation	54%	100%
HEPA vacuum	65%	100%	Wall insulation	12%	14%
Walk-off mats	65%	100%	Windows	17%	57%
CO detector	57%	100%	Door	19%	14%
Low VOC flooring	33%	71%	Duct insulation	20%	29%
Smoke detector	24%	86%	Duct repair	10%	43%
Advanced ventilation	18%	57%	Duct sealing	33%	43%
HEPA/MEPA filter	17%		HVAC - replace	33%	57%
HVAC cleaning	17%		Furnace T and Cn	22%	29%
Air filter	15%	100%	HVAC - repair	13%	
Plumbing repair	13%	14%	Thermostat	15%	43%
Gutter, downspout	13%		Passive venting	44%	100%
Moisture/mold abatement	13%	57%	Lighting	33%	14%
Roof repair, replace	11%		WH low cost	52%	100%
Pest mitigation	9%	14%	Water heater	12%	14%
Comprehensive cleaning	8%	14%	Electrical repair	13%	57%
Crawlspace	7%	29%	Wx repair	1%	
Slip/fall prevention	5%	29%			
Dehumidifier	2%	29%			

Darker cell colors indicate higher rates of installation.

Blank cells indicate that a measure was not installed by the grantee.

