

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2023 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

March 30, 2022

Question: What investments are made in the FY23 budget in weatherization programs for low-income households, and are there ARPA or grant based opportunities to expand the funding and staffing to a weatherization program?

Response:

The Office of Housing provides annual operating support of \$50,000 to Rebuilding Together DC Alexandria (RTDCA) to provide a range of necessary home improvements, including weatherization, to income-eligible low- and moderate-income homeowners that apply for assistance. RTDCA performs this work on a year-round basis through its network of contractors and volunteer labor, as well as on its national annual volunteer service day each April.

The Office of Housing provides annual operating support ranging up to \$10,000 to Energy Masters, a Virginia Cooperative Extension program, which trains and organizes local volunteers to make small energy efficiency improvements in affordable rental housing to lower potential costs for households. Working with residents, the program helps Alexandria's neediest families reduce their utility expenses, provides conservation education to encourage behavior change, and benefits the planet by saving water and reducing carbon emissions. The program serves Arlington and Alexandria; in March 2020, Energy Masters marked improvements to more than 1,000 units.

The Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program (HRLP) provides loans of up to \$135,000 (\$75,000 for condos) and Energy Efficiency Loan Program (EELP) loans of up to \$50,000 to fund various repairs, including weatherization improvements as needed. The loans (deferred payment, with a 99-year term, and 0% interest, which may be made either individually or in tandem) may include repairs to bring owner-occupied residences up to code, provide for accessibility modifications, livability improvements, preventive maintenance, as well as enhance weatherization. The EELP loans may fund energy efficiency improvements and repairs to existing systems (furnaces, air conditioning, boilers, water heaters, and roofing, insulation, water saving devices, as well as doors, storm doors, windows, and storm windows, etc.) The intent of the EELP is to make funding available to specifically reduce energy demand and to lower an owner's energy-related costs over time.

Housing initiated the Emergency Assistance Loan Program (EALP) as a new component of the HRLP in 2021. Its purpose is to provide elderly (62 years-old or older) owner-occupants with limited or no equity in their homes, a no-interest, amortized loan, with a sliding-scale payment and term based on family-income (Extremely-low, Very-low, and Low income.) The loans are limited to be no more than \$15,000 and are intended as a loan of last resort.

Currently, staff are not aware of funding sources to expand weatherization programs and do not see the need to expand beyond what is currently offered.