



COMMUNITY ACTION

Bringing Hope Home

Community Action Agency of San Mateo County, Inc.

www.caasm.org

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For clarification about the contents of this Informational Memorandum, contact Jim Masters, Deputy Director for Planning and Programs, JMasters2@caasm.org

**Subject: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds,
also known as “Stimulus Act” funds.**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) is providing new funds for many, many programs on a nationwide basis. Dozens of public agencies and private nonprofit agencies in San Mateo County and Santa Clara County will receive significant increases in funding from the ARRA, or from increases in their regular appropriations. There will be additional funds for three of the Federally designed programs that are operated by the CAA of San Mateo County (CAASM). They are the:

Weatherization Assistance Program, from the Department of Energy (DOE), for both Santa Clara County and San Mateo County. For the Federal rules, see <http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/weatherization>

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) also from HHS, for San Mateo County only. (Santa Clara County will receive its ARRA CSBG funds through Sacred Heart Community Services in San Jose). For the Federal rules see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/csbg/index.html>. The increase here is only from the ARRA.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), for both Santa Clara County and San Mateo County. See <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap> The increase for LIHEAP is in the regular appropriation, not ARRA.

The CAASM is issuing this statement because the CAASM is receiving inquiries asking about how the agency intends to use these additional funds, and the agency is committed to transparency in agency operations. First, the CAASM is not a foundation or a funding agency.

The CAASM is an operating agency that provides specific types of services to people who meet income and other eligibility guidelines set by the Federal and State funding agencies. So most of the additional funds coming to the CAASM will be used to expand the existing programs for which the funds were appropriated, and the new funds must be used in accordance with the same regulations as the existing programs. The new funds will go for the following five purposes:

EXPANSION OF EXISTING PROGRAMS. The primary purposes of the ARRA funds are to create or preserve jobs and to produce benefits for low income people and for the community by expanding existing programs – which for the CAASM these are Weatherization and CSBG. The expansion will require that the agency employ more staff and obtain additional space. Applications are being accepted for some positions. Check the CAASM website at www.caasm.org for position openings and application procedures. As the plans the CAASM has submitted are approved, additional openings will be posted on the website between now and the end of September.

Let's use the CSBG as an example of a local plan that the CAASM has developed and submitted. The CAASM does not yet know the exact amount of CSBG funds that will be received under the ARRA. The CAASM does know that 99% of the funds that the State of California receives must be passed through to the existing local eligible entities -- using the same allocation formula as the regular appropriation. The maximum possible amount for San Mateo County appears to be \$645,528. The local plan developed by the CAASM for CSBG ARRA funds was submitted to CSD on the deadline date of May 11, 2009. It is available for review on the website at www.caasm.org.

The California State Office of Community Services and Development (CSD) created a State plan based on local plans submitted by all the CAA's in the State. The draft of the State plan was released on May 19, 2009 and is on the CSD website for comment at <http://www.csd.ca.gov>. CSD will send the California State plan to the HHS Office of Community Services by May 29, 2009. After approval by the Federal government, CSD has said it intends to have the contracts out to the eligible entities to implement their local plans by July 1, 2009.

The CAASM local plan for expansion of the DOE Weatherization Program is also available for review on the agency website at www.caasm.org. This plan has been submitted to the State government, and the State government has sent the State plan to DOE. Now the CAASM waits for approval by DOE. Either the Federal or State government could require changes, but if the CAASM local plan is approved as submitted, the CAASM will expand this program through a combination of hiring new staff and the purchase of service agreements for portions of the program -- which is described next.

1. **OPPORTUNITIES TO INSTALL ENERGY CONSERVATION MEASURES.** In some parts of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, it will be more efficient for the CAASM to acquire services for the installation of energy conservation measures (also called "weatherization measures") than to provide them with the CAASM staff. These services will be funded from the LIHEAP and/or DOE program funds.

These opportunities will be primarily for the installation of energy conservation measures in single-family homes, and possibly in multi-family homes and mobile homes. This work must be done in accordance with rules and regulations established by the CAASM, and by the California Department of Community Services and Development and the Weatherization Installation Standards Manual as adopted by CSD.

All of employees of the CAASM who go into people's homes must have a criminal records check, and this will be required of any entity that provides these services. The CAASM will provide the required forms for any employees who will be working on the service agreement and who will be going into people's homes. These and the rest of the requirements each entity is expected to meet will be described -- in great detail -- in the Request for Bids that will be posted on the agency website.

Before the CAASM seeks bids, there are several procedural steps that must be completed. The CAASM must receive the final guidance on allowable activities from the Federal and State funding agencies. CAASM has to determine what services are needed and where. The CAASM has to get approval on bidding and business procedures. The CAASM hopes to obtain the approvals needed by July 1, but cannot guarantee that will happen. Then, the CAASM will conduct an open competition, and seek bids from nonprofit agencies and from private sector firms. The CAASM expects to select no fewer than four (4) entities that would weatherize no fewer than 50 homes each.

The CAASM may also enter into service provision agreements with several organizations in each county to work with potentially eligible families to prepare their applications for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and to deliver completed applications to the CAASM. The CAASM would be requiring (a) completely filled out applications, (b) with all the proper documentation attached. An application must be complete in order for an organization to be paid for helping a family to fill it out.

Both types of Request for Bids will be posted on the CAASM website at least 30 days before the closing date for bids. If you would like to be placed on a list to be notified when the Requests for Bids are published on the website, please send your e-mail address to JMasters2@caasm.org AND to mj2@caasm.org with the following in the subject line "Please send me Requests for Bids for Weatherization." Or "Please send me Requests for Bids for LIHEAP."

2. AGENCY NEEDS. Like some other operating agencies, the CAASM has some old office equipment that needs to be replaced. With the increase in staffing, the CAASM will also need to add more space.
3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE ARRA ITSELF. The ARRA requires additional tasks such as planning and special handling of the funds, and there are new requirements for measuring results, reporting and administrative oversight.
4. STARTING NEW PROGRAMS. Once again, the CAASM is neither a private foundation nor a funding agency. Although the CAASM may sympathize with the plight of other agencies that received reductions from their regular funding agencies, the CAASM will not be "backfilling" funds for them.

In accordance with the CAASM CSBG plan and the local ARRA plan submitted to CSD, the CAASM is exploring the creation of a few new strategies that will benefit low-income people. One criterion for creation of a new strategy will be that it creates new long-term partnerships with other organizations **that are also investing their own resources to increase benefits for low-income people.**

One example of a new program the CAASM is exploring is to install solar electricity generating units (photovoltaic) on the homes of low-income people. Another example is an exploration of ways to assist youth who are coming out of foster care because they have reached their 18th birthday. These and other possible new initiatives are listed in the ARRA CSBG plan which was submitted to the State. It is on the website at www.caasm.org.

As the CAASM moves into the development of these ideas, the CAASM will contact those agencies that would be potential partners on that effort.

The CAASM is always interested in new approaches or collaborations that will benefit low-income people and make our communities better places to live. Whether the CAASM is able to allocate ARRA funds or regular funds to a new approach or not, the CAASM may be able to help you move your idea forward. Please send an e-mail to: JMasters2@caasm.org

Thank you for your interest.