



Storytelling Manual

WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



WAPTAC

WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

WEATHERIZATION WORKS!

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I. Introduction

The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) has an important story to tell: Weatherization Works! Every day, WAP helps low-income families conserve energy, save money, and live in healthier, safer homes. Weatherization diagnostic tests can even save lives by identifying dangerous carbon monoxide levels. An Oak Ridge National Lab evaluation found that every \$1 invested in WAP returns \$1.72 in energy benefits and \$2.78 in non-energy benefits. ⁱ

WAP is accountable to the public for responsibly investing our federal tax dollars. Through a public information campaign (PIC), you can ensure public understanding of the program, develop new opportunities and resources, and build alliances and community support.

WAP's PIC raises awareness of the Weatherization Program and its many benefits – for individuals, the public, the environment, and local communities nationwide. Narratives or stories can bring WAP work, challenges, and successes to life. Stories are essential communication tools for helping the public, your partners, lawmakers, your potential funders, and other stakeholders understand *how* the WAP works and for whom it works.

Often, the people writing these stories at an organization are not specially trained and have to make time in their busy schedules to do so. To help you make these stories as effective as possible, the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP) has created this manual. The guidelines that follow are intended to help with the challenging task of communicating the story of weatherization to others.

Recent research ⁱⁱ about how the public understands stories and narratives tells us a lot about how to choose approaches and write effectively. NASCSPP, with the assistance of Economic Opportunity Studies, has distilled that research into this guide to writing a narrative as powerful as the actual events and concrete results.

II. Audiences: How to Reach Them Where They Are

A How Our Minds Process Information

Your readers are not blank slates. Social scientists say each of us is an “experienced and sophisticated veteran of perception.” This means that our experiences shape our perceptions of the world and we rely on our experience-based assumptions to take shortcuts in our thinking. Taking shortcuts is not the same as being closed-minded; it is an automatic behavior that helps us cope with the huge volume of information that we process daily. This behavior develops in infancy and continues to develop into adulthood, allowing adults to speed up their understanding. ⁱⁱⁱ

Most often, we use categories to sort our impressions. For example, if you walk through a park and see someone lying on the grass, you may not be aware of your mind categorizing the situation. You process visual cues to determine whether the person is “someone who has collapsed and needs my help” or “someone who has fallen but will be fine without my help” or “someone who is lying on the grass, enjoying the sun.” You either select a predetermined category through this entirely unconscious process or else experience uncomfortable confusion.

A similar process occurs when someone reads your story about WAP. Within the first few sentences, the reader has put the story into a category, such as “a situation with which I can identify” or “another example of how charities give hand-outs without solving underlying problems.”

B Frameworks and Frames

Communications researchers call these mental categories frames. Think of a category as a picture frame for a concept – a way to contain and put the contents in focus. For example, a story about a training program for unemployed adults to become WAP workers could be “framed” by a reader as either a) “There’s a chronically unemployed person who hasn’t tried hard enough,” or b) “There’s a hard-working person who never had much luck and is trying to turn his life around” depending on how you frame the narrative.

Researchers also refer to frameworks for receiving information. A person’s framework is a complex structure of personal beliefs that influences the way the person sees any story and how she or he interprets it. An example of a framework would be: “Every person is responsible for her or his own situation and the government has no place in helping those who do not help themselves.” A contrasting framework is: “We all need to work together to be sure every American gets ahead in today’s uncertain economy.” ^{iv} Frameworks are complex and can contain beliefs that seem to contradict each other.

It is helpful to know what kinds of categories your readers are likely to use so you can guide them to use the frame *you* chose for them. Recently, several researchers probed the thoughts and attitudes that shape public opinion about programs like the WAP. The summary below shows how their findings can help advocates communicate their intended message.

C Common Frames and How to Use Them

About half of Americans identify as “middle class” or “upper middle class,” while another 30 percent usually self-identify as “working class.” ^v Today, many Americans say that they feel an economic “squeeze,”—that their incomes are not keeping up with their rising costs, especially in the face of the recent recession. Most believe they personally can overcome these problems through sacrifice and hard work and feel that they are not helpless victims or that public programs can or

should help them. This is an example of a deeply-held moral belief intersecting with economic reality to create a framework for interpreting the world: middle-class Americans feel that, in difficult circumstances, they and others should work hard in order to succeed. However, their moral framework also makes them sympathetic to workers who try but have little success supporting their families.

In other words, while most people believe that too many people face uncertainty in supporting their families and that large economic forces make it too hard for the average person to get ahead, they are not completely convinced that government or other programs are the answer. They do respect those who struggle and sacrifice to support themselves and are sympathetic about the difficulties struggling families face. Programs for hard-working low-wage workers have more widespread support.

The research describes some of the following common frameworks that affect how Americans view poverty and anti-poverty initiatives:

- **Poverty and Poor People:** Since hard work and family are fundamental American values, Americans identify with someone whose work ethic is unquestionable and who strives for a better life for her or his family. Our strong individualistic bias leads us to value work, perseverance, and also ingenuity. As noted, Americans admire their neighbors who *struggle* against adversity, as most believe that they themselves have struggled.^{vi}

This is a widely held framework; the people your organization serves will seem deserving to most Americans *if and only if they obviously share the values of hard work, personal responsibility, and commitment to family*. You can use this frame to choose workers and families to highlight, ensuring they fit this criterion.
- **Opportunity:** Opportunity is a valued American concept. WAP creates opportunity through job creation and training, as well as through reducing energy bills so that program recipients can better afford food, medicine, and other necessities. Americans generally believe that if your work facilitates opportunity, the economy is fairer. Showcase how your program has helped create ways for people to become self-sufficient and contributing members of the workforce.
- **Government Programs and Organizations:** Americans tend to be skeptical of “government” and “programs” per se. They are uncertain about what works in government and how their taxes are spent. Many are discouraged by experience or propaganda that says programs for disadvantaged people don’t work. At the same time, most Americans support government initiatives offering opportunities for education, training, and employment or that provide some security for people in old age or those who are ill or disabled. Therefore, the most effective success story for an organization showcases the responsible, informed leadership and management behind a program. Americans see responsible leaders as those whose goals are building new jobs and strengthening the economy for the long term; they focus on strengthening the community as a whole.

III. Writing your Story

You can adopt a strategy to help your reader categorize each story in the way you intend.

This guide helps you tell your story so your readers will put it into the frame and framework you envisioned.

Stories that tell how WAP succeeds will showcase some elements of the central plot: **the organization's own formula for effectiveness in providing superior service and jobs.** Each will show that WAP intervenes and succeeds using methods that integrate accepted best practices and innovative approaches to providing services and reaching recipients.

Some approaches to highlight are:

- **Thinking strategically** to bring new opportunities and more economic security and stability to the local community through services and job creation by new approaches, technologically advanced services, and community engagement.
- **Mobilizing and coordinating** a variety of resources for people or neighborhoods through integrating services such as weatherization and Healthy Homes.
- **Delivering accessible and well-managed high-quality services**, including serving people whose aspirations are like most Americans' aspirations and who are willing to make sacrifices to improve their economic opportunities and their children's futures.
- **Providing positive results** not only for individuals and families, but also for the community at large.

Create Your Narrative in Five Strategic Steps

- 1 Choose stories that illustrate frames and focus on the values and goals of the WAP. Be sure they reflect shared basic values, such as supporting working families, supporting the economy, opening new opportunities, and saving energy;
- 2 Begin with a widely-shared framework, a broadly shared concern;
- 3 Continue with a description of the problem itself, in this case energy efficiency and jobs for low income Americans;
- 4 Lay out how WAP and your organization provide a solution; and
- 5 End with a description of the outcome highlighting successes, and, if appropriate, future expectations.

Using this five-step approach will strategically frame your story so it is more likely to connect with the audience in ways that will help them understand what America should be doing to address economic insecurity, energy efficiency, and job training in this country.

Step 1: Choosing Your Stories

There are many purposes for WAP success stories. Among them are:

- Introducing the WAP to the general public;
- Teaching others about how energy efficiency and energy poverty affects low-income individuals;
- Raising awareness of job opportunities and training through the WAP;
- Raising awareness about technology and techniques of the program; and
- Describing innovative approaches to service delivery.

As you think about what story to choose, look for options that both exemplify the best the WAP can deliver and include the elements that align with prevailing public attitudes as identified in the research.

Bonus: Emphasize Contemporary “Hot” Issues

When your narrative can demonstrate your response to a widely publicized contemporary problem, it shows that WAP is relevant and ahead of the curve. Recent examples include training out of work construction workers or others affected by the recession.

Discussing Success

Your stories need to be told. Some members of your community do not know how the WAP works, who it serves, and the vital function it performs for individuals and community as a whole.

Your narrative should explain the key development steps and decisions and how successful implementation occurred, including the roles others played, especially through community engagement. You can tell a powerful story from several perspectives. It could have been the leader; it might have been a key team member among many organizations that played a unique role; perhaps it just recognized and funded a brilliant initiative of another group when no other supporters stepped up. All three variations can be told so they **spotlight an aspect of good leadership** and give credit where it is due.

Step 2: The Beginning is Important – Framing Your Story

A reader will put your story into a category after reading or hearing the first few sentences. Remember that, according to researchers who have assessed Americans’ thoughts and attitudes, middle-class Americans identify best with societal problems that affect us all. Therefore, you should begin a story by identifying the broad community or social problem that is behind the subject – for example, energy poverty and scarcity of jobs. When you frame your story by showing

III. Writing your Story

the reader that the problem you solved is a broad-based problem, you open the door to showing how the WAP benefits the reader and the entire community. Your intention is to demonstrate that you are solving a widespread problem.

- Begin with a short description of energy prices or job loss, which affect all Americans and many in your area.

Example:

In a time when there is chronic unemployment throughout Arizona and the nation, many in the state are looking to weatherization and energy efficiency programs to create much needed jobs. Not only does the Weatherization Assistance Program help low-income families and individuals lower their home energy costs; increase their health, safety, and comfort; and improve the quality of housing stock in communities around the state – the Weatherization Assistance Program creates jobs.

Describe your project in the positive – while you are fighting a social issue, don’t just state the problem in the negative, e.g. “Job loss has devastated the region.” Instead, immediately draw the link between WAP and success, e.g. “While there has been much job loss throughout the region, Agency ABC has trained X new workers for the new, green economy.”

Below are examples of frames you can use to shape your story in the positive and connect with readers.

- A widely shared problem such as low-wage jobs, unhealthy living conditions, and high energy bills.
.....
- Expanding community economic opportunities for all through sustainable development.
.....
- Helping families in crisis by providing services that allow them to stay in their homes.

Examples of Story Beginnings:

Unframed:

Here is the start of a local story that could have been effective but is not strategically told:



At community colleges across the state, students from all walks of life can now learn the latest in weatherization techniques in the most effective way possible: hands-on. And it is a stimulus award that made that possible.

How can it be re-framed?

- A** This is a story from a single state. The reader may wonder “So who cares what happened there?” and move on.
- B** The role that your organization played in this new initiative is not identified. Add information about the leaders who dreamed it, the movers and shakers who established it, and the skilled staff who made the project succeed.

Re-framed:



Across the nation, the economic downturn has hurt prospects for recent graduates and led to job loss, particularly in the construction industry. To address this and provide highly trained workers for the new, emerging green retrofit industry, XYZ state has designed and implemented a cutting edge, hands-on training program based in community colleges.

This description sets a socially inclusive frame by evoking the broad-based issue behind the specific problem and gives credit where credit is due. It is important to establish these principles early in the story, as many people do not read past the first few paragraphs.

Step 3: Describing the Specific Problem and Goals

Now that you have framed the problem in a general way so the audience recognizes it as one shared by many communities, employers, and workers, the story is much more dynamic. Plan your narrative to include the steps taken to implement solutions and creative approaches taken.

Unframed:



ABC Organization noticed the lack of comprehensive training when having difficulty filling positions for skilled workers. To address this, ABC Initiative was established in July 2009 to develop and deliver energy efficiency workforce training programs.

How can it be re-framed?

- A** This inadvertently makes it seem like the organization was not in touch with the needs of local agencies for skilled workers.
- B** The story does not elaborate on the specifics of the training nor on what makes the approach innovative. It does not identify who took the active role in solving the community problem, nor focus on the elements of common issues facing all workers.

III. Writing your Story

Re-framed:



The downturn in the construction industry has hurt XYZ County particularly hard. In response to workers looking for jobs, many of them former construction workers who are uniquely positioned to add value to “green” retrofit programs, ABC Organization established a training program specifically for them, emphasizing the latest developments and innovations in the weatherization world.

Director Joe Smith met with local community members and trainers to plan how WAP could have the biggest impact on the local workforce. The resulting program educates trainees in building analysis, energy auditing, home energy ratings, lead dust sampling, and health and safety.

This version uses strong active verbs to describe how the organization’s leaders moved to solve the problem. Your story must avoid vagueness about who did what. In this problem, the staff sees an issue and a leader then reaches out to the community to discover common concerns and develop a shared goal that benefits the workers and the community by solving a defined problem and providing opportunity. This shows that the WAP is an engaged partner in the community and adds value beyond direct services.

Step 4: Describe the Solution and Solution Implementation

Successes should turn the general goals from steps 1 and 3 into specific achievements.

Unframed:



After completing strategic planning, ABC Organization applied for a grant to get the project started. Financing and construction soon began on the state-of-the-art training center, which includes many props and tools to simulate weatherization and health and safety issues in the field. Development partners included the State Department of Energy, the XYZ Foundation, the U.S. Department of Energy, the State Community Action Association, and ABC Organization.

How can it be re-framed?

- A** This tells what happened in general, but not *how* it happened. Who undertook what actions? What roles did the active partners play? What concrete steps did the partners take to get a successful result?
- B** There are no action words and no images to clarify how such a process works. Focus on the actions and leadership qualities of your organization and partners.
- C** The narrative lacks detail on why this is a special project. Why is this important? What is different?

Re-framed:



A \$1 million stimulus grant enabled Executive Director Joe Smith to begin designing this weatherization training program in the fall of 2009 with the input of local community leaders and trainers.

This course is different from most weatherization training courses due to the scale of hands-on worker training. In addition to traditional classroom learning, the Initiative built a series of props or “mock ups” which include a simulated attic, basement, front door, and windows – essentially every part of a house that the students will need to weatherize.

“Everything here you would find in a house,” said Joe Smith. “This is unlike anything that is out there.”

Step 5: Describe the Outcome

All narratives should end with demonstrated successes. Numbers can be helpful, especially with respect to community and economic changes.

Unframed:



The ABC Initiative training center is located at DEF Technical Community College, one of the seven sites that will ultimately have the training program and mockups. In addition to DEF Community College, mockups have been built at GHI Community College and JKL Community College while ABC Initiative is currently in the process of developing the program at three more sites: MNO Community College, PQR Community College and STU Community College.

How can it be re-framed?

- A Avoid lists of locations or events packed into tight sentences. Walk your reader through the collection of simultaneous activities and achievements rather than running through steps.

III. Writing your Story

Re-framed:



One year after their first meeting, the members of the original strategic planning team attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony opening the first of seven sites to have high tech new training centers. The Initiative has also built new facilities at GHI Community College and JKL Community College, which are ready to serve 60 new trainees. Additionally, sites are at the planning stage at MNO Community College, PQR Community College, and STU Community College. These programs will train an estimated 90 new weatherization workers when classes begin in the fall.

The re-framed alternative is still complex, but it is more descriptive and uses simple action verbs.

Of course, your own success story might have more loose ends. A good story can end with a first set of successes followed by a vision for improvement through next steps.

For example:

“Now that training has started at the first center, ABC Initiative is reaching out to community partners across the area to expand the program and train more workers, providing skills that will serve them well in the new, green economy.”

IV. Individuals and Their Successes: How Do Their Stories Fit In?

Historically, WAP success stories have focused on a participant and her or his personal story of success. We have generally accepted that this “puts a face” on the problem and on the solution. However, WAP practitioners need to be very careful about choosing *how* they use personal stories to illustrate their work.

Research shows that too many readers of personal stories frame them by assuming that personal character flaws caused the difficulties that led to the person’s problems and lack of resources. This assumption is related to the strong individualistic bias in American culture, which values the struggle to “make it on your own” and dismisses programs or government assistance as undesirable or marks of failure to “make it.” ^{vii}

This finding means that, without your frame, the person you write about may either invoke an unconscious stereotype (such as “poor = lazy”) or remind your readers of a personal experience with someone they know, such as their shiftless cousin Jane.

WAP has a powerful story to tell – the Program helps low-income people and workers in a very hands-on, concrete way. To make sure you highlight personal stories that will resonate with the general public, consider characteristics that the public values, such as self-sufficiency and opportunity, as well as helping the elderly, disabled, or children.

A Pitfalls of Telling Personal Stories

Pitfall 1: Representing

When you showcase one person's story (or one family's story), the person (or family) is likely to be considered "typical" of an entire group – in your case, of WAP participants. The reader probably, and reasonably, assumes you purposely chose the person's tale to make a general point. Since this usually is the case, it is critical to **make your general points first**, in ways that do not involve a personal story and that you choose your representative story very carefully to ensure that you frame the story in a positive fashion by using people with whom the public can empathize.



Lisa and Jim A.'s mobile home is in very poor condition, leading them to have incredibly high heating bills that the two, who live on Social Security, cannot pay.



In our community, the economic downturn has left many elderly living on fixed incomes, such as Lisa and Jim. A, unable to afford basic necessities, like heat for their homes.

Pitfall 2: Disconnecting

There is a risk that the reader will not see the policy forest for the personal trees. A reader may feel sympathy for the person in the story while failing to make connections to the broad societal or community-level conditions that contributed to the person's problems. A dramatic story increases this risk, but can also be very persuasive.^{viii} Again, careful selection of the personal story highlighted is crucial to connect with the public and illustrate the larger problem.

Research tells us that a vivid image, such as a dramatic or emotionally evocative personal story, keeps the audience from perceiving the general problem behind the story or the policy and program that is the general solution. The person and her or his drama dominate the memory of the reader. This is one explanation for the willingness of many to send unsolicited donations to people whose misfortunes are shown in the media, while the donors lack interest in solving the underlying problem. Readers may also believe that a very successful individual is unique or is so strong that your organization's contribution was marginal, or that it would not be decisive for less extraordinary individuals.^{ix} Ensure that you connect the larger issues, such as high energy prices and job loss, to the personal story in a very concrete way.



Jeremy R. was out of work and had limited construction skills when he signed up for weatherization training at XYZ, Inc.



The economic recession and resulting job loss in Anytown, USA has left many, like Jeremy R., without job or the skills needed to get jobs – that's where XYZ, Inc. steps in.

IV. Individuals and Their Successes: How Do Their Stories Fit In?

Pitfall 3: Stereotypes

A story without a general framework and a clear action sequence can activate one or more negative stereotypes. For example, there is a common misperception that economically impoverished families are larger, on average, than families in the middle class. A story of a family with a large number of children could backfire by summoning forth the idea that “poor people have too many children,” thereby causing their own problems. This is another reason why selection of the highlighted individual is so crucial for success.



Annie M., who can’t work due to disability, and her six children were desperately cold in their home last winter, as many in the area were due to record snow and poor housing conditions.



Last winter’s record snow and the poor state of much of Anytown, USA’s housing stock left many unable to pay their utilities and stay warm, like single-mother Annie M. and her young children.

Use personal stories only when a personal story helps bring to life your action narrative about the work that you do and about all the hard-working, respectable people for whom your organization provides new opportunities.

A good story can involve coordinating community-wide resources and partnerships with others to provide program participants with quality services, especially targeting vulnerable groups such as the elderly, families with young children, and the disabled.

B Tell a Personal Story When...

- You have helped readers categorize the story accurately by introducing it strategically and highlighting the community-wide issued addressed by the WAP. Once you have framed the story with one or more society- or community-level concepts, you can turn the personal story into an example of the impact of the WAP in improving lives.
- You have selected a person (or family) who is a good representative for the majority of the participants and can be easily identified as a member of your community.

Example 1:

Unframed:



Jane Doe recently moved to Cedar Lake with her five children and had a hard time finding work. After a few months, she started working as a hotel maid, but found she could just barely pay the bills – especially the heating bills. She contacted her local community action agency and received weatherization services, lowering her energy bills and also identifying a dangerous carbon monoxide leak in her home.

How can it be re-framed?

- A** Be careful that you are encouraging a reader to categorize the story accurately. As it currently reads, a reader could think that Jane was just accepting handouts – there is not much opportunity reflected in the story.
- B** The health and safety angle is the hook here. Don't bury these compelling and important details later in the story.

Re-framed:



Jane Doe and her family had been feeling tired and out of sorts this winter, which Jane attributed to the low temperature at which she kept her home to keep heating costs down. ABC Agency stepped in, providing a comprehensive energy audit and energy efficiency improvements. In the course of routine health and safety testing, Auditor Joe Smith found dangerous carbon monoxide levels, which may have been making the Doe family sick.

Cedar Lake's booming hotel industry drew Jane Doe and her family to the community last year. She quickly established roots and began working, but found paying her heating bills in this cold climate difficult. Jane says, "I am so grateful to ABC Agency for helping us and keeping me and my children healthy."

Jane's story, as told in this way, is now an illustration of the good work weatherization does as well as the important health and safety issues that can be identified.

Example 2:

Unframed:



Jim L., an out of work construction worker with five children, was struggling to make ends meet before he enrolled in a Weatherization Assistance Program training program offered by XYZ, Inc. Subsequently, he was able to learn a new, marketable skill and gain employment at XYZ, Inc. as a weatherization installer.

How can it be re-framed?

- A** Make sure to draw connections between the personal story and the larger community story so that readers can identify with the problem.
- B** Choose the details about your highlighted individual carefully and make sure that the story is one with which the audience will sympathize.

IV. Individuals and Their Successes: How Do Their Stories Fit In?

Re-framed:



The effects of the recession linger in Lake County and many construction workers remain out of work. One of those workers, single father Jim L., was able to get green jobs training and become a full-time worker in the weatherization industry due to training provided by XYZ, Inc.

C Use Numbers

The Weatherization Assistance Program has compelling, concrete data that can illustrate the impact of the work through energy savings, utility bill savings, job creation, carbon emissions reduction, and homes weatherized. We recommend using these statistics as much as possible as they make a strong case for the Program. Be sure to use statistics that will resonate with the average reader such as homes weatherized or money saved; using numbers from say a blower door test will only confuse the reader without conveying your message.

Examples of
statistics used
include:

- The program has already weatherized more than 6,000 Arizona homes, saving occupants \$30 to \$100 a month on their energy bills.
- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program to assist residents in its service area has assisted more than 1,100 households and has invested millions of dollars into the local economy.
- Weatherization saves each house an average of \$437 in heating and cooling costs annually at current prices. For every dollar invested into the program, weatherization returns \$2.51 to the household and society.

D A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Photographs that illustrate a story can be wonderful, but pictures are powerful tools to use with great caution. Even where your words have “painted the picture” you intend, you may wish to add power to the story with a strong picture. Weatherization has a great built in mechanism for this, since the diagnostic tests and works in progress can be compelling photos. Health and safety measures make a great story too. **Make sure that the action is clear and that all pictured wear proper safety equipment.**

In deciding whether and how to use a particular picture, remember these findings:

- Pictures summon forth the same pre-existing perceptions or frames as do words;
- A picture is visual shorthand, replacing more words;
- A picture, like a dramatic story, will be remembered for longer and more vividly than words;
- Captions are only words. Be sure your picture is clear without captions; and
- The wrong picture can completely undermine a carefully worded story.

Shape Your Photos around the Real Story

You can, literally, frame your subject by focusing the camera (or cropped picture) on weatherization installation and participants. Planning what you want your image to convey can ensure you include all the elements necessary to make the photo a powerful tool.

A Picture is Problematic When...

- It is not obvious what story the picture tells. Vagueness does not get the specific WAP focus item across;
- It illustrates a bias or stereotype ;
- There is something in the picture that diverts attention from your story;
- It focuses on individuals, not actions or results. Personal portraits, like personal success stories, should be used only when they help to frame your story in positive terms and the subject should be chosen very carefully ; and/or
- The role of your organization is not obvious.

The following pages identify common causes and conditions of problematic photos and highlight simple changes you can make to ensure the photo enhances, rather than detracts from, an accompanying story.

IV. Individuals and Their Successes: How Do Their Stories Fit In?

G Problematic Photos and Some Alternatives

Problems

VAGUE PROGRAM OR UNCERTAIN ACTIVITY

Problems -
Who is this? Did he
work on the home?
What agency is he
from? Is he a recipient?



WHAT IS THE ACTION?

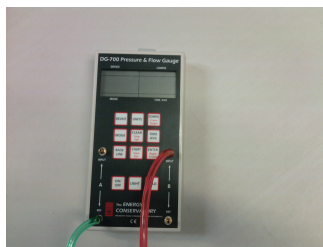
Problems – Vague action –
what is going on here?

Suggestions – Could this
activity be pictured so
that the image accurately
communicates the event?



Problems: What is this?
How is it used? Why is it
pictured?

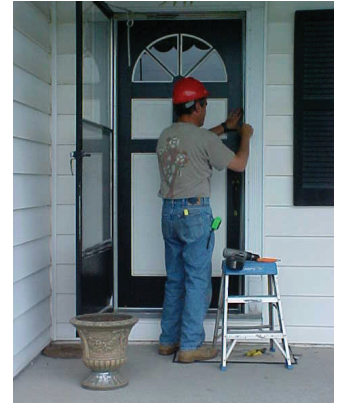
Suggestions:
Weatherization is all
about action! Show the
diagnostic tools in use.



Solution

ACTIVITY DEMONSTRATING WAP IN ACTION

Solution -
The worker is
performing a
weatherization measure
wearing proper safety
equipment and is clearly
identifiable.



ACTIVITY DEPICTING SAFE, POSITIVE, AND RECOGNIZABLE WORK

Good – A knowledgeable
weatherization technician
demonstrates densepack
sidewall insulation to an
elected official.



Good – The image shows
diagnostic testing in action
and is clear.



Problems

WHAT IS THE ACTION?

Problems: What kind of training is this? Who are these people? What are they learning?

Suggestions: Could this activity be shown more actively and clearly?



Solution

ACTIVITY DEPICTING SAFE, POSITIVE, AND RECOGNIZABLE WORK

Good: This photo clearly shows technical training and young people learning from experts.



Good – Good action shot. The subject or focus is the weatherization work, not the worker.



INDIVIDUAL PORTRAITS: RISKS AND HITS

Risk – This picture does not have a theme. It doesn't immediately bring to mind what the service or success has been.

There is no context, no action, and no photo element that puts this family in the frame, "the kind of people who deserve my help or my community's help to get by." A caption can help with this, but try to use shots showing the clients interacting with workers.



Good – This photo shows an energy educator analyzing a utility bill with a client, pointing out potential ways to conserve energy and making the client an active participant in the process, not just a passive one.



V. Conclusion

WAP has a unique story to tell. This guidebook contains strategies and tips to help you write narratives for a wide variety of audiences, including the general public and your elected representatives.

NASCSP welcomes examples of good stories, before-and-after models, and other helpful instructional materials to provide to the WAP network. It is important to get the word out that Weatherization Works! and a great way to do so is to highlight the good work you do every day. When everyone knows about the outstanding work you perform, they are more willing to support your work – in your community, your state, and nationally. NASCSP is here as a reference and resource, so please let us know if we can be of any assistance, and get the word out!

Endnotes

ⁱ ORNL/TM-2014/338, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, http://weatherization.ornl.gov/Retrospectivepdfs/ORNL_TM-2014_338.pdf

ⁱⁱ Materials

1. General: How our minds process information

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^{iv} David Kusnet et al., Introduction

^v *Ibid.*, 24

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 24

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Notes



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