



Weatherization for the Future: New York's SERC Initiative

New York's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) has made significant progress in improving energy efficiency for underserved communities, thanks to the Sustainable Energy Resources for Consumers (SERC) funding. By introducing cutting-edge technologies and targeting vulnerable areas, this initiative has allowed New York to enhance home energy efficiency, reduce energy costs, and lower emissions—all while advancing environmental justice goals through the federal Justice40 Initiative.

Challenge:

In December 2021, the U.S. Department of Energy announced the SERC grant opportunity to expand WAP projects by incorporating renewable energy technologies. New York State, through the New York State Office of Homes and Community Renewal (NYS HCR), received \$537,500 in funding. This funding needed to be applied effectively to address gaps in communities that had historically been underserved.

Cattaraugus Community Action, Inc. (CCA), a long-standing WAP subgrantee serving four counties in New York, was tasked with implementing the SERC project. Their challenge was to deploy new energy technologies in disadvantaged communities, including those within Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZs) and Native American Territories (NATs). Additionally, there was a shortage of trained workers to install these technologies. While a significant portion of NY weatherization agencies had decades of experience, many lacked expertise in newer energy technologies such as heat pumps and solar installations. This skills gap posed a challenge as CCA sought to bring these innovations to homes that needed them most.

Solution:

NYS HCR and CCA developed a plan that prioritized energy efficiency upgrades. With \$500,000 allocated to CCA, the project targeted 21 units for energy upgrades, focusing on multifamily homes in economically distressed areas. These homes received advanced technologies that went beyond traditional weatherization efforts. Installations included air source heat pumps, electric water heaters, and other modern systems in homes that typically wouldn't have access to these systems. These measures helped electrify homes and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Workforce development played a key role in ensuring the success of the SERC initiative. To address the skills gap, CCA and NYS HCR introduced training programs for local workers to become energy auditors and heat pump installers. These programs equipped workers with the expertise needed to support the project's goals while creating new employment opportunities in the region and will continue to provide a pipeline of education and training opportunities for future employment opportunities in weatherization.

NY WAP's project was also supported by funding from the Low-Income Heat and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). This funding allowed New York to upgrade over 1,200 homes across the state.



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These improvements not only provided residents with more energy-efficient living spaces but also positioned NYS HCR to continue leading electrification efforts in future projects.

Impact:

Although the SERC project is still ongoing, it has already produced tangible benefits. Many of the targeted units have been completed, and local workers are now trained in the latest clean energy technologies. By prioritizing disadvantaged communities, including those in QOZs and NATs, the initiative has reduced energy costs and improved living conditions for low-income residents. The inclusion of modern technologies such as air source heat pumps has reduced greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to the state's broader environmental goals.

In addition to the immediate results, NYS HCR is exploring the integration of solar energy into future phases of the project. By adding solar photovoltaic systems, they aim to further reduce energy costs and enhance the sustainability of these homes. This shift toward renewable energy demonstrates New York's commitment to a cleaner, greener future.

The SERC initiative not only aligns with the Justice40 goals of providing 40% of the benefits from climate-related investments to disadvantaged communities but also serves as a model for how weatherization programs can leverage new technologies to create long-term societal benefits. From reduced energy costs to cleaner air and enhanced workforce opportunities, the SERC project has set a new standard for weatherization efforts across the state.