

State of Wisconsin Department of Administration Division of Energy

Residential Energy Assistance Challenge
Program Evaluation

Final Report: August 7, 2006

Evaluation Contractor: PA Government Services Inc.

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State of Wisconsin Department of Administration Division of Energy

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2003, the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) and the Social Development Commission of Milwaukee (SDC-Milwaukee) submitted a proposal to the Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Options (REACH) program to provide services that promote individual and family energy self-sufficiency to low-income households.

The agencies were awarded \$445,486 in FY2003 to provide these services to Milwaukee residents that reside within portions of three designated Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) strategic areas. The proposed plan took a holistic approach to program benefits, treating the family unit as a whole, rather than purely concentrating on home energy use and improvements. The plan included¹:

- Extensive case management services
- Energy efficiency training through a model home demonstrating energy efficient techniques called the Energy House
- Referrals to the state Weatherization Assistance Program
- Home rehabilitation services
- Financial counseling
- Referrals to other programs
- Home maintenance classes.

This report presents the final evaluation results based on process interviews of key staff implementing the program and qualitative interviews with program participants. An interim evaluation report prepared in 2005² reported evaluation results based on process interviews of key staff, participant surveys, and nonparticipant surveys through the first 18 months of the program.

The participant and nonparticipant survey results indicated that there is a need for these types of services in this area. A significant percent of those interviewed had difficulty making their energy payments consistently, let alone fully. In addition, the reported number of disconnects among the nonparticipating population indicate there is a segment of the population the program has yet to reach.

¹ Social Development Commission and State of Wisconsin, Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Options (REACH) Proposal, REACH Milwaukee, July 9, 2003.

² Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Program Evaluation—Interim Report, March 31, 2005

1.1 STAFF EVALUATION OF WHAT WORKED WELL

REACH Milwaukee staff highlighted what they view to be the successful aspects of the program:

- Case management is viewed by program management as one of the key program successes. They said that one of the primary aspects of the program is that it doesn't just pass out money—the case management approach helps “to reduce the cycle of dependence.” However, based on the final program participation numbers (Table 4.1), the program did not provide services at the level projected for REACH participants. Less than 20 percent of REACH participants received home ownership counseling or free tax assistance, less than 60 percent had co-payment arrangements, and approximately 70 percent received financial literacy training.
- Staff view the Energy House has being a key program success. They feel it has been a good teaching tool and cuts across the various services and programs offered by SDC. Evaluators also feel the Energy House has been a good educational tool—surveys of Energy House participants and REACH participants conducted at the time of the interim evaluation report indicate that as a result of the Energy House Tour, individuals report better understanding how to conserve energy in their home and that this has had a positive impact on their comfort and energy bill.
- The educational aspect of the program was cited by most program staff as a success. Case managers said they have witnessed the results of the educational components of the program. As part of the qualitative interviews conducted in Year 3 with program participants, we asked them what was the best feature of the program. Besides weatherization/rehabilitation services, education and training was most often mentioned as the “best” feature of the program.
- Leveraging REACH funding with other programs allowed the program to provide more services. Because the WRAP and REACH pilot programs ran during similar time periods, program managers said this allowed the programs to afford 1) to design and build a database, and 2) provide additional funding to REACH for case management and weatherization.

1.2 BARRIERS TO PROGRAM PARTICIPATION/SUCCESS

At the time of the interim report, REACH Milwaukee staff identified several barriers to participation, including: level of family involvement required by the program and participants' conception about program goals. Evaluators identified three additional potential barriers to program service: REACH staff turnover, weatherization contractor changes, and funding limitations.

Based on process interviews with REACH Milwaukee staff at the end of the three-year pilot, we document the following barriers to participation and/or program service.

- *Level of family involvement required by the program.* Case managers said that they are very clear when describing the program to potential participants, explaining that the program requires households to actively participate. Theoretically, this design would result in participants feeling an ownership in the program, which would result

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in greater self-sufficiency. However, this requirement deterred households that did not want to be actively involved.

- *Participants' concept of program goals.* A second barrier to participation reported by REACH staff is the fact that REACH is not intended to be a weatherization program. By program design, only a third of participants were slated to receive weatherization or rehabilitation services. Program staff find that REACH participants are looking for weatherization services as well as case management and energy education. The inability to use weatherization as a primary draw in the program slowed intake rates.
- *SDC and REACH staff turnover.* As found during the interim evaluation, REACH management turnover has been significant and has resulted in a lack of understanding of program goals, confusion regarding the amount of funds left, and a loss of efficiencies. From program inception in FY2003 to this final evaluation report, REACH Milwaukee saw five separate program managers (Four persons as one person was program manager twice). In addition to management turnover, REACH was unable to offer some planned services during the pilot due to other staff turnover (e.g., home maintenance training, financial literacy training).
- *Weatherization contractor changes and changes in prioritization.* The weatherization component of the program also saw setbacks due to contractor changes and confusion resulting from a change in how Milwaukee's clients are prioritized for weatherization.
- *Funding.* The program was designed with the idea that the funds were to be distributed annually at the amount proposed. For example, it was believed that if a total of \$400,000 was awarded, the grant amount would over the course of three years equaled \$1,200,000. As it turns out, this was a misconception and the grant amount awarded was for the total amount of grant as a whole across all three years, not for each of three years. This funding issue severely limited the number of participants REACH Milwaukee has accepted into the program.

1.3 ACHIEVEMENT OF PERFORMANCE TARGETS

This section presents the achievement of performance targets through May 2006, in context of the surveys conducted midway through the evaluation with participants and nonparticipants, and qualitative interviews with participants in Year 3 of the pilot.

Most pilot programs face problems that must be overcome in order to accomplish program goals. If these problems cannot be overcome, then goals must be revised. REACH Milwaukee is no exception.

To date, the REACH Milwaukee program has not achieved many of their performance targets. It should be noted that the following performance targets are the original performance targets when SDC thought they would receive approximately \$1.2 million over a three-year period, rather than approximately \$400,000. These performance targets were never formally adjusted to reflect this change in funding and are not realistic.

The REACH participation target was to enroll 300 clients in the program. At the time of this final report, only 112 clients had been enrolled.

Goal 1: Clients make consistent and timely energy bill payments

- **INTERVENTION 1:** Provide online Energy Assistance application for client households annually. This intervention would lead to decreased out-of-pocket costs. *(Target: 4,000 households)*

This target was exceeded during each year of the pilot. However, these individuals are not receiving assistance as a result of the REACH program; rather, it is the efforts of the Energy Assistance program that is providing services to these REACH clients.

- **INTERVENTION 2:** Negotiate with the local utility company for payment of arrearages including co-payment arrangements. As a result, client would remain connected to utilities and establish regular payment histories. *(Target: 300 clients)*

Throughout the course of the evaluation, case managers referred 66 IFP clients in setting up co-payments or budget billing; however, program records do not indicate how many of these people actually followed through and set up a co-payment or budget billing arrangement, as case managers did not always assist them in setting it up.

Goal 2: Clients decrease energy consumption

- **INTERVENTION 3:** Instruct clients and family members on energy conservation at the Energy House. As a result, clients learn how to decrease energy expenditures, and household energy consumption would decrease from first year of REACH to second year of REACH. *(TARGET: 2,200 clients visit Energy House, 1,500 clients become aware of how to decrease energy expenditures)*

It is in Intervention 3, through the Energy House, that REACH Milwaukee may have shown its greatest movement. Over 3,700 individuals toured the Energy House over the life of the program. Evaluation efforts at the time of the Interim report indicated that the Energy House was having some effect in infusing energy conservation knowledge into participating households. Additionally, respondents reported putting some of this knowledge into action, which they believe will reduce their energy usage.

- **INTERVENTION 4:** Provide appliance/fixture maintenance information and training to clients. Clients will learn basic maintenance and appliance repair techniques and maintain at least one energy saving device on an on-going basis at home. *(Target: 250 clients participate and 150 clients exhibit proficiency at skills)*

REACH staff reported that only 20 out of 112 REACH participants attended the home maintenance class. Currently, there is no staff who can provide this training, so no clients are currently receiving this service. For those individuals who did receive the class, this intervention appears to have accomplished its goal of teaching basic maintenance skills. As reported during the interim evaluation, home maintenance class participants were satisfied with the training, felt information presented was useful, and used what they learned.

Goal 3: Clients improve financial literacy

- **INTERVENTION 5:** Provide financial literacy instruction for client households to enable clients to understand their financial plan, maintain full and timely utility bill payments, and experience no disconnections within one year.
(TARGET: 300 clients participate, 150 clients understand their financial situations, and 75 maintain positive cash flow)

REACH Milwaukee staff reported providing financial literacy training to 80 participants. At the time of the interim evaluation, only 17 clients had received literacy training—those who did report participating in the financial literacy instruction believed they would be able to improve their finances based on information presented in the class. As part of the qualitative interviews conducted with program participants in Year 3, 12 of the 24 participants reported receiving financial or budget training. Eleven participants said that they have a monthly budget established and 10 of the 11 said they are able to stay within this budget on a month-to-month basis. No participants reported being disconnected since participating in the program.

Goal 4: Clients improve overall housing and living conditions

- **INTERVENTION 6:** Provide clients with supplemental intensive case management in a holistic approach to meet the overall needs of the household. Case management involves referrals to other social service programs, which would in effect decrease out-of-pocket expenditures and help clients maintain positive cash flow.
(TARGET: 150 receive other social services and 75 maintain positive cash flow)

According to program records, all IFP clients received other social services. Most, if not all, clients received energy assistance, as this was the primary source of recruitment (those who toured the energy house while waiting for energy assistance help). While case managers report referring clients to other programs as needed, there is no readily available count of the types and total numbers of referrals. In fact, at the time of the interim report, only 30 percent of respondents said they received referrals to other organizations or programs (although two-thirds of the participants interviewed in Year 3 reported receiving referrals).

- **INTERVENTION 7:** Provide clients with home rehabilitation and weatherization support, improving health and safety, and overall conditions of the home.
(TARGET: 30 clients annually, 90 total)

At the time of the interim report, 28 percent of the participants interviewed said they received home rehabilitation or weatherization services. Of these, less than half said that work was completed. Qualitatively, however, it appears the program could be making some progress toward the goal of improving households' living conditions. A review of home conditions before and after weatherization shows that there was some improvement reported for each household condition, the greatest improvement being in the heating system.

Goal 5: Clients build assets

- **INTERVENTION 8:** Assist clients in claiming all appropriate tax credits through free tax service, increasing households' income.

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(Target: 250 clients)

While no clients received tax service during the first year of the program, 24 received tax service in 2005 and 19 in 2006.

- **INTERVENTION 9:** Provide home buying counseling to REACH Milwaukee client households, educating renters on the home buying process, pre-qualifying renters for mortgages, and facilitating the purchase of their first home.
(Target: 30 clients complete home ownership counseling and purchase their first home)

Less than a quarter of REACH participants are renters. Of those households, program staff report that only two clients received home buying counseling.

- **INTERVENTION 10:** Assist clients in improving environment and equity in home through assistance from REACH Milwaukee and weatherization services.
(Target: 30 homes annually, 90 total)

There is not enough information for evaluators to determine if the program is building client assets through weatherization services. Results related to weatherization services are discussed within Intervention 7.

1.4 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the event that REACH Milwaukee is funded in the future, we recommend a number of changes be put in place. In the event REACH Milwaukee is not funded, these recommendations can be applied to other programs.

- *Reduce program management turnover and other key staff turnover by making the program a higher priority.*
- *Establish goals and outcomes that are reasonable, attainable, and measurable. Milestones should be reasonable and easily linked to program intervention.*
- *Clearly communicate program goals and attach timeframes to activities.*
- *Define what constitutes successful graduation from the program.*
- *Implement tools to clearly and consistently track program services received. Program activities should be tracked in the program database, rather than case managers having to review case notes and make physical counts.*
- *Continue to offer a holistic approach, focusing on financial management and energy conservation.*
- *Identify a dedicated person at We Energies to improve the communications between the caseworkers and We Energies staff.*
- *Offer tax preparation assistance to homeowners who live in their duplex. Currently, these homeowners are not eligible for the free tax service.*

2. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the final evaluation results for Milwaukee’s Residential Energy Assistance Challenge (REACH) Option Program. This report summarizes the major findings from the interim evaluation conducted in Year 2 of the program, discusses any changes in these findings, and presents REACH Milwaukee’s achievement toward their stated program goals.

2.1 OVERVIEW OF REACH MILWAUKEE

The REACH program, funded from federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) leveraging funds, provides states with grants to “minimize the health and safety risks that result from high energy burdens on low income Americans, prevent homelessness as a result of inability to pay energy bills, increase the efficiency of energy usage by low income families, and target energy assistance to individuals who are most in need³.”

In Federal Fiscal Year 2003 (FY2003), the state of Wisconsin Department of Administration–Division of Energy (DOA) and Social Development Commission of Milwaukee (SDC–Milwaukee) was awarded \$445,486 in REACH funds. The proposal submitted outlined an aggressive plan to offer holistic services to 300 households across a three-year period, and was designed to provide significant improvements in individual and family self-sufficiency across multiple venues. The major elements of the work plan were as follows:

1. Within 10 months of award, 300 households will begin a consistent, monthly co-payment schedule.
2. Within 36 months of award, 150 clients will learn basic maintenance and appliance repair techniques with proficiency.
3. Within 36 months of award, 150 clients create and understand their personal financial plans and 75 maintain full and timely utility bill payments and no disconnection for 1 year.
4. Within 36 months of award, 90 clients receive hands-on energy training at the Energy House (a protocol home intended to demonstrate energy saving tips and techniques).
5. Within 36 months of award, 30 clients receive home-buying counseling, become pre-qualified for mortgages, and purchase their first home.

Benefits not outlined in this initial work plan, but included in the interventions listed in latter documents, include:

1. Provide Energy Assistance applications for 4,000 client households annually.
2. Instruct 2,200 clients and family members on energy conservation at the SDC Energy House.

³ US Department of Health and Human Services, LIHEAP Clearing House (<http://www.ncat.org/liheap/reach.htm>).

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3. Provide 90 clients with rehabilitation and/or weatherization support.
4. Provide intensive case management to 300 clients to meet the overall needs of the household.
5. Assist 250 clients in claiming all appropriate tax credits through free tax service.

Table 2.1 presents the logic model upon which the initial program design was based.

REACH Milwaukee's target area consists of portions of three designated Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) strategic planning areas, encompassing two targeted zip codes: 53204 and 53215. It also corresponds to the location of an Enterprise Community on Milwaukee's near south side.

At the time of the grant application, over 84,000 residents resided in this geographic area and the population was growing. Over 50% of the residents were tenants, with 30% living below the federal poverty level. According to the US Census, approximately one-half of the eligible population was Hispanic/Latino. The housing stock is aging and shows considerable deterioration; approximately three-fourths of the homes were built before 1950, with many of those homes having been constructed before the turn of the century.

Table 2.1: Initial REACH Milwaukee Logic Model

Assumptions	Program Intervention	Outcomes	Performance Indicator	Data Source
<p>1. With intensive and specific energy conservation and financial education, households learn how to decrease energy costs.</p> <p>2. By incorporating home rehabilitation, weatherization, and routine maintenance activities learned in REACH Milwaukee training, the homeowner or renter will positively contribute to and enjoy more affordable and healthier housing options.</p>	1. Provide energy conservation training	<p><i>Immediate:</i> 2,200 client receive hands-on training at Energy House</p> <p>1,500 clients learn basic maintenance and appliance repair techniques</p>	<p>Number of client who participate in Energy House</p> <p>Number of clients who participate in maintenance and repair demonstrations</p>	Program tracking system
		<p><i>Intermediate:</i> Increased energy conservation knowledge and attitudes.</p>	Change in energy conservation knowledge and attitudes	Surveys with Energy House participants
		<p><i>Final:</i> Client decrease energy consumption</p>	Percent of households with changed energy conservation behavior	Customer Telephone Surveys
	2. Provide financial education	<p><i>Immediate:</i> 300 households participate in monthly utility co-payment schedule</p> <p>30 households receive home-buying counseling and become pre-qualified for mortgages</p>	<p>Number of households participating in co-payment</p> <p>Number of households participating in home-buying program and pre-qualified</p>	Program tracking system
		<p><i>Intermediate:</i> Households create and understand personal financial plan</p>	Change in budgeting skills and financial planning practices	Customer surveys
		<p><i>Final:</i> Clients improve financial literacy, build assets, and make consistent and timely energy bill payments</p>	Change in customer bill payment behavior, debts and assets	Customer surveys, utility bill payment data

2.2 MAJOR CHANGES DURING THE PILOT PROGRAM

There were numerous major changes that occurred during the pilot program, as summarized below and discussed more throughout this report.

- The program was designed with the idea that funds were to be distributed annually at the amount proposed. For example, it was believed that if a total of \$400,000 was awarded, the grant amount would over the course of 3 years equaled \$1,200,000. As it turned out, this was a misconception and the grant amount awarded (\$401,486) was for the total amount of grant as a whole across all 3 years, not for each of 3 years.
- Program management turnover was high. During the pilot period, there were five program managers (four separate people).
- The initial REACH Milwaukee work plan called for collaboration with OIC, whom the state of Wisconsin contracted with to provide weatherization services in the city of Milwaukee. At the time of process interviews in August 2004, OIC was not responding to SDC's request to weatherize homes. OIC's weatherization contract was not renewed at the end of 2004, and two new contractors (SDC and La Casa de Esperanza) were selected to provide weatherization services.
- In FY06 a pilot program was initiated in the city of Milwaukee for prioritizing weatherization services. This prioritization pilot targeted the highest energy users in the program. Under the prioritization model, the DOA provides weatherization agencies in Milwaukee with lists of WHEAP applicants and their energy cost data, sorted and prioritized to identify the households with the highest energy costs. Agencies are required to actively recruit these households and provide them with weatherization services.

With the exception of the change in the program budget, any one of these changes would not have been fatal to the program. However, as discussed later in this report, the combination of events made program implementation less effective than it could have been and caused dissatisfaction among a number of program recipients.

2.3 EVALUATION PLAN SUMMARY

The evaluation plan addresses the two main evaluation objectives defined by the U.S. Office of Community Services (OCS), which are to:

1. Provide a process evaluation of the design and implementation of the REACH pilot.
2. Assess the pilot's outcomes for participants for the various pilot goals.

REACH Milwaukee is a three-year initiative (October 1, 2003, to September 30, 2006) and a four-year evaluation period (October 1, 2003, to September 30, 2007). REACH Milwaukee has two required evaluation reports. This final report is the second of two required reports. The interim evaluation report was completed on March 31, 2005⁴.

⁴ Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Program Evaluation—Interim Report, March 31, 2005

2.4 EVALUATION DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

The REACH evaluation plan initially included five major data collection activities that would support the outcome evaluation. These included

- Process interviews with REACH Milwaukee program and DOA staff
- Surveys of individuals who toured the energy house
- Surveys of REACH participants in 2005 and 2006
- Surveys of REACH nonparticipants in 2005 and 2006
- Utility payment and consumption analysis

Because of changes in the program budget, and resulting changes to the evaluation budget, only one year of surveys with participants and nonparticipants was conducted (in 2005), and the utility payment and consumption analysis was dropped. The final evaluation activities included:

1. **Process evaluations of REACH Milwaukee program and DOA staff in Year 2 and Year 3 of the Pilot:** These process interviews examined process issues related to program, including but not limited to: program uptake, program outreach, barriers to service and participation, funding requirements and limitations, and progress against performance goals. PA met with the REACH program managers and the DOA program manager throughout the course of the program, as well as the REACH Milwaukee case managers. In Year 3, we also spoke with the Director of Social Services and Director of Business Operations.
2. **Review of other REACH programs:** This secondary research summarized other state's proposed REACH programs. This summary can be found in the interim report.
3. **Surveys of individuals who toured the Energy House:** Energy House demonstrators asked individuals who went through the energy house from October 1 through December 31, 2004, to complete the Energy House survey immediately after the tour. The Energy House survey focused on the energy saving activities presented in the tour. The survey attempted to identify what activities the tour brought to their attention that they had never heard about and what activities could be applied in their own home. The survey also asked if participants believed they would save energy using the guidelines presented in the Energy House. In addition to this, the instrument probed into their reasons for entering the house and if they planned on telling anyone else about their experiences. The results of these surveys are summarized in the interim report.
4. **Surveys of REACH participants:** To feed into the outcome evaluation and assess program performance against stated goals, PA conducted telephone surveys with all households that were actively participating in the program as of January 15, 2005. The telephone survey attempted to take an in-depth look into participants' experiences with the program and their home and living conditions. The results of these surveys are summarized in the interim report.
5. **Surveys of REACH nonparticipants:** To capture the incremental benefit of REACH Milwaukee's holistic approach, we employed a quasi-experimental evaluation

design through the use of a control group. The nonparticipant survey reviewed respondents' awareness of REACh, their interest in some of the services offered through the program, and the same home and living conditions discussed in the REACh participant survey. The results of these surveys are summarized in the interim report.

6. **Qualitative interviews with REACh participants:** In June 2006, PA staff spoke with 24 REACh participants to develop a broader understanding of the program's impacts on their household. Given the small number of participants contacted, the results of these interviews should be viewed as qualitative. In other words, they present a range of views and experiences of participants, but are not representative of the participant population's views and experiences as a whole.

2.5 REPORT ORGANIZATION

This report contains the Executive Summary (Chapter 1), this introductory chapter (Chapter 2), and three additional chapters:

- REACh Milwaukee: About The Program
- Goals and Movement Toward Performance Targets
- Key Recommendations

Appendix A of this final report includes a copy of the interview protocols used for program staff and the qualitative interview with participants.

3. REACH MILWAUKEE: ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The REACH Milwaukee program was designed to take a holistic approach to participant benefits. The program design incorporated elements of energy efficiency education and weatherization services to move households toward energy self-sufficiency, and also incorporated other services such as financial counseling and program referrals to assist households be more successful as a whole. As reported by all program implementers, the backbone of this program has been the case management and the ability for REACH staff to personally work closely with participants to improve their energy use and living conditions.

REACH Milwaukee staff is composed of a director of business operations, a project manager, and two case managers. In addition to these dedicated staff, REACH Milwaukee has on-site access to a financial literacy specialist, weatherization staff, and staff working with other social service programs. During the programs' startup, REACH Milwaukee also had an advisory board made up of program partners, referral agencies, SDC staff, and We Energies. The advisory board served as a steering committee.

REACH Milwaukee began enrolling households in the program in February 2004. At the time of the interim report in May 2005, program staff reported that 88 households were active participants, defined as individuals who enrolled and were accepted into the program. At the time of this final report, program staff reported 112 individuals were accepted into the program.

This chapter describes program services and performance targets, the process for enrolling and becoming a program participant, and barriers to program participation and service.

“The case management that we provide is more than just spending 30 minutes with the client, giving them referrals, and then you are done. There is a lot of follow-up and intensive case management. We’re talking hours and hours spent with each client to find them the necessary resources.”

Case manager, May 2006

3.1 PROGRAM SERVICES AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS

REACH Milwaukee was designed as an intensive case-management program to move families toward greater energy self-sufficiency, and living sufficiency in general. As such, the program required families to actively participate to move themselves toward these ultimate goals.

The program provided services to two groups: those who tour the Energy House, and those who were accepted into the program and received case management services (an Individual Family Plan (IFP)). Below we describe the Energy House and all the components that make up an IFP.

1. **Energy House.** The Energy House is the most innovative component of the program, and the component that reached the greatest number of individuals. The Energy House provides energy efficiency education through a protocol of a home that would be typical for this Milwaukee area. The Energy House is located in the lobby of SDC, one location where Milwaukee residents apply for Energy Assistance. REACH staff typically conduct tours of the Energy House on a twice-daily basis.

Tours can run almost continuously during the busy season. Tours are conducted in both English and Spanish. Supporting documentation is multi-lingual as well.

The Energy House exemplifies many energy saving techniques throughout different rooms in the house, demonstrating how households can save energy and water. For example, the tour discusses with participants the importance of installing compact fluorescent light bulbs, programmable thermostats, ENERGY STAR® appliances, water aerators, weather strips, and new furnaces. Located near many energy saving techniques is a poster that states how much energy can be saved by doing the activity mentioned. More in-depth information about the Energy House can be found in Appendix D of the interim report.

The Energy House was the primary means of identifying program participants. Prior to taking the tour, visitors completed a guest-book that asked for their address. Potential participants were identified through their zip code (53204 or 53215). These participants were contacted after the tour by REACh staff who explained the program and attempted to enlist their participation in the program.

Below are services specific to REACh participants that receive an Individual Family Plan.

1. **Weatherization services.** One component of REACh Milwaukee is the weatherization referral. The target goal over the 3-year pilot was to provide weatherization services to 90 clients through REACh Milwaukee. Although all participants are income eligible to receive benefits through the state Weatherization Assistance Program, REACh Milwaukee was to give households priority to receive weatherization services.

IFP clients are not referred to weatherization until they have demonstrated that they are willing to participate in the other aspects of the program (e.g., financial literacy training). Case managers build a case for families to fill a weatherization slot by assigning a score based on three components. The first component is a cost of shelter index, which takes into account the cost of living (cost of energy and rent/mortgage plus property taxes) as a ratio of income. The second component is an expendable income index, which takes into account the money remaining after required bills are paid. This index is necessary because some families may have very low shelter costs—such as an elderly family that has paid their mortgage off, but still sees very little income. The third component is an additional point given to households that have an elderly member. Discussions were then held among program staff to determine if a household can receive weatherization services.

2. **Rehabilitation services.** REACh Milwaukee also provides home rehabilitation services at an average cost of \$15,000 per home. These services are earmarked for the homes that would otherwise have been unable to receive weatherization due to structural faults that would make weatherization ineffective (e.g., a roof in need of repair or replacement), or need improvements that weatherization could not cover. Examples of rehabilitation services homes could receive include: replacing and repairing roofs; repairing ceilings and drywall; replacing windows; making external improvements such as landscaping, new siding, and gutter replacements; and addressing health and safety issues. Similar to weatherization, case managers recommended households for rehabilitation services and discussions were held among program staff to prioritize homes to receive this service.

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3. **Home maintenance classes.** Home maintenance classes provided participants with energy conservation tips, and demonstrate common home maintenance practices (e.g., replacing faucets, unclogging drains). The class lasted approximately three hours and included a question and answer session at the end. Participants left with a packet of information for their reference.

This course was offered throughout the first year, but has since discontinued due to insufficient staffing and no clients are currently receiving this service. Case managers instead recommend courses at places such as Home Depot to fill this void. These free courses, however, are very focused on a specific topics (e.g., selecting and installing energy efficient doors and windows, installing bathroom faucets, energy efficient cooling solutions). While case managers said they would prefer to conduct the home maintenance training in-house so they can make sure the class covers a variety of maintenance practices, they do not feel personally capable of teaching this type of course and no one else has been assigned to teach it.

4. **Financial literacy.** The program offers two venues for financial literacy training: 10-minute workshops provided to WHEAP applicants waiting to be serviced, and a longer, more intense training provided to IFP participants. The longer financial literacy training consists of sessions that instruct households on ways to manage their finances, such as developing a budget, setting up budget billing with their utility companies, opening a checking and/or savings account, understanding their credit report, and knowing their rights as consumer. This general financial training is modeled after the Money Smart training. Clients needing more in-depth financial training (e.g., credit counseling) are referred to other sources (e.g., Select Milwaukee). Financial literacy training was not offered throughout the entire REACH program due to staff turnover. Financial literacy is currently offered by the case managers, under the guidance of the Education and Training department. While case managers have received training on how to conduct the financial literacy training, this is only one of many services they provide and it is not clear that IFP participants are receiving that same level of training that they would from a dedicated training class.
5. **Tax service.** SDC-offers free tax preparation services and online filing (VITA tax service). During the second year of the pilot, REACH caseworkers were trained to provide this service to their clients, which they said did increase client household income. Caseworkers have not been trained in tax preparation for owner occupied duplexes, so this service is not provided through the program to these homeowners, despite the need for this service.
6. **Intensive case management, and referrals to other programs.** All REACH participants receive intensive case management services, which includes referrals to other programs. Program referrals are intended to improve clients' household and living conditions by increasing care for the family in all aspects of their life. Case managers also provide energy conservation training, and try to get clients set up on a payment plan.
7. **Referral to first-time homebuyers program.** This service is targeted to participants that are renters. One goal of the program is to assist low-income renters purchase a home. This service facilitates that goal.

Table 3.1 summarizes the specific services offered through REACH and the selection process for each service.

Table 3.1: REACH Components and Details

Service	Selection Process
Energy House	None—all WHEAP applicants are encouraged to attend
Individual Family Plan (IFP) <i>Base REACH service</i>	Financial eligibility, home in REACH target area, and level of participation. Households that exhibit a need are voted into IFP.
Financial Literacy Training	IFP participants
Abbreviated Financial Literacy Training	None—all WHEAP applicants are encouraged to attend
Energy education	IFP participants (although more will receive through the home visit, even if not elected into the program)
Maintenance classes	IFP participants
Home weatherization (provided through state program)	Homes are given a structural assessment and are prioritized based on a calculation taking into account a cost of shelter index (cost of housing and energy as a ratio of income) and an expendable income index. The voting committee determines if the service should be provided based on an assessment and index scores.
Home rehabilitation	Same as home weatherization process.
Tax services	Excludes owner occupied duplexes
Referrals to other programs	None
Referral to first-time buyers	Renter participating in IFP with decent credit rating

3.2 THE PROCESS FOR ENROLLING AND BECOMING A REACH MILWAUKEE PARTICIPANT

Enrolling and becoming a REACH Milwaukee participant is a multi-phase process. The reader is referred to the Interim report for a step-by-step review of the enrollment process.

Most importantly, participants are required to actively participate in the program, starting with completion of an assignment checklist prior to being admitted into the program. Case managers provide direction to the participants that need it (i.e., referrals to other services), and follow up with participants to ensure they are actively pursuing the leads provided to them.

Recruitment into the program slowed to almost nothing since the interim report. Funding issues, contribute to the lack of new participants.

Recruitment was also complicated by the fact that participating households were not getting weatherized, creating a disincentive for case managers to actively recruit. Weatherization is a primary draw for participant recruitment, and the program has had difficulty delivering these services due to contractor limitations. Case managers are very reluctant to continue to enroll clients if they don't think they will be able to provide the complete services that clients want.

“We would lose all trust in the community if we do that . . . We would be looked at as another program that promises but doesn't deliver”.

Case manager, May 2006.

3.3 BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION AND SERVICE

At the time of the interim report, REACH Milwaukee staff identified several barriers to participation, including: level of family involvement required by the program and participants' conception about program goals. Evaluators identified three additional potential barriers to program service: REACH staff turnover, weatherization contractor changes, and funding limitations.

Based on process interviews with REACH Milwaukee staff near the end of the three-year pilot, we document the following barriers to participation and/or program service.

3.3.1 Level of Family Involvement Required by the Program

Case managers reported that families are often intimidated by the fact that acceptance into the REACH program requires a commitment from the household to actively participate in the process. Case managers said that they are very clear when describing the program that households will need to be an active participant in the process, starting with the checklist. They explain the benefits the household will enjoy from the program, but the idea of needing to be actively involved, and creating an ownership in the program deterred potential participants who prefer a program that provides program benefits (e.g., weatherization) without requiring anything of them. The up-front explanation of expectations has been effective, and case managers report that few households have dropped out of the program.

Participants' Concept of Program Goals

A second barrier to participation reported by REACH staff during the interim evaluation is the fact that REACH is not intended to be a weatherization program. By program design, only a third of participants were slated to receive weatherization or rehabilitation services. Program staff find that REACH participants are looking for weatherization services as well as case management and energy education. The lack of funding for weatherization (and rehabilitation) resulted in a significant decrease in the recruitment effort.

During the qualitative interviews conducted in Year 3 with program participants, this was participants' primary criticism of the program—they expected weatherization/rehabilitation but many had not received it. In fact, when asked to explain how the program has helped their household in their own words, over one-third of the 24 participants interviewed said the program had not helped them at all (despite the fact that most of these households received financial training, tax assistance, home maintenance training, or other referrals).

3.3.2 REACH Management Turnover

As found during the interim evaluation, REACH management turnover has been significant and has impacted the program. The continual changes in program management resulted in a lack of understanding of program goals, confusion regarding the amount of funds left, and a loss of efficiencies.

From program inception in FY2003 to this final evaluation report, REACH Milwaukee saw five separate program managers (four persons as one person was program manager twice). These managers did not leave the agency, but were reassigned. According to SDC management, this turnover was a result in changing resource demands at SDC, who reacted by shifting program management. Up to the time of the interim evaluation (mid-way through

the pilot), the two program managers had been part of the pilot program development and management since the grant award and were very familiar with the design of the program and its goals. Since the interim report, two of the program managers have been completely new to the program, and these managers faced a steep learning curve. The second to last manager worked with an existing program manager for a couple of months prior to taking over the program.

Changes in program management have also impacted the case managers, as each program manager has had a different agenda and a different way of reporting. Managers who haven't been involved with the program in the past also require training by the case managers on the program processes.

According to the case managers, one positive aspect of this change has been that new people bring new ideas to try out. The downside of this has been that there have been times when a lot of good ideas got started, but then because of the turnover became stagnate because of a change in focus of the new manager.

This change in program management may also be the reason for administrative issues that have arisen. For example, program managers have not documented the final program goals and interventions. There were revisions that should have been made to program goals and interventions after the funding issue was discovered. Another administrative issue approached by DOA staff was invoicing. SDC is not consistent in how often they invoice DOA for program services.

Other key staff that are no longer part of the program are the budget counselor and the home maintenance trainer. The budget counselor—who parted from the program in December 2004—was also responsible for conducting Spanish Energy House tours. SDC has worked with the caseworkers and other staff to fill these gaps. The home maintenance training staff position was not refilled.

Despite this continued turnover in program management, case managers have remained consistent. One of the case managers has been with the program since its inception and the other joined within eight months of program start. This consistency is especially important as participants come to rely on and trust their case manager. Also, the case managers understand the day-to-day issues and how to react to these issues because of their constant involvement. As one past program manager noted when discussing the potential impact of management turnover and his assessment of the job the case managers have performed: *“Because of [the case managers], the impact is less than it could have been. They have done amazing things ‘in spite of it’ or ‘because of it.’”*

3.3.3 Weatherization Contractor Changes and Changes in Prioritization

The weatherization component of the program also saw setbacks due to contractor changes and confusion resulting from a change in how Milwaukee's clients are prioritized for weatherization. The initial REACH Milwaukee work plan called for collaboration with OIC, whom the state of Wisconsin contracted with to provide weatherization services in the city of Milwaukee. At the time of process interviews in August 2004, OIC was not responding to SDC's request to weatherize homes. It was at this point in time when OIC was informed that the weatherization contract was open for re-bid and they were faced with the strong likelihood that they would not be selected to continue their contract. Additionally, they had a

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considerable backlog for the weatherization program beyond the REACH program (upwards of two years).

Two new contractors (SDC and La Casa de Esperanza) were selected to provide weatherization services in January 2005. This changeover naturally delayed weatherization work in the city of Milwaukee as well as within the REACH program. To further complicate matters, in FY06 a pilot program was initiated in the city of Milwaukee. This prioritization pilot targets the highest energy users in the program. Under the prioritization model, the DOA provides weatherization agencies in Milwaukee with lists of WHEAP applicants and their energy cost data, sorted and prioritized to identify the households with the highest energy costs. Agencies are required to actively recruit these households for weatherization services. Case managers had difficulty scheduling a REACH participant for weatherization if they were not already on this prioritization list. As a result, eligible REACH participants are waiting for service, despite the fact that the DOA has authorized these participants to receive services. At the time of this final evaluation report, the REACH program manager said that there had been correspondence between their Director of Program Services and various individuals in the state Division of Energy, that this problem has been resolved, and there is now good communication between the weatherization division and the REACH program.

As noted earlier, these delays have proved to be frustrating to program participants.

3.3.4 Funding

The program was designed with the idea that the funds were to be distributed annually at the amount proposed. For example, it was believed that if a total of \$400,000 was awarded, the grant amount would over the course of three years equaled \$1,200,000. As it turns out, this was a misconception and the grant amount awarded was for the total amount of grant as a whole across all three years, not for each of three years.

This funding issue severely limited the number of participants REACH Milwaukee has accepted into the program. For one, REACH staff reported that the trust applicants put in them is important, especially since this population is not quick to trust. Accepting them into the program and then not being able to follow through with program promises may be more detrimental than not accepting any other applicants at all. Also, they are hesitant to promote the weatherization and rehabilitation components of the program without the additional funding and these services are sought after by participants.

Where possible, case managers have tried to leverage funds from the Weatherization, Rehab and Asset Preservation Partnership (WRAP). The WRAP eligible service territory is a small area within the REACH eligible area. WRAP participants receive weatherization funding through a different source, which frees up weatherization funding for other REACH participants who aren't within the WRAP serve area. SDC's WRAP services also focus on mortgages, home insurance, and taxes. Case managers have used the insurance training they received through WRAP to benefit REACH participants.

SDC also recently applied for and received a NIP (Neighborhood Impact Program) grant. This grant will help 10 families who have lived in their homes for at least five years to fix code violations. Since funding for REACH rehabilitation services is very limited, this additional grant will help REACH families. SDC is also exploring partnering with the Milwaukee Christian Center, which has 50 NIP slots.

Finally, SDC asked for and received two amendments to the budget during the course of implementing the REACH program. These amendments shifted funds among the budget lines to address the changes in SDC's program activities.

3.4 STAFF EVALUATION OF WHAT WORKED WELL

Despite these barriers, REACH Milwaukee staff interviewed noted what they view to be the successful aspects of the program:

- Case management is viewed by the different program management as one of the key program successes. One of the primary aspects of the program is that it doesn't just pass out money—the case management approach helps *“to reduce the cycle of dependence.”*

As one program manager said, *“When you use the words ‘intensive case management’, that is an understatement. People tend to underestimate the time needed to work with these families.”* As part of the qualitative interviews conducted in Year 3 with program participants, we asked them how often they had contact with their case managers. Participants reported as few as two contacts and as many as five dozen contacts, with most people reporting at least five to six contacts.

However, based on the final program participation numbers (Table 4.1), the program did not provide services at the level projected for REACH participants. Less than 20 percent of REACH participants received home ownership counseling or free tax assistance, less than 60 percent had co-payment arrangements, and approximately 70 percent received financial literacy training.

- Staff view the Energy House as being a key program success. They believe it has been a good teaching tool and it cuts across the various services and programs offered by SDC. During very busy times, such as the date the moratorium is about to be lifted, the agency is completely full and this gives clients something constructive and educational to do while they are awaiting. In fact, during these busy times, up to six tours a day are held.

Staff also view the Energy House as cutting edge for a community agency. According to the current program manager, one of the primary reasons why Milwaukee was chosen to host the recent national WRAP conference was because of the interest among other programs in the Energy House.

Evaluators also feel the Energy House has been a good educational tool—surveys of Energy House participants and REACH participants conducted at the time of the interim evaluation report indicate that as a result of the Energy House Tour, individuals report better understanding how to conserve energy. Furthermore, most REACH participants reported implementing at least some of what they learned in the Energy House, and that this had positive effects on their comfort and energy bill.

- Program staff also viewed the educational aspect of the program as a success. Case managers said they have witnessed the results of the educational components of the program. As part of the qualitative interviews conducted in Year 3 with program participants, we asked them what was the best feature of the program. Besides weatherization/rehabilitation services, education and training was most often mentioned as the “best” feature of the program.

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- Leveraging REACH funding with other programs also allowed the program to provide more services. Because the WRAP and REACH pilot programs ran during similar time periods, this allowed the programs to afford 1) to design and build a database, and 2) provide additional funding to REACH for case management and weatherization.

4. GOALS AND MOVEMENT TOWARD PERFORMANCE TARGETS

This chapter presents the findings of the outcome evaluation, which reviews program movement toward program goals, interventions, and performance targets.

Table 4.1⁵ details program interventions proposed within the REACH Milwaukee work plan, performance targets, and movement toward those targets. With the exception of the Energy House tours, receipt of Energy Assistance, and energy conservation training, the program is behind in their performance target numbers, sometimes significantly.

It should be noted that the performance targets presented in Table 4.1 are the original performance targets when SDC thought they would receive approximately \$1.2 million over a three-year period, rather than \$401,000. These performance targets were never formally adjusted to reflect this change in funding and the targets in Table 4.1 are not realistic.

To put this in context, as part of the interim evaluation, we reviewed and reported on Wisconsin's program targets in comparison to other states' proposals and budgets. Other state programs, especially those with lower funding levels, tend to offer very targeted services under their REACH funding. For example, states may only offer weatherization services, or energy efficiency toolkits, or energy conservation classes. States that offer a more holistic approach to the program tend to be awarded grants of approximately \$1 million and higher:

- **Arizona** took a holistic approach to their program design, attempting to increase participants' self-sufficiency in general by reducing energy costs, increasing income, and reducing energy usage. However, Arizona's budget included LIHEAP funds and totaled over \$2 million.
- **The District of Columbia** also offered services beyond energy services to participants. For example, their proposal included a home ownership program to help low-income households qualify for home ownership. Their overall goal, however, hovered more around energy efficiency education and reducing energy costs than case management. The District of Columbia's grant amount was \$1.1 million.
- **Kentucky's** program also resembles Wisconsin's program in the sense that it claims to offer households intensive case management services as well as provide home repairs and weatherization services. Their performance target was 50 participants attaining self-sufficiency across the 3-year program and an additional 50 participants reaching a level of stability in their life circumstances. This particular grant amounted to approximately \$995,000.

⁵ Table 5.1 provides the number of households specifically participating in REACH Milwaukee, and with the exception of Energy Assistance and Energy House tours does not include households that received services through general referrals by SDC-Milwaukee. For example, the agency established co-payment arrangements or arrearage forgiveness plans, provided tax assistance, and provided financial training to numerous households within the targeted area. These numbers are not represented in the table because these households did not receive these services as a result of REACH Milwaukee efforts.

Table 4.1: Interventions, Milestones, and Current Participation Numbers

Goal	Intervention	Milestone and Timeline	Goal Achievement (from program start through May 31, 2006)
REACH participation	Recruit residents in 53204 and 53215 zip codes	300 enroll in program and receive IFP	112 enrolled
Goal 1: Clients make consistent and timely energy bill payments	1. Provide Energy Assistance application for client households annually.	4,000 households sign up for energy assistance (annually)	5,841 households received (Oct 2003-May 2004) 5,269 households received (Oct 2004-May 2005) 5,952 households received (Oct 2005-May 2006)
	2. Negotiate with the local utility company for payment of arrearages including co-payment arrangements	300 IFP clients begin consistent, monthly co-payment schedule	Referred and at times assisted 66 IFP clients in setting up co-payments or budget billing, although it is not clear how many of these households actual set up a co-payment
Goal 2: Clients decrease energy consumption	3. Instruct clients and family members on energy conservation at the Energy House.	2,200 visit energy house, 1,500 of these become aware of how to decrease energy expenditures	3,778 visitors
	4. Provide appliance/fixture maintenance information and training to clients	250 IFP clients participate, and 150 of these exhibit proficiency at skills	20 IFP clients received training. Skill proficiency was not tracked by the program or measured by the evaluation.
Goal 3: Clients improve financial literacy	5. Provide financial literacy instruction for client households.	300 IFP clients participate, 150 create and understand their personal financial plans, and 75 maintain full and timely utility bill payments	80 IFP clients received financial literacy instruction. Actual payment behaviors not tracked by the program or evaluation.
Goal 4: Clients improve overall housing and living conditions	6. Provide clients with supplemental intensive case management in a holistic approach to meet the overall needs of the household.	150 IFP clients receive other social services and 75 maintain positive cash flow	112 IFP clients received other social services. Cash flow not monitored.
	7. Provide clients with home rehabilitation and weatherization support.	30 IFP clients receive hands on energy training at Energy house and through rehabilitation/ weatherization (30 annually, 90 total)	112 clients received hands on energy conservation training 22 clients received weatherization and/or rehabilitation 33 clients referred and in process for weatherization 11 clients referred and in process for rehabilitation

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Goal	Intervention	Milestone and Timeline	Goal Achievement (from program start through May 31, 2006)
Goal 5: Clients build assets	8. Assist clients in claiming all appropriate tax credits through free tax service.	250 <u>IFP</u> clients receive free tax filing assistance	2004: 0 taxes prepared 2005: 24 taxes prepared 2006: 19 taxes prepared
	9. Provide home buying counseling to REACH Milwaukee client households, educating renters on the home buying process, pre-qualifying renters for mortgages, and facilitating the purchase of their first home.	30 <u>IFP</u> clients complete home ownership counseling, 30 clients become pre-qualified for mortgages and purchase their first home	2 clients received home ownership counseling. It is unknown if any clients purchased their first home.
	10. Assist clients in improving environment and equity in home through assistance from REACH Milwaukee and weatherization services.	90 <u>IFP</u> homes weatherized/rehabilitation	22 clients received weatherization and/or rehabilitation 33 clients referred and in process for weatherization 11 clients referred and in process for rehabilitation

4.1 PROGRAM GOALS, INTERVENTIONS, AND RESULTS

This section summarizes the program goals and interventions as detailed in the REACH Milwaukee initial proposal and work plan. It also presents results, or movement toward these goals, in context of the surveys conducted midway through the evaluation with participants and nonparticipants, and qualitative interviews with participants in Year 3 of the pilot.

At the time of final interviews with program staff, REACH staff had not yet thought through what criteria would define a family as being ready to “graduate” from the program. There are clients that the case managers don’t have much contact with since they have already received all services that could be provided. However, there are families for which they haven’t been able to provide all needed services due to program funding (e.g., rehabilitation services).

4.1.1 Goal 1: Clients make consistent and timely energy bill payments

INTERVENTION 1:

Provide Energy Assistance application for 4,000 client households annually. This intervention would lead to decreased out-of-pocket costs.

Evaluation findings:

This target was exceeded during each year of the pilot. However, these individuals are not receiving assistance as a result of the REACH program; rather, it is the efforts of the Energy Assistance program that is providing services to these REACH clients.

INTERVENTION 2:

Negotiate with the local utility company for payment of arrearages including co-payment arrangements. As a result, client would remain connected to utilities and establish regular payment histories.

Evaluation findings:

Throughout the course of the evaluation, case managers referred 66 IFP clients in setting up co-payments or budget billing; however, program records do not indicate how many of these people actually followed through and set up a co-payment or budget billing arrangement, as case managers did not always assist them in setting it up. This reflects SDC’s current inability to track specific program activities in the program database, as well as the lack of follow-through by program managers in ensuring interventions were being monitored.

4.1.2 Goal 2: Clients decrease energy consumption

INTERVENTION 3:

Instruct clients and family members on energy conservation at the Energy House. As a result, clients learn how to decrease energy expenditures, and household energy consumption would decrease from first year of REACH to second year of REACH.

Evaluation findings:

Since program start-up, over 3,770 clients have toured the energy house. A survey of Energy House participants and REACH participant surveys conducted for the interim evaluation indicated that not only is the program teaching households how to ways to save energy, but some of what is being taught is also being applied within their homes. About a quarter of

4. Goals and Movement Toward Performance Targets...

respondents reported the tour taught them about changing the furnace filter, and about a fifth of respondents first learned of replacing CFLs, using curtains to regulate the home temperature, moving furniture, and blocking leaky drafts through the Energy House tour. Participant surveys indicate that the Energy House did actually encourage changes, and that these changes had positive effects on their comfort and energy bill. Nearly all REACH participants surveyed that toured the Energy House said they did at least some of what they learned in the Energy House, and 16 percent said “all of it.” The most commonly reported changes made were replacing incandescent light bulbs with CFLs and sealing up leaky windows with rope caulk or plastic (62% and 67%, respectively). Only 14% reported reducing their thermostat to reduce energy costs. Almost three-quarters of these respondents felt their home is more comfortable and over half believed their bills are lower as a result of the changes they made (70% and 54%, respectively). Forty-four percent of participants believed their energy bill did not change.

INTERVENTION 4:

Provide appliance/fixture maintenance information and training to clients. Clients will learn basic maintenance and appliance repair techniques and maintain at least one energy saving device on an on-going basis at home.

Evaluation findings:

REACH staff reported that only 20 out of 112 participants attended the home maintenance class. The initial plan called for nearly all participants to attend. According to one REACH program manager, home maintenance classes were held several times at the onset of the program. However, time and resource constraints hindered the instructor’s ability to hold as many sessions as they would have liked. Currently, there is no staff who can provide this training, so no clients are currently receiving this service. Case managers instead recommend courses at places such as Home Depot to fill this void.

Based on interviews conducted with participants for the interim evaluation, this intervention appears to have accomplished its goal of teaching basic maintenance skills to those who did receive the class. As reported during the interim evaluation, home maintenance class participants were satisfied with the training, felt information presented was useful, and used what they learned.

4.1.3 Goal 3: Clients improve financial literacy

INTERVENTION 5:

Provide financial literacy instruction for client households to enable clients to understand their financial plan, maintain full and timely utility bill payments, and experience no disconnections within one year.

Evaluation findings:

REACH Milwaukee staff reported providing financial literacy training to 80 participants. At the time of the interim evaluation only 17 clients had received literacy training—those who did report participating in the financial literacy instruction believed they will be able to improve their finances based on information presented in the class, but 56 percent had not done anything different at the time they were interviewed.

As part of the qualitative interviews conducted with program participants in Year 3, 12 of the 24 participants reported receiving financial or budget training. Eleven participants said that they have a monthly budget established and 10 of the 11 said they are able to stay within this

budget on a month-to-month basis. None of the participants reported being disconnected since participating in the program.

4.1.4 Goal 4: Clients improve overall housing and living conditions

INTERVENTION 6:

Provide clients with supplemental intensive case management in a holistic approach to meet the overall needs of the household. Case management involves referrals to other social service programs, which would in effect decrease out-of-pocket expenditures and help clients maintain positive cash flow.

Evaluation findings:

Intensive case management was described to evaluators as one of the most important components of the program. It is through this case management that family plans are established, and staff monitor participants' movement toward both energy and general living self-sufficiency. Case managers review participants' individual situations and refer clients to other agencies and/or trainings and classes if they feel a need is there. According to program records, all IFP clients received other social services.

Again, it is not clear from customer survey results whether the goal of this intervention was really accomplished. Most, if not all, clients received energy assistance, as this was the primary source of recruitment (those who toured the Energy House while waiting for energy assistance help). While case managers report referring clients to other programs as needed, there is no readily available count of the types and total numbers of referrals. In fact, at the time of the interim report, only 30 percent of respondents said they received referrals to other organizations or programs. From the qualitative interviews conducted at the time of this final report, two-thirds of the 24 participants reported receiving referrals.

INTERVENTION 7:

Provide clients with home rehabilitation and weatherization support, improving health and safety, and overall conditions of the home.

Evaluation findings:

At the time of the interim report, 28 percent of the participants interviewed said they received home rehabilitation or weatherization services. Of these, less than half said that work was completed. As discussed in the previous chapter, there was a switchover in weatherization contractors within FY2004. This switchover delayed weatherization services in the Milwaukee area, which explains why such a high percent of REACh participants were still in the process of receiving benefits in Year 3 of the program.

Given the small number of respondents for whom work was completed at the time of the interim report (6), it is not possible to state with confidence what affect this intervention is having on improving the health, safety, and conditions of the home. Qualitatively, however, it appears the program could be making some progress toward the goal of improving households' living conditions. A review of home conditions before and after weatherization shows that there was some improvement reported for each household condition, the greatest improvement being in the heating system.

4.1.5 Goal 5: Clients build assets

INTERVENTION 8:

Assist clients in claiming all appropriate tax credits through free tax service, increasing households' income.

Evaluation findings:

While no clients received tax service during the first year of the program, 24 received tax service in 2005 and 19 in 2006. SDC offers free tax preparation services and online filing (VITA tax service). REACH case managers provide this service to their clients and report that they have been able to increase client household income by providing this service.

Caseworkers have not been trained in tax preparation for owner occupied duplexes, so this service is not provided through the program to these homeowners, despite case managers' perceived need for this service.

INTERVENTION 9:

Provide home buying counseling to REACH Milwaukee client households, educating renters on the home buying process, pre-qualifying renters for mortgages, and facilitating the purchase of their first home.

Evaluation findings:

While over 50 percent of the target population are renters, less than a quarter of REACH participants are renters. Program staff explained that the program design—and particularly the limited funding—makes it more difficult to weatherize a home that is renter-occupied and part of a multi-unit building. While REACH is not a weatherization program, program staff said they would like all participants to have the option to be considered for weatherization and rehabilitation services.

Among the renters in the program, program staff report that only two clients received home buying counseling. As part of the interim evaluation, conversations with case managers confirmed that renters are not specifically targeted and are not considered for the program if they reside in a building with three or more units.

INTERVENTION 10:

Assist clients in improving environment and equity in home through assistance from REACH Milwaukee and weatherization services.

Evaluation findings:

There is not enough information for evaluators to determine if the program is building client assets through weatherization services. Results related to weatherization services are discussed within Intervention 7.

5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the event that REACH Milwaukee is funded in the future, we recommend a number of changes be put in place. In the event REACH Milwaukee is not funded, these recommendations can be applied to other programs.

- Reduce program management and staff turnover. This turnover resulted in a lack of clear and consistent leadership, program efficiencies, and confusion. In addition to program management turnover, the program was unable to offer certain planned services during the pilot due to other staff turnover (e.g., financial literacy training, home maintenance training). Upper management should place a higher priority on the program and its services to minimize turnover, ensure smooth handovers when there is turnover, and ensure continuity in services.
- Establish goals and outcomes that are reasonable, attainable, and measurable. The funding miscommunication had an obvious impact on the program's ability to deliver. A secondary disadvantage the program had from the beginning was the long list of program goals, interventions, and measurable outcomes. Other state programs run more directed programs under larger budgets. In designing assistance programs, particularly heavy case management programs, more directed services might be more effective. Additionally, milestones should be reasonable and easily linked to program intervention.
- Clearly communicate program goals and attach timeframes to activities. Program management turnover and lack of documentation on the final program goals resulted in confusion among management staff, case managers, and evaluation staff.
- Define what constitutes successful graduation from the program.
- Implement tools to clearly and consistently track program services received. Program activities should be tracked in the program database, rather than case managers having to review case notes and make physical counts. This method resulted in inconsistent counts of program performance targets throughout the pilot period. By the end of 2006, SDC is planning to have integration of all services by using central intake for all programs. This will allow them to track participation by all programs and to measure outcomes by types of participation.

Evaluations of other pilot programs that establish electronic links between programs show that connections between programs improve case management opportunities, timeliness, and accuracy. The Milwaukee Energy Linkage is one such program. This pilot established electric links between SDC-Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Gas billing system and expanded case management and bill payment services. The evaluation reported that, as a result of this linkage, case managers felt they were able to serve their clients better, could follow their clients' financial and bill payment patterns more effectively, and that the quality of their work was much improved. The evaluation also found that the pilot alleviated some communication problems

between the two organizations. Evaluators believe an electronic link between REACH Milwaukee and Energy Assistance could reap similar rewards⁶.

- Continue to offer a holistic approach, focusing on financial management and energy conservation. Program management and caseworkers strongly believe that these are key to participants' success. More advanced training in financial literacy should be explored.
- Identifying a dedicated person at We Energies would improve the communications between the caseworkers and We Energies staff and possibly provide clients with a better level of service.
- Offer tax preparation assistance to homeowners who live in their duplex. The caseworkers currently turn a lot of people away and they aren't able to find a quality tax service at a low price that they can refer clients to.

⁶ Tannenbaum, Bobbi, Richard Hasselman, Scott Pigg, and Kathy Kuntz. *Exploring Low-Income Program Alternatives: An Evaluation of Six Wisconsin Energy Bureau Pilots*. Energy Center of Wisconsin, September 1999.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

A.1 PROGRAM STAFF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**REACH Milwaukee
Program Implementer Follow-up Interview Protocol**

To be completed with REACH Milwaukee director and case managers as appropriate

Interview Objectives:

- Benchmark program activities against goals
- Characterize REACH participant population
- Understand how the program affected clients and ways it could have been more effective
- Follow-up on process issues identified in interim report (e.g., program management turnover, workload for case managers, inability to weatherize homes)
- Identify additional process issues for REACH Milwaukee

I. Introduction

Explain purpose of evaluation and assure confidentiality of interview.

Explain we will talk about the following aspects during the last program year and how these have changed over the life of the program:

- Program administration and implementation
- Characteristics of REACH participants
- Your opinions on how REACH functioned
- Program goal achievement

II. REACH Milwaukee Administration

First, I would like to get an understanding of how REACH Milwaukee operated at SDC, focusing on the last program year.

1. During the last program year, who was involved in implementing REACH Milwaukee at SDC and what were their roles? How did this change over the life of the program?
2. Outside of SDC, who else did you work with in implementing REACH Milwaukee (Probe for range of market actors: DOA, We Energies, Milwaukee WRAP, other agencies)? How did this change over the life of the program?

- Did you encounter any specific difficulties working with any of these other organizations you worked with in implementing REACH Milwaukee? Explain any difficulties.
- 3. Did the program tap into additional funding sources to help run the program? [IF YES] What additional sources did you use? How much did these sources contribute to the program? How did you identify these additional sources?
- 4. How were REACH participant characteristics and activities tracked in your information system? (Are they still tracking in conjunction with the WRAP database? Is there any linkage yet between the REACH database and the Energy Assistance database, or any other linkages?)

III. REACH Milwaukee Implementation

1. How were potential participants recruited? How did recruitment procedures change over the life of the program?
2. Did the program target households with any specific characteristics? (Probe about any specific targeting based on vulnerable household members, high-energy consumption, exclusion of those in 3+ buildings, etc.) How did this targeting change over time?
3. During the last program year, how many REACH Milwaukee participants were recruited? How many of these participants completed an IFP?
4. Describe the process for completing an IFP for households (provide case managers with personal data, complete assignment checklist, home walk-through visit, case manager prepares IFP recommendation and refers home to other types of assistance, case manager follows up to determine progress, committee votes families into the program, etc.).
5. What difficulties did you face in getting households to complete their IFP? Were you able to overcome any of these barriers?
6. During the last program year, could you please explain to me the type of services you offered clients as part of REACH Milwaukee. How did this change over the life of the program? Probe specifically about:
 - Energy conservation training
 - Home maintenance training (3 hour course)
 - Financial literacy training (10 minute for WHEAP, more intense for IFP)
 - Supplemental case management
 - Utility co-payments
 - Home buying counseling
 - Home rehabilitation (case manager builds case for homes not eligible for weatherization due to faults that would make weatherization ineffective)
 - Home weatherization (case manager builds case to prioritize REACH participants)

- Tax support
 - Other services/benefits?
7. Previously, Energy House tours were provided to anyone interested in taking a tour, primarily individuals waiting to be seen by a WHEAP representative. Tours were offered regularly depending on the volume in the building at the time. Has the process for conducting Energy House tours changed in the past year? [IF YES] How has it changed? (Probe: how many go through the tour at a given time, how to determine what type of information is distributed, any new materials provided following the tour, etc).
 8. Did any households graduate from the program? What criteria were used when considering a household to have 'graduated'?
 9. Have there been any households that signed up as IFP households, but have since dropped out? What percent? What are the reasons these households are dropping out?

IV. Characterize REACH participant population

1. What are the demographic characteristics of those participating in REACH Milwaukee? Is there any concern about not serving certain segments of the population? Can you identify participants' characteristics through your database?
2. Last year we reported that few participants were renters. The program manager confirmed this was because the program does not enroll individuals that reside in a three or more unit building. Has this element of the program changed? What difficulties have you encountered in enrolling rental units (probe specifically about any landlord issues)?

V. Next, I would like to get a sense of your opinion of how REACH Milwaukee is functioning.

1. How do you think REACH Milwaukee has affected participating households? What evidence do you have to support this? PROBE:
 - Energy conservation knowledge and attitudes
 - Energy consumption
 - Financial literacy
 - Asset acquirement
 - Utility bill payment behavior
 - Overall housing and living conditions
 - Employment status
 - Other?
2. How could the program have been more effective for it's clients?

3. What type of feedback have you received about the Energy House? Have you had clients return to provide feedback about any changes they have made because of the tour they took?
4. What components of the program did you initially implement, and then revise to account for difficulties? What difficulties were there, and how was the program revised to account for them?
5. Were there any components of the program initially part of the work plan that were dropped? Why were those components dropped from the program?
6. What other barriers did the program face over time? Were these barriers overcome? Probe specifically regarding:
 - Level of family involvement to participate
 - Participant's conception of program goals (e.g., not just a weatherization program)
 - REACh staff turnover
 - Weatherization contractor changes
 - Funding (any other solutions not discussed above)
 - State or federal regulations
 - Others?
7. What REACh Milwaukee program component do you think worked best and why?
8. What REACh Milwaukee program component do you think most needed improvement and why?

VI. Benchmark Program Activities Against Goals (see next page)

Finally, I'd like to talk about the original goals of the program. (REVIEW NEXT PAGE) For each goal that wasn't achieved, what specific barriers did you face in achieving this goal?

Goal	Intervention	Milestone and Timeline	Achievement (by year if annual goal)
REACH participation	Recruit residents in 53204 and 53215 zip codes	300 enroll in program and receive IFP	
Goal 1: Clients make consistent and timely energy bill payments	1. Provide online Energy Assistance application for client households annually.	4,000 households sign up for WHEAP (annually)	
	2. Negotiate with the local utility company for payment of arrearages including co-payment arrangements	300 IFP clients begin consistent, monthly co-payment schedule (within 10 months of award)	
Goal 2: Clients decrease energy consumption	3. Instruct clients and family members on energy conservation at the Energy House.	2,200 visit energy house, 1,500 of these become aware of how to decrease energy expenditures (within 36 months of award)	
	4. Provide appliance/fixture maintenance information and training to clients	250 IFP clients participate, and 150 of these exhibit proficiency at skills (within 36 months of award)	
Goal 3: Clients improve financial literacy	5. Provide financial literacy instruction for client households.	300 IFP clients participate, 150 create and understand their personal financial plans, and 75 maintain full and timely utility bill payments and no disconnection for 1 year (within 36 months of award).	
Goal 4: Clients improve overall housing and living conditions	6. Provide clients with supplemental intensive case management in a holistic approach to meet the overall needs of the household.	150 IFP clients receive other social services and 75 maintain positive cash flow (within 36 months of award).	
	7. Provide clients with home rehabilitation and weatherization support.	30 IFP clients receive hands on energy training at Energy house and through WRAP for rehabilitation/ weatherization (30 annually, 90 total)	

Goal	Intervention	Milestone and Timeline	Achievement (by year if annual goal)
Goal 5: Clients build assets	8. Assist clients in claiming all appropriate tax credits through free tax service.	250 IFP clients receive free tax filing assistance, 150 increase income via tax credits (within 12 months of award), 50 clients participate in Individual Development Account (IDA) programs.	
	9. Provide home buying counseling to REACH Milwaukee client households, educating renters on the home buying process, pre-qualifying renters for mortgages, and facilitating the purchase of their first home.	30 IFP clients complete home ownership counseling, 30 clients become pre-qualified for mortgages and purchase their first home (within 36 months of award)	
	10. Assist clients in improving environment and equity in home through assistance from REACH Milwaukee and weatherization services.	90 IFP homes weatherized (within 36 months of award)	

A.2 PARTICIPANT QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

How much contact have you had with your case manager regarding the REACH program (either Mira or Aimee)? (Probe to get frequency of contact, time period over which contact occurred, and average length of individual contacts)

When was the last time you were in contact with your case manager?

REACH offers many services to participating households. I am going to read a list of services to you. Please tell me which services you received.

A. Tour the Energy House?	1 Mentioned 2 Not mentioned
B. Receive referrals to other programs and services other than REACH or Energy Assistance?	1 Mentioned 2 Not mentioned
C. Receive weatherization assistance through REACH?	1 Mentioned 2 Not mentioned
D. Receive home rehabilitation services through REACH?	1 Mentioned 2 Not mentioned
E. Receive tax assistance through REACH?	1 Mentioned 2 Not mentioned
F. Receive financial or budget training?	1 Mentioned 2 Not mentioned
H. Attend home maintenance classes offered by REACH?	1 Mentioned 2 Not mentioned
I. [IF RENT] Receive a referral to first-time homebuyer classes?	1 Mentioned 2 Not mentioned

EXAMPLES OF WEATHERIZATION SERVICES: receiving a new furnace, a new water heater, insulation, etc.

A.: Interview Protocols...

EXAMPLES OF HOME REHABILITATION SERVICES: roof repairs/replacement, landscaping, siding replacement, window replacement, drywall repairs, electrical repairs, etc.

Are there certain services that you expected to receive as part of the REACH program but haven't yet received?

Can you tell me in your own words how this program has helped your household?

NOTE: If not mentioned, probe specifically for:

Have you had your energy service disconnected since participating in the program?

- Yes
- No

What percent of your energy bill payments have been made in full over the past year?

_____ %

What percent of your energy bill have been made on time over the past year?

_____ %

Do you have a monthly budget established?

- Yes
- No

Are you able to stay within this budget on a month-to-month basis?

- Yes
- No

In what ways do you wish the program had helped your household?

In your opinion, what was the very best feature or features of the REACH program?

What were the least helpful features of the program?

Do you have any other comments that you would like to share about the REACH program?