

Bridging the Gap: Pilot Program Helps Partner Agencies Through Staffing Challenges



Powered by a vision to provide “Energy Efficiency for All,” Ameren Illinois partners with community-based organizations across the service territory to help low-income customers make energy-saving upgrades to their homes.

In 2021, a survey of 22 partner Community Action Agencies identified the need for staffing assistance due to high turnover, retirements, medical leave and the COVID-19 labor crisis. In response, Ameren Illinois launched a Supplemental Staffing Pilot to provide temporary assistance in completing Home Energy Assessments.

During a five-month trial period beginning in spring 2022, Ameren Illinois partner, Walker-Miller Energy Services, provided a trained staff member to complete Home Energy Assessments for two participating Agencies: Madison County Community Development in Edwardsville and C.E.F.S. Economic Opportunity Corporation in Effingham.

“C.E.F.S. had an Assessor that was unable to perform their work for medical reasons. This left our Weatherization Program short of around 25% of our required staffing needs,” says Joe Page, C.E.F.S. Housing Program Director. “The Supplemental Staffing Program provided C.E.F.S. with the trained staff needed to fill in and complete Assessments without needing additional time for training and monitoring.”

Alternating between the two Agencies throughout the Pilot period, the loaned employee completed three Home Energy Assessments for Madison County Community Development and four Assessment for C.E.F.S. Based on the Assessments, customers received free energy-saving upgrades, ranging from smart thermostats to insulation and HVAC replacement.

At the end of the Pilot period, Agencies identified lessons learned related to scheduling, documentation, training and communication. Despite these obstacles, the Supplemental Staffing Pilot offered an effective strategy to bridge the staffing gap so low-income families across Ameren Illinois service territory continue to get the help they need.

“This Pilot allowed C.E.F.S. to continue assessments and complete as many homes as funding would allow, providing a great service to our clients.”

— Joe Page, C.E.F.S.

HIGHLIGHTS

- » Supplemental staffing allowed Agencies to continue to provide Home Energy Assessment while short-staffed.
- » Over a five-month period, the Pilot benefited two nonprofit Agencies and seven households.