

## Response to Questions on the FY 2015 Budget

**Request By:** Supervisor Herrity

**Question:** The Budget Consideration Item reduction “*Eliminate the \$500,000 funding for Energy Education and outreach parties*” has been requested. Provide a summary of the reduction including the impact it would have.

**Response:** As part of the *FY 2010 Third Quarter Review*, a total of \$9,642,600 was appropriated to several capital projects associated with the award of a U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) approved by the Board of Supervisors on December 7, 2009. This grant funding was awarded to Fairfax County as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. One of the projects approved as part of this grant was funding associated with a pilot program called ***Energy Action Fairfax*** designed to increase the awareness of Fairfax County residents regarding their personal energy consumption and to encourage them to reduce that consumption. The development and implementation of this branded residential energy education and outreach program was undertaken by GolinHarris International pursuant to a competitively-bid contract awarded in November 2011. The total amount of the federal grant expended for this pilot program was \$428,852.71. All funding associated with this project was expended by October 2012 based on 3-year term of the grant. There is not an additional \$500,000 budgeted in FY 2015 for the Energy Education and Outreach pilot program; however, an amount of \$75,000 has been included in FY 2015 to support the continuation of ***Energy Action Fairfax***. This funding is included within the total \$535,000 budgeted in Fund 30010, County Construction and Contributions for Environmental projects. The entire \$535,000 has also been proposed for elimination; therefore should the reduction of \$535,000 be initiated, an additional \$75,000 for Energy Outreach would not be available for reduction in FY 2015.

Major activities in developing and implementing the initial residential ***Energy Action Fairfax*** program included proposing program names and logos, developing messaging and branding, creating informational materials and content for the program website, establishing contacts with community organizations, and preparing for and hosting numerous events with participating communities, including workshops focused on home energy efficiency and energy audit events at the homes of community volunteers.

The pilot program relied on three distinct but inter-related approaches to energy education and outreach: direct engagement with homeowner and civic associations, a social media and marketing “push,” and a user-friendly website that serves to “pull” residents and web-visitors to the site and program. The direct engagement aspect provided the peer-to-peer contact essential to behavior change; it also generated content for the marketing efforts. Program objectives included educating citizens about their energy consumption both at home and in the workplace, explaining the energy assessment (audit) process, and encouraging residents to undertake energy-savings measures. The program also educated residents about the expected direct benefits and costs of typical improvements and considerations for evaluating and prioritizing recommended improvements.

Although the pilot program ended with the expiration of the EECBG award term, the county has worked to develop a strategic plan that will serve to guide future Energy Action Fairfax program efforts and initiatives in both the residential and commercial sectors. The plan recognizes that there are a variety and range of resources that the ***Energy Action Fairfax*** program can and should draw upon to leverage its messages, such as local agencies, community organizations, business associations, faith groups, and educational institutions. The plan also recognizes that implementation of the ***Energy Action Fairfax*** program should not rely on an outside contractor, as did the pilot program, but instead should be the responsibility of county staff to the extent possible. The plan supplements this framework with short- and longer-term objectives and initiatives. One short-term objective is the redesign and restructure of the ***Energy Action Fairfax*** website. Current information will be streamlined and updated and content relevant to business owners, managers, and tenants will be added. The redesigned site will include less text and more pictures, interactivity and videos, including business-oriented videos. Additional features will be added to the website in a second phase, including one or more blogs and rotating “success stories” highlighting noteworthy residential and commercial efforts. Another short-term objective is the establishment of a green-certification program to provide greater visibility for energy-efficiency and conservation efforts already underway.

The first phase of this ongoing program will focus on the commercial sector, as ENERGYSTAR, LEED, and other established commercial certification programs provide ready resources to identify likely commercial participants. The second phase will address the residential sector.