

# Rochester Energy Efficiency & Weatherization (RENEW) - Elizabeth McDade

<b>ID</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Created</b>	<b>Submitted</b>	<b>Login</b>
324	submitted	7/29/22 03:40PM	7/29/22 04:51PM	<a href="mailto:7040_emcdade@racf.org">7040_emcdade@racf.org</a>

## Organization Profile

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<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Mail Address</b>
Rochester ENergy Efficiency & Weatherization (RENEW)	500 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607

<b>Exec. Name</b>	<b>Contact Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>
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**Mission/Vision** Mission: RENEW convenes community partners to collectively improve the health, wealth, and well-being of the greater Rochester community through home improvement interventions. Our work strengthens and stabilizes neighborhoods, and reduces our community's carbon footprint, making a more sustainable future for us all.

Vision: RENEW's collective impact provides socioeconomic co-benefits including building residential wealth, preventing home foreclosure, reducing residential greenhouse gas emissions, and creating improved health outcomes for income-qualified homeowners and their families. RENEW is as economically sustainable as it is environmentally impactful.

**Receive County Funds?** no

**Div. of Corp. N/A?** no

## Proposal Information

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**Project Name** Rochester ENergy Efficiency and Weatherization (RENEW)

**Summary** Rochester ENergy Efficiency and Weatherization (RENEW) is an initiative of the Rochester Area Community Foundation and a collective impact, multi-million dollar community investment engine that empowers people to maintain home ownership and assists in economic stabilization in underinvested neighborhoods combating racial housing inequity. Our work dramatically conserves energy and reduces the community's carbon footprint (preventing 5,600 tons of greenhouse gas emissions entering the atmosphere to date), and cuts residential fuel costs by 20 to 50 percent, resulting in improved financial status for income-qualified homeowners. In addition, it improves the health status for occupants reducing rates of illness for children and families.

RENEW builds upon the established home improvement/energy-efficiency programs administered by our community partners. RENEW grants to our community partners are for projects in need of "gap" funding to help homeowners meet program eligibility requirements. While many programs provide safety nets, RENEW is a bridge. RENEW funds are braided with community partner grants to remove obstacles to assist families so they can receive desperately needed home improvement.

We know that "place matters" – where a person lives is a stronger predictor of their health than their genetic code. It is critical we use this once-in-lifetime ARPA opportunity to fundamentally transform our community through a comprehensive and holistic lens. Home rehab and energy efficiency work is part of our community's inclusive recovery work, advances economic stabilization of income-qualified households, and improves public health via healthier homes.

<b>Workforce/Economic?</b>	<b>Health/Safety?</b>	<b>Infrastructure/Sustainability?</b>
yes	yes	yes

**Description** A. RENEW's work connects and intersects Public Health, Sustainability, and Workforce Development. RENEW's home improvement work puts community-based organizations and local contractors to work to make homes energy-efficient, healthier, safer, while reducing residential greenhouse gas emissions, and cutting residential fuel costs, resulting in better health outcomes and improved financial status for the homeowners. RENEW's works with multiple community partners to leverages three dollars for every dollar RENEW invests and improves families' health, wealth, and wellbeing, while stabilizing neighborhoods and moving our community towards a sustainable, low-carbon future.

B. RENEW is currently funded year-to-year primarily by the ESL Charitable Foundation with smaller grants from the Community Foundation, Sinclair Foundation, NYS Senate Legislative Initiatives, and individual donors. We are in the process of developing a media campaign to promote the RENEW Climate Fund and create a sustained line of funding.

Every area in Monroe County has income-qualified homeowners living in unimaginable situations. One community partner made the difficult decision to stop adding to their home rehab/repair waiting list because the number of requests had grown to 500. RENEW is currently limited in its ability to help because we have limited resources to share. Without our gap funding, many of the wait-listed projects will not be accomplished.

Technically this project is "possible" without ARPA funding, but multi-year ARPA funding will allow RENEW partners to proactively plan within their own agencies, give RENEW staff time to create long-term strategies for sustainability, and allow us to help more families in

need. ARPA funding will be transformational for RENEW and for the community.

C. RENEW is a program that exists to increase accessibility and eliminate barriers to home improvement interventions for families who would otherwise be ineligible. RENEW builds upon the established home improvement/energy-efficiency programs administered by our community partners. RENEW facilitates inter-agency collaboration, cooperation, and efforts to solve problems that no one agency can achieve on their own. RENEW grants to our community partners are for projects in need of “gap” funding to help community partners assist homeowners meet program eligibility requirements. By working together, RENEW community partners “braid” their unique resources enabling each agency to make the energy efficiency and home improvement funds they offer work harder and go further. RENEW removes obstacles to help our community partners assist families who desperately need those improvements.

For example: Joyce V. called NeighborWorks Community Partners because her sewer line was broken. While Joyce qualified for energy-efficiency home improvements, NeighborWorks couldn't do weatherization work without getting the sewer line replaced. However, their funding did not cover that scope of work. NeighborWorks worked with RENEW to secure funding to replace the sewer line. Joyce and her family of four also received insulation, a high efficiency furnace, air sealing, a new door, and eight new windows. Her fuel costs decreased by 30% and 60.12 tons of greenhouse gas emissions were kept from entering the atmosphere.

D. RENEW will assist up to 250 income-qualified homeowners. The average grant from RENEW is \$4,000.00 and our partners contributed an average of \$10,000.00-\$12,000.00 per project. For an average of \$15,000.00 in braided resources, we improve one home and positively impact the lives of the people living in and visiting that home.

Our research tells us that 1) RENEW clients see an average savings of 20% on energy costs; 2) 100% with self-reported pre-existing respiratory conditions report reduced symptoms; 3) Current estimates demonstrate that this work, to date, will keep over 5,600 tons of greenhouse gas from entering the atmosphere and every future project will only add to that savings; 4) Seventeen percent of clients saw a 30%+ savings on energy costs; 5) No other program is collecting this kind of data.

RENEW collects qualitative research data surrounding physical and mental health benefits resulting from energy efficiency and healthy home improvements by conducting in-person interviews with clients.

Capturing real data in support of energy cost savings claims was crucial to documenting some of the impact of our work. RENEW developed a formula for figuring energy cost savings based upon standard NYSERDA and EPA regulations and created a comprehensive Greenhouse Gas Savings Calculator. The calculator estimates carbon reduction based upon the projected lifetime of the intervention (furnace, etc.).

RENEW staff quantifies fuel cost savings and greenhouse gas emission reductions through pre- and post-energy work audits using utility account data. This audit determines the electricity demand and heat load in the baseline, which is then compared to the post-energy work electricity demand and heat load. The difference is used to calculate fuel cost savings and greenhouse gas emission reductions created by the project. It is a time-consuming process but has proven to be an effective tool.

E. Recent research has uncovered and underscored that where an individual lives is a stronger predictor of their lifelong health than their genetic code. Public health researchers have identified and connected the quality and safety of one's home and community to one's health outcome. In this regard housing is routinely described as a social determinant of health. Research focused on the Greater Rochester region and indoor health quality, more broadly, has indicated that building materials used in homes built before the 1950s such as lead, asbestos, and formaldehyde, gases such as carbon monoxide and radon, and irritants such as black mold caused by inadequate ventilation can trigger or cause various health conditions such as lead poisoning, asthma, different types of cancers, if continuously exposed to these hazards. These hazards are especially dangerous for children and elderly adults. This research and knowledge of the region's housing stock suggests that the work being undertaken by RENEW and its partners are necessary to improve the quality of housing and reduce the impact of these hazards on residents' lives as well as decrease medical care costs.

Investing in comprehensive home “health” is an essential cornerstone and unmet need to combating poverty, helping income-qualified homeowners stabilize their personal and financial situation, and building community-wide economic stability. Every dollar we spend is an investment in people today and in their future.

**Company Strengths** RENEW was established through NYS Attorney General Settlement Funds and is housed at the Rochester Area Community Foundation.

This community wide collaborative effort convenes monthly and grew out of long-established working relationships with members of the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning and the Rochester Healthy Home Partnership. RENEW's community partners include local city, town, and county governments, and over a dozen non-profits with expertise in housing, public health, higher education, climate justice, elder care, environmental health, clean heating and cooling technologies, and data and analytics all coordinated by RENEW staff. RENEW's community partner service providers offer a variety of whole home improvement grant programs. They assess and identify interventions to make necessary home improvement including energy-efficiency and health and safety. Their work is funded through grants and low-interest loans for eligible applicants. They have decades of related experience, successes, and technical expertise and working with Monroe County homeowners.

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Since 2015, RENEW and community partners have invested over \$6.0M into the homes of 420 income-qualified homeowners, making them more energy efficient, healthier, and safer – homes in every City of Rochester zip code and so far in the towns of Brighton, East Rochester, Gates, Greece, Henrietta, Irondequoit, Penfield, Spencerport, and Webster.

RENEW has developed an integrated, efficient approach to stabilize families' and neighborhoods' health, wealth, and wellbeing, while at the same time moving our community towards a sustainable, low-carbon future.

**Community Resources** A: RENEW's primary community partners include: Action for a Better Community, City of Rochester, Climate Solutions Accelerator, Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning, Common Ground Health, Greater Rochester Housing Partnership, Heat Smart Monroe, Metro Justice, Monroe County Dept of Public Health, Monroe County Office on Aging, NCS Development, NeighborWorks Community Partners, PathStone Corporation, Rochester Housing Development Fund Corporation, Town of Greece GRIP, and the Town of Irondequoit IHIP. Secondary partner organizations include Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Legal Aid Society of Rochester, New York, NYS Homes & Community Renewal, and University of Rochester.

Participating partners have experienced construction managers on staff and working relationships with experienced area contractors. This pool of contractors includes NYS certified Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE). All of the participating agencies are committed to meeting or exceeding NYS Empire State Development's (ESD) goal of awarding at least 30% of all projects to MWBE certified firms.

B. RENEW's partners providers offer a variety of whole home improvement grant programs. They assess and identify interventions to make overall home improvement including energy-efficiency and health and safety. This work is typically funded through grants (e.g. NYSEDA 50/50, Assisted Home Performance, EmPower, HUD, etc.) and low-interest loans for income-eligible applicants. RENEW community partners have decades of related experience, successes, and technical expertise.

RENEW (formerly RSEHI Rochester Safe and Efficient Homes Initiative) grew out of the long-established working relationships of the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning and the Rochester Healthy Home Partnership. The parameters of the original NYS Attorney General RENEW/RSEHI funding were designed to be self-defined. Working with community partners who were 1) not accustomed to working together and were active competitors, and 2) used to working within VERY specific funding parameters, meant that we needed to establish trust before designing a program. It took time, training, and collaboration. The result is a truly successful collective impact initiative. RENEW partners became trusted and invested colleagues whose involvement was critical to the program's.

Early on in the process, a community agency administrator said "weatherization guys are never going to care about the health of the home's occupants." At a group presentation in front of potential funders, another community partner shared that "we had to sit in boring meetings for a year" but that in the end, those meetings created a group of colleagues working towards a common goal rather than a group of agencies trying to figure out how to get their piece of the pie. These anecdotes demonstrate the hard work required to shift paradigms to accomplish committed stakeholder/partner trust through the collective work of sitting at the table, talking, examining options, and developing a process based upon best practices for our community.

C. Additional project costs will be covered by grant funding from local private foundations and individual donations and RENEW Community Partners contributions through sources that fund their rehab/home repair programs at their individual agencies including NYSEDA, Empower, NYS Weatherization, Federal Community Block Grants, and Homeowners.

**Audience** RENEW projects can be found in every zip code within the City of Rochester and in the towns of Brighton, East Rochester, Gates, Greece, Henrietta, Irondequoit, Penfield, Spencerport, and Webster. Most of our clients are women of color, head of household, and/or senior citizens. They are grandparents supporting multi-generational families, veterans, and working mothers. 48% are first time homebuyers. 50% graduated from high school. 18% are senior citizens. 28% have children ages 0-17 years. Income-qualified households spend an average of 7.2% of their income on utility bills or \$2,160 of the average \$29,000 household income for a RENEW client. Recent RENEW projects include 24 homeowners with a combined outstanding utility bill balance of \$22,386.00. Individual overdue balances range from \$123.00 to \$3,583.00. Last year, 23% of clients were on a utility payment plan. This year, 31% of current clients have a utility payment plan.

Rochester has a high concentration of older, low market value homes in need of maintenance. The average age of the homes in our program is 104 years old. This makes them energy-inefficient, vulnerable to climate change, and is a problem that disproportionately affects low-income homeowners.

Every area in Monroe County and surrounding counties has income-qualified homeowners living in unimaginable situations. Recent projects included assisting a single woman over the age of 65 living in Greece on a fixed income in a home with only one bathroom and no working toilet. One family's matriarch in 14621 had raw sewage in the basement, was struggling with Lupus, and her remedy to mask the overwhelming smell of sewage pumping into the house when the furnace turned on was to clothespin scented dryer sheets to the heating grates.

There are no costs or fees for homeowners to participate in this program

<i>Cost 1st Year</i>	<i>Cost All Years</i>	<i>Residents 1st Year</i>	<i>Residents All Years</i>	<i>FT Employees</i>	<i>PT Employees</i>
\$100,000.00	\$850,000.00	200	800	1	0
<b>Volunteers</b>					
2					

**Staffing** RENEW Program Director Elizabeth McDade has worked in education, advocacy, and social justice around housing and health concerns for over 20 years. Elizabeth has been active with the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning since 2006, is certified by the EPA in Renovation, Repair and Painting and is credentialed in HUD's Healthy Homes Assessment: Principles and Practice and Healthy Homes Rating System; Lead Wipe Sampling Technician; Essentials for Health Housing Practitioners; and Implementing Healthy Homes Programs and Combating Indoor Environmental Hazards. She participated in two previous healthy-home study projects connected to the University of Rochester Medical Center: CARE and ROC HOME to do evidence-based respiratory health and asthma-specific home assessments and identify gaps in health and housing referral services. She is a 2018 graduate of the Healthcare Business Academy Fellowship Program. In July 2020, she completed the Yale School of Public Health certificate program in "Climate Change and Health."