Program Background. The Chicago Department of Planning and Development partnered with the Center for Neighborhood Technology’s RainReady initiative in 2015-2016 to offer free repairs and food mitigation retrofits to homeowners who experienced property damage during the 2013 Chicago flood. These activities were conducted through the Residential Flood Assistance Program (RFAP). This program assisted participants with recovery from the 2013 flood and with preparedness for future extreme precipitation and flooding.

Funding. The Residential Flood Assistance Program was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Community Development Block Grants for Disaster Recovery. The program aided 70 individuals. Eligible homes received up to $50,000 in assistance.

Impact. Seventy program participants received varying amounts of funding up to $50,000 to help with repairs and flood mitigation retrofits.

Program Eligibility. Eligible participants were low- and middle-income homeowners who were affected by Chicago’s 2013 flood. Flood relief was requested by the 70 participants; their homes were in neighborhoods where at least 30% of the homes were below the federal poverty level.
Program Services. All services offered by RFAP were free to participants, including home assessments and construction work. RFAP addressed issues of mold, lead, and other hazardous materials; made eligible repairs and upgrades, including replacing flood-damaged building materials; and installed flood mitigation measures such as backflow valves, foundation waterproofing, gutter and downspout repair and disconnection, regrading, rain barrels, and other green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and permeable pavers. Acting as the city’s delegate agency, the Center for Neighborhood Technology’s RainReady program was responsible for conducting public outreach to ask for program applications, verifying program eligibility, providing comprehensive home assessments to identify flood repair needs and flood mitigation solutions, developing a scope of work for each home, supporting homeowners with contractor selection, establishing grant agreement with homeowners, and administering funds to contractors. The city will provide inspections for installations every five years, and residents are required to live in the home for at least two years.

Challenges and Lessons Learned. Lessons learned and recommendations for programs similar to RFAP are as follows: Have a strategic plan when reaching out to homeowners, train home assessors to use a “building systems” approach to identify flood risk and mitigation solutions, plan for long-term maintenance of upgrades and repairs, and use similar programs’ materials and resources to help your program get started. For more information about recommendations, visit RainReady’s page on the Adaptation Clearinghouse website.

For additional information about RainReady’s Residential Flood Assistance Program, visit “Chicago, Illinois: RainReady’s Residential Flood Assistance Program” on the Arizona State University website.

For additional examples and resources related to flood preparedness, visit...


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