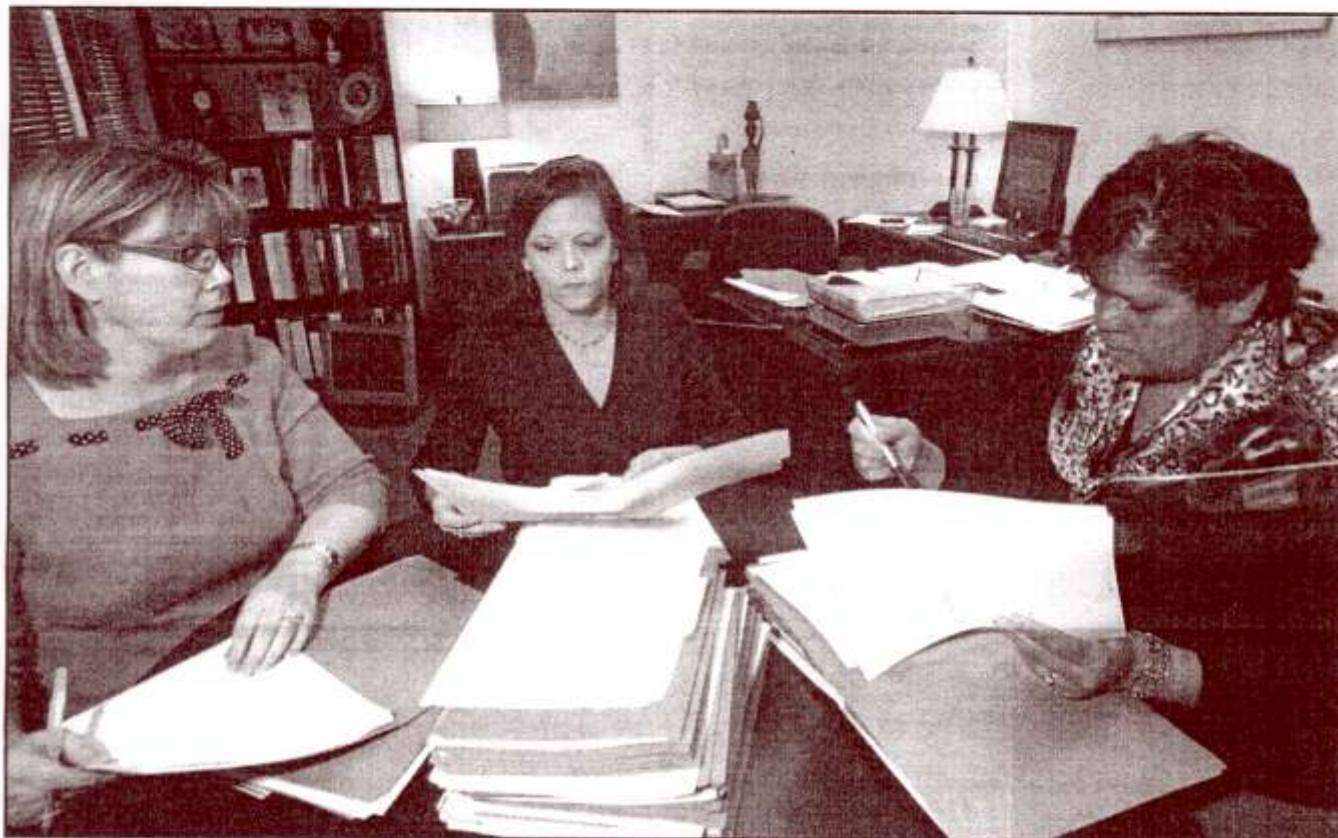


Philanthropy



STEVE WIGAN

Alice Lutz, center, CEO of Triangle Family Services, confers with colleagues Julie Sager, left, and Natalie Huckim. TFS received \$1.2 million in stimulus funds and plans to add three workers.

Stimulus wins bring own headaches

At a time when many nonprofits are facing funding shortfalls, some organizations have found respite in federal stimulus money.

By James Gallagher

Millions of dollars of stimulus funds may be flowing to Triangle-area nonprofits, but the funds have yet to make up for fundraising shortfalls among some beneficiaries.

So far, the stimulus dollars — mostly directed at nonprofits that work on home weatherization and homelessness prevention programs — have proved a mixed bag for these organizations. The additional dollars are, of course, welcome. But in many cases, the programs funded by stimulus dollars fall slightly outside the organization's routine operations and require the nonprofit to hire temporary personnel and shift resources.

"It's a tough balancing act, quite frankly," says Alice Lutz, CEO of Triangle Family Services.

The organization has received about \$1.2 million from the state to fund its Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing programs for three years. The program is intended to keep people from

being evicted and helping those who have been evicted to regain housing.

TFS, one of several organizations in the Triangle distributing the housing funds, hired one part-time employee and will hire two more individuals. The organization can use about \$290,000 from the grant for staff and other operational costs.

FLOOD OF CALLS

For TFS, the program fits well with its mission. Also, it previously ran similar housing programs, though the two programs differ in that the original program limited payment to \$1,000 per household, while the stimulus-funded program is capped at 18 months of support, regardless of cost.

Demand for the latest program has been so great that it has put a strain on the organization. Lutz says during the first three weeks that the dollars became available, TFS racked up more than 900 phone messages from people interested

in the program, more than one part-time employee could handle. So, other employees were forced to work on the program.

It's a similar story at the Women's Center of Wake County, which also is distributing Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing dollars. That organization doled out \$22,000 in the first six weeks of the program.

Executive Director Jean Williams says her organization's funding has dropped about 10 percent this year, but demand for services is up about 25 percent. The \$279,000 the organization received in stimulus money for the homeless prevention program has allowed the women's center to shift some of its resources from housing programs to other needs, she says.

Still, "there are other services we are having to provide. We are going to have to look for dollars that aren't there," she says.

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Cathy Akroyd, a spokeswoman for the state's Office of Economic Recovery and Investment, says the office has not tracked how much in stimulus money has been given to nonprofits because the dollars are coming from both the state and federal government.

Akroyd says the nonprofits were chosen to distribute and manage the funds because the "nonprofit sector is the quickest sector in terms of its ability to respond to the issue." She adds that stimulus dollars were intended to be spent quickly.

'WE THOUGHT WE HAD TWO OR THREE YEARS ... AND THEN THESE GRANTS CAME ALONG.'

MARSHA BASLOE
DURHAM'S PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN

SOME NONPROFITS BENEFIT

David Heinen, director of public policy and advocacy for the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits, says he's not surprised that the stimulus dollars are proving both a blessing and a burden for nonprofits.

He says that when he was studying the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which outlines how the funds are to be disseminated, it was clear that the dollars being sent to nonprofits would meet com-



Jean Williams, left, with Tameka Brown, center, and Regina Brooks. All work at Women's Center of Wake County.

munity needs but would not necessarily help nonprofits with their operations.

"The advice we gave to nonprofits: If you already had the infrastructure in place to do something, the stimulus money might be beneficial for the organization," he says.

Still, nonprofits are lining up to garner stimulus funds.

The North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center is using \$700,000 in stimulus funds to provide worker training in 10 communities around the state. Patrick Woodie, a vice president at the center, says those funds should help about 1,100 people gain new skills that can be employed to find jobs.

And Marsha Basloe, executive director of the Durham's Partnership for Children, has applied for a two-year, \$4 million grant to fund Early Head Start programs in the county. The funding would allow the program to provide education to children from birth to age 3, a period when brain development is critical.

Basloe says the organization had been putting together a plan for the program when stimulus dollars became available, requiring an acceleration of plans. "We thought we had two or three years to develop these strategies and then these grants came along," she says. DPC will find out later this year if it has won the grant.

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