6/14/2021

FY2022 MEAP RFP

Response to Inquiries

Contents

Part I: General Grant Information

1. Are there any line spacing requirements in the response template?

No, there are not. Please use Calibri 11-point font and ensure all attachments are included.

Part II: General Provisions

No questions on this section

Part III: Work Statement

Needs Assessment Tool

Work Statement III-B Problem Statement suggests the use of a common needs assessment tool and evaluation of program success based on similar customer cohorts.

2. Will we be provided with such a common assessment tool?

A common assessment tool will be created based on the ongoing work of the MEAP workgroup.

3. When will this tool be available to view?

There is no specific timeline for the availability of the tool, but it is not expected that selected applicants will implement this tool in its entirety on October 1.

4. Are the cohorts pre-determined?

The customer cohorts are currently outlined as follows: Energy customer on a fixed income, Elderly energy customer, Energy customer with a disability, Energy customer with high usage, Mainline energy customer.

5. Is it required to provide a Needs Assessment for every household that presents for assistance?

It is expected that every engagement with a MEAP client will begin with a customized, universally operated intake interview that is grounded in trauma informed practice and motivational interviewing. This will honor the customer as the primary decision maker and generates a holistic economic security plan, using the energy door by prioritizing energy security as an element of economic security.

6. What activities are required to fulfill the activity of Common Needs Assessment?

See response to question 5.

7. If we assess the need and are not able to follow-up with the customer to provide relevant referrals, should we not provide direct payment? In other words, do referrals need to be provided prior to making a customer payment based on the Common Needs Assessment?

Direct payment could still be made with the initial request. Guidelines for subsequent assists will be developed and refined with the MEAP workgroup's definition of self-sufficiency in mind.

8. What is the timeline for implementing the tiered approach, including utilizing the common needs assessment as well as grouping customers into cohorts?

The refinement of these items is ongoing and will continue throughout the remainder of the current program year in preparation for FY2022. Applicants and current grantees will be working with MPSC and MDHHS staff to have some progress made by October 1.

Service Provision Cohorts

9. What are the cohorts of service provision defined as?

The customer cohorts are currently outlined as follows: Energy customer on a fixed income, Elderly energy customer, Energy customer with a disability, Energy customer with high usage, Mainline energy customer.

10. Will there be pre-determined and consistent "service provision categories" or will it be up to the grantee to create such categories based on geographic need?

MPSC, MDHHS, and ICF will continue to work with the awarded grantees and other stakeholders to refine and enhance these categories. Initial customer cohorts are listed in question 9.

Energy Security Measures

11. Please define energy security; what are the benchmarks by which we are to measure energy security? How does the prior self-sufficiency definition align with the new definition of energy security?

Energy security will look different for different customer cohorts and will be defined by MDHHS & MPSC based on MEAP workgroup contributions. These will be developed with the group's definition of self-sufficiency in mind and will be drawn from a universal appraisal to minimize data entry burden. If a customer is assessed into multiple cohorts, success metrics are assigned according to the primary tier.

12. Tasks III-D #6 states that we are to collect and document standardized customer energy security measures at intake and exit. What measures are those? Energy Burden? Energy Security Index? And will all grantees use one standard measure? Will grantees have access to data required to calculate these measures?

The goal will be to holistically assess, meaningfully serve, and appropriately track the outlined customer cohorts. The success metrics will be customer cohort-specific with clear definitions that are measured by how they change over time. These will be defined by MDHHS & MPSC based on group (awarded grantees and other stakeholders) contributions.

13. Are the energy security measures required to be documented for every household assisted? What is meant by "exit"? (Graduation from APP? Completion of Energy Security Plan action steps? End of the grant year?)

MPSC, MDHHS, and ICF will continue to work with the awarded grantees and other stakeholders to define and track success, including exit from a program such as an Affordable Payment Plan. Success will be directly tied to program activities and oriented to continuous improvement.

14. You mention the coordination of energy assistance funding streams as an objective. Can you expound more on what you mean by this?

This objective is meant to recognize the other available energy assistance funding streams that applicants may have access to or be aware of. The goal of MEAP is to help move households toward self-sufficiency and/or energy security. Other funding streams have different goals and should be coordinated with MEAP funding to maximize the number of households able to be served (e.g. Home Heating Credit for household under 110% FPL, CERA funding for renters, etc.).

15. Are there specific measurables or deliverables associated with the coordination of energy assistance funding streams?

At this time, there are not any specific deliverables associated with this coordination.

Pilot Projects

16. We understand pilot projects are encouraged. Are you looking for individual grantees to develop these pilot projects or are you wanting us grantees to continue working together (like we have for the past year) in developing these pilot projects and you are looking to us to indicate a willingness to do that?

Pilot collaboration is preferred. Please include any pilot proposals as part of your work plan in the response to the RFP, include evaluation and data collection details. Any pilot where MEAP funds are planned to be used must be proposed in an applicant's response to be approved.

17. Are pilots for health and safety measures for eligible clients good fits for the MEAP 2022-2023 FY?

Applicants are encouraged to propose pilot projects that are energy related and should propose their best case for these pilots and how they align with MEAP objectives and tasks, include evaluation and data collection details. If an applicant wants to propose a pilot for health and safety measures, they would need to make the case on why it is a good fit for the MEAP 2022-2023 FY.

MEAP Assistance Cap

18. What are the requirements for approving and tracking payments between $2000 and $3500?

Assistance payments that will cause the household to exceed $2,000 but are less than $3,500 must be approved and tracked by the grantee using the provided exception request spreadsheet. A list of households considered for internal exception requests and approvals must be maintained and may be requested for review.

Assistance payments that will cause the household to exceed the $3,500 should be forwarded to the MPSC Grant Administrator to be considered for a MEAP exception, using the exception request spreadsheet. Where possible, late fees for over-cap households must be waived by the energy provider.

Contact the MEAP Grant Administrator for a copy of the request spreadsheet. Consideration should be given to payment history, annual usage, and engagement in self-sufficiency services among others (e.g., balance transfers, hardship). A household must have engaged in at least one self-sufficiency/energy security activity to have an exception considered.

Technical Assistance Activities

19. Please provide some clarification around the statement "participating meaningfully in data capacity technical assistance activities."

As discussed during the pre-proposal conference, this means expressing a willingness to participate in iterative program design and tool customization. It is expected that selected applicants are willing to engage with on-demand and proactive coaching as well as rapid cycle learning for continuous improvement.

Part IV: Project Control and Reports

20. How are we to define and track energy burden, energy acumen, energy confidence, and participation?

Energy security will look different for different customer cohorts and will be defined by MDHHS & MPSC based on MEAP workgroup contributions. These will be developed with the group's definition of self-sufficiency in mind and will be drawn from a universal appraisal to minimize data entry burden. If a customer is assessed into multiple cohorts, success metrics are assigned according to the primary tier. The defining and tracking of these items will be part of our ongoing process.

21. Please define the following reference Energy Security Measures that grantees will be required to track: "energy acumen", "energy confidence", and "participation". Will grantees have access to the data required to measure these? What data points will need to be collected to determine these Energy Security Measures?

See response to question 20.

22. Monitoring and Reporting Program Performance: What specifically is entailed in "manage and track customer measures"?

See response to question 20.

23. How are we defining and tracking achieving self-sufficiency/energy security?

See response to question 20.

24. How are we defining and tracking households able to reduce dependency on LIHEAP?

See response to question 20.

Part V: Information Required from Applicant

General

25. Under disallowable costs the language of sick pay, vacation pay, and holiday pay has been removed. Does this mean we can now charge these costs to the grant?
Yes, these are allowable personnel salary expenses. The costs should be prorated based on the estimated amount of time allocated to MEAP for each employee as outlined in your budget narrative. A copy of the organization's paid time off policy from the employee handbook should be available for review.

26. Were any other previously disallowed costs removed or now allowed?
No, all other costs that were previously disallowed are still disallowed.

27. Work Plan 4c – does this refer to new enrollments or total enrollments (including rollovers)?
Please include new enrollment estimates in this section. Include rollover customer estimates in the budget narrative direct assistance section.

28. Due to the current competitive market and the desire for retention of staff what is an acceptable starting rate for MEAP support staff?
Grantees should review the salary averages for similar roles in their region. MPSC and MDHHS cannot dictate salary/pay rates to grantees.

29. Should we budget for travel for MEAP meetings?
MEAP Workgroup meetings may occur again in person next program year as allowable. We will continue to have a remote option for these meetings. For contingency purposes, some grantees may want to include travel in their budgets, if applicable.

30. Do we submit 2 budgets and budget narratives, one for FY22 and one for FY23?
Only one budget and narrative must be submitted. Please indicate in the Work Plan any expected deviations to the budget for Year Two.

31. In the administrative cost section- if we would like to ask for more than the 8% admin would we put those figures in the proposed budgets in the RFP and are there any additional steps?
No additional steps are necessary if the increased administrative expenses request is clearly outlined as such in the applicant's response. Administrative expenses (including indirect costs) may not exceed 10% of the total award amount.

32. For the timeline requested under a separate cover:

   o *Is there a specific format that should be used?*
There is no specific format that is required, if the outlined information is included. Please contact curtisj14@michigan.gov if you would like a template.

   o *Are month-by-month projections for households served binding? FYs 20 and 21 have been significantly different from the norm given the Coronavirus pandemic, and additional stimulus funds are being allocated and are being anticipated. This can make monthly projections inaccurate even when yearly estimates hold true.*

The projections are not binding but are helpful for planning purposes as well as for tracking program progress throughout the year.

Affordable Payment Plans

33. Please provide details for the Great Lakes Energy APP

Currently, the Great Lakes Energy APP is in pilot status with one specific grantee partner. As the program moves out of pilot status, additional information will be provided to all applicants.

Part VI: Evaluation and Selection Criteria

34. Will any additional technical assistance be available?

Yes, please contact Jamie Curtis (curtisj14@michigan.gov) for additional technical assistance through July 1, 2021.

Attachments

35. What separates the MEAP application from the "Energy Security Plan"? Are these one in the same? Or is the "Energy Security Plan" a more in-depth plan above and beyond what is provided in the RFP example?

The Energy Security Plan and the Self-Sufficiency Plan are the same. The updated naming convention brings the MEAP application name more in line with energy security activities.

36. Is there a way to streamline the MDHHS app form in lieu of co-pay form into a checkbox on the application that can be sent over? Many of the data fields are redundant and it adds time and paper to the process.

At this time, the process is not being changed.