



8/2/2019

FY2020 MEAP RFP

Response to Inquiries

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Part I: General Grant Information

1. Could a grant allocation increase or decrease in year two based on an agency's effectiveness?

It is anticipated that the level of MEAP funding available for FY 2021 will be consistent with Year One funding; however, funding levels cannot be determined until the FY 2021 federal and state appropriations have been approved. Year Two allocations will be based on the performance, progress, and outcome of the Year One grant project. If Year One grant project performance is not deemed satisfactory, the MPSC and MDHHS will not approve continuation of the Year Two grant.

Part II: General Provisions

2. What is the timeframe for a breach, including a ransomware attack, to be reported?

In the event of any act, error or omission, negligence, misconduct, or breach that compromises or is suspected to compromise the security, confidentiality, or integrity of State Data or the physical, technical, administrative, or organizational safeguards put in place by Grantee that relate to the protection of the security, confidentiality, or integrity of State Data, Grantee must notify the State (Michigan Public Service Commission) as soon as practical but no later than 24 hours of becoming aware of such occurrence. Please see section 2.4.1 Data Breach/Loss of Data in the 2019 MEAP Policy Manual for additional requirements.

Part III: Work Statement

3. Reference IIID Tasks (24): Please provide the customer satisfaction survey questions that must be used.

The questions will be outlined in the Grant Agreement and a copy will be provided to selected applicants.

4. Reference IIID Tasks (18): Has training been planned to ensure SERs do not include late fees?
Ongoing training to DHHS staff occurs, but no specific training to address this is planned at this time. With the information that we've collected this year regarding the processing of SER applications will be reviewed and targeted training opportunities will be provided. SER Policy does indicate that late fees must not be included. Training materials for late fees have been shared with local offices.

Part IV: Project Control and Reports

5. Reference IV-B (2) (b): Please expand on this – is it referring to the objectives and milestones in V-E (3) (a) – (h)?

Yes, the objectives and milestones that will be reported with the final report in a cumulative manner will be reported monthly as well. A copy of the form will be made available to selected applicants prior to the start of the program year.

6. Reference IV-B (4) Final Project Report (d) Program Metrics: (i and ii) Will grantees be given metrics by which to evaluate the success of the program or are grantees to develop their own metrics or both?

Both. Grantees should develop their own metrics. During the course of the year, the MEAP workgroup will be a platform for MPSC and MDHHS to work with Grantees to develop some universal metrics.

Part V: Information Required from Applicant

General

7. For the Work Plan Year Two, should we just provide narrative for those sections that will be different from Year One and put No Change in all sections that do not change?

Yes, please indicate “No Change” in each section as applicable.

8. How do you prefer the format for the 2 year grant? Is it year 1 and then a year 2 budget (separate) and then the work plan we just make note where there are differences between our 1 and 2 year plans instead of writing two separate plans?

Please use the response template when formulating your work plan. As indicated in the template, do not reiterate information for Year Two if nothing is planned to change. A separate budget and budget narrative for each year should be submitted.

9. Reference V-E (1): Please define “high energy consumption”

High energy consumption in this case would be a household who does not meet the consumption requirements to be enrolled in an Affordable Payment Plan.

10. Regarding Question 1 (page 29) of the Work Plan, how will we know if a household has “high energy consumption”? Will high energy consumption be defined?

See question 9.

11. What type of incentive payments are allowed for A16 activities (this was mentioned in the PowerPoint presented at the last MEAP workgroup meeting)?

Incentive payments have been discussed but are not planned to be implemented this program year.

12. Are there caps on commodity’s this grant year?

No, there are not commodity caps. There is a \$2,000 household MEAP cap.

MI Bridges

13. On page 30 #4 it states for each service location to provide the location's Community Partner ID (CPID) as registered with MIBridges. We were told individuals have CPID's, not locations. Please advise.

MPSC and MDHHS staff have re-evaluated this requirement. Instead of providing an individual’s Community Partner ID for each location, please provide the ISD level of Navigation access that currently exists (Navigation, Referral, and/or Access).

14. Is a MIBridges Navigator required for each physical location to receive MEAP funds?

While a MI Bridges Navigator is not required for each physical location, access to navigation must be available to all MEAP applicants.

15. Can our staff assist clients in filling out their SER application in MI Bridges over the phone (our staff filling in the answers)?

No, the client must complete and sign the online application.

16. Will the MI Bridges system be adjusted so that grantees that don't have a physical presence in a zip code will still be in the list if they are serve that geographic region?

Enhancements to the MI Bridges system are being made to allow for this. The final production date is not known at this time.

Affordable Payment Plans

Program Details

17. Can you provide some details for the APP program for those that are applying can appropriately plan for the program.

There will be a multi-year process for bringing each utility's APP into the single State structure.

For FY2020, here is a summary of the APP alignment and the remaining variations:

FY 2020 Alignment	FY2020 Variation
Work with grantees for enrollment	Consumption limits
FPL Tiers: 20-75%, 76-110%, 111-150%	Arrearage cap and arrearage forgiveness
Allow exceptions for households <20% FPL	Length of enrollment
	Customer and agency/gap payments
	Customer default

For FY2020, the program details for each utility are as follows:

- a. DTE's APP:
 - i. Eligibility Criteria:
 1. MEAP Eligible
 2. Consumption limits:
 - a. \$1,600 electric
 - b. \$2,150 gas
 - c. \$3,750 combination
 3. Arrears less than \$3,000
 4. Active service
 5. No unaddressed theft, fraud, or bankruptcy
 6. Residential electric, gas, or combo customer
 - ii. Enrollment/program:
 1. Work with a grantee for enrollment
 2. Enrollment will be for 24 months
 3. Arrears balance frozen/set aside at enrollment
 - a. 1/24th of arrears forgiven monthly
 4. Customer will have a fixed monthly payment plan amount (from DTE's matrix of usage/FPL tiers)
 - a. FPL Tiers: 20%-75%, 76%-110%, 111%-150%
 - b. Allow exceptions for those below 20%
 5. Agency will pay the difference between the monthly usage and the customer payment
 6. Customers default after two missed payments

- b. Consumers' APP:
 - i. Eligibility Criteria
 - 1. MEAP Eligible
 - 2. Consumption limits:
 - a. None currently
 - 3. Arrears less than \$4,000
 - 4. No unaddressed theft, fraud, or bankruptcy
 - 5. Residential electric, gas, or combo customer
 - ii. Enrollment/Program:
 - 1. Work with grantee for enrollment
 - 2. Enrollment will be for two program years
 - 3. Total balance owing at the time of enrollment frozen/set aside at enrollment
 - a. $1/24^{\text{th}}$ of customer arrears paid each month (**note: while this program is two program years and not two fiscal years, the amount of monthly arrearage forgiveness will be $1/x$ where "x" is the number of months on the program*)
 - 4. Customer will pay a percentage of their usage (not a fixed payment yet)
 - a. FPL Tiers: 20%-75%, 76%-110%, 111%-150%
 - b. Allow exceptions for those below 20%
 - 5. Agency will pay the difference between the monthly usage and the customer payment
 - 6. Customers default after behind more than \$200
- c. SEMCO's APP:
 - i. Eligibility Criteria
 - 1. MEAP Eligible
 - 2. Consumption limits:
 - a. None currently
 - 3. No arrears cap
 - 4. No unaddressed theft, fraud, or bankruptcy
 - 5. Residential gas customer
 - ii. Enrollment/Program:
 - 1. Work with grantee for enrollment
 - 2. Enrollment will be for 24 months
 - 3. Arrears paid prior to enrollment
 - 4. Customer will be on a fixed reduced monthly budget plan
 - a. FPL Tiers: 20%-75%, 76%-110%, 111%-150%
 - b. Allow exceptions for those below 20%
 - 5. Agency will pay the difference between the total monthly budget amount and the customer payment
 - iii. Customers default after two missed payments

18. When will the utility APP eligibility guidelines and benefits be released?

See question 17.

19. Will there be better information given to the customers on the requirements of the APP programs, what the ultimate goal is, and what happens if they default.

Yes, program fact sheets will be created to be distributed to grantees and will contain information regarding the households' responsibilities and what happens if they default from the program.

20. There is no reference to a Universal APP in the RFP, but I understand it's still being worked on, are we implementing that Universal APP mid-grant year?

There will be a phased-in approach to the single APP over the next few years. At this point, there has been some further alignment and the plans will be outlined. We do not anticipate implementing any mid-year changes.

21. Is there an area within MEAP where a grantee could propose a pilot for either propane, wood, or other APP program?

Pilot programs can be proposed and will be considered on a case by case basis. MDHHS/MDHHS are proposing a workgroup to design a pilot program for payment plans for deliverable fuels. We would like to build consistency as we move forward.

Eligibility Determination/Re-validation

22. After a customer has been on the APP for the 2 years, can they stay on the program or get back on the program?

After completing two years on the program, if a client is in crisis, they must reapply for SER. In addition, the grantee must work with the client on a needs assessment to determine what barriers to self-sufficiency still exist and what additional services or programs may be better suited. MEAP staff are currently working with stakeholders to identify a plan for households that may need ongoing assistance (households on a fixed income that will not change).

23. With APPs being made a 2-year program will they have eligibility/revalidation done October 1st, on their 1-year anniversary, or not at all for the 2 years?

No validation is required after year one to enter into year two of the Affordable Payment Plan. Households determined eligible for an APP will have twenty-four months or two program years (depending on which APP) to remain on the program.

24. Do roll overs have to apply for a new SER in October or on their anniversary date? Or is the SER good for the up to two-year period they are on the program?

Households determined eligible for an APP will have twenty-four months or two program years (depending on which APP) to remain on the program.

25. Is a graduate of APP eligible to renew October 1st?

After completing two years on the program, if a client is in crisis, they must reapply for SER. In addition, the grantee must work with the client on a needs assessment to determine what barriers to self-sufficiency still exist and what additional services or programs may be better suited. MEAP staff are currently working with stakeholders to identify a plan for households that may need ongoing assistance (households on a fixed income that will not change).

Projections/Budget

26. If you have 500 customers on an APP, do you need to budget for those 500 right off the top of the money you are requesting for the new grant year?

Yes, newly enrolled FY2019 households that will carry over to the new grant year should be considered when developing your work plan and budget.

27. If a current grantee has customers on an APP and the grantee does not get a grant the following year what will happen to all their APP customers who were told they would be on the program for 2 years?

The customer will remain on the program and a different grantee will become responsible for the households' payments.

28. If someone is enrolled in the APP two-year plan, and the two years goes beyond the grant period, how will this customer continue to receive assistance? Will the budget go beyond a two-year period?

At this time, applicants should budget for the two-year grant period. The remaining amounts for customers whose enrollment extends beyond the two-year grant period will be included in a future grant period. If for some reason, a grantee no longer receives an award after that time period a different grantee will become responsible for the households' payments. As part of the information provided to each customer upon enrollment, a statement will be included clarifying that their continued enrollment is contingent upon the continuation of MEAP funding.

29. If a grantee is not awarded the second year of the two-year grant, what is the process and communication to those customers enrolled moving forward into year 2 of the APP?

If for some reason, a grantee no longer receives an award after that time period a different grantee will become responsible for the households' payments. As part of the information provided to each customer upon enrollment, a statement will be included clarifying that their continued enrollment is contingent upon the continuation of MEAP funding.

30. If funding is not available or reduced for year 2 of the grant, what will the procedures or communication message be for enrolled customers?

As part of the information provided to each customer upon enrollment, a statement will be included clarifying that their continued enrollment is contingent upon the continuation of MEAP funding.

31. Will we grandfather customers? How will we receive numbers and projections in time to develop a direct assistance budget?

Households that were new enrollments this program year (FY2019) will continue into the FY2020 program year. Current grantees should have a list of these households as well as their remaining arrearage amounts. *Note: All grandfathered households that were enrolled prior to FY2019 will no longer remain on an Affordable Payment Plan after September 30, 2019.*

32. Will customers enrolled in year one from 2018-2019 grant year start receiving benefits of year 2 of the APP on October 1, 2019?

For Consumers Energy, yes. Customers will start receiving benefits for year two beginning October 1, 2019. For DTE and SEMCO, year two benefits will begin in their anniversary month.

Caps

33. Will caps be raised for customers that are on an APP since the program is 2 years, or will caps be left the same? For example if a customer is on an app and hit their cap in like July and are taken off the program do they get back on at the start of the new grant year, or because it's a 2 year program are they on the program for the 2 years with no cap?

Program year caps will remain at \$2,000 with the allowance for exceptions to be requested. Households should not automatically be removed from an APP if they have reached their cap, but should be evaluated for an exception based on payment history and usage.

34. Are there lifetime caps placed on Affordable Payment Plans?

At this time there are not lifetime caps on MEAP assistance.

Default

35. If a customer is on an APP and they default can they apply for additional services, for example SER (if they were grandfathered) or MEAP (one time assistance)?

Yes, customers on an APP that default are eligible to apply for additional assistance/services. Once a household is no longer on APP whether through default or graduation and they are in crisis, if the household has not received SER during the program year, they must reapply for assistance, beginning with SER.

36. Once a customer graduates or falls off, how long are they ineligible for an Affordable Payment Plan program?

There is not a specified amount of time.

37. If a customer is de-enrolled by the utility, when are they eligible to re-apply for enrollment in an APP and what would be the enrollment procedure if applicable?

If a customer is de-enrolled due to non-payment or not meeting program requirements, they should seek State Emergency Relief if they are experiencing an emergency and have not yet received SER energy assistance in that program year. If SER energy assistance has already been received that fiscal year, additional MEAP assistance is allowable. Keep in mind that grantees should be working with the household to move toward self-sufficiency, so it is acceptable to give the household goals that need to be met prior to receiving any additional MEAP assistance. Direct energy assistance to households that have defaulted should be tracked as such under "Assistance Plan" on the client list.

Part VI: Evaluation and Selection Criteria

38. What specific sections will be used to tabulate the 20 points for Experience and Financial Stability?

The experience and financial stability of the organization should be outlined in the Management Summary as well as in the Current and Prior Experience and Funding Disclosure sections. Review of audited financial statements and Single Audit (if applicable) will be taken into account as well.

Attachments

39. Will the Work Group continue to meet monthly through the 2019-20 grant term and should travel expenses related to those meetings be classified under Administration or EAP?

The MEAP Work Group is scheduled to continue to meet through the next grant term, though the frequency of the meetings has not been set. Travel expenses related to those meetings should be classified under Administrative Travel.

40. Would the MEAP program consider increasing the rate from 35% to 40% to enable funded agencies to better retain quality employees?

At this time, the rate will remain at 35%. However, MEAP staff will look into the increase for future grant terms.

41. Would special meetings or trainings (for example, training sessions provided by Bridges Out of Poverty) directly related to MEAP be allowable costs.

Seminars and conferences are not necessarily disallowed costs. Please review section 7.4.3 in the MEAP Policy Manual for more details. Prior approval must be sought

42. Should we submit Budget Attachments D and E for year one and separate D and E Budget Attachments for year two?

Two separate budgets with budget narratives should be submitted.

43. Is the grant allowed to cover the mandatory 40 sick time that must be offered to employees?

At this time, disallowed costs include sick time. MDHHS and MPSC staff are working on allowing for this.

44. Is there a possibility that the mileage rate will be increased closer to the federal level?

Currently the federal rate is .58 cents and the MPSC rate is .34 cents.

No, the reimbursement rate is the approved State rate, which is currently .34 cents. Detailed travel rates can be found [here](#).

45. Can direct assistance funds be requested for electric utilities that are in the process of developing an Affordable Payment Plan, but have not finalized it yet?

Yes, as long as they have opted into the LIEAF surcharge. A utility that is considering developing an APP should consult with MPSC and MDHHS.

46. Is there a certain percentage of funds that organizations are required to set aside for one-time assists?

There is not a certain percentage of funds required to be set aside for any specific type of direct assistance. We expect grantees to provide the most suitable service(s) for each household that presents for service.