

Notice of Availability of Grants

New Jersey Board of Public Utilities Availability of Grant

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU or Board) hereby announces the availability of a grant as authorized under N.J.S.A. 48:2-29.39 and N.J.S.A. 46:30B-74(b).

Name of program: PAYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR GAS AND ELECTRIC (PAGE)

Purpose:

To administer a program that provides assistance towards payment of electric and/or natural gas public utility bills for households seeking temporary assistance. The beneficiaries of such assistance will be public utility customers, hereinafter referred to as "Limited Income Households" and defined as follows:

- 1) New Jersey residents with income:
 - a) \$1 over the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) income limits during months when LIHEAP heating grants are available; or
 - b) \$1 over the Universal Service Fund (USF) income limits during months when LIHEAP heating grants are unavailable; and
 - c) No higher than the New Jersey state median income.
- 2) Facing a hardship that includes a recent documented notice of overdue payment for natural gas and/or electric service on the utility bill for which payment assistance is being sought; and
- 3) Have a past history of making good faith payments toward the utility bill for which payment assistance is being sought.

Further, the program should be structured such that no more than one grant for electric service and one grant for gas service may be provided to any applicant within a 12 month period.

Eligibility:

A "Grantee" shall be a nonprofit organization, designated by the Board after demonstrating the ability to coordinate distributions to Limited Income Households statewide. Grantees must provide documentation of:

- 1) federal and State government funding;
- 2) all funding approved by the Board;
- 3) a complete accounting of all actual or anticipated expenses and disbursements;
- 4) a comprehensive plan to disburse any funds received pursuant to this program; and
- 5) a comprehensive plan to provide the Board with a report containing details about the program's operation.

Goal:

To aid eligible Limited Income Households with the payment of gas and/or electric bills in order to avoid disconnection of service, or restore service. Money from the Unclaimed Utility Deposits Trust Fund (Trust Fund) may be made available to a non-profit entity to aid eligible electric and/or natural gas customers with "the payment of expenses associated with the restoration of electric or gas service, or to prevent the termination of electric or gas service provided to utility ratepayers

seeking assistance.” Equally important is ensuring the integrity of the program and consistency of eligibility criteria.

Background:

N.J.S.A. 48:2-29.39 authorizes the Board to designate an established statewide non-profit energy assistance organization to receive supplemental funding from unclaimed property held by the State’s electric and gas utilities pursuant to N.J.S.A. 46:30B-74. N.J.S.A. 46:30B-74 directs the administrator of the Trust Fund to provide 75% of the money in the Trust Fund to the New Jersey Statewide Heating Assistance and Referral for Energy Services (NJSHARES), or to another statewide nonprofit energy assistance organization designated by the Board within 45 days of the receipt of such funds.

GRANT SOLICITATION PROCESS

Amount of funds available in the program:

N.J.S.A. 46:30B-74b reads in part, that unless the administrator deems it unadvisable, the administrator shall direct 75% of the funds in the Unclaimed Utility Deposits Trust Fund towards a non-profit entity to help electric or gas customers pay their utility bills to avoid shutoff. The amount of funds available from the unclaimed utility deposits may vary considerably from year-to-year. It is currently estimated that approximately \$7,000,000 will be available after June 30, 2018, however annual grants have been as low as \$800,000. The average annual amount available is approximately \$2,500,000.

Entities which may apply for funding under the program:

Nonprofit organizations [(501(c)(3) organizations] with service location(s) located, or to be located, in New Jersey, that have experience in administering financial assistance programs.

An application may only be submitted by the eligible agency/entity itself.

Qualifications needed by an applicant to be considered for the program:

Applicants for funding must have demonstrated staff and resource capability, and experience with assistance programs.

Proposal instructions:

Inquiries: Please direct email inquiries regarding this Notice to board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov and all inquiries must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday April 9, 2018. Answers to all questions submitted by this date will be posted by 5 p.m. April 16, 2018 on the BPU website at www.nj.gov/bpu.

Proposals due: All proposals must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 2, 2018.

Proposals must be submitted with an original marked “Original” as well as five additional copies and may be hand-delivered, delivered via US Mail, or overnight mailed to:

NJ Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, Suite 314
P.O. Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350
Attn: Maureen Clerc – PAGE Program

Proposals should also be sent via email in MSWord or pdf format to: board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov

Proposal preparation:

This section of the solicitation is designed to guide applicants in organizing their proposals in a consistent fashion so as to facilitate evaluation. Applicants should demonstrate within the relevant sections how their proposed program meets or exceeds the goals and purposes identified above. Each proposal should include the following sections:

- a) Program description and proposed scope of work;
- b) Program eligibility and recertification requirements;
- c) A description of previous experience administering financial assistance programs;
- d) Methods of informing the target audience of the grant availability;
- e) Explanation of applicant's ability to work with the gas and electric utilities;
- f) Grant distribution methodology;
- g) Process for ensuring eligibility requirements are met;
- h) Explanation of how the proposed work will be managed and evaluated for effectiveness along with appropriate metrics;
- i) Explanation of applicant's ability to adjust program costs based on variable funding from year to year;
- j) A copy of the applicant's most recent annual report, operating budget, and audited financial statement;
- k) Three year program budget based on the estimated funds available, including a breakdown of estimated administrative costs, a description of the sources and schedule of all funding, and a detailed explanation of how the grant will be used;
- l) For consortium/contractual costs, provide an estimate of the individuals/organizations with whom these consortium/contractual arrangements will be made;
- m) Program staff contacts with the title of each person to work on the program and his/her estimated hourly cost;
- n) Other costs (for example, consultant, specific supplies, and travel) must also be included; and
- o) A list of all federal and state funds received in the last 5 years.

Proposal timeline:

Applicants shall submit a "time-line" and include projected dates for the distribution of financial assistance based upon the receipt of grant money for each fiscal year. Applicants must be able to commence the distribution of grants to those in need no later than the beginning of the heating season, or October 1, 2018.

Program team:

Proposals should include an organizational chart listing all team members, including the program manager, subcontractors, and other sponsors involved in the program, showing their roles, responsibilities, and salaries. Proposals should also state the program team's individual and combined expertise that will enable successful implementation of the program.

Progress reporting and metrics for evaluation:

Quarterly progress reports, accounting for all funds received and spent, will be required, including but not limited to the number and amount of financial assistance grants distributed to Limited Income Households by each electric and/or gas utility and when the grants are distributed. Quarterly reports shall also include actual program administrative costs for that quarter. Within one year of receiving the grant award, the nonprofit organization shall issue a comprehensive report to the Board which provides the number of applicants applying for household utility assistance grants, the number of households receiving utility assistance grants, the average amount of assistance provided, the average gross income of households receiving assistance, the methods and procedures used for the verification of income or hardship, and any other information as required by the Board.

Evaluation criteria:

Proposals will be reviewed and scored by a Grant Review Committee consisting of Board Staff according to the following criteria:

- General program approach and plans to meet the requirements of the Notice of Availability of Grants (20 pts);
- Detailed approach and plans to expeditiously perform the services required by the scope of work of this Notice of Availability of Grants (20 pts);
- Detailed program budget and cost effectiveness relative to grant award (20 pts);
- Documented experience with administration of assistance programs and their demonstrated results (20 pts);
- Qualifications & experience of key personnel (10 pts); and
- Ability to work with electric and gas utilities to implement a program on a statewide basis (10 pts).

The State of New Jersey and the Board of Public Utilities reserve the right to conduct interviews with applicants or request additional details and clarification, if necessary.

Grant award:

The Grant Review Committee will recommend funding commitment decisions, as described above, to the Board. The Board may reject or accept in part or in whole the recommendations for funding award made by the evaluation committee. Grant funds will be awarded by the Board to the program(s) deemed to be most beneficial to the State according to the application materials submitted pursuant to this Notice of Availability of Grant. The Board reserves the right to make no award if in its sole discretion no acceptable proposal is received. Applicants shall receive a Notice of Award or letter declining such award after Board approval of the PAGE grant, on or before June 29, 2018.

The Board's decision will be communicated to applicants by the Office of the Secretary. Applicants shall designate a program manager in the proposal who shall become the point of contact with the Office of the Secretary.

After Board approval of the award, a grant agreement will be developed between the Board and the grantee. Applicants will be required to comply with Treasury Circular Letter 07-05-OMB which provides some but not all of the terms and conditions that will be made part of the grant agreement. To download a copy of Circular Letter 07-05-OMB and the template agreement go to <http://www.state.nj.us/infobank/circular/cir0705b.pdf>.

Audit requirement:

This grant is covered by the audit requirements of the Department of the Treasury Circular Letter 15-08-OMB, Single Audit Policy for Recipients of Federal Grants, State Grants and State Aid available at: http://www.state.nj.us/infobank/circular/cir1508_omb.pdf.