

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. 46:30B-74b and N.J.S.A. 48:2-29.39.

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

Purpose:

To designate an entity to receive funds distributed pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-29.39 and N.J.S.A. 46:30B-74b to be used for a program, over a five-year period, which provides assistance towards payment of electric and/or natural gas public utility bills for households seeking emergency 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 of low and moderate income; 2) not enrolled in or income eligible for either the Board's Universal Service Fund (USF) program, or the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); 3) has a documented notice of overdue payment for natural gas and/or electric service on the utility bill for which payment assistance is being sought; and 4) have a past history of making regular 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 from this program within a 12-month period.

A "Grantee" shall be a statewide nonprofit organization, designated by the Board after demonstrating the ability to coordinate distributions to Limited Income Households. Grantees must provide documentation of: 1) any federal and state government funding received since 2007; 2) any funding approved by the Board since 2007; 3) a complete accounting of current expenses and anticipated expenses and disbursements under the PAGE program; 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 money from the Unclaimed Utility Deposits Trust Fund may be made available to a non-profit entity to aid eligible electric and/or natural gas public utility customers in preventing shut-offs. Equally important is ensuring the integrity of the program and consistency of eligibility criteria. The non-profit organization chosen to administer the program shall be designated to receive funding for a five-year period.

Background:

N.J.S.A. 46:30B-74b and N.J.S.A. 48:2-29.39 authorize the Board to designate a statewide non-profit organization to receive 75% of the unclaimed utility deposits in the Unclaimed Utility Deposits Trust Fund. The non-profit organization chosen by the Board to receive the funds must exclusively use them to help electric or natural gas public utility customers pay their electric or natural gas bills to avoid termination of service. The amount of funds available from the unclaimed utility deposits in the Unclaimed Utility Deposit Trust Fund may vary from year-to-year. The administrator of the Unclaimed Utility Deposit Trust Fund is the New Jersey Department of the Treasury, who, unless it deems prudent and advisable to do otherwise, distributes the funds to the non-profit organization designated by the Board to operate the program. In past years, this amount has varied from approximately \$800,000 to \$3,000,000 per year.

At its March 20, 2013 agenda meeting, the Board determined that it would distribute a notice of grant availability informing the public of its plans to designate a statewide non-profit organization to receive a portion of unclaimed utility deposits distributed by the administrator in accordance with N.J.S.A. 46:30B-74b from the Unclaimed Utility Deposit Trust Fund for a five-year period.

GRANT SOLICITATION PROCESS**Amount of funds available in the program:**

N.J.S.A. 46:30B-74b states 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.

Entities that may apply for funding under the program:

Applicants must be nonprofit organizations [(501(c)(3) organizations] with experience in administering financial assistance programs, and which have service location(s) in, or to be located in, New Jersey.

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:

Proposals must be submitted with six copies and may be hand-delivered, delivered via US Mail, or mailed overnight to:

NJ Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor
Post office Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Attn: Aida Camacho-Welch – PAGE Program

Proposals should also be sent via email in MSWord format to:

board.secretary@bpu.state.nj.us

All proposals must be received by 5:00 p.m. on **May 15, 2013**. Please direct email inquiries to board.secretary@bpu.state.nj.us. All inquiries and questions with regard to this Notice of Availability of Grants shall be submitted by **April 30, 2013**. Applicants shall receive a Notice of Award or letter declining such award after Board approval of the grant, on or before June 28, 2013.

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 requirements, including minimum and maximum income eligibility criteria;
- c) A description of previous experience administering financial assistance programs;
- d) Methods of informing the target audience of the grant availability;
- e) Explanation of applicants' 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) A copy of the applicant's annual reports, operating budgets, audited financial statements, and any other audits performed, since 2007, however if the applicant has been in operation less than six years, then copies of these items since its inception will suffice;
- j) Program budget, 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;
- k) For consortium/contractual costs, provide an estimate of the individuals/organizations with whom these consortium/contractual arrangements will be made;
- l) Program staff contacts with staff time specified by title of each person to work on the task and his/her cost, based on the number of hours that he/she will work on the task multiplied by the hourly rate. All calculations must be shown;
- m) Comprehensive measures to prevent fraud;
- 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.

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.

This comprehensive report will be required on an annual basis after the first year, or more frequently, at the discretion of Board Staff.

Grant funds may be withheld until reporting requirements are met by the Grantee.

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 grant designation will be awarded to the non-profit entity selected to administer the program for a period of five years, as specified in the final grant award contract.

It is anticipated that the first award will be made at the end of calendar year 2013. Historically, payments have been made once or twice a year depending on when the administrator releases the funds. 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. Further, the Board reserves the right to make changes to the PAGE program as described by the winning bidder prior to signing the contract with that bidder and in future years. Applicants shall receive a Notice of Award or letter declining such award after Board approval of the grant, on or before June 28, 2013. 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 0404-OMB, Single Audit Policy for Recipients of Federal Grants, State Grants and State Aid.