



# New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release:**  
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## **N.J. Board of Public Utilities Approves Notice of Grant Availability for Energy Assistance Program**

*Temporary Relief for Utility Expenses (TRUE) Program will Provide \$25 Million to Nonprofit Organizations that Make Emergency Assistance Available to Low and Moderate Income Residents*

TRENTON, N.J. – The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (Board) today voted to approve a Notice of Grant Availability to distribute \$25 million in funds to help those New Jerseyans who are struggling to pay their electric and gas bills.

The notice targets nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations that have experience in administering financial assistance programs and have service location(s) in, or to be located in, New Jersey.

The Board's action is in response to a law that directs the Board to allocate \$25 million from an account containing Societal Benefits Charge (SBC) funds to a qualified organization(s) for utility assistance grants for low and middle income households that seek temporary assistance.

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### **About the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU)**

*The NJBPU is a state agency and regulatory authority mandated to ensure safe, adequate and proper utility services at reasonable rates for New Jersey customers. Critical services regulated by the NJBPU include natural gas, electricity, water, wastewater, telecommunications and cable television. The Board has general oversight responsibility for monitoring utility service, responding to consumer complaints, and investigating utility accidents. To find out more about the NJBPU, visit our web site at [www.nj.gov/bpu](http://www.nj.gov/bpu).*

### **About the New Jersey Clean Energy Program (NJCEP)**

*NJCEP, established on January 22, 2003, in accordance with the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act (EDECA), provides financial and other incentives to the State's residential customers, businesses and schools that install high-efficiency or renewable energy technologies, thereby reducing energy usage, lowering customers' energy bills and reducing environmental impacts. The program is authorized and overseen by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU), and its website is [www.NJCleanEnergy.com](http://www.NJCleanEnergy.com).*

## **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 P.L. 2009, C. 207.

**Name of program:** Temporary Relief for Utility Expenses (TRUE)

#### **Purpose:**

To administer a program that provides emergency assistance towards payment of electric and/or natural gas public utility bills for households seeking temporary assistance. The beneficiaries of such assistance will be 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 eligible for either the Board's Universal Service Fund (USF) program or the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); 3) facing a crisis situation that includes a documented notice of overdue payment for gas and electric service; and 4) has a past history of making regular payments toward the utility bill for which payment assistance is being sought.

A "Grantee" shall be a nonprofit organization, designated by the Board after demonstrating the ability to coordinate distributions to Limited Income Households. Grantees must provide documentation of: 1) all federal and state government funding; 2) any funding approved by the Board; 3) a complete accounting of all actual or anticipated expenses and disbursements; and 5) a comprehensive plan to disburse any funds received pursuant to this program. A Grantee must also conform to reporting requirements mandated by the State Legislature in L. 2009, c. 207. The Board will consider funding any local, regional, or statewide grant program.

#### **Goal:**

To aid eligible Limited Income Households with the payment of gas and/or electric bills in order to avoid disconnection of service and its related hardships. Money from the Societal Benefits Charge must be made available to eligible customers to assist in preventing shut-offs, especially given the current state of the economic recession. Equally important is ensuring the integrity of the program and consistency of eligibility criteria.

#### **Background:**

On January 15, 2010, L. 2009, c. 207 was enacted, concerning the allocation of \$25 million from the Societal Benefits Charge towards the funding of utility assistance grants for qualified households. This law directs the Board to grant the \$25 million to a nonprofit organization for use in providing grants that would help pay the gas and electric public utility bills of households seeking temporary assistance.

At its November 10, 2010 agenda meeting, the Board determined that it would distribute a notice of grant availability informing the public of its plans to award the funds from the Societal Benefits Charge to a nonprofit energy organization that would help pay the gas and electric bills of households seeking temporary assistance.

## GRANT SOLICITATION PROCESS

### Amount of funds available in the program:

The State of New Jersey has directed the Board to allocate \$25 million to fund these grants to help households pay their electric and gas bills.

### 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 staff and resource capability and experience with assistance programs.

### Proposal instructions:

Proposals must be submitted in triplicate and may be hand-delivered, delivered via US Mail, or overnight mailed to:

NJ Board of Public Utilities  
Two Gateway Center, Suite 801  
Newark, NJ 07102  
Attn: Kristi Izzo - **Temporary Relief for Utility Expenses (TRUE) Program**

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

[board.secretary@bpu.state.nj.us](mailto:board.secretary@bpu.state.nj.us)

All proposals must be received by 5:00 p.m. on **January 5, 2011**. Please direct email inquiries to [board.secretary@bpu.state.nj.us](mailto:board.secretary@bpu.state.nj.us). All inquiries and questions with regard to this Notice of Availability of Grants shall be submitted by **December 20, 2010**. Applicants shall receive a Notice of Award or letter declining such award after Board approval of the Temporary Relief for Utility Expenses (TRUE) grant, on or before February 10, 2011.

### 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;
- 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) Brief explanation of how the proposed work will be managed and evaluated for effectiveness along with appropriate metrics;
- i) A copy of the applicant's most recent annual report, operating budget, and audited financial statement;
- 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) Other costs (for example, consultant, specific supplies, and travel) must also be included; and
- n) 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 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 Temporary Relief for Utility Expenses (TRUE) grant, on or before February 10, 2011.

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/cicular/cir0705b.pdf>.

**Audit requirement:**

This grant is covered by the audit requirements of the Department of the Treasury Circular Letter 04-04-OMB, Single Audit Policy for Recipients of Federal Grants, State Grants and State Aid.