

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

**LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
and
UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND**

FY 2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

NAME OF GRANT PROGRAMS: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Universal Service Fund (USF)

PURPOSE OF PROGRAMS: LIHEAP is funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) to provide financial assistance to low-income families and individuals to defray the cost of heating and cooling their homes.

The USF program is funded by the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to provide financial assistance with heating and cooling costs to low-income households. The Board of Public Utilities (BPU) provides funding for the USF program through the societal benefits charge collected from electric and gas utility customers. BPU pays the client's benefits directly to the utility providers.

AVAILABLE FUNDING: Funding allocations for the LIHEAP and USF are pending Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and BPU approval and dependent on appropriation. For FY2020, the Program received **\$121,729,563** for LIHEAP and **\$6,618,443** from the BPU for the USF Program. Available funds for LIHEAP and USF are awarded to Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and units of local government (ULGs), based on the number of applications processed within each program year (LIHEAP and USF).

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS: Non-Profit entities with an IRS 501(c)(3) delineation and units of local government.

MAXIMUM AMOUNT of AWARD: Grant awards to CBOs/ULGs are based on the number of applications processed in the previous year, and the projected number of applications processed in the current year.

Awarded Grant Amounts: The applicable funding structure provides \$75 per regular applications submitted by the grantee's staff to the USFHEA Program. Award for FY2021 will be based on a projected number of applications generated by the Grantees, based on FY2020 performance.

Each awarded grantee will receive 35% of the total amount awarded, which must be fully drawn down before any further request for payments through FSR will be honored.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS: To be deemed eligible for LIHEAP financial assistance, the applicant's household gross income must be at or below 200% of the US DHHS Poverty Guidelines; and the applicant must be directly responsible for home heating/cooling costs or those costs must be included in the rent.

To be deemed eligible for USF financial assistance, the applicant's household gross income must be at or below 185% of the US DHHS Poverty Guidelines, and the household heating and cooling cost must be more than 3% of its annual income for electric or natural gas. If an applicant's home has electric heat, then the household heating cost must represent more than 6% of the annual household income.

Online Application: Beginning FY2021, eligible program participants will be required to set up their personal accounts and complete an online application via a virtual app. Such applications will be submitted to and processed directly by DCA staff.

Agencies/grantees will be encouraged and supported to engage more in outreach activities and adopt different staff patterns and staff roles.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES: The LIHEAP program provides a one-time annual benefit to eligible households to assist with heating costs (including electric, natural gas, oil, and other deliverable fuels). LIHEAP benefits are also available for medically necessary cooling costs.

USF eligible households receive a monthly credit on their electric or natural gas bill to help reduce their energy cost. A ratio of total household income and the amount of money paid for gas and electric service determines the amount of the credit.

A household receiving assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Pharmaceutical assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD), are reviewed for program eligibility through an automated process that migrates data from the NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development to the USFHEA system.

GRANT TERM: The LIHEAP funding cycle runs concurrent with the federal fiscal year, October 1, to September 30, and USF funding runs concurrent with the state fiscal year, July 1, to June 30.

QUALIFICATIONS: Successful applicants must demonstrate the following:

- Knowledge of the New Jersey Model Plan for the LIHEAP program.
- Experience in implementing energy assistance or similar assistance program requiring the determination of eligibility.
- Ability to accept payment on a reimbursement basis.
- The ability to accommodate multiple clients for simultaneous intake.
- Superior customer-centered service delivery, including the ability to adapt to changing demographics and cultural sensitivity.

APPLICATION RATING CRITERIA: A review panel consisting of members of the DCA Staff, LIHEAP Staff, and BPU score the applications based on a 100-point system in the following areas:

1. Agency Capacity (including fiscal capacity)
2. Viability of Partnerships
3. Target Population and Outreach Plan
4. Management and Training Plan

APPLICATION PROCESS: Applicants must submit information regarding the following program components in SAGE. Agencies applying for multiple counties must submit one application per county.

1. **Agency Capacity (10 Points):** Describe the agency's organizational capacity to deliver this program, in terms of the practical application of effective program planning and fiscal operations. DCA reviews the agency's history and current practice of delivering programs and services (past performance in LIHEAP/USF or similar program.)

- Management of fiscal operations (please utilize the Nonprofit Financial Management Assessment to reflect on your organization's policies and procedures as they relate to fiscal planning, monitoring, operations, and governance.)

2. **Viability of Partnerships (30 Points):** Describe all partnerships with entities that expand the program's reach and ensure more accessibility to eligible applicants using the following metrics:

- Letter of Intent for each partner entity (including government officials)
- Number of individuals or households served by the partner entity
- Schedule of collaborative outreach events
- Experience and outcomes of partnership relationship

3. **Target population and Outreach Plan (50 Points):** Describe the organization's outreach plan for the program eligible population, detailing the methods, activities, and partnerships, with an emphasis on outreach to:

- Disabled and Elderly households
- Occupants of multi-dwelling units (apartment complexes)
- Recertifying and New applicants

Successful responses include the number of projected applicants in each targeted population, a detailed Language Assistance Plan to ensure the needs of the target populations are met, and a description of the outreach plan implementation.

4. **Management and Training Plan (10 Points):** Provide a detailed plan to effectively manage and evaluate the administration of the program, retain/recruit prospective employees, and train staff to perform assigned responsibilities optimally. The plan should focus on the following:

- A detailed recruitment and retention plan
- A detailed assessment of training needs.
- A detailed list and description of training subject matter, based on assessment
- A detailed process to evaluate the outcomes of programs and services provided

Budgetary Instructions

Provide a detailed budget showing total operating expenses for both LIHEAP and USF and must demonstrate:

- Capacity to operate on a reimbursable basis (substantiate other sources of funds, which should be at minimum 9% of total grant budget);
- Fiscal soundness based on audits of the preceding 3 years.
- Amounts allotted to the Administrative category adhering to the 10% cap;

All costs must be recorded in one of the following categories:

Administrative	Costs for administrative support such as fiscal staff, Executive Director, office supplies, etc.	10%
Consultant and Professionals	Name of consultant/ consulting company, the specific work to be performed, and the rate of compensation.	Every budget line item MUST include a budget justification.
Occupancy and Equipment	Must include justification and operating budget	
Salaries for Operational Staff Only	Must be supported by personnel activity reports.	
Fringe	Allocated based on the related salary expense for each employee.	

The occupancy and equipment operational budget and justification must include the following items:

Physical location:

1. Rent
2. Utility expenses
3. Property insurance
4. Property tax
5. Security/maintenance
6. The cost-share of the use of office space if the agency owns the building.

Remote Processing:

1. **Estimated fuel cost**
2. **Car insurance**
3. **Mobile Sim Cards for Tablets/Laptops**
4. **Parking Expenses**
5. **Cellular phones**

INNOVATIVE OUTREACH: Applicants can apply for up to \$25,000.00 in additional funding to purchase tablets for the facilitation of enhanced outreach activities. Each entity must submit a detailed plan and separate budget delineating the methods, costs, and projected measurable outcomes. Agencies may purchase 1 tablet per 500 estimated applications to be received.

2. Required Submittals:

1. Application Cover Sheet (Certification Sheet)
2. IRS 501(c) 3 Determination Letter (required for non-profit only)
3. Certificate of Incorporation and By-Laws (required for non-profit only)
4. List of Officers and Board of Directors
5. Certification Regarding Debarment and Suspension
6. Certification Regarding Lobbying
7. Organizational Chart
8. Hours of operation
9. The total number of staff and each staff's name dedicated to the program.
10. List of Directors and Supervisors and their resumes;
11. Percentage of time dedicated to LIHAP/USF program

The required documents above are considered part of the application for funding. Failure to submit any of the attachments, listed above, will result in the application disqualification. Attachments that cannot be uploaded on SAGE must be emailed to either Rosaura.collazo@dca.nj.gov or fidel.ekhelar@dca.nj.gov no later than 11:59 p.m. on Friday, September 18, 2020.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: Financial Status Reports (FSR) and Monthly outreach/production reports must be submitted by the 15th calendar day of the month.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Achievement of monthly production goals for processed applications.
- At least 75% of applications processed must result in a benefit.
- Timely submission of FSRs, as stated above in reporting requirements.
- Quality program performance including minimal delays in processing of applications
- Number of Eligible applications received and processed
- Number of elderly/disabled applications received and processed
- Number and nature of complaints received from clients.
- Execution of components outlined in the outreach plan.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SESSION: Applicants can also attend the virtual Technical Assistance on Monday, **August 28, 2020**, by sending an email requesting for an invite to fidel.ekhelar@dca.nj.gov.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: Friday, September 18, 2020.