

Family Investment Administration
Request for Proposals
For
Administration of the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and the Electric
Universal Service Program (EUSP)
FIA/OHEP/09-002-S
Pre-Proposal Conference, Friday, November 6, 2009

Questions and Responses to Pre-Proposal Conference

Question 1: Who is the incumbent provider for this program?

Response: Community Action Council of Howard County, MD, Inc.

Question 2: How long has the incumbent been providing this service?

Response: The incumbent has been providing service since before 1982.

Question 3: If there was an incumbent, what was the total contract amount?

Response: The total contract amount for the incumbent is \$681,160 for a 3-year base contract and two one-year option renewals.

Question 4: What is the minimum number of full-time employees that the Provider should plan on utilizing for the implementation of this program?

Response: The Offeror needs to determine the number of employees required to administer the program.

Question 5: Will the office space on Gateway (Drive) in Columbia be available for use for the new provider? If so, what are the lease terms and rates?

Response: The new provider is responsible for obtaining office space.

Question 6: Has (have) contracts being (been) awarded for Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, Somerset, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester counties?

Response: Contract awards for Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, Somerset, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester counties were approved by the Board of Public Works on November 18, 2009.

Question 7: If yes, who won and what were the contract amounts?

Response: The BPW agenda for the 11/18/2009 meeting is posted on the DHR webpage @ www.dhr.state.md.us. Go to the "Doing Business with DHR" navigational bar located on the lower left hand side of the home page. Link to "RFP", and go to the bar for the Office of Home Energy Programs RFP to view the 11/18/2009 BPW Agenda.

Question 8: Is there a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request form that needs to be completed in order to request the previous winning MEAP proposal for Howard County?

Response: There is no FOIA request form to request the previous winning MEAP proposal for Howard County. Vendors must submit a PIA (Public Information Act) request, in writing, to the Procurement Officer in order to receive a copy of the winning MEAP proposal for Howard County?

Question 9: Is there a cut-off time for submitting questions?

Response: No, however based on the availability of time to research and communicate answers, the Procurement Officer will decide whether an answer can be provided before the Proposal due date.

Question 10: Must a prime that is an MBE, be certified by the Maryland Department of Transportation? Can it be any other certifying authority?

Response: No, any Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) can respond to this solicitation.

However, to be recognized as a MBE in a State of Maryland contract you must be certified as a MBE by the Maryland Department of Transportation.

Question 11: Can an MBE be added as subcontractor once you have submitted your proposal - you must still go to the program manager to get approval?

Response: Section RFP Section 2.32 D. of the RFP, Amendment of MBE due to unforeseen circumstances. Any changes to the MBE Participation Schedule (Attachment H) prior to or after contract execution must receive approval. Before execution of the contract notification is sent to the Procurement Officer. After execution of the contract notification is sent to the State Project Manager.

Question 12: If I am the successful Offeror, and I want to (add) additional MBE's, do I need to go to the Program Manager for approval?

Response: Yes – same response as #11.

Question 13: What form(s) is needed to add MBE's?

Response: A revised MBE Participation Schedule (Attachment H) is needed, but in addition to this form a letter from the Offeror/Contractor (whichever is appropriate) justifying or explaining why the Offeror/Contractor is making a change. Attachment J (MBE Project Participation Statement) may also be required if a new MBE subcontractor (s) is being added.

Question 14: Does a MBE subcontractor need to be State certified from MDOT (Maryland Department of Transportation)?

Response: Yes, only MBE's certified by the Maryland Department of Transportation can be used to meet the MBE goal.

Question 15: If you are in the process of acquiring your MBE certification, and the certification will not begin until after the closing date of the proposal, can numbers be adjusted afterward so that you meet the criteria?

Response: No, pending certification will not be accepted. If certified MBE subcontractors are needed, the MDOT website can be searched for certified MBE's, the website is www.mdot.state.md.us. See the response to #11 above for instructions on how to request a MBE amendment.

Question 16: After a contract is implemented and there is a living wage increase, is the vendor required to increase the wage up?

Response: Yes.

Question 17: Can we get a historical pattern of the living wage increases over the course of five years?

Response: Living Wage started in 2007. Tier 1 began at \$11.30. On July 1 of this year it increased to \$11.82 per hour. The subsequent raise was in September, 2009 when it increased to \$12.25. So there have only been two raises since the implementation of the Living Wage law.

Question 18: Does the Hiring Agreement apply to subcontractors as well?

Response: Yes, it also applies to the subcontractors.

Question 19: Will the vendor be given a database of the previous year's clients?

Response: Yes, the database will be available.

Question 20: Is there a requirement on the vendor for an annual mailing?

Response: Yes.

Question 21: What is the SAIL website?

Response: www.marylandsail.org

Question 22: Applications that are come in paper form are the responsibility of the contractor to put into the database?

Response: Yes.

Question 23: Applications on the SAIL website can be accessed anywhere?

Response: Yes, however, Internet connection is needed.

Question 24: Once information is input into the database, there is no more responsibility on the contractor?

Response: This is incorrect. Once the applicant information is entered into the database the contractor is responsible for reviewing the application documentation and approving or denying it for a benefit. If information is missing, the applicant must be contacted to submit the information. Once the benefit is approved an Energy Delivery Statement (EDS) is created. For non-utility benefits, the contractor is to make those payments. The State OHEP Office makes the utility payments. Once payments are made benefit notification letters are generated and sent to the applicant. If the application is denied then a denial letter is generated and mailed.

If the applicant is experiencing a crisis as defined in the statute, the appropriate action must be taken to resolve the crisis.

Question 25: Application intake to time you pay is 45 business days?

Response: Yes.

Question 26: What is time frame for application intake to notice of acceptance or denial?

Response: Once the benefit is paid to the energy supplier, the notification is to go to the applicant within ten days. Denial notices can be sent immediately after the application is denied.

Question 27: When does monitoring take place for the Independent audit reports?

Response: Monitoring by State OHEP will take place during the course of the program year. Independent audits are done on the schedule of the Contractor.

Question 28: Are there set time frames within certain periods for monitoring purposes?

Response: Generally, monitoring is performed from September through March.

Question 29: Is it acceptable to process outside the county?

Response: **Yes, there are no restrictions as to the location of where applications are processed as the database is available from anywhere. However, application intake must be performed in the respective jurisdiction.**

Question 30: Will (a) different person do intake versus certification?

Response: **The person who takes the application and enters it into the database cannot be the same person who certifies it.**

Question 31: It is anticipated for calendar year 2010, that there will be an estimated 3,500 or more individual applicants in Howard County?

Response: **Yes.**