

Office of Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey



Request for Proposal (RFP)

Residential Energy Assistance Grant FY2022-FY2024

Release Date: December 21, 2021

Response Due Date: January 14, 2022

Project Start Date: February 7, 2022

Project End Date: June 15, 2024

Grantor: Office of Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey
Address: One Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108
Email: AGOGrants@mass.gov

The Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General (AGO) is pleased to announce the Residential Energy Assistance Grant (REAG) program. The REAG program will utilize settlement funds received by the AGO through settlement agreements with National Grid and Starion Energy to fund or supplement programs or initiatives designed to assist Massachusetts residents in paying or lowering their residential heating costs.

Residential Energy Assistance

Approximately 400,000 Massachusetts residential customers currently receive a low-income discount rate on their electric and gas bills, with more customers signing up for payment plans each week.

Massachusetts governmental heat assistance programs are available to help low income and hardship customers meet their monthly heating bill. To be eligible for the state's low income heat assistance program, household income cannot exceed 60 percent of the estimated median income in Massachusetts.¹ Other heat assistance programs, which rely on donations from the general public and the business community, focus on those residents who do not meet the state's low-income eligibility requirement.² These assistance programs are designed to help customers with household incomes between 60 and 80 percent of the state's median income level who have been beset by a short-term financial setback. These critical programs allow our most vulnerable residents to stay warm in the winter months.

The goal of the REAG program is to provide additional funding to programs that aid Massachusetts families currently receiving heat assistance and to expand assistance to more eligible households. Programs may assist customers by directly subsidizing their heating bills or by providing specialized assistance to consumers seeking energy assistance. Specialized assistance includes, but is not limited to, application document(s) translation, language assistance, and programs that assist vulnerable populations.

Programs that provide direct subsidies for heating assistance may award, in the aggregate, up to \$1,000.00 for each eligible Massachusetts household per heating season (i.e., between September 15 – June 15). Direct subsidies may reimburse primary sources of heat for Massachusetts households. A primary source of heat shall be eligible for direct subsidy if it is an eligible source of heat for the Commonwealth's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.³

¹ The benefit levels provided to eligible households are dependent on the funding allocated to Massachusetts by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

² Other heat assistance programs are meant to encompass programs other than the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program or the Weatherization Assistance Program, both of which are federally funded.

³ <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/learn-about-low-income-home-energy-assistance-program-liheap>

Eligibility

The following types of organizations are eligible to apply:

- State Agencies;
- Municipalities; and
- Non-Profit Organizations.*

* Non-profit organizations that are public charities (generally speaking, public charities have 501(c)(3) statuses) must be in full compliance with the statutory requirements set forth in G.L. ch. 12, secs. 8E and 8F, and G.L. ch. 68, sec. 19, including initial registration and filing of annual financial reports with the AGO's Non-Profit Organizations/Public Charities Division. Public charities must also comply with obligations and reporting requirements set by the Internal Revenue Service.

Funding

The AGO anticipates disbursing approximately \$500,000.00 by awarding multiple grants of varying sizes to applicants across Massachusetts. Funding is anticipated to be awarded in amounts not to exceed \$200,000.00 per eligible recipient. The AGO encourages applicants to design proposals that are targeted and commensurate with the proposed scale of the program.

An applicant's request for REAG program funds may be funded in full or in part. The total number of grants awarded is contingent upon multiple factors, including, but not limited to, the number of applications received and the funding amounts requested. The AGO expects that the applicants' budget proposals are clearly constructed to assist Massachusetts customers with paying or lowering their residential heating bills. No more than 5% of a grant award or \$2,500.00 (whichever is lower) may be allocated to administrative expenses.

All funding decisions and amounts will be made at the sole discretion of the AGO. Grantees providing direct subsidies for heating assistance may have a portion of their award restricted to the reimbursement of a specific fuel source, such as natural gas.

Duration

The grant will begin on February 7, 2022, and projects shall be completed by June 15, 2024. Unexpended funds remaining at the end of the grant term shall be returned to the AGO within 30 days. The AGO, at its sole discretion, will not allow program extensions except for good cause shown.

Disbursement

The initial disbursement is expected to be sent to awarded Grantees upon completion of all necessary contract documents. Subsequent disbursement(s) will be issued upon completion of all necessary reporting documents by deadlines established in the grant contract. All disbursements will be made by Electronic Funds Transfer.

Submission Instructions

- Proposals must be delivered electronically through the AGO's online grant application by 5:00 p.m. on **January 14, 2022**.
- Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed.
- Applications will not be accepted in any other format.
- Interested applicants may access the application here: www.mass.gov/ago/grants.
- New applicants will be asked to create a free online account. Any applicant that has applied for any grant using the online grant management system may log into its existing account.
- Once applicants have started an application, the application may be saved and returned to later.
- Confirmation of Receipt: Applicants typically receive an email confirmation within 48 business hours; if one is not received, please call (617) 963-2150 for further instructions and assistance.

Evaluation of Proposals

The AGO is highly interested in proposals that seek to provide assistance to heating customers who might otherwise receive no benefits or who are not receiving sufficient benefits.

Applicants should examine the types of assistance programs currently available in their service areas and demonstrate how their proposals supplement existing programs or create new consumer outreach. For example, do current assistance programs in the applicants' service areas predominately work with households making less than 60 percent of the estimated state median income? Do the applicants' proposals fill resource gaps or expand eligibility criteria in their respective service areas?

Other criteria utilized in the evaluation and selection process includes:

- Applicants' history of providing residential heat assistance services/funds;
- Applicants' engagement with household demographic data;
- Applicants' intended service(s) to be provided; and
- Geographic diversity of applicants' intended beneficiaries.

Expectations and Criteria for Successful Applicants

- Funding awards are contingent upon the Grantee satisfactorily completing all necessary documents set forth under "Required Commonwealth Contract Documents for Successful Grantees" by the deadlines established by the AGO during the contract period.
- Any changes to a Grantee's AGO-funded REAG program at any time during the grant period must be requested in writing by the Grantee and must be approved, in advance of any such change, by the AGO.
- As a condition to receiving REAG program funds, Grantees are required to complete and submit for AGO review and approval financial and program reports on a periodic basis. Grantee reports will provide the AGO with sufficient financial detail concerning the

Grantee's REAG program to allow the AGO to confirm that the awarded grant money was appropriately disbursed to Massachusetts residential heating customers. The financial and program information shall be submitted by the deadline established and in a format to be specified by the AGO. The AGO may request additional detailed expenditure data from Grantees at its discretion.

- At the end of the grant period, any unexpended grant funds shall be returned to the AGO within 30 days.

Questions

Questions regarding this RFP may be submitted by email to AGOGGrants@mass.gov, only until 5:00 p.m. on January 7, 2022. When submitting your question(s), please include "Residential Energy Assistance Grant" in the email subject line. The AGO will provide responses by email within two business days of receipt.

Reasonable Accommodation

Applicants who seek reasonable accommodation, which may include the receipt of the application in an alternative format, must communicate such requests in writing to AGOGGrants@mass.gov, no later than 5:00 p.m. on January 7, 2022

Required Commonwealth contract documents for successful Grantees

The following documents will be required upon any notification of a grant award at a deadline established by the AGO and should not be submitted with the grant application:

- Standard Contract Form
- Scope and Services Agreement
- Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing

The following documents will be required as part of the application submission:

- Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification (W-9)
- Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Form⁴

Public Records

All submitted responses and information are subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law, M.G.L. c. 66, § 10, and M.G.L. c. 4, § 7, cl. 26. Applicants should not submit any personal, medical, or other sensitive information.

Updates to this RFP

Any changes/corrections to any part to this RFP will be posted on <https://www.mass.gov/grant-opportunities>. It is the applicant's responsibility to check this web page frequently for any updates.

⁴ It is the responsibility of the applicant ensure that an electronic transfer of funds can be received in the event a grant award is made. No paper checks will be issued.