



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Charles D. Baker, Governor ♦ Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor ♦ Jennifer Maddox, Acting Undersecretary

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**Bid Amendment:** COMMBUYS bid # Bid BD-20-1076-OCDD-OCDD01-48655

**Self Sufficiency Program (SSP) Questions and Answers**

**Question:** Why are medium sized housing authorities excluded from participating? Can multiple housing authorities apply together if they have less than 150 to get to the 150-family unit minimum?

**Answer:** Yes, multiple housing authorities can apply together to form a partnership and get to the 150-family unit minimum. DHCD will consider funding a regional approach that incorporates multiple housing authorities and/or RAAs who own or administer more than 150 units of family housing combined, given a reasonable expectation of participant uptake in the program making sharing of staff feasible. The housing authorities or MRVP household locations must be within 50 miles of each other to be able to share a staff person using this approach.

**Question:** Section III Eligible Uses of Funds states that the LHA can apply for a full-time staff person who will be expected to serve at least 35 participants. In this context, does serving mean that 35 participants will be enrolled in the SSP or at least 35 participants will be briefed on and screened for the program (or something else)?

**Answer:** The expectation is that the LHA/RAA would enroll at minimum 35 participants in order to be eligible for funding for a full-time staff person. The LHA/RAA is only eligible for funding for a full-time staff person with enrollment level of 35 if there is no current FSS program. If an LHA/RAA has not been able to enroll 35 participants by the end of the first year, then DHCD will work with the agency to assess the situation.

**Question:** In section IV, on page 4, DHCD states it is interested in creative designs incorporating lessons from the field. In the ideas presented for incorporation in a program, with a target population of 18-24-year old's, please clarify who is/can be considered the participant:

1. Is the definition of a program participant limited only to 18-24-year old's who are not heads of household, or can 18-24-year old's who are heads of household be considered as participants?

**Answer:** Both 18-24-year old's who are head of household and who are members of a household can be considered.



2. Could two 18-24-year old's in one household, regardless of their head of household status, be participants?  
**Answer:** Yes, two 18-24-year old's in one household regardless of their head of household status can participate.
  
3. If more than one family member, 18-24, can participate, are they considered individuals or part of a household?  
**Answer:** They would all be considered part of a household, with multiple individual participants, but one escrow account.
  
4. Can 18-24-year old's who are not members of a household participate?  
**Answer:** No, the 18-24-year-old must be a member of the household to participate.
  
5. If the head of the household does not want to participate, can any other family participate in the program, as intended?  
**Answer:** No, the head of household must agree to participate in the program for an 18-24-year-old member to be able to participate. However, the head of household does not have to be the member of the household who is required to be working by the end of the program or the one actively working on a COP. This can be another adult member of the household who is designated by the head of household.
  
6. Can you clarify who is the "participant" if the proposed program is component two targeting 18-24-year-old household members? Can more than one household member participate in this program (i.e. Head of Household and a household member age 18-24)?  
**Answer:** More than one household member can participate, both a head of household and a household member who is 18-24 can participate, they would each be counted as a participant (so two total participants from one household). Each household would only have one escrow account.

**Question:** Under the MRV Program, can both Mobile and Project-Based clients participate in the SSP?

**Answer:** Yes, both mobile and project based MRVP clients can participate.

**Question:** Under section III. Eligible Uses of Funds, can you explain or clarify DHCD's expectations for the use of Flexible Funds? Are there some expenses that will be excluded?

Are there limits on what the flexible funds can be used for? Is there an expectation that all participants would be eligible for it? NOFA states "programs, partner payments, or "barrier busting" (small costs that need to be paid in order to remove barriers for

residents to obtain the services they need)". However, with \$10,000 in flex funds for 50 participants, that is approximately \$200 per household.

**Answer:** Flexible funds can be used for programs, partner payments, or "barrier busting" (small costs that need to be paid in order to remove barriers for residents to obtain the services they need). They can also be used as incentives if that is part of the applicants' program design. The \$10,000 is a total amount for the year, so once it is used that is it. There is no expectation that each individual will access the funds, it is up to the LHs/RAA to determine how the funds will be used. Each applicant for the SSP should share how they plan to use the flexible funds and a draft budget for their use. Flexible funds cannot be used to pay rent for participants.

**Question:** In Section III, third bullet states that grant applicants will need to show how the target enrollment of 50 participants will be met within one year, and that justification for enrollment above 5% is required.

1. What does this mean? What is an example of justification?

**Answer:** Given that national averages for enrollment in FSS is 5%, if an LHA/RAA is applying for funding for a full time staff person with a projection of enrolling 50 participants in the first year, then the applicant must provide justification for why you think you can reach this level of enrollment. Justification could include examples of how the LHA/RAA has met this level of rigorous enrollment in the past in similar economic mobility programs, a detailed plan on how the enrollment level will be met, and contingency plans if recruitment does not go as anticipated.

2. Is enrollment limited to 50 participants?

**Answer:** No, enrollment is not limited to 50 participants, but that is the minimum and the general best practice is that one staff person can serve up to 50 participants, however they could go as high as 60 since not everyone is active at the same time.

3. Does it mean that we have to enroll more than 50 participants?

**Answer:** No, the minimum enrollment is 50, there is no obligation to enroll more.

**Question:** What is the anticipated start date for the program?

**Answer:** We anticipate the start date for the program to be September 2020.

**Question:** Could the staffing costs include both a staff at the RAA as well as funding to support a staff at a partner agency should job/career focus be included to secure dedicated staffing at partner agency?

**Answer:** Yes, the staffing funds can be used in combination for staff at the LHA/RAA and for a staff at a partner agency. The total amount of funds available for staffing will remain the same.

**Question:** Do the staffing costs include taxes/fringe/overhead?

**Answer:** Yes, the staffing costs include taxes/fringe/overhead.

**Question:** Could you provide more detail as to why there is a difference if you do not have an FSS program compared to if you do. The caseload for non-FSS program is 35 to have 1FTE, but if you have an FSS program the number of participants is 50 per 1 FTE. Also, if you have FSS but is full-time person there is no way to increase their time with the additional funds (if keeping to 30-35), you would still need an FTE.

**Answer:** DHCD is taking into consideration that for an LHA/RAA that does not have an FSS program now on the federal side there is additional start up time and effort required for a staff person to create the initiative that is not the same as if the LHA/RAA already has an FSS program and existing relationships with partner agencies and service providers for referrals, coaching processes and recruitment models.

**Question:** Will DHCD be requiring a formatted ISP or is there flexibility with the agency to design their own?

**Answer:** DHCD will provide the Individual Training and Service Plan (ITSP) and Contract of Family Participation (COP) based on the FSS or MassLEAP program to be used.

**Question:** Will DHCD be developing and providing an escrow tracking system?

**Answer:** DHCD will modify as needed the MassLEAP escrow tracking tool and provide that for LHAs and RAAs.

**Question:** Will DHCD provide translated program documents?

**Answer:** No, DHCD will not be providing translated program documents.

**Question:** Is there expectation (as in MassLEAP) that each participant has an employment, education and asset goal or is it more flexible and similar to FSS?

**Answer:** There is no expectation that each participant has an employment, education and asset goal. The goals will be determined by the participant, the model is more like FSS with flexibility for the participant to identify their goals in however many areas they like.

**Question:** Will there be restrictions or special requirements (as in MassLEAP) in order for participants to receive their escrow?

**Answer:** Participants need to be in good standing with the LHA/RAA in order to receive their escrow at the end of the program. Escrow funds will be forfeited if the Contract of Participation is terminated. Otherwise the amount in an SSP account, in excess of any amount owed to the LHA/landlord by the SSP family, is paid to the head of the SSP family when the COP has been completed (even if the contract term has not expired).

**Question:** What happens to the escrow should a participant transfer to another RAA that may not be participating in this program?

**Answer:** If a participant transfers to an RAA that is not participating in the program than the participant would need to leave the program and they would be eligible to receive their escrow at that time.

**Question:** Is DHCD expecting applicants to demonstrate that they have already leveraged funds for any budget not covered by DHCD funds?

**Answer:** Applicants should submit a budget that shows any anticipated leveraged funds and the program design should fit within the funding available whether it is from DHCD or other sources.

**Question:** If someone with an MRVP participated in MassLEAP, will they be eligible to participate in this new program?

**Answer:** Yes, someone who participated in MassLEAP is also eligible to participate in SSP.

**Question:** Will you consider applications that consider only one component or does the application have to have all three components?

**Answer:** Yes, we will consider applications that have only one of the optional program components. Applicants are not required to include any of the program components, but if any of them are included are eligible to get up to 20 additional points.

**Question:** How fast does DHCD expect a program to reach enrollment goal of 50 participants?

**Answer:** If an LHA/RAA has applied for funding for a full-time person because they have the goal of enrolling 50 participants, then the expectation is that enrollment goal of 50 will be met in the first year.

**Question:** In order to assist in program design and development, will DHCD release and make available to applicants the data and outcomes from the MassLEAP program?

**Answer:** Yes, DHCD will share a program summary report of MassLEAP.