

Mass LEAP Request for Responses

Written Questions

April 3, 2014

Q: We are working to create a regional consortium that we hope will include many housing authorities (HAs). The HAs that we are talking to are interested in the Mass LEAP program, but we are hearing that it will be impossible for them to obtain Board votes before April 18, as their Board meeting schedule is set in stone, and they do not call special Board meetings. As an alternative, may we include in our proposal letters from the HA Executive Directors, which indicate the date of their next Board meeting and provide a commitment to submit a Board vote/approval to DHCD immediately after the next Board meeting?

A: In response to inquiries, DHCD is extending the date for submission of evidence of board vote of Mass LEAP application approval from April 18 to noon (12:00PM) on May 16, 2014. In lieu of the Board vote of application approval, each consortia partner must submit with the application due April 18, 2014, a letter of intent to partner, signed by the chairman and executive director.

Q: Will the administrative fee payable to the lead organization each month be calculated based on the number of program participants during that month? E.g. if 50 participants, 50 x \$1300; if 48 participants, 48 x \$1300? How will the administrative fee be calculated if one or more clients participate in the program for a partial month?

A: DHCD will release detailed guidelines on Administrative Fee calculation at the time of contracting. Note, the budget for the first year should include reasonable and necessary start-up costs for both the Housing Agencies and the Contractors. DHCD's intent is to adequately support ongoing administrative expenses.

Q: The RFR indicates that applicants must have Board approval of the application as evidenced by a certified extract from the minutes. Can you clarify if this means Board approval to submit the application or Board Approval of the completed application?

A: The Board must vote to approve the application and the potential implementation of the program and relative partnerships.

Q: If a Housing Agency is not able to participate in the grant process, does that eliminate their clients from receiving services?

A: Yes, in order to participate in Mass LEAP, a participant must receive state-funded rental assistance (either reside in a state-aided public c. 200 or c. 705 unit, or receive a MRVP subsidy) from the Lead Housing Agency, or Mass LEAP regional consortia Housing Agency.

Q: One requirement for a household to be eligible to participate in Mass LEAP is "Participant is the Head of Household, age 18 and over, and must have a child under the age of 18 living in the household". We have many multigenerational families in our development. Does the child under the age of 18 HAVE TO BE the Head of Household's child? Or can it be a child in the household, belonging to another family member, such as the HOH's grandchild? What if the HOH is caring for say a grandchild, whose parent is not in the household?

A: The Head of Household must have a child, or be the legal guardian of a child, under 18 residing in the household. The Head of Household must be the participant in the Mass LEAP program.

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Q: RFR Attachment A, Mass LEAP Application Form, requires that a narrative cover letter be provided as an attachment to the application. According to the instructions, "Letter must be signed by the Chair of Board of Commissioners (LHAs) and Chair of the Board of Directors (RAAs) and the Executive Director." Our consortium consists of a lead applicant (an RAA) and a number of LHAs. Who must sign the cover letter? Just the lead applicant's Chairperson of the Board and Executive Director? Or, is it necessary to include additional signatures for each participating LHA? (i.e. each agency's Chair of Board of Commissioners and Executive Director). If is the latter, the LHA's Chair of the Board of Commissioners will not be able to sign the letter until after the Board meets (which may be after April 18).

A: The cover letter needs only to be signed by the Chair of the Board of Commissioners (LHA) or Chair of the Board of Directors (RAAs), as applicable of the Lead Applicant's agency.

Q: RFR Attachment A also refers to a required Letter of Intent to Partner from each Contractor (Attachment C), however Attachment C is not posted on the Mass LEAP webpage. Will DHCD make Attachment C available prior to April 18?

A: The letter of intent was not included as a form, it should be a letter from each agency, written on agency letterhead and clearly marked "Attachment C"

Q: At least one of the LHAs in our consortium does not have a mechanism for handling tenant escrow accounts. Can DHCD provide any guidance about other arrangements for managing/monitoring Mass LEAP escrow accounts?

A: DHCD will provide detailed guidance about Mass LEAP escrow account management in the program guidelines.

Q: For each LHA, RFR Attachment A also requires that we submit a letter from the head of the tenant organization or a letter from the LHA Director certifying that tenants were involved in setting the needs and priorities of the program. Is implementation of the Tenant Survey sufficient involvement? If not, what other tenant involvement does DHCD have in mind? Given the strict requirements of the RFR, it is not clear in which areas tenants can input.

A: This requirement is for Local Housing Authorities only. The LHA should schedule at least one meeting with the tenants where it is made clear that the LHA is applying for Mass LEAP. The LHA should give an overview of the proposed program implementation plan and allow tenants to ask questions. The LHA should be responsive to tenant feedback and edit the application as appropriate.

Q: According to the criteria for tenant participation in the program, each participant must be a tenant "in good standing" as far as his/her tenancy. Can you provide more information as far as what constitutes "good standing"? What if a tenant is a few days late with rent? Or is in the middle of fulfilling an agreement to catch up on past due rent? Or has minor violations of his lease that he has not yet cured?

A: At the time of enrollment, and as a requirement for ongoing participation in Mass LEAP, a tenant or MRVP participant must be in good standing as defined by the Housing Agency. In lieu of a formal definition, Mass LEAP requires at least the following:

- The household is current in payment of rent, charges and fees owed to the LHA;

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- **No household member has committed any material violations of the lease for at least one (1) year. Eviction proceedings are not pending, and the tenant is not subject to the terms of agreement for judgment in a prior eviction proceeding; and**
- **If the tenant is on a repayment agreement, he/she must be fully meeting the terms of that plan. If there are other issues, the tenant must be actively working to correct those issues.**