

Interim Escrow Withdrawals:

Q: It is stated that interim escrow withdrawals will be allowed prior to completion for a "financial need directly related to the participant's MassLEAP goals" and then refers to the list of approved uses. Thus, does the participant need to identify how they plan to use the funds at program commencement?

A: No, they need to identify goals at the beginning of the program; the interim disbursements are to overcome financial obstacles that will prevent them, from meeting those goals.

Q: If a withdrawal is made the participant is subsequently terminated or withdraws from the program, is there a process to recover the funds?

A: No, there is not.

Q: It is possible not to allow for early withdrawal except in an emergency situation?

A: Early withdrawal guidelines are included in the RFR and may be further refined in the Program Guidelines.

Term and amount of funding:

Q: Funding, on page 2 it is stated that "DHCD expects to grant \$8.125M in total funds to support Mass LEAP program sites at 4 to 8 locations...." Does total mean annual total or 5 year total, thus 20% of \$8.125 per year?

A: There will be \$1.625 million per year, subject to funding availability, for five years.

There is \$1m available for services for state-aided public housing tenants and \$625,000 available for services for MRVP participants.

Length of Contracts:

Q: Is the program 3 years or 5 years? The wording on page 2 says "Over the next five years...." on page 4 it states that it is a 5 year program and participants sign a 5 year agreement. Yet on page 12 under contract term it states, "Initial contracts for Mass LEAP will be for three years with two renewals possible for one year terms"

A: This question contains references to two different contracts.

First, the RFR Contracts, and the Contracts that pre-qualified contractors will sign are for three years, with two possible one year renewals. DHCD may elect to not renew a contract if a program is not meeting expectations.

Second, there is a Contract of Participation between the participant and the Housing Agency that outlines the participant's goals and the steps to meet those goals. This is a five year contract. Programs can terminate a participant contract if the participant is not meeting goals, or other program requirements.

Contracts for services will be between the Housing Agencies and Providers, so DHCD cannot terminate those contracts, but under certain conditions, we will stop funding an HA to pay a service provider that fails to perform.

Participants will be held harmless as much as possible in the event that there are performance problems at a site. We would make every effort to find another service provider, transfer participants to another HA, allow for an emergency early graduation and so forth. We will address this question further in Program Guidelines.

Reasonable Accommodations:

Q: On Page 9, the bullet on persons with disabilities entitled to request a reasonable modification in rules, policies, etc. Can a person request a modification in eligibility requirements? For example, person has never been employed.

A: Yes, that would be considered a reasonable accommodation, with the understanding that the goal of this program is to increase earned income, and therefore to participate in the workforce.

Documentation from Consortia HA Members:

Q: We are considering applying as a lead agency in consortia with at least 4 other LHAs, what documents must be submitted with the application from the other consortia LHAs other than demographic and survey result information?

A: Applications from consortia applicants should have items c, f, g, i, and j, if applicable, from each HA in the consortia.

Budgets:

Q: Should an annual, three or 5 year budget be submitted with the application?

A: DHCD originally requested a One Year budget with the application. We are modifying that requirement, and now require an Annual Budget for each of the first three years. Year One budgets should include a start-up phase that reflects lower expenses resulting from the recruitment and enrollment process. *Please note: DHCD will fund Mass LEAP programs on an annual basis, subject to appropriations. A new required budget has been posted on the Mass LEAP page of DHCD's website..*

Site Funding:

Q: The RFR states that the maximum funding per site is \$400,000 and the minimum Administrative Fee appears to be \$65,000 for a 50 caseload program and appears to have to pay for all LHA administration and vendor service cost. Could you please explain the gap between the maximum funding and the administrative fee as it appears that the only way to reach the maximum funding limit would be to have a 400 caseload program?

A: The RFR says that DHCD reserves the right to restrict funding to \$400,000 per site, in order to meet our goals of geographic distribution and maximizing our number of sites. The administrative fee is \$65,000 per 50 person site, the amount spent on services is separate from this. However, the administrative fee is considered a program expense, and thus counts towards the total cost of the program.

Prorated Administrative Fee

Q: Programs serving more than 50 participants are expected to reach an economy of scale, and will receive a pro-rated fee. This fee is to cover expenses directly related to Mass LEAP program management and coordination, data collection and reporting, escrow account management, and vendor payments.

A: This question is looking for clarification on the pro-rated fee. DHCD believes a \$1300 per participant fee for program administration - as listed in the question, provides sufficient funding for strong program oversight, coordination, and reporting. We also believe that the additional costs of serving more participants do not require the same level of financial support per client. DHCD is encouraging applicants to submit cost-competitive proposals, and therefore want to see your request for this fee.

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Definitions:

Q: What constitutes an RAA (Regional Administering Agency)?

A: This is addressed in the definition section of the RFR, but essentially is it one of the eight regional non-profits that administer DHCD's federal rental assistance programs and other state rental assistance programs including MRVP.

Q: Since our housing authority has federal units, can we solicit clients from those developments?

A: No, only residents of state-aided public housing and MRVP participants.

Escrow Component:

Q: Is the escrow component part of the total grant amount or is it a dollar for dollar match that would be calculated with a reduction in voucher payments and therefore the funding for the escrow would come out of the total voucher payments made?

A: Escrow is not part of the grant award, it is calculated pursuant to program formula, and will be provided through the housing program funding source. Grant awards are for Mass LEAP services and administrative costs only.

Start-up Costs:

Q: As the contract will be for services provided to each individual, is there a way to bill ramp up costs? For example, some staff may need to be hired before a full case load is established.

A: The first year budget should include a start-up phase, with necessary start-up staffing expenses.

Additional Funding Rounds:

Q: Will there be another chance to apply for the Mass LEAP, such as next year in 2015? Or would we have to wait until the five (5) years are up to apply for this program (if this program continues)?

A: At this time there is a commitment of 5 years and \$8.25 million dollars for Mass LEAP. Whether or not there will be additional opportunities for HA to apply for new awards is undecided. If funding is fully allocated in response to this RFR then there will be no further opportunities.

Q: Does the annual program administrative fee of \$1,300 per participant come out of the \$400,000 or is this separate funding? *If this annual program administrative fee is separate funding, is this funding just for the Housing Authorities or to be shared with the Contractors as well?*

A: As stated in the RFR, how you use the administrative fee can be negotiated – but it needs to cover only the administrative expenses identified in the RFR.

Q: If there was a consortium between two (2) housing authorities, how would the (admin) funding be divided? As the Lead Applicant, would it be acceptable for this Housing Authority to retain more from this funding?

A: Yes, the lead agency could retain more. The consortia members - and the contractors need to reach agreement on fee allocation and roles and responsibilities. DHCD is not involved in that aspect of the relationship and does not establish a formula for administrative fee allocation.

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Participants/Households:

Q: As the purpose of this program is to increase earned income, are undocumented heads of households eligible? And if they are, how can partnerships assist in career placements

A: All tenants of state-aided public housing who meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the RFR are eligible to apply for Mass LEAP – one of the eligibility/participation requirements is that income be documented at the start of the program, and that income changes during the program be documented as well. It is the responsibility of the program to determine how to handle career and employment options for all participants.

Q: If the Head of Household enrolls in the Mass LEAP, can another adult family member enroll in the Mass LEAP and be considered a program participant (i.e. counted towards the 50 minimum participants)?

A: No, only the head of household can be an "official participant" in the program. Contractors may of course provide services or referrals to all household members.

Q: Participant eligibility includes having a child under the age of 18 in the household, what if the child is a student?

A: We are assuming that the student in this scenario is over 18, therefore this would not be an eligible child/household.

Q: Regarding conducting Resident Surveys, what percentage of the potential program participant pool would DHCD recommend the LHA survey?

A: The HA should provide for all the c.200, 705, and MRVP participants an opportunity to participate in the survey. The HA should use its own discretion on what it considers to be an acceptable survey response to inform your application.

Q: We understand that that LEAP grant funds may only be used for the contracted services of the partners selected and under contract by the LHA. May LHA still use additional service providers (who may or may not be on the list) to supplement the work of the partnership if none of DHCD funds will be used to pay them?

A: Yes, absolutely, however privacy, reciprocity and data sharing issues should be addressed prior to the application. DHCD encourages leveraging other resources and partnerships. There are bonus points for innovation and bringing new partnerships together.

Q: Please provide guidance on the LHA's procurement of service providers from the list of Pre-Qualified Contractors. In other words, what would be the process or steps which DHCD expects LHAs to take in selecting a service partner for the RFR, or to select one service partner over another, from the list of Pre-Qualified Contractors?

A: DHCD expects that all HAs and Contractors will do adequate due diligence prior to working together. We recommend their capacity to get the work done, history of successful partnerships, organizational compatibility, clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. We would request to talk to other partners and request to talk to participants.

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Q: The RFR states that each site must serve a minimum of 50 clients. What happens if, despite our best efforts, we are not able to identify at least 50 clients in our region/service area that meet all required criteria for participation? Will DHCD grant a waiver of that requirement if we demonstrate that we've made all reasonable efforts?

A: No, waivers will not be granted. DHCD expects recruitment goals will be met. DHCD will be monitoring progress through the established benchmarks.

Q: Will DHCD pay us only if we demonstrate, each month, that we have at least the 50 clients? What happens if we start with 50 but, for reasons out of our control, the number drops to less than 50 for any period of time?

A: This will be addressed in the Mass LEAP Program Guidelines which will be issued at the time of contracting.

Q: The required criteria for eligible participants sets the bar extremely high. Will we be able to request a waiver of the requirements on a case-by-case basis if we identify a client who seems to be a good fit for the program but does not meet one of the criteria?

A: No, unless the participant has a disability and it is requested as a reasonable accommodation.

Q: Are all clients required to receive services in all 3 areas?

A: Yes

Q: For any given service area (e.g. Employment & Career Planning), is there a minimum as far as the number of hours of service that a given client is required to receive?

A: Participants will be required to set and meet a series of goals over their five years in Mass LEAP. The amount and intensity of support will vary by the individual and over the five year program period.

Q: For qualifying families, is only the head of household eligible to receive services? Or, are other family members 18 years of age or older also eligible to receive Mass LEAP services?

A: Others can receive services, but the Mass LEAP participant is the Tenant or in the case of the MRVP program, the Participant only. No other household member can receive services paid for with Mass LEAP funds.

Q: For our region, providers in all 3 areas (i.e. employment, education, financial education) were not prequalified in all parts of the region. If a client qualifies for the program but no local provider is available, what are the expectations? Will the client be expected (with the program's assistance) to arrange transportation to a provider, or will the provider be expected to travel to the client?

A: There are state-wide providers available. HAs are expected to secure prequalified providers in all three areas, and have services accessible to participants. As stated in the RFR program overview, Mass LEAP is designed to be an integrated, seamless supportive services program. Services are expected to be provided on site, and/or in the community where participants live, work and go to school. Transportation expenses should be minimal for participants.

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Q: Is there a limit on the number of providers we can work with? Or, can we collaborate with as many providers as we wish to?

A: You may work with as many providers as you wish.

Q: Will providers in a given area (e.g. Employment & Career Planning) be compensated at one flat, statewide rate, or will they be able to set their own rates which might vary provider to provider?

A: They have set their own rates. These rates may be negotiated down, but their maximum rate has been set. See Appendix 1A.

Q: How will the escrow accounts for participants be funded? Can you provide more information regarding the mechanics of creating, maintaining, and monitoring the accounts, and who will be involved in those activities? We envision working with multiple LHAs. Will it be the responsibility of the HA to establish/monitor the escrow accounts for all participants, or will it instead be the LHA(s) responsibility to establish/monitor escrow accounts for its tenants who participate in the program?

A: Detailed information about escrow account management will be included in Program Guidelines, which will be issued at the time of contracting. Pursuant to Mass LEAP Program Guidelines, managing escrow may be negotiable within the partnership.

Q: How will the waiting list for the program be created, maintained, and monitored? How will names on the waiting list be prioritized (e.g. by need, first come first served, etc.)? Can you provide more information regarding the waiting list and who will be involved in its creation, maintenance, and oversight?

A: HAs are required to describe their application, participant selection, and waitlist process in their Mass LEAP response to DHCD. If additional information is needed, DHCD will define it in the Mass LEAP Program Guidelines.

Q: For Housing Agencies (HAs) who are awarded a contract for the Mass LEAP program, what are the requirements for billing DHCD for (a) HA activities, and (b) provider activities?

A: This information will be described in the Mass LEAP Program Guidelines.

Q: On page 8 of the RFR it states "Upon completion of contracting, DHCD expects to support some portion of the costs of the start-up phase of program implementation at Mass LEAP sites pursuant to the availability of funding and at DHCD's discretion". We anticipate that start-up costs may be significant, especially the costs of assessing and identifying qualified participants for the program who meet all of DHCD's criteria and are interested in participating. Can you provide more information regarding the start-up costs that DHCD expects to support?

A: DHCD expects detailed, reasonable and necessary costs for startup program activities. Cost effectiveness is a review criterion for applications.

Q: Also on page 8 of the RFR it states "DHCD expects the annual program administrative fee will be \$1,300.00 per participant based on fifty (50) participants." Can you explain how the sum of \$1,300 per participant was calculated? We are concerned that it will not be sufficient to cover the time and other costs we must expend in order to identify at least 50 qualified clients in our region. Because of the "high bar" that is set by the criteria for eligibility, we are anticipating that we will have to interview and assess

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as many as 500 individuals in order to identify at least 50 qualified clients (based on our experience with the federal Section 8 Family Self Sufficiency program).

A: This dollar amount was calculated based industry best practices. The administrative fee is not intended to support enrollment and startup costs. It is to support on-going program management and oversight expenses as defined in the RFR.

Q: Per the RFR, our proposal must include a completed Mass LEAP Application Form (Attachment A). The Application Form requires that bidders provide a narrative cover letter that identifies "the number of participants to be served (broken down by LHA tenants and/or MRVP participants)". Our agency operates in the Western Region of the state, and we expect that we will need to work with many LHAs (as well as RAAs) over the course of many hours to identify the minimum of 50 qualified clients for the program. What if we haven't completed our efforts (file reviews, interviews, assessments, etc.) prior to the submission deadline of April 18?

A: As stated in the RFR, the deadline for applications is April 18, 2014. HAs are not expected to have targeted potential applicants/participants as part of the application process demonstrating the likelihood of a viable Mass LEAP program site.