

Office of Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey



Request for Proposal (RFP)

Natural Gas Fuel Assistance Grant

Release Date: August 27, 2018

Response Due Date: September 21, 2018

Project Start Date: November 1, 2018

Project End Date: October 31, 2020

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

The Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General (AGO) is pleased to announce the Natural Gas Fuel Assistance (NGFA) grant program. The NGFA will utilize funds received by the AGO through a settlement agreement with National Grid to fund or assist in funding programs or initiatives designed to assist Massachusetts customers with paying or lowering their natural gas heating bills.

Natural Gas Fuel Assistance

Each year, tens of thousands of Massachusetts families struggle to pay their energy bills. Approximately only 1 and 4 income eligible households receive low-income heat assistance.

Massachusetts governmental heat assistance programs are available for low income and hardship customers to help 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 heating 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 a tranche of customers who have a household income between 60 and 80 percent of the state's median income level and 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 NGFA program is to provide additional assistance to programs which provide assistance to Massachusetts families currently receiving heating assistance and to expand assistance to more eligible households. Programs may assist customers directly by subsidizing their heating bills or indirectly by supporting energy-saving measures designed to lower heating bills.³

Eligibility

The following types of organizations are eligible to apply:

- State Agencies;
- City/Town Municipalities;
- Charitable Organizations; and
- Non-Profit Organizations*

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

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

³ Programs may also include energy efficiency type programs that would lower a customers' energy consumption and, thus, lower their heating bill.

* Non-profit organizations must be in full compliance with all annual reporting requirements of both the AGO and the Internal Revenue Service, as applicable, in order to be eligible for funding.

Funding

The AGO anticipates disbursing up to a total of \$3,000,000 by awarding multiple grants of varying sizes to applicants across Massachusetts, unless an applicant submits a proposal that has statewide reach. Funding is anticipated to be awarded in amounts not to exceed \$1,000,000 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 NGFA program funds may not be funded in its entirety. The total number of grants awarded is contingent upon multiple factors, including but not limited to the number of applications received and the fund amounts requested. The AGO expects that the entirety of the funds received by the applicant will be earmarked to help Massachusetts customers with paying or lowering their natural gas heating bills. Further, no portion of the awarded funds may be used to defray any administrative or operational costs associated with delivering these benefits to eligible households.⁴

All funding decisions and amounts will be made at the sole discretion of the AGO.

Duration

The AGO expects to fund grants for up to two years. The grant funds will become available by November 1, 2018, and projects shall be completed by October 31, 2020. Unexpended funds remaining at the end of the grant term must be returned to the AGO.

Disbursement

Disbursements are expected to be sent to awarded grantees on or before the beginning of the winter heating season (*i.e.*, November) by Electronic Funds Transfer, provided grantees have completed all necessary contract and reporting documents by the established deadlines.

If the grantee's program is expected to be completed over a two-year period, the grantee will receive one-half of the awarded benefits in year one (*i.e.*, winter 2018-2019) and the balance of the awarded benefits in year two (*i.e.*, winter 2019-2020). The year two benefits will be awarded only after the grantee's year one Fund Report has been received, reviewed, and approved by the AGO.

Alternatively, if a grantee's program is targeted at supporting energy efficiency measures designed to lower Massachusetts residents' natural gas heating bills, the awarded disbursements are expected to be sent to the grantee on a quarterly basis by Electronic Funds Transfer, provided that the grantee has completed all necessary contract and reporting documents by the established deadlines. Based on the expected completion of the grantee's program, the grantee

⁴ New programs may designate a small portion of grant funds for implementation costs. The grant funds must be earmarked for implementation.

will receive pro rata quarterly disbursements of granted funds only after its quarterly Fund Reports have been received, reviewed, and approved by the AGO.

Submission Instructions

- Proposals must be delivered electronically through the AGO's online grant application by 5:00 p.m. on **September 21, 2018**.
- 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 617-963-2291 for further instructions and assistance.

Evaluation of Proposals

Applicants should focus their proposals on what assistance is currently being provided to natural gas heating customers of Massachusetts, including the category of natural gas heating customer(s) that is being helped by the applicant (*e.g.*, households with a gross income that is 60 percent of the estimated state median income; or is between 60 and 80 percent of the estimated state median income; or some other metric). The AGO is highly interested in proposals that seek to provide assistance to natural gas heating customers who might otherwise receive no benefits or who are not receiving sufficient benefits.

Other criteria utilized in the evaluation and selection process includes:

- Applicant's history of providing heat assistance services/funds;
- Applicant's targeted household demography;
- Applicant's intended service to be provided; and
- Geographic diversity of applicant's 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 NGFA program, for which the Grantee is receiving money from the AGO, 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 NGFA program funds, Grantees are required to complete, and submit for AGO review and approval, Funding Reports on a periodic basis. Grantee

Funding Reports will provide the AGO with sufficient financial detail concerning the Grantee's NGFA program to allow the AGO to confirm that the awarded grant money was appropriately disbursed to Massachusetts natural gas heating customers. The Funding Report shall be submitted by the deadline established and in the format to be provided by the AGO.

- 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 AGOGrants@state.ma.us, only until 5:00 p.m. on September 12, 2018. When submitting your question(s), please include "Natural Gas Fuel Assistance Grant" in the email subject line.

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 AGOGrants@state.ma.us, no later than 5:00 p.m. on September 7, 2018.

Required Commonwealth Contract Documents for Successful Grantees

These documents are listed for informational purposes and should not be submitted with the grant application. Successful grantees will be required to complete these documents within the deadline established at the time of the notification of a grant award. No money will be disbursed unless the necessary documents are submitted by the established deadlines.

- Standard Contract Form;
- Scope of Services Agreement;
- Commonwealth Terms and Conditions;
- Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing;
- Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification (W-9); and
- Electronic Funds Transfer Form.

Public Records

All responses and information submitted in response to this RFP are subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law, M.G.L. c. 66, § 10 and M.G.L. c. 4, § 7, cl. 26. Any submitted information that is inconsistent with these statutes shall be disregarded. Applicants should not include any protected personal 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.