

Request for Information (RFI) DE-FOA-0001947:
Field of Potential Performers for Weatherization Assistance Program
Leveraged Partnership Activities

DATE: June 12, 2018
SUBJECT: Request for Information (RFI)

Description

This RFI pertains to Weatherization leveraged partnerships and support for the development and maintenance of these partnerships, which requires the tracking of initiatives, development and dissemination of resources, provision of training, and targeted assistance to the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) subgrantees and their associations, as well as the facilitation of partnerships with nonfederal funders. The RFI seeks to gather information on organizations' existing work, qualifications, and relationships which would support the maintenance and growth of leveraged partnerships in the WAP network.

Background

WAP and Non-Federal Fund Coordination: The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) provides \$247 million to state grantees for implementation through about 750 local organizations (subgrantees) around the country. In thirty nine states, organizations coordinated non-federal funds with their WAP in 2016.

How Coordinated Programs are Developed: The WAP Statute, 42 USC Sec 6864, authorizes the use of grantee funds to develop non-federal funding partnerships and initiatives. Demand for low-income weatherization services has continued to grow, and, with the addition of complementary resources coordinated with the core WAP program, more weatherization measures can be installed in more eligible homes. The WAP network of state and local agencies is encouraged by the Department of Energy to seek and implement complementary, non-federal funding. In those state networks with robust "leveraged" programs, funds were initially allocated through the state plan to state associations or lead subgrantee agencies in order to integrate service delivery with WAP. Typically, these states also made grants to the formal state membership associations serving WAP subgrantees, to be responsible for negotiating the funds and establishing the program design. These associations work in collaboration with the state grantee and utilize the WAP authorized leveraged funding to pay for the work at the association. In most states, the association, made up of subgrantees, or a designated lead

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subgrantee agency for the state, are also managing the implementation of these leveraged partnerships. Experience indicates a strong relationship between subgrantees, the state association, and the state grantee is critical to a productive process.

Beginning leveraged partnerships and leveraged programs involves negotiations with potential funders, such as electric or gas utilities and their regulatory commissions. These negotiations and program designs can take months or years to develop and require expertise and resources. This RFI is seeking information on organizational capacity to provide the necessary expertise and resources through:

- shared historical and emerging trends and initiative designs as guidance;
- developed and disseminated tools on negotiation, design, and management, specific to the financial and governance requirements of these nonprofit and local governmental organizations;
- targeted training and assisted in the practical application of the sources of funding and the mitigation of program challenges; and
- facilitated exchanges to experienced local WAP peers and industry experts.

This kind of exchange of expertise and resources around both development of new leveraged partnerships and managing challenges of existing leveraged programs would require a high level of trust and confidence between the selected supporting organization and the local subgrantees and their state associations. This work also requires a national perspective in order to facilitate connections between peer state networks in order to share tools, promising practices, and program design insights.

Supporting Strong Subgrantee Management Systems: Coordinating non-federal funding streams with the WAP can involve challenges in the delivery of services and in the fiscal management of these multiple funding streams. Having a strong WAP program is an essential prerequisite to success in these leveraged partnerships; the competence of the WAP organization is the incentive, or “leverage,” that the local organization offers to the funder. Nearly all utility programs will have different requirements and regulations than the WAP requirements and regulations, and organizations will need support in navigating these varying requirements. Many of these coordinated programs are implemented and managed directly between the funder and a local subgrantee or state association, and the state grantee, which is the WAP contact for the Department of Energy, is not directly involved. In addition to inquiring about organizations’ capacity to provide assistance to the local subgrantees and associations when formulating proposals and negotiating new partnerships, this RFI is seeking information

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about organizations' capacity to reinforce DOE communication and policy on WAP and leveraging to the subgrantees and associations.

Purpose

The purpose of this RFI is to understand the field of potential organizations to assist the WAP Subgrantee network to attract non-federal funds and effectively manage multiple funding streams. EERE is specifically interested in uncovering organizations with the experience in information dissemination and peer exchange between local Weatherization agencies across states regarding promising practices for designing successful leveraged programs and partnerships. This is solely a request for information and not a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP). EERE is not accepting applications.

Disclaimer and Important Notes

This RFI is not a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP); therefore, EERE is not accepting applications at this time. EERE may issue a FOA or RFP in the future based on or related to the content and responses to this RFI; however, EERE may also elect not to issue a FOA or RFP. There is no guarantee that a FOA or RFP will be issued as a result of this RFI. Responding to this RFI does not provide any advantage or disadvantage to potential applicants if EERE chooses to issue a FOA or RFP regarding the subject matter. Final details, including the anticipated award size, quantity, and timing of EERE funded awards, will be subject to Congressional appropriations and direction.

Any information obtained as a result of this RFI is intended to be used by the Government on a non-attribution basis for planning and strategy development; this RFI does not constitute a formal solicitation for proposals or abstracts. Your response to this notice will be treated as information only. EERE will review and consider all responses in its formulation of program strategies for the identified materials of interest that are the subject of this request. EERE will not provide reimbursement for costs incurred in responding to this RFI. Respondents are advised that EERE is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information received or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted under this RFI. Responses to this RFI do not bind EERE to any further actions related to this topic.

Proprietary Information

Because information received in response to this RFI may be used to structure future programs and FOAs and/or otherwise be made available to the public, **respondents are strongly advised to NOT include any information in their responses that might be considered business sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential.** If, however, a respondent chooses to submit

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business sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information, it must be clearly and conspicuously marked as such in the response.

Responses containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be conspicuously marked as described below. Failure to comply with these marking requirements may result in the disclosure of the unmarked information under the Freedom of Information Act or otherwise. The U.S. Federal Government is not liable for the disclosure or use of unmarked information, and may use or disclose such information for any purpose.

If your response contains confidential, proprietary, or privileged information, you must include a cover sheet marked as follows identifying the specific pages containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information:

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:

Pages [List Applicable Pages] of this response may contain confidential, proprietary, or privileged information that is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for the purposes described in this RFI DE-FOA-0001947. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source.

In addition, (1) the header and footer of every page that contains confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be marked as follows: “Contains Confidential, Proprietary, or Privileged Information Exempt from Public Disclosure” and (2) every line and paragraph containing proprietary, privileged, or trade secret information must be clearly marked with double brackets or highlighting.

Evaluation and Administration by Federal and Non-Federal Personnel

Federal employees are subject to the non-disclosure requirements of a criminal statute, the Trade Secrets Act, 18 USC 1905. The Government may seek the advice of qualified non-Federal personnel. The Government may also use non-Federal personnel to conduct routine, nondiscretionary administrative activities. The respondents, by submitting their response, consent to EERE providing their response to non-Federal parties. Non-Federal parties given access to responses must be subject to an appropriate obligation of confidentiality prior to being given the access. Submissions may be reviewed by support contractors and private consultants.

Request for Information Categories and Questions

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Category 1: TRENDS AND NEW EMERGING INITIATIVES IN LOW INCOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIPS

1. Describe any emerging residential energy trends you see as beneficial or challenging to the growth of low-income energy efficiency and WAP partnerships that should be shared with WAP grantees and subgrantees.
2. Describe your team's experience being involved in developing and designing low-income energy efficiency partnerships in coordination with the WAP. How many years of experience does your team have in working with the WAP program, and in what geographies?
3. Describe your organization's existing relationships with entities involved in low-income energy efficiency partnerships both within the WAP network of grantees, subgrantees, and their associations, as well as outside of that network (include the geographic areas of these entities).
4. List any data or analysis that your team has provided to the Department of Energy in the last two years regarding developments, challenges, and successes in the local WAP network.

Category 2: TOOL DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION FOR WEATHERIZATION ORGANIZATIONS' PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAM DESIGN/MANAGEMENT

1. What new tools (templates, testimonies, live or recorded trainings) have you developed in the past three years to stimulate or support Weatherization programs' partnerships or coordinated program design? Please provide links to documents or recorded trainings.
2. Weatherization organizations are primarily nonprofit 501c3 organizations or in some cases units of local government. Describe the experience of your team in developing or collecting organizational or program tools and resources dealing with engagement, implementation, fiscal management, and evaluation for these types of entities. Please provide links to these materials. Describe the expertise of staff in the organizational management requirements of these types of entities.
3. Describe any existing mechanism for dissemination of tools and resources to the applicable entities (subgrantees and associations) or what would be needed to create such infrastructure.

Category 3: TRAINING AND TARGETED ASSISTANCE TO WEATHERIZATION ASSOCIATIONS AND SUBGRANTEES

1. Provide examples of how your team has provided targeted assistance in developing and maintaining low-income energy efficiency partnerships, low-income housing partnerships, or general program or organizational management to WAP subgrantees and associations.

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2. Describe your team's experience and qualifications offering training, both in person and virtually, to non-profit organizations, state membership associations, and local governmental organizations.
3. Describe any existing trainings or curriculum in nonprofit fiscal management, risk assessment, quality control, program design, program management, and/or community outreach and engagement.
4. Describe the organization's existing policies that allow for WAP subgrantees and associations to seek targeted assistance with confidence in the discretion and expertise of the team.

Category 4: FACILITATION OF PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN WEATHERIZATION NETWORK AND TO POTENTIAL PARTNERS OR SUPPORTERS

1. In which states have you made contact with state and local Weatherization organizations in the last two years? Please describe the nature of the contact.
2. Describe current and previous in-person engagements with WAP organizations that demonstrate the team's ability to facilitate information exchanges with peers and experts working on leveraging the WAP nationwide.
3. Describe your organization's existing relationships with national, regional, and state entities that work in the areas of energy-efficiency, housing, health, or other fields related to the mission of WAP. Describe how fostering those relationships would assist in creating more Weatherization partnerships.

Request for Information Response Guidelines

Responses to this RFI must be submitted electronically to WAPTA@doe.gov no later than 5:00pm (ET) on **July 12, 2018**. Responses must be provided as attachments to an email. It is recommended that attachments with file sizes exceeding 25MB be compressed (i.e., zipped) to ensure message delivery. Responses must be provided as a Microsoft Word (.docx) attachment to the email, and no more than 7 pages in length, 12 point font, 1 inch margins. Only electronic responses will be accepted.

Please identify your answers by responding to a specific question or topic if applicable. Respondents may answer as many or as few questions as they wish.

EERE will not respond to individual submissions or publish publicly a compendium of responses. A response to this RFI will not be viewed as a binding commitment to develop or pursue the project or ideas discussed.

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Respondents are requested to provide the following information at the start of their response to this RFI:

- Include “RFI DE-FOA-0001947: Field of Potential Performers for Weatherization Assistance Program Leveraged Partnership Activities” in the email response Subject line;
- Company / institution name;
- Company / institution contact;
- Contact's address, phone number, and e-mail address.

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