

Request for Information DE-FOA-0001946:
Field of Potential Performers for Weatherization Assistance Program
Grantee Training and Technical Assistance Project

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

Description

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) solicits input regarding the ability of potential Organizations to directly support Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) Grantees in their efforts to administer an effective WAP program, through training on effective management practices and the development of training plans for Grantee staff. The substance of this request for information is to understand the universe of potential providers to deploy specific technical assistance that enables the Grantees to understand their oversight roles, training needs, and how to responsibly administer WAP rules and Federal funds. The desired outcome is a more effective WAP program that ensures all WAP clients receive equitable services, reduced energy costs and burdens, and increased energy efficiency of homes, while ensuring their health and safety.

Background

DOE manages more than \$400 Million in Congressional appropriations for the WAP in Fiscal Year (FY)2017 and FY2018. The funds are used by crews and contractors on the ground to weatherize low-income households through September 2019. The WAP provides formula grants to 57 states, territories, and tribes, which subcontract with over 700 community-based nonprofits and local governments to provide energy efficiency retrofits for low-income home owners. The program employs 8,500 full-time equivalents. DOE is tasked with awarding the funds and providing fiscal and technical oversight to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. DOE WAP also monitors and evaluates the quality of the weatherization of single family homes, manufactured homes, and multifamily buildings carried out by WAP implementers. Federal regulations provide DOE with the ability to provide training and technical assistance to ensure that WAP Grantees and Subgrantees have the knowledge, skills and abilities to administer the WAP.

Technical assistance efforts can be summarized in 4 primary focus areas:

1. **Grants management** – state plan development; health and safety planning; Grantee – developed training plans for Subgrantees; and adapting the WAP to integrate it with other state and utility initiatives.

2. **Subgrantee management** – the development of local fiscal and operation management systems to manage state and utility funding of weatherization measures that are delivered in coordination with the DOE WAP.
3. **Fiscal accountability** – state plan budget development; fiscal monitoring; and integrating WAP financial requirements into state budget processes.
4. **Quality Work Plan** – A Congressionally-mandated initiative designed to increase the quality of program services through:
 - a) Improved national technical standards;
 - b) Training and certification standards; and
 - c) Improved review of weatherized units.

Further information regarding the Weatherization Assistance Program, its mission, priorities, methods, and regulations can be found here:

- EERE Website: <https://www.energy.gov/eere/wipo/weatherization-assistance-program>.
- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) - 10 CFR 440: https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title10/10cfr440_main_02.tpl

Purpose

The purpose of this RFI is to solicit feedback from industry, academia, research laboratories, government agencies, and other stakeholders on issues related to WAP Grantee Training and Technical Assistance. EERE is specifically interested in better understanding the landscape of providers that may have the ability to directly support WAP Grantees in their efforts to administer an effective WAP program through training on effective management practices and the development of training plans for Grantee staff. This is solely a RFI 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.

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

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 or RFPs 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 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-0001946. 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

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

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

Category 1: Deliver training, support, and technical assistance to new and existing WAP Grantee Managers and staff:

Category 1 - Subpart 1: In view of travel restrictions at both the WAP Grantee and Sub-Grantee levels due to greatly reduced funds, the organization would sponsor and facilitate up to two low-cost training webinars as requested by DOE for each year of the funding agreement. Webinar topics may include but are not limited to: policy, financial management, program management, client education, field best practices, and other identified issues. The organization would also make certain webinar trainings available to WAP Subgrantees. Topics will be identified by DOE and/or WAP Grantees through the organization’s regional calls and other regular communications.

Category 1 – Subpart 1 - Question 1: Describe your organization’s ability to develop and provide two training webinars annually upon request by DOE with topics and content to be approved by DOE with an intended audience of the WAP Grantees. The organization would provide facilitation. Examples of topics are: Effective Monitoring Analysis; How to Use Monitoring Data to Develop a Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) Plan; Technical Monitoring Best Practices; etc.

Category 1 – Subpart 1 – Question 2: Describe your organization’s ability to develop and provide one training webinar annually upon request by DOE with topics and content to be approved by DOE with an intended audience of the WAP Subgrantees. Examples of

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

topics are: Best practice in the field; Quality Control Inspection process best practice; etc.

Category 1 – Subpart 2: The organization would provide support for WAP Grantees to assist with identifying resources and understanding tasks related to weatherization, including but not limited to: planning for the annual and periodic WAP work flow; implementation of WAP monitoring and financial tools which comply with 2 CFR 200 and 10 CFR 440; effective implementation of WAP policies and procedures manuals; grant agreements; contracts with vendors; and other procurement activities. The organization would also provide crisis services to WAP Grantees identified by DOE as needing urgent assistance as a result of DOE WAP monitoring. Additionally, the organization would work with WAP Grantees to craft and implement action plans addressing the results from DOE's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey.

Category 1 – Subpart 2 - Question 1: Describe your organization's ability to assist WAP Grantees via email and phone to provide program support and technical assistance related to Weatherization activities and the DOE WAP rules, regulations, policies, and practices.

Category 1 – Subpart 2 – Question 2: Describe your organization's ability to deploy to a WAP Grantee's physical site to provide program support and technical assistance related to WAP activities after a monitoring report, or as otherwise requested in order to correct issues identified by DOE. DOE WAP provides grants to all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Territories and one Tribal Nation.

Category 1 – Subpart 2 - Question 3: Describe your organization's ability to build management capacity, develop leadership abilities, and foster program stability within WAP State Grantee offices.

Category 1 – Subpart 2 - Question 4: Describe your organization's ability to facilitate peer exchange among WAP Grantees, strengthen peer-to-peer relationships, and successfully disseminate management best practices among WAP Grantees.

Category 2: To coordinate and conduct energy-related training and orientation conferences for WAP Grantee Managers

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

Category 2 – Subpart 1: The organization would develop and provide conference planning services, coordination and implementation for two WAP training conferences each year of the agreement, focused upon the needs of WAP Grantee managers. The first conference would feature one, two-day orientation training for WAP Grantee Directors and staff. The two-day orientation training would be followed by core conference training and activities. The orientation would be conducted by DOE with coordination from the organization and will provide attendees with the latest information about administering the WAP. Orientation would include opportunities to learn from WAP Network experts and may include, but not be limited to, instruction in the following areas:

- Introduction to WAP regulatory limits and working within limits to maximize effectiveness;
- Technical implementation of the WAP;;
- Continuous improvement of WAP cost-efficiency of service delivery;
- Best practices in WAP monitoring;
- Evaluation of WAP Subgrantee service delivery;
- WAP reporting requirements;
- WAP Grantee state plan submission process; and/or
- Other WAP topics as identified by DOE.

The organization would plan, coordinate, and implement a second WAP training conference in the fall of each year of the agreement.

The organization would structure WAP training to give participants opportunities to interact with each other and presenters to create an immediate and well-informed support network to draw upon in the future.

The organization would use electronic communications and/or web-based resources as follow-up to reinforce WAP training on timely and important operational and programmatic aspects of WAP as well as to focus additional support in areas where participants have the least experience. The information and resources would be made available to all WAP Grantee Managers

Category 2 – Subpart 1 – Question 1: Describe your organization’s ability to provide one, two-day WAP orientation training offered annually as a pre-conference session as part of an annually scheduled conference.

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

Category 2 – Subpart 2: The organization would conduct at least one WAP Federal Perspective session in conjunction with DOE staff at both the conferences.

Category 2 – Subpart 2 – Question 1: Describe your organization’s ability to provide at least one WAP Federal Perspective session provided at each of two conferences annually.

Category 3: To assist and enhance the WAP communication, improving communication efforts of WAP Grantees, and increasing overall program awareness

Category 3 – Subpart 1: The organization would engage in a focused effort to improve the public’s awareness and understanding of WAP in conjunction with Grantees and Subgrantees, DOE, and other WAP partners. The organization would use a variety of existing media and draw on creative approaches to promote the WAP as the premier vehicle for delivering energy efficiency, housing affordability, and healthy housing to low-income families throughout the country. The organization would promote the use of the single WAP message that highlights the benefits of the WAP services, including the use of a brand identification symbol – the House and Elements logo - and the “Weatherization Works” slogan.

Category 3 – Subpart 1 – Question 1: Describe your organization’s ability to provide regular communication to WAP Grantees and the public of WAP news, highlights, program news, and information which would be shared with membership and would conform to brand identification and appropriate language and logos. Shared information would conform to all DOE rules and policies for posting online.

Category 3 – Subpart 2: The organization would provide a compendium of research, publications, templates, and other tools for use by the WAP network and to the public.

Category 3 – Subpart 2 – Question 1: Describe your organization’s ability to provide development and organization of the resources listed above.

Category 3 – Subpart 3: The organization would encourage participation and assist WAP Grantees and Subgrantees to proclaim and highlight Weatherization Day in October of each program year, encourage other WAP events throughout the year, and assist in coordination of specialized events as needed. To the maximum extent allowable by the budget and when scheduling permits, the organization staff would attend, speak, and cover Weatherization Day events to gather information and provide coverage of activities.

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

Category 3- Subpart 3 – Question 1: Describe your organization’s ability to provide a Weatherization Day promotional packet which would include supplemental materials to assist WAP Grantees in public information efforts surrounding Weatherization Day.

Category 3 – Subpart 3 – Question 2: Describe your organization’s ability to provide an educational and promotional publication including national summary of events in celebration of Weatherization Day.

Category 3 – Subpart 4: The organization would gather and aggregate data annually for a comprehensive funding survey for WAP Grantees that details historical and recent projects, expenditures, and all funding sources utilized for the completion of WAP goals.

Category 3 – Subpart 4 – Question 1: Describe your organization’s ability to complete a Funding Survey with details as described above with online access and no more than 5 printed copies unless otherwise requested by DOE.

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.

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

- Include “RFI DE-FOA-0001946: Field of Potential Performers for Weatherization Assistance Program Grantee Training and Technical Assistance Project” in the email response Subject line;
- Company / institution name;

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

- Company / institution contact;
- Contact's address, phone number, and e-mail address.

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.