

**Department of Health & Human Services
Administration for Children and Families**

Program Office: Office of Community Services

Program Announcement Number: HHS-2009-ACF-OCS-REACH-0145

Announcement Title: Standing Announcement for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program/ Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Program (REACH)

CFDA Number: 93.568

Postmark Due Date for Applications for Fiscal Years (FYs) 2009, 2010, and 2011: **March 30, 2009**
March 30, 2010
March 30, 2011

Executive Summary

The purpose of this announcement is to (a) inform LIHEAP grantees that applications are being requested under the REACH Program, and (b) provide a copy of the REACH Model Plan format that may be used to apply for REACH funds each year.

Legislative Authority

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act (LIHEAP), Title XXVI of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, Public Law (P.L.) 97-35, the Human Services Amendments of 1994 (P.L. 103-252); and the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-58).

Description

The Human Services Amendments of 1994 (P.L. 103-252) amended the LIHEAP statute to add Section 2607B, which established the REACH Program. REACH was funded for the first time in FY 1996 and is intended to:

- (1) Minimize health and safety risks that result from high energy burdens on low-income Americans;
- (2) Reduce home energy vulnerability and prevent homelessness as a

result of inability to pay energy bills;

(3) Increase the efficiency of energy usage by low-income families, helping them achieve energy self-sufficiency; and

(4) Target energy assistance to individuals who are most in need.

Substantial changes were made to the REACH program in FY 2007. REACH was refocused to emphasize the health and safety of vulnerable households (i.e., households with elderly members, small children and disabled individuals). Application requirements and the information necessary for grantees to receive REACH funds were reduced.

The public health and safety aspects of LIHEAP have been underscored in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-58) that President George W. Bush signed on August 8, 2005. Section 1804 of Title XVIII of the Energy Policy Act required the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to submit a report to Congress on how LIHEAP could be used more effectively to prevent loss of life from extreme temperatures. On February 15, 2007, HHS submitted its LIHEAP Report to Congress, *Preventing Loss of Life Due to Extreme Indoor Temperatures*. (A copy of the report may be requested by sending an email to LIHEAPconsumers@acf.hhs.gov.)

REACH funds are available only to LIHEAP grantees. However, States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico must coordinate REACH efforts with community-based organizations (CBOs) to assure that REACH services are implemented and operated by these entities. Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Insular Areas (other than Puerto Rico) may administer their programs without sub-contracting or sub-granting to a CBO.

The LIHEAP statute provides that up to \$50 million of the LIHEAP block grant appropriation may be used to support a Leveraging Incentive Program. The 1994 amendments to the LIHEAP statute provide that a portion of the leveraging funds (up to 25 percent) may be set aside for REACH awards.

Content of Form of Application Submission

As a follow-up to the Department's Congressional Report, the HHS, Administration for Children and Families' (ACF), Office of Community Services (OCS) has decided to focus REACH grants on promoting innovative LIHEAP initiatives that address energy-related health and safety issues and "home energy vulnerability" (i.e., the risk to personal health and safety that is associated with home energy

affordability.)

REACH funds are available to LIHEAP grantees to plan and implement innovative programs. LIHEAP grantees that wish to receive REACH funds must submit an application for these funds following the requirements listed in Section 2607B of the LIHEAP statute and as outlined in this Action Transmittal.

Please review the attached guidance (Attachment 1), which explains the REACH requirements in detail. The major highlights are:

- REACH funds are awarded for one year programs with a two-year obligation period. Therefore, funds must be obligated in the year of award and/or the following year (no later than September 30). For example, funds awarded in FY 2009 will have an obligation period that extends through the end of FY 2010 or September 30, 2010.
- Only REACH applications that focus on innovative health and safety practices will be considered. Examples of these practices would include partnerships with health departments, utilities, or organizations that serve frail elderly, disabled, and/or households with young children.
- Strong preference will be given to States, Tribes/Tribal Organizations, and Insular Areas that are not past or current REACH grantees.
- Successful REACH grantees must submit their evaluation reports within six months following the end of the two-year obligation period (no later than March 30 in the second year of obligation). Grantees are ineligible for future REACH funds until the objective evaluation report is received.
- States are not required to contract for an outside evaluator.
- If approved, States, Tribes/Tribal Organizations, and Insular Areas will receive funds for their basic REACH programs, but additional funds may be awarded for applications that include an approved Energy Efficiency Education Services (EEES) plan that contains health and safety components. An EEES plan is optional and not required as part of the REACH application. (More details on funding are included in Attachment 1.)

Attached is the REACH Model Plan format (Attachment 2) that you may use in developing your REACH plans. You are not required to use the Model Plan format. You may submit your REACH application in any format you wish, as long as it includes all the information required under the statute.

As with regular block grant fund assurances, LIHEAP grantees applying for REACH funds must provide the appropriate signature to the REACH Assurances (Section 2607B(e)(2)(A) through (M) of the LIHEAP Act), and furnish descriptions where required. See the Model Plan, located at the end of this announcement, for certification statement and the signature block.

We will set aside no more than \$1.5 million out of the available funds for the Leveraging Incentive Program to award grants to two States and four Tribes/Insular Areas under the REACH program. (Insular Areas that consolidate their LIHEAP funds under another HHS block grant are not eligible for REACH funds.) If a sufficient number of qualified applications for REACH funds are not received, unused funds will be awarded under the leveraging program.

Explanation of Due Dates

To be considered for funding, REACH plan applications must be submitted to the address listed below and postmarked on or before the due date listed in the Overview section of this announcement. **The Office of Community Services (OCS) will not consider applications postmarked after this date and no exceptions will be granted.** Applications may also be hand delivered to our offices by 4:30 PM, eastern time, on the due date listed in the Overview section of this announcement. ACF cannot accommodate transmission of applications by facsimile or email. We strongly recommend that applicants use an overnight/express delivery service, such as Federal Express or United Parcel Service, to submit REACH applications, especially if the application is mailed close to the due date. OCS will not provide applicants with an acknowledgement of receipt of the REACH application.

Please refer inquiries to:

Division of Energy Assistance
Office of Community Services
Telephone: (202) 401-9351

Please send application submissions to:

Nick St. Angelo, Director
Division of Energy Assistance
Office of Community Services
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW.
Washington, DC 20447

DATE:

Robinson

Community Services

Josephine B.

Director
Office of

ATTACHMENTS:

- (1) REACH Program Guidance and Policy
- (2) REACH Model Plan

ATTACHMENT 1

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Program (REACH)

Guidance and Policy

1. REACH Program

Application – Must be postmarked no later than the due date listed in the Overview section of this announcement.

- The REACH Program provides funds for grantees to design and administer an innovative program that assists low income households to:
 - (1) Minimize health and safety risks that result from high energy burdens on low-income Americans;

- (2) Reduce home energy vulnerability and prevent homelessness as a result of inability to pay energy bills;
- (3) Increase the efficiency of energy usage by low-income families, helping them achieve energy self-sufficiency; and
- (4) Target energy assistance to individuals who are most in need.
- The REACH statute provides additional funds for an Energy Efficiency Education Program. Grantees may design programs that help low income households learn about energy conservation techniques and staying safe during extreme weather conditions.
 - To be considered, REACH plans must focus on **health and safety** initiatives for vulnerable households. The LIHEAP statute refers to “vulnerable populations” as including “very young children, individuals with disabilities, and frail older individuals.” Vulnerable households can face serious health and safety risks if their homes are too cold in the winter or too hot in the summer. Health risks can include life threatening illness or death from hypothermia or hyperthermia and increased susceptibility to other health conditions, including strokes and heart attacks. Safety risks can include the use of makeshift heating sources or inoperative/faulty heating or cooling equipment that can cause indoor fires or asphyxiation.
 - REACH Plans must be **innovative** – proposed programs that show a reprise of past projects or that simply provide additional LIHEAP benefits (e.g., weatherizing more homes) will almost certainly not be approved.
 - States, Tribes/Tribal Organizations, and Insular Areas who are current LIHEAP grantees may apply for REACH funds. States and Puerto Rico must provide REACH services through community based organizations.
 - Please note that while past REACH grantees are eligible to apply for new REACH funds, a strong preference will be given to those States, Tribes/Tribal Organizations, and Insular Areas that have not received REACH grants in the past and that submit complete REACH applications.

2. REACH Plans

The following information is required and must be provided to qualify for REACH funding. A model plan for your use is provided in Attachment 2.

Part I – Signature to the REACH assurances by the Governor or Tribal Chairman.

Part II -- Descriptions for REACH Assurances – No more than two paragraphs for each of the REACH assurances that are identified in the attached model plan, with the following exceptions:

*Assurances C and F – a combined description may be 2 pages or less

*Assurances I and J – a combined description may be 1 page or less

Part III – Funding Level Requested

Basic REACH Grant: Maximum \$350,000 for States and Puerto Rico; and Maximum \$50,000 for Tribes/Tribal Organizations and Insular Areas.

For grantees opting to include an Energy Efficiency Education Services Plan (EEES): Maximum \$35,000 for States and Puerto Rico, and Maximum \$10,000 for Tribes/Tribal Organizations and Insular Areas.

Part IV – Description of EEES – This description is only required for those choosing to implement EEES plans. EEES plans must focus on health and safety and are limited to one page to explain project and contact information.

Additional Requirements:

Please ensure that your responses do not exceed the limits identified above, or your application may not be considered.

All applications must be written in 12-point, Times New Roman font.

D-U-N-S Requirement

All applicants must have a D&B Data Universal Numbering System (D-U-N-S) number. A D-U-N-S number is required whether an applicant is submitting a paper application or using the government-wide electronic portal, [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). A D-U-N-S number is required for every application for a new award or renewal/continuation of an award, including applications or plans under formula, entitlement, and block grant programs. A D-U-N-S number may be acquired at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free D-U-N-S number request line at 1-866-

705-5711 or you may request a number online at <http://www.dnb.com>.

Certification Regarding Lobbying

Applicants must furnish, prior to award, an executed copy of the Certification Regarding Lobbying. Applicants must sign and return the certification with their application. If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the applicant shall complete and submit Standard Form (SF)-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions. The Certification Regarding Lobbying may be found at:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/grants_resources.html

Please DO NOT attach any supporting documentation or other materials with your application that are not specifically requested in this Action Transmittal—this information will not be considered. (The SF-424 is not required for the REACH application.)

3. REACH Policy

- REACH funding will be granted for one fiscal year program (with a two-year obligation period). As of FY 2007, there are no longer three-year project periods for REACH programs.
- REACH funds are subject to the same obligation rules governing the Leveraging Incentive Program. REACH funds may be obligated in the year of award and/or the following fiscal year. Therefore, REACH funds must be fully obligated before the end of the two-year obligation period (i.e., prior to September 30 in the second year of obligation).
- As with leveraging, REACH funds are not subject to the 10 percent carryover rule that governs regular LIHEAP block grant funds.
- Administrative costs for State grantees and Puerto Rico are limited to 10 percent of the grant.

Costs for providing services and benefits at the local level will not be considered administrative.

- REACH program benefits must be directed to LIHEAP-eligible households. Section 2605(b)(2) of the LIHEAP statute sets maximum eligibility at 150 percent poverty level or 60 percent State median income, or households receiving TANF, FS, SSI and some veterans benefits.

Applicants may target only a portion of the LIHEAP-eligible population for REACH services.

- The LIHEAP statute requires in Section 2609 that, "Grants made under this title may not be used by the State, or by any other person with which the State makes arrangements to carry out the purposes of this title, for the purchase or improvement of land, or the purchase, construction, or permanent improvement (other than low-cost residential weatherization or other energy-related home repairs) of any building or other facility."

4. **Reports**

EVALUATIONS - REACH grantees must complete an evaluation of their programs and submit a report to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) no later than six months following the end of the grant period (i.e., prior to March 30 in the second year of obligation). If a grantee does not submit the evaluation by this date, they will not be eligible for future REACH grants until it is submitted.

An independent evaluator is not required. However, the grantee should provide a professional report that is objective, balanced and discusses the successes as well as the shortfalls of their completed REACH program. If the grantee also implements an EEES program, the evaluation should review the EEES activities as well.

STANDARD FORM 269A – The SF 269A is due 90 days after the end of the grant period, on December 30, in the second year of the two-year obligation period. (Please refer to LIHEAP Action Transmittal (AT)-2008-01, dated 11/30/07, which provides detailed reporting instructions for the SF 269A. AT-2008-01 is available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap/guidance/action_transmittals/at08-01.html.)

(Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 72 hours per response, including the time for reviewing

instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed and reviewing the collection information. The information collection in this announcement is approved under OMB control number 0970-0348, which expires 07/30/2011. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.)

5. Award Information

- We expect to set aside \$1.5 million in REACH funds for awards to two States and four Tribes/Tribal Organizations, or Insular Areas. Funds not issued under REACH will be redirected into the Leveraging Incentive Program.
- REACH programs are set for one year. States and Puerto Rico may receive up to \$350,000; Tribes/Tribal Organizations and Insular Areas may receive up to \$50,000. Applicants must specify the amount of their request, not to exceed these dollar limits, when filing their REACH applications.
- REACH awardees that have chosen to integrate EEES on health and safety, as part of their REACH plan, may receive up to the following additional amounts: States and Puerto Rico may receive up to \$35,000; Tribes/Tribal Organizations and Insular Areas may receive up to \$10,000.

6. Plan Review and Final Awards

- As with LIHEAP block grant plans, Division of Energy Assistance (DEA) staff will review REACH plans for completeness, and will follow up with applicants if additional information is needed in order to complete the application.
- Final award decisions will be made by the DEA Director, following review and recommendations made by DEA staff, in order to award REACH dollars for innovative programs best designed to provide "a plan to promote health and safety."

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

MODEL PLAN
for the
Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Program (REACH)
FISCAL YEAR (FY) _____

GRANTEE (STATE, TRIBE, TRIBAL ORGANIZATION OR INSULAR AREA):

EIN: _____

GRANTEE CONTACT NAME

: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL:

TELEPHONE: _____ FAX:

**LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Program (REACH)**

Part I - Signature

Certification to the REACH Assurances:

Section 2607B (e) (2) (A) through (M) of the LIHEAP Act – Elements of State Plans

(A) an assurance that such State will deliver services through community-based nonprofit entities in such State, by--

(i) awarding grants to, or entering into contracts with, such entities for the purpose of providing such services and payments directly to individuals eligible for benefits; or

(ii) if a State makes payments directly to eligible individuals or energy suppliers, making contracts with such entities to administer such programs, including

(I) determining eligibility;

(II) providing outreach services; and

(III) providing benefits other than payments;

(B) an assurance that, in awarding grants or entering into contracts to carry out its REACH initiative, the State will give priority to organizations that--

(i) are described in section 673 of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(1)), except where significant geographic portions of the State are not served by such entities;

(ii) the Secretary has determined have a record of successfully providing services under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program; and

(iii) receive weatherization assistance program funds under part A of title IV of the Energy Conservation and Production Act (42 U.S.C. 6861 et seq.); except that a State may not require any such entity to operate a REACH program;

(C) an assurance that, subject to subparagraph (D), each entity that receives a grant or enters into a contract under subparagraph (A)(i) will provide a variety of services and benefits, including—

(i) payments to, or on behalf of, individuals eligible for residential energy assistance services and benefits under section 2605(b) for home energy costs;

(ii) energy efficiency education;

(iii) residential energy demand management services, including any other energy related residential repair and energy efficiency improvements in coordination with, or delivered by, Department of Energy weatherization assistance programs at the discretion of the State;

(iv) family services, such as counseling and needs assessment, related to energy budget management, payment plans, and related services; and

(v) negotiation with home energy suppliers on behalf of households eligible for REACH services and benefits;

(D) a description of the methodology the State and local agencies will use to determine—

(i) which households will receive one or more forms of benefits under the State

REACH initiative;

(ii) the cases in which non-monetary benefits are likely to provide more cost-effective long-term outcomes than payment benefits alone; and

(iii) the amount of such benefit[s] required to meet the goals of the program;

(E) a method for targeting non-monetary benefits;

(F) a description of the crisis and emergency assistance activities the State will undertake that are designed to—

(i) discourage family energy crises;

(ii) encourage responsible vendor and consumer behavior;
and

(iii) provide only financial incentives that encourage household payment;

(G) a description of the activities the State will undertake to—

(i) provide incentives for recipients of assistance to pay home energy costs; and

(ii) provide incentives for vendors to help reduce the energy burdens of recipients of assistance;

(H) an assurance that the State will require each entity that receives a grant or enters into a contract under this section to solicit and be responsive to the views of individuals who are

financially eligible for benefits and services under this section in establishing its local program;

(I) a description of performance goals for the State REACH initiative including—

(i) a reduction in the energy costs of participating households over one or more fiscal years;

(ii) an increase in the regularity of home energy bill payments by eligible households; and

(iii) an increase in energy vendor contributions towards reducing energy burdens of eligible households;

(J) a description of the indicators that will be used by the State to measure whether the performance goals have been achieved;

(K) a demonstration that the plan is consistent with section 2603, paragraphs (2), (3), (4), (5), (7), (9), (10), (11), (12), (13), and (14) of section 2605(b), subsections (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), (i), and (j) of section 2605, and section 2606 of this title;

(L) an assurance that benefits and services will be provided in addition to other benefit payments and services provided under this title and in coordination with such benefit payments and services; and

(M) an assurance that no regulated utility covered by the plan will be required to act in a manner that is inconsistent with applicable regulatory requirements.

Certification to the Assurances: As Chief Executive Officer, I agree to comply with the REACH assurances contained in Section 2607B(e), Title XXVI of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, as amended. By signing these assurances, I also agree to abide by the standard assurances on lobbying, debarment and suspension, and a drug-free workplace.

Signature of the Tribal or Board Chairperson or Chief Executive Officer of the State or Territory*:

Signature_____

Title:_____

Date:_____

* If a person other than the Chief Executive Officer of the State or insular area, or Tribal Chairperson or Board Chairperson of a Tribal Organization, is signing the certification to the assurances, a letter must be submitted delegating such authority. (PLEASE ATTACH DELEGATION AUTHORITY.) The delegation must include authority to sign the assurances, not just to administer the program.

In the REACH assurances, which are quoted from the law and cited above, "State" means the 50 States, the District of Columbia, an Indian Tribe or Tribal Organization, or an Insular Area; "title" of the Act refers to Title XXVI of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (OBRA), as amended.

Tribes/Tribal Organizations and Insular Areas, except Puerto Rico, are exempt from Assurances (A) and (B).

Part II - Descriptions of REACH Assurances

(statutory references)

(Assurances C & F)

2607B(e)(2)(C)&(F) Describe services to be provided by the REACH plan including the health and safety activities you will implement to help households avoid crisis situations. This description should include the home energy-related health and safety needs to be addressed and the REACH activities that will be carried out to respond to those needs. This description shall not be more than two pages long.

For State grantees and Puerto Rico, this description should clearly define the roles of the grantee and the community based organization(s).

(Assurance D)

2607B(e)(2)(D) How will you determine:

(a) Which households receive REACH benefits?

(b) Benefit amounts?

What non-monetary benefits will you provide?

(Assurance G)

2607B(e)(2)(G) What incentives will you develop and implement for households receiving REACH benefits? For vendors?

(Assurances I & J)

2607B(e)(2)(I) EVALUATION: What performance goals will you establish for your REACH program with outcomes to (a) increase the health and safety of vulnerable LIHEAP households; (b) reduce household energy

costs?

Explain how data will be collected and analyzed.

2607B(e)(2)(J) èWhat indicators will you use to measure whether your stated performance goals have achieved the desired outcomes (findings and conclusions)?

The combined description provided for I and J above shall not be longer than one page and may be attached. A Final Evaluation is due six months after the end of the grant period and should include EEES activities, if implemented. **An independent evaluator is not required.**

(Assurance H)

2607B(e)(2)(H) èDescribe how the views of low income households will be solicited with regard to the design of the program. Describe how the grantee will respond to those views.

(Assurances A&B)

2607B(e)(2)(A)&(B) è**FOR STATES AND PUERTO RICO ONLY:** States and Puerto Rico shall provide REACH services through one or more community-based non-profit organizations (CBOs). Provide the following for each CBO implementing REACH:

CBO Contact Name:
Organization:
Address:
Telephone Number:
Email:
Fax:

Part III – Funding Level Requested

Funding level requested for the REACH Plan is
\$_____.

If the grantee chooses to provide an EEES plan, as described below in Part IV, funding level requested is \$_____.

Part IV Description of Energy Efficiency Education Services (EEES) - Optional

(statutory references)

2607B(b)(2)(A)&(B) If the grantee chooses to provide educational services that will provide knowledge to low income households concerning energy conservation, weatherization, energy efficient practices or appliances, health and safety factors involved in extreme weather conditions, or other similar energy educational services, provide the following:

- Description of the services to be provided and the needs addressed by those services;
- Description of the target population;
- Where and how services will be provided; and
- Who will provide EEES services.

The EEES plan description shall be no more than one page.

Reminders

Plan descriptions must be written in font size no less than 12-point. Most descriptions should be no longer than one or two paragraphs except for the following:

The REACH plan description for Assurances C&F combined shall be limited to two pages or less.

The REACH plan description for Assurances I & J combined shall be limited to one page or less.

If you elect to provide an EEES plan, your description for Part IV shall be one page or less.