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Request for Proposals for Neighborhood Energy Centers (NECs)

Application Opens: March 26, 2024
Application Deadline: May 1, 2024, at 5 p.m.
Award Notification: June 2024

Energy Coordinating Agency (ECA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to help people conserve energy and to promote a sustainable and socially equitable energy future for all. ECA leads the design and implementation of high-quality energy conservation, education, and home repair initiatives to eliminate energy burden and stabilize low-income families in their homes and communities.

I. Introduction

In 1983, as residential utility terminations in Philadelphia increased from 3,000 to 30,000 in just one year, community activists, advocates, and faith leaders around the city called for a solution. The City of Philadelphia responded with the founding of ECA the following year. ECA started with the goal of improving access to energy assistance and conservation services for income eligible communities. In 1985, the network of Neighborhood Energy Centers came to fruition to deliver trusted education and streamline the utility bill assistance application processes. Since then, our work has only expanded, with the goal of a just and resilient city.

To develop a comprehensive solution, ECA established a citywide network of Neighborhood Energy Centers (NEC's), each of which serves as a "one-stop-shop" for low-income energy services, and provides access to all conservation, education, bill payment assistance and energy related home repair and financial literacy services. ECA designates existing community-based organizations as NECs to provide comprehensive energy services. ECA provides training, technical assistance and administrative support to the NECs as well as monitoring and evaluating their programs on an on-going basis.

ECA administers a contract with the City of Philadelphia, Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to provide comprehensive energy services through the Neighborhood Energy Centers. We anticipate that up to 16 community-based organizations will be designated as NECs in the spring of 2024 with awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000. ECA also operates several other community energy education programs through which the agency contracts for services to the NECs.

Successful respondents to this RFP will be designated as Neighborhood Energy Centers for a three (3) year period, July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2027, contingent on funding and program performance as determined through the annual evaluation process. Services provided will include:

- intake for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP);
- intake for or referral to LIHEAP Crisis;
- utility bill payment assistance programs;
- Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) workshop provision;
- budget and energy counseling;
- intake for or referral to Weatherization Assistance Program;
- energy education; and
- other energy related services.

The NECs are funded, in part, through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) administered by the City of Philadelphia, Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and as a result, federal requirements concerning CDBG will apply to the NECs.

II. Definition of Neighborhood Energy Center

A Neighborhood Energy Center (NEC) is a neighborhood-based organization, which provides a coordinated and comprehensive approach to assisting Philadelphia residents with their energy needs of a specific community by operating as a "one-stop-shop" for energy programs. Our experience has shown that the only effective way to meet the energy needs of low-to-moderate income people is to combine, at the point of service delivery, all three basic types of energy services: conservation, education, and bill payment assistance. NECs serve the most energy burdened communities in the City of Philadelphia.

III. Organizational Eligibility

The applicants must be a community-based organization (CBO), located in Philadelphia and incorporated as a nonprofit with an IRS-designated tax exempt 501(c)(3) status. The application will request the organization's EIN for validation through GuideStar.

Additionally, proposed NEC locations must be ADA compliant (i.e. wheelchair accessible) and accessible through public transportation. Criminal background checks are required for all NEC staff and/or volunteers. Background checks are valid for two years from the date of completion.

IV. Evaluation Criteria

To become designated as a Neighborhood Energy Center, a community-based organization must demonstrate the ability, capacity, and commitment to provide comprehensive energy services to low-to-moderate income households through core energy services: education, conservation, and energy assistance. The applicant must also demonstrate the ability to conduct outreach to area residents.

As part of the selection process, preference will be given to established organizations with strong past performance as an NEC and/or community-based organization.

Applicants are encouraged to tailor their applications to the following evaluation criteria:

- Organizational mission statement;
- Demonstrated history of providing quality service in the community served;
- Capacity to provide in-office and/or virtual application intake as well as energy and budget counseling;
- Strong record of program oversight and financial management;
- Community involvement in organizational decision-making and policy-setting within both the Board of Directors and core staff;
- Strength of partnerships with the City of Philadelphia and/or other community-based organizations;
- Capacity to provide community energy education and housing stabilization services with an emphasis on sustainable living; A strong emphasis on making communities stronger through sustainable energy;

- Proposed NEC location within Philadelphia’s most energy burdened communities;
- Flexible working hours with ability to provide energy services for working families on evenings and weekends;
- In good standing with ECA and DHCD.

V. Certification by DHCD

The successful applicant, as ECA's sub-recipient, must be certified by the City of Philadelphia's Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in order to receive CDBG funds. This certification ensures, to the satisfaction of DHCD, the appropriateness of the successful applicant's financial management systems. This certification must occur before the successful applicant receives funding.

VI. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

The agreement reached between ECA and the successful applicant will be defined by a performance-based, fee-for-service contract to be renegotiated annually. The contract will provide the basis for ECA's annual evaluation, which will include a year- end evaluation and a mid-year assessment, of the designated NECs service production and overall program quality. Therefore, each NEC will be required to adhere to the following program monitoring and evaluation plan:

- Track services provided within ECA’s Salesforce database on a weekly basis/in real-time. Services include: Compass; LIHEAP CRISIS application assistance; CRP application assistance; energy counseling; home visit; LIHEAP application assistance; NEC intake; TAP application assistance; USEF referral; and other energy application.
- Attend monthly NEC Manager convenings via Zoom;
- Participate in ECA’s annual energy conference;
- Complete mid-year assessment (December/January of each year), including site visits from designated ECA staff; and
- Complete annual evaluation (May/June of each year), including site visits from designated ECA staff.

VII. Proposal Submission

Please submit your proposal by **May 1, 2024 at 5 p.m.** by email to lorraineh@ecasys.org and rebeccaw@ecasys.org with the subject line “2024 RFP Response.” Upon submission, you will receive a confirmation email.

Late proposals will not be accepted.

Do you have questions or need technical assistance regarding this Request for Proposal? Please sign up for Office Hours with ECA’s Grants Manager, Rebecca Walters, at <https://calendly.com/rebeccaw-eca/30min>. 30-minute sessions will be available on Thursdays

and Fridays from 2pm-5pm leading up to the **May 1** deadline. You may also email questions to rebeccaw@ecasys.org.

VIII. Proposal Questions and Attachments

1. What is your organization's mission statement? *(1 paragraph recommended)*
2. What are your core programs? Describe any energy, housing, financial literacy, job readiness, or related programs. *(3-4 paragraphs recommended)*
3. Summarize your organization's history and experience serving low-income community members through energy conservation, housing rehabilitation, and/or housing counseling. *(1-3 paragraphs recommended)*
4. Which neighborhoods of Philadelphia do you serve? Please include any potential satellite sites you may use for intake. *(Please list the neighborhoods you serve.)*
5. What is the approximate poverty rate within your community? What is the energy burden within your community? *(1 paragraph recommended)*
6. Do you serve any of the following vulnerable populations? *(Please list all that apply.)*
 - i. Older adults (ages 55+)
 - ii. Families with young children
 - iii. Disabled/homebound populations
 - iv. Veterans
 - v. Returning citizens
 - vi. Youth (ages 4-24)
 - vii. LGBTQIA+ populations
 - viii. Historically excluded communities (Black, Latinx, immigrant, etc.)
 - ix. Other *(please specify)*
7. What is the demographic breakdown of your clients? (age, sex, income, race, etc.) *(1 paragraph recommended)*
8. How many community members do you serve per month? *(Please provide the approximate number of people you serve per month.)*
9. As a Neighborhood Energy Center (NEC), what core services will you offer to your community? *(1-2 paragraphs recommended)*
10. How is your organization well-positioned to be an NEC? *(1-2 paragraphs recommended)*
11. Is your organization community-led? Please describe how the community you serve participates in organizational decision-making and program design, including community representation within the Board of Directors, program staff, and volunteers. *(1-2 paragraphs recommended)*
12. What languages are you able to provide service in? Please describe your plan for serving clients who do not speak English as a primary language. Will you provide services in other languages (including ASL) and/or utilize language line? *(1-2 paragraphs recommended)*
13. If your organization currently manages an NEC, provide a summary of your impact in the past 12 months. This should include the number of households served and services offered. *(1-2 paragraphs recommended)*

Additional Questions:

- Please list your Board of Directors and their affiliations.
- Please provide your organization's nondiscrimination statement.

Proposal Attachments:

- Resumes of the organization's NEC Manager and Executive Director.
- Most recent annual audited financial statement. If audited financial statements are not available, please attach your organization's most recently completed Form 990.
- Up to three (3) letters of support.
- A statement that your organization is current with all tax payments, liens, judgments, fees, or other debts to the City of Philadelphia.
- City of Philadelphia Campaign Contributions Report

IX. Anti-Discrimination Policy

ECA's contract with NECs shall include City, State and local laws and regulations including but not limited to the prohibition of discrimination or permits discrimination against any individual because of race, color, religion, ancestry or national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age or disability.

In response to the objectives of Executive Order 03-12, Applicants that are nonprofit organizations will be required to submit the following information to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO):

1. identification of the race, gender, disability status, and ethnic composition of the nonprofit Applicant's workforce;
2. identification of the race, gender, disability status, and ethnic composition of the nonprofit Applicant's board of directors or trustees;
3. a list of the nonprofit Applicant's five highest dollar value M/W/DSBE suppliers of products and services; and
4. the nonprofit Applicant's statement explaining its efforts to maintain a diverse workforce, a diverse board of directors and operate a fair and effective supplier diversity program.

X. Proposal Evaluation and Selection

ECA will convene a review committee to complete a preliminary review of the proposals submitted by the deadline. The committee will rate the proposals using the Evaluation Tool, which is included for your review as part of the Request for Proposal. The review committee's recommendations will be presented to the full Board of ECA for a final selection. The decision by the ECA Board of Directors with the agreement of the City of Philadelphia, Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is final. The proposals, for a given area, with the consent of the ECA Board of Directors and accepting

the contractual terms of ECA will be selected as a NEC. Written notification of accepted proposals and selection of NECs will be made by June 1, 2024.

XI. Non-indebtedness to the City of Philadelphia

As part of the contracting process, all contractors must demonstrate to the City of Philadelphia that the NEC is not currently indebted to the City and will not at any time during the term of the program be indebted to the City. In addition to any other rights or remedies available at law or in equity, the NEC acknowledges that any breach of or failure to conform to this certification may, at the option and direction of the City, result in the withholding of payments otherwise due to the NEC for services rendered to the City, and, if such breach or failure is not resolved to the City's satisfaction within a reasonable timeframe specified by the City, may result in termination from the program.