



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor
Post Office Box 350
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350
www.nj.gov/bpu/

IN THE MATTER OF THE ENERGY ASSISTANCE) ORDER
GRANTS AS AUTHORIZED UNDER L. 2009, C. 207 -)
TEMPORARY RELIEF FOR UTILITY EXPENSES)
(TRUE) PROGRAM – CONSIDERATION OF)
EVALUATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION) DOCKET NO. EG10100740

Parties of Record:

Donna Blaze, CEO, Affordable Housing Alliance, Eatontown, NJ
Stefanie A. Brand, Esq. New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel, Newark, NJ

BY THE BOARD:

On January 15, 2010, L. 2009, c. 207, an Act providing for the allocation of \$25 million for utility assistance grants for qualified households (the “Act”), was signed into law by Acting Governor Stephen Sweeney. Under the provisions of the Act, the Board of Public Utilities (“Board”) is directed to allocate \$25 million from available funds from the Societal Benefits Charge (“SBC”) towards utility assistance grants for qualified households. Further, the Act directs the Board to grant the \$25 million to a nonprofit organization to administer a program that will provide grants to help households seeking temporary assistance to pay their gas and/or electric public utility bills.

Following a competitive Notice of Availability of Grant bidding process, on February 22, 2011, the Board designated the Affordable Housing Alliance (AHA) as the Grantee to administer the distribution of Temporary Relief for Utility Expenses (TRUE) Program funding.

When the grant agreement between the Board and AHA expired on March 4, 2015, approximately \$6 million was still available for use. Therefore at its May 19, 2015 agenda meeting, the Board determined that it would issue a Notice of Grant Availability (“Notice”) informing the public of its plans to award the approximate amount of \$6 million in TRUE funds to a nonprofit energy organization who would administer a program to use the money to help pay the gas and electric bills of households seeking temporary assistance.

On June 15, 2015, the Board published the Notice in the New Jersey Register at 47 N.J.R. 1355(a). The Notice was also posted on the Board’s website at:
http://www.nj.gov/bpu/pdf/announcements/2015/9a_notice.pdf and emailed to the Universal

Service Fund (USF) Working Group, the Clean Energy listserv and other potentially interested parties.

Additionally a question and answer period was provided to all potentially interested bidders. Any questions received by 5:00 pm on June 26, 2015 were posted to the Board's website in a Q&A format at: http://www.nj.gov/bpu/pdf/announcements/2015/TRUE_Grant_Q_A_20150702.pdf and were emailed out to the USF Working Group, the Clean Energy listserv and other potentially interested parties.

The deadline by which applicants had to submit their proposals to the Board was 5:00 pm on July 15, 2015. In accordance with the requirements contained in the Notice, the Board received a total of five proposals from:

1. Affordable Housing Alliance (AHA);
2. Greater Bergen Community Action;
3. NJ 211 Partnership;
4. New Jersey SHARES (NJ SHARES); and
5. OCEAN, Inc.

An Evaluation Committee ("Committee"), consisting of five representatives from Board Staff, reviewed the proposals.

The Committee was made up of members from the Board Secretary's Office, Division of Customer Assistance, Division of Audits, and the Division of Economic Development and Energy Policy. Technical scores were calculated based on the result of an independent reading and analysis of each proposal by the evaluators.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The Committee was responsible for performing a review of each proposal received. The focus of the Committee's evaluation was on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal as it related to the applicant's ability to undertake and successfully complete the work required for the TRUE Grant, as specified in the Notice.

The Committee utilized a technical scoring format based on assigning points to each of the evaluation criteria listed in that section of the Notice. The Committee utilized the following process to derive total scores:

1. Each member reviewed and scored each application independently, by assigning a technical score from one (1) to ten (10) or one (1) to twenty (20) to each of the six (6) criterion listed in the Notice, depending on the number of points allotted to each criterion and used in the scoring sheet; and
2. Then summing scores from all committee members and averaging them based upon the number of committee members (five) to derive the average score for the proposal.

Each Committee member could assign a maximum score of 100 technical points to each applicant's bid proposal and a minimum of six (6).

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee selected AHA as the highest scoring bidder. AHA's average score was 91 and the second highest ranking entity was NJ SHARES, with an average score of 78. All Committee members ranked AHA higher than NJ SHARES in all scoring criteria.

AHA provided a thoroughly detailed, clear and organized proposal. AHA laid out step by step how it would execute the grant and meet the required eligibility criteria listed in the Notice. The AHA proposal led the Committee to believe AHA could implement the TRUE program in the most efficient and fiscally responsible manner. All of the Committee members agree with the final scoring to rank AHA number one and recommend the selection of AHA as the recipient of the TRUE Grant. While AHA provided budgets for both a one-year and a two-year program, the Committee recommends a two year program.

While NJSHARES provided a clear, well written proposal, and indicated that it could administer the TRUE program, AHA's overall proposal was scored higher. Therefore the Committee unanimously recommends the selection of AHA as Grantee and TRUE Program Administrator.

The Committee suggested that the Board direct staff to work with AHA in developing the final contract or grant agreement in four specific areas of its proposal: 1) The benefit cap should be increased from the proposed amount of \$650 to \$750 to be more in line with other energy assistance program benefit caps; 2) The grant should only be provided for the cost of energy, not for heating/cooling appliance repairs or security deposits; 3) As per the Notice, a documented notice of overdue payment from the utility company must be a condition of eligibility; and 4) In developing the final budget based on the actual amount of available funds, ensure that any amount listed in the "Administrative Overhead" is appropriately allocated.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The Board recognizes the need for an open and transparent bidding process where public funds are concerned. After review of the evaluation process, the Board **HEREBY FINDS** the process was fair and impartial. Each Committee member independently evaluated every proposal, based upon the criteria as specified in the Notice, and each Committee member was provided with specific instructions for following the Notice criteria and using it when scoring the applications. Therefore every applicant was afforded the same opportunity to compete for the TRUE Grant.

Applications were scored based upon the information contained in the proposals submitted to the Board by the July 15, 2015 deadline. The details of each proposal were carefully reviewed by the Committee and, based upon the applications presented, the highest ranking proposal was submitted by AHA.

The Board **HEREBY ACCEPTS** the recommendation of the Evaluation Committee to award the TRUE Grant to AHA, based in Eatontown, New Jersey.

The Board also **DIRECTS** that AHA incorporate the Committee's requested modifications listed above to its proposed TRUE program. The Board further **DIRECTS** that such requirements shall be included in the final contract or grant agreement with AHA. The Board **HEREBY DIRECTS** the utilities and other energy providers to work with AHA to ensure that during the initiation of the TRUE Grant program, applicants who have applied for and met the eligibility requirements of a TRUE Grant will not be adversely affected by a delay in payment as AHA implements the

TRUE Grant. The Board **HEREBY AUTHORIZES** President Mroz to sign the contract or grant agreement with Affordable Housing Alliance to implement the TRUE Grant.

The Affordable Housing Alliance shall adhere to the reporting requirements as set forth in the Notice of Grant Availability and any other reporting requirements specified in the contract and as set forth below:

Quarterly progress reports, accounting for all funds received and spent, will be required, including but not limited to the number and amount of financial assistance grants distributed to Limited Income Households by electric and/or gas utility and when the grants are distributed. Quarterly reports shall also include actual program administrative costs for that quarter. Within one year of receiving the grant award, the nonprofit organization shall issue a comprehensive report to the Board which provides the number of applicants applying for household utility assistance grants, the number of households receiving utility assistance grants, the average amount of assistance provided, the average gross income of households receiving assistance, the methods and procedures used for the verification of income or hardship, and any other information as required by the Board.

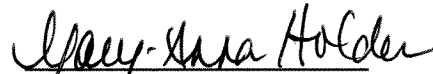
This Order will be effective on August 29, 2015.


DATED: 8/19/15

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
BY:

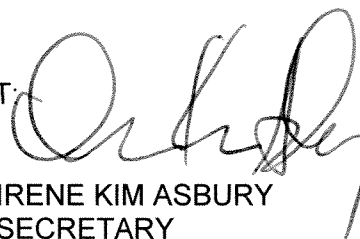

RICHARD S. MROZ
PRESIDENT


JOSEPH L. FIORDALISO
COMMISSIONER

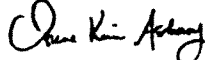

MARY-ANNA HOLDEN
COMMISSIONER


DIANNE SOLOMON
COMMISSIONER


UPENDRA J. CHIVUKULA
COMMISSIONER

ATTEST: 
IRENE KIM ASBURY
SECRETARY

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the within document is a true copy of the original in the files of the Board of Public Utilities



IN THE MATTER OF THE ENERGY ASSISTANCE GRANTS AS AUTHORIZED UNDER L.
2009, C. 207 - TEMPORARY RELIEF FOR UTILITY EXPENSES (TRUE) PROGRAM –
CONSIDERATION OF EVALUATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION –
Docket No. EG10100740

SERVICE LIST

Donna Blaze, CEO
Affordable Housing Alliance
59 Broad Street
Eatontown, NJ 07724

Maria Delaplain, Utilities Director
Affordable Housing Alliance
59 Broad Street
Eatontown, NJ 07724

Gregory Seitz
Customer Services Manager
NJ Natural Gas Company
1415 Wyckoff Road
Post Office Box 1464
Wall, NJ 07719

Claire Bartolomeo
PSE&G
Payment Assistant Outreach
80 Park Plaza-T7
Newark, NJ 07102

Barbara Devito
Rockland Electric Company
390 West Route 59
Spring Valley, NY 10977

James Fredericks
South Jersey Gas Company
One South Jersey Plaza
Route 54
Folsom, NJ 08037

Jannie Foxworth
South Jersey Gas Company
One South Jersey Plaza
Route 54
Folsom, NJ 08037

Irene Kim Asbury
Secretary of the Board
Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor
Post Office Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Maureen Clerc
Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor
Post Office Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Michelle Rossi
Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor
Post Office Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Peter Hilerio, Esq.
Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor
Post Office Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Stefanie A. Brand, Esq., Director
Division of Rate Counsel
140 East Front Street, 4th Floor
Post Office Box 003
Trenton, NJ 08625-0003

Sarah Steindel, Esq.
Division of Rate Counsel
140 East Front Street, 4th Floor
Post Office Box 003
Trenton, NJ 08625-0003

Geoffrey Gersten
Deputy Attorney General
Department of Law
124 Halsey Street
Post Office Box 45029
Newark, NJ 07102-45029

Alita Corbett
Customer and Community Relations Manager
Atlantic City Electric
63ML36
5100 Harding Highway
Mays Landing, NJ 08330

Timothy Keltz
First Energy
Human Services
2800 Pottsville Pike
Post Office Box 16001
Reading, PA 19612 - 6001

Gina O'Donnell
Supervisor, Energy Assistance Administration
Elizabethtown Gas Company
300 Connell Drive, Suite 3000
Berkley Heights, NJ 07922