Questions and Answers during the Healthy Housing Grant RFP Period

Question 1:
In past years our organization received MDH Lead Hazard Control Grants where the funds were used to cover lead remediation activities in owner-occupied rehabilitation projects. Homeowners executed a repayment agreement in which the funds were forgiven over a period of time. Would this use of funds be allowed for the current Healthy Housing Grant application? We have a few activities we are thinking of applying for, but this would be a great use of the funds as we could leverage them with our DEED Small Cities Development Program owner-occupied rehabilitation funding.

Answer: The funds in this RFP are intended as grants that do not need to be repaid. We do encourage applicants to leverage these funds or support needs that are not covered by other funding programs.

Question 2:
Do you know of public financial assistance available for dealing with asbestos for single-family homes? I am thinking of a new construction site where the asbestos is in the soil (rather than in the building materials). The homes are intended to be affordable for families earning between 30% - 80% of the area median income (AMI).

Answer: Our program is not aware of any funding specifically devoted to the type of activity described. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Brownfields Program (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/brownfields) Program may be able to provide technical assistance.

Question 3:
One of the programs we have wanted to implement is a fund for lead and radon abatement mitigation in our community, with a focus on outreach and education to low-income families as well as communities at risk for elevated lead in homes. It looks like the area of work #1 includes some activity around home interventions and I was wondering if that could include radon and lead mitigation as well?

Answer: Yes, radon and lead mitigation are acceptable uses for this grant. The grantee shall not exceed $750 per house unless prior approval is obtained from MDH. Thus, if you choose to focus on radon and lead mitigation, you may want to describe other sources of funding in your grant application.
Question 4:

On page 8 of the RFP, it is stated that the grants are expected to begin around Oct 1st, 2017 and continue until June 30th, 2019. Is this accurate information, as the deadline is October 13th?

Answer: That was a typo in the RFP. The correct dates are found on page 2 of the RFP under the heading Key Dates. That sentence on page 8 of the RFP under the Project Timeframe heading should read: “Grants are expected to begin around December 1, 2017 and continue until June 30, 2020, contingent on grantees meeting outcome and reporting expectations and continued appropriations from the legislature.” This will be updated in the RFP posted on the MDH website on 9/22/17.

Question 5:

The RFP states that “Applicants for the general healthy housing grant should address at least two of the work areas 1-7 below in their proposed scope of work.” Does this mean we would need to conduct all of the activities under two different work areas such as, Primary Prevention and Healthy Homes Assessments and Interventions? Or could we just address one or more activities under two different scopes of work?

Answer: This statement means that applicants should address one or more activities under at least two of work areas in their proposed scope of work. It does not mean that the applicant would need to conduct all of the activities under two different work areas.

Question 6:

We are reviewing the Healthy Home grant application, but wants to ensure our eligibility and if we are not: what steps/certifications are needed to be eligible to apply.

Answer: For your question about eligibility, I would suggest you refer to the Eligible Applicants section on page four of the RFP. This states:

“Eligible applicants are community health boards, community action agencies (designated and recognized under Minnesota Statutes Section 256E.31), and nonprofit organizations with expertise in providing outreach, education, and training on healthy housing subjects and in providing comprehensive healthy housing assessments and interventions. Nonprofit organizations must have current 501(c)3 status from the IRS. Grant applications that propose collaborations among multiple organizations will be accepted. The duties of each organization must be clearly laid out in the application, and a single fiscal agent must be identified to submit quarterly invoices and progress reports. Invoices need to account for all expenses and identify each expense for each operating agency that is party to the joint agreement.”
**Question 7:**

Under the Funding Information on page 2, the grant period is listed as December 1st, 2017 to June 30th, 2020 and that grantees may apply for up to $120,000 over three years. However, the grant period is only 2.5 years. Could you specify which is correct?

Answer: The budgets extend over 3 fiscal years, however as you note part of the first fiscal year will have passed by the time the grant agreements are issued. You budgets should cover the time period from December 1st, 2017 to June 30th, 2020.

**Question 8:**

Should we budget for personnel to receive HHP training, despite the testing and accreditation being dropped recently by NEHA?

Answer: NEHA will be retiring their Healthy Homes Specialist credential because of the ongoing cost of having this credential available. However, we expect that the Essentials for Healthy Homes Practitioners training course will continue to be offered in the absence of this credential. If the course becomes unavailable or there is a similar course that is available, MDH is willing to consider alternative training options.

**Question 9:**

Are we allowed to provide incentives to families in order to make a follow-up visit or check-in? Also, part 2 of this question is does this follow-up have to be done at their home, or could we work with phone surveys or other ways?

Answer: There are no rules that would prevent grantees from using grant funds to provide incentives to families. Keep in mind that any incentives should be in the form of a gift card, not cash. See also the Department of Administration Purchasing Policy 27b [http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/pdf/PPOLICY27b.pdf](http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/pdf/PPOLICY27b.pdf) which does not apply directly to grantees, but provides some useful guidance on the types of considerations for managing gift cards. As this is a competitive RFP, applicants who wish to provide incentives are encouraged to describe how this expenditure will help them meet the outcomes of the project, as well as their internal controls for managing gift cards. Follow-up does not need to be done in-person.

**Question 10:**

Does matching funds increase scoring of our budget and budget narrative?

Answer: Full points for scoring may be earned without any matching funds. The RFP states on page three under Requirements for In-Kind or Matching Funds that “No specific dollar amounts are required for in-kind or matching funds. However, projects that leverage matching funds will be given priority.”
**Question 11:**

Does the state of MN have a contract that a city could bounce-off for purchase of intervention supplies? The prices are specific too so we want to make sure that our supplier’s for the products are the most equipped to meet those expectations.

The State of Minnesota does not have a contract that a city could bounce-off for purchase of intervention supplies. However, information regarding obtaining radon test kits can be found at MDH Radon Testing (http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/radon/radontestresults.html). For all other intervention supplies, if you are unable to find them at the prices listed, you can submit a letter of justification for the grant going towards paying for supplies at a different price than listed.

**Question 12:**

Do we need to fill out the due diligence form as a government entity?

Answer: You do not need to fill out the due diligence form as a government entity.

**Question 13:**

Would MDH prefer applicants to include logic models in our narrative write-up, under project plan narrative?

Answer: We do not have a preference regarding including or not including logic models in your narrative write-up under project plan narrative. If you believe it will strengthen your application, you are welcome to include a logic model.

**Question 14:**

Can you provide an example of what the Affirmations would be in include with our grant application?

Answer: Affirmations may be found on page four of the Healthy Housing Grant Application document. This Affirmations section states that affirmations are required for the application to be considered, but not scored, and you should:

1. “Affirm that no one under the age of 18 will perform any activities under this grant
2. Affirm that all workers will receive monetary compensation at least equal to the prevailing wage as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 177.42, subdivision 6, for comparable jobs in your organization or certified firm’s principal business.”
Question 15:
On the affirmations, we have volunteers work on some homes. Our staff and all subcontracts meet the prevailing wage requirement—but not the volunteers. Is that an issue? Would we have to apply the funds only to repair and building projects where volunteers are not involved?
Answer: This would not be an issue. Funds could go to repair and building projects where volunteers are involved.

Question 16:
We occasionally have 16- and 17-year-olds volunteer. Again, would we have to apply funds to projects that only people over 18 years old working on them?
Answer: This affirmation statement was included in the application because the majority of the grants issued by our program in the past have been for funding specifically dedicated to lead hazard control. The statutory requirements for work environments don’t always apply when there are volunteers who are not employees. However, our program is not comfortable funding projects where individuals under the age of 18 years may be exposed to lead, either because the project is being completed to reduce lead hazards, or because lead paint may be disturbed in the course of completing the project. We would be willing to make an exception to this statement for volunteers who are working only on residences built after 1978 or residences for which a risk assessment has shown there are no lead paint hazards.

Question 17:
Is MDH’s invoice template available? We want to make sure we can do all required compliance there.
Answer: A sample of the MDH invoice template was provided to the requestor. This document is available upon request.

Question 18:
We spend $40,000/year on lead paint abatement (approximately 25 homes) and probably close to that much on active radon mitigation systems (approximately 50). Is one more desirable than the other?
Answer: The strongest applications will be those that tie the interventions in most closely with the needs of the community they serve. We look to the applicants to justify their prioritization.
Question 19:

As I read through the guidelines, I see that our project might tie in with a few Areas of Work, but I just wanted to ask if this is something that sounds applicable.

Answer: We are unable to comment on specific projects or applications for the Healthy Housing Grants. We encourage anyone to submit an application for projects they believe fit within the scope and areas of work described in the Eligible Projects section of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Healthy Housing Grant found on the MDH Healthy Housing Grants (http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/homes/hhgrant.html) website.

Question 20:

Would our program qualify to apply for this grant or is this grant for more organizations that help with mitigation?

Answer: We are unable to comment on specific projects or applications for the Healthy Housing Grants. We encourage anyone to submit an application for projects they believe fit within the scope and areas of work described in the Eligible Projects section of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Healthy Housing Grant found on the MDH Healthy Housing Grants (http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/homes/hhgrant.html) website.

Question 21:

I’m looking over the application requirements and it asks us to give a brief description of the administrative structure of the organization, is this asking for the admin structure of the Tribe? Or is it asking for the admin structure of the Health and Human Services department that this grant would run out of?

Answer: We are interested in the structure of the department or program that would be completing the grant activities. For larger organizations, it may be helpful to provide a brief description of how that department or program fits into the organization (agency or tribe) as a whole.

Question 22:

Does this grant require a Tribal Resolution? I don’t recall seeing anything in the RFP but I just want to double check.

Answer: The Minnesota Department of Health does not require a Tribal Resolution for our RFP’s. The reason for a resolution would be to assure the requesting agency that Tribal Leadership is aware of the application, in support of the application, and that Tribal Council is aware that the application is being submitted. Most Tribal Councils have their Tribal Chair sign the application, and that is sufficient for the RFP so a resolution is not required.
**Question 23:**
Could Matching funds come from the Tribal MCH Block grant if we provide a letter of support?
Answer: Yes, block grant funds are an acceptable form of matching funds.

**Question 24:**
I am curious if the due diligence form needs to filled out for the Tribal Health and Human Services department or if it should be filled out for the Tribal Government?
Answer: You do not need to fill out the due diligence form as a government entity.

**Question 25:**
I see the grant covers salary and fringe, would it cover up to 10% of salary and fringe of one of the individuals implementing the grant?
Answer: We do not have any specific caps on the amount of funds to be put into a given budget category (salary vs. supplies). The budget justification should explain how the proposed budget aligns with the project objectives.

**Question 26:**
Will MDH funds cover the cost of New Mattresses, Box Springs, Bed Frames, Bed Bug Covers with this grant?
Answer: Any additional supplies to address specific hazards (that not listed under the Intervention Supplies section of the RFP) are subject to approval by Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). You can include a justification for the expense in your application. Expenses to address specific hazards that arise over the course of the grant should be discussed with MDH, and a written justification should be provided.

**Question 27:**
We’re going to focus on the radon mitigation systems we put in new homes (and rehabs that test high). We purchase the fans ($140) and subcontract the installation as part of the plumbing or HVAC work. The radon system is not line itemed in the bids. Does it need to be for reimbursement? We estimate costs us $500 per home for the installation.
Answer: Radon and lead mitigation are acceptable uses for this grant. The grantee shall not exceed $750 per house unless prior approval is obtained from MDH. Thus, if you choose to focus on radon and lead mitigation, you may want to describe other sources of funding in your grant application. Any additional supplies to address specific hazards (that not listed under the Intervention Supplies section of the RFP) are subject to approval by Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). You can include a justification for the expense in your application. Expenses to
address specific hazards that arise over the course of the grant should be discussed with MDH, and a written justification should be provided.

**Question 28:**

Would you all entertain two separate applications for to completely different programs? We have two operations going here that I believe are related to this application. I understand that each project must satisfy the scoring criteria, but I didn’t see any language relating to a limit on the number of applications an organization can submit to the RFP.

Answer: We do not have any rules that would prevent an organization from submitting more than one application for different programs.

**Question 29:**

Is [our work] something that the Healthy Housing grant would look at favorably, relevant to the work and impact they are trying to achieve?

Answer: We are unable to comment on specific projects or applications for the Healthy Housing Grants. We encourage anyone to submit an application for projects they believe fit within the scope and areas of work described in the Eligible Projects section of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Healthy Housing Grant found on the MDH Healthy Housing Grants (http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/homes/hhgrant.html) website.

**Question 30:**

It says in one place that you can request up to $120,000 per year for three years and in another place it says $120,000 for all three years. Can you clarify which is correct?

Answer: That was a typo in the RFP. The correct amounts are found on page 4 of the RFP under the heading Scope of Work. That sentence on page 2 of the RFP under the Amount of Funding for Distribution heading should read: “The total amount of the grant funding for the entire grant period (December 1, 2017–June 30, 2020) is $720,000. This will be distributed to grantees at amounts up to $120,000 per grantee total for three years.” This will be updated in the RFP posted on the MDH website on 10/02/17.

**Question 31:**

On the grant Request for Proposal under the “Funding Information” in the second sentence, it stated that “This will be distributed to grantees at amounts up to $120,000 per grantee per year for three years”, but on the Minnesota Department of Health website – Healthy Housing Grants, on the third paragraph in the second sentence, it stated, “This will be distributed to grantees at amounts up to $120,000 per grantee total, over three years.” What is the correct total grant amount for three years?
Question 32:

On page 3 of the RFP, under Invoicing, the line reads, "Invoices must be accompanied by detailed expense reports". Does that mean scanned copies of bills paid, receipts, etc., or is an income statement acceptable? Thank you.

Answer: Scanned bills and receipts are not needed. As an example, the travel category should be broken down to explain the total on the invoice: number of miles travelled, line items for any hotel costs, etc. Depending on the accounting system, an income statement may fill this need or it may still list broad categories.

Question 33:

It states that eligible costs in the grant budget can include $175 for 2 people for the required training event, but also states that mileage required for meetings and training event for the grant can be included. Are we able to calculate mileage costs separately from the $175 max for 2 people to/from this training (or is the mileage to be included in that $175/person total)? I was a little confused by the wording when looking at budget page.

Answer: Yes, you can calculate mileage costs separately. The $175 for the training does not include mileage or other travel-associated costs.

Question 34:

To clarify, the full application with all related materials are due Oct 13, this Friday, and is considered the RFP (and application)? I just wanted to be sure we understand correctly, as sometimes when we apply for MDH funding, there is a separate RFP/Pre-application process as a first step prior to full application submission.

Answer: There is no pre-application for this grant; all materials are due October 13. Applicants must complete the Healthy Housing Grant Application. Additional instructions are provided in the Healthy Housing Grant RFP and the Healthy Housing Grant Application.

Question 35:

Are there font size/type specifications that are preferred for the narrative?

Answer: Since we don’t have a page limit, we didn’t include any font specifications. The font should be readable.
Question 36:

Do the two affirmations statements need to be signed by our Executive Director (or others)? OR Is it sufficient to simply have these 2 required affirmations typed on the application materials (referring to page 4 on grant application)? I was thinking of simply stating that “We affirm the following:” and then type the 2 required affirmations, verbatim.

Answer: Is it sufficient to simply have these two required affirmations typed on the application materials. The two affirmations statements do not need to be signed by your Executive Director (or others).

Question 37:

When members of our agency have completed the Essentials for Healthy Homes Practitioners Course, does it qualify them to become Assessors/Auditors/ Inspectors?

Answer: No, the Essentials for Healthy Homes Practitioners Course does not qualify people to become Assessors/Auditors/Inspectors. The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) used to offer a Healthy Homes Specialist credential for these areas, but that course has been retired.

Question 38:

Are those that have completed the Essentials for Healthy Homes Practitioners course the ONLY people qualified to do in-home assessments/audits/inspections?

No, those that have completed the course are not the only people qualified to do in-home assessments/audits/inspections. It is assumed that those who attend the Essentials for Healthy Homes Practitioners course will come back and share the information from the course with others at their agency. Anyone can do a visual assessment of a home in terms of what is discussed in the Healthy Homes Assessments and Interventions section of the RFP. Licensing/credentials are necessary if someone comes in to take measurements or samples for testing, for example, measuring the amount of lead in paint, not just do a visual inspection.

Question 39:

We understand that the allowable expense under the grant make it possible for us send two members of our agency to attend the Essentials for Healthy Homes Practitioners Course, but can we send two additional members to attend the training who registration will be paid for by our agency?

It is fine to send additional members to attend the training if their registration will be paid for by your agency.