

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS


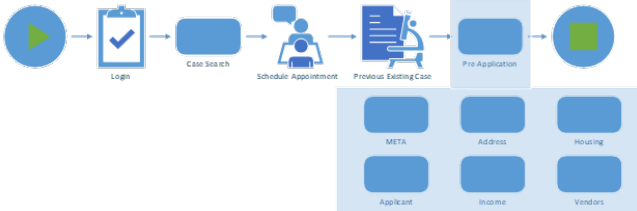

DOIT #2024-060

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
on behalf of the
NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SOFTWARE SHOLUTION

	Questions	Answers
1.	The RFP states that the requested system must allow for digital signatures. Does this necessitate the inclusion of an off-the-shelf system such as DocuSign that has tracking/audit capabilities or would a vendor-implemented solution that internally stamps a document with the time and date be acceptable?	Software for managing digital signatures must have tracking/audit capabilities.
2.	The RFP seems to indicate that the state is open to any technical architecture solution, but does the state have a preferred technical architecture?	The state is interested in a cloud based or commercial off the shelf (COTS) solution. The solution should be hosted 'off prem,' i.e., within the vendors solution and be readily accessible via browser based "web" access.
3.	Is the intended solution limited to integration with those programs only, or would consideration be made for inclusion of other programs, such as Neighbor Helping Neighbor, which the regional CAAs also implement?	The solution is for the three programs identified in the RFP.
4.	What is the estimated budget for this project? Has a budget been approved for this project? Is there an estimate of the total budget available for the initial development, implementation, and ongoing support?	The total project funding for initial development, implementation and training is \$1,334,000.
5.	Can you share more information on your preference for a commercial/off-the-shelf (COTS) or custom-built solution for the software?	System is intended to be as low code or no code capable as possible with the ability to update and meet current and future changes in state and federal program requirements. We hope that code customization can be kept to a minimum, noting that the EAP program may deviate from this restraint.

6.	<p>In the application are there are any downflow of data (meaning are there other systems which need data from this system)?</p>	<p>Yes, both FAP and EAP have information sent out of the system to the vendors and utilities. Additionally, the CAAs may want to export data to a central document management system to enable other programs within the agency to access common documentation.</p>
7.	<p>What are some of the features/functionality that the Agency likes about the current system?</p>	<p>The current system enables users to edit, merge and transfer case records between sub grantees. Users can access many years of case histories. User creation is very easy and permissions levels are easily assigned to their role. The accounting system works very well.</p>
8.	<p>In what aspect does the current system lack that the Agency would like to have in the new system?</p> <p>Can NHDOE tell us any pain points that they have experienced in the past with previous programs?</p>	<p>The current system is not cloud based and does not have multi-browser capability. There is currently no online application functionality or ability to send communication (email) through the system. There is no ability to normalize the data. Reporting is a major pain point. It is limited, operates slowly, and lacks flexibility and accuracy. Users are not able to create fully customized queries or save searches. The current system also operates as ‘mini-systems’ with a different database for each of the five CAAs – one for current year, then separate databases for each prior year, and a separate reporting site. This disaggregated data makes operation difficult.</p>
9.	<p>In the RFP, I don’t see the flow of architecture for FAP/EAP or WAP? We would like to know on the high level the flow on all three systems (specifically with WAP).</p>	<p>Current State FAP Process Workflow</p> <p>High Level Business Functions</p>  <p>Client Intake - CAPS</p>  <p>Certification Admin</p> 
10.	<p>What form of customizations or reports if any would be expected in the system to accommodate in future for reports or special requests by the State/Fed. Would additional budget be approved for ad-hoc reports/requests?</p>	<p>Users should be able to create customized reports with the ability to utilize and query on all data fields, to limit the reports to specific timeframes, and to save a custom or ad-hoc report. Ad hoc reporting should be available on demand to the users and included as a part of initial software release, not an additional expense.</p>

11.	<p>Considering the sensitive date of NH citizens, would the Agency prefer Public cloud or Private cloud or a hosted solution?</p>	<p>Generally, Public. We expect that a public cloud solution will be secure (as stated in the RFP). However, we are open to proposals that best meet our needs.</p>
12.	<p>From the database perspective what's the requirement from the state/federal on archival for different programs?</p>	<p>The Fuel Assistance Program and Electric Assistance Program archive requirement is five years. The requirement for the Weatherization Assistance Program is three years and then addresses are archived.</p>
13.	<p>Once the contract is awarded how soon does the customization/implementation start? What's the cutoff date for the new system that it needs to be live?</p> <p>Can NHDOE provide the expected/preferred launch date(s) for each of the three programs in the new system? Which program and program year does NH DOE intend to go live with first?</p> <p>To confirm, is the New Hampshire Department of Energy expecting a fully operational system by June 2026 with phased functionality in 2024 and 2025 when developed?</p> <p>What is the anticipated project duration?</p>	<p>The FAP and EAP programs would launch/go live at the same time. The goal for a fully operational system is June 2025. The expectation is that the system would run concurrently with a small percentage of the applications a few months prior to go live. The WAP go live would be phased in after FAP and EAP.</p>
14.	<p>What is the backup plan in case the new system doesn't meet the customized requirement that client needs?</p>	<p>The new system should be capable of meeting the needs as outlined.</p>
15.	<p>Is there any preference or set aside for minority/veteran/women owned business?</p>	<p>There is no preference or set aside for minority/veteran/women owned businesses. All bidders must be equal opportunity employers.</p>
16.	<p>What is the ADA compliance requirement?</p>	<p>Please see requirements at this website: https://nhgov.sharepoint.com/sites/DoIT-UX/SitePages/Accessible-Design.aspx</p>
17.	<p>Does the agency prefer to buy per user/per year? OR 2) Purchase the application as one time cost with budget to maintain and support it. If it's the option 2, then how would hosting cost be calculated in overall pricing.</p>	<p>The Department preference is to buy per user/per year; however, we would like to see pricing for both options for comparison.</p>
18.	<p>Are the Agency (CAA) users included in the 175 users mentioned? If not, how many CAA users do you anticipate?</p> <p>Considering all roles at the State offices, sub-grantees, installers, inspectors, and so on, how many users will need access to the system?</p>	<p>Yes, they are. The estimate of 175 users includes all state employees and CAA (sub-grantee) staff.</p>

19.	Would the state consider a second round of questions?	An opportunity to ask follow-up/clarifying questions about the responses posted to the first round of vendor questions will be provided. No new questions will be accepted or answered. See Addendum No. 1 to the RFP.
20.	What is required to have a multi-lingual option? What languages must the portal support?	The system should have a way to support multiple languages and should be flexible as needs of NH residents change. Currently, languages most frequently needed are English, Spanish, French, Indonesian, and Bosnian.
21.	What programs will the electronic payments be used for? FAP, WAP, and EAP? Please provide an example of an invoice entry?	<p>The Fuel Assistance Program will utilize the payment system. The EAP benefits are applied to the electric bill by the utility not run through the software.</p> <p>The information entered on an invoice entry for the FAP includes the household and applicant name, name on account, benefit amount, vendor name and vendor number, invoice number, invoice date, amount, and payment due date, and for certain fuel types delivery date, unit price, units, and discount. Invoices can be entered and saved without posting and then posted (paid) at a later date.</p> <p>The WAP wants system generated invoices, based on project completion.</p>
22.	<p>Could the utilities access this information within the selected software via a secure portal where they can download the data or is an automated nightly transmission required? If the latter, does each utility require a custom format?</p> <p>Will approved contractors, vendors, and landlords need access to the proposed solution? If so, please describe the functionality required.</p>	<p>For FAP, a secure portal should be available to the fuel vendors for the submittal of invoices and fuel consumption data. Additionally, the software should generate and send a list of enrolled customers and benefit amounts on a nightly basis to fuel vendors. For the EAP, automated transmissions to the four electric utilities are required nightly, and the format is standard.</p> <p>For WAP, the CAAs should have the authority to create and grant limited access to the necessary contractors.</p>
23.	<p>Are you intending to use your existing accounting system for payments based on approved payments in the selected software?</p> <p>Do you expect the selected software to have a full accounting system or would it be acceptable to use a 3rd party software?</p>	The software solution should include a full accounting system but should also have the capability to export data to third party accounting software solutions in use by the CAAs.
24.	Is bi-directional data transfer required as expressed in the scope of work? If so, what data gets imported into TREAT?	No information will be imported into TREAT.

25.	Please expand on the requirements for full and seamless integration.	The States expectation is that all required historical data and requirements are fulfilled upon delivery of software solution.
26.	Under the current system is there one statewide list of measures allowed in TREAT or do agencies or end users have their own library of measures?	There is one list of measures. Each agency independently refines the unit cost for its TREAT use within TREAT with NH DOE approval.
27.	Requirement: Ability to track case benefit amounts and payments and balances. Ability to limit expenditures based on benefit provided, contract limits, expenditures per home. Does this requirement relate to Weatherization of Energy Assistance?	This would be applicable to two programs – FAP and WAP. This function would prevent over obligating or overspending on specific program and contract limits.
28.	Can you give some examples of data that the subgrantee agencies would want to import into the proposed database and how that data would be used?	The WAP will have demographic and basic funding data they would want imported into the new database. This will function as a master list of homes that have received WAP and the measures installed.
29.	Requirement: Capability for staff persons to generate a report of pending follow -up actions needed. Please provide examples of follow-up actions needed.	An example is a status aging report that would provide by staff member a list of pending applications along with the processing timelines in order to follow up on and maintain program compliance.
30.	Does the client need to apply each program year?	FAP and EAP applicants apply annually or, in limited cases for EAP, biannually.
31.	Is the identify provider that you use SAML based?	The identity provider for the FAP/EAP system is <i>not</i> SAML based (Security Assertion Markup Language (an authentication protocol set)
32.	What is the required retention period for daily system backups?	The current required retention period is 1 year.
33.	Please provide a definition of the uptime requirement and how is compliance with this requirement determined?	FAP/EAP user operations, off-hours data processing and report processing which would realistically be 18/6 x 365.

34.	<p>On an annual basis, how many applications are received for FAP, WAP and EAP, by program? The Solicitation states over 30,000 households are assisted annually, but how many households apply for benefits annually?</p> <p>You indicate FAP and EAP support 30,000 households per year. How many total applications (qualified and non-qualified) per year are anticipated across all three programs (including WAP)?</p> <p>The RFP states that the FAP and EAP programs assist 30,000 households annually. How many households did the EAP program assist? What was the total funding for the EAP program the last three years? What was the average assistance payment per applicant based on previous application disbursement? Was all the funding allocated?</p>	<p>FAP and EAP each receive 30,000-35,000 applications annually. WAP does not have a separate application. FAP assisted approximately 30,000 households last year. EAP assisted approximately 32,000 households in the 2022-2023 program year.</p> <p>The EAP is not a block grant; it is funded through a per kWh charge on electric bills. On average, the per kWh charge collects between \$15.5M and \$16.5M annually. The four regulated utilities collect the funding and apply the EAP benefit to participating customer bills on a monthly basis. Any overcollection is submitted monthly to an account, the EAP Fund, held by the NH State Treasurer on behalf of the EAP. Payments to utilities who undercollect compared to benefits paid are made monthly from the EAP Fund. The average annual EAP benefit for the 2022-2023 program year was \$693.71. The EAP benefits are applied to the electric bill by the utility not run through the software.</p>
35.	<p>What role do CAAs play? Do they underwrite and approve applications for assistance?</p>	<p>The CAAs perform application intake, certification of eligibility, notifications, delivery of benefits. CAAs provide the vendor payments for FAP. EAP does not provide monetary benefits through the system. The FAP program completes intake and eligibility functions for the WAP.</p>
36.	<p>Who will distribute funds to applicants? Will DOE, or CAAs, or others distribute funds?</p>	<p>The CAAs will distribute payments.</p>
37.	<p>What systems are currently used to manage FAP, WAP and EAP by DOE and CAAs?</p>	<p>A custom software is used to manage FAP and EAP WAP currently does not have a centralized database. The CAAs manage their programs using a variety of methods, i.e., Excel, Access</p>
38.	<p>What is the size of the data load from existing systems that must be converted?</p>	<p>The current sizes of the production databases are listed in question 41. We would like to have three years of legacy data in the system.</p>
39.	<p>Are there image files that must be converted from existing systems? If so, what is the total size of the images/files from existing systems?</p>	<p>No image files need to be converted from the current system.</p>
40.	<p>The Solicitation states that data must be converted from a SQL 2019 database, and "other systems". What other systems must data be converted from?</p>	<p>WAP does not have a current database. CAAs have maintained program records using various solutions ie: Excel, Access. Data from WAP would be provided on flat files for import. The FAP and EAP have the data in the SQL database.</p>

41.	Historically, what is the data growth size annually in the SQL 2019 database and the other systems?	Over the past four years the average annual data growth size is approximately 10 GB/year: BMCA = .3 GB/year, 2023=6.8 GB SCCA = .12 GB/year. 2023 = 7.3 GB SNHS = .5 GB/Year, 2023 = 18 GB State = 8.8 GB/Year, 2023 = 84 GB SWCS = .17 GB/Year, 2023 = 8.0 GB TCCA = .22 GB/Year, 2023 = 9.8 GB
42.	What is the expected respective internal and online (applicant) user growth annually?	It is difficult to predict, but we do anticipate growth in applications with the availability of an online application statewide.
43.	Upon completion of this project, does the New Hampshire Department of Energy seek ownership of any of the Intellectual Property used for its development?	No – just the data is State property – we presume a SaaS or Cloud based solution would remain the intellectual property of the chosen vendor/contractor.
44.	How many homes will be weatherized under the WAP program each year? How many households does the WAP program assist annually? What was the total funding for the WAP program the last three years? What was the average assistance payment per applicant based on previous application disbursement? Was all the funding allocated?	Combining 2 Federal programs, NH Annual WAP allotment and BIL WAP, it is anticipated that 500 households will be completed annually through June, 2027. The LIHEAP WAP set aside is used by the CAAs to perform heating system replacement and repair to approx. 500 households annually. Additionally, the utility funded WAP provides services to approx. 2500 households per year.
45.	Our license costs are related to the number and size of programs to be tracked. What are the distinct funding sources that must be tracked and reported (LIHEAP, DOE WAP, BIL, Utility, etc.) and how much funding is to be distributed for each funding source for each year of the term.	LIHEAP funding will need to be tracked from the go live date. EAP does not require funding tracking. WAP funding is approximately \$2 million and varies annually. Funding for BWP is approximately \$550,000 per year. WAP BIL is \$18.2 million over a five year period.
46.	Is it anticipated that new IRA Home Energy Rebates will be run on this system and should pricing include support of the DOE/PNNL API and workflows?	No.
47.	What system/s will be the source of FAP/EAP legacy data? WAP legacy data is not called out. Should we also assume WAP legacy data migration? Can you provide an estimate of the quantity of data to be migrated?	The data is located on multiple Microsoft SQL 2019 databases. Yes, data migration for WAP will need to be completed however the data for WAP will be contained in flat files and not imported from a database. An estimate of data quantity to be migrated has not been established.

48.	Section 6.3 indicates a term through June 30, 2026 with an option to extend one year. The pricing tables E-1.4, E-1.5, E-1.6 are asking for five years of pricing. What is actually the intended term of this agreement?	The State operates under a biennium budget cycle with the current budget cycle ending on the June 30, 2026 date. The pricing tables allow for the State to project and secure budgeting requirements past the biennium cycle.
49.	Considering all roles at the State offices, sub-grantees, installers, inspectors, and so on, how many users will need access to the system?	175
50.	What company and software are NHDOE using today for FAP, WAP, and EAP?	Currently NHDOE and CAAs are using a custom software for FAP and EAP. WAP has not been using any software for program management. This solution will replace a 22-year-old custom built program.
51.	The RFP states that the FAP and WAP are federally funded and the EAP is ratepayer funded. This seems like you need three applications with three separate funding sources. Can NHDOE confirm number of expected applications by funding source they expect during launch?	The Department is looking for one solution that integrates the three programs. The FAP and EAP use the same application for clients to improve administrative efficiency for both programs and to improve the experience for the client. FAP usually sees approximately 35,000 applicants annually, and EAP typically sees approx. 37,000 applicants annually. It is unknown what the impact of an on-line application will do to the overall applicant numbers.
52.	The RFP states that the price proposal must be submitted separately from the technical proposal. Please confirm that Section VII should be in its own PDF separate from all other sections required by the RFP? Do you want the vendor to send two emails to submit, one for technical and one for pricing?	Yes, Section VII: Price Proposal should be a separate PDF. One email containing the two PDFs should be sent. Please do not send two emails unless the size of the files being sent necessitate doing so.
53.	The Activity/Deliverable/Milestones Worksheet appears in both Section III (via the vendor workbook) and Section VII (pricing). Please confirm you want the same table in both sections of the vendor's proposal, with pricing?	The Activity/Deliverable/Milestones Worksheet should be included in both the technical and price proposal. Please redact the milestone payment and total cost from the worksheet included with the technical proposal.

54.	Can NHDOE provide a copy of the data fields captured in their existing system that need to be migrated? A CSV or Microsoft Excel file of the fields will be ideal.	<p>Data is captured – and will need to continue to be captured – on a variety of areas, including information on household demographics, residence, heating and electric providers information, and income documentation. Below is a list to provide some understanding, but please note that this list is intended for informational purposes and it is not exhaustive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household/residence information – street address, mailing address, phone number(s), email address, housing type, own/rent, rental info (Utilities included? Subsidized? Current eviction notice?), rent/mortgage amounts, number of rooms, interest in weatherization (y/n) • Information on each person in the household – Full name, date of birth, SSN, gender, race, ethnicity, veteran status, student status, last grade completed, health insurance status • Employment information for every adult (18+) - Employed (y/n), Receiving unemployment? Employed by someone else or self employed? Full-time student? • Income information for every adult in the household (18+) - Income source, type, frequency, dates, and amounts per household member. Income could include paychecks, SS, SSI, or SSDI, Cash Assistance, Pensions, Retirement withdrawals, Income reported on taxes, etc. • Heating information – Heating provider name, account number, primary heating type, 1 year at current address (y/n), current fuel amount, current disconnect notice (y/n), secondary heating type (if applicable) • Electric information – Electric provider name, account number, customer name on bill • Information related to program – prior year case numbers, status (enrolled, denied, etc), FAP benefit amounts, EAP discount tier level, eligibility, vendor and landlord information (name, address, contact info, type, etc), payment information (vendor, date, amount)
55.	Was email address a required field in the previous application?	Yes
56.	Does NHDOE have assigned technical staff to assist with an SFTP connection and conversion of third-party data and mapping?	The DoIT is the NHDOE technical resource. DoIT can provide SFTP service but is not able to provide conversion or mapping services.

57.	Can we get a sample output of the TREAT import/export?	Information responsive to this question is not currently available. A response will be provided with the responses to clarifying/follow-up questions on March 27.
58.	Will NHDOE be able to provide any custom reports they would like added to their database?	The software should provide the ability for the users to create ad-hoc or custom reports from the system in addition to the required, static reports for each of the programs.
59.	For data uploads, are there existing APIs or interfaces where credentials can be supplied, or will manual import be needed?	Data for FAP and EAP is hosted in Microsoft SQL Server 2019. There are existing APIs for extracting or migrating data from Microsoft SQL – requiring credentials for access. There are also utilities from Microsoft and other sources for extracting data.