Request for Information

End-to-End Technology Solution and Administrative Services for Homeowner Assistance Fund

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ONLY. Respondents to this Request for Information (RFI) are invited to respond to any or all of the questions in this document. Responses to this RFI shall serve solely to assist the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) in understanding the current state of the marketplace with regards to the solicited information and to inform the possible development of a Request for Proposals (RFP) or other solicitation in the future. This RFI does not in any way obligate MHP to reissue or amend this solicitation or to include any of the RFI provisions or responses in any future solicitation. Responding to this RFI is entirely voluntary, and will in no way affect MHP's consideration of any proposals submitted in response to the potential RFP or any subsequent solicitation, nor will it serve as an advantage or disadvantage to the respondent in the course of any future solicitation.

INTRODUCTION

This RFI seeks information about the delivery of services to support the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Homeowner Assistance Fund (Massachusetts HAF), including but not limited to SoftSecond and ONE Mortgage loans within the MHP portfolio. The HAF Program aims to assist income-eligible Massachusetts homeowners who, due to the impact of COVID-19, have suffered financial hardship (Eligible Homeowners) that is impacting their ability to pay their homeownership-related expenses (Eligible Expenses).

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) became law. Section 3206 created the federal Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF) to help Eligible Homeowners with Eligible Expenses. Subsequently, the U.S. Department of the Treasury provided a website announcement, including a Notice of Funds Request, and on April 14, 2021, as amended on August 2, 2021, published a Housing Assistance Fund Guidance document.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts will receive $178 million of HAF funds, as overseen by the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (A&F). MHP expects to be contracted by A&F to plan for the Massachusetts HAF Program and is seeking information about services related to the possible administration of such Program.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Financial hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are hitting low-income households and households of color especially hard. With unemployment assistance and foreclosure moratoria set to expire before the end of the year, many homeowners may find themselves unable to resume mortgage and property tax payments or other housing-related expenses.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and MHP are dedicated to homeownership retention and sustainability. The Massachusetts HAF Program will prevent foreclosures by providing direct assistance related to mortgage payments, property taxes, property insurance, condo fees, and other Eligible Expenses on behalf of Eligible Homeowners.

On behalf of A&F, MHP is seeking information from the marketplace to guide the development and implementation of the Massachusetts HAF Program. Respondents may, but are not required to, describe their capacity to provide the services required to administer a program in compliance with all requirements described below.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Comprehensive Technology Solution

We are seeking a single technology solution for all phases of administering the Massachusetts HAF Program. This component is solely for the technology and <u>not</u> for staffing the various steps in the process, which staffing services are detailed below.

We believe the comprehensive technology solution will need to include, at minimum, the following functionalities:

- Front-end, homeowner facing web-based and mobile friendly portal, including:
    o Applicant prescreening tool;
    o Application (including certain attestation forms);
    o Secure document uploading, including from mobile devices;
    o Tool that provides applicant with the status of the application; and
    o Messaging/communication functionality.
- Back-end, administrative functionality, including:
    o Processing, underwriting, review and approval;
    o Payment processing, including:
        ▪ The ability to make batch payments and single payments
        ▪ The ability to create and send a common data file or other file sharing methods with mortgage loan servicers
        ▪ Other third party payees
    o Access for all relevant stakeholders including homeowners, program administrators, state housing finance agencies, state agencies, auditors, and potentially lenders and/or servicers;
    o Automated workflow orchestration and validation, including fraud detection;
    o Data capture, application status reporting (operational visibility including key performance indicators), analytics, and audit;
    o Secure file and data storage; and
    o Interface with state 211, or other state initiatives as needed. (See Exhibit A - Technical Requirements for more information).

ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS OF MASSACHUSETTS HAF PROGRAM

We believe the administration and operation of the Program will need to include, at minimum, the following functionalities:

Intake/Customer Service

- Physical, online and/or telephone assistance to Eligible Homeowners applying for assistance, including pre-screening assistance.

Application Processing

- Review the application and all supporting documents to ensure the file is complete so the file can be underwritten and ensuring all data and documents are accurate and consistent in the system.
- Follow up on all missing documents and data – both before submitting file to the underwriter and after if underwriter determines items or data are missing.

Application Underwriting and Approval

- Review completed application files and then approve or disapprove requested payments.
- Inform homeowner of underwriting decision, including informing about any appeal process.

Payment Processing

- Make payments for approved files,
   - This could be batch payments (e.g., single payment to mortgage servicer for multiple homeowners) or single payments for one homeowner.
- Provide any required reconciliations and reports.

Reporting, Quality Control (QC), and Audit Review

- Prepare and provide all required reports as directed by Treasury, A&F, and MHP. This may include weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, and annual reports.
- Provide a QC and audit plan and perform such QC and audit.

CHALLENGES

The key challenges of the project are:

- A short timeframe within which the Massachusetts HAF Program must become operational once funds have been appropriated for distribution.
   - MHP would need to begin taking applications from Eligible Homeowners within 30 days of Treasury's approval of the Massachusetts HAF Plan.
   - MHP would like to launch the comprehensive technology solution, and related administrative functions within 30-60 days of entering into a contract with a contractor(s) selected through the RFP.
   - Technology and Administrative services to be provided under this Scope are for the duration of the Massachusetts HAF Program, currently not to exceed September 30, 2025.
- The volume of applications to be processed will likely be high, and funds must be distributed in an expedited timeframe.
- A high level of accountability and transparency will be required by MHP.

KEY QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. It is intended that any contractor selected through the RFP process will be considered a sub-recipient of the federal HAF funds. Please describe the systems and controls that typically would be in place to provide quality assurance and to mitigate the risk of fraud

or errors in the allocation of the federal funds, and describe the degree of financial liability that a contractor would be willing to accept, and in what form, in the event that a contractor allocates the funds for unauthorized uses.

2. Providing components of both the technology and the administrative services in other languages will be critical to the Massachusetts HAF Program's success. Please describe the degree to which a technology solution and administrative workflow can be created that attends to the needs of applicants with limited English proficiency.

3. To what degree are the comprehensive technology solutions that you are familiar with customizable to accommodate local requirements and future program changes? Additionally, can specific components of those comprehensive technology solutions be purchased individually, if needed?

4. Does your comprehensive technology solution allow for integration and data exchange with other databases and systems of state HFAs, state agencies, and national loan servicing platforms?

DECISION MAKING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

MHP expects to be reviewing options available in the marketplace and making decisions for the Massachusetts HAF Program. MHP expects to consult with A&F, and in some cases, obtain A&F's approval for particular decisions related to the Massachusetts HAF Program. Additionally, A&F has established a HAF steering committee (SteerCo), comprised of staff from A&F, MHP, the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Massachusetts Division of Banks. SteerCo intends the contractor(s) selected through the RFP process to participate in SteerCo meetings as requested by MHP. A contractor(s) selected through the RFP process would primarily communicate with MHP (primary contacts would be the Managing Director and the Director of Homeownership). Please advise us if these decision making and management plans are typical of the industry and similar projects, or if different approaches would be more appropriate.

SUBMISSION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Contents of Submission

Respondents may submit relevant information on all or some of the above topics, and may also include:

- Description of the company.
- Description of the company's overall approach to meeting the requirements of the Massachusetts HAF Program as described in this RFI.
- Names and resumes of key people that may be involved in providing the services outlined herein.
- Link to the company's website.
- Examples of similar work performed (including HAF programs in other states).
- Contact information, including the primary contact.

- An anticipated project timeline showing all major steps required to launch a potential program and meet program deadlines and requirements.
- Details on the cost of services including the cost of individual service components (Comprehensive Technology Solution, Intake/Customer Service, Application Processing, Application Underwriting and Approval, Payment Processing, and Reporting, QC, and Audit Review).
- Any proposed modifications to the Scope that, in respondent's opinion, would allow for more effective implementation of the Massachusetts HAF Program.

Timeline

RFI Activity	Estimated Date	Estimated Time
RFI Release Date	Tuesday, 8/3/21	5:00 PM EDT
Deadline for Responses to RFI	Tuesday, 8/17/2021	5:00 PM EDT

How to Submit the Letter

Letters (plus any accompanying documents) shall be submitted in PDF format and emailed to:

Elliot Schmiedl, Director of Homeownership   Mark Curtiss, Managing Director
Massachusetts Housing Partnership   Massachusetts Housing Partnership
eschmiedl@mhp.net   mcurtiss@mhp.net

Questions

Any questions regarding this RFI may be made only in writing to:

Elliot Schmiedl, Director of Homeownership
Massachusetts Housing Partnership
eschmiedl@mhp.net

All question responses will be published to MHP's website, www.mhp.net, where the RFI will be posted.

EXHIBIT A – TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Paperless Functions including, but not limited to:

    • Receive custom-defined applications from the public via 100% internet web interface using all n-1 latest versions of Firefox, Chrome, Edge, and Safari
    • Receive custom-defined applications from the public via 100% native mobile interface for iPhone and Android phones

2. Data Management including, but not limited to:

    • Ability to support all standard input types (text, radio button, checkbox, etc.)

    • Ability to validate format and content of pre-defined data types

    • Ability to support logic on data input screens to collect data based on previously inputted data

3. Support a multi-lingual interface in both English and Spanish and potentially other language translations to be decided at a later date.

4. Provide full Scope of Services in adherence to, and in compliance with State and Federal accessibility requirements.

5. Securely support multiple, multi-step application processes (i.e. multiple programs supporting multiple rounds of federal funding):

    • Initiated by Homeowner, completed by Mortgage Holder servicer?

6. Data Security

    • Selected Homeowner information not visible to Mortgage Holder servicer?

    • Selected Mortgage Holder information not visible to Homeowner

    • All data in motion and data at rest fully encrypted

    • Role-based function and datapoint level access control

    • Fraud prevention, such as flagging duplicate applications

7. E-sign

    • Ability to e-sign compliant with all 50 states' e-signature regulations

8. Application Processing

    • Ability to support up to 500 remote application processors

    • Ability to selectively assign applications to processors in bulk

    • Ability to assign specific applications to specific processors

    • Ability to restrict application processors to view only applications assigned to the processor

• Ability for Managers, QA, and other identified personnel to view all applications

• Ability to support multiple approval workflows

- Standard approval workflow

- QA workflow

- Up to three cure workflows

9. Non-Functional

• Ability to support 20,000 concurrent, active users entering applications into the system

• Ability to support 500 concurrent, active application processors, QA, and cure personnel

• 24x7 availability

• SUB 5-second response time for all screens/interactions

• SOC2 certified

• Low Code approach that allows us to customize forms and business rules

10. Reporting

• Ability to report on all application information and status in real time

- o Weekly, Monthly and Quarterly reporting in the format required by Treasury, A&F, or MHP
- o Web-based, On-line reporting capability
- o Direct connect capability for 3rd party reporting tools
- o Ability to download all reported data sets
- o Standard Reports
- o Ad-hoc Reports
- o Ability to distribute pre-defined standard reports to selected lists of e-mail recipients

11. Interfaces

• Ability to create pre-defined formatted data extracts to feed 3rd party systems' administration
• Ability to maintain user accounts, roles and access

12. Retention and Archiving

• Ability to retain all data and documents for five (5) calendar years after end of program(s)