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## **NOTICE OF FUNDS AVAILABILITY HOUSING COUNSELING SERVICES**

**Please take notice that, in compliance with N.J.S.A. 52:14-34.4 and 34.6, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs hereby announces the availability of the following program funds.**

**\*\*This Notice of Funds Availability has been redistributed with a revised deadline for submission.\*\***

### **I. Background**

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) manages the delivery of Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist State residents to recover from Superstorm Sandy. The purpose of CDBG-DR is to assist New Jersey homeowners, renters, businesses and townships to rebuild and revitalize their communities. A copy of the State's Action Plan describing all of its CDBG-DR programs can be found at: <http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/sandyrecovery/action/>.

As is indicated in the Action Plan, housing programs are a major component of New Jersey's strategy for recovery. These initiatives include the following programs:

- *Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Elevation and Mitigation (RREM)*: this program assists homeowners to rebuild and elevate their Sandy-damaged house.
- *The Lead Based Paint (LBP) Program*: the LBP program will assist LMI owners who sustained damage from Superstorm Sandy to address and control lead hazards in their home.
- *Rental rebuilding programs, including: Landlord Rental Repair Program (LRRP), The Fund for Restoration of Multi-Family Housing (FRM), the Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP), Predevelopment Assistance, and the Sandy Special Needs Housing Program*: these programs provide rehabilitation, new construction and related assistance to owners of multi-family properties in Sandy-impacted communities. The units developed under these programs will predominantly be rented to Low and Moderate Income (LMI) households.
- *Tenant based rental assistance (TBRA) and project-based landlord assistance*: these programs provide financial assistance to property owners and tenant households to make rents more affordable.
- *The LMI Homeowner Program*: this new program is designed to provide rebuilding and elevation assistance to homeowners who sustained damage from Sandy. This program is particularly targeted toward LMI owners and owners with limited English proficiency who did not apply for funds under the RREM Program.

Although some CDBG-DR programs are open to residents in other counties, the vast majority of the housing assistance is focused on the nine New Jersey counties deemed most impacted by Superstorm Sandy, per FEMA, namely: Atlantic; Bergen; Cape May; Essex; Hudson; Middlesex; Monmouth; Ocean; and Union.

In order to ensure that all households impacted by Sandy have access to the services they need to recover, the State of New Jersey recently signed a Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA) with HUD. A copy of the VCA may be requested directly from DCA. The VCA includes provisions related to outreach and housing program design. In the VCA, the State and HUD agreed that it was important to couple affordable housing development endeavors with housing counseling.

DCA has determined that the most effective way to undertake these housing counseling efforts is through a network of community-based nonprofit and public organizations. The State will select the nonprofit and public agencies via this application process. This Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) describes the scope of work anticipated for the housing counseling and the process by which proposals will be reviewed and funded.

The scope of work includes housing counseling and support in order to direct sandy impacted renters and homeowners to available services. As a part of the scope of work, the nonprofit or public organizations selected under this NOFA will also assist applicants to the LMI Homeowner and TBRA programs to complete initial program applications. Please note that the outreach and marketing tasks envisioned under the VCA are covered under a separate solicitation and are not included in this NOFA.

Per the VCA, DCA has a total of \$2,000,000 available annually for the delivery of all housing counseling services across all nine counties. The grants awarded to nonprofits and public agencies under this NOFA will be for one year with up to five (5) optional one-year extensions until the CDBG-DR program closes no later than 2019. Each option year will be separately negotiated with winning awardees. All housing counseling services delivered under this NOFA will be provided at no cost to the household.

## **II. Eligible Organizations**

All entities applying under this NOFA must be a New Jersey-based nonprofit organization or public agency, including but not limited to: HUD-certified housing counseling agencies; community based development organizations (CBDOs); community development corporations (CDCs); community development financial institutions (CDFIs); community housing development organizations (CHDOs); educational institutions; long term recovery groups; and local public housing and community development agencies. For-profit companies will not be considered, although nonprofit or public applicants may choose to include subcontractors on their team, if those subcontractors are appropriately procured following state and federal procurement laws.

All proposed teams must include one or more HUD-certified housing counseling agencies with experience in the geographic areas for which they apply. The housing counseling agency need not be the prime applicant and other nonprofit or public organizations may choose to apply with one or more HUD-certified housing counseling agencies as subrecipients to the applicant nonprofit or public agency.

DCA seeks organizations with community-based experience in the nine most impacted counties: Atlantic; Bergen; Cape May; Essex; Hudson; Middlesex; Monmouth; Ocean; and Union. **DCA will select no more than one proposal per each of these nine counties.** It is preferred that the counseling services be provided in facilities located in lower income communities impacted by Sandy.

Smaller nonprofit or public organizations which only work in a subset geographic area of a county may choose to team together and submit a joint proposal that covers the entirety of one or more counties. In these instances, the nonprofit and/or public team members must choose a lead organization. DCA will contract with that lead organization and the lead organization will be responsible for managing and overseeing the work of its partners.

It is preferred that nonprofits or public agencies elect to apply for multiple counties, assuming their team has community-based expertise in working in each of the areas they propose to cover. If DCA does not receive sufficient qualified proposals to cover all nine counties, it may choose to request one or more of the winning organizations to expand its service area to include any county not covered by other proposals.

The nonprofits and public agencies awarded funds under this NOFA will be considered subrecipients to DCA and will be required to comply with all financial management, reporting, recordkeeping and program requirements of CDBG-DR. As subrecipients, awardees may receive full reimbursement of all eligible program costs. However, CDBG rules do not permit subrecipients to earn a profit or fee on top of these eligible costs. The nonprofits and public agencies receiving an award under this NOFA will execute a subrecipient agreement with DCA containing but not limited to the types of clauses listed under Attachment B.

Nonprofits and public agencies awarded under this NOFA must agree to comply with all applicable federal, state and municipal laws, rules, and regulations, as applicable to the activities related to the performance under the CDBG-DR grant. These include not only the federal CDBG rules, as modified for CDBG-DR, but also rules from the Federal Office of Management and Budget, the New Jersey Department of the Treasury, Office of Management and Budget, and the State Affirmative Action requirements at N.J.A.C. 17:27, N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq., and PL 1975 c.127 and all implementing regulations. Nonprofits and public agency applicants under this NOFA also agree to comply with all applicable provisions of New Jersey Circular No. 07-05 OMB to the extent that these state rules are not superseded by more stringent federal rules: <http://www.state.nj.us/infobank/circular/cir0705b.pdf>.

### **III. Scope of Work**

The selected nonprofit or public agencies will provide housing counseling services to potential participants in Sandy-assisted housing programs, including both homeowners and renters. There will be three types of counseling services:

- Counseling for potential tenants under any of the CDBG-DR rental or TBRA programs,
- General housing counseling for current and ineligible RREM applicants; and
- Counseling for potential homeowner applicants under the LMI Homeowner program.

The counseling will cover topics such as, but not limited to:

- Available resources;
- Referral to appropriate assistance programs or available CDBG-DR funded rental units;
- Financial literacy;
- Fair housing rights;

- Mobility; and
- Relocation assistance for displaced public and assisted housing residents.

The counseling will also include assistance in completing initial applications for the CDBG-DR funded LMI Homeowner, TBRA and rental housing programs.

- The LMI Homeowner program will have an on-line application form that the counselor may assist the applicant to complete. Households will be encouraged to consult with the selected housing counseling agency in their county, although the household may choose to submit their application without consulting a counseling agency. By assisting with intake, the selected nonprofit or public agency will ensure that all fully completed applications are submitted to DCA for further processing.
- The TBRA program will have a brief on-line pre-screening form that applicants will fill out. The housing counselor will assist potential applicants to fill out the pre-screening questions and will forward the forms for any households meeting the initial screening criteria to DCA for processing. Through DCA's outreach efforts, households will be encouraged to consult with a housing counselor in their county. However, they may also choose to directly submit a pre-screening form to DCA.
- For the CDBG-DR funded rental housing programs, the selected nonprofit or public agency will refer the household to the property management office for the rental properties. Property owners are responsible for the application process for their rental units. If requested, households may seek assistance from the housing counselors in completing a rental unit application.

The nonprofit or public agencies selected under this NOFA are not responsible for application review, processing, or eligibility documentation collection /determination for any CDBG-DR program. Once the application is submitted to DCA, it will be the role of DCA staff and/or its existing Housing Advisors to provide these services. However, if an applicant is determined by DCA to be ineligible for a specific CDBG-DR program, the selected nonprofit or public counseling agencies will refer the applicant to other available resources.

DCA anticipates that some households may require ongoing counseling during the application process and/or construction period, as applicable. The on-going role of the selected nonprofit or public agency is to continue to provide the types of general counseling services outlined above rather than case management, construction support or advisory services related to the amount or use of the CDBG-DR assistance.

All counseling services must be made available to Sandy-impacted persons with limited English proficiency, in accordance with the State's Language Access Plan (LAP) and HUD's requirements. It is not expected that the housing counseling agencies will necessarily have in house translation services for all of the target languages.. However, the counseling agency should provide services in any languages where they have qualified translators, as indicated on their application. For all other languages, the counseling agency must have a process for using DCA's *I Speak Cards* (to be provided by DCA) and referring LEP households to DCA's language line and other translation services. Please note, DCA translation services will only be available to CDBG-DR funded programs. For all Limited English Proficiency (LEP) services provided by the counseling organization, the selected nonprofit or public agency will be required to report to DCA monthly on the number and type of those services so that DCA may report to HUD.

#### **IV. Qualifications**

Proposal teams must demonstrate the following types of expertise and background:

- Must be currently established as a nonprofit (with an appropriate IRS designation) or public agency;
- The team must contain at least one HUD-certified housing counseling agency which will undertake the direct counseling tasks outlined under scope of work above;
- Knowledge of housing counseling and referral to available resources;
- Understanding and knowledge of housing and/or community development programs;
- Knowledge of the chosen geographic area and its needs;
- Experience in communicating with persons with limited English proficiency; and
- Financial management, reporting and recordkeeping capacity, preferably on previous federal or state grants.

## **V. Factors for Award & Proposal Organization**

DCA will review each complete proposal received by the due date. It will rate and rank proposals according to the following criteria:

- **Experience – 60 points**
  - Years and breadth of housing counseling experience. The housing counseling agency must demonstrate experience in financial and credit analysis, client interaction, and referrals to and knowledge of other available housing resources;
  - Years, type and breadth of housing and community development experience;
  - Years and type of experience in working in the selected community(ies) or geographic areas;
  - Experience in working with persons with Limited English Proficiency; and
  - Experience with and knowledge of federal programs and associated reporting and recordkeeping.
- **Approach – 30 points**
  - The proposed approach to conducting the required counseling, including curriculum, advisory services, materials and procedures for both rental and homeowner families;
  - The proposed approach to supporting application intake for the LMI Homeowner Program and pre-qualification screening for TBRA Program; and
  - The proposed approach to rental program referrals.
- **Cost – 10 points**
  - Costs are reasonable and the proposed approach is cost effective. Applicants must develop and submit a budget for the first year of the counseling operations. Assume that the first year of operations will be from September 2014 to August 2015. Applicants do not need to submit a budget for the later option years.
  - The budget may be submitted in any format but must at a minimum list the proposed costs for salaries and fringe (such as health benefits), travel, equipment, materials and supplies, rent and utilities, consultants and subcontractors, and any other substantial cost categories for the housing counseling services to be provided under this NOFA. Do not include salary information by individual employee but rather by labor category or level/title. If proposed budgets exceed available funds, DCA reserves the right to negotiate costs with winning bidders. Applicants under this NOFA are requested to provide a total estimated budget for the first year of their CDBG-DR housing counseling services and a total all inclusive price per household counseled.

- The applicant has effective financial management systems. The applicant should briefly describe its accounting and financial management procedures and systems.

The proposing entity should organize its application according to each of these sections and **briefly** cover all of the topics outlined above related to experience, approach and cost. DCA does not expect extensive text – a brief summary of the applicable topic is appropriate.

## **VI. Proposal Instructions**

**Proposals in response to this NOFA must be received by DCA by no later than **noon on September 17, 2014**.** Complete proposals may be emailed to: [Sandhya.verma@dca.state.nj.us](mailto:Sandhya.verma@dca.state.nj.us) or mailed to: NJ Department of Community Affairs, Attn: Sandy Recovery Division 101 South Broad Street. PO Box 823. Trenton, NJ 08625. Late applications will not be accepted and will be returned to the applicant. DCA will email an acknowledgement receipt for all proposals received prior to the due date and time. Please plan to submit early in order to ensure you receive your acknowledgement before the due date.

Proposals shall not exceed 25 pages in length and should be organized as indicated above. Proposals must be complete and briefly contain the information outlined above. DCA reserves the right to request applicants to submit any minor missing information after the due date.

**Each applicant must also fill out and send in the Cover Sheet found at attachment A with its application to DCA.**

Questions regarding this NOFA or the application process may be submitted to [Sandhya.verma@dca.state.nj.us](mailto:Sandhya.verma@dca.state.nj.us) by no later than **noon Friday, September 12, 2014**.

Applicants will be notified on or before **September 24, 2014** of intent to award or not award funds under this NOFA.

**ATTACHMENT A: APPLICATION COVER SHEET**

Lead Applicant Organization Name	
Organizational DUNS Number	
Organizational Address - Street	
City	
County	
State	
Zip Code	
Name of Contact Person	
Phone of Contact Person	
Email of Contact Person	
Affiliated Organizations on the Applicant Team (list all)	
Counties Over Which the Organization Proposes to Provide Services (check all that apply)	Atlantic                  Bergen                  Cape May                  Essex                  Hudson
	Middlesex                  Monmouth                  Ocean                  Union
Locations of Counseling and Intake Offices (list street address, town and zip)	Location 1:
	Location 2:
	Location 3:
	Location 4:
	Location 5:
	Location 6:
	Location 7:
	Location 8:
	Location 9:
	Location 10:



In Which Languages Are Services Available	
Estimated Total Budget for Year 1 Counseling	
Estimated Budget Per Each Household Counseled	

By signing this application, I certify that the statements in this application are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 218, Section 1001)

Name of Authorized Submitter	
Signature	
Date	

## **ATTACHMENT B: SUBRECIPIENT AGREEMENT CLAUSES (MAY BE EXPANDED)**

- Statement of work - The agreement will include a description of the work to be performed, a schedule for completing the work, and a budget. These items will provide a sound basis for DCA to effectively monitor performance under the agreement.
- Records and reports – DCA will specify in the agreement the particular records the subrecipient must maintain and the particular reports the subrecipient must submit in order to assist DCA in meeting its recordkeeping and reporting requirements.
- Uniform administrative requirements - The agreement will require the subrecipient to comply with applicable uniform administrative requirements, (OMB Circular A-110 or A-87, implemented at 24 CFR Part 84 or 85; A-122 or A-21, as applicable; and A-133).
- Other program requirements - The agreement shall require the subrecipient to carry out each activity in compliance with all Federal and State laws and regulations, including the CDBG requirements at 24 CFR Part 570, as modified for CDBG-DR, and applicable requirements related to cross cutting federal and state rules such as but not limited to Section 3, conflict of interest, audits, procurement, drug free workplace, prevailing wage, accounting procedures, except that:
  - The subrecipient does not assume DCA’s environmental responsibilities; and
  - The subrecipient does not assume DCA’s responsibility for initiating the review process under the provisions of 24 CFR Part 52, Intergovernmental Coordination Regulations.
- Conditions for religious organizations - Where applicable, the conditions prescribed by HUD for the use of CDBG funds by religious organizations will be included in the agreement.
- Suspension and termination - The agreement will specify that, in accordance with 24 CFR 85.43, suspension or termination may occur if the subrecipient materially fails to comply with any terms of the agreement, and that the agreement may be terminated for convenience in accordance with 24 CFR 85.44.
- Reversion of assets - The agreement will specify that upon its expiration, the subrecipient shall transfer to DCA any CDBG funds on hand at the time of expiration and any accounts receivable attributable to the use of CDBG funds.