

**NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA)
Sandy Recovery Division (SRD)
Housing Counseling Services (HCS)
Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)**

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/>.

The Sandy Recovery Division (SRD) Housing Counseling Services Program began assisting storm-impacted households in 2014 through a network of agencies across the State. Agencies provide free HUD-certified housing guidance on a wide array of issues, including but not limited to: foreclosure and homelessness prevention, financial literacy and budget guidance, rental advisory and relocation services, utility assistance and help locating additional resources. As of the fourth quarter of 2018, almost 10,000 renter and homeowner households had received comprehensive housing counseling services through the program. Agencies have exhausted all allowable extensions, but a need for their services remains.

The purpose of this Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is to seek qualified organizations to provide services to applicants in CDBG-DR housing and rental programs. These services include, but are not limited to: application assistance for program enhancements; the identification of gap funding (if needed); foreclosure mediation; contractor selection assistance; fraud process navigation; financial literacy; and budget and credit counseling services. The two largest CDBG-DR housing programs are the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation and Mitigation (RREM) Program and the Low- to Moderate-

Income (LMI) Homeowners Rebuilding Program. As of Spring 2019, there remain approximately 1,065 displaced homeowners in those programs who have not completed their recovery process.

Housing recovery assistance is focused in the nine New Jersey counties most impacted by Superstorm Sandy. They include: Atlantic; Bergen; Cape May; Essex; Hudson; Middlesex; Monmouth; Ocean; and Union. However, the **largest percentage of the remaining households are located in Atlantic County.**

DCA has determined that the most effective way to continue housing counseling efforts is through New Jersey's community-based nonprofit and public organizations. This NOFA describes the scope of work and the process by which proposals will be evaluated. Please note that the following scope of work includes providing HUD-certified housing counseling services and assisting CDBG-DR program participants with the application for Supplemental Funds, a new initiative through the RREM and LMI programs. Awards will be for a term of one year with two (2) optional one-year extensions. Each option year will be separately negotiated with the awardee. All housing counseling services delivered under this NOFA will be provided at no cost to the household.

II. Eligible Organizations

Any entity 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 partnerships 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. Please consider following the guidance below when developing your proposal and establishing partnerships:

- DCA will not fund more than one agency in a county;
- The demand for service in the respective county should determine the degree of funding for office space and staffing;
- DCA seeks cost effective and innovative approaches that reflect the demand for service;
- DCA encourages community partnership proposals;
- All partnerships should select a lead organization as the subrecipient;
- Subrecipients are responsible for compliance with all cross-cutting policies that apply to financial management, reporting, and record keeping for all members of the partnership.

- If DCA does not receive sufficient qualified proposals to cover all nine counties, it may request that one or more of the awardees expand its service area to include any county not covered by other proposals.

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 two types of counseling services:

- Counseling for potential tenants in any of the CDBG-DR programs; and
- General housing counseling for current and eligible RREM and LMI Program applicants.

The counseling services shall include, but are not limited to:

- Referral to appropriate assistance programs or available CDBG-DR funded rental units;
- Identification of gap funding resources;
- Contractor selection, including fraud assistance, if necessary;

- Foreclosure mediation;
- Financial literacy;
- Fair housing rights;
- Mobility and relocation advisory services; and
- Assistance in completing applications for Supplemental Funds utilizing the web-based application link provided to the client.

The nonprofit or public agencies selected under this NOFA are not responsible for application review, processing, or eligibility determination for any CDBG-DR program. If an applicant is determined by DCA to be ineligible for a specific CDBG-DR program, the selected nonprofit or public counseling agencies should make every effort to identify alternative resources.

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. The counseling agency should provide services in any languages where they have qualified translators, as indicated on their proposal. For all other languages, the counseling agency must have a process for using DCA's *Speak Cards* (to be provided by DCA) and referring LEP households to DCA's language line and other translation services. DCA translation services will only be available to applicants of CDBG-DR funded programs. For all Limited English Proficiency (LEP) services provided by the counseling organization, the selected nonprofit or public agency must report to DCA monthly on the number and type of those services for DCA submission to HUD.

Other activities that shall be conducted by the selected nonprofits include:

- Attendance at monthly meetings with Housing Advisors;
- Organizing Payment Requests for RREM and LMI programs; and
- Monthly contact with RREM / LMI program applicants.

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;
- Proficiency in basic contract law;
- 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 evaluate each complete proposal received by the due date 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 meet the funding objective in this NOFA;

- 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; and
- The proposed approach to rental program referrals.

Cost – 10 points

- Costs are reasonable and the proposed approach is cost effective. Agencies must develop and submit a budget for one year of operations utilizing the Excel budget template provided;
- Eligible cost include: salaries and fringe benefits (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. Proposals must include labor category rates, not salary information per individual employee.
- The agency must demonstrate sound financial practices. A copy of the agency's most recent audit results must be included in the proposal for review.
- The proposing entity should organize its proposal according to each of these sections and **briefly** cover all of the topics outlined above related to experience, approach and cost.

VI. Proposal Instructions

Proposals in response to this NOFA must be received by DCA by no later than noon on Monday, July 29, 2019.

- Complete proposals may be hand delivered or mailed to:
NJ Department of Community Affairs, Attn: Sandy Recovery Division 101 South Broad Street. PO Box 823. Trenton, NJ 08625
- Late proposals will not be accepted and will be returned to the agency. DCA will email an acknowledgement receipt for all proposals received prior to the due date and time.
- Proposals shall not exceed 25 pages in length and should be organized as indicated above.
- Proposals must be submitted on a USB flash drive.
- Proposals must be complete and briefly contain the information outlined above. DCA may request applicants to submit any minor missing information after the due date.

There will be a MANDATORY HCS NOFA FAQ Session held at NJ DCA, 101 South Broad Street, Trenton NJ, on Thursday, June 13, 2019 at 10 am. Interested organizations should email Sylvia.Johnston@dca.nj.gov to register to attend.

Questions regarding this NOFA or the proposal process may be submitted to:

Sylvia.Johnston@dca.nj.gov and will be shared with all potential applicants.

Applicants will be notified on or before Monday, August 12, 2019 of DCA's intent to award pursuant to this NOFA.