2020 CDBG NOFA Workshop

Housing and Community Development

CDBG Grants Management Division

Introduction to the CDBG Redesign/GMS Pilot Project

- This is a pilot project! Your feedback is critical to know whether or not this effort is a success. We need to know:
  - If an application field is broken
  - If an application field doesn't meet the data needs
  - If a question is confusing
  - If an upload doesn't work
  - If a process is confusing or contradictory
  - If the system breaks
  - If you don't understand what to do next
  - If you have questions or concerns or need troubleshooting
- **Congratulations!** You are officially part of this pilot project. Help us make good choices!
- Application questions may change or evolve as we receive input, but once we mark a question required it will be final
  - Plan ahead to thoroughly review the application before submittal
  - We will keep a changes log so you can see what changes are made with each update

Housekeeping

- Schedule: 3 Sessions and 1 hour for questions and technical assistance – 5 minute breaks between sessions

- Parking, Restrooms, and Materials

- Goal of this Workshop – Go over information that is not already in existing training materials or in the NOFA materials

- Questions – If a question is answered in one of our online training aids or is explicit in the NOFA or Appendices, we'll direct to those resources

- Process – Staff will be recording any questions we can't answer here and will be regularly updating a FAQ regarding NOFA and CDBG Program questions and updates to the eCivis application.

Overview

Session 1: Preparing for Your Application
           eCivis Portal Access
           NOFA Solicitation Access
           Application Sections
           Application Process
           Technical Support

Session 2: Competitive and OTC Applications
           Selecting the Correct Activity
           Required Information
           Threshold Requirements
           Readiness Scoring
           Appendices

Session 3: Application Submittal
           Preparing your Budget
           Final Application Review
           Submitting the Application
           Troubleshooting Application Issues

Session 1: Preparing for Your Application

- eCivis Portal Access
  - Completing your Profile
- NOFA Solicitation Access
  - The NOFA Solicitation Page
  - NOFA Programs
- Application Sections
  - Sections I through VI
  - Application as Exhibit E
- Application Process
  - Timing Expectations
- Technical Support
  - Who to Call!

eCivis Portal Access

- Link to Portal: https://portal.ecivis.com/#/login

- Ways to access your Profile and how it will look different.
  - Original "Create an Account" Profile
    - Minimal – will need updating
  - Profile in Portal
    - More complete – may need additional information in application
  - Profile in Application
    - We'll get to this in a minute

Profile in New Account Signup

New Account Signup

Welcome to the grant application portal. This free service provided by eCivis allows grant seeking applicants the ability to save, collaborate

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Password

Weak

Sign Up

← Back to Login

Profile in Portal

Applicant Information

First Name: *

Last Name: *

Email:

Title:

Company:

Company Website:

City:

State: *

Organization Information

Organization Name:

Employer Identification Number (EIN):

DUNS:

Authorized Representative:

Business/Finance Representative:

Organization Address

Address:

Address 2:

City:

State:

County:

Congressional District/Region:

Zip:

Phone:

Fax:

NOFA Solicitation Access

- Link to NOFA Solicitation Page: https://gn.ecivis.com/GO/gn_redir/T/vyjsqf2kekyx
- 6 NOFA Program Solicitations
  - Economic Development Competitive
    - Business Assistance and Micro-Enterprise
  - Economic Development Over-the-Counter (OTC)
    - ED Capital grants
  - Housing Assistance Competitive
    - Single-Family Homebuyer and Rehab
  - Housing Assistance OTC
    - Multi-Family Rehab and Infrastructure in Support of Housing
  - Community Development (Non-Housing) Competitive
    - Public Services and Planning
  - Community Development (Non-Housing) OTC
    - Public Infrastructure and Facilities

Accessing the Application

- Application is ONLY available through the NOFA solicitation page.
- **NOTE:** Go through the WHOLE solicitation before you start your application. Download appropriate documents, take a note of the deadlines and the award limits.
- Go through the NOFA and Appendices before you start the application.
- The application instructions are in the application

Profile in Application

- Your profile in the application is very robust. Complete as much as is applicable to your application.

- Include multiple points of contact – we want to make sure that if someone in your organization is receiving our communications.

- If you are unsure about what information to include in your Profile, reach out to us.

Application Sections

- The application has been designed to work as Exhibit E of the Standard Agreement

- Each section relates to specific criteria in the Standard Agreement

- Keep in mind that what is included in the application will be enforceable through the agreement if the activity is awarded

Application Sections Cont.

- Section I
  - Activity Information: this will define the remaining application questions and should be completed first

- Section II
  - Beneficiary data: Make sure you include presumed benefit info if it applies to your activity. Not every activity has presumed benefit beneficiaries, so you can skip this if it does not apply to you

Application Sections Cont.

- ## Section III
  - – Activity setup information, including geographic tracking, Colonia, and tribe status

- ## Section IV
  - – Activity description, scope of work, and deliverables. Activity description should include information about who the activity will assist. Scope of work should talk about how task by task the activity will be implemented. Deliverables should detail what products will come from the activity.

Application Sections Cont.

- ## Section V
  - ### Milestones
    - Milestones – only the first and the last are required – additional milestones are encouraged but optional
    - The first milestone should be when you realistically plan to start implementing your activity.
    - The last milestone should be when you realistically plan to complete the activity.
    - These milestones will be part of the performance metrics in the Standard Agreement.

Application Sections Cont.

- Section V
  - Readiness(for Competitive applications only)
    - Readiness – these criteria are scored and are intended to show how well you are prepared to initiate or continue the activity.
    - Criteria for each readiness component are included to show what we will be looking for.
    - Readiness will be worth 80% of the scoring.
    - Criteria are new – we will do our best to help explain if there are questions or concerns.

Application Sections Cont.

- Section V
  - Threshold
    - Threshold – these items are required to move forward.
    - If you select "no" on a required threshold item, your application will be disqualified.
    - Requirements around public participation, public noticing, and pre-submittal of procurement documentation have been loosened to align with HUD.
    - Requirements for NEPA clearance, activity readiness, and compliance with 2 CFR 200 have been increased to align with HUD.

Application Sections Cont.

- Section VI
  - Budget
    - Must use the budget in the Grants Network system – detailed instructions on how to set up the budget are later in this workshop
    - Must include a budget narrative that explains how funds will be used, what other funding is included, and if there are any funding gaps. The narrative should include how the applicant will respond if less that the requested amount is awarded
    - Budget document upload – should be a spreadsheet of your line item budget that shows all of your funding sources. For program activities, your uploaded budget should show how funds will be distributed over the life of the activity.

Exhibit E

- The application becomes Exhibit E of the Standard Agreement
  - Scope of work and Deliverables are enforceable
  - National Objective and beneficiary data is locked-in
  - Budget is locked-in
  - Before we fully execute the Standard Agreement we will reach out and ask if anything needs to be updated
    - Milestones updated if necessary
    - Budget updated if necessary (only very minor updates will be allowed)

Application Process

- Complete application and upload required documents
  - If a document upload includes multiple documents, make sure to merge them into a single PDF.
- Use "Save Draft" to save the application while it is in the works
  - Save often!
- Use "Save" only when the application is complete
- Complete the budget through the budget link for each application
- DO NOT SUBMIT WITHOUT YOUR BUDGET!
- Review the application carefully before hitting submit
- The grantee personnel who is identified as the day-to-day grant administrator for the grantee should hit "Submit" on the application

Tech Support

- Who to call
  - Functionality problems contact eCivis
    - Passwords, logins, error messages, glitches in the system, etc. support@ecivis.com (877) 232-4847
  - Program questions contact HCD
    - Readiness criteria, National Objectives, matrix codes, questions on what to include or how to answer a field, etc. CDBGNOFA@hcd.ca.gov
  - If in doubt contact HCD CDBGNOFA or your rep
    - If it is a functionality issue, we'll direct you to eCivis. CDBGNOFA@hcd.ca.gov
  - **DO NOT contact HCD IT.**
    - They will not be able to help you! (and they will get angry with us ☹)

5 Minute Break

Session 2: Competitive and OTC Applications

- Selecting the Correct Application
  - Determining Activity Type
- Required Information Competitive
  - Activity
  - Readiness
  - Threshold
- Readiness Scoring
  - Scoring process

Selecting the Correct Application

- 6 NOFA Program Solicitations
  - Economic Development Competitive
    - Business Assistance and Micro-Enterprise (not a Combo)
  - Economic Development Over-the-Counter (OTC)
    - ED Capital grants
  - Housing Assistance Competitive
    - Single-Family Homebuyer and Rehab (not a Combo)
  - Housing Assistance OTC
    - Multi-Family Rehab and Infrastructure in Support of Housing
  - Community Development (Non-Housing) Competitive
    - Public Services and Planning
  - Community Development (Non-Housing) OTC
    - Public Infrastructure and Facilities

Required Information for Competitive Applications

- Activity information
  - Activity Category – what type of activity are you applying for?
    - Select from dropdown. If you don't see your activity in the dropdown, you may be in the wrong application. If you aren't sure select the activity that is closest to your planned activity and…
  - Select the matrix code for the specific activity
    - If you don't see the activity in the matrix code list, then odds are you are in the wrong application. Contact us if you have questions.
  - Select the correct National Objective
    - For more information about National Objectives, see the appendices and our online CDBG 101 training.

National Objectives

- Your National Objective should drive your Measure Indicator.
  - Low-mod clientele is Persons Assisted (individuals)
  - Low-mod housing is Households Assisted
  - Low-mod area benefit is People Assisted (aggregate)
  - Low-mod jobs is Jobs Created and Retained, or Businesses Assisted
    - ED activities can be area benefit, limited clientele, jobs, and businesses assisted – it depends on how the activity is set up with the National Objective.

Beneficiary Estimates

- Beneficiary estimates need to be realistic.
  - Grantees will be evaluated on how they actually perform against their proposed number of beneficiaries.
- Presumed benefit is not applicable to all activity types, however, we use this data in multiple places.
  - If your activity is not presumed benefit eligible according to HUD, but the activity does target people who meet the presumed benefit definition, include it so we can count it in our other reports.
  - If this doesn't apply at all, leave it blank.
- Additional benefit types
  - This is not HUD required data, however this is information that HCD collects to help evaluate the impact of HCD programs on a variety of people.
  - If this doesn't apply at all, leave it blank.

Activity Information

- Activity title – make it descriptive so we can easily identify what you are doing.
- Organization Name – who is the responsible entity
  - Usually this will be whoever is responsible for managing the funds and completing the NEPA, but in the case of partnerships between multiple eligible entities, this should be whoever is the lead organization.
- Colonia and Non-Federally recognized tribes
  - These are yes/no. Funding awarded through these allocations are on-top of per jurisdiction award limits.

Project/Program Census Location

- For all National Objectives
  - The first ask for Census information is to establish a fixed location for where the funding will be awarded – this should be the Census information for the applicant
    - This is to supplement congressional/legislative district data, which changes frequently
    - We will be able to tie funding to a location instead of a district in the event that district boundaries change
  - Address should be the primary address where the funding is awarded (for the applicant)
    - If a county is awarded funding, the address should be the County Administrator's Address

LMA Activity Data

- LMA Activities have additional census or survey data that must be entered
  - Income Survey if you answer Yes, must upload the survey documentation, No, must complete the census tract and block group information
  - This census information should identify the geography of the service or benefit area, not the awardee address (though they may be the same)
  - Marking the additional census tracts question yes, additional tract information will be added.
    - If you run out of room for the number of included census tracts, or if there are not enough block groups, please let us know and we'll fix it
  - For information on how to conduct an income survey see Appendix H and the online Income Survey training

Activity Description

- Activity Address
  - If the applicant will be completing the activity, then their address is appropriate
  - If there is a contractor or subrecipient completing the activity, or if the activity takes place at a specific location, then use that address
- Activity Description
  - Think "Who, What, Where, When, Why"
  - This section is not scored, however, we will be looking to make sure it is consistent with the National Objective and the Measure Indicator
  - This is your opportunity to pitch your activity
    - Don't worry, we aren't expecting pages and pages. A few well crafted paragraphs will do the trick in most cases.

Detailed Scope of Work – Tasks and Deliverables

- Detailed Scope of Work – Task Narrative
  - This is the "How" of your activity
    - This should be task oriented, and should indicate that you have a clear understanding of the steps necessary to complete your activity

- Detailed Scope of Work – Deliverable Narrative
  - This is the list of products for your activity
    - Every activity should have some deliverables
      - public participation, a final study, regular reports, council/board presentations, public binders, project documentation
    - This list should be fairly comprehensive and should indicate that you have a clear understanding of the products necessary to monitor your activity

Activity Timeline

- Reporting past expenditure
    - This is for activities that have delayed beneficiaries
    - Activities that do not have delayed beneficiaries should select "No"
- Milestones
    - First and last are required
        - Estimate the optimal start date for your activity
        - Estimate your completion date – be conservative
            - Your completion date MUST be before your potential expenditure deadline
    - Optional milestones
        - These are for you to help you administer your activity, and can be set up however you like
        - They can be changed administratively in the Standard Agreement
        - Consider setting up additional milestones to correlate with your activity tasks
    - Milestones do become part of the Standard Agreement

Readiness

- Readiness only applies to competitive applications – in OTC the readiness criteria are part of Threshold.
  - Readiness criteria are customized to each activity
  - They are intended to show how prepared you are to "hit the ground running" with your activity
  - The new criteria are designed for specificity and transparency
- FYI, readiness criteria that are scored this NOFA may be required in future NOFA's
  - The goal is to improve overall program operation

State Objectives

- In Competitive Programs, State Objectives are worth points, in OTC they are Threshold.
- State Objectives are simplified this year.
  - Must have documented proof of one action taken in the last 24 months to support fair housing
  - Must have documented proof of one action taken in the last 24 months that supports disaster resiliency
- Must be documented and must be recent.
  - We will be using the responses we get this round to better understand how we should be targeting State Objective requirements
  - Only one incident for each objective will be scored, but if you have done more than one and want to share, we are happy to have that in the file

Public Services Readiness

- Code Enforcement Toggle
    - Code Enforcement has a very different readiness path than standard public services
    - Selecting "Yes" will open the Code Enforcement path
    - Selecting "No" will open the Public Services path

Public Services Readiness Cont.

- Criteria are intended to clearly document the following
  - General need for the service;
  - Lack of access to the service (there are no other service providers, or the other service providers have no additional capacity); and/or
  - Lack of service accessibility (there are no service locations near enough for potential clients to get services);
  - There is a population that needs the service;
    - This may include documenting changes in that population that are driving the need for the service; and
  - Leveraged partnerships (with commitments)

Code Enforcement

- Population to enforcement officer ratio
  - The higher the ratio the higher the score
- Narrative describing needs – the narrative should provide context for all of the other scored components
- Age of housing stock
  - This can be represented different ways (average age, age cohorts, etc.) but should be public data
- Narrative relating age of housing stock to code enforcement needs
  - Be explicit. Not all older housing is a code enforcement problem, but some is. Help us understand your situation
- Narrative describing property nuisances
  - With supporting documentation
- Rental Housing Protections
  - Hold down shift or Ctrl to select multiple protections
  - A fair housing certification program CAN be used to meet your State Objective for fair housing

Planning Readiness

- Similar to public services
  - Statement of need and proposed outcomes
  - Identify population that would benefit from proposed outcomes
  - Document the lack of other resources
    - If there are other providers/facilities, we need to understand why you need a new/different/additional resource
  - Documentation of lack of accessibility (facility does not meet ADA accessibility standards)
  - Partnerships – who are you working with on this planning effort
    - Is it a leveraged planning project

Housing Program Readiness

- Marketing Plan
  - Points distributed based on thoroughness of each component
  - Fair Housing Protections (this will NOT count as your State Objective)
    - Federal requirements, fair lending practices, complaint management, etc.
  - Anti-Discrimination Plan
    - LEP, Anti-discrimination policies, discrimination claim management procedures, etc.
  - Target Population Analysis
    - How well do you know your market, and what adjustments are you making to your marketing plan to support program success?

Housing Program Readiness Cont.

- Underwriting Requirements
  - Acceptable property criteria
    - Are the standards clear? Do they align with HUD's standards? Is there an inspection and/or appraisal requirement? Is there an appeal process?
  - Income qualification criteria
    - Definitions of what constitutes income, time period for review, documentation standards. Tax returns? Credit reports? 3rd party verifications?
  - Loan to value standards
    - Hard or soft limits? Front end vs. Back end. What are you going to do if the new housing loan substantially increases monthly payments? Have a policy.

Housing Program Readiness Cont.

- Loan Servicing Plan
  - Loan default clauses
    - How will you handle defaults? Do you have default prevention measures? Default terms? What if they let their property insurance lapse and refuse to renew?
  - Long-term servicing obligations
    - How will you handle your loan portfolio? How will you do monitoring for occupancy/ownership? Are you tracking receivables? What about file management?
  - Loan transfer requirements
    - How will you handle inheritance? Resales? Refinances? What if the value of the property is less than the loan?

Economic Development Readiness

- Assistance to For-Profits and
  - Market Analysis
    - Understanding of market conditions and opportunities by market segment
    - Identifying and analyzing lending opportunities and competitors
    - Demand projections and conclusions
    - Loan underwriting and servicing documentation
- Micro-enterprise Assistance
  - Market Analysis
    - Understanding of market and need for assistance
    - Identifying and analyzing partners and competitors
    - Demand projections and conclusions

OTC Threshold

- Readiness as Threshold
  - Bid-ready Plans and Specs
    - Requires upload of a signed letter from engineer/architect that the plans and specs are "bid-ready"
    - Certification that the project will go to bid within 90 days of execution of the standard agreement
  - We do not need to see your plans and specs
  - We will cancel the grant if the project does not go to bid within 90 days
    - It means you were not ready
  - We will use the money to fund the next project down the waitlist
    - This is serious. Think of it like the Tax Credit deadlines. If you miss this, there is nothing we can do for you.

Common Threshold: Changes

- A lot of this is similar to past applications. We will talk about the differences
  - NEPA compliance – You must show you have completed NEPA
    - Question: Does that mean we have to have a published FONSI/NOIRROF?
    - Answer: We would like it if you published your FONSI/NOIRROF. You do not need to have an award in hand to publish. You just have to list potential federal funding sources. We want your NEPA to be complete and finished, with no additional steps that will slow your implementation.

Common Threshold: Changes

- Documentation
  - We want to see documentation for everything
  - We want you to pull your debarment information
  - We want you to provide your consultant contracts
    - We don't need to see your procurement this round (we aren't looking for documentation that we can't effectively review)
    - We will likely want to see procurement next round
      - Check out our procurement training for more information

Threshold Do's and Don'ts

- If a threshold item is marked required and you respond "No" the GMS will not prevent you from submitting the application
- It will disqualify your application without review
  - If it is an OTC application, we will kick it back to draft and you will lose your place in line
  - If it is a competitive application, it will be disqualified without appeal
- We've added "N/A" and conditionally formatted the fields so that you aren't asked to submit information that doesn't apply to you
  - Be thoughtful as you complete threshold
  - ASK if you have questions! We don't want to disqualify you!

Readiness Scoring

- Scoring will have 2 parts
  - Needs scores, nuanced to application type
  - Readiness scores dependent on the completeness and applicability of activity documentation
- Proposed scoring weight of 20% needs and 80% readiness
  - We will not be finalizing scoring until we finalize the application
    - Look for an Appendix L: Scoring Rubric in the solicitation (we'll send out a public email notification when it is available)

Appendices

- Use our appendices to provide guidance
- BIG changes in some appendices
  - Appendix A – Needs Scores
  - Appendix C – Public Participation
  - Appendix D – Sample Resolution
  - Appendix J – Certifications and Assurances
    - THIS REQUIRES A SIGNATURE AND UPLOAD!
  - Appendix K – Draft Sample Standard Agreement
- General documentation change – links!
  - We tried to hyperlink every citation to a free source. This is as much for us as you – so we can help answer questions.

5 Minute Break

Session 3: Application Submittal

- Preparing your Budget
  - Activity Budget
  - CDBG Budget
- Application Review
  - Save Draft vs. Save
- Submitting the Application
  - OH NO! IT IS WRONG!
- Troubleshooting Application Issues

Preparing Your Budget

- Activity Budget
  - This is an uploaded budget that includes all of the funding sources for your activity, by line-item. If you have a cost allocation plan it also needs to be uploaded.
    - We will be looking at this budget for unfunded line-items and budget gaps
      - Please be real with us. We will do our best to help you!
- CDBG Budget
  - This is the budget for your proposed CDBG funds
    - It may be the same as your activity budget. If it is, that's OK. Just say so in the narrative.
  - Must use the budget tool in eCivis

Preparing Your Budget Cont.

- We are not hard-stopping your budget
  - **You** get to calculate your admin
    - You can take less than the maximum limit of 7%.
  - **You** should consider the per jurisdiction limit
    - ***Strategize how you want to distribute funds across your activities***
  - **You** must have a game plan for your PI
    - You can include your PI on-top of activity and jurisdiction limits
    - You can also use it to supplement grant funds so your jurisdiction limit goes further
      - ***BUDGET FOR FUTURE PI***
      - We do not want to disencumber your grant
        - » It makes us sad and causes extra work for lots of HCD staff

Application Review

- We strongly recommend scheduling application review in your application preparation timeline
  - Use "Save Draft" when you are preparing your application (otherwise it will error on every empty required field)
  - Use "Save" only when you are ready to submit (you can't submit on "Save Draft")
  - Use the "View" option to see how your application looks before you submit.
  - Have a second set of eyes (if possible)
  - Make sure to review the budget too!

Submitting Your Application

- When you hit "Save" and all of the required fields are completed, then the green "Submit" button becomes available.

  – You can review the application after you hit "Submit" by using the "View" option.

- You will get a confirmation email once you submit so that you know the application was received and time stamped.

OH NO! IT IS WRONG! But it will be OK!

- So you've made an error in your competitive application (it happens!)
  - If you have prepared your application early and hit submit before the deadline, and
  - If you let us know you found an error and would like to fix it, then
  - We can return it to "Draft" and you can fix the issue and re-submit.
- Similarly, if your found the error in your OTC application and you've just submitted it, tell us and we'll unlock it, and you can fix it and resubmit – you'll lose your place in line, but faster is better in this scenario.

OH NO! IT IS WRONG! And too late.

- If you don't find your error until 48 hours before the competitive due date
  - Sorry! We won't be able to unlock your application in time to meet the deadline.
- If you don't find your error until after the competitive due date
  - That's unfortunate. Sorry, we can't help you.
- If we find the error in your OTC application, and it results in a disqualification, we will reject your application, kick it back to draft for you to fix, and you will lose your place in line.
  - Timing wise, it is MUCH BETTER if you find the error than us.

Submitting Your Application

- In summary:
  - Ask Questions if you don't know or aren't sure about an application field
  - Check the FAQ and the Issues and Updates Log frequently to make sure you stay on top of changes
  - Plan time to review your application
    - And time to fix errors if you find them!
  - We want you to be successful
    - We will do our best to help you if you give us time

Troubleshooting Application Issues

- Over the next couple of weeks we are leaving the application in an "open" format
  - If you find issues as you are looking through the application, let us know so we can fix them.
  - After the application is "locked-in" we will have a much harder time fixing problems.
  - You may have to re-enter information after the application is "locked-in" we recommend drafting narratives in a word processor (it helps with spelling and grammar too) and then pasting them into the final application.
- If you have problems after the application is "locked-in" and they aren't obvious log-in issues, contact HCD at CDBGNOFA@hcd.ca.gov first
  - We will triage issues with eCivis to determine what is programmatic and what is software function.
- If you have application issues on the deadline – 2 minutes to go and you email us (emails have time stamps) and we triage it with eCivis and your application is otherwise complete and ready to submit, we will accept your application, even if it is technically "late".
  - If you have application issues at 2 minutes to go and email us and your application is not complete and ready to submit, we will not be able to help you.
  - We can see your applications. ☺

Q & A

Our questions for you!

Is there anything we didn't cover that you were really hoping to learn about?

Where do wish we have more detail?