

**Notice of Funding Availability for
HUD's FY 2016 and 2017 Comprehensive Housing Counseling Grant Program
Frequently Asked Questions (Part 2)**

Question 1: Will the grant funds awarded through the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-2017 NOFA (NOFA) be made available in October?

Answer 1: Information regarding anticipated announcement and award dates is unavailable at this time. However, we can provide the following information regarding use of grant funds.

HUD will notify applicants of their selection for funding. Grantees under this NOFA will execute a grant agreement with HUD. Grantees will receive funding on a cost reimbursement basis for eligible housing counseling services. The initial period of performance for grants awarded under the NOFA will be for a period of up to eighteen (18) months. For planning purposes, applicants should assume that the period of performance is October 1, 2015 through March 31, 2017.

Question 2: The NOFA states in certain instances that counselors need to be certified; however, I have not seen anything released yet, or received notification regarding a final rule, policy guideline, or a counselor certification exam, etc. Have the final requirements for certification of counselors been determined? Is there an exam my staff should be preparing for? My staff seems to believe that our counselors need to currently be certified. .

Answer 2: Currently housing counselors participating in the Housing Counseling Program do not have to be certified. The NOFA makes reference to the fact that sections 106(e) and (f) of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, which requires, in part, that the Department test and certify housing counselors providing HUD-related counseling. HUD has published a proposed rule in the Federal Register related to these requirements. The Final Rule has not been published. Reference is made to the requirement to test and certify counselors to make applicants aware that expected training, testing and certification expenses are eligible expenses under the NOFA

Applicants should be aware that expected training, testing and certification expenses are eligible expenses under this NOFA. The funding methodology contains a layer of funding based on the number of the Applicant's full-time equivalent (FTE) housing counselors. This change was made not only to improve the methodology with which HUD determines award amounts, but also to make sure award amounts are made in a manner consistent with the intent to help counseling agencies offset expected certification costs for their counselors

Question 3: I had a conflict and could not attend the February 25, 2016 Housing Counseling NOFA Webinar. Will this webinar be available at any other time for those of us who were not able to participate?

Answer 3: The Housing Counseling NOFA Webinar has been archived. The audio, PowerPoint presentation, and the transcript are available on the HUD Exchange at the link below.
<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/housing-counseling/webinars/>

Question 4: Must an Applicant or one of its Sub-grantees be physically located within the geographic boundaries of a Promise Zone to qualify for the bonus points available in connection with Promise Zones as part of the FY 2016 and 2017 Housing Counseling Grant NOFA?

Answer 4: To be eligible to receive the bonus points available in connection with Promise Zones, an Applicant and, if applicable, its Sub-grantees must obtain the required certification on Form HUD 50153 signed by the authorized official of the designated Promise Zone to verify that the Applicant or one or more of its Sub-grantees have met the required criteria. The physical location of the Applicant's or Sub-grantee's office or offices with respect to Promise Zone boundaries is not specifically identified as a criteria for establishing eligibility for bonus points. Form HUD 50153 does describe certain geographic criteria that must be met for the proposed activities and projects to be undertaken in connection with a Promise Zone. The authorized official must certify to the following in order for an applicant to receive bonus points:

- (1) The applicant is engaged in activities, that in consultation with the Promise Zone designee, further the purposes of the Promise Zones initiative; and
- (2) The applicant's proposed activities either directly reflect the goals of the Promise Zone or will result in the delivery of services that are consistent with the goals of the Promise Zones initiative; and
- (3) The applicant has committed to maintain an on-going relationship with the Promise Zone designee for the purposes of being part of the implementation processes in the designated area.

Question 5: We are a recently HUD-approved housing counseling agency. Some of the Rating Factors are based on past performance. How can we estimate our potential score for these ratings as a recently approved agency? For example, R.F. 1 Sub-factor 2 states that "HUD will evaluate Applicant compliance with programmatic requirements and oversight results" for this scoring. R.F. 3 Sub-factor 1 poses the same question. How should we self-score since there are no prior programmatic requirements?

Answer 5: Applicants may not be able to precisely estimate their potential score for each of the rating factors. However, please note that for a period of at least 120 days, beginning 30 days after the awards for a Program NOFA are publicly announced, HUD will provide to a requesting Applicant a debriefing related to its application. Information provided during a debriefing may include the final score the applicant received for each rating factor, final evaluator comments for each rating factor, and the final assessment indicating the basis upon which assistance was provided or denied.

A request for a debriefing must be made in writing or by email by the authorized official whose signature appears on the SF424 or by his or her successor in office, and be submitted to housing.counseling@hud.gov.

Regarding Rating Factor 3 Sub-factor 1(a): Please note that newly-approved applicants who were not required to submit a Form HUD-9902 during the period October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015 must prepare and submit a Form HUD-9902 as part of the application. This Form HUD-9902 report should reflect the total housing counseling activity of the applicant and its network (if applicable) for FY 2015. See HUD Handbook 7610.1 for additional guidance on completing the Form HUD-9902 report.

Question 6 For R.F. 3 Sub-factor 1(b), how do we self-score our budget?

Answer 6: Applicants may not be able to precisely estimate their potential score for each of the rating factors. However, please note that for a period of at least 120 days, beginning 30 days after the awards for a Program NOFA are publicly announced, HUD will provide to a requesting applicant a debriefing related to its application. Please also note that the dollar amounts provided in Chart E.2 should reflect the actual costs to administer your agency's housing counseling program from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015.

Question 7: R.F. 2 Sub-factor 1 has four communities listed for 10 points. How can we self-score our application for this Rating Factor?

Answer 7: Applicants may not be able to precisely estimate their potential score for each of the rating factors. However, please note that for a period of at least 120 days, beginning 30 days after the awards for a Program NOFA are publicly announced, HUD will provide to a requesting applicant a debriefing related to its application.

Question 8: For R.F. 1 Sub-factor 1, would home visits be regarded as an alternate mode of counseling?

Answer 8: Yes, counseling that takes place in a client's home is an example of an alternate mode of counseling.

Question 9: For R.F. 3 Sub-factor 3, is there a definition or description of "housing counseling-related partnerships/collaboratives"? This program is involved in several formal and informal relationships as part of its service, and we just want clarity on what is eligible for scoring.

Answer 9: HUD has not provided a definition or description of "housing counseling-related partnerships/collaboratives." Both formal and informal relationships are eligible for scoring purposes.

Question 10: Does my agency have to submit the HUD-2995 - Certification of Consistency with Sustainable Communities Planning and Implementation with the grant application?

Answer 10: Your agency may submit the HUD-2995 with the FY16-17 NOFA application to receive bonus points. This form must be signed by the Designated Point of Contact for designated Preferred Sustainability Status Community or the HUD Regional Administrator in cases where the Applicant would otherwise be self-certifying. Designated PSS Communities Points of Contacts can be found on HUD's website at http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=PSS_POCs.pdf

Applicants that do not meet the criteria for bonus points- Preferred Sustainable Status Community - are not required to submit Form HUD-2995.