



**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Choice Neighborhoods Program**

CALL FOR NON-FEDERAL PEER REVIEWERS

HUD is seeking peer reviewers to assist in the review process of applications for FY 2010 Choice Neighborhoods grants. Choice Neighborhoods is a new competitive grant program that will provide funds to eligible entities to transform neighborhoods of poverty into viable mixed-income neighborhoods with access to economic opportunities by revitalizing severely distressed public and assisted housing and investing and leveraging investments in well-functioning services, effective schools and education programs, public assets, public transportation, and improved access to jobs.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act, 2010 permits the HUD Secretary to use up to \$65,000,000 of the HOPE VI appropriations for a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative demonstration. The Round 1 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) was issued on August 25, 2010 and is available from Grants.gov, as well as the HUD website.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Choice Neighborhoods grants will primarily fund the transformation of public and/or HUD-assisted housing developments through preservation, rehabilitation, and management improvements as well as demolition and new construction. In addition, these funds can be used on a limited basis (and combined with other funding) for improvements to the surrounding community, public services, facilities, assets and supportive services. Choice Neighborhoods grant funds are intended to catalyze other investments that will be directed toward necessary community improvements. The leveraging of other sources will be necessary to address other key neighborhood assets and achieve the program's core goals. The program ensures that current residents will be able to benefit from this transformation by preserving affordable housing, or providing residents with the choice to move to affordable housing in another, existing neighborhood of opportunity. Choice Neighborhoods has three core goals:

- 1) Housing: Transform distressed public and assisted housing into energy efficient, mixed-income housing that is physically and financially viable over the long-term;
- 2) People: Support positive outcomes for families who live in the target development and the surrounding neighborhood, particularly outcomes related to residents' health, safety, employment, and education; and
- 3) Neighborhood: Transform neighborhoods of poverty into viable, mixed-income neighborhoods with access to well-functioning services, effective schools and education programs, public assets, public transportation, and improved access to jobs.

In response to the Round 1 NOFA, Choice Neighborhoods grant applicants can apply for a Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant or a Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant. The application

requirements are different for each type of grant. HUD will announce 12-15 Planning Grant awards upon conclusion of its Round 1 application reviews. From the pool of Implementation Grant applicants in Round 1, HUD will select approximately 10 finalists. (Note: HUD will then publish a second NOFA, and in Round 2, these finalists will be given an opportunity to assemble a more detailed application. At the conclusion of Round 2 application reviews, approximately two to three of these finalists will be awarded an Implementation Grant. This “Call for Non-Federal Peer Reviewers” is only for Round 1.)

WHO:

Through this “Call for Non-Federal Peer Reviewers,” HUD is seeking non-Federal peer reviewers who will work with Federal employees to review Choice Neighborhoods applications. Non-Federal peer reviewers should have expertise in a variety of subject matters, including those that relate to the three core goals described above of Housing, People and Neighborhoods. Non-Federal peer reviewers may be professionals with expertise in housing development, community development (especially mixed-income, mixed-use), urban planning, social service planning and coordination, or other relevant areas (e.g., practitioners [planners, developers, architects, etc.], consultants, researchers, college or university educators, evaluators, etc.) The selected reviewers should have professional experience related to the three core goals of Choice Neighborhoods – Housing, People, and Neighborhoods – and demonstrable expertise in at least one of the three goals.

WHAT:

Peer reviewers will independently read, rate, and provide written comments for Planning Grant applications and/or Implementation Grant applications submitted to HUD in response to the Round 1 Choice Neighborhoods NOFA. Please note that selection as a peer reviewer is not guaranteed; HUD reserves the right to not select an individual as a peer reviewer.

Non-Federal peer reviewers will be paid an honorarium for their work. Applications will be subject to a threshold review and then a rating (scoring) review. For Planning Grant applications, \$315 would be paid per threshold review of an application (estimated to take approximately 4 hours) and \$315 per rating review of an application (estimated to take approximately 4 hours.) For Implementation Grant applications, \$475 would be paid per threshold review of an application (estimated to take approximately 6 hours) and \$635 per rating review of an application (estimated to take approximately 8 hours.) HUD will determine whether reviewers evaluate Planning Grant applications and/or Implementation Grant applications.

REQUIREMENTS: In addition to select skills, attributes and expertise, peer reviewers must also meet the following requirements:

- Availability:
 - It is anticipated peer reviewers will need to dedicate approximately 20 hours per week for a 4-6 week period during November and December 2010 (planned Nov. 8 – Dec. 17; Federal holidays will be observed.) While not a requirement, if you are able to commit more than 20 hours per week please indicate this availability in the email described in the “If Interested” section below. Reviewers will be required to complete work prior to arriving at the DC-area grant review training and kick-off session (see “Location and Travel to DC Area” below), including reading and becoming familiar with the NOFA and Frequently Asked Questions. Reviewers will be compensated up to four hours of the review rate for their pre-site work.
 - Most of the review will be completed independently and thus could be done during evenings and weekends. However, part of the review process will include conference

calls with your team and the competition coordinators. Thus, you will need to be available for conference calls for approximately 4-5 hours per week (these hours are included in the time estimates provided in this document) during regular work hours, Monday-Friday, 9 AM – 5 PM Eastern Standard Time. The majority of calls will originate between 11 AM – 4 PM Eastern Standard Time.

- Application review time is needed for completing duties related to the competition and grant reviews including, training, reading, scoring, developing and writing comments, and discussing applications.
- This approximated time commitment may be adjusted depending on the number and/or complexity of applications HUD receives. Accordingly, HUD is not guaranteeing a minimum number of applications that will be assigned for review.
- Location and Travel to DC Area: Reviewers will be expected to be in the DC area for one three-day training and kick-off session, which is anticipated to occur November 8-10. Travel, lodging and per diem costs would be paid by HUD, as applicable. An additional training session is planned for later in the process but will be conducted remotely. Otherwise, review work will take place remotely.
- Tools: Each reviewer must have access to a computer, the Internet, a phone, a printer and have the ability to interact within the web environment.
- Quality of Review: Each reviewer must provide detailed, objective, constructive, and timely written reviews for each assigned application. These reviews will be used to recommend applications for funding.
- Conflict of Interest: Please be aware that any non-Federal peer reviewer for the Choice Neighborhoods competition will be subject to a review for possible, apparent, and/or actual conflicts of interest, including responding to specific conflict of interest questions that will be forwarded to candidates after submission of their résumé and completion of the online Reviewer Skill form. In addition, potential reviewers must complete OGE form 450 and HUD form 450-A. The questions generally seek to obtain information about the applicant's professional experience(s), including any financial interest that the applicant may have in any Choice Neighborhoods application. If a potential conflict of interest is identified, HUD will consider whether the individual can participate as a peer reviewer in full compliance with all applicable Department policies and procedures. In this way, HUD is able to determine that the objective and efficient management and administration of the Choice Neighborhoods program ultimately ensures the integrity of the Department's function and the public's confidence in that integrity.

Reviewers cannot have a covered relationship with any organization with a financial interest in the NOFA or the Choice Neighborhoods grant programs. Specifically, reviewers cannot work on a grant which will have a direct and predictable effect on the financial interest of himself/herself; a member of his/her household and an entity in which that household member serves as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, agent, attorney, consultant, contractor or employee; a relative with whom the employee has a close and personal relationship; an entity he/she seeks a business, contractual or other financial relationship; an organization in which the reviewer is an active participant; or a recent former employer. Ultimately, no reviewer can have circumstances that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question his/her impartiality in the matter being reviewed.

IF INTERESTED: If you would like to be considered as a non-Federal peer reviewer:

- 1) Go to the following URL <http://www.namgt.com/gmc> and provide the information requested. You will be asked via this URL to complete the on-line Reviewer Skill form and upload your résumé.
- 2) You will receive additional detail following your provision of the requested information (i.e., you will be asked to answer specific conflict of interest questions and to complete the OGE form 450 and HUD form 450-A). Respondents would provide this additional information via email. While not a requirement, if you are able to commit more than 20 hours per week please indicate the number of hours (up to 40) that you will be available weekly in this email.
- 3) The first set of prospective consultants will be drawn on **October 7, 2010** so interested parties are encouraged to submit the required information by that date. Those respondents who meet this submission deadline date will be considered first for possible selection. However, applications will continue to be accepted after October 7.

If you have questions concerning this Call for Non-Federal Peer Reviewers, please contact Eileen Marshall at 703-415-1700 ext. 233 or emarshall@namgt.com.

PROGRAM INFORMATION: For more information about the Choice Neighborhoods Program, go to <http://www.hud.gov/cn>.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your interest in the Choice Neighborhoods program.