

Survey Methodology

April 21, 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR: Karen Miller Regional Administrator -
Regional Housing Commissioner, 3S

ATTENTION: John J. Kane, CPD Director
Philadelphia Regional Office, 3C

FROM: Kenneth C. Williams, Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Grant Programs, CG

SUBJECT: Survey Methodology

This is in response to your memorandum dated February 2, 1994, requesting clarification of the procedures for conducting surveys which were contained in a memorandum dated July 11, 1988, from General Deputy Assistant Secretary Jack R. Stokvis. The subject of the Stokvis memorandum was survey methodology to determine low/mod status of CDBG service areas. Your office raised three questions related to the explanation of survey methodology in the memorandum.

The first question was what the sample size should be for a universe of 1-50 households since the Stokvis memorandum seemed to indicate that the sample size required to generate an acceptable level of accuracy would be 50. With a universe of 50 or less, a sample of less than the universe is unacceptable for statistical purposes. However, since the objective for CDBG purposes is simply to determine that the percent of persons in the area is at least 51 percent (or some lesser number for certain communities qualifying for the "upper quartile" exception), as soon as the grantee has answers from a sufficient number of respondent households to indicate that the required percentage is present, it could consider the information sufficient for area benefit documentation purposes. For example, if the universe is ten and the grantee only receives responses from seven, the information would still be sufficient for CDBG purposes if six of the seven were found to be low and moderate income since it would mean that at least 60 percent of the households in the area are low and moderate income.

The second question was whether the sample size of 400, which was the figure in the Stokvis memorandum for any universe over 2,700 still applies to entitlement communities with universes of upwards of 40,000 who are interested in conducting city-wide surveys in order to qualify city-wide activities such as central downtown district improvements. The answer is yes. A truly randomly drawn sample of 400 households will provide an acceptable level of confidence to support conclusions about the percentage of low/mod income households in an area regardless of the number of households over 2,700 in the universe. Because surveys of large areas are more difficult to undertake with the same statistical accuracy as the census, any community undertaking a city-wide survey should consider hiring a professional demographer to conduct the survey to ensure that its statistical reliability is comparable to that of the U.S. Census as is required by 24 CFR 570.208(a)(1)(D).

The third and final question asks whether the procedures require that each respondent certify that the information is correct. No, the information need not be certified by the individual respondents.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Entitlement Communities Division at (202) 708-1577.

cc: Robert P. Allen, SC