TA Request Review & Assignment Development Business Process Guide

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Purpose, Scope, and Structure

This guide outlines the first steps in launching technical assistance under a Community Compass or Distressed Cities Technical Assistance (TA) award: need identification and articulation through an assignment to a TA Award Recipient (Recipient). The purpose is to ensure HUD consistently applies similar criteria for consideration of TA needs so that TA assignments are eligible and appropriate. This guide is primarily to support HUD staff who are designated as points of contact to triage TA requests as well as anyone who is responsible for drafting TA assignment descriptions for a designated assigner to input into the system. Recipients may read this guide for awareness of the requirements and intention that goes into the demand for technical assistance received through an assignment as it may better help inform work plan development.

This document distinguishes TA request review (triage) from other types of need identification and then outlines how to properly develop a TA assignment, regardless of the way the need came to be identified and authorized for TA support.

This guide applies to TA Request and Assignments under all HUD funding awarded for the Community Compass Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program, which includes all funding sources associated with CFDA number 14.259 (collectively referred to as the "TA Program"). This Guide specifically discusses criteria for review; content and organization; and information dissemination.

Roles and Responsibilities

This section briefly describes key roles involved in reviewing TA requests and developing TA assignments.

TA Requestor: The organization, individual, or HUD staff that submits a TA request on behalf of an eligible HUD customer in the HUD Exchange TA portal.

Triage Manager: the staff who oversee the TA Portal Requests to ensure timely review and actions on all TA Requests, across HUD programs. This role engages program and field offices for decisions and acts on their behalf in the TA portal.

As part of their role, Triage Managers will:

- conduct a front-end screening process of TA requests submitted in the HUD Exchange TA Portal on a daily basis;
- make referrals with recommendations to the appropriate program or field office;
- ready TA requests for further review like for a Review Committee in CPD, when appropriate;
- manage the TA requests and works in conjunction with the program office Triage staff to ensure their requests are acted upon timely and updates status in the TA Portal;
- train and provide consultation to Triage POCs in program offices;
- work in conjunction with the program offices to maximize TA resources helping to find best TA award for any approved requests; and
- manage the TA requests in the queue in all categories to fruition including follow up until referred, resolved, assigned, or not approved.

Triage Point of Contact (POC): staff who conduct an initial screening of the TA requests submitted in the TA Portal, usually upon request of the triage manager who referred the request to the POC. The triage point of contact then notifies the triage manager of the decision to approve, hold, or deny a request. The POC

- reviews and responds to TA requests upon receipt
- responds to and acts on program and field office recommendations
- provides determination to Triage Manager to update the TA Portal Status or take additional action

TA Request Triage – Departmental Roles

Program Office/Fund Source	Triage Manager	Triage POC
Departmental	• TAD for all programs except SNAPS and PIH • OPM for PIH Departmental	• All programs (OAHP, OHH, Housing, FHEO, etc.)
All PIH (ONAP, PH Receivership, PH Departmental)	• OPM in PIH • ONAP GTM	• PIH program office SMEs • ONAP GTM
American Rescue Plan	• OPM in PIH • EHV SME • ONAP GTM • TAD for HOME	• EHV SME • ONAP GTM • OAHP Management
Office of Special Needs (McKinney Vento, Youth, CARES)	• SNAPS GTM	• SNAPS GTM
OBGA (NSP, DR, CARES)	• TAD	• OBGA GTMs for each program listed
Housing (MAHRA)	• TAD	• Housing GTM
FHEO (NFHTA)	• TAD	• FHEO GTM

Assigner: Designated HUD program staff that submit TA assignments in DRGR on behalf of the program offices thereby directing the use of TA resources toward approved and eligible TA needs.

Assigners are designated in DRGR and identified in the Points of Contact list on HUD.gov by program area. Assigners may include the CAO, triage staff, GTRs, GTMs, and other appointed assigners throughout HUD. TAD requires that each program office administering their own awards designate staff to make assignment. Only those with the "Assigner" role in DRGR, can make assignments in DRGR.

Assigners must understand TA eligibility, strategies, and requirements; and the ability to translate HUD's TA decision and needs into a relevant assignment. Assigners must also be familiar with eligible TA activities identified in the NOFA, and types of TA available and appropriate.
TAD GTRs will be available to review and provide feedback on draft assignments before they are tasked to the TA provider.

TA Award Recipient (Recipient): the non-Federal entity receiving an award directly from HUD to carry out an activity under a HUD TA program. The Recipient receives the assignment as a demand for TA services to which they respond through a work plan for implementation.

TA Need Identification Overview

Needs are identified in multiple ways, which this guide will highlight but one common way is through a request for TA. Therefore, this guide starts with an overview of how to triage TA requests and then progresses to outline other forms of need identification before outlining the important considerations in crafting a quality TA assignment.

Requests for assistance come from a variety of organizations and make clear the need for capacity- building or technical assistance resources. Assignments are HUD's formal demand for TA services on behalf of grantees which may result from a request or from other strategic planning efforts or directives. Please note that a TA Assignment does not necessarily derive from a TA Request. This guide combines both topics to better illustrate the potential pathways for need identification resulting in TA.

The guide addresses the receipt and review of requests, as well as the assignment of a demand for TA services to build the capacity of HUD grantees and eligible customers.

HUD Exchange TA Request Overview

HUD receives TA requests through the HUD Exchange TA Portal as submitted by grantees, HUD program office staff on behalf of eligible customers, and the public. The TA portal is hosted on the HUD Exchange website and serves as a central repository for receiving requests for HUD TA. These requests are triaged by appointed HUD staff for review and action.

In the HUD Exchange, users complete a form to submit a request for technical assistance. The request form includes basic demographics about the requestor (name, organization, and contact information) as well as background on the need for TA:

- Recipient: Organization to be assisted by the TA
- Background:
  - Field Office consultation regarding the request
  - History of technical assistance received in past three years
  - Recipient review of existing resources, guidebooks, and trainings
  - Status of other TA already underway
- Topics: Identification of relevant program topics for TA
- Request Details:
  - Details about the problem or challenge to be addressed through TA and the factors that led to the problem or challenge
  - Descriptions of the assistance needed from HUD to address the problem described
  - Deadlines or timing considerations related to the request
  - Intended result of the TA
  - Expected outcome from TA

TA Request Review Considerations in Determining Approval

HUD Triage Managers and Triage Points of Contact should consider the following questions when evaluating the request received:

- Do the proposed activities meet eligibility requirements? If not, can they be reframed to do so and achieve the desired results?
- How intensive or complex are these issues? Does it warrant in-depth TA or are other interventions useful like AAQ, On-Call, or field office support?
- Does the organization to be assisted demonstrate readiness, willingness, and ability to receive TA? This assessment may be informed by leadership turnovers, staffing levels, or history of ethical issues.
- What was the return on investment of prior TA?
- What will be the likely return on investment for new TA?
- If TA is considered, what outcomes would be achieved?

Other TA Needs – not submitted as requests in TA Portal

As noted above, not all TA assignments are generated from TA requests submitted in the HUD Exchange TA Portal, TA needs are also identified in other ways as follows:

- **TA planning process:** Upon receiving appropriated funds for technical assistance the Department or a program office is encouraged to identify need and outline planned outcomes and activities for that year funding which can then inform broader Departmental TA Plans, Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO), and TA assignments. For the TA funding received through the Office of Policy Development and Research account, HUD is required to submit to Congress a Departmental TA Plan outlining planned activities each year and that plan then governs the priorities and activities undertaken for those funds. When activities are part of a larger plan, activities are assigned to a Recipient without an additional request of approval.
- **Leadership directed:** HUD and program office leadership may also identify emerging priorities that can be directly assigned so long as they are in accordance with existing TA planning documents and NOFOs.
- **Other on-going needs anticipated:** Some TA needs are defined and approved as ad-hoc needs to allow for urgent response to exigent circumstances like recovery from natural disaster. These activities are usually addressed generally in TA plans and NOFOs so that TA may be assigned to Recipients quickly, without internal review processes.

Regardless of the method for the need identification, through TA Portal requests or advance TA planning, the needs may only be addressed through eligible activities and are articulated through a clear description of need through an assignment to the Recipient.

How to Triage TA Request

Initial Baseline Review – Upon receiving a TA request through the TA Portal, triage staff consider the following factors to determine if the request is eligible, complete, or appropriate for TA:

- **Eligibility:**
  - Confirm request will support eligible HUD customer (per definition in NOFO)
    - Individuals may not receive TA; requests for housing assistance and other individual support are not eligible. Please review our resources on eligible activities for TA on our SharePoint site.
  - TA will help build capacity, skill, and knowledge of the organization(s) assisted without doing the work of the grantee
  - Aligns with the eligible activities outlined in the NOFO (i.e., group learning, knowledge management, direct assistance, etc.).

- **Completeness:**
  - Determine if the TA request is complete, each request is reviewed for clarity and completeness.
  - Triage may follow up with the requestor if additional information is needed.

- **Alternate solutions:**
  - Determine if an immediate solution is available. Triage may refer the requestor to program resources on the HUD Exchange, provide info about homeless or housing assistance and resources in their city/state, and/or refer the requestor to AAQ.
  - Determine if the TA request should be referred to another office for intervention, including Environmental, PD&R, or HUD Field Office.

TA Request – Triage Process Overview and Status Updates

The Triage manager or designated triage staff conduct initial baseline reviews (triage) of each TA Request submitted in the TA Portal and if needed, forwards it to the respective field or program office for additional or final review.

In cases where it is necessary to wait based on pending information or the program office waiting on a particular activity, the triage staff will notify the triage manager. The triage manager updates the status in the TA Portal according to the chart below which generates a notification that requires a written narrative.

It is important to document the reason for decisions or status changes so that everyone may transparently understand the status.

HUD Exchange TA Portal TA Requests Change Status

Options	Description
Request Information	Use when TA request is incomplete or unclear - TA request narratives must clearly explain the problem, the need for the TA, and how the TA will assist the requestor. Should inadequate information be received, triage follows up via email and updates status until information received allows advancement.

On-Hold	At times requests are held during triage when it is determined the recipient is not yet ready for TA based on pending action, i.e., when the grantee is completing steps for readiness like hiring new staff, realigning resources, or completing required training prior to TA delivery. A request in this mode is still considered pending action and can be advanced to a different selection once a subsequent decision is made.
Referred to Program Office	Triage routinely refers TA requests to the Program office for review and/or consultation. The program office designee reviews the request and decides how to proceed and advises Triage on which action to take (approve, not approve, etc.).
Referred to Field Office	Consultation with field office is encouraged for every TA request for direct assistance to a grantee to gain insight into performance and capacity concerns. However, this status is only recommended for selection in the TA Portal when the request is considered not appropriate for TA and is better suited for field office intervention. This selection removes the request from the request queue as it is considered a referral to the field office to provide TA as part of their jurisdictional oversight. Once this option is selected, it cannot be changed or undone. A new (subsequent) TA request would have to be submitted for review in the HUD Exchange TA Portal.
Referred to Review Committee	This only applies to program offices that have a committee that reviews eligible TA requests like CPD does for more complex TA that cannot be addressed by AAQ or On-Call TA, such as Direct TA to resolve financial grant management issues. For detailed reference, access this link to learn more about CPD's Review Committee governance structure.
Referred to Decision-Making Committee	This is for requests that are appealed or undecided by the review committee. It is elevated to a committee of higher-level principal decision-makers in HUD and is rarely used.
Referred to On-call TA	A request may be approved for On-Call TA which is limited direct assistance of no more than 32 hours. Each program office may decide how many hours are appropriate for their on-call engagements (often ranging from 8-16 hours typically). Referral to On-Call TA requires an email to the requestor confirming that On-Call TA is approved, and a subsequent assignment to the applicable On-Call work plan in DRGR will be made. See Additional Tips on page 12 for information on how to assign on-call TA.

Approve	After consultation, requests that are eligible and appropriate are entered as an approved status. Triage enters a brief explanation of the approval and notification is generated to the grantee, field, and program offices. Triage must assure that the most recent GTM and Assigner (if known) are included in the notification, as this is the first step toward assignment. Once Approved TA Requests are entered and submitted, this option cannot be undone in the TA Portal.
Not Approve	Triage may determine that a TA request does not meet HUD's eligibility criteria and therefore does not approve the request. If the TA request was referred to the program office, and it is determined that the request is not appropriate, eligible, or in alignment with current priorities, the TA is not approved in the TA Portal once Triage is notified.
Referred to Ask-A-Question (AAQ)	AAQ is for requests that can be readily addressed through one of HUD's funded virtual help desks staffed by HUD or TA Providers. AAQ is a lighter form of TA provided along with links to resources and material. The referral to AAQ is embedded in the Not Approved option; the TAD will be looking into revising this option to Approve status. The notification to the TA requestor must include a written explanation, the link to AAQ, a brief description about AAQ, basic instructions on how to complete and submit the form in the TA Portal, and links to resources and material.

Timeline

As much as possible, triage conducts reviews and closely monitors TA requests submitted to assure that these are reviewed in a timely manner, and if approved not have long delays in assignment.

Triagers maintain close oversight of TA requests, regardless of their status, including when working with field and program office staff. Triagers review requests frequently and follow up on those pending in the queue.

It is critical to act quickly on new requests, and not to let any remain unattended in the queue for longer than 5 business days as this may delay getting needed TA to HUD's customers.

Triage follows up on "On-Hold" TA requests at least monthly. At 90 days, if there is no recommendation or solution from the Program Office, or no response, Triage makes a concerted effort to follow up; if still no response, the On-Hold request is not approved (closed) with an explanation. This is an area of concern because TA requests that remain in the queue unattended can create extensive backlog. These can add up quickly and take a lot of follow up and time.

Approved TA Portal TA Requests Data Uploaded into DRGR

As assignments are issued through the Disaster Recovery and Grant Reporting system (DRGR), data from approved TA requests are migrated to DRGR by Triage Managers in TAD daily.

Once the data requests TA Approved Reports are uploaded, they are available for Assignment by designated Assigners. Triage Managers complete the upload task daily at close of business so that Assigners (and GTMs or other appointed staff interested in seeing approved requests and pending assignments) can view fresh TA uploads with approved TA requests ready for assignment each morning.

TA Assignments

TA Assignments are HUD's response to address TA needs from TA requests submitted, an assignment is the formal demand for TA services on behalf of grantees. This section helps HUD staff develop quality TA assignments and provides the requirements and offers additional considerations to ensure the assignment is informative for the TA Recipient to develop a clear implementation plan (work plan) in response.

Regardless of whether the TA need was identified through a TA request, TA Plan, or other means, the assignment is how HUD conveys authorization and instructions to a TA Provider to deliver TA services. To carry out the work as HUD requests, the TA Provider develops a work plan from the assignment that illustrates how they will conduct and carry out the TA delivery and identifies the staff that will work on the tasks and affiliated budget costs.

Assignment Development – Components of Assignment

A complete assignment is comprised of several components that together contain key information to identify how TA will address the need, these are described in this section. Regardless of whether the TA need came from a HUD Exchange TA Portal Request or another source like the Departmental TA Plan, the Assigner will receive notification that an assignment is ready to be made by either the HUD Exchange approval notification or the program office conveying that they want an assignment made.

Assigners should consider using the TA Assignment Template which contains all the required components for a clear assignment.
The Assigner will work with the requestor to develop the assignment to enter the required information into DRGR.

Title of TA Project (Optional): It is helpful to give the assignment a name, especially for a product or training (e.g., CDBG Timeliness TA, along with specifics to the recipients like Grantee name). This title can be included in the Assignment Summary narrative.

TA Provider Selection (DRGR Requirement)

Program offices determine which Recipient is best to provide the TA in most instances, based on the documentation from the TA request, funds available, authorization under prior TA plans and NOFOs, and the capacity, expertise, and interest of the Recipients funded for their programmatic TA. Several factors are considered when selecting a TA Provider for an assignment, such as:

- Capacity, experience, and expertise for the assignment
- Alignment of proper award, fund source, and project budget (i.e., funding source that allows TA for the purpose identified)
- Funds and timeline available under existing TA awards

TAD recommends selecting different Recipients to expand the breadth of TA providers, build more capacity among Recipients, and allow unique skills and perspectives to come to bear. Assigners are encouraged to review DRGR Project budgets reports to analyze funds available and review the Capacity and Skills Summary for HUD TA Providers found on the Community Compass TA Resource SharePoint site.

TA Appropriations (Eligible TA Funding Sources)

A critical factor in making an assignment is the selection of not just a TA Award Recipient, but selection of the **appropriate funding source**. The funding source decision is based on factors such as, the availability of funds on the award and for the project under which the activity is to be funded. The program office will generally identify one or more eligible funding sources and the Assigner must carefully select from a drop-down menu that lists sequentially numbered TA funding sources.

Key considerations:

- **Select oldest funding first:** when multiple awards have the project funding available. This is important because HUD does not want to risk any unnecessary grant award expiration where funds remain unutilized and subsequently expire.
- **Ensure allowability under appropriation, TA Plan, AND NOFO for that year:** Some activities were only authorized in a certain appropriation, TA Plan, or NOFO, so the Assigner must check that the any award considered for assignment allows for the activity proposed.
- **Funds available for activity:** The activity or project must be funded (and funds must be available) under the project budget for the year selected. It is also very important to check with the program office because one of these fund sources may be designated for other work in progress. When in doubt, the Assigner should follow up with the program office.

The TA provider must follow HUD's indication of best award as consideration was given to eligibility under that year's NOFA/TA Plan, or other relevant documents prior to assigning. If the TA provider wants to recommend an alternative funding source, you should ask the assigner prior to submitting a work plan to avoid re-work.

TA Type

- Administration
- Planning
- TA – Coordination
- TA – Data
- TA – AAQ
- TA - Direct
- TA – Other Direct
- TA – Group Learning
- TA – Needs Assessment
- TA – On-Call
- TA – Products
- TA - Websites

The TA Type category in DRGR will be based on the activities to be undertaken and will inform the type of work plan template the provider submits.

Administration and Coordination work plans are automatically assigned at creation through the NOFO and award terms and conditions. The other types are identified by the assigner based on the need and are self-explanatory.

In some cases, a TA assignment may be comprised of two TA types, such as, Tools and Products and a Training component. In a case like this, the assigner can combine them in one assignment with instruction to break out work across work plans since multiple work plans may be generated from one assignment scope.

Assignment Summary

This is a brief written narrative comprised of information gleaned from the TA request, the program office, and discussion notes (if applicable).

A written assignment includes information from the TA request, a background summary and rationale for providing TA. This also includes the way the TA need came to be approved (i.e., from TA request, TA Plan, or other directive) so that there is a clear history for how this assignment was authorized.

TA Topic* Select relevant program topics from dropdown menu of pre-determined program topics from past TA Plans and NOFOs. Selecting accurate topics will allow for improved data tracking and reporting for the TA program.

Assignment Scope (DRGR Requirement)

The Assigner develops the scope using information gleaned from the TA request documentation, as applicable; the program office, field office (or RC) review, discussion, and decisions; the TA plan, and any other information provided. The scope identifies:

- Statement of need
- Relevant background
- Outcomes or goals to be achieved through TA (i.e., defines which skill, knowledge, or capacity gaps are being addressed through the TA)
- Key milestones, deliverables, or timelines associated with meeting the need (if any)
- Any collaborating providers – identify whether the assignment will be conducted with other providers including the role and organization name of coordinating partners
- Key points of contact
    - list the GTR, GTM, POTAC, Subject Matter Expert (as appropriate), the Field Office with their names and email addresses
- Suggestion of planning meeting or kick-off call request to further scope assignment and answer questions to inform work plan development

The scope should not prescribe how the provider should meet the need as that is their responsibility in the implementation plan response.

TA Scope planning is important because many times the approval and intent are not fully complete. While a lot of this can be flushed out as the TA Provider drafts the work plan, it is helpful to put the assignment scope into perspective and to prioritize tasks which are a critical tool for work plan development.

- It will include an outline of the approved TA, the type of TA approved, including any relevant information about whether TA is to be carried out in phases etc.

- It includes any prerequisite instructions from the program office, e.g., may specify that the grantee staff must complete certain online training prior to receiving TA

The TA Providers draft their TA work plan from the information provided in the assignment and planning discussions, such as the kickoff discussion.

TIP - Prepare the Assignment in Word - see the Assignment TA Components template and samples to develop your assignment. Remember there are key components required in DRGR, but the Assigner can cut and paste information from other documents into the Assignment Summary and the Assignment Scope narratives. Assigners also can include other information as part of the assignment.

The Assigner is highly encouraged to share the TA Assignment Components template with their program staff so that they can successfully assemble the assignment.

Send DRGR Assignment Notice

Once an assignment is made in DRGR, the Assigner must select the option to send a notice to key individuals at the TA Provider organization and at HUD so that they are immediately notified that an assignment has been made.

It is critical to select the DRGR Notice, as selecting it will open a list of pre-populated names of the TA Provider staff, the Assigner, and some HUD staff. Other names must be added manually, and any additional staff must be identified in the notification and their email addresses are required.
Notification is an essential step as the TA Provider will begin the work plan development and/or may need to schedule a planning call upon receipt.

Edit Assignment

It may become necessary for the Assigner to make edits to the assignment either as more needs become known or to change something like the funding source or TA type. This is done by using the Edit Assignment function steps in DRGR.

Additional Tips for Scoping Assignments

On-call Assignment Scoping

If a need for on-call TA delivery has been identified, and a new work plan needs to be established, the assignment should outline the scope, activities, outcomes to be achieved, and eligible maximum hours authorization (not to exceed 32 hours per organization assisted, or as determined by the program assigner). This assignment informs the Recipient of the need to establish an on-call work plan.

As organizations or tasks are identified to be added under the work plan, assigners should create a new assignment and briefly indicate in the "assignment summary" field the TA need, activity, and organization(s) to be assisted. The assignment should also clearly associate either to an existing assignment or on-call work plan and the Recipient will add the organization(s) to the appropriate task(s) or add the new task to the existing work plan.

Assigning Two or More TA Providers on One Assignment

In some cases, it may be necessary to split an assignment or require coordination between two or more TA Providers, based on several factors, e.g., the complexity of the TA, the specialized TA provided by specific TA Providers, geographic coverage, etc. Each assignment should refer to the other assignment scope and assigned provider(s) to facilitate consistency, coordination, and communication across Recipients. If applicable, the assignment should also make clear if there is a Lead TA provider for the engagement and how the Recipient should interact with that firm (i.e., share updates, contribute to shared products, etc).

After Assignment – Next Steps

Work plan development hinges on the assignment so specificity and clarity are key to drafting a succinct and well-structured scope, including information pertaining to requirements, phases, and resources. The TA Provider will develop the work plan from information contained in the TA Assignment and add relevant details pertaining to proper scoping, including their approach, tasks, as they are tasked based upon their expertise, budgeting, planning and scheduling, deliverables, and staffing.

Refer to the work plan Guide for more information.

Resources

Submit a TA Request
https://www.hudexchange.info/hudexchange-portal/ta-request/?taportalaction=tarequest%3Amain.requestta

Refer to Ask-a-Question (AAQ)
https://www.hudexchange.info/get-assistance/

TA Provider Capacity and Expertise Table
https://hudgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/TADTechnicalAssistanceDivision2/Shared%20Documents/Technical%20Assistance%20Provider%20Summaries%20-%20FY18,%20FY19.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=6cWZpJ