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1 NOFA Application Materials and Requirements

1.1 The grant application is requiring HUD Form 52515 with an expiration date of 7-31-22. I am not finding this updated version. Please advise where to locate it.

In order to access the HUD-52515 and the sample attachments, you will need to download the instructions package in Grants.gov by clicking “Download Instructions”. The instructions package will download as a zip file that will need to be unzipped so you can open and view the documents. If your computer shows an error when downloading the zip file, check with your local IT department to make sure your computer is set up properly to open a zip file.

These materials are also now available on the Mainstream webpage.

1.2 Where can I find the Appendix mentioned in the NOFA?

The appendix for the NOFA is simply the two sample attachments. These can be found in the instructions package. Please see above question for more information.

1.3 PHA’s are expected to achieve a utilization rate of 80% within 1 year of the new award’s effective date. Is this referring to the date the PHA was notified of their award or the effective date the PHA chose to start the program?

The effective date.

1.4 In the FY17 NOFA there was a Geographic Jurisdiction criterion that did not allow a PHA to prohibit portability of a voucher before 1 year of lease up. I do not see this requirement in the FY19 NOFA. Is it correct that this requirement has been removed and would not apply to vouchers awarded under the FY19 NOFA?

The geographic jurisdiction rating factor did not represent a program requirement but rather a rating factor for which the PHA could get points for their NOFA application. Portability is a required feature of the housing choice voucher program (Section 8(r) of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937). Applicants where the head, co-head, or spouse did not have legal domicile in the PHA’s jurisdiction at the time the family first submitted their application do not have the right to portability until they have leased a unit in the jurisdiction for 12 months, however, the PHA may choose to allow portability during this period (982.353(c)(2)). PHAs must keep in mind that persons with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation to port out before meeting the one-year residency requirement if there is a nexus between the person’s disability and their need to move out of the jurisdiction.

1.5 Will preference points be awarded for opportunity zones and HBCUs?

No.

1.6 The webcast mentioned there would be a sample “Needs Statement” along with some ideas of what kind of data could be included to support it. I am not finding that on the website yet. Is this still to come?

Possible data sources for the Statement of Need were uploaded on August 7th. As stated in the webinar and on the “Possible Data Sources for Statement of Need”, the PHA is not required to use these data sources.

1.7 Is there a requirement for font size (10pt. 12pt), style (Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial) and spacing (single or double) for Attachment 2 Rating Factor Certifications?

No.

1.8 The project start and end date listed on pg. 11 of the NOFA is 02/01/2020 – 01/31/2021 on pg. 21 of the NOFA it states most applicants should use November 1, 2019 – October 31, 2020 when filling out line 17 of the SF-424. Which date do we use?

Use 2/1/2020 through 1/31/2021.

1.9 Can someone other than the Executive Director of the PHA sign the grant application documents?

Yes, any authorized PHA official.

1.10 Can a PHA applicant score points under Rating Factor #3 for providing/partnering to provide additional services beyond the five listed?

No.

1.11 When we applied for Mainstream vouchers under last year’s NOFA, I remember being instructed to include the “Certification Regarding Lobbying” (attached FYR) as an alternative to the SF-LLL, confirming that our PHA did not participate in lobbying. There was no mention of this form in the webinar, so I wanted to confirm with you whether we should or should not include the “Certification Regarding Lobbying” form with our application this year.

The only required forms are described in the NOFA beginning on page 16.

1.12 Will you be uploading a fillable version of the HUD-52515?

Yes, the form linked on the Mainstream webpage has been updated to a fillable version.

1.13 Is there a page limit for the statement of need? I have not been able to find anything but just wanted to double-check.

No, there is not a page limit, however, PHAs should be able to answer the data-based question in no more than 1-2 pages. We are looking to see that there is a justification for the number of vouchers requested.

1.14 We are applying for Mainstream Voucher and we have agreements with other PHAs to allow our vouchers to be used in their jurisdictions. Last year, in response to the NOFA, we just obtained letters of support from each PHA, but the NOFA this year specifically mentions an agreement. We are wondering if we actually need to have a formal agreement, or if we can just use letters of support again?

PHAs are responsible for determining the appropriate agreement based on applicable state and local laws governing a PHA's jurisdictional authority.

2 NOFA Eligibility

2.1 Is the FY19 NOFA only for new applicants? And those of us that were awarded Mainstream Vouchers last year will there be a renewal grant or will it be an automatic renewal like HCV?

Any PHA that administers housing choice vouchers is eligible to apply. This includes those PHAs that received an award in 2018. PHAs do not need to apply for renewals. Renewals to existing vouchers will happen automatically if funding is available.

2.2 If we received funding for mainstream vouchers in Sept. 2018, are we eligible to apply for additional vouchers under this NOFA?

Yes. The PHA should consider whether it has the capacity to administer additional Mainstream vouchers.

2.3 Can you please tell me if Indian Housing Authorities are eligible applicants for this program? Page 14 of the attached program solicitation lists those entities as both eligible and ineligible applicants.

No, IHAs are not eligible because they do not operate housing choice vouchers programs.

3 Funding

3.1 On p. 21 of the NOFA Guidance for Locating and Completing Forms, b. (FS 424) Question 18 guidance says PHAs should use "inflated" VMS data for a 2-bedroom unit to determine the funding for the number of vouchers requested. VMS data is not broken down by bedroom size. We report total funds expended based on unit months under lease. Shouldn't the FMR be used, or the Payment Standard adopted by the PHA, to determine this amount. Or does HUD want us to use internal data that we have on average HAP paid for 2-bedroom units? Also, how should we inflate this data?

Use your PHA's inflated per unit cost (PUC) (this is the average overall which represents approximately 2 bedrooms). This was included on your renewal enclosure, or if you do not have a renewal enclosure you can use the average PUC from VMS. If you already had Mainstream vouchers, use data specifically for your Mainstream program. If you do not have Mainstream vouchers or do not have sufficient data for Mainstream yet as you recently received an award, use the average PUC for your regular vouchers.

3.2 My PHA is interested in submitting an application for grant FR-6300-N-43. However, before doing so we would like some additional information on exactly what kind of funding will be awarded and for how long. It is my understanding that if we are awarded the grant that we will receive a number of “Mainstream” Vouchers and the funding to administer them for one year. Is this correct? If not, could you please explain what the funding entails.

The award is for one year of housing assistance payments. The PHA will also receive administrative fees for unit months leased. While renewals are determined in accordance with each year’s appropriations act, Congress has consistently provided funding for HCV mainstream renewals.

3.3 Our PHA is in shortfall but we have budget authority for our Mainstream vouchers awarded in 2018. Can we still lease our Mainstream vouchers?

Yes. The requirement to suspend general voucher issuance is subject to the following exclusions stated in PIH Notice 2019-08, Attachment D (p. 32), “Vouchers issued to program applicants under special-purpose voucher increments awarded in CY 2018 or CY 2019. These special-purpose vouchers include HUD-VASH, Family Unification Program (FUP), Non-Elderly Disabled (NED), and Tenant Protection vouchers initially awarded in 2018 and/or 2019.” This includes Mainstream.

4 NOFA Evaluation and Rating Criteria

4.1 This year’s NOFA has the HUD-52515 as a requirement. Can you tell us what weight will this form have in scoring? We don’t find any information on how this information will be used in the evaluation process in the NOFA.

The rating criteria and the documentation that will be evaluated for each criterion is described on pages 26-29 of the NOFA.

4.2 "Through a future award process, HUD plans to award additional mainstream vouchers to those PHAs who were funded through FR-6100-N-43 and this NOFA (FR-6300-N-43) based on performance including utilization." Nowhere else in the NOFA does it refer to PHAs funded in FY2017; however, does this mean those PHAs receive additional preference in this award?

No. This sentence is simply saying that HUD plans to issue another NOFA in FY 2020 that will base awards on performance for those awardees from the previous NOFA and this NOFA. Those PHAs that received funding are eligible to apply for this round but they will not receive preferential treatment.

4.3 Does NOFA Rating Factor 3 (a) apply to people experiencing homelessness as well as persons who are institutionalized or at risk of institutionalization?

Yes.

4.4 Our municipality has a health and human services department which we would like to use as the partner for the application. Is this acceptable?

Yes.

4.5 Our non-profit would like to partner with two different PHAs. Is that allowed?

Yes.

4.6 For Rating Factor 1, I want to ensure that we meet the application requirements. I would like to know if PHAs are limited to 5 sentences *total* to respond to item 1.1, or if we may include 5 sentences to describe our experience in each of the program areas listed under item 1.1?

Please provide up to 5 sentences each for questions 1.2 through 1.8. For 1.1, simply answer Yes or No for each program except if you are claiming points under “Other Similar Program.” If you are claiming points for “Other Similar Program”, please provide a very brief description of the program.

4.7 The Mainstream NOFA says that SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying form is only required if applicable. On Grant.gov it is listed as a mandatory form. The form is not applicable to our agency and I’m concerned that this will cause problems during when we try to submit our application because it shows errors exist because it hasn’t been filled out.

The SF-LLL should not be required. If you are not able to submit the application in Grants.gov without completing it, enter Not Applicable in all required fields and submit.

4.8 Can you provide examples of the activities that qualify as: “Assist persons with disabilities to move into units, including physically accessible units where appropriate, on the private rental market”?

Examples may include but are not limited to moving the family’s belongings (or covering the cost to do so), paying a security deposit or application fees, or helping the family obtain furniture for the unit. Please note that HAP funding cannot be used for these purposes.

4.9 Can you provide additional information on the differences between these services:

“Assist persons with disabilities to apply and obtain acceptance in housing programs OR find housing OR secure home modifications and/or disability related accommodations,” AND

“Assist persons with disabilities to move into units, including physically accessible units where appropriate, on the private market.”

The key difference in the second service listed is helping persons with disabilities move into units *on the private market*. Please see the answer to question 4.8 for examples of this assistance.

4.10 For Rating Factor 3, Points are awarded for *referring, coordinating, or providing home and community-based services (emphasis added)*. Do ongoing community-based services and tenancy supports, regardless of funding source, qualify under this criteria? Or is this question limited to Medicaid-defined and funded ‘Home and Community Based Services’?

On going community-based services and tenancy supports qualify, they are not limited to Medicaid-defined and funded “Home and Community Based Services”.

5 Waiting List Administration and Preferences

5.1 Would we maintain a separate waiting list from the HCV program? Our waiting list is currently closed and will be for some time so I'm curious how this would work with our agency.

No, the PHA must maintain one waiting list for all tenant-based assistance.

5.2 Can a PHA use the CoC's Coordinated Entry system to identify and refer applicants for mainstream vouchers, as long as it is in compliance with PIH Notice 2013-15? This notice allows PHAs to give a preference of referred clients (from Coordinated Entry) over clients who apply directly to the PHA.

Admissions preference requirements for Mainstream vouchers are the same for regular tenant-based assistance. Mainstream vouchers exclusively serve non-elderly persons with disabilities, so PHAs must take particular care to ensure that their preferences do not violate fair housing laws. Providing a preference for individuals referred from a specific organization that serves persons with certain types of disabilities is not allowed. Assuming the Continuum of Care's Coordinated Entry system is not disability-based, it is acceptable for families referred by the CoC to receive a preference. PHAs still must follow the regulations on waiting list administration and program admissions, including the requirement to use the waiting list for admissions (982.202(a)(2)).

5.3 The narrative to slide 23 of the recently posted HUD webinar states that PHAs cannot develop direct referral partnerships. FAQ 3.6 from the FY17 NOFA references pages 5 and 6 of PIH Notice 2013-15 which provides guidance on how PHAs may establish preferences for homeless individuals being referred through a CoC Coordinated Entry System. Is a preference for persons experiencing homelessness referred by a CoC's CES not considered a "direct referral"? Please clarify.

Page 14 of the NOFA states that PHAs must allow qualifying persons that meet the targeted groups to apply directly to the PHA for the program. The intention of this language is to ensure that persons with any type of disability can access Mainstream voucher assistance. Some organizations only serve persons with certain types of disabilities. These organizations may refer applicants; however, the PHA may not establish a preference specifically for referrals from an organization or organizations that limit their services based on disability type. The NOFA encourages PHAs to partner with these organizations because they are critical to assisting persons with disabilities. However, PHAs may not set up exclusive referral partnerships with these organizations.

PIH Notice 2013-15 describes a specific instance where a direct referral preference may be allowable without violating fair housing laws because Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Systems typically do not base assistance on disability type. PHAs may use the guidance provided in PIH Notice 2013-15 to structure a referral preference, however, the PHA must still ensure that fair housing laws are not violated. PHAs still must follow the regulations on waiting list administration and program admissions, including the requirement to use the waiting list for admissions (982.202(a)(2)).

5.4 If in our NOFA application we certify:

“we have or will adopt a preference for non-elderly persons with disabilities who are:

X transitioning out of institutional and other segregated settings

X previously experienced homelessness and are currently a client in permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing project”

Can we limit our adopted preference to only one of the two we commit to in the NOFA if we receive a smaller than requested award of vouchers? So, if we plan on serving both categories identified above based on a request for 200 vouchers, but only receive 75 vouchers, could we chose to only adopt a preference for one of the categories?

If your commitment is based on the number of vouchers your PHA is awarded, please provide that detail along with your certification. No additional points will be given for targeting more than one group; however, we will aggregate the data on which groups are being targeted to help inform future policy and technical assistance efforts. The Office of Housing Voucher Program’s Quality Assurance Division will also reach out to PHAs to determine if they have adopted the preferences included in their certification, so having that additional detail would be helpful.

5.5 One of the admissions preference categories is: “non-elderly persons with disabilities who are currently a client in a permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing project.”

Are PHAs allowed to limit that preference to solely “non-elderly persons with disabilities who are currently a client in a permanent supportive housing” or, alternatively to “non-elderly persons with disabilities who are currently a client in a rapid rehousing project.”

Yes.

5.6 Can the PHA use those currently on the tenant-based waiting list who meet the criteria outlined in the NOFA for the requirement to allow non-elderly persons with disabilities to apply directly to the program without going through a partner agency?

Yes.

5.7 I saw on FAQ that " the PHA must maintain one waiting list for all tenant-based assistance." How does this payout with a lottery system? Currently, for example, out of 3000 HVC applicants, 500 may get chosen. Would Mainstream-eligible folks be on the main waitlist, but also on another for the set-aside?

Since there is one waiting list, the Mainstream-eligible families would be on the main waiting list. The Mainstream program is not a set-aside, it is a specified category that has more specific eligibility criteria than regular vouchers. If the PHA used a lottery, they would identify which of the 500 in your example qualified for the Mainstream program. They would determine if any of the 500 families on the waiting list qualified for the preference and adjust their position on the waiting list based on the PHA’s waiting list and preferences policies included in the administrative plan. When the PHA has a Mainstream voucher to issue, they would issue it to the first family that appears on the waiting list that includes a non-elderly person with disabilities. This may not be the first family on the entire waiting list, however,

due to the specific category of Mainstream eligibility, the PHA may skip to the first Mainstream-eligible family.

5.8 The FY19 NOFA expands the targeted groups, to include persons in permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing programs. Since the last round of mainstream vouchers did not include this as a targeted group, will we essentially be operating two different mainstream voucher programs that have different eligibility/preference criteria? Or can last year's mainstream vouchers also include these new targeted groups?

A PHA's preferences apply to the entire waiting list, so it is not possible to operate two separate programs with separate preferences. The requirement to get points under Admission Preference Rating Factor for the FY 2017 Mainstream NOFA (awarded in September 2018) was to adopt a preference for at least one of the targeted groups described in the NOFA. If you adopted (or already had) a preference for one of those groups, then you met the requirement for the FY 2017 Mainstream NOFA. To be eligible for points under Rating Factor FY 2019 Mainstream NOFA, you must adopt (or already have) a preference for one of the targeted groups, and if you establish a limited preference, the preference must be for at least the number of vouchers awarded through this NOFA. The fact that a new preference category for receiving points was added does not mean that prior year vouchers cannot be issued to this new group. On the contrary, with the preference, new and old vouchers will be issued to this group.

5.9 We have 12,000 families on our current waiting list. Is it acceptable for us to provide a public announcement informing applicants to notify us if they meet the new eligibility and preference criteria?

Your PHA's administrative plan should state your process for adding new preferences. You could have a policy stating you will publicly announce any new eligibility criteria or preferences; and indicate that applicants should contact the PHA to notify them that they meet the new criteria. Alternatively, the PHA could send out a mass mailing to all applicants asking them to respond if they meet any of the new criteria. The PHA cannot penalize families that do not respond within a certain time period. These are not the only options for determining if existing applicant families on the waiting list are eligible for new special vouchers or new preferences. It is important for the PHA to have a consistent policy and follow the policy. As always, the PHA must follow all applicable regulations.

5.10 Can you please clarify the following: If a PHA is awarded Mainstream Vouchers through the 2019 NOFA, and they have a preference adopted in the admin plan for recipients of rapid rehousing, would they have to first offer the voucher to existing applicants on the waitlist or could they start issuing vouchers to referrals they receive from the rapid-rehousing agencies?

The PHA would need to offer those on its current waiting list who meet the preference. See the answer to question 1.3. Families who are referred, families on the waiting list, and families that apply would be eligible to receive the preference. Families would receive assistance in accordance with the PHA's waiting list policies.

5.11 We have had a difficult time leasing the Mainstream vouchers we were awarded in 2018, so we are not sure if we are ready to apply for more vouchers yet. We established a limited preference in accordance with the NOFA for 25 families, however, we have only been able to lease up 3 families under this preference. We do not have anyone else on our waiting list that meets the preference criteria, so we have not been able to issue any more vouchers. What should we do?

The PHA is required to make a good faith effort to recruit families that meet the preference criteria. If they cannot find families that meet the preference criteria, the voucher may go to the next eligible family on the waiting list, i.e. a family that includes at least one non-elderly person with disabilities.

5.12 If we receive an award of 50 vouchers, do we have to maintain a limited preference for one of the targeted groups for as long as we have the vouchers even after they turnover?

No, the requirement in this year's NOFA is that the PHA adopt (or already have) a preference for at least one of the targeted groups. If the PHA opts to limit the preference, the PHA must apply the preference to at least the number of vouchers awarded to the PHA through this NOFA. The PHA establishes the parameters in their administrative plan for how the limited preference will work. The preference may be limited to a finite number of vouchers, e.g. once 50 families have been served under the preference, the preference expires; or the PHA may state that the preference remains for up to 50 families at a time.

5.13 What are the requirements for identifying and selecting families from a current rapid rehousing program for enrollment in the Mainstream Voucher Program? Do we have to establish a waiting list, a needs assessment, and/or can we refer clients from our own rapid rehousing program for Mainstream Vouchers?

The PHA must use one waiting list for all tenant-based assistance and determine that families are eligible for the program in accordance with 24 CFR 982.201. A PHA that wants to target assistance to those who are participating in a rapid rehousing program should establish a preference in their administrative plan for that group. The participants in the PHA's rapid rehousing program would then be eligible to receive the preference along with others who qualify.

5.14 Given the special populations HUD is targeting with the new allocation of Mainstream Vouchers, is it possible that those targeted to those who experienced homelessness and are currently residents in PSH or RRH be considered "special admission" under 24 CFR 982.203?

No.

5.15 There appears to be a contradiction between guidance on the previous Mainstream FAQ and the current one. Q1.7 on the previous NOFA FAQ says the new NOFA doesn't change Mainstream admission for vouchers in an old NOFA, but Q5.8 in the most recent Q&A says "The fact that a new preference category for receiving points was added does not mean that prior year vouchers cannot be issued to this new group."

This question is conflating two separate issues : 1) the eligible population to receive assistance using Mainstream vouchers addressed in the previous FAQ under 1.7; and 2) the preference categories under

which a PHA may receive points under the NOFA for adopting (addressed in the current Q&A document under 5.8).

6 Project-Basing Vouchers

6.1 Are we permitted to project-base mainstream vouchers?

Yes, mainstream vouchers may be project-based. The Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2010 converted mainstream assistance to tenant-based assistance under 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937. Tenant-based assistance may be converted to project-based assistance under (8)(o)(13) of the same Act.

Given the population served by the mainstream voucher program, PHAs need to be particularly mindful of fair housing requirements. The owner and the PHA are responsible for ensuring that, in addition to complying with project-based voucher program requirements, the project complies with all applicable Federal nondiscrimination and civil rights statutes and requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), titles II or III of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA), and the Fair Housing Act and their implementing regulations at 24 CFR part 8; 28 CFR parts 35 and 36; 24 CFR part 100.

6.2 Can a property that receives Mainstream PBV/TBV be 100% Permanent Supportive Housing?

HUD cannot answer general questions about a PHA's ability to project-base vouchers in a particular building. There are too many factors that affect compliance and eligibility. PHAs must be familiar with and comply with all project based voucher rules and regulations, as well as all Fair Housing requirements. Please see 24 CFR Part 983 as well as PIH Notice 2017-21(HA) Implementation Guidance: Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016 (HOTMA) — Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and Project-Based Voucher (PBV) Provisions. HUD also strongly recommends PHAs that are considering project-basing mainstream vouchers consult with their local HUD Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. These vouchers serve nonelderly persons with disabilities, and project-basing vouchers on behalf of this population involves significant fair housing considerations.

6.3 Can Mainstream Vouchers be used for Shared Housing with individuals with disabilities?

A tenant may choose to use their tenant-based voucher to live in a shared housing unit. There are special rules for tenant-based assistance in shared housing, see 24 CFR 982.615 through 618. If you are asking about project-based shared housing, please see the answers to 6.1 and 6.2.

6.4 We are a nonprofit who administers Mainstream vouchers, can we apply to project-base the Mainstream vouchers in units in buildings we own? Are we able to apply to project-base vouchers outside of our current jurisdiction? If yes, do we submit one application for all or per jurisdiction?

Yes, assuming your agency already has a PBV program or will properly establish a PBV program, you may project-base PHA-owned units subject to the restrictions and additional considerations in the regulations related to PHA-owned units, including 24 CFR 983.51(e) and 983.59. As with traditional

PHAs, nonprofits are responsible for identifying the geographic area in which they may administer vouchers consistent with applicable state and local laws and the nonprofit's organizational documents. HUD will only accept one application per eligible entity (DUNS number). If the same entity submits two applications, we will only review the most recently submitted application.