

## FY2015/2016 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants NOFA

### Questions and Answers

*Note: In accordance with the HUD Reform Act, HUD cannot provide a determination to questions that ask about a specific situation (e.g. whether something would be eligible or how it would be rated) outside of reviewing a submitted grant application during its formal review process. This Q&A is meant to provide general clarification to the NOFA language.*

- 1. The NOFA states that there can only be one application per locality. How do we define locality? Are there limitations on how many applicants can come from one city or county?**

Yes there are limitations. On page 17, locality is meant in this NOFA to refer to the local government as defined on page 7 of the NOFA or, in the case of tribal entities, the Indian tribe as defined in 4(13) of the Native American Housing and Self-Determination Act of 1996.

Successful neighborhood transformation typically requires focused support and attention from the local government or Indian tribe that the neighborhood is located in, which is why the NOFA states there can be only one application per locality.

- 2. Could two eligible applicants apply for grants for two neighborhoods in one municipal jurisdiction? For example, could a city be the lead for one neighborhood with the PHA serving as the co-applicant, and the PHA serve as the lead applicant for a second neighborhood, with the city serving as co-applicant?**

No. Successful neighborhood transformation typically requires focused support and attention from the local government or Indian tribe that the neighborhood is located in, which is why on page 17 the NOFA states there can be only one application per locality.

- 3. Our Housing Authority was awarded a FY 2012 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant. Do we have to apply for the 2015-16 Planning grant as a “FY 2010 – 2014 Planning Grantee applicant” or do we have the option to apply for a new neighborhood?**

The FY15 Planning Grants NOFA does not prohibit the ability of a locality or an entity to apply for a neighborhood because of past (FY 2010 – 2014) Planning Grant awards. Thus, you may submit either an application (for the Action Activities funding only) for the same neighborhood as the prior Planning Grant or an application for a different neighborhood.

- 4. Can a State, as an umbrella organization, be an applicant? If the answer to this question is “no”, can a State be a co-applicant to add capacity to an overall application?**

Both applicants and co-applicants must meet the same requirements for eligible applicants. Generally, the definition of ‘local government’ (as stated on page 7 of the NOFA) also includes a State government.

**5. Will an applicant's eligibility for a Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant be impacted if they are awarded a grant under this NOFA?**

It depends on the grant awarded. Recent past NOFAs have prevented entities who received a Planning Grant to be eligible for Implementation Grants for the same Fiscal Year (e.g., FY2014 Planning Grants were unable to apply for FY2014/2015 Implementation Grants). The intent was for Planning Grantees to have time to undertake their planning process before applying for Implementation. However, past Planning Grantees applying under this NOFA for Action Activities funds only have either completed or are in the process of completing their planning activities. Therefore, nothing in this NOFA would bar a past Planning Grantee who is awarded Action Activities funds only from applying for the next round of Implementation Grants. Please note, if a grant is awarded, historically, past Implementation Grant NOFAs have reduced the maximum award amount for which the application is eligible by the same amount awarded under the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant.

**6. Can Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grantees apply for this grant if they have a neighborhood improvement project that is partially outside of the Choice Neighborhoods boundary and is unfunded in the current Implementation Grant?**

No, among other requirements, in order to be an eligible applicant under this NOFA, the applicant must target eligible public and/or assisted housing and the surrounding neighborhood to be the subject of this application. On page 17, under Relation to prior Choice Neighborhoods Grants, the NOFA states that “Public and/or assisted housing projects and the neighborhoods in which they are located previously funded through a Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant may not be the target housing and neighborhood of a Choice Neighborhoods application under this NOFA.”

**7. Page 17, under III.C.4.f includes the following statement: “The term “FY 2010 – 2014 Planning Grantees” as used in this NOFA refers to those Grants, regardless of whether the applicant was the recipient of the Planning Grant.” Does this mean for example, that the applicant under this NOFA for Action Activities could be the municipality, rather than the PHA that received the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant?**

Yes that is correct.

**8. For FY2010-2014 Grantees, do the neighborhood boundaries for this NOFA application need to be identical to the boundaries designated in the prior Planning Grant application? Specifically, if the planning process identified neighborhood boundaries that were larger or smaller than originally approved, could the Action Activities and potential partnerships described in applications under this NOFA be modified from those identified in the completed Transformation Plan?**

This question refers to page 17, which states “For applications that target the same neighborhood and public and/or assisted housing project(s) previously funded through a FY 2010 - 2014 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant, the applicant may only request funding for Action Activities...” In the course of the planning process it is not uncommon for the community to slightly alter the boundaries of their neighborhood. The neighborhood will be considered to be the same neighborhood previously funded through a FY 2010 – 2014 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant if: 1) the neighborhood boundary changes were included in the final Transformation Plan that has been accepted by HUD as reflected in our internal records; or 2) if a Final Transformation Plan has not yet been accepted by HUD, the neighborhood boundary changes were approved by the HUD grant management team as reflected by our internal records.

- 9. Page 17 of the NOFA indicates that a Planning Coordinator may participate in a maximum of two applications under this NOFA. What does “participate” mean? Does it mean that a specific individual or entity can only be listed in up to two Planning Grant applications submitted to HUD? Or does it mean that a specific individual or entity can only serve as a Planning Coordinator in up to two Planning Grants that are awarded by HUD?**

Participate under this NOFA means committing or intending to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. Demonstration of this intention includes but is not limited to a selection letter, contractual agreement, or other documentation.

- 10. Does employment of a specific individual or entity as Planning Coordinator by two or more PHAs who received 2010-2014 Choice Neighborhood Planning Grants invalidate the individual or entity from being part of 2015-16 Planning Grant applications?**

No, the NOFA requirement on page 17 does not apply to previously awarded grants and only applies to applications submitted under this NOFA. As explained above, participate under this NOFA means committing or intending to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. Past Planning Grantees can only qualify for Action Activities funding. Therefore, past Planning Coordinators would not be participating in the activities funded under this NOFA.

- 11. If a planning coordinator is currently working with two separate 2014 Grantees, what is the planning coordinator’s status if both Grantees choose to submit applications for Action Activity funding? Is the Planning Coordinator precluded from participating as a planning coordinator for another applicant? Since planning is not an eligible Action Activity grant activity, does the Planning Coordinator need to be listed under the partner capacity rating factor?**

As stated above, the NOFA requirement on page 17 does not apply to previously awarded grants and only applies to applications submitted under this NOFA. As explained above, participate under this NOFA means committing or intending to commit, as part of the application, to

participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. Past Planning Grantees can only qualify for Action Activities funding. Therefore, Planning Coordinators for past grantees would not be participating in the activities funded under this NOFA, regardless of whether they are listed under the partner capacity rating factor.

**12. If a planning coordinator has planning grant applications under a prior year - does this preclude a planning coordinator to participate in 2015 planning applications? Also if the previous planning grantees intend to apply for the "Action" grants of up to \$1.5 million, does this preclude that planning coordinator from participating in the 2015 planning grant solicitation?**

As stated above, the NOFA requirement on page 17 does not apply to previously awarded grants and only applies to applications submitted under this NOFA. As explained above, participate under this NOFA means committing or intending to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. Past Planning Grantees can only qualify for Action Activities funding. Therefore, Planning Coordinators for past grantees would not be participating in the activities funded under this NOFA.

**13. If there is a current Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grantee that is interested in pursuing an Action Activities Grant this round and they have a Planning Coordinator already on board for the planning part of the effort, does this count toward the two application limit for a particular Planning Coordinator?**

No, this does not count toward the two application limit. This question refers to the NOFA requirement on page 17 which states that a Planning Coordinator may participate in a maximum of two applications under this NOFA. As explained above, participate under this NOFA means committing or intending to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. Past or ongoing participation in previously awarded Planning Grants (FY 2010 – 2014) are considered distinct from the FY15 NOFA requirement on page 17.

**14. Can an entity that served as Planning Coordinator for 2010-2012 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grantees, where the Transformation Plan has been completed and submitted to HUD, serve as Planning Coordinator for two planning grant applications under the current NOFA? What happens if these previous 2010-2014 grantees apply for Action Activity funding, and identify the name of their Planning Coordinator in the narrative attachments to help explain what has been accomplished. Would such an entity be deemed to be a "participant" under this NOFA, potentially resulting in the disqualification of multiple applications?**

No, the entity would not be deemed a participant under this NOFA. These questions refer to the NOFA requirement on page 17 which states that a Planning Coordinator may participate in a maximum of two applications under this NOFA. As explained above, participate under this

NOFA means committing or intending to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. Past or ongoing participation in previously awarded Planning Grants (FY 2010 – 2014) are considered distinct from the FY15 NOFA requirement on page 17.

- 15. On page 17, how is the term "participate" defined for Planning Coordinators? We are an existing Planning Grantee with an outside Planning Coordinator on contract. Is our existing Planning Coordinator "participating" ONLY if they help us work on the Action Grant application itself? Or are they also considered to be "participating" if we indicate in our grant application that they will help us implement the Action Grant?**

As stated above, the NOFA requirement on page 17 does not apply to previously awarded grants and only applies to applications submitted under this NOFA. As explained above, participate under this NOFA means committing or intending to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. Past Planning Grantees can only qualify for Action Activities funding. Therefore, Planning Coordinators for past grantees would not be participating in the activities funded under this NOFA even if they assisted with the application.

- 16. Does an individual or entity providing grant writing assistance to more than two Applicant entities invalidate their applications?**

No. This question refers to the NOFA requirement on page 17 which states that a Planning Coordinator may participate in a maximum of two applications under this NOFA. As explained above, participate under this NOFA means committing or intending to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. Grant writing for this NOFA is not an activity that is funded under this NOFA, and therefore is not included in the definition of participate.

- 17. Can an entity that is serving as a planning coordinator for a 2014 Grantee, serve as a grant writer for multiple applications under this NOFA as long as the entity is not identified as a Planning Coordinator or planning partner under V.A.1.c (Capacity of Planning Partners)?**

Yes. This question refers to the NOFA requirement on page 17 which states that a Planning Coordinator may participate in a maximum of two applications under this NOFA. As explained above, participate under this NOFA means committing or intending to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. Grant writing for this NOFA is not an activity that is funded under this NOFA, and therefore is not included in the definition of participate.

**18. If an individual or entity provided Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant grant writing assistance to a grant winning applicant, could the Applicant/Grantee entity later choose to hire that grant writer to provide other technical assistance within the awarded planning grant?**

It depends. This question also refers to the NOFA requirement on page 17 which states that a Planning Coordinator may participate in a maximum of two applications under this NOFA. The NOFA restriction only applies to the commitment or intention to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the Planning and Action Grant activities funded under this NOFA. If the individual or entity did not commit or intend to commit, as part of the application, to participate in the activities funded under this NOFA, then there is no restriction on providing technical assistance post award.

**19. Does the limitation on planning coordinator participation relate to the individual identified as the planning coordinator, or their relationship to an entity which employs them? For example, if we assume that a nonprofit entity, or a planning consultant, employs multiple individuals, each having the professional capability to serve as a planning coordinator, can each of these individuals be part of up to two Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant applications?**

No, the limitation relates both to the individual and the entity that employs them. This question also refers to the NOFA requirement on page 17 which states that a Planning Coordinator may participate in a maximum of two applications under this NOFA. Page 9 defines a Planning Coordinator as a “person or entity.” If an individual is an employee of a larger entity and participates as a Planning Coordinator for an application, then that entity would also be considered to be a Planning Coordinator for that application. Both the entity and the individual would be limited to participating in two applications. Therefore, an entity employing multiple individuals can only participate in a maximum of two applications, even if the individual employees have not reached their maximum of two applications.

**20. Since a Planning Coordinator is not required for submission of an application, could a successful grantee choose to secure supplemental planning services following a grant award? How should funding for planning services be reflected in the budget?**

If awarded a grant, a grantee may procure a Planning Coordinator if they so wish by following the procurement requirements referenced in the NOFA and grant agreement. On page 44, the budget rating factor states that applicants should develop a budget for the planning activities related to the grant (including required activities listed in section III.C.5.a) that shows projected sources and thoroughly estimates all applicable costs.

**21. We want to double check that submitting a Planning and Action Grant application under this NOFA does not constitute an application for RAD as well for the target housing development.**

Correct. Submitting an application under this NOFA does NOT constitute an application for Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). The NOFA reference on page 17 only clarifies when an applicant who has already received a RAD Commitment to enter into a Housing Assistance Payments Contract (CHAP) for the target housing may be eligible to apply under the current Planning Grant NOFA.

**22. Could you please clarify the relationship of RAD and Action Activity applications for FY2010-2014 Planning Grantees?**

As explained above, submitting an application under this NOFA does NOT constitute an application for Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). The NOFA reference on page 17 only clarifies when an applicant who has already received a RAD Commitment to enter into a Housing Assistance Payments Contract (CHAP) for the target housing may be eligible to apply under the current Planning Grant NOFA.

**23. We would like to apply for a Planning and Action Grant that would enable us to create a viable plan to revitalize a severely distressed housing project. The ultimate strategy may be full or partial demolition of the existing buildings which we may want to do as part of the Action component of our plan. We are, however, confused by the Ineligible Activities listed in the NOFA, which include “(1) Supportive services; and (2) Redevelopment of the public or HUD-assisted housing targeted in this application, including acquisition, relocation, demolition and remediation, rehabilitation, or construction of the targeted housing.” Can you help us to understand this better?**

Neither Action Activities funds nor any other funds under this NOFA can be used for supportive services or the redevelopment of the public or HUD-assisted housing targeted in this application. Action Activities are the limited, physical neighborhood improvements that are further defined on page 6. As described on page 6 and on page 21 under ineligible activities, these funds are not intended for use toward the housing component of your Transformation Plan.

**24. Leverage Rating– Should the range for 3 points under Leverage Commitments for a Non-Metro Area or from a tribal entity be 7.00 to 7.99 and not up to 8.99?**

Yes. This question is referring to the typo in the leverage table on page 47. Applications from a non-metro area or from a tribal entity will receive 4 points if the application’s leveraged commitments as a percent of grant funds requested is between 8.00 and 9.99 percent, and will receive 3 points, if it is between 7.00 and 7.99 percent.

**25. Are these grants restricted to municipalities with 25,000 and above population?**

No, this NOFA does not restrict applicants based on population size. Your question may be referring to the Main Street program, which is separate from the Choice Neighborhoods Planning and Implementation programs.

**26. Does the \$100,000 available for Early Action Activities come out of the potential \$500,000 for planning activities or the \$1.5 million for Action Activities?**

Early Action Activities are distinct from Action Activities, and therefore the up to \$100,000 of Early Action Activity comes out of the up to \$500,000 for planning activities. Page 25 of the NOFA states that all funds awarded under this NOFA to successful past Planning Grantees and funds beyond \$500,000 awarded to other successful applicants (up to \$1.5 million) must be used for Action Activities as defined on page 5. These funds are distinct from the \$100,000 that can be used for Early Action Activities as defined on page 6 of the NOFA.

**27. We applied last year. We are applying again this year. May we use the same Certification of Distress as no changes have been made to the structures?**

No. You must complete the form HUD-53232 that is included under the current application package.

**28. Do we need to develop a neighborhood revitalization strategy in order to apply for the Choice Neighborhood Planning Grants Program? Or will our 5 Year Consolidated Plan supersede this requirement in order to apply for the grant?**

Awards under the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant NOFA provide funding for communities to develop a neighborhood revitalization strategy, which is one of the required grant activities (unless you are past Planning Grantee). The consolidated plan is not a substitute for this required grant activity.

**29. Is a Regional Planning and Development District an eligible applicant under the definition of “local government”?**

It depends on the authority provided to the regional planning organization in its charter from the state. On page 7, this NOFA defines “local government” to have the same meaning as “unit of general government” from section 102(a)(1) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5302). Consistent with HUD’s interpretation in other programs that use this same definition, to be considered a unit of general local government the entity should possess the powers of a unit of general local government such as the power to tax. Potential applicants should consider whether they are deemed “unit of general government” for other HUD programs that use the same definition (e.g. the Community Development Block Grant program).

**30. Is there an advantage to having the City as a co-applicant?**

Each applicant must determine for themselves whether having a co-applicant is beneficial.

**31. Does the Physical Needs Assessment (PNA) need to be prepared prior to application, or is it part of the planning process?**



As stated on page 38 of the NOFA, the Physical Needs Assessment must be submitted as part of the application to respond to the current rehabilitation costs rating factor, unless: 1) the targeted units are public housing and HUD has already approved a Section 18 demolition or 2) the targeted units are Indian Housing that have been demolished.

**32. Are conceptual drawings, design and engineering costs covered in the \$1.5 million for Action Activities? Or should they be a part of the planning portion of the grant?**

The conceptual drawings, design, and engineering costs related to the target housing can be covered by the planning portion of the grant, but not by the Action Activities portion. Page 25 of the NOFA states that all funds awarded under this NOFA to successful past Planning Grantees and funds beyond \$500,000 awarded to other successful applicants (up to \$1.5 million) must be used for Action Activities as defined on page 5. As stated in the definition, Action Activities funds must be used for must be used toward limited, physical neighborhood improvements, and a list of uses is provided.

**33. Are indirect costs covered by the grant? If so, do they all need to be covered by the \$500,000 portion?**

Indirect costs are not covered by the grant. Only costs directly related to the planning process may be covered by the \$500,000 for planning activities. These direct costs may include administration costs directly associated with planning, such as staffing and meeting space for planning activities. Section III.C lists the required and eligible grant activities. Please note, Section III.C.9.c specifies that (for all applicants apart from FY 2010-2014 Planning Grantee applicants) the first \$500,000 cannot be used toward Action Activities.

**34. As Action Activities are implemented, there will still be a need for grant administration and oversight. Do these costs come from the \$1.5 million Action Activities portion?**

No. Page 25 of the NOFA states that all funds awarded under this NOFA to successful past Planning Grantees and funds beyond \$500,000 awarded to other successful applicants (up to \$1.5 million) must be used for Action Activities as defined on page 5. As stated in the definition on page 5, Action Activities funds are for physical improvements, and must not be used for non-physical uses, such as supportive services, staffing, and marketing. Thus, grant administration and oversight cannot be supported by the Action Activities funds. Applicants may use non-Choice Neighborhoods funds to cover Action Activities administration and oversight needs.

**35. Match vs. leverage. Where can we count in-kind staff costs from the lead/co-applicants? Is this allowable in the 5% matching requirement? If so, does that then count as leverage? Are other forms of in-kind acceptable as leverage? If so, what does that include?**

First, let us clarify the match requirement: the statutory requirement [section 24(c)(1)(A) of the 1937 Act (42 U.S.C. 1437v(c)(1)(A))] is that by the end of the grant term, the grantee will have secured a match of at least 5%. As a requirement in this NOFA (see Section III.B), the applicant certifies [as part of the form provided under the Choice Neighborhoods Application Certifications form] it will meet this requirement. It is not a requirement that the match be in place at the time of the grant application.

As to your question, in-kind staff costs can be counted toward match but not leverage. On page 13, the NOFA states that the 5% match requirement must be fulfilled by cash or in-kind donations. Funds used to meet the five percent match may be counted as leverage, only if it meets the leverage requirements of the NOFA. This NOFA does not provide for in-kind commitments, such as professional staff time or office and meeting space, to be counted as leverage. Instead, in addition to cash leverage commitments, HUD will consider “supporting commitments” as one type of leverage. Supporting commitments, as defined in the NOFA under the Leverage Rating Factor, relate to funding your partners have available for their use to carryout activities that directly support the proposed planning process.

**36. If a partner is considering their vacant land as the dollar value commitment for the Planning Grant, can we take the full present appraised value as leverage for the planning grant; especially if the Planning Grant neighborhood process supports the development direction?**

No. Under this NOFA, land cannot be considered as leverage. Only cash or supporting commitments can be considered leverage, and supporting commitments are limited to financial commitments that your partners have available for their use to carry out activities that directly support the proposed planning process (see page 47).

**37. Can the city's future funding commitment in the Consolidated Plan for the neighborhood that surrounds the target housing be considered as the city's leverage?**

Leverage commitments must comply with all of the program requirements stated in the NOFA under the leverage rating factor. Among others, these requirements include that the resource must be explicitly dedicated to the Choice Neighborhoods Planning and Action Activities. A general commitment of funds to a target neighborhood in a consolidated plan, would not meet this requirement.

**38. One of the selected "Target Housing Projects" consists of rental units that were not constructed with NAHASDA funds. Can this be an eligible type of target housing?**

Regarding Indian Housing, the NOFA does not require that the tribal entity used NAHASDA funding construct the units. It states that target units must be currently assisted with NAHASDA funding (e.g. operating subsidy and/or funding for capital improvements) in order to be eligible. And as also stated in the NOFA, the target housing must be a multifamily rental project and at

least half of the units must be receiving the NAHASDA assistance. Please refer to page 6 for the definition of “assisted housing.”

**39. Can you describe the relationship between an applicant and a co-applicant? [Does a co-applicant report directly to HUD or does a co-applicant report to the Lead applicant who then integrates it into one report? What is the financial relationship between an applicant and a co-applicant? Does the co-applicant take on liability for any issues that arise? Does the Lead applicant assume liability for co-applicant? Is the Lead applicant responsible for managing the co-applicant both from a responsibility and cost perspective?]**

On page 6, the NOFA defines the co-applicant and states that the Co-Applicant will also sign the Planning Grant Agreement or Planning and Action Grant Agreement and be responsible for implementing the activities identified in the Transformation Plan, but will not directly receive access to funding through HUD’s Line of Credit Control System (LOCCS). HUD Form 53156, Choice Neighborhoods Application Certifications, and other portions of the NOFA/grants.gov package contain additional detail on co-applicant responsibilities. Beyond these requirements, it is up to the applicants to decide upon the specific details of their partnership.

**40. What is the difference between a Co-Applicant versus an implementation partner?**

This Planning Grant NOFA does not refer to implementation partners but rather to planning partners, who may help the Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant undertake the planning process (see pages 37-38). While planning partners help with the planning process, they do not have the same responsibilities as the Co-Applicant, as specified in the NOFA and grants.gov package, such as on page 6 and in HUD Form 53156.

**41. Of the Choice Neighborhoods funds of \$500,000 for planning activities, must a portion be used for Early Action Activities?**

No. Early Action Activities are an eligible grant activity but are not a required use of Choice Neighborhoods grant funds.

**42. After accounting for Early Action Activities, would the remainder of the \$500,000 of planning activity funds then be used for planning/management/oversight/administration of the project? Is that planning/management/oversight/administration for the entire time period (all 3 years)?**

Costs directly related to the planning process may be covered by the \$500,000 for planning activities. Section III.C lists the required and eligible grant activities. These direct costs may include administration costs directly associated with planning, such as staffing and meeting space for planning activities. Please note, Section III.C.9.c specifies that (for all applicants apart from FY 2010-2014 Planning Grantee applicants) the first \$500,000 cannot be used toward

Action Activities, which would include the administration and oversight of implementing the Action Activities.

**43. Does the Statutory Regulatory Requirements on Troubled Status for PHAs apply to Tribally Designated Housing Entities?**

On page 13, the NOFA states that this requirement applies to PHA applicants. For the purposes of this NOFA, PHAs or public housing authorities, as defined on page 9 of this NOFA, do not include Tribally Designated Housing Entities.

**44. Form HUD-53156, Choice Neighborhoods Application Certifications, requires the signature of the Chairman of the Board of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority if the Lead Applicant or Co-applicant is a Public Housing Authority. If the Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant is not a PHA, but is a tribal entity, does the Chairman of the Indian Tribally Designated Housing Entities Board Chairman need to sign this form?**

No. The signature in question on the Form HUD-53156 only applies if the Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant is a Public Housing Authority. For the purposes of this NOFA, PHAs or public housing authorities, as defined on page 9 of this NOFA, do not include Tribally Designated Housing Entities.

**45. Are ASTM standard requirements required to be used for the Physical Needs Assessment (PNA)?**

No. The only standards and requirements that need to be followed are the ones identified in the NOFA. Please see the definition of the Physical Needs Assessment on page 9 of the NOFA and the rating factor on page 38 for the requirements.

**46. Our target housing is a senior development. Since it does not meet criteria (3)(a) under the definition of “Severely Distressed Housing” of being occupied predominantly by families who are very low-income families with children, have unemployed members, and are dependent on various forms of public assistance, are we correct in assuming that it would have to either (b) have high rates of vandalism and criminal activity or (c) be lacking in sufficient appropriate transportation, supportive services, economic opportunity, schools, civic and religious institutions, and public services, resulting in severe social distress in the project?**

Yes. On page 10 of the NOFA, the definition of severely distressed housing, includes several criteria, including meeting at least one of the three criteria (a, b, and c) listed in the above question.

**47. For the current rehabilitation costs rating factor, we have been told by several experts that since the structure does not conform to local building codes, it cannot be rehabilitated.**

**Therefore, no estimation is required. Do we need to get that in writing from an expert, or can we just state it within the application?**

Per the NOFA requirements, unless the target housing is public housing and HUD has already approved a Section 18 demolition or is demolished Indian Housing, an applicant must submit a Physical Needs Assessment that follows the requirements stated on pages 9 and 38 of the NOFA in order to receive points for the current rehabilitation costs rating factor.

**48. The last application cycle required a map to be submitted using a HUD mapping tool? Is that part of the current application process? If so, what is the link?**

As stated on page 15 of the NOFA, the mapping tool is required to define the neighborhood boundaries and provide certain data. Page 15 also states that the mapping tool is posted on the FY2015 NOFA and Funding Information page at [www.hud.gov/cn](http://www.hud.gov/cn). The direct link for the tool is: <http://www.huduser.gov/portal/CN2015/planning.html>

**49. If we have already received a past Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant, completed a HUD approved Transformation Plan, and are only applying for the \$1.5 million for the Action Activities portion, do we need to respond to the planning rating factors in the NOFA since they are different from the responses required in the past Choice Neighborhoods Planning NOFA?**

Yes. All applicants, including past Planning Grantees must respond to all applicable rating factors in order to receive full points. Page 35 of the NOFA further states that specific instructions for past Planning Grantees are stated throughout the applicable sections. For example, the rating factors under the Soundness of Approach section (which include many of the rating factors related to the plan for the planning process), have specific instructions for past Planning Grantees. Applicants should follow the specific instructions within the NOFA.

**50. We are a past Planning Grantee. Do we need to submit new attachments and new dated letters for all of the letters we provided to HUD when we submitted and were awarded our past Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant?**

Yes. The current NOFA competition is separate from past NOFA competitions, and therefore past Planning Grantees must submit new letters, certifications, and other documents to respond to the current NOFA.

**51. We are a past Planning Grantee. Do we need to conduct the required resident meeting after the publication of the NOFA if we are only applying for the Action Activities funds?**

Yes. You need to conduct the required resident meeting after the publication of the NOFA, even if you are a past Planning Grantee and are only applying for the Action Activities funds.

**52. Will there be another opportunity to apply for a Planning Grant in FY 2016, after the current NOFA's deadline?**

As page 1 of the NOFA states, this NOFA is for the FY2015/2016 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants program.

**53. If a grantee under this NOFA later applies for an Implementation Grant, will their ability to request Implementation Grant funds for Critical Community Improvements (CCI) and the related CNI Implementation leverage requirements for CCIs be impacted in any way?**

Historically, past Implementation Grant NOFAs have stated that the maximum award amount for which the application is eligible would be reduced by the same amount awarded under the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant for active Planning Grants. The specific requirements of the Implementation NOFA will be included in that NOFA.

**54. I am working with a FY2010-2014 Planning Grantee. For the current NOFA, is it permissible to eliminate one of the original properties in the footprint as long as another severely distressed property exists?**

Yes. On page 17, the NOFA refers to past planning grants as applications that target the same neighborhood and public and/or assisted housing project(s). For the housing, applicants must include at least one of the same public and/or assisted housing project(s), and it must meet the eligible target housing requirements starting on page 14.

**55. We are a past Planning Grantee and, as a result of our planning process, we have been able to close funding for the redevelopment of our target housing projects. Are we still eligible to apply for the Action Activities funds under this NOFA?**

No. We congratulate you on your successful revitalization of the target housing. However, in order to qualify under the current NOFA, all applicants must meet the requirement of having at least one severely distressed target housing project (see page 14).

**56. We are a past Planning Grantee. Can we still apply if our target housing has already received a RAD Conversion Commitment?**

No. Page 17 of the NOFA, states that a target housing project is only eligible if it has not yet received a RAD Conversion Commitment (RCC).

**57. Our neighborhood is a part of the area funded by a Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant. Can we still apply despite this overlap?**

No. Target neighborhoods can be adjacent to neighborhoods funded by a Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant, but cannot overlap. Page 17 of the NOFA states that public and/or assisted housing projects and the neighborhoods in which they are located previously funded

through a Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant may not be the target housing and neighborhood of a Choice Neighborhoods application under this NOFA.

**58. We are a city and have two separate entities that are considering applying under this NOFA. Would the city be disqualified for both applications if the city gave letters of support for these two different entities? Please note the city would not be a Co-Applicant to either application.**

Successful neighborhood transformation typically requires focused support and attention from the locality, meaning either the local government or Indian tribe that the neighborhood is located in, which is why on page 17 the NOFA states there can be only one application per locality. A local government or Indian tribe should only submit a letter of support for one application, regardless of whether they are a Co-Applicant or not.

**59. Grants.gov only provides 15 slots for attachments, but the application requires more than 15 narrative exhibits and attachments. How am I supposed to submit the application?**

Grants.gov is a system used by the entire Federal government so its structure does not necessarily reflect the Choice Neighborhoods NOFA. Its attachment 1 does not explicitly mean the Choice Neighborhoods Attachment 1. Applicants should zip together the multiple attachment files (in one or more zip files, depending on the size) they have prepared in accordance with the Choice Neighborhoods NOFA and plug them into the slots provided by Grants.gov. Please be reminded that, as instructed in the NOFA, each narrative exhibit and attachment must be its own file. Do NOT simply create one file that includes multiple exhibits or attachments.

**60. Is the HUD-2530, Certification for Multifamily Assisted Property Owners, required for Indian Housing? Does the form need to be approved by HUD prior to the application deadline?**

No, it is not required for Indian Housing. This question refers to page 14 of the NOFA, under Certification for Multifamily assisted property owners, which states that if the Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant is the owner of the assisted property that is the subject of the Choice Neighborhoods application, the applicant must submit form HUD-2530. The definition of HUD multifamily assisted housing does not include Indian Housing; therefore, HUD-2530 is inapplicable to Indian Housing.

**61. The NOFA requires documentation for the Current Rehabilitation Costs through a PNA. The most recent PNA for the target public housing site occurred in 2008. Should this PNA be included in the grant application?**

Applicants must respond to the rating factor criteria as they are written in the NOFA. The Current Rehabilitation Costs rating factor (page 38) states: “You may receive up to 3 points based on the estimated cost to rehabilitate the units as determined by a Physical Needs

Assessment (PNA, as defined in section I.A.3.f) that has been conducted within the **last three years** for the target public and/or assisted housing project(s)...If the PNA was completed more than one year prior to the publication date of this NOFA, you must also include an update by the project's owner indicating which improvements identified in the PNA have been completed."

**62. If the PHA is the Lead or Co-Applicant for the FY 2015/2016 Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant Program and the target housing is public housing, is it necessary for the PHA to submit the Certification for Multifamily Assisted Property Owners (form HUD-2530)?**

No. As found on page 14, the title of the requirement is, "Certification for *Multifamily* Assisted Property Owners." The first sentence of the paragraph states: "If the Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant is the owner of the assisted property that is the subject of the Choice Neighborhoods application, you are required to complete a Previous Participation Review for Prospective Multifamily Housing Programs Participants," which refers to multifamily assisted housing.

**63. Can we still apply for this grant if we have only received a RAD Rental Conversion Commitment (RCC) for one phase of a multiphase CHAP awarded for the target housing development?**

A target housing site can still be eligible if they only have the RCC for the first phase of a multi-phase project.

**64. It is noted in the NOFA that CDBG Funds can be counted as leverage if the work activity is in the CDBG recipient's annual action plan, and that matching funds can be considered as leveraged funds. Can CDBG funds be used as a match for the grant?**

Yes, CDBG funds can be used as a match, as long as they meet the requirements of section III.B (pages 12-13 of the NOFA) and the CDBG-specific language on page 47 of the NOFA: "In the case of HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, the work activity must be included in the CDBG recipient's annual action plan. Such plans may be amended to include the Choice Neighborhoods funded activity(ies)."

**65. For FY 2010 - 2014 Planning Grantees, the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants Program NOFA states that "within six months of the grant award, these awardees must propose a plan, which must be approved by HUD, that identifies the Action Activities for which these funds will be used." If a grant is awarded, how detailed must this proposal be?**

Once grants have been awarded, the Choice Neighborhoods program office will issue guidelines for awardees to follow that specify the level of detail needed for the Action Activities proposal. For the purposes of the NOFA, past Planning Grantees are neither expected nor encouraged to identify Action Activities in the application (see page 25 of the NOFA).



**66. Do past Planning Grantees need to propose Action Activities that were prioritized in the original Choice Neighborhoods planning process, or can they propose new Action Activities that did not appear in their Planning Grant Transformation Plan? Additionally, if new Action Activities are permitted, does the applicant then need to apply for the full Planning and Action Grant (since previous planning has not been completed for those items)?**

Page 43 of the NOFA states that Action Activities “should evolve from the planning process.” For past Planning Grantees, this means Action Activities should be based on the needs and priorities identified in the original planning process and Transformation Plan, but the Action Activities do not need to have been specifically proposed in the Transformation Plan. As the NOFA states on page 18, past Planning Grantees who are awarded a grant under this NOFA will have six months to submit their proposed planning activities to HUD for approval. This time is provided for any additional planning that is needed to identify specific Action Activities. Please note that past Planning Grantees can apply for Action Activities funding only, and not the full Planning and Action Grants (see page 17 of the NOFA). Successful applicants that no longer have funds from the original Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant, may use non-Choice Neighborhoods funds to cover additional Action Activities planning costs.

**67. For past Planning Grantees, do the timelines and milestones for the Action Activities process referenced in the Planning Schedule rating factor need to be addressed as part of the narrative or as a separate planning schedule attachment?**

For past Planning Grantees, the Action Activities process is handled as part of the narrative. This question refers to page 44 of the NOFA, which states that past Planning Grantees “may receive up to 2 points for providing their most recent HUD-approved Planning Grant schedule, and describing in the narrative how the Action Activities process builds off of or will be integrated into this schedule. Please also identify the milestones and the timeline associated with identifying and proposing Action Activities within six months after the grant award date.” Please note that the narrative, including the milestones and timeline, only relates to the Action Activities **process**, which is described on page 43 of the NOFA as the process for selecting Action Activities. Past Planning Grantees are neither expected nor encouraged to identify Action Activities in the application (see page 25 of the NOFA), and therefore the specific Action Activities themselves should not be included in the planning schedule or narrative.

**68. Can we submit multiple neighborhoods in one application or can we only submit one neighborhood per application?**

The application is limited to one targeted neighborhood. Please see page 8 of the NOFA for the definition of neighborhood under this NOFA, as well as the eligible neighborhoods requirements starting on page 15.

**69. Are the slides from the Choice Neighborhoods FY15/16 Planning Grant NOFA webinar available?**

Yes, the webinar slides have been recently posted on the Choice Neighborhoods FY15 Funding Page. The direct link to the slides is:

<http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=CNFY15-16PlanGrntsNOFA.pdf>

**70. What does cash leverage for undefined Action Activities mean? For example, if a landscape company is willing to commit \$200,000 (set aside) to beautification efforts (one of the eligible Action Activities by our read of the NOFA to be defined during the planning process to develop the Transformation Plan and be approved by HUD), would that be considered cash leverage for undefined Action Activities?**

No, the example you referenced would not be considered cash leverage for undefined Action Activities, because this leverage is limited to a type of Action Activities (i.e., beautification). Additionally, it is not clear from the question, but the leverage might also be a commitment of materials/labor from the landscape company, not cash. Cash means a commitment of dollars (not supporting commitments or in-kind activities) and undefined means that cash is not earmarked for specific Action Activities or specific types of Action Activities. For example, a letter for a cash commitment might state “X City commits \$100,000 of CDBG funds for Action Activities that will be defined through a community planning process and approved by HUD.” When it comes to Action Activities, the NOFA states that applicants are neither expected nor encouraged to identify Action Activities in the application (see page 25), and that HUD will only count cash leverage for undefined Action Activities (see page 46).

**71. Can Annual Contribution Contract (ACC) units be replaced by Project-Based Section 8 and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) units?**

This question references the requirement for the Transformation Plan to include one-for-one replacement of the target public and/or HUD-assisted housing units (see page 23 of the NOFA). Awardees are only expected to **plan** for replacement housing and funds under this NOFA cannot be used for the replacement of the targeted housing units. Replacement housing is defined on page 9 of the NOFA.

**72. Is demolition an allowable use under this NOFA, for example if the demolition was part of a business façade improvement program?**

The NOFA states that applicants are neither expected nor encouraged to identify Action Activities in the application (see page 25), as they need to come out of the community planning process and then be approved by HUD. No applicant will earn credit or points for proposing or describing specific Action Activities. Generally, demolition is not an allowable cost under the Action Activities funds. However, if you are awarded a grant, your HUD grant manager will work closely with you to determine eligible costs in each specific case.

**73. One of the eligible Action Activities includes “beautification, place-making, and community arts projects.” Can you describe place-making in more detail?**

The NOFA states that applicants are neither expected nor encouraged to identify Action Activities in the application (see page 25), as they need to come out of the community planning process and then be approved by HUD. No applicant will earn credit or points for proposing or describing specific Action Activities. Place-making is a term used in urban design that varies slightly in its exact definition. The Project for Public Spaces states “Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution. With community-based participation at its center, an effective Placemaking process capitalizes on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people’s health, happiness, and well being.”

**74. Can Action Activities funds be used for infrastructure for a future development?**

The NOFA states that applicants are neither expected nor encouraged to identify Action Activities in the application (see page 25), as they need to come out of the community planning process and then be approved by HUD. No applicant will earn credit or points for proposing or describing specific Action Activities. As to your question, no, Action Activities cannot be used for basic infrastructure and cannot be used towards the construction of replacement target housing. The definition of Action Activities on page 5 of the NOFA states that Action Activities “funds must also not be used for basic infrastructure or as a substitute for basic municipal services. Additionally funds must not be used for redevelopment of the public or HUD-assisted housing targeted in this application, including acquisition, relocation, demolition and remediation, rehabilitation, or construction of the targeted housing.”

**75. For the budget rating factor, should past Planning Grantees include a line for Action Activities TBD in their most recent approved budget? If not, how will HUD determine how much funding a past Planning Grantee is requesting?**

No, that is not necessary. Page 44 of the NOFA instructs past Planning Grantee applicants to submit their most recent HUD approved Planning Grant budget. There are places on Form HUD-2880 and SF-424 that indicate the amount of funding being requested (up to \$1.5 million for past Planning Grantees).

**76. Is there a webinar or source material to guide Choice Neighborhoods past Planning Grantees on how to prepare their applications this year?**

There is a webinar that provides a high-level overview of the NOFA for all applicants, but the NOFA is the most complete source for instructions. The webinar can be found on the Choice Neighborhoods FY15 Funding Information Page:

[http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/ph/cn/fy15funding](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/cn/fy15funding)

**77. The Action Activities definition states that funds cannot be “used for basic infrastructure or as a substitute for basic municipal services.” How is “basic infrastructure” defined in this context? With neighborhood broadband/Wi-Fi as an eligible type of Action Activities, is the funding of Wi-Fi infrastructure an ineligible use of funds?**

Generally, infrastructure is not an allowable cost under the Action Activities funds, although some exceptions may be made, such as certain neighborhood broadband/Wi-Fi infrastructure. The NOFA states that applicants are neither expected nor encouraged to identify Action Activities in the application (see page 25), as they need to come out of the community planning process and then be approved by HUD. No applicant will earn credit or points for proposing or describing specific Action Activities. If you are awarded a grant, your HUD grant manager will work closely with you to determine eligible costs in each specific case.

**78. We would like to procure a Planning Coordinator. Can we use a portion of the \$500,000 allocated to Choice Neighborhoods planning activities to cover Planning Coordinator fees?**

Grantees are not required to use Planning Coordinators, but if they wish to do so, relevant Planning Coordinator fees can be covered under these funds. Costs directly related to the planning process may be covered by the \$500,000 for planning activities. Section III.C lists the required and eligible grant activities. These direct costs may include administration costs directly associated with planning, which can include appropriate Planning Coordinator fees.

**79. Can CDBG-eligible areas or census block groups be considered an officially designated investment priority area under the Alignment with Existing Efforts rating factor?**

No. An officially designated investment priority area is meant to show that the local government or other similar entity has designated this particular neighborhood, over other neighborhoods, as a priority for investment. As stated in the NOFA on page 45, examples include a redevelopment area, Tax Increment Finance district, and a CDBG Revitalization Strategy Area, among others. Being a CDBG-eligible area or census block group is not comparable to these types of examples and would not be considered an officially designated investment priority area.

**80. Please clarify the policy priority renewable energy rating factor on page 48 of the NOFA. Can the applicants choose to include only one of the on-site renewable energy technologies among the list (i.e., Solar Thermal Electric, Photovoltaics, Landfill Gas, Wind, Biomass,**

**Geothermal Electric, Combined Heat and Power, Municipal Solid Waste, Small Hydroelectric, Fuel Cells using Renewable Fuels)? Or does the applicant need to include all the renewable energy technologies in the policy priority?**

Applicants only need to certify that they will incorporate at least one form of renewable energy technologies on-site in the redevelopment of the target housing.

**81. As part of the planning activities funds are incentives for completing surveys and attending meetings an eligible direct cost (e.g., a \$20 Walmart Gift Card)? Is food for community meetings an eligible cost?**

No. Incentives are not considered an eligible cost and for the most part food is not considered an eligible cost.

**82. For past Planning Grantees, in the Capacity of the Planning Partners section, we can describe what our planning partners did during the development of the Transformation Plan, but should we also explain and will we be scored on what the new partners will do related to the Action Activities we are proposing?**

First, the NOFA states that applicants are neither expected nor encouraged to identify Action Activities in the application (see page 25), as they need to come out of the community planning process and then be approved by HUD. No applicant will earn credit or points for proposing or describing specific Action Activities they plan to implement if awarded a grant.

Second, Capacity is based on past experience. Past Planning Grantees may include what they have already accomplished during the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant, but they and their partners may also include other past experiences as well.

Your question refers to the “Capacity of the Planning Partners” starting on page 37 of the NOFA. The Planning Partners rating factor is only based on the capacity to coordinate a comprehensive neighborhood planning process, and does not reference the capacity to undertake Action Activities.

**83. We were unable to submit an application under this NOFA, but intend to submit an application for the next round. Roughly when can we expect the next Planning Grant NOFA to be released? Also, how may we receive alerts for the next round?**

We do not know when the next Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant NOFA will be released, as funding for that NOFA is subject to appropriations from Congress. Also, please note that historically NOFAs have changed, sometimes significantly, from round to round. The best way to receive alerts is to sign up for the Choice Neighborhoods newsletter (at <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/subscribe/signup&listname=Choice%20Neighborhood>)

[ds%20e-Newsletter&list=CHOICENEIGHBORHOODSENEWSLETTER-L](mailto:ds%20e-Newsletter&list=CHOICENEIGHBORHOODSENEWSLETTER-L)) and sign up for alerts on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

**84. We are a FY2010 - 2014 Grantee with a Transformation Plan that was completed and accepted by HUD. The Plan identifies a number of projects that fall under the Action Activities definition that we have been trying to secure funding to implement. In our case, is it acceptable for leverage letters to commit cash for specific projects or categories of projects, rather than undefined Action Activities, since the projects were identified through a community planning process and HUD has accepted our Transformation Plan?**

No, leverage commitments cannot be committed to specific projects or categories of projects. Please note that HUD does not approve Transformation Plans, but rather accepts them, which as the acceptance letter states does not necessarily constitute an endorsement. Page 46 of the NOFA, states “FY 2010 – 2014 Planning Grantees may only submit leverage associated with the Action Activities process and cash leverage for **undefined Action Activities**” and does not allow for exceptions.

**85. At times, the NOFA lists specific instructions for past Planning Grantees. For example, at the end of the first Capacity rating factor, “Capacity to Lead the Planning Process,” it reads “FY 2010 – 2014 Planning Grantees may include what they have already accomplished during their Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant Process.” In this case, should prior grantees only respond to the instructions that pertain specifically to them, i.e. the above referenced sentence, or should they also respond to all of the questions listed above in that same section?**

Unless, specifically instructed otherwise, past Planning Grantees should respond to all applicable rating factors and aspects of those rating factors. In the case referenced above, the last sentence is an additional instruction for past Planning Grantees, and they should respond to all of the relevant questions above in that same section as well. There are a few places where past Planning Grantees have entirely separate instructions than other applicants, such as for the budget and planning schedule rating factors.

**86. On page 30 of the NOFA, the instructions under “Attachment 4. Eligible Target Housing Documentation – Severe Distress of Targeted Project Certification” refer to the requirement in III.C.1.d. Is the reference supposed to be to III.C.1.b?**

Yes, the instructions are supposed to refer to the eligible target housing requirements under III.C.1.b.

**87. The end of III.C.1.b in the NOFA provides specific instructions for Indian Housing that has been demolished, but does not reference non-Indian housing. Are the instructions the same for non-Indian Housing that has been demolished?**

No. The requirements are slightly different for Indian Housing than other housing. III.C.1.b refers to the definition of severely distressed housing on page 10 of the NOFA. That definition explains when demolished housing can be considered severely distressed housing: “A severely distressed project that has been legally vacated or demolished (but for which HUD has not yet provided replacement housing assistance, other than tenant-based assistance) must have met the definition of physical distress not later than the day the demolition application approval letter was dated by HUD, or in the case of Indian Housing, not later than the day the tribal entity signed the written notification of demolition provided to HUD in accordance with 24 CFR1000.134.”

**88. Do pages with partial portions of text count as a full page toward the page count? For example, since each narrative must be saved in a separate file, would an executive summary narrative of 1.5 pages be counted as 1.5 pages, or 2?**

Each page of text, other than excepted pages, counts as a full page, even if only a portion of the page is filled by text. In this example, the executive summary narrative would be counted as 2 pages.

**89. When the attachments say they need to be “certified” does that mean they need to be notarized or just state that the person certifies the data is accurate?**

Applicants must follow all instructions in the NOFA for specific certifications, whether it is requested as part of a NOFA requirement or rating factor. The question appears to refer to the Part I Violent Crime rating factor, wherein the criteria states (in part): “You must submit data for each of the three years...in your attachments as a letter of certification from the local law enforcement agency or ....” In this case, to be a letter of certification it needs to be a letter and be signed by the appropriate official from the local law enforcement agency.

**90. Can you define what “Gap financing for economic development” means under Early Action Activities. Does this mean you can assist local businesses in the neighborhood with store front improvements?**

No. Business façade improvements, another Early Action Activities category, includes improvements to the physical exterior of businesses. Gap financing for economic development means contributing a small amount of “gap” funds to enable an economic development project to be created in the neighborhood. For example, if a partner has all the financing needed to create a new grocery store in the neighborhood except for \$100,000, the \$100,000 to make that project possible would be considered gap funds. Please note Early Action Activities funds must be used for projects that can be completed within the first two years of the planning process and meet all other Early Action Activities requirements (see pages 6-7 of the NOFA).

**91. During the planning process, can we include budget money toward a case manager?**

Funds cannot be used for supportive services, which includes case management. See page 21 of the NOFA where supportive services is listed as an ineligible activity.

**92. Our Choice Neighborhoods team has a question about the documentation needed to show that our proposed Transformation Plan is consistent with the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. In the application instructions, it says to either include a section of the plan or letter from the agency overseeing the plan. Then in the Order of the Application, it says to use form HUD-2995. Do we need to include both? Is a letter sufficient?**

The HUD-2995 is asked for in relation to the Bonus Points (specifically for the Preferred Sustainability Status Communities Bonus Points) as shown on page 31: “(u) Attachment 21. Bonus Points, if applicable. Review and respond to the rating factor in V.A.3 by providing a completed form HUD-2995 and/or HUD-50153 as instructed in section V.A.1.a of the General Section.” Your question references the Consistency with Other Planning Documents - Regional Sustainability Plan rating factor (page 45 of the NOFA). As shown on page 30, Attachment 17 is the attachment that supports the Consistency with Other Planning Documents rating factors: “(q) Attachment 17. Documentation to Support Consistency with Other Planning Documents. Review and respond to the rating factor in V.A.1.s by providing the documentation required under that section.”

**93. Can you please let me know where to find section V.A.1.e(2)(ii), which talks about the Substandard Housing Documentation?**

Section V.A.1.e(2)(ii) begins on the bottom page 40 (“You will earn 2 points for documentation showing that 8.00 percent of homes are substandard...”) and ends on the top of page 41. Section III.C.1.c begins near the top of page 15 and ends on the top of page 16.

**94. If an organization is applying for the \$500,000 plus the \$1.5 million, are match (5%) and leverage amounts calculated on the full \$2 million or just the \$500,000?**

The Cost Sharing or Matching requirements (page 13) state that: “By the end of the grant term, you are required to have matching funds in the amount of five percent of the grant amount in cash or in-kind donations.” The Leverage rating factor (page 47) speaks in terms of “grant funds requested.” So in both cases it is based on the total grant amount, not portions of it.

**95. If our target housing has already been demolished, are we still expected to explain the design flaws of the target housing under the Design Deficiencies rating factor?**

If applicants wish to be considered for points under the Design Deficiencies rating factor (page 39), they must respond to the criteria as written in the NOFA. In cases of demolished sites, applications should provide narrative related to design deficiencies at the time of demolition.



**96. Page 47 of the NOFA states that “in-kind contributions, such as professional staff time or office and meeting space from your partners” cannot be considered as a supporting commitment. However, one of the examples of the supporting commitment is “a university professor who received grant funding in the amount of X dollars to conduct a healthy environment study for the target neighborhood.” How is the professor’s time used to execute the study different than in-kind professional staff time from partners?**

Page 47 defines a supporting commitment as “a financial commitment that your partners have available for their use to carry out activities that directly support the proposed planning process.” In the example cited, the university has received a financial commitment, in this case a grant, to carry out an activity, in this case a study, that directly supports the planning process. This is different than an in-kind contribution of, for example, partners spending staff time developing the transformation plan strategies or participating in meetings.

**97. For past Planning Grantees, as part of the budget submission, I understand from the NOFA that we should include our most recent HUD-approved budget using HUD form 53421, and that we should include Part II and Part III. Do we also need to include the tabs LOCCS form, Detailed Budget, Narrative or any other information?**

No, that is not necessary. Page 44 of the NOFA instructs past Planning Grantee applicants to submit their most recent HUD approved Planning Grant budget, including Part II and Part III of the Form. The NOFA does not ask for additional parts.