U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-5000

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INDIAN HOUSING

MAR 27 2014

Dear Executive Director:

Subject: 2014 Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program Coordinator Funding

In preparation for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for FSS Program Coordinator funding, and in light of the recent changes to funding for such coordinators, the Department is issuing this letter to help your agency prepare for the upcoming FY 2014 FSS competition. Please review this letter carefully and share it with your FSS Program Coordinator(s), your Chief Financial Officer, and any other staff or individuals that work in the administration of your agency's FSS program, including the process of preparing and submitting FSS applications through Grants.gov. If your agency does not administer an FSS program, this letter is not applicable to your agency.

Combined FSS Program

In the past, funding for the Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency (PH FSS) and the Housing Choice Voucher Family Self-Sufficiency (HCV FSS) programs was appropriated separately. Therefore, funding was awarded under two separate Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs), one for PH FSS and one for HCV FSS, and use of the funding was restricted to the applicable FSS program. In the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (enacted January 17, 2014) funding streams for the HCV FSS and the PH FSS program coordinators were combined. **As a result, FY 2014 FSS funding will be awarded through one NOFA and applicants need to only submit one application. This also means that use of FSS funding awarded through the FY 2014 NOFA will no longer be restricted to the applicable program (funding may be used to serve both PH FSS and HCV FSS participants). However, please note that HCV FSS and PH FSS awards made *prior to FY 2014* are still restricted to the applicable program.**

Additionally, the $75 million appropriated under the FY 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act for the FSS program must be obligated by **September 30, 2014.** In order to meet this deadline, we encourage agencies to follow the instructions provided in the NOFA, seek technical assistance as soon as you experience any issues, and respond to technical deficiencies right away. Addressing technical or programmatic issues immediately will allow HUD to meet its deadline to obligate funds by September 30, 2014, and successfully make awards without delays.

Application Preparation and Common Mistakes

The FY 2014 FSS Program NOFA will specify the applicable deadline date for submitting applications, however, due to the September 30, 2014, deadline for obligating FSS funds this FY, agencies can anticipate a short open period for submitting their applications via Grants.gov.

We strongly encourage you to read the NOFA in its entirety as soon as it is posted on Grants.gov, and view any FSS NOFA related webcasts (www.hud.gov/webcasts) once they become available, to ensure that all eligibility and threshold requirements listed in the NOFA are met. *Please be reminded that due to combined funding/NOFA,* ***application requirements will change from previous NOFAs.*** We also encourage you to submit your application *early* to ensure that there is ample time to resolve any issues that would prevent your application from being successfully submitted and validated before the application deadline. You can subscribe to Grants.gov to receive notifications of new grant opportunity postings and updates, based on several criteria, including Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number, by visiting, http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/manage-subscriptions.html. **The CFDA number for the FSS program is 14.896.**

As a way to help reduce delays and errors in submitting applications through the Grants.gov, below is a list of some common mistakes for which applications were found to be ineligible or not processed during previous NOFAs/competitions.

1. Expired System for Award Management (SAM) Registration. During the FY 2013 HCV and PH FSS competitions, several applicants were unable to successfully submit their application on time because of an expired SAM registration. Please note that SAM registrations must be renewed and revalidated at least every 12 months from the date the applicant last certified and submitted the registration in SAM, and sooner if the applicant's information changes. Obtaining your SAM registration can take up to four weeks; therefore, your agency is encouraged to start this process or check your status immediately. For more information about SAM, please visit https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM.

2. Applying Under the Wrong NOFA/CFDA. Each program NOFA has a unique CFDA and Funding Opportunity number. Please note that the CFDA number and Funding Opportunity Number are typically located on the first page of the NOFA and on the first page of the Grants Application Package downloaded from grants.gov. Applicants must ensure that they are applying for the correct NOFA by checking that the CFDA number in their application package matches the CFDA number stated in the NOFA. **The CFDA number has changed from previous years, due to the combined funding/NOFA. The new CFDA number is 14.896.**

3. File Attachment Names. During the FY 2013 HCV and PH FSS competitions several applicants were unable to successfully submit their application because of errors in their file attachment names. Please note that file attachment names longer than approximately 50 characters can cause problems processing packages in grants.gov. Also, avoid using any special characters (example: -, &,*, %,/,#) or spacing in the file names. If you need spaces in the name

of your files, use the underscore (example: my_Attached_File.pdf) in naming the attachments. When submitting your application, please ensure that your file attachment names meet this criteria; otherwise, your application will be rejected by Grants.gov.

4. Not Checking Validation Status. *Please remember that your application must be "validated" by Grants.gov after it is "received" by Grants.gov.* During the FY 2013 HCV and PH FSS competitions, several applicants submitted their application to Grants.gov but did not check to ensure that the application was validated by Grants.gov. In some cases, the application was rejected by Grants.gov, and the applicant did not resubmit before the grace period ended, and the application was therefore not processed. As described in the FY 2014 General Section (Section IV.C.1.a "Electronic Application Deadline"), your application must be "validated" by Grants.gov after it is "received" by Grants.gov. The applicant is responsible for tracking the application, as described in the General Section

5. Late Applications. Applicants must successfully submit their applications prior to the deadline date as stated in the NOFA; otherwise, their applications will not be processed – no exceptions.

6. Failure to Respond to Deficiency Notice. Applicants will be notified when corrections or clarifications to their application are needed. The Department will notify applicants of a deficiency in two ways. Initially, the Department will send an email to the person designated in item 8 of the SF424 submitted with the application, to the person listed in item 21 of the SF424 as authorized representative, and to the person(s) designated in Part I.D of the HUD-52651 (FSS application form). These email notifications will be sent from the Department with confirmation of delivery receipt. The email notifications will be the official notification of the need to cure a technical deficiency.

Secondly, as a courtesy, the Department will also send a fax copy of the email notification to the fax numbers identified for the individuals on the SF424. The fax notification is a courtesy copy only.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the Department with accurate email addresses and fax numbers for receipt of these notifications. The Department is not responsible for correcting an email address or fax number that was not entered into the SF424 (or HUD-52651) correctly. Applicants are responsible for monitoring their email accounts and fax depositories to determine whether a cure letter has been received and for notifying appropriate staff of the receipt of the fax promptly.

If the applicant fails to correct technical deficiencies required for funding within the specified period of time, the application will be rendered unacceptable for processing.

The list of common mistakes above are only intended to serve as a guide to assist your agency in avoiding such mistakes under an upcoming NOFA. Please note that this list is not intended to provide applicants with all of the information needed to be successful in the application registration and submission process. To help applicants with the electronic application registration and submission process, the Department advises that applicants review the FY 2014 General Section, and to use the checklists, user guides, and other help features

located at SAM.gov and Grants.gov websites. Both websites provide access to instructions and answers to frequently asked questions which are updated periodically.

FY 2014 General Section Is Available Now

Please be reminded that the FSS Program NOFA must be read in conjunction with HUD's FY 2014 General Section, as the General Section and the program NOFA comprise the full set of application submission instructions that are applicable to the program. The FY 2014 General Section is available at: http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/administration/grants/fundsavail/2014gensec.

FSS Funding through LOCCS

In previous years, HCV FSS funds were made available through an amendment to the Annual Contributions Contact (ACC), while PH FSS funds were made available through a Grant Agreement and use of HUD's Line of Credit Control System (LOCCS). **As a result of the combined HCV FSS and PH FSS programs, all FSS funds will now be provided through a Grant Agreement and LOCCS.** Obtaining access to LOCCS requires HUD approvals and can be a lengthy process. If your agency does not currently have LOCCS access (e.g., HCV-only PHAs), we encourage you to begin the process as soon as possible, in the event that your agency is awarded funds under an upcoming NOFA. When completing the LOCCS Voice Response System Access Authorization Form (HUD 27054), please indicate "ROSS" in section 5a (LOCSS Program Area) and "Family Self-Sufficiency" in block 5b (Program Name).

For more information about gaining access to LOCCS, please visit http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/cfo/loccs_guidelines, or contact the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, User Support Branch at 1-877-705-7504 (toll free).

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact FSS@hud.gov.

Sincerely,

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