

**FY2018 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. We received a HOPE VI Revitalization Grant for part of a public housing project. Can the remaining units now be the “target public housing development” for a Choice Neighborhoods grant?**

The NOFA states, “Public housing projects previously funded through a HOPE VI Revitalization grant may not be the target public housing project of a Choice Neighborhoods grant application. However, they may be located within the Transformation Plan neighborhood.” The prohibition applies to the entire public housing project was the subject of the HOPE VI Revitalization Plan and does not differentiate among which particular funding source paid for the rehabilitation or redevelopment of specific units. An exception would be if the PHA demonstrated that, in accordance with 24(j)(2)(A)(v) of the 1937 Act, the target units were “sufficiently separable from the remainder of the project, of which the building is a part, to make use of the building feasible for transformation.”

- 2. Our neighborhood has a lot of distressed housing, but it is neither “public housing” or “assisted housing.” Can we still apply for a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Planning Grants if our application meets the other eligibility criteria, but does not have “severely distressed public or HUD-assisted housing”?**

No, the “Eligible Target Housing” threshold requires that there be a severely distressed public or HUD-assisted housing project at the center of the planning process. Please see the Eligible Target Housing threshold on page 15 of the NOFA. The terms “assisted housing,” “public housing,” and “severely distressed housing” are defined in the Program Definitions section starting on page 6.

- 3. Regarding the “Alignment with Existing Efforts” rating factor, must the boundaries for the target neighborhood in this grant application be identical to the boundaries of the “officially designated investment priority area” or can only a portion of the target neighborhood be located in such a priority investment area?**

While the neighborhood boundaries do not need to be identical, they should be substantially the same and both must include the target housing.

- 4. For the “Alignment with Existing Efforts” rating factor, does being named one of the newly created “Opportunity Zones” by the US Treasury/IRS count as a “officially designated investment priority area” under this NOFA?**

No, the intent of the NOFA is that such designation is made by a state or local level of government that can direct capital to the project as part of an intentional effort.

- 5. We have completed a Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) conversion and the property now has a PBRA contract, which meets the NOFA’s definition of “assisted housing” for eligible target housing. However, the “Relation to RAD Applicants” threshold states that after the receipt of a RAD Conversion Commitment (RCC), units are ineligible to apply. Does this prohibition continue to apply to our RAD converted property that is now under a PBRA contract?**

Yes, units that have received the RAD RCC are not eligible to be included in an application for a Choice Neighborhoods grant. In addition, given the requirements of the RAD program to ensure stability of a project post-conversion, a unit that has undergone a RAD conversion would not meet the statutory definition of “severely distressed.”

- 6. In Grants.gov, there are not enough slots for us to upload all the exhibits and attachments listed in the Choice Neighborhoods NOFA. How am I supposed to submit the application?**

Grants.gov is a system used by the entire Federal government and 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 files that include multiple exhibits or attachments.

- 7. On the Choice Neighborhoods website, there is a budget form for the Planning Grantees to use (HUD-53421). Is it necessary to submit this budget form in our grant application or can we submit our own budget spreadsheet?**

The NOFA does not require use of the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant Budget form (HUD-53421). Applicants should submit a Sources and Uses document in the format the meets the requirements identified in the NOFA.

- 8. Can Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds be used as a match for the grant?**

Yes, CDBG funds can be used as a match, if they meet the requirements of section III.B and the CDBG-specific language on page 50 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).”