**Sent 11/26/13**

**Subject: ER Clearance from Fish and Wildlife**

The Office of Community & Rural Affairs (OCRA) has been notified that the US Department of Interior – Division of Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), has changed their procedures for obtaining Environmental Clearance. The new process will allow grantees to self certify and receive a printable acknowledgement. The following procedures will appear in the Grants Manual Section (Environmental Form 7). The content of the letter from Fish and Wildlife to our Regional HUD Environmental Specialist is provided below in italics.

*Previously the FWS has provided at least minimal reviews and comments on all federal funding projects submitted to this office. Beginning immediately we will pursue a revised approach of focusing our review efforts on projects that have significant impacts on wildlife habitat. This approach will have three categories, as follows:*

*Category 1 – Projects With No Impacts on Wildlife Habitat*

*Projects that occur in highly urbanized settings and which involve little or no disturbance of undeveloped land (e.g. housing rehabilitation, renovations and improvements to existing municipal buildings, demolition of urban buildings, streetscape improvements) will have no impacts on wildlife habitat. We have concluded that those projects are not likely to adversely affect federally endangered or threatened species. For projects in this category we request that you notify all grant recipients not to submit project review requests to this office.*

*Category 2 – Projects With Minor Impacts on Wildlife Habitat*

*For all project review requests submitted to this office which we conclude will have insignificant impacts on wildlife habitat we will no longer send a response. With this letter we are notifying you that if funding recipients do not receive a written or email response from this office within 30 days we have concluded that the project is not likely to adversely affect any federally endangered or threatened species, and the project may proceed with no further consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. We recommend notifying all grant recipients of this policy change.*

*Category 3 – Projects With Significant Impacts on Wildlife Habitat*

*For all projects which we conclude will have significant impacts on fish and wildlife resources we will continue to send written comments.*

Grant recipients may also go to the Section 7 website:

(<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/section7/s7process/index.html>) and follow the online steps to self-certify and receive a printable acknowledgement that their project will not likely adversely affect a listed species if appropriate.

Category 1 letters, Projects With No Impacts on Wildlife Habitat, should be addressed to OCRA from the Chief Elected Official. Category 2 letters, Projects With Minor Impacts on Wildlife Habitat, should be submitted to Fish and Wildlife.

If you have any questions, please contact Grant Services at 1-800-824-2476.

**Sent 11/5/13**

**Subject: Monitoring of Sub-Contractor Contracts**

In response to a HUD monitoring of the State CDBG Program, effective immediately, OCRA will begin monitoring sub-contractor contracts. To comply with Section 3 guidelines, OCRA monitors will require that a copy of all sub-contractor contracts be made available at the monitoring.

If you have any questions, please contact Grant Services at (800)824-2476.

**Sent 6/5/13**

**Subject: Interest on 5 Day Rule Violation**

The Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) will no longer be collecting interest payable to the U.S. Treasury for violations of the 5 day rule unless the amount of interest due is **$100** or more.  The Grantee must provide a statement from the bank showing the  amount of interest earned was less than $100.

Please be advised, the Grantee will still receive a finding for violation of the 5 day rule at monitoring.  A thorough written explanation signed by the Chief Elected Official, including a statement of understanding that federal grant funds are to be disbursed within five business days of their deposit.  Such written statement should continue by affirming that should the Grantee be the recipient of Community Development Block Grant funds in the future, more careful attention will be paid to the receipt and disbursements to insure that no violations of the Code of Federal Regulations occur.

For questions or further information, please contact the Grant Services Division at (800) 824-2476.

**Sent 4/7/13**

**Drug Free/Fair Housing Ordinances**

Effective immediately, all Fair Housing Ordinances and Drug Free Workplace Ordinances/Policies must be **submitted with the project applications**. They will remain with the applications.  Each time a new project is submitted, a copy of the Fair Housing Ordinance and Drug Free Policy will be required.

A sample Drug Free Workplace Ordinance appears in the Civil Right Sections of the CDBG Handbook on the OCRA website.

Please assure that the submitted Fair Housing Ordinance contains the updated language as shown on the attached document.  **PLEASE NOTE:  This is a HUD requirement and does not affect the definition of “Familial Status” under the Fair Housing Act.**  We’ve revised the sample document to be more clear.  If you have already added the definition of “Family” as provided in the previous Sample, that will be accepted.  HOWEVER, if you amended the definition of “Familial Status” in your Fair Housing Ordinance – that will not be acceptable and you will need to revise it.

If you have questions regarding the contents of this email, please contact Neil Brook nbrook@ocra.in.gov  or Kathleen Weissenberger kweissenberger@ocra.in.gov.

**Sent 4/7/13**

**Subject: Tribal Consultation**

**Effective immediately**, all new environmental reviews must follow the HUD Process for Tribal Consultation.  You can find a link to the HUD Notice on Process for Tribal Consultation in Projects That Are Reviewed Under 24 CFR Part 58: <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=env_notice_tribe_con.pdf>.

This applies to **all** future CDBG applications that have yet to be submitted. The process requires federal agencies to consult with federally-recognized Indian tribes on projects that may affect historic properties of religious and cultural significance to tribes. Federally-recognized Indian tribes must now be included as a part of the CDBG environmental review process.  A new FORM 7 is attached.

First, utilize the Tribal Assessment Tool to determine which tribes must be contacted by inserting the project address into the tool.  Tribal Assessment Tool:

<http://egis.hud.gov/tdat/Tribal.aspx>

The project address is determined by the project type.  For public facilities, historic preservation, clearance, downtown revitalization or treatment facilities, utilize the exact street address(es) for the project.  For all other public improvements, use the unit of local government’s street address.

The process is not required for exempt activities which would include planning, fire truck, etc. See the link to “When to Consult with Tribes under Section 106” for more information: <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=env_tribes_checklist.pdf>.

You must utilize the attached template letter to contact both the chief and the tribal president (if listed) for every tribe listed in the project area. **Email is not acceptable.**

If no response has been received 35 days after mailing, the process is complete and can be documented on Environmental Form 7.  If a response is received within 35 days of mailing and a consultation is requested, contact OCRA for further instructions on how to complete the consultation (Step 2 of the HUD Notice).

If you have questions regarding this policy, please contact:

**Neil Brook**

**317-234-1911**

**Sent 4/7/13**

**Subject: CCR Registration**

Grant Services has received notification that some communities are paying for CCR registration.  This is a FREE federal government registration website.  The website address is [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov). SAM has replaced [www.bpn.gov/ccr](http://www.bpn.gov/ccr)  (where you registered in the CCR database).

**Some grantees have received a notice from for profit businesses offering to renew your registration for a fee!   Please remember you can do this for free yourself at** [**www.sam.gov**](http://www.sam.gov)**.**

To assist in familiarizing you with these new procedures, we are attaching a list of “Top SAM Frequently Asked Questions”.  These documents are also available on the SAM website.

We understand that anyone who had an active record in CCR automatically has an active record in SAM and that you do not need to create a SAM account to search publicly available information.  However, if you are an entity with an expired record, you should create your account now and migrate your account from CCR.

Additional guidance on how to use SAM is available under “SAM Help” on the right side of the main menu bar, then click “User Help” from the menu on the left.

**IN ADDITION - We received the below information from The General Services Administration:**

*The General Services Administration (GSA) recently has identified a security vulnerability in the System for Award Management (SAM), which is part of the cross-government Integrated Award Environment (IAE) managed by GSA.  Registered SAM users with entity administrator rights and delegated entity registration rights had the ability to view any entity’s registration information, including both public and non-public data at all sensitivity levels.*

*Immediately after the vulnerability was identified, GSA implemented a software patch to close this exposure.  As a precaution, GSA is taking proactive steps to protect and inform SAM users.*

*The data contained identifying information including names, taxpayer identification numbers (TINs), marketing partner information numbers and bank account information. As a result, information identifiable with your entity registered in SAM was potentially viewable to others.*

*Registrants using their social security numbers instead of a TIN for purposes of doing business with the federal government may be at greater risk for potential identity theft. These registrants will receive a separate email communication regarding credit monitoring resources available to them at no charge.*

*In the meantime, we wanted you to be aware of certain steps that all SAM users may want to take to protect against identity theft and financial loss. Specific information is available at* [*www.gsa.gov/samsecurity*](http://www.gsa.gov/samsecurity)*.  If you would like additional background or have questions, you may call 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636), from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (ET), Monday-Friday starting Monday, March 18. We recommend that you monitor your bank accounts and notify your financial institution immediately if you find any discrepancies.*

*We apologize for any inconvenience or concern this situation may cause. We believe it is important for you to be fully informed of any potential risk resulting from this situation. The security of your information is a critical priority to this agency and we are working to ensure the system remains secure. We will keep you apprised of any further developments.*

**Sent 4/7/13**

**Subject: CDBG Info from OCRA: CFF/MSRP Applications**

The attached applications and instructions will be posted to the website within a few days.  These applications and instructions, **dated April 2013**, **MUST** be used for applications submitted on May 31, 2013.  We have tried to highlight the changes in yellow for your convenience, but please take care to read the application and instructions thoroughly.

If you have questions regarding the CFF and/or MSRP process or applications, please contact your Community Liaison or a member of Grant Services.

Thank you,

Grant Services Division