City of St. Louis

FAQs #2 – 2015 CDBG Request For Proposals

Questions & Answers Received as of July 25, 2014
Posted on July 29, 2014
Contact: CDBG@stlouis-mo.gov

<u>**General Questions**</u>

1. **Isn't it correct that the amount of detail we can provide in our organizational narrative is limited to the space provided?**

That is correct.

2. **Who will be reviewing and rating this year's proposals?**

CDA plans to solicit professionals and experts in their respective fields to serve as raters.

3. **We have not yet filled certain positions that will be involved in the CDBG activity. The RFP requires resumes, but we will not have them for all positions at the time of proposal submission.**

The RFP requires that applicants list each of the organization's existing and proposed staff positions and attach a resume and job description for those staff to be involved in the administration, management and/or operation of proposed CDBG activities. However, in the case where the staff person has not yet been hired, we will not require a resume.

4. **It is my understanding that organizations will only be reimbursed for low- and moderate-income persons served.**

That is correct. Under the limited clientele national objective, CDA will only reimburse for low- and moderate-income beneficiaries. Please refer to the RFP for additional information on the national objectives.

5. **Can we request our organization's scoring from the 2014 application round?**

Yes, we can provide the total score for each activity and the average ratings for each rating category.

6. Is there a CDA preference to fund new activities, existing activities, or expansion of existing activities?

We are open to all three as long as you can demonstrate the need for the activity. Explaining need is a crucial component of the proposal. In the past, proposals that failed to adequately demonstrate need received lower ratings.

7. Will preference be given to past CDBG awardees who applied for funding under the old system?

No.

8. Can my organization apply for an activity that we have provided in the past, but are not currently providing?

Yes.

Budget / Funding

9. We are applying for the CDBG grant for renovations to our health center. What is the maximum amount we can apply for?

CDA has not set a maximum funding request. However, requests must be reasonable.

10. In Section IV.1 regarding the 2014 Agency-Wide Budget. There are differences between the expense categories on your form and the expense categories in our agency's prepared budget. Are we permitted to submit our agency's budget in our format, or are we required to submit it in the format provided?

You must submit your budget on the format provided.

11. In prior years, our Alderman requested a transfer of CDBG funding for my organization. Does a letter from an Alderman count as a letter of support from a previous funder?

No.

12. In reference to Part 4 (Financial Management), are we including the budget information just for that particular calendar year or all the way up to the date we submitted our proposal?

The annual operating budget is required.

13. Should I include an attachment to show the reasonableness of my costs?

No. The only allowed attachments are listed on page 14 of the RFP.

14. Do you have any suggestions for calculating volunteer hours for in-kind revenue?

Many organizations utilize independentsector.org to assist in calculating volunteer hours.

15. In 2014, my organization was funded under the Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP). Will the amounts at which activities were funded in 2014 be acceptable again for 2015?

Not necessarily. Remember that the NIP program was designed to assist neighborhood organizations in the transition to the new funding process. In 2015, you must be reasonable and be able to substantiate the funding request.

Eligibility

16. Under "High Priorities" it states, "…encouraging historic preservation and rehabilitation of business properties." Does that mean we can submit a proposal to fund repairs and rehabilitation to a historic landmark commercial building, or, should the focus of the application be directed toward the eligible activities?

Although "encouraging historic preservation and rehabilitation of business properties" is a priority under economic development, it is not specifically included as an eligible activity for the 2015 RFP.

17. Are there boundaries for the North and South landlord training?

Boundaries were not specified in the RFP and CDA encourages applicants to propose a reasonable boundary. CDA, however, reserves the right to increase proposed service areas to ensure that the entire City is served by the program and/or decrease proposed areas to avoid duplication.

18. Are you looking for a city-wide provider for minor home repair?

Applicants can propose any service area, including city-wide.

19. Can improvements to an existing early childhood center be proposed? Can we propose to develop a building without first identifying the provider?

Improvements to existing facilities will be considered. However, improvements or construction without an identified provider will not.

20. What neighborhoods were funded for Neighborhood Ownership Model (NOM) in 2014 and thus not eligible for 2015 funding?

The following neighborhoods were funded in 2014 and are not eligible for funding in 2015 for NOM:

Botanical Heights	Mark Twain I-70	Walnut Park East
Dutchtown	Midtown	Walnut Park West
Greater Ville	Old North St. Louis	Wells-Goodfellow
Jeff-Vander-Lou	Tower Grove South	

21. Besides NOM, are other neighborhood safety initiatives eligible?

Yes. NOM is just one type of program eligible under the crime prevention activity.

22. Would the expansion of an existing facility or activity be eligible under Food Deserts/Food Access?

Yes.

23. Would the installation of ADA compliant ramps on sidewalks be an eligible activity under Public Improvements?

Yes.

24. On pages 10 – 12, the RFP notes a few organizations/departments that are not required to compete for funding. Can I still apply for activities that these organizations will complete in 2015?

Yes, as long as the activities are listed on pages 7-9 of the RFP, under Eligible Activities for 2015.

Better Block

25. Can you provide more detail on the Better Block activity including examples of how CDBG funding would be used for a Better Block event and what could be potential outcomes?

 "Better Block" is a tool to demonstrate the potential for redevelopment by focusing on a specific commercial block or blocks. Better Block events typically target areas with large numbers of vacant commercial properties and few amenities. With volunteer and community

support, the event temporarily transforms the block with improvements such as pop-up businesses, crosswalks, bike lanes, and planters to show the possibilities for redevelopment.

CDBG funding can be used for activity delivery costs associated with a Better Block event such as reimbursement for staff time and supplies for the event. Organizations should take steps to ensure that costs are reasonable and leverage other sources of funding wherever possible. CDBG funding cannot be used to pay for food or entertainment associated with the event.

Some potential outcomes for a Better Block event could be the number of meetings, number of volunteers and volunteer hours, conducting the event, number of properties leased/sold as a result, etc.

26. For Better Block, can an organization charge vendors a fee to offset the costs associated with the event?

Yes. However any income that the organization has left over after paying for costs associated with the event could be considered program income. Program Income is subject to additional regulations and could be due back to CDA.

27. In 2014, my neighborhood was funded for a Better Block in XYZ neighborhood. Can XYZ neighborhood be funded again for Better Block in 2015?

Yes, a neighborhood can be funded again in 2015. However, the same commercial area cannot.

Collaboration

28. Based on 2014 results, it seems like there is no need to collaborate with other similar organizations if we are all doing similar things and we all need funding. Does CDA encourage collaboration?

CDA encourages collaboration and its importance is reflected on the 2015 rating sheet (which can be downloaded from the CDA website).

In 2014, applicants proposed two main types of collaborations:

- The first group of activities named partners who did not require financial assistance through respective CDBG proposals. For example, ABC organization requested $25,000 in CDBG funding to operate a youth employment program. The organization's proposal reflected that it would partner with SLATE, local high schools, and another local nonprofit organization. CDBG funds would be reimbursed based on units of service, but would be used to pay ABC's staff and supply costs. SLATE and the local nonprofit would assist with training, but do not require financial assistance from ABC. ABC is partnering with local high schools to promote the program to its students (no financial resources needed).

- The second group of activities named partners that would need CDBG assistance through the respective proposals. For example, DEF organization requested $25,000 in CDBG funding to operate a youth employment program. The organization's proposal reflected that it would partner with SLATE, local high schools and GHI Corp., another local nonprofit organization. CDBG funds would be reimbursed based on units of service, but would be used to pay DEF and GHI staff and supply costs.

Your proposal should demonstrate the need for collaborators/partners and identify the value that those organizations bring to the proposed activity. In the examples above, ABC and DEF would most likely receive a similar score for collaboration as long as the proposals both described the need for the collaboration in its program design. However, because DEF proposed to use CDBG dollars to fund a "named" partner organization, it should sufficiently demonstrate why the collaboration is (1) necessary, (2) reasonable, and (3) competitive. Many of the proposals received in the second group did not sufficiently demonstrate the reasons for funding the particular partner. Because of this, ratings were lower.

Please keep in mind that with any collaborative effort, CDA will assess the capacity of all organizations participating in the proposed collaboration. Because of this, one organization's capacity strengths or deficiencies (e.g. fiscal and programmatic compliance) may adversely affect the outcome of the rating.

29. How can my organization demonstrate that we selected our partner through a competitive process?

We encourage you to follow adequate procurement procedures. This includes identifying and clearly specifying standards for the services to be obtained and seeking competitive offers to obtain the best possible quality at the best possible price.

30. If there was only one organization that wanted to partner, how would we address the issue of competition?

You must adequately address the claim in your proposal. For example, how many organizations were contacted?

31. Can you provide any guidance on what a joint or collaborative application would like?

Please see Question No. 28. Because only one organization can be funded per proposal, there must be a lead agency. If your proposal is approved, the lead organization will enter into a contract with CDA. Please note the following additional information on collaborations:

- The lead organization for the activity will be ultimately responsible for the successful completion of the proposed objectives and any CDBG compliance requirements.

- CDA will only approve collaborations that will result in a fixed rate per unit completed/accomplished (for example, $10 per unit based on a budget for operations and administration of $10,000 and a volume of 1,000 units). CDA will require a cost allocation plan for all contracts with per unit costs, to ensure that the reimbursement is tied to the actual cost of services.

- If applicable, CDA will require that the lead organization submit, for CDA approval, a contract with its partner that spells out its responsibilities and funding to be received. All CDA and CDBG requirements must be incorporated into this agreement.

32. My organization had previously planned to submit a proposal that would also provide funding for another organization to perform services within its service area. However, we just discovered that the partner organization may have had some compliance issues in the past. Can both organizations submit separate proposals?

Yes, organizations can apply separately so that they can be rated on their own qualifications. If you are taking this approach consider crafting your proposal so that the program can still work if the partner organization is not funded.

33. How can an organization provide evidence of collaboration?

Simply naming your proposed partners in your proposal may result in some points for collaboration. However, your rating will be significantly enhanced by adequately describing the need for the collaboration.

34. Would it be okay to work with another organization that has the capacity to do an activity that we do not have the capacity to do?

Yes. However, your proposal should adequately explain what your organization is contributing to the activity.

35. If we partner with other entities, are they all required to be nonprofits or can we work with private organizations as well?

You can partner with private entities. However, if you plan to fund these entities with CDBG funds, they must be procured per CDA's procurement procedures.