



**PY 2021 Ohio Consolidated Plan
Community and Economic Development Programs
Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting
November 5, 2020
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Dennis Miller/Austin Serna – MVPO
Kelly Cole – Brown County
Karen Sprague – Gallia County
Shannon Wells – Morgan County
John Cleek – CDC of Ohio
Nathan Simons – HAPCAP
Tim King – Erie County
Renee Muhlenkamp – Mercer County
Dirk Lackovich-Van Gorp – Clark County
Nikki Reese – Troy
Lauren Falcone/Gayle Flaczynski – Poggemeyer Design Group
Jake Brand – Ashtabula County
Julie Green – Trumbull County
Evelyn Warr-Cummings – Marion RPC
Angie McConnell – GLCAP
Michelle Hyer – Buckeye Hills
Ronnie Raible – Access Engineering
Jeannette Wierzbicki – OMEGA
Niki Warncke – Defiance
Joyce Barrett – Heritage Ohio

Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA) Employees:

Haley Lupton
Jared Jodrey
Ben Kepple
Tiffany Laffitte
Mary Oakley
Wesley Watkins
Matt LaMantia
Shana Garrett

Community Development Programs

Tiffany Laffitte presented background information for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The PY2020 budgets were reviewed, with emphasis on allocated amounts as compared to actual funds spent, including applications pending review.

The Office of Community Development (OCD) is working with stakeholders to discuss how current programs are working to fund priority and locally identified projects, and the State of Ohio's

investment priorities. OCD held a stakeholder meeting in October with participants from local governments, community development organizations, and consultants. Meeting feedback is summarized as follows:

The Neighborhood Revitalization Grant (NRG) program is the most comprehensive and impactful program due to the amount of available funds and a concentration of activities but may not be appropriate for the smallest communities. Critical Infrastructure (CI) and Residential Public Infrastructure Grant (RPIG) programs are most critical and respond to the greatest need. The Economic Development program is important for communities with private investment/job creation opportunities. The Allocation program is not impactful for the State of Ohio but may be the only source of funds for small projects and small communities. Other discussion points included: Funding for demolition, slum/blight, public service projects is important, open cycle programs provide the most flexibility and allow applications to be submitted when projects are ready, ED and RPIG programs evaluate projects against a scoring threshold, and there are advantages to packaging like projects; administration, bidding, and contract management.

Haley Lupton then proceeded to review proposed PY2021 program changes, including redirection of Allocation program funds. The Allocation budget of approximately \$11.3 million would be redistributed to effective programs with greater impact and higher demand. Most activities would remain eligible under other program categories, but submissions would be comprehensive rather than piecemeal.

Changes to the NRG program would include a curing period to allow applicants to correct minor deficiencies after submission. A pre-application and site visit would be required. Leverage requirements would also be adjusted. The CI program would remain similar to past years, including grant amounts and leverage requirements. A budget would be set aside to ensure distribution of funds to small communities and for small projects. The RPIG and ED programs would remain similar to the current structure, with an emphasis on prioritization of documented health hazards, unsewered areas, and readiness to proceed, in addition to flexibility in the COVID-19 environment.

Target of Opportunity

In PY 2021, the Target of Opportunity program would see an increase in the community and economic development budget to fund projects formerly eligible under Allocation. There would also be an increase in the downtown revitalization budget to better meet demand. A planning budget would be created to assist communities in assessing need and planning for comprehensive community-wide projects. Allocation activities, except home repair, street resurfacing (paving), and sidewalks would remain eligible. Applications would be required to make a significant single investment or include multiple projects of the same type with community wide impact. The Downtown Revitalization program would continue to provide funding for private rehabilitation and historic preservation projects in the Central Business District.

Ms. Lupton summarized the redesign with an emphasis on the following goals: improving access to grants for immediate needs, creating a greater impact per dollar awarded, and encouraging developing better projects through strategic planning.

Feedback

OCD opened the floor for discussion with participants. A few participants asked about potential projects and under what program categories they would qualify. An attendee inquired about how fair housing would be funded going forward. OCD mentioned that the PY 2019 and PY 2020 Allocation grants funded fair housing programs through December 31, 2021 and December 31, 2022, respectively, and that the office would use this time to evaluate a new approach to fair housing.

Participants provided positive feedback about access to planning funds and provided input on limits of assistance and eligible activities.

The committee initiated an extensive discussion about access to funds for small communities, and the belief they might not be competitive with non-Allocation funding programs. This concern included the requirement for leverage. Although leverage is an important metric in evaluation of public grant programs, OCD understands the need to re-evaluate leverage requirements on a program per program basis if Allocation is no longer available. OCD also provided data to demonstrate small communities currently can access funds through the existing grant programs and requested feedback from committee members on how programs can be better marketed to small communities. One committee member mentioned his county had undertaken a similar analysis to understand which communities applied for grant programs and to identify barriers to application for communities not submitting proposals.

Some organizations expressed concerned because staff is paid from Allocation administration funds. CDBG trained staff is limited in all regions, and turnover is high. OCD acknowledged this concern but stated the amount of Allocation funding provided over a 2-year grant cycle does not appear a factor in keeping qualified staff employed for program administration and project development. The average Allocation grant of approximately \$200,000 provides \$20,000 per year for program administration and fair housing, and all grant administrators have many roles and responsibilities in addition to the CDBG program.

Participants stated that their communities need sufficient lead time to plan for program changes. OCD ensured participants it would continue to be transparent in communicating potential program changes. The PY 2021 draft Annual Action Plan will be available on March 1, 2021, to commence a public comment period for all of OCD's programs.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.