



FY 2021 CDBG REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) REVIEW PANEL HANDBOOK

**Economic Development Department
Community Development Division**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Review Panel: Responsibilities and Conduct	4
II.	City Staff: Responsibilities	5
III.	Conflict of Interest Guidelines.....	6
IV.	Confidentiality	8
V.	Reviewer Reference Materials.....	9
VI.	Reviewing & Scoring Applications.....	10
VII.	Reviewers' Written Comments.....	12
VIII.	CPAB Ratification of Scores.....	13
IX.	Next steps	13
X.	Appendices.....	14

CITY OF SAN DIEGO – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

The City of San Diego's Community Development Division (within the Economic Development Department) oversees federally funded entitlement grant programs including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program.

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides funds to local jurisdictions on an annual basis through the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) for local community development, housing activities, and public services. The primary objective of the CDBG Program is the development of viable communities through the provision of decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities. In accordance with CDBG standards, these resources are intended to primarily benefit low- and moderate-income persons and neighborhoods.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO – CONSOLIDATED PLAN ADVISORY BOARD

The Consolidated Plan Advisory Board (CPAB) was established by the City Council via Ordinance No. O-19963 (Sections 26.2101–26.2113 of the Municipal Code) to provide advice and recommendations on certain policy issues related to the City of San Diego HUD grant entitlements inclusive of the CDBG program. Specifically, per [§26.2113](#), the CPAB is charged with performing an open and impartial evaluation of the applications for CDBG funds and provide funding recommendations to the City Council.

PURPOSE OF THE CPAB REVIEW PANEL HANDBOOK

This *CPAB Review Panel Handbook* outlines the process and procedures the CPAB will follow in reviewing and scoring applications submitted for the Fiscal Year (FY 2021) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Request for Proposals funding cycle.

The Handbook identifies:

- The roles and responsibilities of the CPAB (reviewers);
- Procedures to follow in conducting the review;

- Reference materials that may be used in scoring the applications;
- Guidance for using the Economic Development Grants Management System (EDGrants); and
- Conflict of interest guidelines for panel members.

Appendices of this handbook include the following:

1. RFP applicant organizations names, project names, and board of directors.
2. Sub-Recipient Performance Report Cards: Past fiscal and programmatic performance is considered in the evaluation, and performance indicators and standards in those areas are used to assign performance scores to the organizations (poor performance results in negative scores).
3. EDGrants Registration and User Guides for Reviewers: Step-by-step guides to navigate through EDGrants.
4. Scoring Criteria for all categories
5. Tentative Budgets for each category
6. FY 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan Goals

The review of CDBG applications, as outlined in [Council Policy 700-02](#), is a competitive process to ensure funds are invested in the highest scoring projects

I. REVIEW PANEL: RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONDUCT

Reviewers are responsible for conducting an independent and objective review of the CDBG applications and must be able to fulfill the following responsibilities:

1. Read and become familiar with supplementary materials provided (inclusive of this Handbook) prior to the commencement of their review;

2. Attend and participate fully in the Ad Hoc Committee meetings (if established),
3. Recuse themselves from the review of applications where an actual or apparent conflict of interest may be present;
4. Consider, review and score each application in relation to the applicable FY 2021 Scoring Criteria;
5. Refer all applicant contact to the Community Development Division staff; and
6. Complete their review in EDGrants on or before the **March 5, 2020** deadline.

Reviewers must be able to dedicate a significant amount of time to this process within a very limited timeframe. If they find they are unable to fulfill their obligations, they are asked to contact City staff immediately.

II. CITY STAFF: RESPONSIBILITIES

The City of San Diego Community Development Division staff (City staff), charged with the responsibility of ensuring the CDBG allocation process is impartial and consistent with all applicable standards, will:

1. Ensure reviewers are comfortable navigating through ED Grants. If necessary, deliver hard copies of requested and necessary information to reviewers in a timely manner;
2. Respond to all inquiries from the reviewers promptly;
3. Consult with staff from HUD and the City Attorney's Office and other professionals, as needed;
4. Provide staff and facilitate the Ad Hoc Committee meetings;
5. Create a ranking of the applications by project-type based on their average scores in descending order and present the scoring

recommendation to the CPAB for its ratification at the **March 16, 2020** CPAB meeting; and

6. Present CPAB's recommendation to the City Council for review and approval in April 2020 (time and date to be determined) in conjunction with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Annual Action Plan.

III. CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINES

In order to ensure compliance with applicable HUD requirements and other applicable standards, as well as to ensure a fair and transparent scoring process, CPAB reviewers are required to follow these conflict of interest guidelines. A conflict of interest generally describes a situation in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise or bias professional judgment and objectivity.

The CDBG conflict of interest provisions at the federal level are based on the regulations found at 24 CFR 570.611, which can be summarized as follows:

No person who is an employee, agent, consultant, officer, or elected or appointed official of the recipient (City of San Diego in this instance), or any designated public agencies, or any sub-recipient which is receiving CDBG funds and who exercises or has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to CDBG activities or who is in a position to participate in a decision-making process or gain inside information with regard to such activities, may obtain a financial interest or benefit from the activity, or have an interest in any contract, subcontract or agreement with respect thereto, or in any of its proceeds, either for themselves or those with whom they have family or business ties, during their tenure and for one year thereafter.

The CDBG RFP review process is also subject to a variety of federal conflict of interest regulations and standards. Said standards prohibit City employees, as well as its officers and agents, from participating in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by federal funds if a conflict of interest, real or apparent, is involved. Note that even *apparent* conflicts of interest are prohibited.

The City of San Diego Municipal Code also governs the actions of the CPAB in relation to conflicts of interests and requires CPAB members to recuse themselves from participating “in any decision in which she or he has any personal or financial interest” (see [§ 26.2109](#)).

The City Council has also adopted [Policy No. 000-04](#), which is the Code of Ethics for all city employees and board/commission members.

Within the general context of the conflict of interest guidelines, a *financial interest* includes:

- Receipt of gifts of \$250 or more in value in the previous twelve months from an applicant organization;
- Receipt or promise of income (e.g., salary) from an applicant organization in the previous 12 months;
- Having an investment of \$2,000 or more in an applicant organization;
- Holding a position of management or serving on the board of an applicant organization, whether in a paid or unpaid position, within the previous twelve months; and,
- Ownership of real estate with a value of \$2,000 or more with an applicant organization.

As noted, federal standards also prohibit apparent conflicts of interests. An apparent conflict of interest is generally considered to occur when the circumstances are such that a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts would question the impartiality of the reviewer in his/her evaluation of an application.

Review panel members are obligated to report any conflicts of interest to City staff immediately. Reviewers can declare the presence of such conflicts via ED Grants at the time of registration, via email or via a phone call. Declaring such conflicts does not mean the reviewer is unable to serve; it simply means the reviewer may not review those applications or participate in the Ad Hoc

Committee meeting discussions regarding those applications where the conflict exists. It is important to note that a conflict of interest exists whether or not decisions are affected by a personal interest—conflicts of interest only imply the potential for bias is present.

Reviewers must keep in mind the conflict of interest provisions during the process as potential conflicts may exist in relation to the applicant organization, its board members, its staff, the proposed project itself, its intended beneficiaries, and/or other parties that may be affected by the proposed project.

If at any point during the process, a reviewer determines the potential presence of an actual or apparent conflict of interest, that reviewer must declare the presence of such conflict to City staff and recuse herself/himself from reviewing the application and participating in related discussions. When in doubt, a reviewer may contact City staff for guidance.

This responsibility is strictly imposed upon reviewers and reviewers are required to digitally acknowledge the Conflict of Interest Statement during the ED Grants registration process. If the reviewer identifies the presence of a conflict of interest at any point during the review process, the reviewer is also obligated to report such conflict immediately to City staff.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY

CPAB reviewers are also asked to respect the confidentiality of the RFP applications and supporting materials. The contents on the website system are only for the CPAB reviewers and should not be shown or distributed to other parties. If requested by a CPAB member, City staff will provide hard copies of needed materials to the CPAB reviewer.

Furthermore, reviewers may only discuss the applications, their contents, and their own assessments of the applications or similar related matters during the Ad Hoc Committee meetings and/or with City staff as part of related inquiries.

Completion of a Confidentiality Agreement is required of all reviewers prior to their registration in EDGrants (as described below).

V. REVIEWER REFERENCE MATERIALS

Each Board member participating in the review of the FY 2021 CDBG applications will have access to relevant reference materials on or before January 27, 2020. Some materials will be made available only after successful registration in EDGrants.

Information available to the reviewers includes the following:

7. Applicant Organization Submittals: This material includes the portion of the applications subject to CPAB review, including supporting documents.
8. Board of Directors Rosters: To assist with identifying potential conflicts of interest, the Board Roster for applicant organizations is included as Appendix A.
9. List of Applicants and Projects: A listing of all applications submitted, sorted by RFP category (NCIP, MFHR, CED, PS, PS-SME and SUS). The information provided will include the name of the applicant organization and the name of the proposed project, as identified by the applicant in the application. The List of Applicants and Projects are included as.
10. Scoring Criteria Templates: Scores will be entered directly into the EDGrants scoring review form for each individual applicant organization submittal.
11. Performance Indicator Report Cards: A means for evaluating the past performance of an organization that has previously received City of San Diego CDBG funding. Report cards will include information on applicable:
 1. FY 2018 construction related projects, a maximum of up to two (2) points may be deducted based on programmatic and fiscal performance.

2. FY 2019 public services and community and economic development projects, up to a maximum of two (2) points may deducted based on programmatic and fiscal performance.

In terms of assessing an organization's performance, the report card reviews two areas of performance: Fiscal and Programmatic. Fiscal performance looks at use of the funding allocation, both the amount expended and proper expenditures. Programmatic performance looks at how well the organization has met its stated goals in terms of clients served or projects completed. Performance Indicator Report Cards are included as an appendix.

12. Additional resources are available via the EDGrants portal at: www.edgrants.force.com (under the "Resources" tab).

VI. REVIEWING & SCORING APPLICATIONS

The following sections provide details regarding the six primary elements of the review process for the CPAB members:



Preparation: Prior to the Review

To reiterate, prior to the release of the relevant information as described above, reviewers are required to complete the following for registration purposes:

1. Register as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in the EDGrants system at: www.edgrants.force.com.
2. Examine the **Board Member Rosters** (Appendix A) and **List of Applicants and Projects** (Appendix B) and identify any proposal

and/or applicant organization where a conflict of interest may exist and inform City staff of any such conflict.

READING AND ANALYZING APPLICATIONS

Reviewers are instructed to evaluate applications on the basis of the FY 2021 CDBG RFP Scoring Criteria. Reviewers should consider how well the applicant fully describes the proposed project in relation to the questions asked.

Each section in the Scoring Criteria will be accompanied by an annotation icon to assist reviewers in evaluating the applicants' responses. The Annotations have been included in this handbook as.

Given that **each** reviewer must read and score **each** application within a limited timeframe, reviewers are encouraged to consider the number of applications that must be reviewed and allot an appropriate amount of time for each.

1. CPAB approved the establishment of a tie-breaker as part of the FY 2020 Scoring Criteria at the September 12, 2018 CPAB meeting. The tie-breaker will require CPAB members to indicate whether the overall project is of high, medium, or low priority to fund in the event of a tie within the Comment Box field on the scoring form within ED Grants.
2. Council Policy 700-02, Item 13: In December of 2016, City Staff updated Council Policy 700-02 to ensure agencies applying for capital improvement projects do not have an open capital improvement project at the same location.

AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETINGS

CPAB is scheduled to have the opportunity to convene Ad Hoc Committee meetings in the month of February to discuss applications, exchange considerations, and ask technical questions of staff.

Each reviewer is responsible for scoring **each** application independently and not sharing scores with other CPAB reviewers.

SCORING APPLICATIONS

Reviewers must identify the most significant strengths and weaknesses of the application when assigning scores. Reviewers must use **whole** numbers in assigning scores to the individual sections within ED Grants. The CPAB will score only those applications deemed eligible by City staff.

FINALIZED SCORES

Upon completion of the review and scoring process, the review panel members will submit their scores via ED Grants *no later than* **March 6, 2020**. Reviewers have not completed the review process until their scores have been submitted in the system.

The scores and comments will be made available to the applicants (upon their request) following the ratification of the FY 2021 Annual Action Plan by the City Council and submittal to HUD by May 15. The names of the individual reviewers will be redacted from the information prior to its distribution to the applicant organizations.

VII. REVIEWERS' WRITTEN COMMENTS

A thorough evaluation of applications is critical in the CDBG funding allocation process. Reviewers provide applicants key insights into the evaluative process with comments on the scoring form that identify the strengths and weaknesses of proposals. This insight allows organizations the opportunity to incorporate feedback into future applications and improve their ability to secure funding. There is one comment box in the review form to provide a general comment on the application. Comments are not required.

Reviewers should not:

- Use prior or outside knowledge of an applicant organization. Comments and scores are based only on the information at hand.
- Impose their own evaluation standards. Applications should be reviewed in relation to the Scoring Criteria.

- Make sarcastic or derogatory remarks in the comments section of the scoring template or in public meetings.

The comment text box(es) in EDGrants serve as the mechanism to provide feedback to the applicant organizations regarding the strengths and/or weaknesses of their applications. Therefore, comments should be as specific as possible, both positive and negative.

VIII. CPAB RATIFICATION OF SCORES

EDGrants will tabulate and average the scores of all reviewers. The applications are then ranked based on their average scores—in descending order—according to the RFP categories below:

1. Nonprofit Capital Improvement Projects
2. Multi-Family Housing Rehabilitation
3. Community/Economic Development
4. Public Service – Regular Organizations
5. Public Service – Small and Emerging Organizations
6. Nonprofit Sustainability Improvement Projects

Once compiled, average scores and resulting rankings are posted on the City's CDBG Program website, and notification of their availability is given to all applicants and subscribers to the City's email distribution list. Average scores and resulting rankings will subsequently be presented to the CPAB for their ratification during the March CPAB meeting.

IX. NEXT STEPS

Following the CPAB March meeting, the CDBG funding recommendations will be incorporated into the FY 2021 Annual Action Plan and will be released for a 30-day public review in April 2020. The FY 2021 CDBG allocations and the Annual Action Plan, will be presented to City Council for review and approval in late April 2020. The Annual Action Plan describes how CDBG resources will be allocated and, in fact, constitutes the application to HUD for receipt of the City's FY 2021 CDBG entitlement. The Annual Action Plan must be submitted to HUD on or before May 15, 2020.

X. APPENDICES

[Appendix A: FY 2021 Applicant Organization Board Rosters](#)

[Appendix B: FY 2021 Applicant Organizations and Project Names](#)

[Appendix C: Performance Indicator Report Cards](#)

[Appendix D: EDGrants User Guides for Reviewers](#)

[Appendix E: Scoring Criteria](#)

[Appendix F: Categories with Budget](#)

[Appendix G: FY 2020 – 2024 Consolidated Plan Goals](#)

For more information please contact:

City of San Diego

Leonardo Alarcón

Economic Development Department

Community Development Division

1200 Third Avenue, Suite 1400

San Diego, CA 92101

[\(619\) 236-6944](tel:(619)236-6944)

lalarcon@sandiego.gov