

## Public Hearing HUD Mega Waiver Public Comments and Agency Responses

Location: Webinar  
Date: April 14, 2020  
Time: 11:00 a.m.

Sharon Haugen, City of Helena

- **I understand there's an initial \$1.6, some to be used for economic development other to support homelessness. When will the guidelines or will there be any guidelines in terms of how those funds can be used and what will be the application process?**
  - Jennifer Olson, Montana Department of Commerce – Explained the reduced public comment period for the Consolidated Plan is related to the recently released HUD directive that further impacts the availability of CARES funding. Further that guidelines will be announced soon after the federal register notice becomes available, but at this time HUD has not provided a specific timeframe when the federal register notice will be released. Commerce is waiting to release guidelines and funding after the federal register notice is announced to ensure the CARES funding is awarded in a manner consistent with federal guidance.
- **Is there something we can be doing to help you with those efforts?**
  - Jennifer Olson, Montana Department of Commerce – Explained what information/ comments local governments and other stakeholders could provide specific to funding and how those public comments would be utilized. Commerce welcomes local/community comments on CARES needs in their area. Provided the email address comments could be submitted to.
- **Thank you, Jennifer, and thank you guys for all your effort.**

Shyla Patera, North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS)

- **We are really happy to see a lot of the CARES stimulus funds moving forward for people with disabilities, particularly work with vouchers and other things that will help the disability community. We hope that applicants moving forward on those CARES funds will look at accessibility and more vouchers for, mainstream vouchers, for people with disabilities and we at NCILS believe that we sorely need administrative help with housing navigation, especially during this time of COVID-19. We hope that somehow normal times begin again, but working remotely for property managers and landlords, we hope to see people having access to PPE, masks and other materials as needed. We hope that housing is included in pandemic planning from now on. For the normal ConPlan, we really hope that you encourage visit-ability and universal design in all future housing developments and CDBG developments because a connected community works well. I will be submitting further comments by email. Thank you for your time.**

The Montana Department of Commerce gives preference to applications that benefit extremely low-income, homeless, disabled, elderly, and other disadvantaged individuals and families. Commerce strongly encourages applicants, to the maximum extent possible, to include the

three basic visitability features that increase access to friends and family for individuals with disabilities (a zero-step entrance, doors with 32 inches of clear passage space, and a wheelchair-accessible half bathroom on the main floor). Whether a project serves disabled persons and meets visitability and universal design requirements is considered during application ranking, which is Commerce's process for prioritizing and funding projects.

Ann McCauley, Lewis & Clark County

- **Can you talk a little bit more about the process for working with our local HRDCs for the ESG funds that were made available to them? Repeat of question: Curious about a best practice or best process to work with our local HRDCs with respect to the ESG funding and how to go about that.**
  - Juliana Crowley, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services – Are you currently involved with a local coordinated entry and coordinated effort?
- **Yes**
  - Juliana Crowley, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services – HRDCs should be currently working in coordination with the agencies that they typically work with, but I can get you more information if you would like me to.

Mariah Ramirez, Director of Community Impact / United Way Helena

- **I lead the coordinated entry system here in Helena as well, as well as the discussion of COVID response sheltering communications through the Elkhorn Co-ad the community organizations active in disaster. We work very closely with the RMDC. We are typically the hub for getting ESG funding out our RMDC through our RMDC as its own here for Rocky Mountain Development Council works with Good Samaritan Ministries as the executor of a lot of the ESG funding; this will change a little bit so I am curious about some of that conversation as well, the one that Ann just mentioned. I also wanted to offer for public comment that one of our goals in the creation of our shelter plan for the COVID response is that, as individuals and families are housed in COVID-specific shelter arrangements that when the crisis piece is starting to subside and folks are getting ready to transition out of shelter care, that these funds are likely going to be one of our major recourses in discharging people into homes instead of back into homelessness. So, I just want to say thank you for all of your work, we'll look for recourses as they come out and I will also be submitting commentary before tomorrow so that feedback and a little bit more detail around that is included. I would say as we move forward as a state that can be such an opportunity that we have in the midst of this crisis is to alleviate some of the experiences of our neighbors who are living in extreme poverty and in homelessness is to transition folks into housing instead of back into poverty and housing instability. I would love for that to be a part of the statewide approach and I know that that's something we are working diligently on creating a plan for here in Helena as well. Thank you so much.**

Janelle Egli, Montana Department of Commerce – Repeated the URL for the location the PowerPoint slides for the webinar could be found and the Consolidated Plan documents as well.