



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-5000

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INDIAN HOUSING

January 26, 2015

Dear Tribal Leader:

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is seeking your input on the design of a demonstration program that will provide critical housing assistance and supportive services to Native American Veterans living on or near tribal lands.

Over the last seven years, HUD and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have jointly administered the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. The program combines Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance with VA case management and clinical services, home for Veterans experiencing homelessness. VA services are provided at VA medical centers, VA community-based outreach clinics, VA community partner agencies, and in the Veteran's home. HUD-VASH, along with other VA homeless programs, has been a critical component in the Administration's efforts to end homelessness among Veterans.

Unfortunately, certain statutory limitations have prevented Indian tribes and tribally designated housing entities (TDHEs) from being eligible to administer these vouchers to assist Native American Veterans on tribal lands. However, with the recently enacted Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015, the Department is authorized for the first time to set aside funding for HUD-VASH in Indian Country. Funding under the program must be awarded based on need, administrative capacity, and other funding criteria established by the Department.

The law also directs HUD to coordinate with Indian tribes, TDHEs, and other appropriate tribal organizations on the design of this program, and to ensure the effective delivery of housing assistance and supportive services to Native American Veterans. Finally, it also authorizes HUD to make appropriate adjustments to the HUD-VASH model, and to waive or specify alternative requirements for any provision of any statute or regulation that it administers. HUD may issue these waivers or alternative requirements if it finds that they are necessary for the effective delivery and administration of rental assistance under the program.

In accordance with HUD's Government-to-Government Tribal Consultation Policy, the Department, with this letter, is seeking your input on this program. Please consider the following issues as you form your response:

1. As prescribed by law, this funding will be awarded based on need. HUD is considering using data from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Census Bureau to determine need. Are there other data sets to consider in determining need?

2. HUD may establish other criteria for awarding funds. What other funding criteria should HUD consider when making awards?
 3. How should tenant-based rental assistance be used in this program? How should project-based rental assistance be used in this program?
 4. How can HUD target assistance under this program in a way that encourages the creation of new housing?
 5. What rent structure should be used for rental units assisted by HUD-VASH: local fair market rents, (FMR), unit operating costs, or other indicators of rent?
 6. Does your tribe currently work together with local VA Medical Centers (and, if so, in what ways)? Are there obstacles that Veterans in your community face in getting treatment or care?
 7. What role can the Indian Health Service (IHS), IHS-funded hospitals and clinics, and tribally funded hospitals play in assisting the VA in providing supportive services to Native Veterans?
 8. What other medical providers exist in your community that currently or could potentially care for Veterans?
 9. Does your tribe currently have a way to estimate the number of homeless persons (including persons at risk of being homeless) and/or Veterans in your community? If so, please provide any relevant additional information that may be helpful to the Department.
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10. HUD is required by law to track HUD-VASH assistance and how it is used. How can the Department work with Indian tribes and TDHEs to track and report on this assistance?
 11. What, if any, statutory and regulatory waivers should HUD issue to ensure the effective delivery and administration of assistance under this program? Are there any alternative requirements that HUD should consider? Please note that funding under this program will generally be subject to NAHASDA requirements.
 12. Please outline any other challenges or opportunities you identify with a tribal HUD-VASH program.

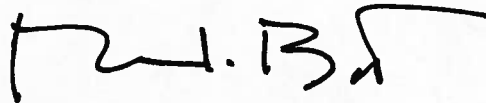
Please submit your comments within 30 days from the date of this letter to tribalhudvashcomments@hud.gov or by postal mail to:

Nick Zolkowski
HUD - Office of Native American Programs
451 Seventh Street, SW, Room 4126
Washington, DC 20410

After receiving all comments, HUD will consider them and begin working with the VA on the design of the program. Tribal stakeholders will be kept informed, and HUD will continue its collaboration with you throughout the process. HUD is required by law to publish, by June 14, 2015, a notice in the *Federal Register* that establishes program requirements, and announces how Indian tribes and TDHEs can apply for funding.

HUD looks forward to receiving your comments. Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. J. Boyd", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rodger J. Boyd
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Native American Programs
