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PROGRAM GUIDANCE

PROGRAM: Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG)

FOR: Tribal Government Leaders and Tribally Designated Housing Entities

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TOPIC: Useful Life and Binding Commitments

Purpose: The intent of this guidance is to give IHBG recipients information about maintaining IHBG-assisted housing and non-housing projects for the useful life of the property. It will clarify (1) what will be considered “satisfactory to the Secretary”; and (2) what constitutes an acceptable binding commitment. This Program Guidance has been updated to include a [FHA Loan Rider to NAHASDA](#) and replaces Program Guidance 2014-09.

Background: Section 205(a)(2) of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA), requires that housing units remain affordable for either (1) the remaining useful life of the property (as determined by the Secretary) or (2) for such other period that the Secretary determines is the longest feasible period of time consistent with sound economics and the purpose of NAHASDA. Useful life is the time period during which an assisted property must remain affordable.

NAHASDA gives the Secretary the authority to determine the housing units’ useful life or other period of time during which the units must remain affordable. The IHBG regulation at 24 CFR § 1000.142, states that to the extent required in the Indian Housing Plan (IHP), each IHBG recipient shall describe its determination of the useful life of the assisted housing units in its developments in accordance with the local conditions of the Indian area of the recipient. By finding the IHP to be in compliance with the statute, the Department would be determining the useful life to be in accordance with NAHASDA.

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The NAHASDA statute and regulations also require that this affordability period be secured through binding commitments satisfactory to the Secretary. The purpose and intent of requiring binding commitments is to guarantee that the housing will remain affordable for its useful life (affordability period). The binding commitment requirement under NAHASDA not only applies to the parties, but it also applies to the property. The purpose and intent of requiring binding commitments is to guarantee that the housing will remain affordable for its useful life regardless of who may have entered into a contractual agreement or who may be in possession. The binding commitment required cannot be satisfied solely with a contract between the parties. Pursuant to 24 CFR § 1000.144, in order for it to be satisfactory to HUD, a written use restriction that is placed on the assisted property and must run with the land; hence, binding commitments must be recorded.

Affordability Period: The first primary objective of NAHASDA, as stated in Section 201(a)(1), is: "...to develop, maintain, and operate affordable housing...for occupancy by low-income Indian families." Every time IHBG funds are spent on a property, an investment is made in low-income families in the community. The return on that investment is the period of continued future use during which the property will be available for use by low-income families. That period of future use is the affordability period or useful life for that property.

Housing units that are constructed, developed, and/or rehabilitated using IHBG funds must establish a useful life to ensure the property will remain available to low-income families.

Determination of Affordability Period: Generally, the affordability period is the period of time during which the property will be available for use by low-income families. It should be the remaining useful life of the property, as approved by HUD, or the longest feasible period of time consistent with sound economics and the purposes of NAHASDA, as approved by HUD.

In determining a property's affordability period or useful life, a recipient could use a tiered schedule similar to that used in the Department's HOME program to determine the affordability period. This would specify a number of years during which the housing must remain affordable, dependent upon the amount of IHBG funds being invested in the property per occurrence. For example:

IHBG Funds Invested	Affordability Period*
Under \$5,000	6 months
\$5,000 to \$15,000	5 years
\$15,001 to \$40,000	10 years
Over \$40,000	15 years
New construction or acquisition of newly constructed housing.....	20 years

* NOTE: For relatively minor investments, the designated affordability period can be some nominal period of time, but NAHASDA requires that some period be designated, and that it be secured with a binding commitment. Additionally, if the reasonable affordability period is less

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than one year, a binding commitment is required; however, it is not necessary to record the written use restriction for purposes of complying with NAHASDA. It is good business practice, however, to record the written use restriction for purposes of giving notice to subsequent purchasers. The dollar ranges and/or the corresponding number of years may differ from those shown above depending upon local conditions. The recipient may choose to assign a longer affordability period in order to ensure the availability of a larger continuing affordable housing supply for low-income families.

If the recipient chooses to use some other method of assigning the affordability period, the IHP should describe how the method provides for an affordability period with appropriate consideration given to any unique local conditions. In setting a useful life, a specific number of years should be given for the affordability period, not a range of years (e.g., 30 to 40 years) or a general statement. The number of years should also be without ambiguous qualification (e.g. “about,” “approximate,” “if properly maintained,” “planned,” “expected,” “estimated,” etc.). Similarly, the designated affordability period should in no way be contingent upon the continuation of IHBG funding.

Reporting Useful Life: A description of the recipient’s plan or system for determining the useful life of the housing it assists with IHBG funds must be provided in the IHP. A record of the current, specific useful life for housing units assisted with IHBG funds should be maintained in the recipient’s files and be available for review.

Types of Properties and Assistance Covered: The useful life provisions apply to all housing units and non-housing units assisted with IHBG funds except for Mutual Help homes developed under the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 (see 24 CFR § 1000.145).

1. **Housing Units:** The initial homebuyer, and any subsequent owners that purchase the property during the period of its useful life, need only qualify as low-income at the time of their purchase. In other words, if the initial owner seeks to sell the property while it still has a remaining useful life or affordability period assigned to it, the new buyer must qualify as an eligible family at the time of his or her purchase; however, the transfer of a homeownership unit to a family member or household member is not subject to a binding commitment for the remaining useful life of the property. Thus, if a homeownership unit has been transferred to a family member or household member, then the written use restriction will not terminate, even though it will not apply. However, any subsequent transfer by the family member or household member to a third party (not a family member or household member) is subject to any remaining useful life or affordability period under a recorded binding commitment. Should the home be sold during its useful life period to a new purchaser that does not qualify as a family member, household member, or an eligible family and funds are not repaid to the recipient’s IHBG program in accordance with its useful life plan, the Secretary will take appropriate action against the IHBG recipient in accordance with section 401(a) of NAHASDA.

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Similarly, low-income owner/occupants of privately owned housing that receive IHBG funded assistance, whether in the form of a loan or a grant, for moderate or substantial rehabilitation, need only be low-income at the time the assistance is provided. However, there should be a binding commitment accompanying the assistance that guarantees an appropriate useful life or affordability period and provides for remedies for the breach of such useful life provision upon transfer of ownership during the assigned useful life. The useful life and binding commitment requirements apply to all housing units assisted with IHBG funds, including units developed through NAHASDA's Title VI Loan Guarantee program.

2. [Model Activities/Non-housing](#): The useful life provisions apply to all model activities and non-housing projects constructed, developed, or acquired with IHBG funds to ensure the remaining useful life of the property will be maintained for affordable housing activities. Non-housing projects include community centers and model activities established to provide affordable housing activities.

[Record of Use Restrictions](#): Records must be kept for all use restrictions. Attached is a sample Record of Use Restrictions form that can be used by recipients to record both NAHASDA and other affordability or use restrictions. Restrictions can vary both in how they are imposed and model reporting form is designed to be the registry of all of the various use restrictions that are placed on recipient properties.

Acceptable Binding Commitments: As mentioned above, NAHASDA requires that there be binding commitments satisfactory to the Secretary in place to ensure that a housing unit will remain affordable for its useful life. When IHBG funds are used, either in the form of a grant or a loan, to purchase, construct, or rehabilitate a residence, there must be a written agreement in place between the IHBG recipient and the individual who is being assisted with the IHBG funds. These written use agreements must include provisions for the IHBG recipient's useful life or affordability period restrictions as specified in its IHP. The provisions must be imposed by recorded deed restrictions, covenants running with the land, or other mechanisms approved by HUD, except that the useful life restrictions may terminate upon foreclosure by a lender (or transfer in lieu of foreclosure), as long as the action is not for the purpose of avoiding low-income affordability restrictions. The written use agreement may contain a schedule outlining a payback of a decreasing balance of assistance or percentage equity over the useful life or affordability period that would have to be reimbursed to the recipient's program if a subsequent occupant does not meet the IHBG eligibility requirements.

Types of Binding Commitments: There are a number of different ways to place both NAHASDA and other affordability or use restrictions on assisted properties. The six attached samples of Useful Life/Use Restriction Agreements (two for fee land, two for trust land, one for model activities/non-housing projects and one for FHA insured loans) can be used for this purpose. Any form used must be properly recorded with the appropriate land records offices. Additional use restrictions may be imposed on such properties as long as they do not contradict the NAHASDA useful life restrictions.

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Useful Life/Use Restriction Agreements for Use on Fee Land: When a restriction is placed on fee land, a covenant running with the land is imposed on the property to enforce the restriction:

- NATIVE AMERICAN HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION USEFUL LIFE/USE RESTRICTION ([Indian Housing on Fee Land with Single Recovery Amount](#)). This covenant requires that the full amount of NAHASDA funds invested in the property be refunded in all cases of default.
- NATIVE AMERICAN HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION USEFUL LIFE/USE RESTRICTION ([Indian Housing on Fee Land with Prorated Recovery Amount](#)). This covenant requires that the amount of NAHASDA funds invested in the property be prorated over the life of the restriction. In the event of a default, only the current prorated amount must be refunded.

Useful Life/Use Restriction Agreements for Use on Trust Land: When restrictions are placed on trust land, a lease amendment or addendum to the lease is used to enforce the restriction:

- NATIVE AMERICAN HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION USEFUL LIFE/USE RESTRICTION LEASE ADDENDUM/AMENDMENT ([Trust Land with Single Recovery Amount](#)). This lease document requires in all cases of default that the full amount of NAHASDA funds invested in the property be refunded.
- NATIVE AMERICAN HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION USEFUL LIFE/USE RESTRICTION LEASE ADDENDUM/AMENDMENT ([Trust Land with Prorated Recovery Amount](#)). This lease document requires that the amount of NAHASDA funds invested in the property be prorated over the life of the restriction. In the event of a default, only the current prorated amount must be refunded.

FHA Loan Rider to NAHASDA Useful Life/Use Restriction

Some grantees use their IHBG funds to provide down payment assistance to low-income Native American borrowers who receive a loan insured by FHA. Because of FHA requirements under 24 CFR 203.41 the sample useful life restrictions contain language that limits transfer of the property in the event of foreclosure. The FHA Loan Rider addresses the FHA requirements and should be used when NAHASDA funds are invested in the property.

If you have any questions, please contact your Area Office of Native American Programs.

Attachments