ILLINOIS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Strong Communities Program

Program Manual

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For questions and comments please contact
SCPinfo@ihda.org

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Chapter 1- Introduction and Program Description

Congratulations! You have been chosen as a grantee under the Illinois Housing Development Authority's (IHDA) Strong Communities Program (SCP or the Program). Created in 2020, SCP provides funds to municipalities, counties, and land banks to address affordable housing needs and community revitalization efforts. SCP will return vacant residential properties to productive and taxable use through rehabilitation and provide funds for demolition in cases where properties are beyond repair and negatively impacting neighboring residences. As a result, SCP will increase property values, create jobs, help reduce crime, generate additional tax revenue and attract further community investment. It will preserve existing affordable housing stock that is often in city centers and in proximity to community amenities (schools, parks, medical facilities, shopping, jobs, and transportation).

The purpose of this Program Manual (the Manual) is to provide guidance and sample documentation for the various aspects of SCP. The objectives of this Manual include the following:

- To create a common ground for the Program;
- To establish rules, procedures, and expectations;
- To develop thoughtful and effective operating procedures;
- To minimize future Program and project issues by identifying best practices and potential solutions; and
- To operate a successful rehabilitation and/or demolition program.

Eligible Applicants

Program applicants must be a municipality, county, or land bank located in the State of Illinois. A county or municipality may join with other counties/municipalities and together submit a single application; however, each county/municipality may only apply once per funding round.

Eligible Costs/Program Activities

Grant funds may be used for acquisition, demolition, or rehabilitation of vacant and abandoned residential properties (the "Parcel")[1].

A list of specific activities is included below. Maximum costs per individual Parcel for all eligible uses cannot exceed $40,000.

- Acquisition - $5,000 maximum
- Rehabilitation
- Demolition
- Tree, Shrub and Debris Removal (excluding grass cutting)
- Grass Cutting - not to exceed 5% of grant amount
- Lot Treatment and Greening (i.e. sod, level and grading, shrubs, native plantings, community gardens, stormwater management projects)
- All reasonable hard and soft construction costs related to the activities listed above, which may be approved or denied in IHDA's sole and absolute discretion
- Administrative costs - maximum general administration fees consist of 5% of the total disbursed amount for administrative costs related to general management, oversight, and coordination, including staff and overhead.

Please also note that deconstruction/salvage of building materials, fixtures, etc. is allowable as part of the demolition or rehabilitation of vacant and abandoned residential properties under the Program.

[1] Parcel shall mean a defined piece of real estate which can be identified by an individual PIN or as a single unit within a multi-unit building.

Eligible Properties	Ineligible Properties
• 1-6 unit residential properties in the State of Illinois • Properties that meet the definition of Abandoned Residential Property under the Program • Manufactured homes taxed as real property with a foundation but no hitch or wheels • Properties may have garages, outbuilding, and/or sheds (demolition/removal of these buildings is an eligible cost if associated residential property meets the definition of "Abandoned Residential Property"[2] under the Program)	• Residential properties knowingly occupied by legal or non-legal residents • Historically registered properties • Commercial, industrial, or agricultural properties • Mixed use properties with a residential unit component

Funding Source and Max Distribution

Funding for the Program is derived solely from the Build Illinois Bond Fund. Maximum grant amounts are $250,000 per municipality/county or land bank in the State of Illinois (no match funds required). Funding will be allocated to approved grantees based on evaluations of competitive applications.

Funding Availability and Program Expectations

With a dedicated allocation of $30 million, SCP is projected to run for three consecutive grant funding rounds of $10 million each, (each round consisting of a 2-year grant term).

This funding could potentially allow about 1,000 vacant and abandoned homes to be rehabbed (assuming $25,000 per unit), and around 500 vacant and abandoned homes beyond repair to be demolished (assuming $10,000 per unit). SCP will return vacant residential properties to productive and taxable use through rehabilitation and provide funds for demolition in cases where properties are beyond repair. As a result, SCP will help address local affordable housing needs and community revitalization efforts for local governments that lack capital needed to address these issues. The Program is expected to help increase property values, create jobs, help reduce crime, generate additional tax revenue, and attract further community investment.

Project Timing

SCP will operate for two years from the date of your initial closing with IHDA's Legal Department. The Grant Funds Recovery Act allows 24 months for the expenditure of funds. No extensions are expected beyond this period. All construction work must be completed by your program's expiration date. IHDA will allow payouts up to 60 days after your program's expiration date expires. It is the grantee's responsibility to be aware of the expiration date of their program and to track their spending. If you are ever unsure about your expiration date or amount of dollars available, please consult your Funding Agreement.

[2] See Appendix A for definition

Chapter 2- Setting up Your Program

Setting up a rehabilitation and/or demolition program that meets the requirements for a fiscally sound state-funded program requires forethought and planning. Time spent now in delineating roles and responsibilities and defining procedures for your program will result in the efficient delivery of the intended services. This section provides thoughts on evaluating your readiness to begin SCP and a review of program parameters to remember before you begin.

As you review the Manual and appendices and all the requirements of operating SCP, consider how your current procedures may need to be changed and how your current staffing or knowledge may need to be supplemented.

How will roles and responsibilities be assigned within your administrative team? SCP has the goal of efficiently coordinating resources in assisting the return of vacant residential properties to productive and taxable use through rehabilitation and/or demolition. It can be a challenge to set up a new program, assigning roles and clarifying procedures. As administrators of the program, you will be required to manage both dollars and documents. It may help to start with questions such as

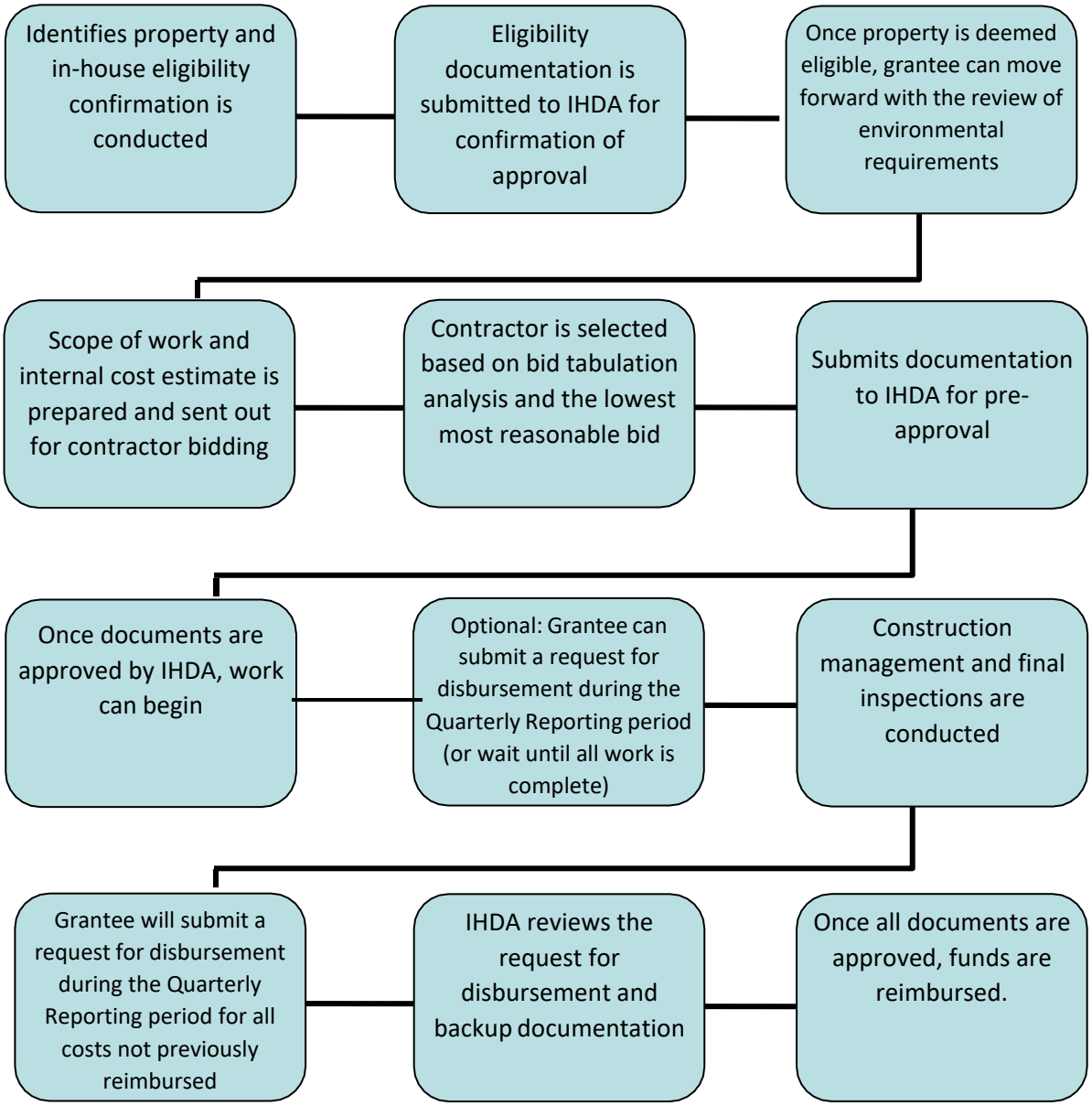
- Do we have the expertise needed to perform all the assigned tasks?
- Should we contract with an outside agency to supplement in-house knowledge?
- Do we currently have sufficient record keeping and financial management practices to be able to maintain the necessary documents, ensure contractors are paid in a timely fashion, and track the staff costs of the program?
- Does our staff have sufficient knowledge of local building codes and lead-based paint requirements to meet the needs of the program?
- Will we be able to keep up with all the compliance procedures and reporting requirements?

Program Activity Table

The following Program Activity Table is provided as a management tool that may be helpful as you manage the various stages of the program round. Indicate which party will be the **primary (P)** decision maker and who will **assist (A)** for each activity.

Activity	Staff Person	Third Party	Other
Identifies property to acquire, rehab, demolish, and/or maintain			
Confirms property eligibility with IHDA			
Reviews for environmental requirements			
Prepares initial scope of work and cost estimates			
Secures contractors through bidding process			
Submits documentation to IHDA for pre-approval			
Inspects ongoing construction/demolition work			
Final inspection			
Pays contractors			
Submits payouts through quarterly reimbursement report			
Performs follow-up as necessary			
Maintains financial records for record retention			

Example Project Flow Chart



Chapter 3- Establishing a Contractor Pool

This section addresses contractor pre-qualification, insurance and licensing requirements, and other contractor concerns. Do you have qualified contractors to do the work? Do you know your contractors? Are they going to do the work professionally, timely, and ethically? Are they financially stable and dependable enough to complete the job? Do they have the required licenses and insurances?

Most rehabilitation and/or demolition programs rely on a pool of pre-qualified contractors. The grantee advertises or otherwise seeks out interested contractors. IHDA recommends that the grantee have the contractor complete the Statement of Contractor's Qualifications, we have included this form as Appendix B. The grantee will also need to review the contractors' insurance information, as well as any required licenses. All insurance and licenses should be current, and a copy should be maintained in the grantee's files.

Insurance Requirements

Minimum coverage should include the following:

- **Workmen's Compensation and Employee's Liability** - Workmen's compensation of not less than the statutory amount and employer's liability of not less than $500,000 per person.
- **Auto Insurance** - A minimum combined single limit of not less than $500,000 for injuries, including accidental death, or damages caused by the contractor's vehicles on the site.
- **Comprehensive Public Liability** - Not less than $1,000,000 for accidents or injuries for each occurrence, and not less than $2,000,000 in the aggregate for the policy term.

Procurement

Grantees should adhere to the following tenets when establishing procurement policies for the program:

- **Maximize Competition**
  In order to ensure that a job is reasonable, open competition should be maximized. At least two, but preferably three proposals from your pre-qualified list of contractors should be received in order to obtain the best possible price for the work to be done.
- **Ensure Project Costs are Reasonable**
  An independent cost estimate based on local cost data should be done prior to the bids. The bids are then compared to each other and to the cost estimate. The accepted bid must be within a reasonable range (usually 10%, sometimes more on smaller projects) of the cost estimate. IHDA recommends that you use a cost estimating software for developing work write-ups and cost estimates. If your municipality or agency does not own this software, you may purchase it and request reimbursement from your administrative funds.
- **Avoid Conflicts of Interest**
  No conflict of interest may exist between contractors and the grantee. There must be a clear distinction of duties performed by the entity performing the rehabilitation and the parties that develop work write-ups/cost estimates, approve progress and final draw requests, resolve disputes, and/or approve funding of individual properties.
- **Unauthorized Compensation**
  Grantees may not receive or demand from builder, remodeler, contractor, supplier, or borrower:

- Kickbacks
- Commissions
- Rebates
- Other compensation

- **Select Contractors that are Responsive and Qualified**
  Ensure that contractors submitting bids are qualified to complete the work specified in their proposals and are properly licensed and insured.

Prevailing Wage

Illinois Prevailing Wage will apply to SCP in accordance with the Prevailing Wage Act. Current prevailing rates are available on the Illinois Department of Labor website. The grantee must ensure that all contractors are abiding by the Act and that proper records are maintained. IHDA reserves the right to request documentation to confirm compliance of this requirement at any time.

Chapter 4- Environmental and State Administrative Requirements

SCP is supported by the Build Illinois Bond Fund. As such, all State of Illinois requirements for rehabilitation and demolition projects apply. This section addresses environmental and state administrative requirements, including asbestos, state historic preservation review, floodplain concerns, lead-based paint regulations, and other administrative requirements.

Asbestos

For any activity undertaken and submitted for reimbursement under your SCP award, you must follow all local, county, state and federal laws that pertain to such activities. Before demolishing a property, you must ensure all local, county, state and federal requirements for demolition, asbestos inspections, and handling/removal of hazardous containing materials are met. IHDA will not require submission of asbestos inspection documentation. Grantees must sign the Certification of Compliance with applicable Environmental Requirements certifying that they have followed all pertinent local, county, state, and federal laws, including, but not limited to, all applicable environmental laws.

State Historic Preservation

All properties in SCP will need to receive approval from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) indicating that no historic properties will be affected. Grantees should submit information to SHPO as soon as possible and will receive a letter back, which should then be provided to IHDA as part of the pre-approval process in SCP.

More SHPO review and approval information is available at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website. Please note that as of January 1, 2021, the SHPO transitioned to an electronic submittal and review process. The following https://www2.illinois.gov/dnrhistoric/Preserve/Pages/resource-protection-submittal.aspx provides step by step instructions.

Note: IHDA will not issue a pre-approval unless you have received an approval/no comment letter back from the State Historic Preservation Office.

If your community is a Certified Local Government approved by the State Historic Preservation Office, IHDA will accept CLG approval indicating that the proposed work on the parcel will have no adverse effects to historic resources.

Floodplain Requirements

Executive Order 2006-05 governs the development and rehabilitation of properties in the floodplain with State dollars. You must document whether each property is located in a 100-year floodplain. If the property is located in the 100-year floodplain, then flood insurance is required before a property is rehabilitated with State-funded assistance.

To check if a property is in the 100-year floodplain, you will need to consult the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for that address published by FEMA. Print a copy of a "FIRMette" from the FEMA website for the property. There is also a tutorial on the website to assist you. Submit a color copy of the property's FIRMette to IHDA with your pre-approval package.

The National Flood Insurance Program requires that "if the cost of improvements or the cost to repair the damage exceeds 50 percent of the market value of the building, it must be brought up to current floodplain management standards. That means an existing building must meet the requirements for new construction." See the NFIP Floodplain Management Requirements in Appendix D, for more information.

The entire NFIP Floodplain Management Requirement guide can be found in full at the following FEMA site. The DNR "Illinois Quick Guide to Floodplain Management" serves as a resource for rehabilitation projects in Illinois that must be brought up to current floodplain management standards. This guide is located in Appendix E. This guide and further Illinois specific NFIP information can also be found on the DNR website.

Proximity to an Underground Mine

IHDA requires that a map showing the proximity to underground mines be provided for each rehabilitation project to be funded. A search should be done through the following website. A color copy of the map should be submitted to IHDA as part of the pre-approval package. All properties within the proximity zone will be required to have mine insurance.

Lead-Based Paint for Interior Rehab Projects

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) provides licenses for lead paint contractors and enforces state regulations regarding lead-based paint.

If the home was built prior to 1978, IHDA will require that a risk assessment be done of the property that will be rehabilitated. According to IDPH, homes built after 1978 do not need to be assessed for lead unless the grantee determines otherwise. Contractors completing lead work will need to submit their lead abatement contractor license and the lead supervisor license to the grantee for review.

Lead-based paint assessment and remediation work are both eligible costs under SCP. However, if the clearance test fails, the contractor must pay for a second clearance test after further remediation work is done. IHDA will not reimburse for additional clearance testing.

When any interior rehabilitation work is being done and lead-based paint is **known** or strongly suspected in the work site area, then lead-safe work practices must be followed. This includes inspection and remediation work performed by state-licensed risk assessors and contractors. All work in the affected areas must be done by a licensed lead contractor using lead-safe work practices and pass IDPH lead clearance levels.

Other Environmental Requirements

Due diligence with regards to health and safety issues, and environmental concerns is a responsibility of publicly funded programs, whether the items are specifically stated. The above is not meant to be a comprehensive listing of all environmental requirements.

Chapter 5- Property Eligibility and Pre-approval

This section provides information on how to evaluate the feasibility of rehabilitating or demolishing the property, as well as how to obtain pre-approval from IHDA. At this point in the project, you have found a property that is eligible for SCP and can move forward to drafting the scope of work.

Scope of Work

After reviewing the above-mentioned factors, you will derive your scope of work for the project. This is your general list of items that need to be completed as part of the project. At this point in your process, you will probably also have a good idea if the project can move forward with the amount of funds that you have available. The person performing the initial assessment of the property prepares the scope of work and later the cost estimate, must be qualified and knowledgeable with state and local building codes, including energy efficiency standards. Additionally, for rehabilitation projects, pre–1978 structures will need a lead risk assessment conducted by a state-certified lead risk assessor in accordance with state-required protocols.

Scope of Work Narrative

Now that you have prepared a Scope of Work for the project, IHDA requires that you briefly summarize the work to be performed in a Scope of Work Narrative. This narrative must be in memo/letter format and on your organization's letterhead. You will include this Narrative as part of your pre-approval package.

Work-up/Cost Estimate

A detailed work write-up and cost estimate should now be developed. The cost estimate should include detailed specifications and be based on current market costs. You should derive your own in-house cost estimate prior to bidding the project and establish limits on what you will accept. Your work write-up should include your standards and specifications that are specific and measurable and will result in a good quality project. IHDA recommends the use of cost estimating software, such as Housing Developer Pro and RESPEC. Best practices generally require that bids be within 10% of the cost estimate.

The next step is to consider project feasibility. Do you have sufficient funds for the rehabilitation and soft costs needed to complete the project? Make a detailed budget. If there are insufficient funds to complete the project, and additional funds from other sources are unavailable, you will have to decide whether to move forward with the project.

Confirmation of Property Eligibility and Pre-Approval Request

SCP will utilize a two-stage approach to ensure the property meets the general SCP requirements and that all documentation demonstrates that the grantee has completed the necessary steps to begin work on the specific property. Additional details on this process are included in the Instruction Manual – Completing an SCP Reimbursement Request included as Appendix G.

SCP Pre-Approval Part 1: Initial Property Approval

First, grantees will submit an Initial Property Approval Information utilizing an online Jotform survey. All properties submitted for reimbursement under the Strong Communities Program (SCP) must be verified as meeting eligibility requirements per the definition of Abandoned Residential Property included in Appendix A. These requirements include that each property be zoned as residential and contains a 1-6 unit building. IHDA must verify a property's eligibility before any payment for work done on a specific property can be approved. This is the first step of the process to begin work on a property. Please keep in mind if a property is unclassified or classified as exempt, additional information such as past year assessment information will need to be provided to demonstrate that the property was previously classified as residential.

Grantees also need to have the legal authority to undertake proposed activities. Grantees must, before performing any work pursuant to the Program or in its performance under the Funding Agreement, have the legal authority to undertake any proposed activities on private property and shall comply with all applicable local, county, state and federal laws and regulations.

Grantees **will not** need to provide documentation of ownership/legal authority as part of the initial property approval.

See Appendix G Instruction Manual – Completing an SCP Reimbursement Request for this JotForm link.

Please note that each active Program Round will have a separate SCP Pre-Approval Part 1: Initial Property Approval Jotform link. Please make sure to utilize the correct form for your Program Round to avoid any delays in review.

SCP Pre-Approval Part 2: Pre-Approval Checklist

The second stage is the pre-approval from IHDA before any costs are incurred on the project. Once you have collected all the documentation listed below, you will submit the information to the Community Affairs Department using Jotform. We will email you to confirm pre-approval or let you know if any additional documentation is needed. Note that IHDA will not collect documentation of ownership/legal authority, but grantees must sign the Certification of Legal Authority.

The following documentation must be submitted as part of your **Pre-approval package:**

1. Certification of Legal Authority (use IHDA-provided form)
2. Scope of Work Narrative (summary of work to be performed on agency letterhead)
3. Bid Tabulation (summarizing bids received for project using IHDA-provided template)*
4. In House Cost Estimate (on which the request for funds is based)
5. State Historic Preservation Office Approval Confirmation**
6. FIRMette, floodplain map (in color), if applicable
7. Mine map (in color), if applicable
8. Pictures in color of work to be completed (before rehabilitation, must be labeled).
9. Your disposition strategy (for properties submitted for acquisition expenses only)

**An exception can be granted to allow submission of the Bid Tabulation Form with the Reimbursement Request Form rather than as part of the Pre-Approval Process. Please indicate whether you will be requesting this exception when completing the Pre-Approval Checklist*

***Certified Local Government approval will also be accepted for this requirement*

See Appendix G Instruction Manual – Completing an SCP Reimbursement Request for this JotForm link.

Please note that each active Program Round will have a separate SCP Pre-Approval Part 2: Pre-Approval Checklist Jotform link. Please make sure to utilize the correct form for your Program Round to avoid any delays in review.

Chapter 6- Construction, Demolition and Rehabilitation Management

Now that your in-house cost estimate determines that the project should continue, you should solicit bids from your pool of contractors. You must take pictures before, during, and after the construction period. Pictures must be submitted before the work begins to demonstrate the work that needs to be done. Pictures included in partial payout submissions must show progress and any completed components. Final payout pictures must show completion of the items specified on the work write-up. Make sure pictures reference the major items in your cost estimate and scope of work narrative. Please include color pictures and be sure to label them. If there were numerous change orders, a new or revised scope of work narrative should be submitted with your payout documents.

Bid the Job and Select a Contractor

A minimum of two bids (preferably three) must be obtained for all projects. The submission of more than one bid helps assist in assessing the validity of your cost estimate and establishes that costs are reasonable for your market.

Do not accept bids that are too low or that are unreliable. **Do** make sure that bids are comparable and that you are comparing the same line items. Perform a bid tabulation analysis to compare and document that the bid review process was fair and accurate.

Once the bids have been reviewed, select the lowest and most reasonable bid. Do share the IHDA Standards for Architectural Planning and Construction, which are the minimum quality standards for all rehabilitation projects.

General steps to move forward with the contractor:

- ✓ **Step 1 - Issue a Notice to Proceed.** This notice informs all parties that a contractor may begin construction on a project.
- ✓ **Step 2- Are permits required?** Make sure all necessary permits have been obtained.
- ✓ **Step 3 - Perform interim inspections as needed.** Document the interim inspections.
- ✓ **Step 4 - Perform final inspection** to confirm work is completed in accordance with permit.

Chapter 7- Receiving Funding, Project Completion, and Reporting

This section outlines the payout process, including required documentation and timelines for payment. Requests for reimbursements are handled on a quarterly basis through the Quarterly Disbursement Statement.

Reporting Requirements

Quarterly Disbursement Statement

For a detailed step by step guide on completing a Quarterly Disbursement Statement, see Appendix G Instruction Manual – Completing an SCP Reimbursement Request. The Cover Sheets used for reporting can be found in Appendix H. The SCP Reporting Timeline with due dates is found in Appendix I.

Please note that expenses for testing and remediation of asbestos and/or lead are reimbursable as part of demolition and/or rehabilitation projects under the Program.

If requesting reimbursement for acquisition expenses, please include a copy of the ownership document (Deed, Purchase Agreement, etc.). If not requesting reimbursement for acquisition expenses, no ownership documentation is required. The Certification of Legal Authority provided in the Pre-Approval process will serve to demonstrate that the grantee has legal authority to undertake the project on the relevant property.

You may submit up to two requests for reimbursement per property.

First Request

You will submit a request for reimbursement if your project is partially complete and you would like to make a payment to your contractor for work completed.

1. Checklist and cover sheets indicating first reimbursement
2. Ownership Documentation (only if requesting reimbursement of acquisition expenses)
3. Scope of work narrative (on grantee's letterhead, if amended from pre-approval)
4. Change order(s) if any
5. Contractor payment invoice and proof of payment
6. Invoice or comparable documentation and proof of payment for all other eligible costs
7. Pictures of completed work (include both "during", for rehab, and, if completed "after" photos)
8. For rehabilitation projects, lead risk assessment, conducted by a certified lead risk assessor.
9. Bid Tabulation Form (if not provided as part of Pre-Approval Process)

Second Request

You will submit a final request for reimbursement if your project is complete and you would like to make a final payment to your contractor.

1. Checklist and cover sheets indicating final reimbursement
2. Ownership Documentation (only if requesting reimbursement of acquisition expenses and not provided previously)

3. Scope of work narrative (if different from first request or pre-approval or to reflect multiple change orders)
4. Change order(s), if any
5. Contractor payment invoice and proof of payment
6. Invoice or comparable documentation and proof of payment for all other eligible costs
7. Certification of Compliance with Applicable Environmental Requirements (IHDA-provided form)
8. Pictures of completed work (include both “during”, for rehab, and, if completed “after” photos)
9. For rehabilitation projects, lead risk assessment, conducted by a certified lead risk assessor. (if not provided previously)
10. For rehabilitation projects, is property ready for occupancy? If not, provide an explanation.
11. For rehabilitation projects, confirmation of final inspection.
12. Bid Tabulation Form (if not provided as part of Pre-Approval Process or previously with a first request)

Administrative Funds

The grantee is eligible to receive up to 5% of the total grant amount disbursed as administrative funds under SCP.

- Collection of administrative funds is based on successful completion of the program (prorated by the percentage of project funds expended). For example, if the grantee has spent only 50% of their project funds (47.5% of total award), then up to 50% of the administrative funds will be approved for payout.
- The grantee is responsible for monitoring and tracking its total project expenditures, as well as its administrative funds requests.
- Back-up documentation may be required for administrative draws, at IHDA’s discretion.
- Only two (2) administrative funds draws per grantee will be granted for the Program. Requests for reimbursement can be submitted mid and at the end of the program.

Please refer to Appendix G Instruction Manual – Completing an SCP Reimbursement Request for further details.

Congratulations! You are now familiar with the steps needed to successfully implement SCP. Please contact us at any time with any questions at SCPinfo@ihda.org.

List of Appendices

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