

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Texas CDBG program herein incorporates the following conflict of interest policy into its own State procurement policies and procedures:

a) *Applicability.*

1) In the procurement of supplies, equipment, construction, and services by recipients, and by subrecipients, the conflict of interest provisions shall apply:

a) No employee, officer, or agent may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by a Federal award if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest. Such a conflict of interest would arise when the employee, officer, or agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein, has a financial or other interest in or a tangible personal benefit from a firm considered for a contract. The officers, employees, and agents of the non-Federal entity may neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors or parties to subcontracts. However, non-Federal entities may set standards for situations in which the financial interest is not substantial or the gift is an unsolicited item of nominal value. The standards of conduct must provide for disciplinary actions to be applied for violations of such standards by officers, employees, or agents of the non-Federal entity. (2 CFR 200.318(c)(1))

b) All procurement transactions must be conducted in a manner providing full and open competition consistent with the standards of this section. In order to ensure objective contractor performance and eliminate unfair competitive advantage, contractors that develop or draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, or invitations for bids or requests for proposals must be excluded from competing for such procurements. Some of the situations considered to be restrictive of competition include but are not limited to:

(1) Placing unreasonable requirements on firms in order for them to qualify to do business;

(2) Requiring unnecessary experience and excessive bonding;

(3) Noncompetitive pricing practices between firms or between affiliated companies;

(4) Noncompetitive contracts to consultants that are on retainer contracts;

(5) Organizational conflicts of interest;

(6) Specifying only a "brand name" product instead of allowing "an equal" product to be offered and describing the performance or other relevant requirements of the procurement; and

(7) Any arbitrary action in the procurement process. (2 CFR 200.319)

2) In all cases not governed by (a)(1) above, the provisions of this section (24 CFR 570.48(h)) shall apply. Such cases include the acquisition and disposition of real property and the provision of assistance with CDBG funds by the unit of general local government or its subrecipients, to individuals, businesses and other private entities.

3) Conflict of interest provisions are applicable to any person or entity including any benefitting business, utility provider, or other third party entity that is receiving assistance, directly or indirectly, under a TxCDBG contract or award, or that is required to complete some or all work under the TxCDBG contract in order to meet a National Program Objective, that might potentially receive benefits from TxCDBG awards.

b) *Conflicts prohibited.* Except for the use of CDBG funds to pay salaries and other related administrative or personnel costs, the general rule is that no persons described in paragraph (c) of this section who exercise or have exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to CDBG activities assisted under this part, or who are in a position to participate in a decision making process or to gain inside information with regard to such activities, may obtain a financial interest or benefit from a CDBG-assisted activity, or have a financial interest in any contract, subcontract, or agreement with respect to a CDBG-assisted activity, or with respect to the proceeds of the CDBG-assisted activity, either for themselves or those with who they have family or business ties, during their tenure or for one year thereafter.

c) *Persons covered.* The conflict of interest provisions of paragraph (b) of this section apply to any person who is an employee, agent, consultant, officer, or elected official or appointed official of the recipient, or of any designated public agencies, or subrecipients which are receiving CDBG funds.

d) *Exceptions: threshold requirements.* Upon the written request of the State, an exception to the provisions of paragraph (b) of this section involving an employee, agent, consultant, officer, or elected official or appointed official of the State may be granted by HUD on a case-by-case basis. In all other cases, the State may grant such an exception upon written request of the unit of general local government provided the State shall fully document its determination in compliance with all requirements of paragraph (d) of this section including the State's position with respect to each factor at paragraph (d)(2) of this section and such documentation shall be available for review by the public and by HUD. An exception may be granted after it is determined that such an exception will serve to further the purpose of the Act and the effective and efficient administration of the program or project of the State or unit of general local government as appropriate.

(1) An exception may be considered only after the State or unit of general local government, as appropriate, has provided the following:

(i) A disclosure of the nature of the conflict, accompanied by an assurance that there has been public disclosure of the conflict and a description of how the public disclosure was made; and

(ii) An opinion of the attorney for the State or the unit of general local government, as appropriate, that the interest for which the exception is sought would not violate State or local law.

(2) *Factors to be considered for exceptions.* In determining whether to grant a requested exception after the requirements of paragraph (d) of this section have been satisfactorily met, the cumulative effect of the following factors, where applicable, shall be considered:

(i) Whether the exception would provide a significant cost benefit or an essential degree of expertise to the program or project which would otherwise not be available;

(ii) Whether an opportunity was provided for open competitive bidding or negotiation;

(iii) Whether the person affected is a member of a group or class of low or moderate income persons intended to be the beneficiaries of the assisted activity, and the exception will permit such person to receive generally the same interests or benefits as are being made available or provided to the group or class;

(iv) Whether the affected person has withdrawn from his or her functions or responsibilities, or the decision-making process with respect to the specific assisted activity in question;

(v) Whether the interest or benefit was present before the affected person was in a position as described in paragraph (c) of this section;

(vi) Whether undue hardship will result either to the State or the unit of general local government or the person affected when weighed against the public interest served by avoiding the prohibited conflict; and

(vii) Any other relevant considerations.