



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Texas Community Development Block Grant Program

FAST Fund - Common Questions

- Webinar slides and notes will be posted after the presentation
- There is time set aside for questions after the presentation

Good afternoon and thank you for joining us. I'm Michelle Phares. This is the 3rd webinar in a series of webinars regarding the *FAST* Fund. In today's webinar, I will be discussing some of the more common questions and answers related to the *FAST* Fund. This webinar should be fairly brief and is intended to provide consistent responses to some of the *FAST* program questions I get asked over and over again on a regular basis.

If you haven't already, I strongly encourage you to review the previous webinars and contact me with any questions or verification requests. Please note that the webinar slides and notes (essentially a transcript) will be posted on the TDA training page after the webinar. We will also have time after the webinar for additional questions.

Now, let's get started.



FAST – Common Questions

Do I have to be TxCDBG certified to prepare a FAST application?

No. However, anyone preparing AND administering or just administering the grant must be TxCDBG certified.

Can the city or county administer its own grant?

Yes. However:

- Must have 2019 TxCDBG certification
 - Register now for 2019 Implementation Workshops!
- Must document experience/capacity prior to award
 - TDA can require 3rd party administration as condition of award if capacity/experience are lacking

Do I have to be TxCDBG certified to prepare a FAST application?

No. However, anyone preparing AND administering or just administering the grant must be TxCDBG certified. Also, third-party grant administrators that wish to prepare AND administer a grant must be procured prior application preparation. Please note that registration for TxCDBG Project Implementation Workshops, being held in July, August in September of 2019, is now available on the TxCDBG Training page. Implementation Workshops provide annual training for project administrators, engineers, and local officials. Implementation workshops are also used to meet the annual training requirement to certify individuals that will be responsible for administering TxCDBG grant projects.

Can the city or county administer its own grant?

Yes. However, self-administering applicants must:

- 1) have a 2019 TxCDBG certification; and
- 2) document their experience and capacity prior to award (TDA will send the required forms)

TDA can require 3rd party administration as a condition of award, if it is determined that the self-administering applicant lacks the capacity or experience to self-administer. In this case, funding for administrative costs can be reallocated from the request amount. Due to the extensive and complex requirements associated with preparation and administration of TxCDBG grants, TDA strongly recommends the use of a qualified third-party grant administrator.



FAST – Common Questions

Can an Emergency Services District or Volunteer Fire Department apply for this grant?

No.

- Only non-entitlement cities and counties can apply
- Eligible applicants can apply on behalf of service providers
- Service providers: fire departments, volunteer fire departments, emergency service districts and 3rd party EMS providers

Can an Emergency Services District or Volunteer Fire Department apply for this grant?

No. Only non-entitlement cities and counties are considered eligible applicants. An eligible city or county may apply on behalf of a fire department, volunteer fire department, emergency service district or third-party EMS provider. In the application, these entities would be considered “service providers”. Applicants may apply on behalf of more than one service provider. However, multiple service providers must be accounted for in one application and serve eligible communities and service areas. Also, if multiple service providers are included in an application, this may trigger a multi-jurisdictional application.



***FAST* – Common Questions**

Are fire hydrants, water lines or fire stations eligible projects?

No.

- Only vehicles, crafts and equipment are eligible
- No infrastructure

Are fire hydrants, water lines or fire stations eligible projects?

No. Only vehicles, crafts and equipment are eligible projects under *FAST*. Infrastructure, including (but not limited to) fire hydrants, water lines and buildings (such as fire stations) are not eligible projects.



FAST – Common Questions

- **When will awards be made? Funds available?**
 - Tentative schedule:
 - Awards: early August 2019
 - Funds: first draw-downs available mid-September 2019

When will awards be made? When will funds be made available?

TDA is hoping to make awards by early August 2019 and make funds available by mid-September 2019. The funds set aside for this program are close to expiring and time is of the essence, so our plan to adhere to this timeline as much as possible. That being said, these dates are a bit of a moving target and are subject to change.



FAST – Common Questions

Do I need to send in the pre-agreement request prior to starting the environmental?

No.

- The pre-agreement form must be submitted with the application
- It must contain original signatures
- For *FAST*, pre-agreement starts the date of the application draft release (1/31/2019)

Do I need to send in the pre-agreement request prior to starting the environmental?

No. The pre-agreement form for *FAST* is due with the application. There is no need to send prior. In the case of *FAST*, pre-agreement for certain administrative costs (those associated with completion of the environmental review and initiation of vehicle/craft/equipment procurement) starts the date of the draft application release (1/31/2019). The pre-agreement form in the application must contain original signatures.



FAST – Common Questions

What level of environmental review is required?

- Categorically Excluded, Not Subject To 58.5
- Use Form A303 “Exempt or Categorical Exclusion Not Subject To 58.5”
- Due with application:
 - Letter from the Grant Recipient supporting the Categorical Exclusion level of review
 - Form A303 – Exempt or Categorical Exclusion Not Subject to 58.5

Any other questions associated with the Environmental Review, including questions about how to fill out the form, must be sent to TDA’s Environmental Specialist at CDBG_EnvReview@TexasAgriculture.gov

What level of environmental review is required?

Categorically Excluded Not Subject To 58.5 is the required level of environmental review for FAST. Applicants must use the form A303 “Exempt or Categorical Exclusion No Subject To 58.5”. Please remember that the environmental review must be completed prior to application submission. By this I mean that applicants must submit the following with the application:

- A copy of the Letter from the Grant Recipient supporting the Categorical Exclusion level of review
- Form A303 – Exempt or Categorical Exclusion Not Subject to 58.5

Nothing can kill a project faster than not meeting environmental review requirements. If you have questions about the Environmental Review, please send them to TDA’s Environmental Specialist at the email listed.



FAST – Common Questions

- **What happens if the bids (post award) come in above or below my original quote?**
 - Above? Applicant responsible for balance
 - Below? See Community Needs in application

What happens if the bids (post award) come in above or below my original quote?

If after award, procurement results in vehicle/craft/equipment bids that exceed the amount listed in the original quote, then the applicant must provide the balance of funds. TDA will NOT be awarding additional funds.

If after award, procurement results in vehicle/craft/equipment bids that are less than the amount listed in the original quote, then the applicant may use the balance of funding for any eligible projects listed in the Community Needs section of the application. In an effort to avoid deobligated funds, TDA recommends listing any additional community needs and FAST Fund eligible projects in this section of the application. TDA cannot fund any additional eligible FAST projects unless they are listed in this section of the application. As mentioned, additional funding will not be awarded, but leftover funds may be allocated to another eligible FAST project listed in the Community Needs section of the application.



FAST – Common Questions

- **I’m submitting a quote with the application, so I don’t know what my final vehicle cost will be. What project amount do I authorize in the resolution?**
 - “Up to \$500,000”
 - Match funding amount (\$5,000)
 - If providing other or additional match
 - Must also be listed in resolution
 - Must be documented

I’m submitting a quote with the application and I don’t know what my final vehicle cost will be. What project amount do I authorize in the resolution?

In the event that an applicant is providing a quote and they won’t know the final project cost until after award and procurement, please provide an amount on the resolution that will encompass the maximum possible amount: “up to \$500,000” would be a safe bet.

If the applicant or service provider is providing additional match or other funding, (in the case of vehicles that exceed the maximum request amount), the additional match or other funding must also be authorized in the resolution and letters of commitment or other acceptable forms of funding documentation must be provided with the application.



FAST – Common Questions

- **Do I need to submit more than one quote?**
 - No.
- **The quote from the vehicle vendor is 80 pages long. Do you want the whole quote submitted with the application?**
 - No. Please provide the cost summary or ask the vendor to provide one if a summary is not included in quote.

Do I need to submit more than one quote?

No. Applicants are only required to submit one quote with the application. However, it may be a good idea to solicit multiple quotes to determine the most accurate estimate of the final equipment/vehicle cost. This is important because applicants providing quotes will still have to procure competitively, after award, and TDA will only be reimbursing awardees for the amount supported by the quote in the application. If procurement comes in over the amount listed on the quote, the applicant will be responsible for funding the balance. Therefore, it behooves applicants to solicit multiple quotes and submit the quote that most closely approximates the probable final cost.

The quote from the vehicle vendor is 80 pages long. Do you want the entire 80-page quote submitted with the application?

No. We do not need the full quote/specs packet YET (please hold onto them though). For the purposes of the application, you may submit the scaled down version of the vendor's quote that includes the sections containing the cost information and a general description. If the quote doesn't include a cost summary or summary table of some sort, please ask the vendor to provide one.



FAST – Common Questions

- **Can the Service Provider hold title to the proposed vehicle?**

Yes

- Procurement and environmental requirements must be met prior to purchase
- Still subject to all other governmental and programmatic requirements
- Applicant/service provider must retain use and ownership of vehicle/craft/equipment for 5 years (mutual aid allowed)
- After award, TDA will require an agreement between applicant and service provider

Can a service provider can hold title to the proposed vehicle?

Yes. However, the purchasing entity (applicant or otherwise) must comply with all competitive procurement and environmental review requirements. Regardless of who owns the vehicle/craft/piece of equipment, it is still subject to all of the state, local, federal and programmatic requirements associated with *FAST* and TxCDBG projects. Also, the applicant or service provider must retain ownership and use of the vehicle/craft/equipment in the service area for five (5) years after the vehicle/craft/equipment is placed in service. This will not prevent the applicant or service provider from providing mutual aid. In the event that the applicant is partnering with another entity or entities (e.g. third-party service provider, emergency service district, etc.) that will own or operate the vehicle/craft, TDA will require an agreement between the applicant and the partnering entity or entities, after award.



FAST – Common Questions

- **Do I include a block group in the LMI calculation, if it only partially overlaps the service area?**

It depends....

- HUD Guidance: “completely encloses and significantly overlaps”
- TDA will consider:
 - Location and nature of activity
 - Location of beneficiaries
 - Must make sense to a reasonable person
- Service area determination/beneficiary verification deadline: May 16, 2019

Send to: Michelle Phares at michelle.phares@texasagriculture.gov

Do I include a block group in the LMI calculation, if it only partially overlaps the service area?

It depends....The new HUD guidance states, “The LMA (low-to-mod area) determination shall be made based on the entirety of the data of the census geography which the service area both completely encloses and significantly overlaps.” In cases where there is a question about whether a “substantial overlap” exists, we will consider the location and nature of the activity, as well as beneficiary location.

For example, it is reasonable to expect the area immediately surrounding the fire station would be included in the service area, so the further away from the location of the vehicle or equipment, the less likely that block group would be considered to be included in the service area.

Another example: your service area includes the small tip of a very large census block group that encompasses other unincorporated areas and another city outside of your service area. In addition, the small tip of the census block group in your service area appears to be mainly comprised of unpopulated Ag land on a map. In this case, an argument could be made to exclude this census block group from the service area as the majority of the population being represented by the census block group is outside of the service area and not benefitting from the project.

Ultimately, the determination to include or exclude a census block group must make sense to a reasonable person.

If you have any doubts, I strongly encourage you to send in your service area maps and beneficiary documentation for verification, as far in advance as possible. The deadline for beneficiary verification is May 16, 2019.



FAST – Common Questions

- **Can we use surveys to qualify two census block groups in our service area and the LMISD data to qualify the other census block groups in our service area?**

No.

- Survey data cannot be added to LMID as a matter of “convenience”

Can we use surveys to qualify two census block groups in our service area and the LMISD data to qualify the other census block groups in our service area?

No. Survey data cannot be added to LMISD as a matter of “convenience”.

For example, a service area is comprised of two block groups: block group A is 60% LMI and block group B is 40% LMI. Block group B cannot be surveyed and added to the LMISD populations in block group A to develop a cumulative LMI. Using this example, the applicant’s only option to qualify might be to survey both block groups and use only survey data to qualify the service area.



FAST – Common Questions

- **Can I submit a previously conducted survey?**

Yes.

- Please submit approved copy of survey tab to TDA for verification in advance
- Send to: Michelle Phares at michelle.phares@texasagriculture.gov
- Please DO NOT resend copies of interview/survey forms from previous surveys

Can I submit a previously conducted survey?

Yes. The first webinar noted that HUD guidance on surveys is in transition and that we don't anticipate communities to conduct a new survey for the *FAST* fund. Additionally, TxDBG has strong concerns regarding a *FAST* applicant's ability to conduct a successful, viable survey within the relatively short application timeframe.

That being said, surveys will be accepted, including those that were previously conducted for another program. However, I strongly encourage applicants to send me a copy of the approved survey tab form, well in advance of the application due date, so that I may verify that the survey is still viable.



FAST – Common Questions

- **Vehicle/Equipment questions:**

1. Is a rural medical transport vehicle eligible?

No. Must be for emergency response only.

2. Are ambulance-based heart monitors and stretchers/power load stretchers eligible equipment?

Yes. Must be dedicated to vehicle serving a qualified service area and beneficiaries.

3. Is each Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) considered one piece of equipment?

Yes.

Vehicle/Equipment questions:

1. Is a rural medical transport vehicle eligible?

FAST is limited to vehicles that fulfill some sort of emergency or public safety requirement. As such, a non-emergency medical transport vehicle isn't an eligible project at this time.

2. Are ambulance-based heart monitors and stretchers/power load stretchers eligible equipment?

Assuming the piece of equipment is assigned to an ambulance that is serving an LMI eligible service area, then yes, it would be eligible. It must be broken out as a separate piece of equipment in the application.

3. Is each Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) considered one piece of equipment?

Yes. Each SCBA is considered one piece of equipment. If applicants are proposing to purchase a brand new SCBA unit, they can include the new cylinder as part of the whole SCBA package. However, replacement cylinders for an existing SCBA or reimbursement for refills of SCBA cylinders are not eligible costs. Also, all of the components comprising an SCBA are considered one piece of equipment. If, for example, one vendor bills all the parts of an SBCA separately, it is still considered one piece of equipment or one SCBA.



FAST – Common Questions

- **Vehicle/Equipment questions (continued)**

4. Is an equipment set considered one piece of equipment?

Yes. Must be billed and marketed/advertised as a set with everything purchased from the same vendor.

5. Is a command vehicle eligible?

Yes, provided it:

- *Is **not** used for law enforcement purposes*
- *Is **not** used for the general conduct of government (i.e. not for personal or general use)*
- *Must be specialized and substantially different than a standard vehicle*
- *Must be used for emergency response purposes only*

4. Is an equipment set considered one piece of equipment?

Yes. But, it must be billed, marketed or advertised and packaged as a set, all purchased from the same vendor. An example of this would be a “complete rescue set” that includes a multi-tool, cutter and spreader heads, ram, hoses, valves and couplers. I should be able to go online and find this sold as a set to any regular customer. Please no one-off “custom” orders wherein a “set” of equipment is created in order to “maximize” an equipment request for the purposes of the grant.

5. Is a command vehicle eligible?

Yes, provided it will not be used for law enforcement purposes or the general conduct of government. In other words, the command vehicle cannot be a “dual-purpose” vehicle that is also use by the police department. Also, Command vehicles cannot not be used for personal transportation (like a “company car”) or general use. When the Command vehicle is not in use, it cannot be parked in someone’s driveway. Command vehicles must be specialized or have a specialized configuration and must be substantially different than a standard vehicle. A red Ford SUV with a department logo and a two-way radio does not qualify as “specialized”. Command vehicles must be used for emergency response purposes only.

If you have any questions about the eligibility of a vehicle, craft or piece of equipment, I strongly encourage you to reach out to me and verify project eligibility prior to submitting an application.



FAST – Common Questions

- **Where can I find a list of previous Community Enhancement Fund (CEF) awards?**

One is now available on the FAST landing page under “Resources”

Where can I find a list of previous Community Enhancement Fund (CEF) awards?

A list is now available on the FAST landing page under the “Resources” section at the bottom of the page.

For additional information or questions,
contact Michelle Phares at
Michelle.Phares@TexasAgriculture.gov



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That concludes the *FAST* Common Questions webinar. The floor is open for additional questions at this time.