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State of Louisiana

Division of Administration
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Disaster Recovery Unit

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State accepting public comments on plan to allow interim housing expenses, additional construction assistance for non-compliant Road Home grantees

BATON ROUGE – The State of Louisiana is accepting public comments on Action Plan Amendment 65, which would allow Road Home grant recipients to claim interim housing expenses previously incurred as an unmet need. This amendment augments the previous APA 58, which modified Road Home Program policies for homeowners who had diverted grant proceeds to pay for unmet needs due to circumstances beyond their control.

The proposed APA 65 also provides some additional construction assistance for Road Home Program grant recipients who have not yet returned to their homes. APA 65 will allow homeowners participating in rehabilitation or reconstruction programs who have not yet reoccupied their homes because they need funding in excess of the $150,000 cap, to be eligible for such funding in the form of a shared equity agreement. This agreement requires repayment of the additional funding to the state upon sale of the house.

"Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were unique, not just in their scope of regional devastation but also in the nature and range of recovery issues that had to be addressed in the aftermath," OCD-DRU Executive Director Pat Forbes said. "Many people lost not only their homes, but their neighborhoods, their jobs, their children's schools. And both the public and private sectors experienced lag times in the distribution of money to repair homes. With the financial crisis of 2008 factored in, the effect was a greatly increased likelihood that additional resources would be required for interim living expenses."

Following the storms, insurance policies and various federal programs provided funding for temporary housing costs or actual alternative housing options, but those resources had limited time frames in which they were available. Under the above described circumstances, it is not unreasonable that once those temporary housing programs were concluded, a homeowner uncertain whether sufficient funds existed to complete the work necessary to return home, would consume resources on interim housing.

These proposed measures are intended to provide additional resources for existing Road Home Program grant recipients to return home and become compliant with the program. The plan does not provide for new Road Home applicants to enter the program, nor does it provide additional compensation grants. Road Home and Liaison staff will continue to work with homeowners to help them determine their best path forward, and they will now have additional tools.

Action Plan Amendment 65 can be accessed online here: http://www.doa.la.gov/Pages/ocd-dru/Action_Plans.aspx.

The formal public comment period for the action plan begins Sept. 23, 2015 and continues until 5 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2015. After accepting public comments, the state will submit the plan to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for final federal approval.

Written comments on the proposed Action Plan Amendment 65 may be submitted beginning today and must be received no later than 5:00 PM (CST) on Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2015. The proposed amendment will be published in Vietnamese and Spanish translation at the same website. Comments may be mailed to the Office of Community Development, Post Office Box 94095, Baton Rouge, La. 70804-9095, or sent via facsimile to (225) 219-9605 to the attention of Janice Lovett.

Citizens, community leaders and elected officials can access the plans and submit comments online by visiting http://www.doa.la.gov/Pages/ocd-dru/Action_Plans.aspx and opening APA 65. A copy of the plans can be requested by calling (225) 219-9600.

Members of the public may submit comments several ways:

- Using the online form at http://www.doa.la.gov/Pages/ocd-dru/Action_Plans.aspx;
- Emailing them to ocd@la.gov ;
- Mailing them to Disaster Recovery Unit, P.O. Box 94095, 70804-9095, Attn: Janice Lovett; or
- Faxing them to the attention of Janice Lovett at (225) 219-9605.

The Disaster Recovery Unit within the Office of Community Development is dedicated to helping Louisiana's citizens recover from hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, Ike and Isaac. As the state's central point for hurricane recovery, the OCD-DRU manages the most extensive rebuilding effort in American history, working closely with local, state and federal partners to ensure that Louisiana recovers safer, stronger and smarter than before.

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