

COVID-19 Asset Management & Compliance Guidance

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak and the unprecedented challenges housing providers are facing, the Department of Commerce (Commerce) is providing the following guidance regarding the ongoing compliance requirements of Housing Trust Fund (HTF), HOME and National Housing Trust Fund funded properties.

These guidelines align with processes established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD), and the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. The intent is to prevent additional burden to our funding recipients (contractors) during this time.

Tenant Move-in Applications and Certifications

It is acceptable for our contractors/property owners to collect applications, certification forms, and verifications of income and assets in any of the following manners: mail, fax, or electronic submittal, including email and text message, or dropped off at a location designated by the owner representative.

Further, lease applicants and household members can electronically sign all certification forms and submit to the owner representative. Once received, the owner representative will need to sign the forms and include the actual date of signature. If unable to sign the hardcopy, the owner representative can electronically sign the documents.

The household file will need to identify how the documentation was received. Include a note showing the document was not signed in the presence of the owner representative due to the risk of COVID-19.

Delays in Annual Certifications

Property owner representatives may experience a delay in the annual certification of households because they may not have received the documentation or verification of income and assets due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Owner representatives need to keep track of this information and comment on the applicable WBARS household record by explaining that the certification was delayed due to COVID-19.

The household file will need to be documented, explaining the reasoning for the delay and include the attempts the owner representative took to resolve the delay.

All documents should include the actual date of signature or the date the documentation was received.

Do not backdate the documents.

Vacancies and Unit Turns

If a unit is vacant for longer than 90 days due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the owner needs to document the reasons and attempts to resolve the issues. This detailed information will need to be submitted with the 2020 Annual Report supplemental materials.

Owner representatives should develop a policy on how to handle unit turns that protects the health and safety of their staff due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Funder Inspections

Commerce is suspending on-site property inspections conducted by Commerce staff until further notice due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

At this time, Commerce does not have a date as to when inspections can resume. When inspections return, Commerce will follow the inspection notification process outlined in the [Housing Trust Fund Handbook](#).

If another funding partner conducted an inspection on behalf of Commerce, please work with that partner to resolve the issues noted in their report (if any). If these partners have issued guidance related to the COVID-19 outbreak, please refer to their advice.

Loan Repayments Due to Commerce

The vast majority of HTF projects do not have hard debt payments. For those projects that have hard debt payments coming due, and if the contractor is encountering financial challenges due to the COVID-19 outbreak, Commerce is happy to review their financial situation and consider loan payment deferrals. To request an application form to amend the terms of your Commerce contract, please email htfportfoliomgmt@commerce.wa.gov.

Emergency/Disaster Waiver for Rental Housing Requirements

Commerce is providing temporary contract waivers to contractors who intend to use vacant units to house individuals affected by COVID-19. These waivers allow a temporary suspension of specific contract requirements, such as population set-asides or household income restrictions.

Waiver information is on the HTF website at <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/building-infrastructure/housing/housing-trust-fund/> (menu on the right).

We Care

Commerce supports the health and safety of everyone and wants to help limit the spread of COVID-19. The goal of this guidance is to help our contractors, property owner representatives and their staff remain safe while performing the duties of their job.

We hope you find this guidance helpful. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jason Davidson at jason.davidson@commerce.wa.gov or TyeRae Guined at tyerae.guined@commerce.wa.gov.