

Frequently Asked Questions

Community Building Code Administration Grant Act of 2007

Q. What is the purpose of a grant program to supporting local building and fire code administration?

- A. The purpose of the Community Building Code Administration Grant Act is to offer local governments a source of funding dedicated to programs to promote effective administration of building and fire codes. A dedicated funding source ensures that applicants applying for these grants are not competing to use scarce resources that are also available for other priorities.

Since this program is designed to be a bottom-up approach, based on local initiative, it responds to the needs unique to each community. Some jurisdictions may be best served by more training and certification of existing employees and better equipping them to perform enforcement functions. Other locations may need funding primarily to establish or increase building code compliance staff.

Q. What can this funding be used for and how many years would a recipient be eligible?

- A. A Community Building Code Administration Grant could be used to increase staffing, provide staff training, improve staff competence and professional qualifications, support individual certification or departmental accreditation, or for capital expenditures specifically dedicated to the administration of the local building code department.

Each year grant proposals are to be evaluated competitively with all other applications for available funding, with individual grants of up to \$1 million. The legislation does not establish a limit on years of eligibility.

Q. Why not use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) or Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding?

- A. There are 26 eligible uses for CDBG, creating considerable competition for funding between local priorities. Areas using this funding for code enforcement must already be “deteriorated or deteriorating.” We propose that communities should be eligible to use funds from the Community Building Code Administration Grant prior to an area becoming blighted.

FEMA does permit HMGP funds to be applied towards support and improvement of building code enforcement efforts. However, an area is only eligible for HMGP funding in the aftermath of a federally declared disaster. The objective of the Community Building Code Administration Grant Act is to more globally provide resources to communities to enhance building code administration.

Q. What is the benefit of the Code Administration Grant Program to the federal government?

- A. Hazard mitigation, through proper code enforcement, has been proven to decrease future disaster relief expenses that are paid for by all American taxpayers. The best evidence regarding fiscal benefit to the federal government is presented by the Multihazard Mitigation Council (MMC) of the National Institute of Building Sciences (2005). The MMC examined several forms of federal spending for state and local disaster mitigation. Its report concluded that, on average, the federal government receives \$3.65 in future benefits from each \$1 spent on programs that increase disaster mitigation.

Q. Would the Community Building Code Administration Grant put the federal government in control of building codes?

- A. No. The Community Building Code Administration Grant Act does not make a change to local and state authority over building and fire codes. This program will create a federal grant program singularly devoted to improving local government operations in building code administration.

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- Q. How much funding should the Community Building Code Administration Grant receive, and for how long should it be authorized?**
- A. The Community Building Code Administration Grant Act authorizes \$100 million per year in grant funding with an initial five year authorization. It is expected that the program will clearly demonstrate its purpose and benefits in this period of initial authorization.
- Q. Who is the Code Council approaching in the private sector to join in support of the Community Building Code Administration Grant?**
- A. The Code Council's Strategic Partners in the built-environment are the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) and the National Multi-Housing Council (NMHC). In addition, the Code Council has a broad range of additional coalition partners, including insurers, laborers, materials and equipment suppliers, engineers, and community planners. *For a full list of organizations who have endorsed the CBCAG, please visit iccsafe.org/code-grant.*
- Q. How does the environment benefit from better code compliance?**
- A. Code compliance improves the quality, durability to hazards, and the energy performance of homes and buildings. Building to code provides a community with peace of mind that local homes, schools, churches, businesses and other buildings are constructed to meet or exceed minimum requirements for quality, safety, fire prevention, and hazard mitigation.
- The Environmental Protection Agency states that "Codes improve air quality by reducing energy consumption in buildings, thereby lowering electricity generation and resulting pollution from power plants." The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy estimates that an average state, using the energy efficiency building requirements, could save about \$650 million in homeowner energy bills over a 30-year period.
- Q. Who is eligible to apply for the Community Building Code Administration Grant? Can local governments afford the matching requirement? How can the matching requirement be waived?**
- A. Local or state governments or subdivisions that have responsibility in administering laws and regulations addressing building safety and fire prevention are eligible. The Community Building Code Administration Grant's is scaled dependent on local conditions, requiring as low as a 5% local match, with allowances for counting in-kind contributions. The Act allows waiver of the local match if a grantee has legally dedicated its building permit receipts to local building code administration. Under the Act HUD may also waive the in-kind contribution under conditions of economic distress.
- Q. Does building enforcement activity supported by the Community Building Code Administration Grant only apply to new construction?**
- A. Though a community's building code administration activities are most significantly focused on new construction, the Community Building Code Administration Grant would support all code administration efforts, including building code inspection and enforcement programs for both new and existing buildings.