

The Wisconsin Department of Commerce proposes an order to amend Comm Table 108.6-1, 108.07 (5), 108.22 (1), and 154.06 (intro.), relating to emergency assistance grants in the community development block grant program, and affecting small businesses.

Rule Summary

1. Statutes Interpreted.

Sections 560.02 (4), 560.04, 560.045, and 560.9809

2. Statutory Authority.

Sections 560.02 (4), 560.04, 560.045, and 560.9809

3. Explanation of Agency Authority.

The Department is the designated agency to administer the federally funded Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program for Wisconsin. These CDBG funds can be used statewide, except in “entitlement” communities that also receive annual CDBG funding directly from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (cities with populations above 50,000 and, with only a few exceptions, Milwaukee, Dane, and Waukesha Counties). Federal regulations require that the Department submit an Annual Plan describing the State’s intended use and distribution of the CDBG funds based on any State regulations and public input. The Wisconsin administrative rules that are authorized by the above statutes set forth the criteria, process, and limitations for distributing CDBG funds.

4. Related Statute or Rule.

The Department has statutes and rules for other programs associated with housing assistance and community development, but none of these programs fund emergency assistance for housing repair or public infrastructure/facility repair or replacement.

5. Plain Language Analysis.

The proposed rules in this order would repeal limits on emergency assistance grants in the CDBG Program. This will enable the Department to (1) use any available CDBG funds for emergency assistance with repairing or replacing public infrastructure and facilities, and with repairing or replacing homes damaged by the severe storms and flooding; and (2) base the award amounts on the scope of the damages and destruction in the community and on the funds available.

6. Summary of, and Comparison With, Existing or Proposed Federal Regulations.

24 CFR 570.483(d) allows the Department to use CDBG funds for activities that address the national objective of meeting an “urgent local need.” The criteria under this objective specify that the funded activities must be designed to alleviate existing conditions

which pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community, and which are of recent origin or recently became urgent. In addition, the Department must determine that the state grant recipient is unable to finance the activity on its own, and that other sources of funding are not available to carry out the activity.

7. Comparison With Rules in Adjacent States.

Michigan

Michigan does not set aside or limit the use of CDBG funds for emergency assistance in either state statute or administrative rule or in their Annual Plan submittal to HUD. In the event of a disaster, Michigan amends their Annual Plan to enable CDBG funds to be used for emergency assistance as needed.

Minnesota

Minnesota does not set aside CDBG funds for emergency assistance in either state statute or administrative rule or in their Annual Plan submittal to HUD. In the event of a disaster, Minnesota amends their Annual Plan to enable CDBG funds to be used for emergency assistance. The Minnesota Small Cities Development Program does have a policy to limit CDBG funding to \$1.4 million per community for each event.

Iowa

Iowa does not set aside or limit the use of CDBG funds for emergency assistance by state statute or administrative rule. The current Iowa Annual Plan sets aside 5 percent of the CDBG annual allocation for emergency assistance. Iowa amends their Annual Plan if additional funds are needed.

Illinois

Illinois does not set aside or limit the use of CDBG funds for emergency assistance in either state statute or administrative rule or in their Annual Plan submittal to HUD. In the event of a disaster, Illinois amends their Annual Plan to enable CDBG funds to be used for emergency assistance as needed.

8. Summary of Factual Data and Analytical Methodologies.

There were no factual data or analytical methodologies used to develop the proposed rules.

9. Analysis and Supporting Documents Used to Determine Effect on Small Business or in Preparation of an Economic Impact Report.

The proposed rules should have a minimal effect on small business. There were no supporting documents used to determine the effect on small business, and an economic impact report was not prepared.

10. Effect on Small Business.

The amended rules are not expected adversely effect small business. Grants to repair or replace public infrastructure and facilities would only have a positive impact.

11. Agency Contact Person.

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12. Place Where Comments Are to Be Submitted, and Deadline for Submission.

Comments on the proposed rules may be submitted by e-mail to srockweiler@commerce.state.wi.us, no later than November 17, 2008. If e-mail submittal is not possible, written comments may be mailed, by the same date, to Sam Rockweiler, Department of Commerce, Division of Environmental and Regulatory Services, P.O. Box 14427, Madison, WI 53708-0427.

File reference: Comm 108 and 154/rules, analysis-e