



Environmental Review Information Sheet: Tiered Reviews January 2008

Background

Most CDBG and HOME-funded activities begin with a clearly defined scope of work in a very specific location. For these activities, the environmental review consists of a straightforward and focused evaluation of conditions at the project site. Certain programs, however, such as the Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) and the Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Program, can involve the execution of activities at scattered sites within a targeted geographic area. Often, grantees cannot immediately identify specific project sites at the beginning of a grant period. A **tiered environmental review** (24 CFR 58.15) allows grantees to streamline the environmental review process for these programs that include repetitive activities at scattered locations.

A tiered environmental review consists of two distinct steps: a general **Tier 1** review, and a site-specific **Tier 2** review. The Tier 1 environmental review involves a broad analysis of relevant, general environmental conditions in a program target area. The Tier 1 review also provides structure for the Tier 2 review by establishing procedures for site-specific environmental compliance. The Tier 2 review focuses on site-specific environmental conditions that cannot be adequately evaluated at the Tier 1 level. The following discussion provides additional information and guidance regarding the tiered environmental review process.

Selecting the Appropriate Level of Review

A tiered environmental review may be used for activities that are Categorically Excluded (24 CFR 58.35), or require an environmental assessment (24 CFR 58.36). To determine the appropriate level of review for these projects, grantees must consider the full range of eligible activities within a program, and then select the highest level of review that will accommodate any proposed work. Quite often, the range of possible actions in Housing and Downtown Revitalization programs requires the preparation of an environmental assessment.

Tier 1 Environmental Review

For each compliance area in the Statutory and Environmental Assessment Checklists in a Tier 1 environmental review, grantees must provide either:

1. a description of general conditions in the target area and a procedure for site-specific compliance;
or
2. a narrative explanation that describes why a compliance area is not relevant to the eligible activities included in the program design.

To determine the relevance of the various compliance areas, consider the scope of eligible activities and their potential relationship with different environmental conditions. No further coordination is required for a compliance area if a program's eligible activities have no potential to affect it. For example, programs restricted exclusively to structural rehabilitation will not affect Endangered Species or Wild and Scenic Rivers. Obviously, the list of relevant compliance areas will be more extensive for new construction activities than structural rehabilitation programs.

Tier 1 Environmental Review (continued)

The size of the target area will often determine the level of detail possible in a Tier 1 review. For example, it is appropriate and worthwhile to include floodplain maps for a neighborhood or city target area; whereas this type of information is not particularly useful in a county-wide analysis. If sufficient detail is not attainable in the Tier 1 review, simply describe a process for Tier 2 compliance. The description should include a summary of any applicable technical research, and a procedure for coordination with regulatory agencies.

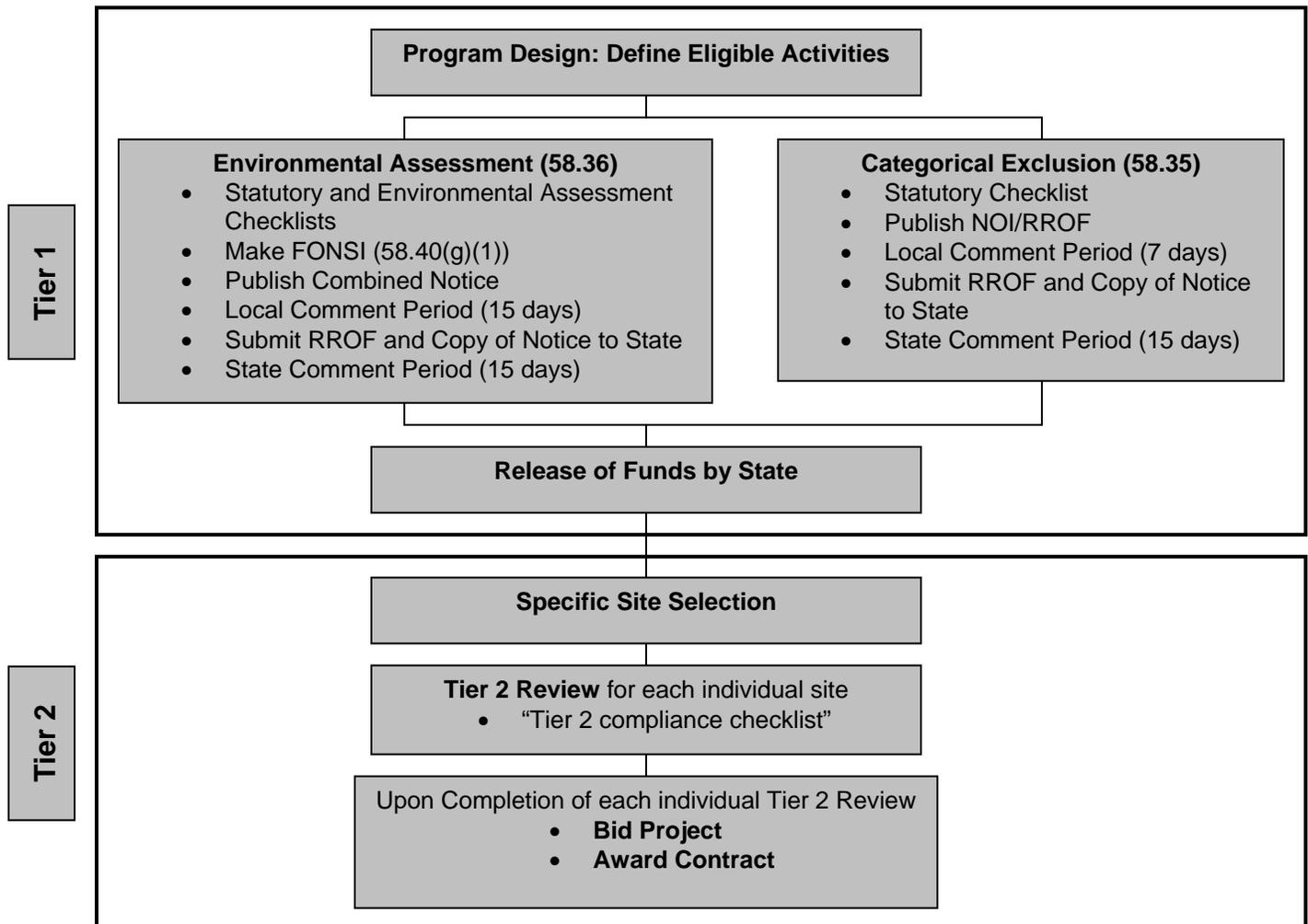
Tier 2 Environmental Review

When specific sites are selected for participation in a program, grantees must revisit the Tier 1 checklist(s) and conduct a focused evaluation of **all** compliance areas that were not adequately addressed during the Tier 1 review. For each site, create a "Tier 2 compliance checklist," and compile all associated correspondence and documentation into a site environmental review record. **Final Design, specifications, or bidding may not begin for a site until all Tier 2 coordination for that site is complete.**

The Release of Funds Process

In a tiered environmental review, grantees publish a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and/or Notice of Intent to Request Release of Funds (NOI/RROF) following the completion of the Tier 1 review. Grantees do not republish these notices or submit additional Request for Release of Funds (RROF) documentation following site-specific Tier 2 reviews. Tier 2 documentation remains in the grantee environmental review file, and is subject to monitoring by the Office of Community Development. Failure to comply may result in the loss of project funding.

Abbreviated Tiered Review Flowchart



Please contact Tim Allen or Cecilia Castillo, Environmental Specialists at OCD, at (614) 466-2285 with any questions regarding Environmental Review.