



Homes and
Community Renewal

Housing
Trust Fund
Corporation

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Governor

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Office of the State Comptroller
110 State Street
Albany, NY 12236

Re: Housing Trust Fund Corporation: Oversight of the Residential Emergency Services to Offer Home Repairs to the Elderly Program (2022-F-18)

This letter is in response to the Office of the State Comptroller's ("OSC") follow-up review of its prior audit of HTFC's *Oversight of Residential Emergency Services to Offer Home Repairs to the Elderly ("RESTORE") Program (2020-S-4)* dated July 2021.

HCR has administered the RESTORE Program for over twenty years, successfully providing financial resources to assist senior citizen homeowners with the cost of addressing emergencies and code violations that pose a threat to their health and safety or affect the livability of their home. HCR continually strives to improve policies, procedures, and processes to ensure the fair and effective delivery of resources. We valued the opportunity to work with OSC's auditors in this regard.

Recommendation 1 – *Develop objective scoring guidelines to promote consistency and transparency in scoring and selecting LPA applications.*

OSC Status Determination – Partially Implemented

HCR Response – HCR appreciates that OSC recognizes the significant updates and improvements made to the application review and scoring process since the beginning of the RESTORE audit in 2020. While the program area will always consider options for improvement, the application review and scoring process in use at this time is consistent, transparent and results in the selection of high-quality applications and program administrators. Scoring for a program of this nature inherently requires a measure of subjectivity. Specifically, evaluation of applicant experience and administrative capacity requires consideration by experienced program staff reviewers. Detailed instructions and materials are developed to guide reviewers and ensure consistency.

Recommendation 2 – *Maintain clear, contemporaneous documentation (e.g., supporting scores, including deductions) during the LPA application scoring process.*

OSC Status Determination – Partially Implemented

HCR Response – HCR appreciates that OSC recognizes that clear documentation is maintained to support scoring deductions. A revised Scoring Guide was developed to ensure consistency in scoring. By strengthening

the standardized narrative that supports scoring decisions, the Scoring Guide has reduced the need for subjective comments by reviewers. While all scores and comments are consistently entered into an Access Scoring Database, we understand that record keeping could be further improved by the inclusion of additional notes to support overall scores and we will strive to continue to implement improvements.

Recommendation 3 – *Identify LPAs that have shown they are unable to use awarded RESTORE funds within the contracted period and provide timely assistance.*

OSC Status Determination – Implemented

HCR Response – HCR agrees this recommendation has been implemented and will continue to assist Local Program Administrators with expiring Grant Agreements to encourage timely completion of program activities and requests for extensions due to extenuating circumstances.

Recommendation 4 – *Increase monitoring of LPAs for RESTORE program compliance and establish a process for LPAs to consistently track compliance with program requirements, including timeline, bidding, and PMD provisions.*

OSC Status Determination – Implemented

HCR Response – HCR agrees this recommendation has been implemented and will continue regular monitoring efforts to support compliance with program requirements.

Recommendation 5 – *Increase outreach and support to LPAs in counties that have not applied for or did not receive RESTORE program awards.*

OSC Status Determination – Implemented

HCR Response – HCR agrees this recommendation has been implemented and will continue efforts to encourage new LPA applicants and to support the geographic distribution of coveted program resources.


Recommendation 6 – *Improve timeliness of awarding RESTORE program funds to LPAs.*

OSC Status Determination – Implemented

HCR Response – HCR agrees this recommendation has been implemented and will continue to award funds timely to ensure resources expeditiously reach seniors in need of emergency home repairs.

Please contact Sean Fitzgerald, Audit Coordinator, at (518) 894-5050 if you have any questions or require anything further.

Sincerely,



Crystal Loffler
President, Office of Community Renewal

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