



**Administrative and Policy Proposals for consideration by the
Biden-Harris Administration
November 2020**

The [Council of State Community Development Agencies](#) (COSCDA) is a national association dedicated to advancing state actions on community development, homelessness, affordable housing, disaster recovery, and economic development. COSCDA members administer programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Office of Community Planning and Development.

COSCDA welcomes proposals highlighted in the [Biden Housing Priorities](#) with its emphasis on expanding access to housing and reinvesting in communities. Our organization is updating its advocacy priorities which further details the following recommendations, and will be shared with the transition team once completed.

In the aftermath of the ongoing pandemic, robust investment will be key to meeting community-based needs and aiding vulnerable populations. Additionally, policies which efficiently deliver federal assistance will be essential to COVID-19 recovery efforts. A comprehensive response is necessary at this time to address large-scale gaps in our nation's infrastructure, housing, and related areas. COSCDA endorses the following goals through HUD CPD programs to improve social and economic conditions, and promote long-term change in distressed communities.

- 1) **Local infrastructure is critically deficient preventing long-term economic recovery and growth in many communities.** Basic public infrastructure across the nation has been underfunded for years. Roads, utilities, and public facilities are key to maintaining safe neighborhoods and creating opportunities for business attraction and expansion. While federal programs such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) have promoted these type of developments, the level of need has consistently outweighed available resources. Further investment is necessary to build and restore essential networks and services. **COSCDA strongly encourages new investment in CDBG which responds to local infrastructure needs and dedicates resources to projects with lasting impact.**
- 2) **Costs have increased for low-income and working class families largely due to housing expenses while affordable places to live remain limited or non-existent.** Despite pre-pandemic labor and business growth, basic living costs have outpaced incomes especially for those on the lowest tier of the economic ladder. Housing-related expenses are making up a bigger share of household budgets. Quality housing at affordable prices has also been out of reach or unavailable in many jurisdictions – larger, urban settings as well as rural communities. Programs such as the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) and Housing Trust Fund (HTF) support preservation and development of affordable housing. However, the demand for units has far outweighed

available resources for affordable housing. Additionally, services aimed at reducing and ending homelessness share a similar dilemma remaining insufficient to aid this segment of the population. **Housing is a basic need and without significant federal investment in programs such as HOME and HTF, communities will remain ill-equipped to promote quality places to live. Current funding fails to meet the demand for affordable housing. COSCDA recommends robust resources to reinforce these important programs. Likewise, additional investment in the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program would bolster assistance for families and individuals experiencing homelessness.**

- 3) **Certain program rules and procedures increase time and costs while deterring qualified contractors to bid on projects.** Oversight and accountability is a priority in spending federal dollars to meet program goals. Administrative standards exist though which mean little to ensuring funds are dedicated as intended. These processes and rules result in extended timelines and higher costs associated with project development and service delivery. **COSCD A recommends a thorough review of HUD programs especially CDBG, HOME, and HTF to reveal how accountability can be achieved while increasing impact and efficiency of federal investments.**
- 4) **Administrative support is inadequate and inconsistencies exist in HUD program guidance.** Shortened capacity and diminished resources have lessened HUD's ability to support grantees and program delivery. A reduced agency has also led to varying levels of assistance across regional field offices. In turn, program rules are therefore interpreted and applied differently as well. **We propose improvements at HUD through renewed capacity, resources, and staff training.**

For more information on our organization, please visit www.coscda.org. If you have any questions regarding our recommendations and priorities, please feel free to contact Josh Shumaker, Director of Advocacy and Federal Programs at jshumaker@coscda.org.