



November 4, 2025

Bryan Horn
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Community Planning and Development
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Deputy Assistant Secretary Horn,

The Council of State Community Development Agencies (COSCDA) writes to request additional guidance on the implementation of Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) requirements for HUD grantees. COSCDA represents state agencies that administer HUD grants at the state level, including Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), CDBG-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR), the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and Homeless Assistance Grants.

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) grant agreements for many of these programs included Addendum 1: Policy Requirements. One of the policy requirements reads as follows:

“The Recipient must use SAVE, or an equivalent verification system approved by the Federal government, to prevent any Federal public benefit from being provided to an ineligible alien who entered the United States illegally or is otherwise unlawfully present in the United States.”

Many HUD grant recipients are ready and willing to implement this new policy requirement, but more guidance is needed to ensure successful implementation.

Defining Federal Public Benefit

HUD programs generally document meeting HUD eligibility by collecting information about beneficiaries served. The HUD program definitions of beneficiaries are not synonymous with “Federal public benefit” as defined in 8 USC Chapter 14, from Title 8 – Aliens and Nationality §1601. Statements of national policy concerning welfare and immigration:

- 1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), for purposes of this chapter the term “Federal public benefit” means –
 - A) Any grant, contract, loan, professional license, or commercial license provided by an agency of the United States or by appropriated funds of the United States;
and

- B) Any retirement, welfare, health, disability, public or assisted housing, postsecondary education, food assistance, unemployment benefit, or any other similar benefit for which payments or assistance are provided to an individual, household, or family eligibility unit by an agency of the United States or by appropriated funds of the United States.

As such, a clear understanding of how HUD grantees should interpret “Federal public benefit” in the context of HUD funded projects and programs is critical.

Using SAVE with CDBG and Disaster Recovery Projects

COSCEA’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grantees are unsure how to use SAVE to verify the immigration status of everyone who benefits from CDBG projects. For example, under the Low- and Moderate-Income National Objective, CDBG can support “area benefit” projects such as street improvements, water and sewer lines, and community facilities. If the understanding is that service area beneficiaries are not receiving “Federal public benefits” as defined in 8 USC Chapter 14, Title 8, then SAVE verification would never apply to many HUD-funded CDBG projects.

Please confirm that HUD does not expect grantees to verify the immigration status of everyone in a community who could possibly benefit from a public facility project. Eligibility categories of such projects should include area benefit, elimination of slum and blight (area basis and spot basis) and any other projects with a similar scope. SAVE verification for these projects would be extremely burdensome, if not impossible, and lead to fewer infrastructure improvements for citizens.

CDBG-DR grantees also complete certain large-scale, “area benefit” infrastructure projects to aid communities recovering from natural disasters. **COSCEA also recommends exempting CDBG-DR public facilities projects from SAVE requirements and studying whether the addition of SAVE verification leads to delays in the provision of disaster assistance.**

Using SAVE with Multifamily Housing and Homelessness Assistance

Again, the new policy requirement in HUD’s grant agreement is in place to “to prevent any Federal public benefit from being provided to an ineligible alien.” For the HOME, HTF, and some CDBG-DR programs, it is not clear how HUD would define the *recipient* of these benefits and how far the benefits extend. Specifically,

1. HOME, HTF, and some CDBG-DR grants are provided to governments and private developers for the purpose of building and preserving affordable housing. Is the recipient of the public benefit defined as the developer in these instances, or the individuals living in the housing units?
2. If the recipient of the public benefit is defined as the individual(s) living in the housing units, is there a period during which grantees must continue verifying the immigration status of those individuals? Only during the initial lease-up process? Once per year?

Please consider that from an implementation standpoint, the grantee is not the entity responsible for verifying household income and eligibility.

COSCD A urges HUD to engage in further conversations with HOME and HTF grantees who develop multifamily housing to ensure clear guidance for SAVE verification for such projects.

The new SAVE requirement also applies to Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) grantees, who provide homelessness assistance in the form of emergency shelter, rapid-rehousing, and other models. Homeless individuals often do not have access to formal documents proving their identity and immigration status, such as Social Security cards. President Trump’s recent executive order, *Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets*, directs government entities to move unsheltered homeless populations off the streets¹. Given the severity of homelessness in the United States, **COSCD A urges HUD to provide more guidance on how to use SAVE to verify the immigration of homeless individuals who may not have access to their documentation.** HUD should also direct homeless service providers, states, and local governments on how to provide shelter to individuals who cannot be verified through SAVE.

Gaining Access to SAVE and Equivalent Verification Systems

State grantees are already working to gain access to SAVE. The system is designed for “registered federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local government agencies” to verify immigration status². COSCD A members report that, in some cases, it has taken several months to gain access to SAVE and appropriately train their staff to use the system. **HUD should work with the Department of Homeland Security to provide step-by-step instructions for accessing SAVE and ensure there is adequate training available.**

HUD’s FY25 grant agreements require the use of “SAVE, or an equivalent verification system approved by the Federal government.” It would be helpful to have an alternative, simpler verification option—such as REAL ID—to use while grantees are gaining access to SAVE. For reference, minimum requirements for verification³ under the SAVE system include:

- First and last name;
- Date of birth; and
- At least one unique identifier such as:
 - USCIS/Alien Registration number (A-number)
 - Form 1-94, Arrival/Departure Record number
 - Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) ID number
 - Naturalization/Citizenship Certificate number
 - Card Number/I-797 Receipt number
 - Social Security number (for initial verification only)

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/07/ending-crime-and-disorder-on-americas-streets/>

² <https://www.uscis.gov/save>

³ <https://www.uscis.gov/save/about-save/save-verification-process>

COSCD A urges HUD to identify “equivalent verification systems” approved by the Federal government. For example, clarify whether a REAL ID is sufficient to verify immigration status.

Acquiring a REAL ID requires⁴:

- Proof of Identity: U.S. birth certificate, U.S. passport, or Permanent Resident Card (Green Card).
- Proof of a Social Security number: Social Security card, form W-2, or a pay stub.
- Proof of Residency: Deed, mortgage statement, lease agreement, utility bill, bank statement, etc.

Clarifying Nonprofit Exemption through PRWORA

In a June letter to COSCDA and the National Community Development Association (NCDA)⁵, HUD advised grantees that “unless excepted by PRWORA, the Grantee must use SAVE, or an equivalent verification system...” to verify immigration status. PRWORA exempts certain nonprofit organizations from such verification requirements. HUD grantees—especially state CDBG and HOME grantees—often work with nonprofit subrecipients. **COSCD A urges HUD to outline under which circumstances nonprofit sub-recipients of HUD grants would be legally required to perform SAVE verifications.**

Thank you for considering our request for additional guidance. COSCDA members look forward to receiving guidance that will help them understand SAVE and other new requirements. Please feel free to reach out to Tess Hembree (thembree@coscda.org), COSCDA’s Executive Director, for further communication.

Sincerely,



Tess Hembree

Executive Director, COSCDA

⁴ <https://www.usa.gov/real-id>

⁵ <https://coscda.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/6-5-2025-HUD-Response-to-COSCD A-NCDA.pdf>