



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-8000

OFFICE OF HOUSING

Ms. Rita Young
OMB Policy Analyst
Office of Management and Budget
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
New Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20503

RE: Request for emergency PRA review for new OMB Collection: *FHA Catalyst*

Dear Ms. Young:

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Multifamily Housing Programs (MFH) is seeking an emergency review of the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) requirements for the *FHA Catalyst*: Multifamily Application Portal ("*FHA Catalyst*"). *FHA Catalyst* is a new IT solution that has been developed to provide FHA multifamily lenders with a web-based portal so they may begin submitting applications for FHA mortgage insurance to HUD electronically. Applications were previously submitted to HUD offices in paper and USB format through the mail, but this is no longer an option due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Now, lenders are submitting applications using various web-based applications, including SharePoint and Dropbox, which are not approved for use by HUD's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO). *FHA Catalyst* will provide an immediate and secure platform for online application submissions that will be used for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

In compliance with the requirements of 5 CFR 1320.13, this letter requests emergency processing within 14 days from the date of publication of the Federal Register Notice. This emergency processing is essential to quickly deploy *FHA Catalyst* to address this urgent need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Deployment of the portal will be delayed by adherence to the normal process for clearance of new collections of information, so MFH respectfully requests a 14-day PRA emergency approval.

FHA Catalyst will allow FHA multifamily lenders to submit applications for FHA mortgage insurance and related documents through a web-based portal, and MFH staff will be able to receive and download the documents from the portal. *FHA Catalyst* is instrumental in HUD's effort to modernize FHA's IT systems and comply with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-19-21, which mandates that all records be created, retained, and managed in electronic formats and requires a transition of all permanent and temporary records to electronic format by December 31, 2022. *FHA Catalyst* will provide MFH with a much-needed IT solution for electronic document submission and records retention.

MFH worked closely with a committee of representatives of FHA multifamily lenders during the development of *FHA Catalyst* to minimize the burden of the collection of information and make the system as simple and efficient as possible. FHA multifamily lenders are very

supportive of the portal as it will reduce the burden associated with submitting applications and related documents via mail. *FHA Catalyst* will bring MFH's operations into compliance with the OMB mandate and in-line with those systems of other multifamily lending institutions.

If PRA approval cannot be obtained expeditiously and MFH is unable to release *FHA Catalyst* to the public soon, lenders will be forced to continue to submit applications through various other electronic means in violation of OCIO policy. Delays would significantly hinder MFH's ability to comply with OMB Memorandum M-19-21 and would interfere with HUD's attempts to modernize its FHA IT platforms. Therefore, MFH respectfully requests a 14-day PRA emergency approval to successfully operationalize *FHA Catalyst*.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact Scott Greuel, Director, Program Administration Division, Multifamily Production (202-402-5346) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

C. Lamar Seats
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Multifamily Housing Programs

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