

# PROGRAM GUIDANCE

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**PROGRAM:** Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG)

**FOR:** All Tribal Government Leaders and Tribally Designated Housing Entities

*RJB*

**FROM:** Rodger J. Boyd, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native American Programs, PN

**TOPIC:** Calculating Annual Income for Purposes of Eligibility under NAHASDA

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**Purpose:** This guidance provides instructions to IHBG recipients on how to calculate annual income under the IHBG program for the purpose of program eligibility. It covers the three definitions of annual income that recipients may adopt in their policies. It includes an updated list of Federally Mandated Exclusions from annual income, and provides guidance on how to treat certain payments received by individuals pursuant to the recent settlement in the case entitled *Elouise Cobell et al. v. Ken Salazar et al. (Cobell Settlement)*, and a number of other Tribal Trust settlements. This Program Guidance replaces Program Guidance 1999-02.

**Background:** Housing assistance under the IHBG program is generally limited to low-income Indian families. A low-income family is defined in the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA) as a family whose income does not exceed 80 percent of area median income or the national median income whichever is higher. In order to determine whether a family is eligible to receive assistance under the IHBG program, recipients must first determine a family's annual income.

**Calculating Annual Income:** To calculate a family's annual income for purposes of IHBG eligibility, a recipient should follow these steps:

**Step 1: Adopt a Definition in Policies** – A recipient must indicate in its written policies that govern the eligibility, admission, and occupancy of families for IHBG assistance, the definition(s) of annual income it will use. The IHBG regulations at 24 CFR §1000.10 provide recipients with the option to choose any one of the following three definitions of “annual income”:

1. Section 8 Limits. Annual Income as defined for HUD's Section 8 programs in 24 CFR part 5, subpart F (except when determining the income of a homebuyer for an owner-occupied rehabilitation project, the value of the homeowner's principal residence may be excluded from the calculation of net family assets). **Attachment A** contains the Section 8 definition of annual income.
2. Census Definition. Annual income as reported under the U.S. Census long form for the most recent available decennial Census. This means the definition of income used by the Census, not the dollar amount reported. **Attachment B** contains the Census definition.
3. IRS Definition. Adjusted gross income as defined for purposes of reporting under Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 1040 series for individual Federal annual income tax purposes. Recipients should review the program participant's appropriate past IRS Form 1040s to obtain this information. On the 1040 Form (in 2012), this is line 37. On the 1040A Form, this is line 21. On the 1040EZ Form, this is line 4. Payments received under the *Cobell* Settlement are not included in that individual's adjusted gross income. **Attachment C** contains additional information on what is included and excluded in adjusted gross income on IRS Form 1040.

The recipient does not need to limit its definition to only one of the three outlined in this guidance. For example, the policy may state that the tribe or tribally designated housing entity (TDHE) will use the definition most advantageous to the family or to the housing entity.

**Step 2: NAHASDA Exclusions** – Section 4 (9) of NAHASDA defines the term “income” as income from all sources of each member of the household as determined in accordance with criteria prescribed by HUD, except that the following amounts may not be considered as income:

1. Any amounts not actually received by the family.
2. Any amounts that would be eligible for exclusion under Section 1613(a)(7) of the Social Security Act. This relates to certain amounts received from the United States that are attributable to underpayments of benefits due for one or more prior months under the Social Security Act.
3. Any amounts received by any member of the family as disability compensation under Chapter 11 of Title 38, United States Code, or dependency and indemnity compensation under chapter 13 of such title. This relates to amounts received from the Department of Veterans Affairs by a family for service-related disabilities of a member of the family, and survivor benefits. (See PIH Notice 2011-15).
4. Exclude any payments that are expressly excluded from annual income under these NAHASDA exclusions.

**Step 3: Federally Mandated Exclusions** – Federally mandated exclusions are amounts specifically excluded under other Federal statutes from consideration as income for purposes of determining eligibility or benefits under a category of assistance programs that includes assistance under NAHASDA. HUD periodically publishes a notice in the *Federal Register* identifying the benefits that qualify for this exclusion. The most recent notice was published on December 14, 2012, and can be found in the *Federal Register* at 77 FR 74495. The most common Federally Mandated Exclusions are also included in this Guidance in **Attachment D**.

***Per Capita Payments and Recent Trust Case Settlements:***

Generally, *per capita* payments that are not derived from interests held in trust or restricted lands are included in a family's annual income. For instance, if a tribal member receives the Form 1099-Misc, Miscellaneous Income, from a tribe for reporting Indian gaming profits, this payment must be included as annual income as defined by HUD's Section 8 Program, the Census, and the IRS Form 1040. However, certain *per capita* payments under several recent Tribal Trust settlements may be excluded from annual income under the IHBG program as explained below.

*Cobell Settlement:*

The Federally Mandated Exclusions include lump sum or periodic payments received by an individual Indian in the case entitled *Elouise Cobell et al. v. Ken Salazar et al.* These *Cobell* Settlement payments are statutorily excluded pursuant to the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 (Pub. L. 111–291). This exclusion will apply for a period of one year after receipt of payment. Once a payment is received, that payment is not counted as income or as a resource for a period of one year from the time of receipt of that payment. The exemption attaches to the payment and applies for a one year period from that payment. Payments may not be counted as a part of an individual's income for purposes of determining initial eligibility, ongoing eligibility, or level of IHBG assistance.

*Other Tribal Trust Cases:*

In addition to the *Cobell* Settlement, the United States recently entered into settlement agreements with a number of federally recognized Indian tribes, settling litigation in which the tribes alleged that the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Treasury mismanaged monetary assets and natural resources the United States holds in trust for the benefit of the tribes. In some circumstances, proceeds from these settlements have resulted, or will result in, *per capita* payments being provided to Indian families.

On January 14, 2013, the Internal Revenue Service issued IRS Notice 2013-1, which is available at: [http://www.irs.gov/irb/2013-03\\_IRB/ar08.html](http://www.irs.gov/irb/2013-03_IRB/ar08.html), and is entitled "Per Capita Payments from Proceeds of Settlements of Indian Tribal Trust Cases." The Notice clarifies that, under 25 U.S.C. § 117b(a), *per capita* payments made from the proceeds of an agreement between the United States and an Indian tribe settling the tribe's claims that the United States mismanaged monetary assets and natural resources held in trust for the benefit of the tribe by the Secretary of the Interior are excluded from the gross income of the members of the tribe receiving the *per capita* payments. Therefore, IHBG recipients that adopt the IRS Form 1040 definition of annual income should exclude *per capita* payments from these settlements from a family's annual income. This IRS Notice provides some additional limitations. For instance, *per capita* payments that exceed

the amount of the Tribal Trust case settlement proceeds and that are made from an Indian tribe's private bank account in which the tribe has deposited the settlement proceeds, are included in the gross income of the members of the tribe receiving the *per capita* payments. This IRS Notice also provides guidance concerning the federal income tax treatment of per capita payments that members of Indian tribes receive from proceeds of certain settlements of tribal trust cases between the United States and those Indian tribes.

IHBG recipients that choose to adopt a definition of annual income other than the IRS Form 1040 definition should note that *per capita* payments received from these Tribal Trust settlements may also be excluded if they fall under an exclusion in either the Section 8 definition of annual income, or the Census definition. For example, nonrecurring *per capita* payments made to tribal members may in some instances qualify as "temporary, nonrecurring or sporadic income" that is excluded under the Section 8 definition of annual income. A payment may also be excluded as one time lump-sum payment under the Census definition.

**Step 4: Income Verification:** The IHBG regulations at 24 CFR § 1000.128 require the recipient to verify that a family is income eligible based on anticipated annual income. The family's annual income may not exceed the applicable income limit. The family is required to provide income documentation to verify this determination. The recipient must have income verification policies in place and is required to maintain the documentation on which the determination of eligibility is based. The recipient may also require a family to periodically verify its income in order to determine housing payments or continued occupancy consistent with locally adopted policies. The recipient may choose to use third party income verification methods or request documentation such as income tax returns, W-2s, pay stubs, and other appropriate information as stipulated by their policies to adequately estimate annual income.

**Questions:** If you have any questions regarding the calculation of annual income for applicants and participants, please contact your local Area Office of Native American Programs.

Attachments