

FAQ's on Section 3 regarding Bidding and Contracting Requirements

1. What is Section 3?

Section 3 is a provision of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. The purpose of Section 3 is to ensure that employment and other economic opportunities generated by certain HUD financial assistance shall, to the greatest extent feasible, and consistent with existing Federal, State, and local laws and regulations, be directed to low- and very low-income persons, particularly those who are recipients of government assistance for housing, and to business concerns which provide economic opportunities to low- and very low-income persons.

- How do I obtain more information outside of this document?

Please see the following websites for additional information.

<https://ded2.mo.gov/cdbg/reporting/section-3>

<https://www.hud.gov/section3>

To Register your business as a Section 3 Business, you will self- certify at the following web address:

<https://portalapps.hud.gov/Sec3BusReg/BRegistry/>

To search for self-certified Section 3 contractors and subcontractors to directly solicit:

<http://www.hud.gov/Sec3Biz>

To search for and register for Section 3 contracting and job opportunities, use the Section 3 Opportunity Portal to match Section 3 Residents to jobs and training opportunities and Section 3 Businesses to contracting opportunities.

<https://hudapps.hud.gov/OpportunityPortal/>

2. What Do “Best Efforts” and “to the Greatest Extent Feasible” Mean?

“Best efforts” and “greatest extent feasible” are statutory terms, used in the statute in different contexts. As such, HUD uses both terms to track compliance, and there are many ways to interpret the language. Traditionally, HUD has used the terms interchangeably, as referenced in the statute, and will continue to be consistent with the statutory language. *See* 12 U.S.C. 1701u(b)-(d). These terms are integral to the statutory intent and provide flexibility, rather than administrative burden, to grantees or recipients of HUD funding.

HUD acknowledges that some perceive “best efforts” to be the more rigorous standard, while others perceive “greatest extent feasible” to be the more rigorous standard. HUD has determined not to define the difference between these two terms but rather to increase the emphasis on outcomes as a result of these efforts. A recipient’s reported results will be compared to the outcome metrics defined

in the benchmark notice. HUD program staff will evaluate the level of effort expended by those recipients that fail to meet the benchmark safe harbor, and thus will ensure that the statutory terms are being properly enforced. HUD included a list of examples in the regulation at 24 CFR §§ 75.15 and 75.25, including engagement in outreach efforts to generate job applicants who are Targeted Section 3 workers, providing training or apprenticeship opportunities, and providing technical assistance to help Section 3 workers compete for jobs (e.g., resume assistance, coaching).

3. What Does “Section 3 Worker” Mean?

A Section 3 worker is any worker who currently fits, or when hired **within the past five years** fit, at least one of the following categories, as documented:

1. The worker’s income for the previous or annualized calendar year is below the income limit established by HUD (see Question 6 of this part I of these FAQs, below);
2. The worker is employed by a Section 3 business concern (see Question 5 of part I, below); or
3. The worker is a YouthBuild participant.

4. What Does “Targeted Section 3 Worker” Mean?

A Section 3 targeted worker for Public Housing Financial Assistance projects is a Section 3 worker who:

- (1) is employed by a Section 3 business concern; or
- (2) currently fits or when hired fit at least one of the following categories, as documented within the past five years:
 - (i) A resident of public housing or Section 8-assisted housing;
 - (ii) A resident of other public housing projects or Section 8-assisted housing managed by the PHA that is providing the assistance; or
 - (iii) A YouthBuild participant.

A Section 3 targeted worker for Housing and Community Development Financial Assistance projects is a Section 3 worker who:

- (1) is employed by a Section 3 business concern; or
- (2) currently fits or when hired fit at least one of the following categories, as documented within the past five years:
 - (i) Living within the service area or the neighborhood of the project, as defined in 24 CFR § 75.5; or
 - (ii) A YouthBuild participant.

5. What Does “Section 3 Business Concern” mean?

A Section 3 business concern is a business that meets at least one of the following criteria, documented within the last six-month period:

1. At least 51 percent owned and controlled by low- or very low-income persons;
2. Over 75 percent of the labor hours performed for the business over the prior three-month period are performed by Section 3 workers; or
3. A business at least 51 percent owned and controlled by current public housing residents or residents who currently live in Section 8-assisted housing.

- **How are low-income and very low-income determined?**

Low- and very low-income limits are defined in Section 3(b)(2) of the Housing Act of 1937 and are determined annually by HUD. These limits are typically established at 80 percent and 50 percent of the area median individual income. HUD income limits may be obtained from:

<https://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html>.

6. As a funding recipient, what are my Section 3 reporting goals?

Your Section 3 reporting goals depend on the type of assistance you are receiving, whether public housing financial assistance or housing and community development financial assistance.

For public housing financial assistance, the benchmark for Section 3 workers is set at *25 percent* or more of the total number of labor hours worked by all workers employed with public housing financial assistance in the PHA's or other recipient's fiscal year. The benchmark for Targeted Section 3 workers is set at *5 percent* or more of the total number of labor hours worked by all workers employed with public housing financial assistance in the PHA's or other recipient's fiscal year. This means that the *5 percent* is included as part of the *25 percent* threshold.

For housing and community development financial assistance projects, the benchmark for Section 3 workers is set at *25 percent* or more of the total number of labor hours worked by all workers on a Section 3 project. The benchmark for Targeted Section 3 workers is set at *5 percent* or more of the total number of labor hours worked by all workers on a Section 3 project. This means that the *5 percent* is included as part of the *25 percent* threshold.

Reporting table that will be required:

	Labor Hours of Project	Calculated Percentage	Safe Harbor Benchmark Met
Total Labor Hours			
Section 3 Target Worker Hours			
Section 3 Worker Hours			

HUD sought to tie Section 3 reporting requirements to statutory requirements while also aligning it as close as possible with standard business practices in that most recipients, subrecipients, contractors, and subcontractors already track labor hours in their payroll systems.

For those employers who do not track labor hours in detail through a time-and-attendance system, HUD does not require they acquire such a system. Instead, they may provide a good faith assessment of the labor hours for a full-or part-time employee.

7. What is a “Service Area” or “Neighborhood of the project”?

“Service area” or the “neighborhood of the project” means an area within one mile of the Section 3 project or, if fewer than 5,000 people live within one mile of a Section 3 project, within a circle centered on the Section 3 project that is sufficient to encompass a population of 5,000 people according to the most recent U.S. Census.

8. What if my agency does not meet all benchmark goals for employment or contracting?

If reporting indicates that the agency has not met the Section 3 benchmarks, the agency must report in a method prescribed by HUD program offices on the qualitative nature of its activities and those its contractors and subcontractors pursued per 24 CFR § 75.15(b) and § 75.25(b).

Such qualitative efforts may, for example, include but are not limited to the following:

- Engaged in outreach efforts to generate job applicants who are Targeted Section 3 workers.
- Provided training or apprenticeship opportunities.
- Provided technical assistance to help Section 3 workers compete for jobs (e.g., resume assistance, coaching).
- Provided or connected Section 3 workers with assistance in seeking employment including: drafting resumes, preparing for interviews, and finding job opportunities connecting residents to job placement services.
- Held one or more job fairs.
- Provided or referred Section 3 workers to services supporting work readiness and retention (e.g., work readiness activities, interview clothing, test fees, transportation, and childcare).
- Provided assistance to apply for/or attend community college, a four-year educational institution, or vocational/technical training.
- Assisted Section 3 workers to obtain financial literacy training and/or coaching.
- Engaged in outreach efforts to identify and secure bids from Section 3 business concerns.
- Provided technical assistance to help Section 3 business concerns understand and bid on contracts.
- Divided contracts into smaller jobs to facilitate participation by Section 3 business concerns.
- Provided bonding assistance, guaranties, or other efforts to support viable bids from Section 3 business concerns.
- Promoted use of business registries designed to create opportunities for disadvantaged and small businesses.
- Outreach, engagement, or referrals with the state one-stop system as defined in Section 121(e)(2) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- Promote Use of Section 3 Business Registry and HUD Opportunity Portal

9. My agency has met all benchmark goals for employment and contracting, does this mean that we are considered in compliance with Section 3?

Yes. Recipients will be considered to have complied with Section 3 requirements, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, if they meet all benchmark goals and certify compliance with prioritization requirements found in 24 CFR § 75.9 or §75.19. However, if subsequent HUD enforcement activities reveal that the recipient has failed to comply with the recipient responsibilities set forth at 24 CFR §75.13 or §75.23, **this compliance determination may be rescinded.**

10. What recordkeeping responsibilities do contractors/subcontractors have?

Recordkeeping requirements for recipients are found at 24 CFR § 75.31. Recipients are required to maintain documentation to demonstrate compliance with the regulations and are responsible for requiring their contractors/subcontractors to maintain or provide any documentation that will assist recipients in demonstrating compliance, including documentation that shows hours worked by Section 3 workers, Targeted Section 3 workers, and any qualitative efforts to comply with Section 3. Examples of documentation can be found in 24 CFR §75.31.

11. What are good strategies for targeting Section 3 workers and businesses?

In order to successfully target Section 3 workers and businesses for employment and contracting opportunities, recipients must establish and maintain an effective Section 3 program. HUD has found that hiring a Section 3 coordinator or assigning one individual the responsibility of coordinating all Section 3 related activities is instrumental in reaching Section 3's employment and contracting goals.

It is recommended that recipient agencies establish procedures to certify Section 3 workers and Section 3 business concerns for employment and contracting opportunities. Thereafter, they should maintain a list of eligible workers and businesses by skill, capacity or interest and contact them on a periodic basis when employment and contracting opportunities are available. Refer to the Section 3 regulations at 24 CFR § 75.15(b) and § 75.25(b) for a listing of qualitative efforts.

12. Are Section 3 workers or business concerns guaranteed employment or contracting opportunities under Section 3?

Section 3 is not an entitlement program; therefore, employment and contracts are not guaranteed. Low- and very low-income individuals and Section 3 business concerns must be able to demonstrate that they have the ability or capacity to perform the specific job or successfully complete the contract that they are seeking.

13. How can a prospective Section 3 worker or business concern certify that they meet the eligibility requirements?

The individual or business must contact the agency or developer from which they are seeking employment or contracting opportunities (e.g., the PHA, city, or local government). They should identify themselves as a Section 3 worker, Targeted Section 3 worker, or Section 3 business concern and provide whatever documentation is required.

14. What documentation must be maintained by HUD recipients, subrecipients, contractors, and/or subcontractors certifying that low- and very-low individuals and business concerns meet the regulatory definitions under Section 3?

There are many ways that a worker can be certified as either a Section 3 Worker or Targeted Section 3 Worker under 24 CFR part 75:

For a worker to qualify as a *Section 3 worker*, one of the following must be maintained:

- a. A worker's self-certification that their income is below the income limit from the prior calendar year;
- b. A worker's self-certification of participation in a means-tested program such as public housing or Section 8-assisted housing;
- c. Certification from a PHA, or the owner or property manager of project-based Section 8-assisted housing, or the administrator of tenant-based Section 8-assisted housing that the worker is a participant in one of their programs;
- d. An employer's certification that the worker's income from that employer is below the income limit when based on an employer's calculation of what the worker's wage rate would translate to if annualized on a full-time basis; or
- e. An employer's certification that the worker is employed by a Section 3 business concern.

(2) For a worker to qualify as a *Targeted Section 3 worker*, one of the following must be maintained:

For Public Housing Financial Assistance projects:

- (i) A worker's self-certification of participation in public housing or Section 8-assisted housing programs;
- (ii) Certification from a PHA, or the owner or property manager of project-based Section 8-assisted housing, or the administrator of tenant-based Section 8-assisted housing that the worker is a participant in one of their programs;
- (iii) An employer's certification that the worker is employed by a Section 3 business concern; or
- (iv) A worker's certification that the worker is a YouthBuild participant

For Housing and Community Development Financial Assistance projects:

- (i) An employer's confirmation that a worker's residence is within one mile of the work site or, if fewer than 5,000 people live within one mile of a work site, within a circle centered on the work site that is sufficient to encompass a population of 5,000 people according to the most recent U.S. Census;
- (ii) An employer's certification that the worker is employed by a Section 3 business concern; or
- (iii) A worker's self-certification that the worker is a YouthBuild participant.

The documentation must be maintained for the time period required for record retentions in accordance

with applicable program regulations or, in the absence of applicable program regulations, in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.334, Retention Requirements for Records (www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?n=se2.1.200_1334), which provides for retaining records for at least three years, as described in detail in that regulation..

A PHA or recipient may report on Section 3 workers and Targeted Section 3 workers for five years from when their certification as a Section 3 worker or Targeted Section 3 worker is established.

15. What are examples of acceptable evidence to determine eligibility as a Section 3 worker?

HUD does not prescribe that any specific forms of evidence to establish Section 3 eligibility. Acceptable documentation includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Proof of residency in a public housing project; or
- Evidence of participation in the YouthBuild program.

16. What are examples of acceptable evidence for determining eligibility as a Section 3 business concern?

HUD does not prescribe that any specific forms of evidence be required to establish Section 3 eligibility. The business seeking the preference must be able to demonstrate that they meet one of the following criteria:

1. At least 51 percent owned and controlled by low- or very low-income persons;
2. Over 75 percent of the labor hours performed for the business over the prior three-month period are performed by Section 3 workers; or
3. A business at least 51 percent owned and controlled by current public housing residents or residents who currently live in Section 8-assisted housing.

17. Are all public housing residents considered Section 3 workers regardless of their income?

No. To qualify as a Section 3 Worker, an individual must meet one of the following criteria:

1. The worker's income for the previous or annualized calendar year is below the income limit established by HUD;
2. The worker is employed by a Section 3 business concern; or
3. The worker is a YouthBuild participant.

18. Does qualifying as a Section 3 businesses mean that the business will be selected if it meets the technical requirements of the bid, regardless of bid price?

No. As provided in 2 CFR 200.318, contract awards shall only be made to responsible contractors possessing the ability to perform under the terms and conditions of the proposed contract. In order to meet the requirements of Section 3 and Federal and state procurement laws, recipient agencies must develop procedures that are consistent with all applicable regulations.

19. Can contracting with MBE/WBE businesses count towards Section 3 benchmarks?

It depends. Section 3 is race and gender neutral. Only MBEs/WBEs that meet the eligibility criteria as a Section 3 business concern set forth in the regulation can be counted towards the Section 3 labor hour calculation.

20. Does a business have to be incorporated to be considered a Section 3 eligible business?

No. A Section 3 business concern can be any type of business, such as a sole proprietorship, partnership, or a corporation, properly licensed and meeting all legal requirements to perform the contract under consideration.

