Environmental Review Steps

1. Open the Environmental Review (ER) in GEARS System

- Grants Electronic Application & Reporting System.
- The *municipality* must be the one to open the project on GEARS.

2. Defining the Project/Project Description

- List *all* potential project activities:
  - Area of ground disturbance, existing conditions, funding sources, size of parcel and existing buildings, structural changes, & scope of work.
  - Specific Examples: Weatherization, installation of septic, accessibility modifications etc.
- Capture the *maximum scope* of the proposal.

3. Determine Level of Review

- Exempt (24 CFR 58.34)
  - Planning grants, urgent need grants, no public notice period.
  - Does *NOT* mean the project is exempt from the ER process.
- Categorically Excluded (25 CFR 58.35)
  - Minor rehab, no change in land use, and an increase in occupancy or footprint <20%.
  - 7-day comment period, 15-day objection period.
- Environmental Assessment (24 CFR 58.36)
  - Highest level of review; evaluates the project as a whole.
  - 15-day comment period, 15-day objection period.

4. Analysis & Compliance Documentation

- Ensure that *supporting documentation* is uploaded through the ER checklist.
- Pay special attention to… noise, toxics, floodplain management, explosives, and historic preservation as they commonly have compliance issues.

5. Finalize the ER & Publish Applicable Notice

- Public notice templates available in GEARS and from the Environmental Officer.
- If Categorically Excluded is converted to Exempt, no public notice is needed.
- Public notice should also be sent to any interested parties.
- Include mitigation measures and HUD funding sources in the notice.

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6. <u>ER Release is Received</u>

- This will detail the ER conditions; it is important to review the release carefully.

- Conditions must be *specific*, with an outlined plan of mitigation.

- Providing an anticipated timeline of construction at this time is helpful.

- Choice-limiting actions are allowed at this point in the review process.

7. <u>Expend Project Funds</u>

- After the ER has been certified and compliance for the conditions has been guaranteed, project funds can be used.

- At this point, choice limiting activities are allowed.

8. <u>Post-Review Consideration/Upload Conditions</u>

- It is important to meet your conditions because there will be follow up to confirm they were implemented.

- Documentation should be added to the ER record in GEARS.

<u>Congratulations!</u>

If you diligently follow these instructions, you will have a smooth and successful ER process.

<u>For Environmental Review Process Questions/Guidance Please Contact:</u>

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