



Aida Andujar honed in on program design considerations.

Resolving Conflicts in Housing Rehabilitation

Does this unfortunate scenario sound familiar?

The residential rehabilitation project is underway when the homeowner expresses unhappiness with the kitchen cabinets and now refuses to allow the contractor to continue work or get paid for work already performed until the kitchen cabinets are replaced. The contractor refuses to replace the cabinets because he feels he has complied with the work write and specifications.

Sixty-five SHIP program administrators, rehabilitation inspectors, project managers and non-profit representatives participated a day-long Florida Housing Finance Catalyst workshop designed and produced by the Florida Housing Coalition to address housing rehabilitation nuts and bolts and conflict resolution.



Evelyn Rusciollelli addresses SHIP program administrators, rehab inspectors, project managers and non-profits.

Coalition technical assistance providers, Aida Andujar and Evelyn Rusciollelli, honed in on program design considerations. SHIP administrators were instructed to develop clear policies and procedures to ensure consistency in all program requirements between clients and contractors. Participants received guidance on determining populations to be served, recapture terms, public subsidy amounts, unit feasibility, rehabilitation standards, work-write-ups, specifications and program administration. Andujar and Rusciollelli stressed that key to a successful rehabilitation program is adoption of clear policies and procedures established prior to program implementation.

Some of the items that should be clearly outlined in a policy and procedures manual:

- Application requirements
- Wait List
- Property selection criteria
- Project responsibilities – homeowner, contractor, local government
- Program standards
- Rehabilitation standards
- Detailed specifications
- Subordination policy
- Contract requirements
- Conflict of interest
- Dispute resolution policy
- Contractor selection and removal
- Materials and specifications
- The bid process
- Contractor payment, lien waivers, inspections
- Change order process
- Warranties and guarantees related to the project



Dr. Tom Taylor, Associate Director of the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium Consensus Center located at Florida State University.

Dr. Tom Taylor focused on developing conflict resolution skills; he provided a conceptual framework for resolving rehabilitation program problems through negotiating skill exercises, providing guidelines for negotiations with owners, contractors and others involved in the rehabilitation process, and providing procedures to avoid and resolve conflicts.

According to Dr. Taylor, the following are five keys to constructive negotiation put forth as a conceptual framework for constructive negotiation, facilitation and mediation.

- 1. Concentration on satisfying interest**
- 2. Creating a cooperative climate**
- 3. Communicating clearly**
- 4. Considering one's effectiveness**
- 5. Carrying out a constructive process**

Through exercises, participants were able to develop active listening skills, communicate their point of view, frame a shared challenge, guide negotiations with constructive questions and comments, use non verbal communication skills and identify negotiation tricks that should not be used during the negotiation process.

Dr. Taylor provided a sample partnership agreement that could be used between the owner, contractor and rehabilitation program staff. This agreement provides resolution principles, steps and responsibilities of all parties and guidelines for negotiation during the rehabilitation process. Dr. Taylor also provided a mediation process that could be adopted by program administrators as part of their program policies and procedures. A copy of the partnership agreement can be found on the Florida Housing Coalition's website at www.flhousing.org.

Understanding the cause of conflicts and having a plan to address it are crucial to the rehabilitation program process. By developing partnering agreements and conflict resolution policies and procedures, SHIP program staff will have the right tools in place to avoid conflict or resolve conflicts, if and when a conflict does arise.

They learned ways to improve existing programs through systematic program design, the establishment of clear policies, procedures, rehabilitation standards, detailed work write ups and comprehensive construction contracts, selection of competent contractors, and improving communication and negotiation skills to help avoid and resolve conflicts.

Housing Rehabilitation and NSP

Housing rehabilitation is a key component of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. The Florida Housing Coalition is working under a variety of contracts to provide training and technical assistance to NSP recipients and their private sector partners in Florida. Let us know what assistance you are interested in having.



Areas of Technical Assistance:

- NSP Program Requirements and Rules
- Partnerships and Program Administration
- Selecting and Acquiring Sites
- Rental Programs
- Homebuyer Programs
- Meeting the 25% Setaside for Low Income
- Land Banks and Demolition
- Environmental Issues
- Construction Issues
- Tenant and URA Issues
- Special Needs and Supportive Housing Issues
- Neighborhood Stabilization through Homeownership
- DRGR
- Section 3