

SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUCCESS: THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING CATALYST PROGRAM

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In 1992, the Sadowski Act, the groundbreaking piece of affordable housing legislation that created a dedicated revenue source for affordable housing in Florida, also created the Affordable Housing Catalyst Program. The Catalyst Program was created with the tremendous foresight that funding must be paired with robust technical assistance to spend state dollars effectively and implement affordable housing strategies. It is in no small part due to the Affordable Housing Catalyst Program that the funding programs supported by the Sadowski Act are highly effective and serve as nationwide models.

Section 420.531 of the Florida Statutes governs the Affordable Housing Catalyst Program “for the purpose of securing the expertise necessary to provide specialized technical support” on federal, state, and local affordable housing initiatives.

Each fiscal year, the Legislature funds the Catalyst Program through proviso language, and this work is contracted by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to the Florida Housing Coalition, which provides training on a variety of subjects, including compliance with housing program requirements and implementation of homeownership and rental housing programs by local governments and nonprofits. The Coalition’s staff offers webinar instruction, on site visits, face-to-face workshops, and materials for self-instruction.

Per section 420.531 of the Florida Statutes, the Florida Housing Coalition, as the state’s contractor for the program, is obligated to perform the following in coordination with the Florida Housing Finance Corporation:

- Manage the Florida Housing Coalition’s SHIP Hotline at 800-677-4548.
- To provide specialized technical support to local governments and community-based organizations to implement the HOME Investment Partnership Program, State Housing Incentive Loan Program (SAIL), State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP), and other affordable housing programs. F.S. 420.531(1).
- To provide training on 1) formation of local and regional housing partnerships as a means to bringing together resources to provide affordable housing; 2) Implementation of regulatory reforms to reduce the risk and

cost of developing affordable housing; 3) Implementation of affordable housing programs included in local government comprehensive plans; and 4) compliance with requirements of federally funded housing programs. F.S. 420.531(1) (a-d).

- To convene and administer biannual, regional workshops for local elected officials who serve on their local affordable housing advisory committees to share best affordable housing practices. F.S. 420.531(2).

CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE CATALYST PROGRAM

Supporting the Affordable Housing Catalyst Program is a highly effective way to ensure that Florida’s affordable housing programs remain the best in the nation. Here are some reasons why:

ONGOING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IS VITAL TO ENSURING THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF THE SADOWSKI HOUSING TRUST FUND PROGRAMS

Through the Catalyst Program, the Florida Housing Coalition provides accessible technical support to ensure that the 123 SHIP jurisdictions across Florida are expending state dollars efficiently and effectively. The Catalyst Program is foundational to preserving SHIP and SAIL as national models for state-led affordable housing initiatives. The support offered includes topics such as income certification, applicant eligibility, updates to programmatic rules and regulations, program compliance, long-term affordability controls, annual reporting, and much more. This vital program addresses pressing compliance and policy-related questions of local housing administrators.

MORE JURISDICTIONS ARE SEEKING WAYS TO TACKLE THE HOUSING CRISIS

Due to rising prices and housing costs after the COVID-19 pandemic and the monumental passage of the Live Local Act, requests for assistance are at an all-time high by local governments and developers looking for ways to address the housing crisis through policy, regulatory reform, and innovative funding strategies. As a result, there are more requests for guidance and training.

With state support, Catalyst staff will continue to provide training to local governments on local tools to increase the supply of affordable housing with more targeted outreach to areas of the state that are facing the biggest strain on their housing stock. With these dollars, local governments and affordable housing developers can continue to receive training on best practices to implement the variety of tools in the Live Local Act and other land use reforms that facilitate the production of affordable housing as requested by the Florida Legislature.

RESPONDING TO SHIP STAFF TURNOVER

There is a steady rate of turnover among SHIP staff. The role of Catalyst is critical to providing new staff with orientation, often after former staff are gone, and no one locally has worked on SHIP. Franklin County is a recent example of this type of Catalyst support. The County's long-time SHIP administrator recently retired, and through Catalyst and the Coalition's team of Technical Advisors helped new staffers become familiar with SHIP. The new administrator offered this feedback about the training: "Thanks for the systematic way you've addressed SHIP rules, income eligibility, applications and more. I expect we will be able to seamlessly pick up with current SHIP projects."

As we move into the 2024 Legislative Session, we are incredibly pleased that for the sixth year in a row, Governor DeSantis has recommended full funding of the Sadowski Housing Trust Funds. The Governor has a proven track record of supporting affordable housing funding at the state level and the Coalition applauds the housing appropriations in his recommended budget, which includes support for the Affordable Housing Catalyst Program. The Coalition also thanks the Florida Association of Local Housing Finance Authorities (Florida ALHFA) for its partnership and advocacy for the Affordable Housing Catalyst Program.

CONTACT US

Continued support of the Catalyst Program is vital. To find out how you can encourage your representatives in the Florida Legislature to support the Catalyst program, please contact Kody Glazer, Chief Legal and Policy Officer, at glazer@flhousing.org.



KODY GLAZER is Chief Legal and Policy Officer for the Florida Housing Coalition with expertise in land use law, affordable housing planning and development, and policy implementation. Kody provides technical and legal assistance to local governments, community-based organizations, and policymakers on inclusionary housing policies, community land trusts, fair housing, land use, environmental law, and the law generally as it relates to housing. Kody graduated Magna Cum Laude from the Florida State University College of Law, where he was a member of the Florida State University Law Review and the Journal of Land Use & Environmental Law.



ASHON NESBITT is CEO of the Florida Housing Coalition. A respected community and nonprofit leader, Mr. Nesbitt is an expert in housing finance, development and program administration. As a strong advocate for permanent affordability, Nesbitt has championed the expansion and professionalization of community land trusts throughout the state, overseeing the development of the Coalition's nationally recognized Community Land Trust Certification Program. Mr. Nesbitt holds two master's degrees from the University of Florida, one in Urban and Regional Planning and one in Real Estate. He also holds a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Studies from Florida A&M University.