

Q4 2024 SOMAH Public Forum Notes

Date: Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Time: 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Purpose:

The purpose of the SOMAH Public Forum is to share program progress and updates while creating an opportunity for program stakeholders and participants to ask questions, share concerns and provide feedback. This forum, which was held remotely, covered the latest program stats and developments, regulatory updates and the future of tenant education services.

Public forums are ideally suited for those interested in getting program updates and providing feedback to the SOMAH Program Administrator, such as multifamily affordable housing property owners, solar contractors, community-based organizations (representing affordable housing, environmental justice, tenants' rights, etc.), investor-owned utilities, community choice aggregators and job training organizations.

Welcome & Introductions

Lisa Evenson, SOMAH Program Coordinator, kicked off the meeting by welcoming attendees and explaining the purpose of the forum. Lisa stated the SOMAH Program Administrator (PA) team's commitment to equity, energy and environmental justice. She concluded by reviewing the forum agenda, SOMAH's current staff list and meeting guidelines.

Session 1: SOMAH Program Update

Sabryna Barrios, SOMAH Program Coordinator, presented the latest program statistics and developments, including an overview of the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) Proposed Decision released on September 30. The decision proposes modifications to refine and streamline SOMAH to drive participation and improve delivery of the program's benefits. Sabryna provided an overview of SOMAH's resources, including the newest affordability requirement prescreen service, the suite of technical assistance (TA) and support services (such as job training support and tenant education) and the eligible properties map. Sabryna also shared a new video testimonial complementing the benefits of SOMAH from a tenant's perspective. You can view the video [here](#).

Session 1 Q&A

Q: Michael Caponigro – Can you share best practices on obtaining deed restriction documentation to help properties with qualifying in the discovery phase?

A: Working directly with the property owner is the best way to understand what deed restrictions or regulatory agreements are applicable to a potential project site.

Q: Marc Ross – Why is a 10-year HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] agreement a requirement? This is a really difficult ask and our biggest hurdle in getting projects approved.

A: While the program does have a minimum 10-year remaining requirement, it is important to note that this isn't HUD-specific. Any deed restriction or regulatory agreement that meets the program requirements may be eligible. Other examples include TCAC [Tax Credit Allocation Committee] or a regulatory agreement from a Housing Authority. To support this requirement, we encourage interested participants to take advantage of our prescreen offering.

Q: John Kammerer – How much time do we have to submit the paperwork?

A: There are several milestones and timelines throughout the life of the application process. In whole, from reservation request approval to incentive claim is an 18-month process. For more information on the milestones throughout the process, please visit our website or review our handbook. We also offer suspensions or correction periods along the way for any revisions that may be needed for program documentation with the application process.

Q: Tony Jaramillo – Could you provide information or fliers for upcoming orientations for employers?

A: You can find information regarding job training requirements and how to become a trainee on our website calsomah.org/job-training-eligibility or by emailing workforce@calsomah.org.

Q: Cindy Norton – Is it possible for SOMAH to help get a legislative change or blanket authorization to gain access to utility data for tenant use? We have Utility Allowance (UA) analysis requirements with HUD and that process requires getting bills from residents. It would be much simpler if we could get use and cost data directly from the utility company.

A: We want to recognize that UA are an important and complicated part of the big picture. There are not any changes planned at this time, but I can confirm that the SOMAH incentive should not have any impact on the UA or adjustment of rent. For any project specific questions, we are happy to discuss further one-on-one so we can talk about what options your projects might have and how the program can best support any technical assistance.

Session 2: The Future of Tenant Education Services

Nic Muñoz-Proulx, SOMAH Tenant Engagement Manager, provided an overview of the program's free tenant education services. Nic highlighted the growing demand for tenant education workshops in recent years and statistics on the workshops completed so far in 2024, including tenant attendance rates and language needs. Nic reviewed adjustments the SOMAH PA has already made to meet this growing demand and what we plan to do starting in the near future to equitably continue providing these services for the remainder of the program.

Session 2 Q&A

Q: Michael Caponigro – Do you facilitate the tenant education workshops if needed and provide the language resources? It appears so but wanted to confirm.

A: Yes, we offer workshop facilitation as part of our technical assistance and support services. There is a tenant services intake form on our website that you can fill out if you are interested in this offering. We are working on a way to better serve the large number of requests we are receiving and will be looking to implement this new format in 2025. We provide written resources in various languages, including Spanish and Chinese, and will consider the specific needs of the tenant population if doing an in-person or virtual workshop.

Looking Ahead & Next Steps

Lisa Evenson wrapped up the forum by sharing the following dates for upcoming SOMAH events, with more to be announced in the future:

- **January 16, 2025:** Applicant & Contractor Eligibility Training

Register at calsomah.org/events.

For additional questions and feedback, please contact the SOMAH PA:

Email: contact@CalSOMAH.org

Web form: CalSOMAH.org/contact-us

General hotline: 858-244-1177 ext. 5

Tenant hotline: 800-843-9728