Environmental Review Module
Training Manual

Environmental Review submission and tracking in the Housing Contract System (HCS)

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Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
TDHCA Environmental Staff
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Accessing the Environmental Review Module in HCS

In this manual, the external Housing Contract System (HCS) user will be referred to as the contract administrator (CA).

To enter the Environmental Review Module in HCS to create or access an existing environmental review submission, select a contract number.

Once on a contract page, you will see the Environmental link in the upper right corner of the screen. Select the Environmental link.
The **Environmental** link will take you to the main environmental page where you create or access environmental reviews associated with a contract. This is your **overall Environmental screen** for any environmental reviews associated with that contract.

If the contract is a HOME Reservation contract, then all contracts associated with one reservation agreement will be linked to and created under one environmental page. This page is referenced by the Reservation Group number. The HOME Reservation main environmental page contains the same sections as a contract page. *(*One exception is for TBRA contacts; see below.*)*
The Reservation Group was created for the environmental review module to link all HOME Reservation contracts to its reservation number. That reservation number is the Reservation Group name. In the screen shot above, Reservation Group – 2012-0140 is the Reservation Group name and the reservation number is 2012-0140. All contracts associated with reservation number 2012-0140, whether it is one contract or several, will have their environmental reviews created or accessed through a Reservation Group page.

For example,

- HOME Reservation Agreement 20150001 with associated contracts: 1003001 (HBA), 1003002 (TBRA*), 1003003 (HBA/HRA Disaster) = Reservation Group 20150001.
- HOME Reservation Agreement 19023 with associated contract: 1003025 (CHDO) = Reservation Group 19023.
- HOME Reservation Agreement with associated contract: 1003030 (HBA/HRA Disaster) = Reservation Group 20150018.

* TBRA environmental clearances clear the program and not individual addresses. Also, TBRA contracts have a version of the main environmental page that does not have a Broad Review section since they do not ever tier. Therefore, if you select a TBRA contract in a HOME reservation contract, you should only create or access environmental reviews associated with that TBRA contract. See manual TBRA section for further instructions.
Navigating from one main environmental page to another

If you have more than one contract, be sure to double check the reference link at the top left corner to ensure you are going to be working under the correct contract. The reference link should be your contract number. If your contract is a HOME Reservation contract, the page reference link will be your Reservation Group number.

To navigate to another main environmental page associated with another contract or HOME reservation: Select the My Contracts link

Select another contract. If it is a HOME reservation contract, select a contract that falls under the desired reservation agreement.

Select the Environmental link on the contract page.
The Environmental link takes you to the main environmental page for that contract or, if HOME Reservation contract, Reservation Group number.

To select a different Reservation Group without going through the My Contracts link: Select the Reservation Group name link: Ex. Reservation Group – 2012-0140.

It will take you to a page that lists all contracts associated with that reservation group name. Select the link Reservation Group List.
Select the Reservation Group Name that your contract would fall under.

Select a contract number from that group.

Select the Environmental link.

The Environmental link takes you to the Reservation Group page.
# Environmental Status

The following are the (8) statuses in the environmental review module for environmental reviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Status</th>
<th>Status indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pending</strong></td>
<td>All environmental reviews begin in the “Pending” status indicating a CA has created an environmental review and saved it but not submitted it to TDHCA. CA may make edits to review until it is submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Received</strong></td>
<td>“Received” follows the “Pending” status and indicates an environmental review has been submitted by the CA for TDHCA staff to review. CA is unable to make changes to review other than upload additional attachments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In Review</strong></td>
<td>“In Review” follows the “Received” status and is selected by TDHCA staff. “In Review” indicates TDHCA staff is currently reviewing the submitted information. CA is unable to make changes to review other than upload additional attachments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Approved to Publish** | TDHCA staff will select the “Approved to Publish” status indicating that a review that requires a public notice has been approved to publish/post public notice.  
  - This is mostly used when TDHCA is the responsible entity. It can apply to responsible entities that are not TDHCA should they request assistance or TDHCA issues a deficiency.  
  - CA is unable to make changes to review other than upload additional attachments. |
| **RROF** (Request for Release of Funds) | TDHCA staff will select the “RROF” status indicating that a review that requires a public notice has a Request for Release of Funds signed by the responsible entity and the review is in a federal comment period.  
  - This is mostly used when TDHCA is the responsible entity. It can apply to responsible entities that are not TDHCA should they request assistance or TDHCA issues a deficiency.  
  - CA is unable to make changes to review other than upload additional attachments. |
| **Deficiency**       | TDHCA will select the “Deficiency” status indicating a CA must revisit review and make changes according to emailed letter sent by TDHCA staff. Deficiency letter will also be uploaded to contract system attachments. CA can make changes in HCS as well as upload additional attachments. CA can save or submit. Save button does not change the status. The Submit button changes the status from “Deficiency” to “Received”. Once submitted, CA is unable to make changes to review other than upload additional attachments. |
| **Clearance**        | Environmental review has been environmentally cleared. The review cannot be edited nor can attachments be uploaded. |
| **Canceled**         | Environmental review has been canceled by TDHCA. |

To check the status of a review in the ERM, refer to the Review Status column under the review type.
For example below, a review status is on the Reservation Group page that lists broad reviews and non-tiered reviews.

To view a Site Specific status you must navigate to the Site Specific Reviews List page from the Broad Review page. You select the **Review Detail** link of the broad review to enter the broad review page.

Select the **Site Specific Reviews List** link to enter the site specific reviews page.

In the Review Status column on the Site Specific page, you can determine the review status.
You can also review the status within the reviews themselves:

Example, non-tiered review

You can also review the status within the reviews themselves:

Example, non-tiered review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Status indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pending Review</td>
<td>An attachment has been uploaded. Once uploaded, CA and TDHCA can view attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewed</td>
<td>TDHCA selects “Reviewed” to indicate TDCHA has reviewed the attachment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only TDHCA can remove attachments. This is to ensure that, for record keeping purposes, attachments do not get inadvertently removed.

You can check the status of attachments on the attachments page of any review.
**Sequence of statuses based on submitted and reviewed documentation**

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**Environmental reviews that do not require a public notice**

1. **Pending** → **Received** → **In Review** → **Clearance**
2. Deficiency

---

**Environmental reviews that do require a public notice**

1. **Pending** → **Received** → **In Review** → **Approved to Publish**
   - Or
   - **RROF**
   - **Deficiency**
   - **Deficiency**
   - **Received**

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To note, the reviews can be put into deficiency as well as canceled at any time.

Red and italicized (Pending and Deficiency) reflect the system being unlocked for the CA so they can update information in the ERM. **These statuses also indicate the CA must submit the information in order for TDHCA to review any updates.** Attachments can be uploaded at any time by both CA and TDHCA.

Black reflects the system being locked where only TDHCA staff can update information in the ERM. Attachments can be uploaded at any time by both CA and TDHCA.
Overall Description

The first section to be filled in on the Reservation Group page is the **Overall Description**. This includes the total scope of all the contracts that will be evaluated under an application or reservation number and includes:

- activity types (HBA, TBRA, rehabilitation, reconstruction, new construction, etc)
- area(s) served
- approximate number of households to assist

To begin the environmental process, navigate to the Reservation Group page. The Environmental section for reservation group page is divided into three sections:

- Overall Project Description
- Broad Review
- Non-tiered Review

To create an Overall Description, select **Create New Description** under the Overall Description section.
Type in scope of projects in text box labeled Description. Hit [Save].

After selecting Save, you have the option to Save again or Submit.

- Selecting Save will save entry and allow further editing.
- Selecting Submit will submit the Overall Description and prevents further editing. Once submitted, only TDHCA environmental staff can edit the description.

To return to the Reservation environmental page by saving and not submitting, select Save and then select the Env Review link at top left corner.

The Reservation environmental page will show you if the overall description has been submitted with either an N for no or Y for yes. Select Edit to make changes and/or submit. Select Delete to delete overall description.
If you go back and edit, you can hit Save as many times as necessary to revisit and make changes. Select Submit to submit your overall description. Remember, once Submit is selected, edits to the overall description can only be made by TDHCA staff.

After the overall description is submitted, return to the Reservation environmental page and double check the Submitted status is a Y for yes.

Once an Overall Description is submitted, you can proceed to create environmental reviews. Just below and to the right of the Overall Description is an Environmental Notes link. This is where TDHCA Environmental Staff will place comments and notes with regards to the reviews associated with a contract including if a review is on hold or if something specific is pending. You will have read-only rights to this section. This is not the primary method of how environmental staff will communicate deficiencies. Deficiencies will be emailed to the CAs and uploaded as an attachment to the review.

To view notes, select the Environmental Notes tab.

Select Environmental Review link to return to reservation group environmental page.
Non-tiered Environmental Review Submission and Tracking Procedures

To begin the environmental process, navigate to the Reservation Group page. We are focusing on the last section of this page, Non-tiered reviews which can include the following types of projects:

- Down Payment Assistance Only
- Tenant Based Rental Assistance
- Project Based Rental Assistance
- All Multifamily projects
- All Non-tiered Single Family construction projects that are Categorically Excluded Subject to 58.5
  - Individual addressed SF properties that are Converting to Exempt
  - Individual addressed SF properties that require a publication due to mitigation (floodplain, noise, wetlands, etc)
- Projects that are Categorically Excluded Subject to 58.5 or Environmental Assessment that can be cleared per one site location (such as an entire subdivision or street block).

When creating a Non-tiered review you have two choices: either City or Colonia.

For this example, choose Create Non-Tiered Review City and the link will bring you to the screen below. You will then begin by choosing a level of review.
The Level of Review provides a drop down menu of levels of review to choose from.  

- Select the level of review from the drop down menu 
- Write a short project description for this portion of the review 
- Assign the contract number 
  - These reviews are cleared by contract number so you must type in the appropriate contract number that the review will fall under for set-up. 
- Select [Save] to save the information. Once saved a new screen appears.

Example of fields filled out:
After you hit [save], this next screen allows for address detail to be added to the review.

- Fill in the street address, city and zip code (ensure this address is correct, this will link to the set-up)
- Attach your document(s) using the attachments link
- Select [Save] to save the address information than
- Select the [Submit] button. You have submitted your environmental review for clearance.

Once submitted you have two confirmations:

- “Your request for approval has been submitted” appears above the review.
- The status changes from “Pending” to “Received”

This area will also show the number of attachments submitted, for our example below the status reads 0. You are still able to upload attachments. (Refer to attachments section of the manual for instructions on how to upload attachments.)
**Tenant Based Rental Assistance**
Categorically Excluded Not Subject to 58.5 project (non-tiered)

Choose a TBRA contract for environmental evaluation from “YOUR CONTRACTS” list.

Select the Environmental link.

When you choose the TBRA contract, the screen below is your Environmental screen. It displays ONLY the TBRA contract selected under its reservation or application number. The Overall Description for all contracts under the associated reservation number is still displayed on this screen.

**All other contracts when selected allow you to look at overall environmental status of contracts under that Reservation Number.**
Under Non-tiered Review, Choose [Create Non-Tiered Review]

- Choose **Categorically Excluded Not Subject to 58.5** from the drop down menu
- Write a short project description for this portion of the review, include the area to be served and the estimated number of units to be assisted.
- Assign the contract number
  - These reviews are based on the contract number so you must type in the appropriate contract number that the review will fall under for set-up.
- Select [Save] to save the information. Once saved a new screen appears.

This screen shows the status as “Pending”. Unlike the other reviews, an address is not required for TBRA reviews.
Your next steps are to:

- Attach your environmental document(s) using the attachments link.
- Select Save to save the updated information
- Select the Submit button. You have submitted your TBRA environmental review for clearance.

Once submitted you have two confirmations,

- “Your request for approval has been submitted” appears above the review.
- Status changes from “Pending” to “Received”

This area will also show the number of attachments submitted, for our example below the status reads “0”. You are still able to upload attachments. (Refer to attachments section of the manual for instructions on how to upload attachments.)
Tiered Environmental Review Submission and Tracking Procedures

To begin the environmental process for a tiered review, navigate to the Reservation Group page. We are focusing on the middle section of this page, **Broad Review**. When creating or reviewing a tiered review, both the broad reviews and site specifics are accessed through the **Broad Review** section on the Reservation Group page.

Tiered reviews are reviews that are **only** single family and can be one of the following levels of review:

- Categorically Excluded (subject to 58.5)
- Environmental Assessment

**Broad Review**

To create a new tiered review you begin with creating a broad review. Select **Add Broad Review** found at the bottom right of the **Broad Review** section.
Fill in all active fields.

Level of Review is a drop down menu. Select appropriate level of review. Other fields require text.

- Select the level of review from the drop down menu
- Describe the location of the broad review.
- Write a short project description describing scope of work for the broad review.
- Enter city and county of broad review. If broad review location is larger than a city, enter N/A for city.
- Select [Save] to save the information. Once saved a new screen appears.

Once saved, you can:

- Exit the broad review page
- Make changes to the broad review fields
- Attach environmental review documents for a broad review
- Submit the broad review. (You are only able to create and submit site specific reviews when the broad review is submitted.)
Exit the broad review page

To exit the broad review page select either “Environmental Review” or “My Contracts”, or use the back arrow on your browser. (Environmental Review and the back arrow on your browser will take you back to the Reservation Group page).

Make changes to the broad review fields

To make changes to the broad review fields, you can replace text in the active fields as well as change the Level of Review drop down selection. Hit [Save] when finished. (Broad review remains in “Pending” status until it is submitted.) Do not hit [Submit] until all attachments are uploaded.
- **Attach environmental review documents for a broad review**
  Attach your environmental document(s) using the attachments link. (Refer to attachments section of manual for instructions on how to upload attachments.)

  ![Environmental Review Module Screenshot](image1)

- **Submit the broad review**
  When broad review fields have been filled out and all documentation has been uploaded, hit [Submit].

  ![Environmental Review Module Screenshot](image2)
Once the review has been submitted, the review is in “Received” status. You are unable to make changes other than upload other attachments. Select the Environmental Review link to return to the Reservation Group page.

To review an existing broad review, or to create or access an existing site specific, select Review Detail of the broad review you want to access from the Reservation Group page.
Site Specific

Site Specific reviews are tied to a Broad Review. You must navigate through the Broad Review to get to the screen that allows you to create or access existing site specific review submissions. **You can create site specific reviews in the ERM only when a broad review has been submitted.**

Choose the broad review from the Reservation Group home page by selecting the **Review Detail** link of that broad review to access the Site Specific Reviews List.

Select Site Specific Reviews List link
Select “Create Site Specific Review City” or “Create Site Specific Review Colonia” link. Remember, the links are active only when a broad review has been submitted.

All active fields must be filled in. Level of review reflects what was chosen for the broad review.

- Write a short project description for this portion of the review.
- Assign the contract number
  - These reviews are cleared by contract number so you must type in the appropriate contract number that the review will fall under for set-up.
- Fill in the street address, city and zip code (ensure this address is correct, this will link to the set-up)
- Select [Save] to save the information. Once saved a new screen appears.
After you save, you are redirected to the Site Specific Review List page. Select Edit Review of site specific that you would like to attach documents to and submit for review.

Double check information on site specific screen, upload attachments and select [Submit]. If you are not ready to submit, then select [Save] and you can revisit the review.
Attaching documents

A document can be attached where there is an active attachments link that resembles this: Attachments[0]

The number in the brackets indicates the number of attachments that are uploaded to that review.

There are several areas of the ERM that you can attach documents:

- Reservation Group page
  - Broad Review list
  - Non-Tiered Review list
- Broad Review page
- Site Specific List page
- Site Specific review
- Non-Tiered review page

To attach environmental review documents, select the Attachments link in any of the pages mentioned above.

Example below is the Broad Review page
Select **Attach a Document** in the lower left side under the list.

You will then see the screen below. Please make note of the maximum attachment size and the tips on reducing the size of your document prior to uploading.
Select document type from the **Type** dropdown menu

**Broad Review document types**

- Broad Review Clearance
- Deficiency Notification (TDHCA only)
- Deficiency Response
- Environmental Review Documentation
- Public Notice Documentation
- Request for Release of Funds

**Site Specific Review document types**

- Deficiency Notification (TDHCA only)
- Deficiency Response
- Environmental Clearance
- Environmental Review Documentation
Non-tiered Review document types

Next, write a description of the document and use the browser button to upload your documents.

Select Save when finished. Documents are uploaded.

Select link at top left of page to return to previous page. Per the screen shot above, the link Non-tiered Review Detail will take you to the previous page.
Creating a Project Set-up

The creation of the project set-up follows the same steps outlined in the TDHCA Contract System User Guide. You begin at the contract level and select “Activities”.

You then select City or Colonia next to Add Contract Activity as appropriate for your contract and activity.

As shown below, a list of all submitted environmental reviews is displayed. To create your activity set-up you must choose an address to associate with your set-up. You will not be able to fill in your address or clearance date. These will auto-populate from the clearance you choose.
Once an address is selected your form auto-populates, you complete your set-up.

You now can select **Save**.
A “Submit for Approval” Button will only appear once the site specific or non-tiered review status is changed to or is already in “Clearance”.

To Create a Set-Up, Status Matters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Review</th>
<th>Review Status</th>
<th>Actions Allowed in Creating Set-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-tiered Review</td>
<td>Clearance</td>
<td>Create, Save and Submit Set-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-tiered Review</td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>Create, Save</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-tiered Review</td>
<td>Deficiency</td>
<td>Create, Save</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiered Review</td>
<td>Clearance</td>
<td>Create, Save and Submit Set-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiered Review</td>
<td>Site Specific “Received” (Broad Review Cleared)</td>
<td>Create, Save</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiered Review</td>
<td>Site Specific “Received” (Broad Review, Received/Deficiency)</td>
<td>Activity Set-up Unavailable until Broad Review in clearance status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>