

C. Gift Funds. An outright gift of the cash investment is acceptable if the donor is the borrower's relative, the borrower's employer or labor union, a charitable organization, a governmental agency or public entity that has a program to provide homeownership assistance to low- and moderate-income families or first-time homebuyers, or a close friend with a clearly defined and documented interest in the borrower. The gift donor may not be a person or entity with an interest in the sale of the property, such as the seller, real estate agent or broker, builder, or any entity associated with them. Gifts from these sources are considered inducements to purchase and must be subtracted from the sales price. No repayment of the gift may be expected or implied. (As a rule, we are not concerned with how the donor obtains the gift funds provided they are not derived in any manner from a party to the sales transaction. Donors may borrow gift funds from any other acceptable source provided the mortgage borrowers are not obligors to any note to secure money borrowed to give the gift.) This rule also applies to properties of which the seller is a government agency selling foreclosed properties, such as the Veterans Administration or Rural Housing Services. Only family members may provide equity credit as a gift on a property being sold to other family members. These restrictions on gifts and equity credit may be waived by the jurisdictional HOC provided that the seller is contributing to or operating an acceptable affordable housing program.

FHA deems the payment of consumer debt by third parties to be an inducement to purchase. While FHA permits sellers and other parties to make contributions of up to six percent of the sales price of a property toward a buyer's actual closing costs and financing concessions, this policy applies exclusively to the provision of mortgage financing. Other expenses paid on behalf of the borrower must result in a dollar-for-dollar reduction to the sales price. The dollar-for-dollar reduction to the sales price also applies to gift funds not meeting the requirement that the gift be for downpayment assistance and is provided by an acceptable source. When someone other than a family member has paid off debts, the funds used to pay off the debt must be treated as an inducement to purchase and the sales price must be reduced by a dollar-for-dollar amount in calculating the maximum insurable mortgage.

Documentation Requirements. The lender must document the gift funds by obtaining a gift letter, signed by the donor and borrower, that specifies the dollar amount of the gift, states that no repayment is required, shows the donor's name, address, telephone number and states the nature of the donor's relationship to the borrower. In addition, the lender must document the transfer of funds from the donor to the borrower, as follows:

1. If the gift funds are in the homebuyer's bank account, the lender must document the transfer of the funds from the donor to the homebuyer by obtaining a copy of the canceled check or other withdrawal document showing that the withdrawal is from the donor's account. The homebuyer's deposit slip and bank statement that shows the deposit is also required.
2. If the gift funds are to be provided at closing:
  - a. If the transfer of the gift funds is by certified check made on the donor's account, the lender must obtain a bank statement showing the withdrawal from the donor's account, as well as a copy of the

certified check.

b. If the donor purchased a cashier's check, money order, official check, or any other type of bank check as a means of transferring the gift funds, the donor must provide a withdrawal document or canceled check for the amount of the gift, showing that the funds came from the donor's personal account. If the donor borrowed the gift funds and cannot provide documentation from the bank or other savings account, the donor must provide written evidence that those funds were borrowed from an acceptable source, i.e., not from a party to the transaction, including the lender. "Cash on hand" is not an acceptable source of the donor's gift funds.

Regardless of when the gift funds are made available to the homebuyer, the lender must be able to determine that the gift funds ultimately were not provided from an unacceptable source and were indeed the donor's own funds. When the transfer occurs at closing, the lender remains responsible for obtaining verification that the closing agent received funds from the donor for the amount of the purported gift and that those funds came from an acceptable source.

NOTE: FHA does not "approve" down payment assistance programs in the form of gifts administered by charitable organizations (i.e., nonprofits). Mortgage lenders are responsible for assuring that the gift to the homebuyer from the charitable organization meets the appropriate FHA requirements and the transfer of funds is properly documented. In addition, FHA does not allow nonprofit entities to provide gifts to homebuyers for the purpose of paying off installment loans, credit cards, collections, judgments, and similar debts.