

COUNTY OF UNION
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
AMENDED CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
FOR U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)
PROGRAMS

Pursuant to the citizen participation requirements of 24 CFR Section 91.115, the County of Union, , hereinafter referred to as the “County”, sets forth the following Citizen Participation Plan as it relates to the Consolidated Planning process for housing and community development programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Citizen Participation Plan presents the County’s plan for providing and encouraging all citizens, particularly low- and moderate-income citizens, to participate in the development and adoption of four components of the consolidated planning process.

The Department of Community Development of the County is the lead agency responsible for the Consolidated Planning process and the administration of the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), including the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program, the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and the Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG). All of these funds are collectively known as Community Planning and Development (CPD) funds.

Subsequent to approval of this Citizen Participation Plan by the County, the Plan shall be effective until it is amended or otherwise replaced.

The following describes the process and procedures related to the development of the Citizen Participation Plan from the Policy Manual of the Union County community Development Revenue Sharing Committee.

25.3 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

In order to meet the requirements under Section 104 (a) (3) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, the Union County Community Development Revenue Sharing Committee has adopted a citizen participation plan that sets forth its policies and procedures.

The Citizen Participation Plan must provide for and encourage participation by low and moderate income persons, particularly those living in slum and blighted areas and in areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used, and by residents of predominantly low and moderate income neighborhoods, as defined by the jurisdiction.

Activities necessary to meet this requirement are as follows:

1. The two members of the Union County Community Development Revenue Sharing Committee from each municipality attend monthly meetings, receive detailed correspondence on appropriate regulations and situations concerning the entire county Community Development Program, and maintain voting privileges regarding the distribution of the grant and other matters. Correspondence includes updates on changing HUD requirements, copies of the draft and final Consolidated Plan, and periodic data sheets covering the fiscal progress of the entire Community Development Program. The Community Development Revenue Sharing Committee members represent the residents of low and moderate income neighborhoods in the respective communities. Staff maintains direct contact with all Community Development Revenue Sharing members via meetings, mail and telephone correspondence. Staff maintains direct contact with the representatives of projects serving eligible residents via site visits, public/virtual meetings, written correspondence and telephone/email contact.
2. Prior to the submission of proposals for the coming year, each participating municipality holds a local public meeting, after 10 days public notice, to receive citizen input on proposed projects and to determine municipal project priorities for the forthcoming program year. Each non-profit agency shall submit a copy of its proposal to the municipality within which it is located for review at the public meeting. Minutes of this meeting are forwarded to the Union County Community Development Office. Special efforts shall be made by the municipalities to contact residents of low and moderate income and blighted areas.

The Citizen Participation Plan must provide citizens with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information, and records relating to the grantee's proposed use of the funds, as required by regulations of the Secretary, and relating to the actual use of funds under this title.

Activities necessary to meet this requirement are as follows:

1. Staff conforms to P.L. 1975, Chapter 231, section 213 (Open Public Meeting Act) and HUD requirements by publishing proper notices in advance of all public meetings.
2. Correspondence is also sent directly to local agencies participating in the CD program, such as the notice of the start of the yearly planning process, the proposal submission forms and accompanying instructions, scopes of service forms, contracts, monthly /quarterly progress reports, forms and notices of the Workshop, Seminar meetings and the Public meeting to discuss the proposed projects for the coming year. All correspondence offers further assistance from staff.

3. Calendars of Community Development activities and meetings for the year are provided to all interested parties.
4. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq. (New Jersey Right to Know Law), all records pertaining to the Union County Community Development Program are available to the public for perusal at the Office of Community Development, 3rd floor, Union County Administration Building, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m..

The Citizen Participation Plan must provide for technical assistance to groups representative of persons of low and moderate income that request such assistance in developing proposals with the level and type of assistance to determine by the grantee:

Activities necessary to meet this requirement are as follows:

1. A seminar will be held annually in October to acquaint public, (with direct mailing to agencies serving low and moderate income groups), with the technical assistance available to them from the Community Development Staff in developing acceptable proposals. An interpreter will be provided for foreign speaking individuals, if requested in writing, at least 5 days prior to the meeting.
2. Staff site visits will be made to all participating agencies, private and public, in order to provide instructions and technical assistance to those agency directors and clients in developing proposals, when requested.
3. Annual workshops for sub grantees and Community Development Revenue Sharing Committee members will be held in January to provide comprehensive technical assistance on all aspects of the CDBG Program.
4. Correspondence to municipalities and agencies offers staff names, email and telephone numbers, especially letters regarding proposal submission instructions and forms, and notices of workshops and hearings. Staff emphasizes the willingness to instruct and assist interested parties in the Community Development Program. All records are kept in the Community Development office and are open to the public.
5. Community Development staff maintains income data and other census data, as well as maps delineating the low income areas of the county, which information is provided to the general public, consultants, agencies and municipalities as a means of providing technical assistance.

The Citizen Participation Plan must provide for public hearing to obtain citizen views and to respond to proposals and questions at all stages of the community development program, including at least the hearings shall be held after adequate notice, at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries, and with accommodation for the handicapped.

Activities necessary to meet this requirement as follows:

1. As previously stated, each municipality is required to hold a public meeting, with 10 days' notice to the public, to obtain citizen views to projects needed (development of needs) and proposals to be submitted for the coming year. This meeting is to be held prior to the proposal submission deadline established.
2. A countywide Public Hearing will be held, after due Public Notice is published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county and the Community Development webpage. At the hearing, copies of the Draft Consolidated Plan will be distributed and made available for review of program performance presented, for citizen comment. The hearing will be held at a central county location for the convenience of low and moderate income citizens, and will be assessable to the handicapped. Final decisions on funding will be made after citizen input is expressed and considered.

The Citizen Participation Plan must provide that the proposed Consolidated Plan be published so that affected citizens have sufficient opportunity to review it and provide comments.

Activities necessary to meet this requirement are as follows:

1. Staff prepares a summary of the proposed Consolidated Plan and places it in one or more newspapers of general circulation. The summary describes contents and purpose of the Consolidated Plan and includes a list of locations where copies of the entire plan may be examined.
2. Citizens will be provided a period of not less than 30 days prior to the submission of the Consolidated Plan to submit comments.
3. Staff will respond, in writing, within 15 working days to any written complaints submitted by the general public.

Due to the COVID-19 Crisis, the County of Union will use the waiver that was released by HUD for a minimum of 5 day public comment period.

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CARES-Act-Flexibilities-CDBG-Funds-Used-Support-Coronavirus-Response.pdf>

The draft Citizen Participation Plan will be made available for public review for a 8-day period on the CDBG's website at <https://ucnj.org/department-of-economic-development/bureau-of-community-development/> prior to consideration and adoption, and may be done concurrently with the public review and comment process for the Five-

Year Consolidated Plan. The Citizen Participation Plan shall be provided in a format accessible to persons with disabilities upon request. Such formats may include, but are not limited to providing oral, Braille, electronic or large print versions of the plan to those visually impaired and delivering copies to those who are homebound.

The Citizen Participation Plan will encourage comment and participation by minority persons and non-English speakers, and, when feasible, translation services will be available upon request by contacting the County contact person listed above, or a designee.

Amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan

Activities necessary to meet this requirement are as follows:

- The County shall follow the following procedure to amend the Citizen Participation Plan, as needed.

Amendment Considerations

Activities necessary to meet this requirement are as follows:

- The County shall amend the Citizen Participation Plan, as necessary, to ensure adequate engagement and involvement of the public in making decisions related to the programs and documents governed by 24 CFR Part 91.115. Formal amendment of the Citizen Participation Plan may be required should a provision of the Citizen Participation Plan be found by the County to conflict with HUD regulations. At a minimum, the Citizen Participation Plan shall be reviewed, and amended as needed, every five years in conjunction with the preparation of the Consolidated Plan.

Amendment Review and Public Comment

Activities necessary to meet this requirement are as follows:

- The county will consider any comments from citizens received in writing or orally at public hearing in preparing this Citizen Participation Pan, the Consolidated Plan, Annual Plan, CAPERs, AFH, and/or substantial amendments to these plans. A summary of all comments will be attached and submitted to HUD. The County will respond to written complaints received relating to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Plan, CAPERs, AFH, and/or substantial amendments. Written complaints must describe the objection and provide contact information of the complaint. The County will respond to

complaints within 15 working days of receiving the written complaint, acknowledging the letter and identifying a plan of action, if deemed necessary.

- Due to the COVID-19 Crisis, amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan shall be made available for public review for a 5-day period prior to consideration and adoption. A *virtual* public hearing shall be conducted by the County so that citizens may express their views prior to consideration and adoption. Written comments will be accepted by the County contact person below, or a designee, during the public review period. A summary of all written comments and those received during the public hearing as well as the County's responses will be attached to the amended Citizen Participation Plan prior to submission to HUD.

Revisions to the plan that only include updated contact information or editorial changes for clarity will not be released for public review and comment. Copies will be made available following the process.

Public Hearing

Activities necessary to meet this requirement are as follows:

- The County shall conduct a *virtual* public hearing to review and accept public comments on the draft amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan prior to its approval and submittal to HUD. After public comments are heard and considered by the County, it may approve or reject the amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan.

Submittal to HUD

Activities necessary to meet this requirement are as follows:

- A copy of the Amended Citizen Participation Plan, including a summary of all written comments and those received during the *virtual* public hearing as well as the County's responses and proof of compliance with the minimum 5-day public review and comment period requirement, shall be submitted to HUD. A summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore shall be supplied to HUD.

For more information, contact Brandon Givens, Director, at 908-527-4462 or by email at bgivens@ucnj.org. Public comments may be submitted via any of the following: by email at cbathelus@ucnj.org; by mail at County of Union, Attn: Community Development – CDBG- 3rd Floor, 10 Elizabethtown Plaza, Elizabeth, NJ 07207; or by participating in the public hearing.

**Brandon Givens, Director
Community Development
Department of Economic Development
County of Union**



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OPPORTUNITY**