

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

- I. Statement of Purpose: This Citizen Participation Plan of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) seeks to provide for and encourage the participation of Georgians in the development of the Consolidated Plan, any substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan, and the associated annual performance report. The Plan also provides for the participation of citizens in the development of local applications for the State Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and throughout the implementation of funded CDBG projects. DCA especially aims to encourage participation by low and moderate income person, residents of low and moderate income areas as determined by the State, the homeless, persons with disabilities, persons living with AIDs, and representative organizations of these groups. This Citizen Participation Plan has been designed to meet the requirements of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and the Consolidated Submission for Community Planning and Development Programs Final Rule of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as published on January 5, 1995.
- II. Effective Date: This Citizen Participation Plan, as amended, is effective on July 1, 1996.
- III. Consolidated Plan Development: During the development of the Consolidated Plan, DCA shall:
 - A.) Make available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties information that includes the amount of assistance that DCA expects to receive from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs and the range of activities that may be undertaken using these funds, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low and moderate income; and the plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced. This information will be made available before the adoption of the Consolidated Plan.
 - B.) Publish the proposed Consolidated Plan in a manner that affords citizens, units of general local governments, public agencies, and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine its contents and to submit comments. This information will be summarized and published in one or more newspapers of general circulation across the state. The summary will include a description of the contents and purposes of the proposed Consolidated Plan and a list of the locations

where copies of the entire proposed Consolidated Plan may be examined.

- C.) Make available free of charge to interested citizens and groups copies of the proposed and final Consolidated Plan. Copies will be available from the central offices of DCA and on DCA's web site at www.dca.ga.gov.
- D.) Hold at least one public hearing on housing and community development needs before the proposed Consolidated Plan is published for comment.
 - 1.) The State shall give adequate advance notice of the hearing to citizens by: publishing notices in newspapers of general circulation across the state which includes information on the purpose, time and location of the hearing; informing the chairman of each county commission; providing notice using the applicable mailing lists maintained by DCA; making the notice available on DCA's web site at www.dca.ga.gov; and providing other notice as determined by DCA.
 - 2.) DCA shall hold the hearing at a time and location convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries and with accommodation for persons with disabilities. DCA shall hold this hearing at a minimum of three locations across Georgia to provide convenient access to residents living in all regions of the state. DCA shall select a time and date for holding the hearing at each location which will attempt to maximize the participation of interested Georgians.
 - 3.) In the case where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate, DCA will provide a qualified interpreter at the public hearing to accommodate the needs of these residents.
- E.) DCA will receive comments on the proposed Consolidated Plan from citizens and units of general local government for a period of not less than thirty (30) days.
- F.) Consider any comments or views of citizens and units of general local government received in writing or orally at the public hearing when preparing the final Consolidated Plan. A summary of these comments or views and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and reasons therefore shall be attached to the final Consolidated Plan.

IV. Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan: When considering a Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan, DCA shall:

A.) Substantially amend the Consolidated Plan if any one of the following actions are proposed:

- 1.) A change in the State's allocation priorities or change in the method of distribution of funds covered by the Consolidated Plan;
- 2.) Implementation of an activity using funds from any program covered by the Consolidated Plan (including program income) not previously described in the action plan; or,
- 3.) A significant change in the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of a program funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) or Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs as listed in the Action Plan section of the adopted Consolidated Plan.
- 4.) A transfer of a significant percentage of allocated funds from an established program funded through the CDBG or HOME programs. A significant percentage will equal 25% for programs funded through the CDBG program, and 50% for programs funded through the HOME program. (Amended 11/15/00)

Any one of the actions listed in Section IV (A) (1-4) shall constitute a "substantial amendment" to the Consolidated Plan.

- B.) Provide citizens and units of general local government with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on a Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan. Reasonable notice must include a summary of the proposed change and its potential effect on households of low and moderate income. The summary must be made available on DCA's web site and include an opportunity for written comment by interested citizens and groups for a period of not less than thirty (30) days before the amendment is implemented. The summary must indicate that written comments must be submitted by a specified date to DCA.
- C.) Consider any comments or views of received in writing or orally at public hearings, if held, in preparing the Substantial Amendment of the Consolidated Plan. DCA shall attach to the Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan a summary of comments or views accepted and a summary of comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore.

- V. Performance Reports Associated with the Consolidated Plan: When preparing performance reports associated with the Consolidated Plan, DCA shall:
- A.) Provide citizens and units of general local government with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on performance reports associated with the Consolidated Plan. Reasonable notice must include a summary of the accomplishments and their effect on households of low and moderate income. The summary must be made available on DCA's web site and include an opportunity for comment by interested citizens and groups for a period of not less than fifteen (15) days before the performance report is submitted to HUD. The summary must indicate that written comments must be submitted by a specified date to DCA.
 - B.) Consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at public hearings, if held, in preparing the performance report. DCA and GHFA shall attach a summary of these comments or views to the performance report.
- VI. Availability of the Consolidated Plan and Related Documents to the Public: DCA shall make available to the public free of charge and upon request the final Consolidated Plan as adopted, any substantial amendments, and any associated performance reports. Upon request DCA will also make available the final Consolidated Plan as adopted, any substantial amendments, and any associated performance reports in a form accessible to persons with disabilities.
- VII. Access to Records Associated with the Consolidated Plan: DCA will provide reasonable and timely access to information relating to the Consolidated Plan and the State's use of assistance under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs during the preceding five years.
- VIII. Complaints Associated with the Consolidated Plan and Related Documents: DCA will provide a timely, substantive written response within fifteen (15) working days to every written citizen complaint related to the Consolidated Plan, substantive amendments and associated performance reports.
- IX. Citizen Participation Requirements for Local Governments: Applicants for and recipients of State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds shall be required to certify that they are following a detailed citizen participation plan that meets the requirements outlined in Items 1 – 11 of Subsection IX (A) and the Housing and Community Development Act of

1974 as amended. DCA will review recipients for compliance with this section as part of the normal CDBG recipient monitoring process.

- A.) Each applicant for or recipient of CDBG assistance shall provide for and encourage citizen participation in the planning, implementation and assessment of local CDBG programs, with particular emphasis on participation by persons of low and moderate income. To achieve these goals, applicants and/or recipients must meet, at a minimum, the requirements set forth in Items 1 - 11 of this subsection.
- 1.) At least one (1) public hearing must be held in the locality prior to submission of an application to DCA. In cases where a preliminary application is required (i.e. the Employment Incentive or the Innovative Grant programs) the hearing shall be held prior to submission of the final application. The purpose of the hearing(s) will be to obtain citizen views and to respond to proposals and questions concerning previous CDBG funded projects (if any) and to obtain citizen participation in the development of new proposals, including the identification of community needs.
 - 2.) At least one (1) public hearing must be held to discuss the approved activities within sixty (60) days after acceptance of the grant award; the hearing must include the estimated amount to be used for activities that will benefit low and moderate income persons, the recipient's plans for minimizing the displacement of persons as a result of CDBG funded activities and to assist persons actually displaced as a result of such activities.
 - 3.) At least one (1) public hearing must be held if a grantee proposes a substantive amendment to the program, as defined in the Recipient's Manual published by DCA.
 - 4.) At the completion of the project, the recipient shall hold a public hearing on its performance and accomplishments and shall prepare a detailed report in the format required by DCA which describes the accomplishments of the project. The recipient shall make the report available to the public and solicit comments on performance prior to grant close out.
 - 5.) The public hearings required by this subsection shall be held only after publication of a notice not less than five (5) days prior to said hearing in the nonlegal section of a local newspaper of general circulation. Local governments are encouraged to take other actions to provide adequate notice to persons potentially interested in the project.

- 6.) Hearings must be held a times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries and with accommodation for the needs of the disabled.
 - 7.) The needs of non-English speaking residents must be met in the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate.
 - 8.) Recipient files must contain evidence that the actions listed above have been taken, including copies of actual notices, and minutes of hearings.
 - 9.) Applicants and recipients must provide 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 be determined by the local unit of government.
 - 10.) Citizens must be provided with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information and records relating to the local government's proposed and actual use of CDBG funds as required by HUD regulations and state law.
 - 11.) This subsection (A) may not be construed to restrict the responsibility or authority of the local government for the development and execution of its CDBG program.
- B.) If DCA receives a citizen complaint concerning the CDBG program of a non-entitlement unit of local government, the following procedure will be followed:
- 1.) DCA shall only respond to written complaints, and then only if evidence indicates that relief has previously been sought at the local level.
 - 2.) Upon receipt of a complaint, DCA shall transmit a copy of the complaint to the local government and request a response within fifteen (15) calendar days.
 - 3.) If the response indicates that the local government is in noncompliance with law or regulation, DCA shall require corrective action and advise the complainant of its decision.
 - 4.) If noncompliance with law or regulation by the local government has not occurred, DCA shall advise both the local government and complainant of its decision.

C.) Although recipients may designate the location of the program records, DCA must be officially informed of their location. In addition, in order to insure citizen access to CDBG program records and if the location of the records is different from the recipient's normal place of business, the following minimum information must be on file in a designated place within the locality and available for public inspection during normal office hours:

- 1.) The application (including any amendments);
- 2.) The standard performance/financial reports, including quarterly reports;
- 3.) Other pertinent information deemed appropriate by the recipient, such as engineering plans; and,
- 4.) The environmental review record.

X. Public Review of Citizen Participation Plan: DCA will make the Citizen Participation Plan public and will provide citizens and units of general local government a reasonable opportunity to comment for a period of not less than 15 days on the original Citizen Participation Plan and on any Substantial Amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan.