

Board of County Commissioners

Leon County, Florida

Policy No. 20-3

Title: Citizen Participation and Complaint Plan for the Community Development Block Grant

Date Adopted: February 11, 2020

Effective Date: February 11, 2020

Reference: Section 104 of the Housing and Community Development Act; 24 Code of Federal Regulations 570; Florida Administrative Code 73c-23, Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program

Policy Superseded: N/A

It shall be the policy of the Board of County Commissioners of Leon County, Florida, that a policy entitled "Citizen Participation and Complaint Plan for the Community Development Block Grant" is hereby adopted, to wit:

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

OVERALL GOAL

The purpose of this Plan is to ensure an adequate opportunity for community-wide participation in the planning, development, implementation and performance evaluation activities related to the Leon County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

I. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

In order to provide citizens with information concerning the CDBG program, Leon County (County) will take the following actions:

- A. Make available to the public, in a reasonable and timely manner, information concerning the amount of funds available, the range of activities that may be undertaken and anticipated grant award and program income amounts.
- B. Make available to the public, proposed CDBG activities likely to result in displacement, if any.

- C. Technical assistance shall be available to any party representative of low to moderate income persons requesting assistance for developing a proposal for the CDBG, in accordance with the procedures developed by the State, including actions to affirmatively further fair housing.
- D. Provide citizens with reasonable advance notice of changes to the grant application related to the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiary criteria.
- E. Consider any comments and views expressed by citizens on the proposed application and, if appropriate, modify the proposed application.
- F. Hold at least one Public Hearing to obtain the views of citizens on the final application prior to its submission to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

II. CITIZENS ADVISORY TASK FORCE

Leon County shall establish a Citizens Advisory Task Force (CATF) in accordance with state and federal laws to gather and provide citizen input on the planning, implementation, and assessment of the County's CDBG program. The County shall establish bylaws to govern the CATF.

Through the CATF, the Board assures representation of varied segments of the community. The diverse representation provides an overall community-wide perspective relative to CDBG information, programmatic suggestions and complaints.

The CATF meetings shall be open to the general public. These meetings are readily accessible to interested parties and the local media.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS, NOTICES AND MEETINGS

In accordance with state and federal laws and requirements, a public hearing shall be held to determine eligible projects that the County may considered for CDBG funding requests and a public hearing to review and consider a CDBG application prior to submittal.

Citizens will be provided adequate notice of public hearings, which are to be held at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries, and with accommodations for the handicapped. A public notice of the public hearing to be held shall:

- 1. be published through an advertisement in a local newspaper of general circulation at least five days but not more than 30 days prior to the public hearing; and
- 2. be conducted by a member of the Local Government.

To ensure accessibility, hearings will be held at the following locations: County Commission Chambers - Leon County Courthouse, Tallahassee, FL or Leon County Office of Human Services & Community Partnerships.

IV. ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

All program information will be available for inspection by interested citizens, including, at a minimum, CDBG Advisory Task Force meeting minutes, CDBG Application, Housing Assistance Plan(s), CDBG Program Regulations, Guidelines and Operating Procedures, Quarterly Status Reports, Anti-Displacement and Relocation Plan, and the Citizen Participation Plan. These documents are available during normal business hours (Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) at the Leon County Courthouse currently located at 301 South Monroe Street and the County's public website. This information will be available at no charge.

In addition, specific information will be disseminated, and technical assistance activities will be undertaken to inform the low/moderate income persons residing in the CDBG Target Area. Such activities include neighborhood meetings at community centers, churches or other convenient locations, community outreach by County staff, direct contact by CATF, and written information concerning the program. These activities provide excellent opportunities for interaction in a neutral setting between staff, CATF, and those residents served by the program, whereby citizen views and recommendations are strongly encouraged.

V. BILINGUAL OPPORTUNITES

If a significant number of non-English speaking residents could reasonably be expected to attend a public hearing, an interpreter will be provided for the language expected to be represented.

VI. RESPONSE TO PROGRAM INQUIRIES

All inquiries concerning the CDBG program will be promptly answered either by electronic mail, telephone, personal contact, or in writing. All written inquiries will be answered in writing. The response period should not exceed fifteen (15) working days from the date of receipt of the inquiry by the County.

CITIZEN COMPLAINT PLAN

I. CITIZEN COMPLAINT POLICY

It is a policy of the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) and Leon County to provide a means by which

persons may file complaints of substandard workmanship and complaints of discrimination in housing and/or HUD assisted contracts.

- A. Therefore, it is the policy of Leon County to enforce nondiscrimination practices in program policy, procedures or performance and to assure quality workmanship.
1. Any person that feels that he/she has been discriminated against because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or physical handicap, sexual orientation, or has a complaint concerning quality of workmanship should contact the Housing Services Manager in the Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships.
 2. All complaints should be filed with the County at the official address of the local government within forty-five (45) calendar days of the alleged unlawful practice. The address and phone number of the local government shall be the Leon County Courthouse, 301 South Monroe Street, 5th floor Tallahassee, Florida 32301 and (850) 606-5300.
 3. Upon receipt of the complaint, notice of the same will be served in writing by certified mail, return receipt requested, upon the individual(s) and/or company against whom the complaint has been filed. The County shall investigate the complaint/grievance and respond with written findings and determinations within 30 working days although conclusion of the matter may take more than 30 working days.
 4. Within ten (10) working days after service of said findings and determinations, either party may request a hearing if they are not satisfied.
 5. When a hearing is requested by either party, the appropriate hearing officer, appointed by the County Administrator, will conduct the hearing in accordance with applicable laws, procedures and regulations.
 6. Within ten (10) working days after the hearing, a decision will be rendered by the hearing officer and all necessary parties notified of the determination.
 7. The determination of the appropriate hearing officer will be submitted to the CATF for determination. The CATF has the authority to uphold, rescind or reverse the determination of the hearing officer.
 8. An appeal of the CATF determination can be filed by either party with the Leon County Board of County Commissioners no later than one hundred eighty (180) days after the occurrence of the alleged unlawful practice.
 9. Nothing in this policy prohibits a person from filing a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or any regulatory agency or court.
 10. Housing discrimination complaints may be filed directly by calling the discrimination hotlines.

State: 1-800-424-8590

HUD: 1-800-342-8170