**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |



**Public participation is a CDBG requirement. This guide includes detailed information on how to meet the federal requirements. Sample notices and handouts are included.**

**Review ALL the materials with the staff person responsible for public hearings and establish a timeline for completion. You can’t start on this aspect of your application too soon.**

To apply for CDBG funds, a jurisdiction must show it has involved its citizens in the CDBG application process and complied with the specific federal citizen participation requirements outlined in 24 CFR 570.486. The purpose of these activities is to inform residents and decision-makers of the availability of CDBG funds and to provide an opportunity for community members to present potential projects and offer input on proposed projects.

**√ *HELPFUL HINT*:** Plan for the required initial public hearing NOW! Decide the hearing date and then work backward to determine when and how the public announcement must be published to allow sufficient notice time and outreach.

If a jurisdiction intends to apply for more than one type of CDBG grant during the same year, it is advisable to contact the CDBG office to discuss how to coordinate these citizen participation and public hearing requirements.

**THE MINIMUM CITIZEN PARTICIPATION STEPS**

1. **Assess Demographics**. Review local demographic data to determine if it is reasonable to expect a significant number of non-English speaking residents to participate in the public hearing. Advertise and conduct the public hearing in accordance with this assessment.
2. **Develop and Publish Notice.** Publish an official announcement of the hearing, providing reasonable advance notice. A sample public hearing notice with required language is provided on page 48.
3. **Conduct Hearing.** Conduct at least one public hearing prior to submission of the CDBG application. This hearing must be held at a convenient time and location to encourage citizen participation. At the hearing, distribute the CDBG handouts on the availability and eligible uses of CDBG funds, and the CDBG citizen participation regulations at the public hearing. CDBG public hearing handout in English is provided in this guide. The Spanish version is available on the CDBG website under Guidance.
4. **Adopt Grievance Procedure.** Adopt a grievance procedure for the use of CDBG funds. The grievance procedure must provide citizens the address, phone number, and times for submitting complaints and grievances, and provide timely written answers to written complaints and grievances, within 15 working days where practicable. A sample grievance procedure is provided on the CDBG website under Guidance.
5. **Document Citizen Participation**. Complete and submit the Citizen Participation Documentation form with all necessary public hearing documentation as part of your CDBG application. Along with the Citizen Participation Documentation form, submit a copy of the hearing announcement, an affidavit of publication, documentation of outreach to non-English speaking residence (if applicable) and a copy of the public hearing minutes. If the official minutes are not available by the application due date, instead include a statement from the clerk indicating when the minutes will become available and send the minutes as soon as possible.

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS INFORMATION**

**A. What is a Public Hearing?**

A public hearing is a meeting of a governmental body during which the public is invited to the council or board of county commissioners, who will primarily listen and receive public input. The comments received go into the public record. A public hearing may be held as part of a regularly scheduled public meeting, but do not assume a regular council or board meeting automatically meets the public hearing requirement.

**B. Meeting the Needs of Non-English Speaking Residents**

The federal citizen participation regulations state that "public hearings shall be conducted in a manner to meet the needs of non-English speaking residents where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can reasonably be expected to participate." The applicant jurisdiction must review local demographic data and consider the potential impacts of the proposed project to determine the appropriate outreach steps and accommodations to meet the needs of non-English speaking residents.

If the result is over 10% for any single language, then additional outreach and additional accommodations are necessary as described in the Citizen Participation Documentation form and sample Public Hearing Notice to encourage participation from non-English speaking residents.

Of the 17 counties proposed to receive a 2019 CDBG Public Services Grant, only the following counties show over 10% of the population speaks English “less than very well”. This information is based on “Origins and Language”, Table Number DP02 “Selected Social Characteristics in the US 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates”, “Language Spoken at Home” section. Data on the number and percent of non-English speaking residents in a jurisdiction can be found on the US Census website at [http://factfinder2.census.gov](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **County** | **Language** | **Percentage** |
| Grant County | Spanish | 17.3% |
| Yakima County | Spanish | 16% |

**C. Public Hearing Notice**

When must the advance notice be made? A legal notice is generally published at least two weeks before the hearing date. The notice must meet the local public hearing notice requirements.

Where must the notice be made? – The hearing must be well advertised, generally in the official local paper. If it meets the local notice requirements, the hearing notice can be on an official on-line source. In addition, public notice can be made using community bulletin boards, local newsletters, billing statements, newspaper articles or door-or-door distribution. Residents within those areas in which CDBG funds are proposed to be used, especially the low- and moderate-income persons, should be encouraged to attend or provide comment.

What must the notice say? – A sample notice is provided in this guide.

**D. Public Hearing Logistics**

What must the CDBG hearing cover? – The purpose of the hearing is to obtain citizens’ views and respond to proposals and questions. The hearing must cover community development and housing needs as well as the availability of CDBG funds. This purpose is supported by distributing the required CDBG handouts. Distributing additional materials describing the proposed project(s) is advisable. Spanish versions of the handouts is provided on the CDBG website under Guidance.

Who must conduct the hearing? – The applicant county must conduct the hearing. Although some applications are developed by potential subrecipients such as community organizations or special districts, these organizations cannot conduct the hearing and have it meet CDBG requirements.

When must the hearing be held? – Prior to submission of the CDBG application and within 18 months of the application submittal date.

Where must the hearing be held? – The hearing location must be accessible to persons of disability. The location must also be convenient for persons likely impacted by the proposed project. This is particularly relevant for a county proposing a project in a community that is far from the county seat.

|  |
| --- |
| **√ *NOTE*:** **If funded**, an additional public hearing will be required towards the end of the project to review and receive comments on the project’s performance. This final public hearing should be included in your proposal’s Work Plan and can be conducted at the same time as the new public hearing (see item #5 of the sample public hearing notice). Also if funded, a public hearing would be required if activities are proposed to be added, deleted or substantially changed from the original proposal. |

**E. Grievance Procedure**

What must the procedure do? – The grievance procedure must provide citizens the address, phone number, and times for submitting complaints and grievances, and provide timely written answers to written complaints and grievances, within 15 working days where practicable. An existing Grievance Procedure may be submitted with the application. A sample grievance procedure is provided in this guide.