
2015-2019
Columbus Citizen Participation Plan

INTRODUCTION

The 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan is a collaborative process through which the community identifies its housing, homeless and community development needs and establishes a vision, goals and strategies for addressing these needs. The plan also identifies how the money received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will be spent over the upcoming program year – taking into account the regulations governing the programs – to meet locally identified needs.

The City of Columbus is required by law to have a detailed Citizen Participation Plan that contains the City’s policies and procedures for public involvement in the Consolidated Plan process and the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Housing Opportunity for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) monies. This Citizen Participation Plan must be available to the public.

Citizen participation is a vital part of the Consolidated Plan process. Citizens, non-profit organizations and other interested parties must be afforded adequate opportunity to participate in the planning process. This includes:

- Access to meetings;
- Access to information;
- Technical assistance as required;
- Public hearings to identify housing and community development needs and review of proposed uses of funds; and
- Timely response to complaints and grievances.

The following describes the guiding principles for citizen participation by the City of Columbus in the implementation of the HUD Consolidated Plan.

Encouraging Public Participation

The law requires that our Citizen Participation Plan both provides for and encourages public participation, emphasizing involvement by low- and moderate-income people—especially those living in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. Also, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) expects the city of Columbus to take whatever actions are appropriate to encourage participation of minorities, people who do not speak English, and people with disabilities.

Copies of this Citizen Participation Plan, as well as summaries of basic information about CDBG, HOME, ESG, HOPWA and the Consolidated Planning process may be made available in the languages of residents who comprise a significant portion of the low and moderate income

population. Currently, the city of Columbus has materials in English only. Residents needing materials in other languages are welcomed to contact City staff.

The Role of Low Income People

The primary purpose of the programs covered by this Citizen Participation Plan is to improve communities by providing: decent housing, a suitable living environment, and growing economic opportunities—all principally for low- to moderate-income people.

Because the amount of federal CDBG, HOME, ESG, and HOPWA money the City of Columbus receives each year is mostly based upon the severity of both poverty and substandard housing conditions in Columbus, it is necessary that public participation genuinely involve low-moderate-income residents who experience these conditions. Genuine involvement by residents must take place at all stages of the process, including:

- Identifying needs.
- Setting priorities among these needs, suggesting how much money should be allocated to each high-priority need, and suggesting the types of programs to meet high-priority needs.
- Overseeing the way in which programs are carried out.

The Various Stages of the Consolidation Plan Process

The policies and procedures in this Citizen Participation Plan relate to several stages of action mentioned in law or regulation. In general, these stages or events include:

1. Identification of housing and community development needs.
2. Preparation of a draft use of funds for the upcoming year called the proposed Annual Action Plan or the development of a proposed new Multi-Year Strategic Plan.
3. Formal approval by elected officials of a final Annual Action Plan or Multi-Year Strategic Plan.
4. On occasion during the year, it might be necessary to change the use of the money already budgeted in an Annual Action Plan, or to change the priorities established in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan. In that case, a formal Substantial Amendment will be proposed, considered, and acted upon.
5. After a program year is complete, the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) must be drafted for public review and comment and then sent to HUD.

The Program Year

The program year chosen by City of Columbus is January 1 through December 31.

COLUMBUS CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

The City of Columbus Citizen Participation activities will include:

- Community Outreach;
- Public Hearings;
- Access to Information;
- Technical Assistance; and
- Timely Response to Complaints and Grievances.

Community Outreach – In order to assure that all citizens have the opportunity to participate in the planning process, the city of Columbus will conduct community outreach on the development of the strategic plan. The objectives of outreach will be to:

- Obtain views of citizen, public agencies and other interested parties;
- When applicable, announce the availability of technical assistance and funds;
- Respond to proposals and comments at all stages of the Consolidated Plan submission process, including:
 - ◆ Identifying housing and community development needs,
 - ◆ Reviewing proposed uses of funds, and
 - ◆ Reviewing program performance.

Public Hearings – The City of Columbus will host two (2) public hearings every year. Typically, one of these hearings may consist of either: 1) a meeting to announce the availability of technical assistance and funding for current program year; 2) a meeting to review program performance; or 3) one of the city council meetings, where legislation regarding either the strategic plan or the annual action plan is read and/or considered for approval. Also, each year, a public hearing will be held once the draft plan is complete, to solicit comments on the strategies and proposed use of funds. Public hearings will be conveniently timed and located for people who will benefit from program funds, and will be accessible to persons with special needs.

Access to Information - Citizens, public agencies and other interested parties, including those most affected, will have the opportunity to receive information, review and submit comments on any proposed submission concerning any of the following documents:

- The proposed and final Annual Action Plans.
- The proposed and final Multi-Year Strategic Plan (the "Consolidated Plan").
- Proposed and final Substantial Amendments to either an Annual Action Plan or the Multi-Year Strategic Plan.
- Annual Performance Reports.
- The Citizen Participation Plan.

Interested parties may access these documents at no cost through the internet, at the Columbus, Department of Finance and Management, Grants Management website; or by contacting city staff. The city will make every attempt to provide these materials in a form accessible to persons with disabilities and in a style for individuals that do not speak English, when requested.

Citizens will be provided 15 days to comment on the City's CAPER, prior to HUD submittal on March 31st of each year.

Technical Assistance - City staff will work with organizations and individuals representative of low- and moderate-income people who are interested in submitting a proposal to obtain funding for an activity. All potential applicants for funding are encouraged to contact city staff for technical assistance. Additionally, city staff will work with individuals and organizations receiving Consolidated Plan monies to ensure that funds are being spent for their intended purpose and within the rules and regulations of the federal government.

Timely Response to Complaints and Grievances - City staff will provide timely, written responses to written complaints and grievances within fifteen (15) days of receipt, where practical.

SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS

Prior to the submission of any substantial change in the proposed use of funds, citizens will have 30 day notice of, and the opportunity to comment on, the proposed amendment using the citizen participation methods outlined in this plan and/or other methods that result in effective notice and comment.

A substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan is when one of the following decisions is to be made:

1. A change in the use of CDBG, HOME, ESG, or HOPWA money from one project* to another, and a change to increase or decrease funding or cost of a project by more than 20% of the funds that were originally allocated for that project. (This does not include projects that are completed under budget by more than 20%. The unspent balance may go to new activities, but citizens will need opportunity to comment.)
2. The elimination of a project originally described in the Annual Action Plan.
3. The addition of a project not originally described in the Annual Action Plan.
4. A change in the purpose of a project, such as a change in the type of activity or its ultimate objective - for example, a change in a construction project from housing to commercial.
5. A meaningful change in the location of a project.

*the term "project" refers to a budget line item (often called a "program") as delineated in the yearly action plan

For more information regarding the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan or to submit your comments, please contact Philip Carter at pdcarter@columbus.gov, or call 614.645.7492, or write to City of Columbus, Department of Finance and Management, Grants Management, 90 W. Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215 or visit the city's Department of Finance and Management website at: <http://columbus.gov/Templates/Detail.aspx?id=544>