

Appendix L: New Mexico Citizen Participation Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1994, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued new rules consolidating the planning, application, reporting, and citizen participation processes of four formula grant programs: Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA). The new planning process was intended to more comprehensively fulfill three basic goals: to provide decent housing, to provide a suitable living environment and to expand economic opportunities.

The Consolidated Plan involves a three-part planning process required by HUD. It comprises developing a five-year strategic plan, preparing annual action plans and submitting annual performance reports. These three parts are intended to furnish the framework whereby New Mexico can identify its housing, homeless, community, and economic development needs, identify resources (under the above named HUD programs) that will be tapped and actions to be taken to address the needs, as well as look back and evaluate the state's progress toward achieving its strategic goals. Programs and activities range widely from public facilities to housing development, homeless shelters or services and many other actions designed to meet the strategic goals. Completing these documents on time and in a manner that is acceptable to HUD ensures program funding. In addition, HUD guidelines require New Mexico to analyze impediments to fair housing choice, publish the study and report on actions taken to address those impediments. The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice demonstrates the state's efforts to affirmatively further fair housing during a period covered by the Consolidated Plan.

The precursor to the Consolidated Plan is the Citizen Participation Plan (CPP). The objectives of the CPP are to ensure that the citizens of New Mexico, particularly persons of low and moderate income, persons living in slum and blight areas, units of local government, housing agencies and other interested parties, are provided with the opportunity to participate in the planning and preparation of the Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan, any amendments to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan, and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report, as well as the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.

The CPP sets forth general policies and procedures for implementing and carrying out the Consolidated Plan process and the fair housing study's preparation, such as how the Consolidated Plan will be developed, dates and milestones along which the process will proceed and methods for citizens to offer the state assistance and guidance in the formulation of the Plan. Furthermore, the provisions of the CPP fulfill statutory and regulatory requirements for citizen participation specified in HUD's rules for the Consolidated Plan, the HOME program, the CDBG program, the ESG program, the HOPWA program, and the National Housing Trust Fund (HTF) program. In New Mexico, the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) administers the HOME, ESG, HOPWA, and HTF funds and the Local Government Division, Community Development Bureau within the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) administers the CDBG resources. MFA is the lead agency for developing the Consolidated Plan.

In order to ensure maximum participation in the Consolidated Plan process among all populations and needs groups, and in order to ensure that their issues and concerns are adequately addressed, MFA and DFA will follow the standards set forth in its adopted Citizen Participation Plan during development of

its Consolidated Plan, Action Plan and Annual Performance Report. Those standards of participation will also apply to the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.

II. TYPES OF PARTICIPATION

A. CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

The Consolidated Plan is a five (5) year plan that identifies the needs of low-income persons and areas of the state of New Mexico and sets forth a five (5) year strategy to address those needs, primarily utilizing federal housing and community development funds. The Annual Action Plan identifies the specific needs to be addressed with that funding each year based on the priorities established in the Consolidated Plan's five (5) year strategy.

1. Preparation

In order to identify the needs of low-income persons and areas of the state of New Mexico, priorities must be set in order to decide which of the identified needs should get the highest priority for funding. In order to solicit community input, which is essential to determining these needs and priorities, the state of New Mexico will:

- Create and utilize a survey to obtain community input on the state's housing and community development needs for the Consolidated Plan process.
- Conduct stakeholder interviews for the Consolidated Plan process with local public agencies that assist low-income persons and areas, including MFA and DFA staff and government agencies; as well as with private agencies, including local non-profit service providers and advocates such as health agencies, homeless service providers, non-profit housing developers and social service agencies (including those focusing on services to children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, persons with substance abuse problems, etc.).
- Conduct one (1) or more focus group meetings for the Consolidated Plan process to solicit input on needs and priorities.
- Solicit proposals from local governments for CDBG funded infrastructure projects that meet local community needs based partly on community outreach by applicants for such funding. (Applicants must hold at least two publicly-advertised citizen participation meetings prior to submitting an application to DFA for CDBG infrastructure funds. Public notices must include a print notice published in at least one (1) local newspaper of general circulation or post notices in prominent locations at least ten (10) days prior to the citizen participation meetings.)
- Issue a public notice for a public hearing on the needs of the community to inform the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan.
- Develop an assessment of needs in the state of New Mexico as well as a strategic plan to address those needs as part of the Consolidated Plan process.

- Issue a public notice announcing the release of a complete draft of the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan, a thirty (30) day review and comment period of the complete draft, and a public hearing to take place during the review and comment period. This second public hearing will be focused on the Strategic Plan and/or the Annual Action Plan.
- Take appropriate actions to encourage the participation of all New Mexico residents, including minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with disabilities.

2. Adoption

As noted above, the state of New Mexico will provide several opportunities for citizen involvement in the Consolidated Plan process prior to adoption. These include:

- One (1) or more focus group meetings on needs and priorities for the Consolidated Plan process.
- A public notice for the public hearing on the needs of the community to inform the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan and a separate public notice announcing the release of a complete draft of the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan, a thirty (30) day review and comment period of the complete draft, and a public hearing to take place during the review and comment period. Published notices will be in the Albuquerque Journal, the Santa Fe New Mexican, Las Cruces Sun News and other local newspapers, and on MFA's website (<http://www.housingnm.org/>) and DFA's website (http://nmdfa.state.nm.us/Local_Government.aspx) at least seven (7) days in advance of the hearing. The notice will list the locations where the document(s) will be available for review.
- The Draft Consolidated Plan and/or Draft Annual Action Plan will be available at MFA and DFA offices and on MFA's and DFA's websites. Copies of the documents will be mailed upon request.
- The Draft Consolidated Plan and/or Draft Annual Action Plan will be made accessible to persons with disabilities upon request. In addition, a reasonable number of free copies will be provided to citizens or groups requesting copies of the document(s).
- In preparing the Final Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public hearings or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final documents will have a section that presents all comments and explains why any comments were not accepted.
- At the end of the thirty (30) day comment period, the state of New Mexico will consider any comments and finalize the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan.

3. Amendments

The Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan will be amended whenever there is a change in one (1) of the priorities presented on the HUD-required Priority Table; a change in the use of money to

an activity not mentioned in the final Annual Action Plan; or a change in the purpose, location, scope or beneficiaries of an activity (described more fully later). The public will be notified whenever there is a “substantial” amendment as defined below:

- Changing the priorities contained in the Five (5) Year Strategic Plan of the Consolidated Plan.
- Funding of a goal not described in the Annual Action Plan.
- Any change in the described method of distributing funds in the Annual Action Plan to local governments or nonprofit organizations to carry out activities. Elements of a method of distribution are:
 - Application process;
 - Resource allocation method;
 - Threshold factors
 - Grant size limits; and
 - Criteria selection.

Any changes in federal funding level after the Consolidated Plan's draft comment period has expired and the resulting effect on the distribution of funds will not be considered an amendment or a substantial amendment.

There must be reasonable notice of a proposed substantial amendment so that residents of the affected areas of the state will have an opportunity to review it and comment on it. Notice will be made according to the procedures described herein with the addition of the following procedures specifically for substantial amendments:

- Issue a public notice upon release of the proposed substantial amendment announcing a thirty (30) day review and comment period and a public hearing regarding the proposed substantial amendment after the review and comment period. Published notices will be in the Albuquerque Journal, the Santa Fe New Mexican, Las Cruces Sun News and other local newspapers, and on MFA's website (<http://www.housingnm.org/>) and DFA's website (http://nmdfa.state.nm.us/Local_Government.aspx) at least seven (7) days in advance of the hearings.
- Include a section in the final substantial amendment that presents all comments, plus explanations why any comments were not accepted.

It may be necessary to amend the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan in the event of an emergency such as a natural disaster. These amendments may include funding activities outside of the method of distribution process described in the Annual Action Plan and/or reprogramming funds to meet community development needs that have a particular urgency. Therefore, the state of New Mexico, acting through MFA, may utilize its HOME, HTF, ESG and HOPWA funds to meet an urgent need without the normal public comment period, which is otherwise required for substantial amendments. DFA, through its Community Development Bureau, may administer the CDBG funds for urgent needs in a similar fashion.

To comply with the national objective of meeting community development needs having a particular urgency, an activity will alleviate existing conditions that the state of New Mexico certifies:

- Pose a serious and immediate threat to the health and welfare of the community;
- Are of recent origin or recently became urgent;
- The state and MFA or DFA are unable to finance the activity on its own; or
- Other resources of funding are not available to carry out the activity.

A condition will generally be considered to be of recent origin if it is developed or became critical within 18 months preceding MFA's or DFA's certification.

B. CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Every year, the state of New Mexico must submit to HUD a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) within ninety (90) days of the close of the program year. In general, the CAPER must describe how funds were actually used and the extent to which these funds were used for activities that benefited low-income people.

- There will be seven (7) days advance public notice of the availability of the CAPER prior to a public hearing.
- There will be a public hearing regarding the CAPER after a fifteen (15) day public review period.
- The final CAPER will have a section that presents all comments, plus explanations why any comments were not accepted.

C. ANALYSIS OF IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING CHOICE

HUD guidelines require New Mexico to analyze impediments to fair housing choice, publish the study and report on actions taken to address those impediments. The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice demonstrates the state's efforts to affirmatively further fair housing during a period covered by the Consolidated Plan. MFA will publish its Analysis of Impediments and reporting on actions to address those impediments to its website at <http://www.housingnm.org/>.

II. PUBLIC NOTICE

A. PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

There shall be advance public notice once any of the following documents are available: the Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan, any proposed substantial amendment(s) to the Action Plan or Consolidated Plan and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). Public notice requirements are laid out in the previous section.

B. FORMS OF PUBLIC NOTICE

Staff will ensure adequate advance notice of all public hearings. Adequate notice will include:

- Printing notices in newspapers representative of the state of New Mexico's population and geography at least seven (7) days prior to the public hearings.
- Posting notices on MFA's website (<http://www.housignm.org/>) and DFA's website ([http://nmdfa.state.nm.us/Local Government.aspx](http://nmdfa.state.nm.us/Local_Government.aspx)).

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings are required by law in order to obtain the public's views and to provide the public with the State's responses to public questions and proposals. Public hearings will be held only after there has been adequate notice as described in the Public Notice part of this Citizen Participation Plan. Public hearings will usually be held at MFA's offices at 344 4th Street SW in Albuquerque and may be held at other locations throughout the state of New Mexico. However, the final approval and adoption of the Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan and CAPER will be conducted at MFA's offices. All public hearings must be held at locations that are accessible to people with disabilities and provisions will be made for people with disabilities when requests are made at least five (5) working days prior to a hearing. Translators will also be provided for people who do not speak English when requests are made at least five (5) working days prior to a hearing.

IV. PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

As required by law, the state of New Mexico will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the data or content of the Consolidated Plan, as well as the proposed, actual, and past use of funds covered by this Citizen Participation Plan in addition to the Analysis of Impediments. Staff will also provide reasonable public access to records about any uses of these funds during the previous five (5) years.

Also, as required by law, the state of New Mexico will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to local meetings relating to the proposed or actual use of funds (such as MFA Board meetings).

A. HUD DOCUMENTS

HUD Documents described in this section include:

- The Annual Action Plans;
- The Consolidated Plan;
- The Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER);
- Substantial amendments to the Annual Action Plans, the Consolidated Plan, the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports or the Citizen Participation Plan; and
- The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.

B. AVAILABILITY OF HUD DOCUMENTS

In the interest of encouraging public participation, copies of the HUD Documents will be provided to the public at no cost and within one (1) week of a request. These materials will be available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, when requested.

C. LOCATION OF DOCUMENTS

The HUD Documents will also be available at the following locations during their respective, applicable review periods:

New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority
344 Fourth St. SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102
Telephone: (505) 843-6880 | TTY: 711

Copies of the final and draft versions of the HUD Documents are also available at MFA offices.

V. COMMENT PROCEDURES

The state of New Mexico will provide a period of at least thirty (30) days to receive comments on the draft Consolidated Plan and on any substantial amendments. The thirty (30) day period may start on the date the document is available to the public. The state of New Mexico must also provide public notice regarding the availability of documents and the dates of the thirty (30) day comment period.

For performance reports, the state of New Mexico will provide at least fifteen (15) days to receive public comments.

The state of New Mexico will consider all comments received, and all comments and responses will be attached to each document.

VI. COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

Citizens, administering agencies and other interested parties may submit complaints and grievances regarding the programs MFA and DFA administer. Complaints should be in writing, specific in their subject matter, and include facts to support allegations. The following are considered to constitute complaints to which a response is due:

- The administering agency has purportedly violated a provision of this Citizen Participation Plan.
- The administering agency has purportedly violated a provision of federal CDBG, ESG, HOME, HOPWA or HTF program regulations.
- The administering agency, or any of its contractors, has purportedly engaged in questionable practices resulting in waste, fraud or mismanagement of any program funds.

Residents may also present complaints and grievances orally or in writing at the community meetings and/or public hearings. All public comments, including complaints and grievances, made either orally or in writing within the 30-day public comment period, will be included in the final Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan. Such complaints or grievances for HOME, HOPWA, HTF or ESG shall be directed

to the Consolidated Plan representative at MFA. Such complaints or grievances regarding CDBG shall be directed to the Bureau Chief by contacting DFA at 505-827-4974 or 505-827-4950. MFA or DFA will respond to all complaints, in writing, within fifteen (15) days.

VII. ACCOMMODATION OF PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The state of New Mexico complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and will make accommodations for persons with special needs. Public hearings and the review of Consolidated Plan documents will be held at the MFA office, which is accessible to people with disabilities, or another accessible location. Additional provisions will be made for people with disabilities when requests are made at least five (5) working days prior to a hearing. Translators will also be provided for people who do not speak English when requests are made at least five (5) working days prior to a hearing.

VIII. WAIVERS OF CONSOLIDATED PLAN REQUIREMENTS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 AND MITIGATE ECONOMIC IMPACTS CAUSED BY COVID-19

Citizen Participation Public Comment Period for Consolidated Plan Amendment

In a memo released to all community planning and development field office directors, deputy directors and program managers on April 1, 2020, HUD waived 24 CFR 91.105(c)(2) and (k), 91.115(c)(2) and (i) as specified below, in order to balance the need to respond quickly to the growing spread and effects of COVID-19 with the statutory requirement to provide reasonable notice and opportunity for citizens to comment on substantial amendments concerning the proposed uses of CDBG, HOME, NHTF, HOPWA or ESG funds.

This 30-day minimum for the required public comment period was waived for substantial amendments, provided that no less than 5 days are provided for public comments on each substantial amendment. The waiver is available through the end of the recipient's 2020 program year. Any recipient wishing to undertake further amendments to prior year plans following the 2020 program year can do so during the development of its FY 2021 Annual Action Plan. Based on this waiver, the State of New Mexico will provide a 5-day public comment period in the event of a substantial amendment through December 31, 2020.

Citizen Participation Reasonable Notice and Opportunity to Comment

HUD recognizes the efforts to contain COVID-19 requires limiting public gatherings, such as those often used to obtain citizen participation, and that there is a need to respond quickly to the growing spread and effects of COVID-19. Therefore, in the previously mentioned memo, HUD waived 24 CFR 91.105(c)(2) and (k), 24 CFR 91.115(c)(2) and (i) and 24 CFR 91.401 to allow grantees to determine what constitutes reasonable notice and opportunity to comment given their circumstances. This authority is in effect through the end of the 2020 program year.

In-person public hearings are not required. Grantees may meet public hearing requirements with virtual public hearings if: 1) national/local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons; and 2) virtual hearings provide reasonable notification and access for citizens in accordance with the grantee's certifications, timely responses from local officials to all

citizen questions and issues, and public access to all questions and responses. Based on this waiver, the State of New Mexico will provide access for citizens to participate in virtual public hearings regarding substantial amendments through December 31, 2020 through MFA's website at <http://housingnm.org/resources/webcasts>. During the 5-day comment period, citizens can leave a comment on MFA's Contact Us page at <http://housingnm.org/contact/contact-us> in addition to emailing staff as described in public notices. MFA will not hold in-person public hearings through December 31, 2020 if national/local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons.