

**Columbia County
Citizen Participation Plan for the
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program**

PURPOSE

In order for the CDBG Program to operate effectively, and to address the needs of the citizens of Columbia County, the entire population must be kept informed. The decision-making process must be open and consistent with State and Federal regulations. To accomplish this, the following plan will be followed:

PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

1. Columbia County shall create a Citizen Participation Plan Committee, members of which shall be appointed by the Chief Elected Official and confirmed by the Columbia County Board of Supervisors. This Committee shall be responsible for implementation of the Citizen Participation Plan, as well as offering guidance in preparation of the grant application.

Columbia County shall oversee the preparation of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant application.

2. To insure responsiveness to the needs of its citizens, Columbia County shall provide for and encourage citizen participation. Particular emphasis shall be given to participation by persons of low- to- moderate income (LMI).

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

1. Columbia County shall establish a committee composed of persons representative of Columbia County demographics. This committee must include at least one LMI person.

The committee members should also include representatives from the local government, real estate, banking and labor communities whenever possible. This committee shall assume responsibility for coordinating all required elements of the Citizen Participation Plan. All committee members must be residents of Columbia County.

NOTICE OF HEARINGS

1. Official notice of hearings will be by public notice in the Portage Daily Register at least two full weeks prior to the hearing. In addition, the public notice shall be posted at the Columbia County Administration Building. These notices will include time, place and date of meetings, as well as a brief agenda.
2. All notifications of meetings and available assistance must be worded in such a way as to encourage LMI participation. In addition, all meeting announcements shall include where, and during what time, information and records relating to the proposed and actual use of funds may be found.

REQUIRED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings shall be held to obtain citizen views and to enable them to respond to proposals at all stages of the CDBG Program, including the development of needs, the review of proposed activities and the review of program performance. Hearings shall be held after adequate notice, at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries and with accommodations for the handicapped, and, if needed, for non-English speaking persons.

1. The first hearing will receive citizens' views and provide an explanation of:
 - a. Community development needs, objectives, and strategies.
 - b. The CDBG program including goals, objectives, application process, amount of funds available, timetable, eligible activities, etc.

2. The second hearing will receive citizens' views and provide a review of the performance of the funded activities.
3. The first public hearing shall be held during the development of the application for funds. The second public hearing shall be held during the implementation of the program. Columbia County will attempt to have at least one of the public hearings in the service area (if applicable).

PROGRAM INFORMATION, FILES, AND ASSISTANCE

1. Technical assistance will be provided to any citizen who requests information about program requirements. Assistance with the application process will be provided by Columbia County staff in the Community Development Department. A Columbia County staff member will meet with citizens on request.
2. Columbia County will maintain, in the Columbia County Administration Building, a record of all citizen participation efforts including minutes of meetings, newspaper clippings, and copies of notices and brochures.
3. Citizens will be invited to make proposals regarding the application. If suitable proposals are submitted in writing, a written response will be provided within 15 days. Every effort will be made to respond to all proposals prior to the final action on the subject.
4. Citizens may petition or request in writing assistance or changes.

Columbia County staff will respond to all such requests within 15 days after the Citizen Participation Plan Committee has met to discuss the request.

COMPLAINTS

Columbia County will handle citizen complaints about the program in a timely manner. By federal regulation Columbia County will respond in writing to all written letters of complaint within 15 days after receipt of the complaint. The nature and disposition of verbal complaints will be reported in a complaint log. The first contact for complaints should be made to the County Board Chair.

In addition to the above procedure, any citizen wishing to object may complain directly to the following address:

Attention: Executive Staff Assistant
Wisconsin Department of Administration
Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources, 9th Floor
P.O. Box 7970
Madison, WI 53707-7970

Written complaints should contain the following information and should be as specific as possible when describing:

- 1) The Program area being referenced: HOME, Community Development Block Grants for Housing (CDBG – Housing), Community Development Block Grants for Community Development (CDBG – Community Development), Community Development Block Grant Close Program (CDBG – CL), Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), etc.;
- 2) The event resulting in the complaint;
- 3) The dates, details, and reason for the complaint; along with
- 4) The complainant's name, address, and telephone number.

NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING PERSONS

Columbia County will regularly survey the municipality to identify non-English speaking persons and will make all special efforts to assure them equal opportunity in the citizen's participation process.