GEORGIA DEPARTMENT *of* COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

CDBG-DR Citizen Participation Plan In Accordance with 90 FR-1754

In accordance with 90 FR 1754 (the Universal Notice) and as amended, this document was prepared by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to meet the requirements of CDBG-DR funding for each allocation appropriated by Congress after a qualifying presidential disaster declaration. The Citizen Participation Plan reflects the Common Application, Waivers, and Alternative Requirements as specified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the Federal Register Notice 90 FR 1754 and any amendments, as applicable. DCA will ensure the Citizen Participation Plan meets the requirements of 24 CFR 91.115 or 91.105 (except as provided for in waivers and alternative requirements). Additionally, each local government receiving assistance from DCA must follow the citizen participation requirements at 24 CFR 570.486 (except as provided for in notices providing waivers and alternative requirements).

Outreach Summary

The Citizen Participation Plan is designed to ensure that citizens of the State of Georgia, particularly low- to moderate-income individuals residing in areas where these funds are proposed to be used, are provided the opportunity and encouraged to participate in the planning and implementation of CDBG-DR activities. In anticipation of receiving CDBG-DR funds, DCA incorporated specific citizen participation requirements into its CDBG-DR Action Plan. This plan outlines how DCA intends to meet these requirements. The objectives of DCA's outreach activities are to ensure that all citizens are aware of the CDBG Disaster Recovery funding and the planning process and have the opportunity to comment on or suggest proposed uses for the funds.

The State of Georgia will ensure all HUD requirements for citizen engagement are met. DCA will hold meetings open to elected and appointed officials from all FEMA Individual Assistance (IA) and Public Assistance (PA) declared counties resulting from the qualifying disaster. DCA will initiate outreach through the following mechanisms: conference calls, webinars, emails, and in-person meetings. DCA will also host phone calls and communicate with local elected officials via email to ensure consistent and ongoing feedback. DCA will also distribute periodic CDBG-DR status updates produced by the State's CDBG-DR Director, Project Manager, and/or Coordinator, and facilitate community meetings with local officials and staff to discuss program guidelines, planning, and to receive feedback from local jurisdictions.

Principally**,** DCA will ensure that the following requirements are met:

- Consultation during Action Plan preparation.
- Publication of the Action Plan and opportunity for public comment.
- DCA consideration of public comments.

Consultation During Action Plan Preparation

DCA will consult with states, Indian tribes, and local governments in the surrounding geographic

area during Action Plan preparation to ensure consistency of the Action Plan with applicable regional development plans. DCA will consult with agencies that manage local Continuum of Care, Public Housing Agencies, and HUD-approved housing counseling agencies, as applicable.

DCA may consult with other relevant Federal government partners and local government agencies, including state and local emergency management agencies that have primary responsibility for the administration of FEMA funds, as well as non-governmental organizations supporting community recovery. DCA may coordinate with State Housing Finance Agencies to verify that all available funding sources and opportunities for leverage are noted in the Action Plan.

Publication of the Action Plan and Opportunity for Public Comment

Publishing Action Plan

Prior to finalizing the CDBG-DR Action Plan or substantial amendment, DCA will publish it on the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery website for public comment. Residents, affected local governments, and other interested parties will have 30 calendar days to review the Action Plan or substantial amendment.

The Action Plan will include information on the amount of assistance DCA expects to receive, the range of activities that may qualify, and the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low and moderate income.

For those who cannot access the draft CDBG-DR Action Plan online, a copy will be made available at DCA Headquarters. Citizens who wish to participate in the planning process are encouraged to contact their local government or reach out to DCA via email at CDBG-DR@dca.ga.gov.

DCA will also consider any potential impediments that may limit or prohibit disaster-impacted individuals from providing public comment on the Action Plan or substantial amendments.

Public Hearing

DCA will convene the required number of public hearings on the Action Plan to gather the views of interested parties and respond to comments and questions based on the amount of the CDBG-DR allocation. DCA may conduct additional public hearings as deemed necessary. The form and structure of the hearings and convenings may vary to effectively solicit meaningful engagement and feedback.

CDBG-DR Grant Value	Minimum Public Hearing Requirement
< $20 Million	No public hearing requirement
≥ $20 Million but < $100 Million	One (1) public hearing required
≥ $100 Million but < $500 Million	Two (2) public hearings required
≥ $500 Million	Three (3) public hearings required

DCA may convene public hearings virtually (alone, or in concert with an in-person hearing). All in-person hearings will be held within HUD-identified MID areas and in facilities that are physically accessible to persons with disabilities. When conducting a virtual hearing, DCA will allow questions in real-time, with answers provided directly by a DCA representative to all attendees.

DCA will make every effort to hold all hearings, whether virtual, in-person, or hybrid (a combination of both virtual and in-person), at a time and location convenient to both potential and actual beneficiaries. Appropriate steps will also be taken to ensure effective communication with applicants, beneficiaries, and the general public. This includes making accommodations for persons with disabilities and appropriate auxiliary aids and services as required by 24 CFR 8.6. The meetings will be held in an accessible location, and sign language interpreters will be made available upon advance request. DCA will also provide interpretation services for non-English speaking residents at the meetings upon advance request. Stakeholders and citizens will be notified of the public hearing at least 10 days in advance of its scheduled date.

DCA will hold all in-person hearings in facilities that are physically accessible to persons with disabilities. Where physical accessibility is not achievable, DCA will prioritize alternative methods of product or information delivery that offer programs and activities to qualified individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate. When conducting a virtual or hybrid hearing, DCA will allow questions in real-time, with answers provided directly by DCA representatives to all attendees.

DCA will provide reasonable notification and access for residents in accordance with the grantee's certifications at section I.C.4. of the Universal Notice, as amended, timely responses to all citizen questions and issues, and public access to all questions and responses.

Consideration of Public Comments

DCA will receive comments on the Action Plan or substantial amendment for 30 calendar days after publishing, whether written or submitted electronically. DCA will consider all oral and written comments on the Action Plan or any substantial amendment. Any updates or changes made to the Action Plan in response to public comments will be clearly identified in the Action Plan. A summary of comments on the Action Plan or amendment, and DCA's response to each, will be included with the Action Plan or substantial amendment. DCA's responses shall address the substance of the comment rather than merely acknowledge that the comment was received.

Development of CDBG-DR Action Plan

Each Disaster Recovery Action Plan will include:

- The amount of assistance expected to be received, based on projected amounts provided by HUD;
- The range of activities that can be undertaken, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low and moderate income;
- Plans to minimize the displacement of persons and assist any persons displaced;
- An anticipated time schedule for submission of the Action Plan to the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and
- Incorporation of and response to public comments received during the public comment period.

Amendments to the Action Plan

As additional information becomes available and programs evolve through the grant administration process, amendments will be made to the Action Plan in accordance with 90 FR 1754 as amended. Updates to the plan may be substantial or non-substantial. Program changes

that result in a Substantial Amendment are:

- A change in program benefit or eligibility criteria,
- The addition or deletion of an activity,
- The allocation or reallocation of $3 million or more,
- A proposed reduction in the overall benefit requirement, or
- An update to the submitted initial Action Plan if the original submission was incomplete (i.e., program award caps or funding criteria).

Substantial Amendment(s) will be posted for public comment for a minimum of 30 days. DCA and/or MID area local governments will notify affected citizens through electronic mailings, press releases on websites, and/or social media. A summary of all comments received and responses provided will be included in the appendices of the final Substantial Amendment submitted to HUD for approval. The HUD-Approved Substantial Amendment will also be posted to DCA's public website.

Written comments on the CDBG-DR Action Plan or subsequent substantial amendments to the plan may be submitted to DCA via email at CDBG-DR@dca.ga.gov or mailed to the following address by 5:00 PM EST on the pre-approved date as set forth in the applicable Allocation Announcement Notice (AAN) in the *Federal Register*:

Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Attention: CDBG-DR
60 Executive Park South, NE Atlanta, Georgia 30329

For non-substantial amendments, DCA will notify HUD but not post for public comment. Each amendment, substantial or not, will be posted to DCA's CDBG-DR public website, not replacing, but in addition to all previous versions of the plan.

Citizen Complaints Process and Procedures

Citizens may file a written complaint or appeal through the CDBG-DR email at CDBG-DR@dca.ga.gov or submit via mail to:

Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Attention: CDBG-DR
60 Executive Park South, NE
Atlanta, GA 30329

DCA's goal is to resolve all complaints in a manner that is both sensitive to the complainants' concerns and achieves a fair outcome. DCA will make every effort to provide a timely written response within 15 working days of receiving the complaint, where practicable.

Complaints regarding fraud, waste, or abuse of government funds will be forwarded to the HUD OIG Fraud Hotline (phone: 1-800-347-3735 or email: hotline@hudoig.gov).

DCA Website

Publication and Accessibility of Required/Vital Documents

The DCA website will include copies of all relevant procurement documents, as well as all

grantee administrative contracts, details of ongoing procurement processes, and action plans and amendments. The following items will be made available on the website:

- Admin Action Plan (if applicable) and the Action Plan (including all amendments)
- Each performance report (as created using the DRGR system);
- Citizen participation plan;
- Procurement policies and procedures;
- Program-specific policies and procedures, including a projection of expenditures and outcomes;
- All contracts, as defined in 2 CFR 200.1, that will be paid with CDBG-DR funds (including, but not limited to, subrecipients' contracts); and
- A summary including the description and status of services or goods currently being procured by DCA or the subrecipient/vendor (e.g., phase of the procurement, requirements for proposals, etc.).
    - Contracts and procurement actions that do not exceed the micro-purchase threshold, as defined in 2 CFR 200.1, are not required to be posted on DCA's website.

These required documents will also be available on the grantee's website in a form accessible to persons with disabilities.

Website Accessibility

Section 508 Accessibility:
DCA's website complies with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, ensuring that its content is accessible to people with disabilities. Section 508 requires that anyone with disabilities must be able to access and use information and data on a website in a manner comparable to how people without disabilities can access and use that information and data, unless it would cause our agency an undue burden.

If you are using assistive technology (such as a screen reader or Braille reader) and have trouble accessing information on the DCA website, please contact CDBG-DR@dca.ga.gov so that they can be informed of the issue. Include the URL (web address) of the material you tried to access and your contact information. We will do our best to provide the information you are seeking.

Section 504 Accessibility:
DCA will work to eliminate disparities in the discrimination against individuals based on their disability in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (24 CFR part 8, subpart C). To achieve this objective, DCA will ensure that its outreach, communication, and public engagement efforts are comprehensive and accessible in order to reach as many impacted citizens as possible.

Performance Reporting

In accordance with HUD requirements, DCA will submit a Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) through the Disaster Recovery Grant Reporting (DRGR) system no later than 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter. QPRs will be posted to the DCA CDBG-DR public website within three (3) days of submission to HUD each quarter until all funds have been expended and all expenditures have been reported.

Each QPR will include information about the uses of funds in activities identified in the Action Plan, as entered in the DRGR reporting system.