

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM

**For
COUNTY OF ELK
And
“ON BEHALF OF” (OBO)
RIDGWAY BOROUGH**



Administered by:
The Elk County Planning Department
Elk County Courthouse Annex
300 Center Street, P.O. Box 448
Ridgway, PA 15853



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR THE COUNTY OF ELK CDBG PROGRAM
(including Ridgway Borough as “OBO”)

Program Background

In 1984 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enacted Act 179 establishing the State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The purpose of the program was to provide certain counties and municipalities with an annual allocation of grant funding to help develop viable communities through the provision of decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expand economic opportunities for persons primarily of low-to-moderate income. The Commonwealth receives its CDBG funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) pursuant to Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act 179, as amended.

Elk County is an *eligible county* entitled to receive an annual allocation of CDBG funds. The County’s funds are to be used to benefit the “non-entitlement municipalities” within its jurisdiction. Of the twelve (12) municipalities in the County, ten (10) are considered “non-entitlement” which means they are not eligible to receive an annual allocation of CDBG monies from either the State or HUD and therefore can apply for a share of the County’s CDBG funds.

There are two (2) *eligible municipalities* in Elk County which are entitled to receive an annual allocation of CDBG funds. These include the City of St Marys and Ridgway Borough. These communities have obtained entitlement status as a result of having a population of 4,000 or more according to the latest Decennial Census and meeting the minimum standards of physical and economic distress.

The Elk County Planning Department has been designated as the local entity responsible for administration of the County’s CDBG program. The Elk County Planning Department will also manage some aspects of the Ridgway Borough CDBG Program, this is referred to as “On behalf of” or “OBO”.

Citizens must be provided with information in a timely manner and be afforded a reasonable opportunity to participate in the CDBG planning and evaluation process.

The County of Elk shall comply with the following citizen participation requirements to maximize the efforts made for citizen involvement. In satisfying these citizen participation requirements, the County shall not be restricted in their responsibility or authority to develop and execute the CDBG Program. Elk County will make reasonable efforts to provide for citizen participation during the community development process and throughout the planning, implementation and assessment of all CDBG projects undertaken by the County and the “OBO’s”.

A. General Requirements.

1. Follow procedures which inform and encourage citizens to participate in the CDBG planning and evaluation process. Special emphasis shall be placed on procedures which encourage participation by low- and moderate-income persons, residents who reside in slum and blight areas, and residents of areas where CDBG funds are proposed for expenditure or are being expended. Additionally, participation is strongly encouraged from minorities and persons with disabilities
2. Provide citizens with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information and records relating to proposals for the use of funds being applied for as well as the actual prior use of CDBG funds. The County must take

steps to ensure that pertinent application/program information and records are accessible to the public, and that the public has been made aware of when and where material is available for inspection.

3. Hold public hearings to obtain citizen views and to respond to proposals and questions at all stages of the CDBG Program, including the development of needs, the review of proposed activities, and the review of program performance. The public hearings shall be held after adequate notice, at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries and with accommodation for the handicapped. The public hearings will be held in connection with each entitlement allocation. The County will hold a public hearing for citizen participation in the development of needs. A second public hearing will be held after a plan for use of the funds is published and prior to application approval by the Board of Commissioners. BOTH public hearings will be held prior to submission of the funding application to DCED.
4. Provide technical assistance, upon request, to groups of persons of low and moderate income, and their representatives, in developing proposals for use of CDBG funds. The level and type of assistance is to be determined by the County.
5. Provide a timely written response to written complaints and grievances. A timely response is one which is made within fifteen (15) working days from receipt of the written complaint/grievance.
6. Identify if and when it may be necessary to meet the needs of non-English speaking citizens. When such needs are identified, the County must meet these needs as part of the advertising and public hearing requirements.
7. Maintain citizen participation files which contain documentation that demonstrates compliance with all requirements contained in the Citizen Participation Plan.

B. Citizen Participation Requirements During the Planning, Development, and Submission of the CDBG Application.

In developing applications for CDBG funds, the following requirements will be met:

1. Provide public notice(s) of the fund availability and application deadline to County
2. The first public hearing to obtain citizens views and comments on how CDBG funds will be used. This public notice shall contain:
 - (a) The date, time and location of the first public hearing;
 - (b) The amount of CDBG funds available;
 - (c) The range of activities which may be undertaken with CDBG funds;
 - (d) The amount of CDBG funds proposed to benefit low- and moderate-income persons;
 - (e) An identification of activities that could result in displacement and the applicant's plans for minimizing such displacement. The notice must also state that the applicant is responsible for replacing all low- and moderate-income

housing units that may be demolished or converted. The types and levels of assistance that the applicant plans to make available to persons displaced by CDBG funded activities even if no displacement is expected to occur, must be explained at this public hearing; and

- (f) A statement that citizens may also comment on the applicant's prior use of CDBG funds.

3. Hold the first public hearing to elaborate upon the contents of the public notice(s) and to obtain citizen comments and questions.

At this public hearing, the applicant must explain its responsibility to replace all occupied and vacant occupiable low- and moderate-income dwelling units that may be demolished or converted to another use. The County's explanation must include the following:

- (a) Replacement must take place within three years of demolition/conversion;
- (b) Replacement units must be located within the County's jurisdiction (within the same municipality where demolition/conversion may occur);
- (c) The replacement units must be of sufficient size to house at least the same number of occupants that could have been housed in the units demolished/converted;
- (d) The replacement units must be provided in standard condition;
- (e) The replacement units must be designed to remain low- and moderate-income units for at least ten years from the date of initial occupancy.

The County must also explain that prior to obligating or expending funds that will result in the demolition or conversion of low- and moderate-income housing units, it will publicize and provide opportunity for citizen comment on the following:

- (a) A description of the proposed demolition/conversion activity;
- (b) The general location and the number of units by size that will be demolished/converted;
- (c) A time schedule for the start and completion of demolition/conversion;
- (d) The general location and number of units by size that will be provided as replacement units;
- (e) The source of funding and a time schedule for the provision of replacement units; and
- (f) The basis for concluding that the replacement units will remain low/mod for at least ten (10) years from initial occupancy.

4. Following the first public hearing, the County must consider all comments and views received for use of funds.

5. Provide public notice(s) on the second public hearing(s) to obtain citizens' views and comments on the proposed use of funds. This public notice shall contain:
 - (a) The date, time, and location of the second public hearing(s)
 - (b) Sufficient detail on the proposed use of funds to permit meaningful citizen comments at the public hearing;
 - (c) The deadline for public comment prior to the date that the County will meet to consider the application and where and when the proposed application may be inspected prior to the meeting of the local governing body; and
 - (d) The date, time and location of the meeting where the County will consider the approval of the application. (This meeting must be after the second public hearing and the deadline for public comment)
6. Hold the second public hearing to elaborate on the proposed use of funds and to allow for citizens' comments and questions.

NOTE: Public notices must be published or posted a minimum of five (5) days prior to the public hearings. Both hearings can be done in the legal section of the local newspaper or via local government website, flyers in utility bills, local newsletter, social media, local postings, etc.

The location of the hearings must be convenient to potential program beneficiaries and low- and moderate-income populations. Public hearing sites must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Public comment period will be 10 calendar days from date of meeting.

C. Minimum Citizen Participation Requirements for Modifications to County and County "OBO" programs:

When it is necessary for the County to modify approved projects, the following citizen participation requirements must be met.

Prior to modifying approved projects, the following must be completed:

1. Provide a public notice, at least once in a newspaper of general circulation, of the proposed modification and provide the deadline by which public comments must be received. The notice must also indicate the date that the County will conduct a public hearing concerning the proposed modification.
2. The County must consider all comments received as a result of the public notice and hearing, and if appropriate, modify the proposed modification.
3. Upon approval of the modification by the County, it must be made available for public inspection.

D. Competitive Applications

The Citizen Participation requirements for the Competitive applications remain the same as those for the Entitlement applications. Counties applying for additional funding

under the competitive process may integrate the public hearings for their entitlement and competitive applications. Documentation of this hearing should be included with the project file for the competitive application as well as that for the entitlement.

E. Notification of Non-Entitlement Municipalities

As noted, the County receives an annual allocation of CDBG funds to benefit its “non-entitlement” municipalities and as such will provide these communities with information about the program.

Prior to the County’s first public hearing, an information/application packet will be mailed to each non-entitlement municipality informing them:

1. that the County will be preparing its annual application for CDBG funds;
2. that as a non-entitlement municipality they have an opportunity to apply for a share of the County’s CDBG dollars;
3. the amount of funds anticipated;
4. the deadline to submit their application/funding request to the County.

Non-entitlement municipalities are usually given 3-5 months to come up with a project; have an income survey undertaken if necessary; and submit their application request to the County. Technical assistance will be provided as noted in the “general requirements” to any applicant as needed in developing their proposals. Through the CDBG coordinator, projects will be determined “eligible and “fundable” under regulations of the CDBG program.

F. Prioritization of County Projects

Upon receiving applications for funding from non-entitlement municipalities the CDBG Coordinator will prepare a list of projects and forward it to members of the Elk County Planning Commission Board members.

Applicants meeting the “eligible” and “fundable” guidelines of the program will have the opportunity to present their project and answer any questions from the Commission Board members or the general public. After the project presentation, the Planning Commission members will prioritize the project for funding and ask the CDBG Coordinator to make a recommendation to the Elk County Commissioners for funding. The Elk County Board of Commissioners will have the final vote on which projects are funded.

G. Contact Agency/Person

The Elk County Planning Department (ECPD) is responsible for the development and implementation of citizen participation of the CDBG program. The ECPD will disseminate information concerning proposed projects and status of current project activities; coordinate applicable groups participating in the community development process, and receive written comments. The ECPD will monitor the citizen participation process and proposing amendments to the CDBG Citizen Participation Plan as necessary.

All questions concerning the CDBG program including citizen participation in the community development process should be directed to the Elk County CDBG Coordinator who is located in the, Elk County Courthouse Annex, Elk County Planning Department, 300 Center Street, P.O. Box 448, Ridgway, PA 15853. The CDBG Coordinator may be contacted by mail; phone: (814-) 776-5335; or email: bltaylor@countyofelkpa.com.

H. Other Special Project Grants or Emergency Declaration

In the event that other federal special programs are awarded to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or if an emergency declaration is made that affects the administration of the existing federal programs, that are authorized under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, Cranston-Gonzales National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, as amended, and/or McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act 1987, as amended, and administered by DCED, the citizen participation requirements will be followed in accordance with either the statute or regulations set forth in the program. If HUD allows for or provides opportunities to request waivers to specific elements of the citizen participation process DCED will determine whether a waiver is necessary and seek use of the waiver authority in accordance with information provided by HUD. Once the waiver is granted by HUD to the Commonwealth, the special conditions will be passed to its grantees, if necessary, to streamline the citizen participation process in accordance with the regulations in place.

In order to take advantage of the granted waiver authority, Elk County will amend the Citizen Participation Plan to meet the minimum standards included in the waiver if the required action is not already covered in the Citizen Participation Plan.

We, the Elk County Board of Commissioners, hereby certify that the aforementioned Citizen Participation Plan was duly adopted by motion at a regular meeting on May 9, 2024.

This Plan will be utilized for Ridgway Borough's CDBG Program for all Fiscal Years that Elk County designated to administer "OBO" to DCED.

This plan originally adopted by the Elk County Board of Commissioners, August 29, 2013, at the regular scheduled Board meeting.

This plan reviewed and readopted:

March 17, 2015

February 16, 2016

May 5, 2020

May 9, 2024

ELK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

M. Fritz Lecker, Chairperson

Matthew G. Quesenberry, Commissioner

Gregory J. Gebauer, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Patrick E. Straub, Chief Clerk