

Citizen Participation Plan

1. Citizen Participation

Federal regulations require that Hillsborough County develop a system through which the community can participate in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of housing and community development programs. These regulations, which are found under 24 CFR § 91.105, provide opportunities for the general public, elected officials, and community stakeholders to actively plan and assess certain federally funded programs that have a direct impact on Hillsborough County's citizens.

The Citizen Participation Plan provides the County with vital guidance on development of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans, Substantial Amendments, and the Consolidated Annual Evaluation and Performance Report (CAPER). The County uses the Citizen Participation Plan on a regular basis throughout the year--it is a working document. As such, it provides guidance on the role of public participation for all of the programs that fall under the auspices of the Consolidated Plan in Hillsborough County, which include the following formula grant programs: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) program, and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program.

The Citizen Participation Plan is one part of the Consolidated Plan, which brings together the planning, application, reporting and citizen participation components for the three formula programs. This narrative will explain the Citizen Participation Plan and its applicability to the three programs and the ongoing role of citizen involvement.

Hillsborough County Affordable Housing Services (AHS) is responsible for administering the Citizen Participation Plan.

Purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan

Hillsborough County is required to adopt a Citizen Participation Plan that explains the County's policies and procedures for citizen participation in the Five Year Consolidated Plan, any subsequent amendments, the Assessment of Fair Housing, the Annual Action Plans, and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPER). [24 CFR 91 §91.105(a)(1)]

Although the Citizen Participation Plan is a Federal requirement, Hillsborough County is equally committed to ensure that the citizens of the County, particularly persons who may be under-represented in the public process, as well as other interested parties and stakeholders, are provided opportunities to participate in the planning and preparation of the Consolidated Plan, subsequent amendments, the Assessment of Fair Housing, the Annual Action Plans, and the CAPER. The main goal of this plan is to increase citizen participation, promote community partnerships, and receive input from residents

regarding the projects and activities funded through the CDBG, HOME and ESG Programs as well as actions taken to affirmatively further fair housing.

In particular, citizen participation is encouraged from persons with low and moderate incomes, persons living in slum and blighted areas and in areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used, residents of predominantly low and moderate income neighborhoods, as well as persons with special needs, residents of public housing, persons who are homeless, members of minority groups, non-English speaking persons, and persons with disabilities. The County provides outreach to these residents by contacting groups and agencies that represent or serve these populations.

Hillsborough County will also consult with public and private agencies addressing housing, health, social services, victim services, employment or education needs of low-income individuals and families as well as homeless individuals and homeless families and other individuals with special needs. Additionally, Hillsborough County shall consult with local and regional institutions, Continuums of Care, and other organizations in the process of developing and implementing the AFH and the Consolidated Plan. [24 CFR 91 §91.100(a)(2)(ii)]

Relevant Areas and Programs: The Hillsborough County 2021-2025 Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing covers the geographic area within the County limits of Hillsborough County, Florida. Specifically, the exact relevant geographic area includes the unincorporated County and the Cities of Temple Terrace and Plant City. The County is entitled to receive CDBG, HOME and ESG program funding from HUD during the program years within the five year time period covered by the plan. Hillsborough County does not have officially designated areas of blight or Community Redevelopment Areas within its jurisdiction.

Regular Public Hearings

The County will conduct at least two public hearings every year, as follows:

1. One public hearing will be associated with the development and review of the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plans. The purpose will be to obtain citizen views on housing and community development issues, steps taken to affirmatively further fair housing, and to provide comments on proposed projects. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(e)(ii)]
2. The second public hearing will be held in association with the CAPER to obtain citizen views on program performance, as well as housing and community development issues.

Applicability and Adoption: This Citizen Participation plan sets forth the policies and procedures that Hillsborough County shall follow to encourage citizen participation in the above mentioned federally funded programs and shall be used during the development and adoption of the County's Consolidated Plan, subsequent amendments, the Assessment of Fair Housing, the Annual Action Plans, and CAPER. Hillsborough County shall follow this Citizen Participation Plan throughout all

stages of the 2021-2025 Consolidated Planning process and for subsequent Assessments of Fair Housing. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(k)].

This Citizen Participation Plan was approved and adopted by the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners on August 14, 2021.

HUD Regulations: Hillsborough County's Citizen Participation Plan was developed in accordance with federal regulations as set forth in the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and Part 91 of Title 24 (Housing and Urban Development) of the Code of Federal Regulations (24 CFR 91), in particular §91.100 and §91.105 and 24 CFR 5.158.

Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing Process

The Development of the Consolidated Plan and the Assessment of Fair Housing requires the most citizen participation of any activity undertaken by AHS. Prior to adopting a Consolidated Plan or an Assessment of Fair Housing, Hillsborough County shall make available to citizens, public agencies, Continuums of Care and other interested parties information which includes the amount of assistance the County expects to receive (including grant funds and program income) and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount of funding that will benefit persons of low and moderate income. The County shall also make available to the public, public agencies, and other interested parties at the start of its citizen participation process or as soon as possible thereafter, all data related to its Assessment of Fair Housing. The data will be made available on the AHS website by cross-referencing HUD data, maps, and other supplemental data to be used in the Assessment of Fair Housing. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(b)(1)]

Once community and fair housing needs have been determined, based on the needs assessment conducted by Hillsborough County staff, and based on public input, the development of the Consolidated Plan and/or the Assessment of Fair Housing begins in earnest.

The following are requirements for the development of the Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing.

Public Meeting During the Development of the Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing

Before the Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing is developed, public meetings shall be held to determine the priorities and needs of the community and to solicit public input regarding the housing and community development needs including priority non-housing community development needs, as well as on fair housing issues in the region. The meetings may be held anywhere within the County but should be concentrated in areas that may receive benefit from the programs described in the Consolidated Plan and actions prescribed in the Assessment of Fair Housing, as well as in blighted or areas designated for revitalization.

Reasonable and Timely Access

Hillsborough County shall provide its citizens with reasonable and timely access to all local and county-wide meetings regarding the Consolidated Plan and the Assessment of Fair Housing. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(f)]

Location and Accessibility

The locations of these meetings shall be accessible to persons with disabilities. Special accommodations shall be arranged upon request with two business days advance notice. In addition to assessing the likelihood of attendance of non-English speaking persons at each public meeting location by reviewing census demographic characteristics and providing translation services at meetings deemed likely to require such services, translation services shall also be provided upon request with two business days advance notice. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(a)(4)]

Meetings will be held, to the greatest extent possible, in the geographic areas of the County most likely to receive benefit from the programs described in the Consolidated Plan and/or the Assessment of Fair Housing. Although it is not possible to meet in every low income area in Hillsborough County, every effort will be made to hold meetings in the major regions of the County. The meetings will be held in convenient and accessible facilities. The time and location of the meetings will be published in local newspaper(s) of county-wide circulation, and will also be advertised on the County's website.

Encouragement of Citizen Participation

All citizens of Hillsborough County are encouraged to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan and the Assessment of Fair Housing. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(a)(2)(i)] It is the policy and past practice of Hillsborough County to identify and offer various opportunities for citizens to participate in the Consolidated Planning and Assessment of Fair Housing processes.

The County shall undertake whatever actions are appropriate to encourage the participation of all its citizens, particularly persons with low and moderate incomes, persons living in slum and blighted areas and in areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used, residents of predominantly low and moderate income neighborhoods, as well as persons with special needs, residents of public housing, persons who are homeless, members of minority groups, non-English speaking persons, and persons with disabilities by contacting groups and agencies that represent or serve these populations. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(a)(2)(i)] Note: For the purposes of this Citizen Participation Plan, the definition of residents of predominately low and moderate income neighborhoods are those residents of low and moderate income census tracts as identified within the current Consolidated Plan.

The County shall also encourage participation of local and regional institutions, Continuums of Care, and other organizations such as businesses, developers, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations, faith-

based organizations and other community-based organizations in the process of developing and implementing the Assessment of Fair Housing and the Consolidated Plan. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(a)(2)(ii)]

Public Housing Residents: Hillsborough County encourages, in conjunction with and in consultation with public housing authorities, the participation of residents of public and assisted housing developments, in the process of developing and implementing the Consolidated Plan and the Assessment of Fair Housing, along with other low income residents of targeted revitalization areas in which developments are located. Hillsborough County shall make an effort to provide information to the local public housing authorities regarding the AFH, AFFH strategy, and Consolidated Plan activities related to its developments and surrounding communities so that said housing authorities can make this information available at the annual public hearing required under their respective Comprehensive Grant programs. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(a)(2)(iii)]

Jurisdiction responsibility: The requirements for citizen participation do not restrict the responsibility or authority of the County for the development and execution of its Consolidated Plan or its Assessment of Fair Housing. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(l)]

Consultations with Other Agencies

General

During development of the Consolidated Plan, the Assessment of Fair Housing and the Annual Action Plans, Hillsborough County shall consult with public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services and social services, community-based and regionally-based organizations that represent protected class members, and organizations that enforce fair housing laws. [24 CFR §91.100(a)(1)] Consultation shall include individual and group meetings, and requests for data related to housing, health services, social services, children, HIV/AIDS, the elderly and persons with disabilities and their families, non-English speaking persons and homeless persons. [24 CFR §91.100(a)]

When preparing portions of the Consolidated Plan describing the County's homeless strategy and the resources available to address the needs of homeless persons, Hillsborough County will consult with the following individuals and agencies: the local Continuum of Care, public and private agencies that address housing, health, social services, victim services, employment, or education needs of homeless individuals and families, publicly funded institutions and systems of care that may discharge persons into homelessness and business or civic leaders. [24 CFR §91.100(a)(2)]

Hillsborough County shall consult also with adjacent municipalities and government agencies, including local government agencies with metropolitan-wide planning responsibilities where they exist, particularly for problems and solutions that extend beyond a single jurisdiction. [24 CFR 91 §91.100(a)(4)]

Mailing List

Hillsborough County shall develop and maintain a “Notify Me” mailing list to communicate with interested parties regarding the Consolidated Plan, subsequent amendments, the Assessment of Fair Housing, the Annual Action Plans, and the CAPER.

The Mailing List shall be maintained as an open list. Private citizens, as well as public and private agencies representing Hillsborough County citizens, shall be added to or removed from the mailing list upon request.

The Mailing List shall include, but not be limited to: representatives of the State of Florida agencies (as may be relevant to the planning process), Hillsborough County, City of Tampa, City of Temple Terrace, and the City of Plant City. The list shall also include members of the Hillsborough County Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB), the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission, and the Public Housing Authorities within the County. Representatives from public housing resident councils, neighborhood associations representing low and moderate income neighborhoods, and public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services and social services (including those focusing on services to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, homeless persons and persons with HIV/AIDS and their families) shall also be included on the list.

Any person or entity may request to be added or removed from the “Notify Me” emailing list by calling 813-612-5397. The Department will request an individual's name, title, company/agency name, address, phone, and email address.

Public Housing

Hillsborough County staff shall consult with the Tampa Housing Authority and the Plant City Housing Authority (local public housing agencies participating in approved Comprehensive Grant programs) concerning public housing needs and planned Comprehensive Grant program activities to ensure that CDBG activities are coordinated to help achieve comprehensive community development goals. Additionally, in accordance with Assessment of Fair Housing requirements, Hillsborough County staff shall consult with the Tampa Housing Authority and the Plant City Housing Authority to solicit input on fair housing issues in the region, including the use of the Housing Choice Voucher program. [24CFR 91 §91.100(c)(1)]

This consultation will also help ensure that activities with regard to local drug elimination, neighborhood improvement programs, and resident programs and services, funded under the public housing program and those funded under a program covered by the Consolidated Plan or actions prescribed to affirmatively further fair housing in the County's Assessment of Fair Housing, are fully coordinated to achieve comprehensive community development goals. [24CFR 91 §91.100(c)(2)]

Hillsborough County shall make every effort to cooperate in providing activities with regard to local drug elimination, neighborhood improvement programs, and resident programs and services.

Continuum of Care

Hillsborough County shall consult with the local Continuum of Care to determine how to allocate its Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) for eligible activities as well as to consult with the development of performance standards and outcomes for projects and activities assisted with ESG funds. Hillsborough County will also consult with the Continuum of Care to develop funding, policies and procedures for the operation and administration of the HMIS. [24 CFR §91.100(d)]

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

Hillsborough County staff shall consult with community-based and regionally-based organizations that represent protected class members, and organizations that enforce fair housing laws, including local fair housing enforcement agencies. The goal is for this consultation to inform the County's Assessment of Fair Housing, its certification to affirmatively further fair housing and inform the County's Consolidated Plan. [24 CFR 91 §91.100(e)(1)] The organizations consulted with shall have relevant knowledge or data to inform the Assessment of Fair Housing, and represent an independent opinion for development of the Consolidated Plan, Assessment of Fair Housing and implementation of these plans. [24 CFR 91 §91.100(e)(2)]

The organizations described above shall, at a minimum, be consulted with during the development of the County's Assessment of Fair Housing and its Consolidated Plan, but the County shall, at its discretion, consult with these organizations beyond the minimum as described in this paragraph. [24 CFR 91 §91.100(e)(3)]

Priority Non-Housing Community Development Needs

Hillsborough County staff shall consult with adjacent municipalities, internal departments and government agencies concerning any non-housing needs identified during the development of the Five Year Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plans. Such adjacent municipalities and government agencies shall include, but shall not be limited to the City of Tampa, City of Temple Terrace, and Plant City. [24CFR 91 §91.100 (a)(4)]

Lead-Based Paint

Hillsborough County staff shall consult with local and State health and child welfare agencies and examine existing data related to lead-based paint hazards and poisonings, including health department data on the addresses of housing units in which children have been identified as lead poisoned. [24 CFR 91 §91.100(a)(3)]

Public Review and Comment Period

A public review and comment period of not less than 30 days shall be established for the receipt of comments from citizens on the proposed Consolidated Plan and the Assessment of Fair Housing. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(b)(4)]

Copies of Proposed Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing

Copies of the entire proposed Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing shall be available on the internet, on the County's website, at libraries, government offices, public places and other locations throughout the County for examination by the general public. Upon request, the County shall also make free copies of the proposed Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing available to citizens and groups. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(b)(2)] In the event of a Local State of Emergency, the proposed Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing will be available on Affordable Housing Services webpage.

Publication of Proposed Consolidated Plan Summary and Assessment of Fair Housing Summary

A summary of the proposed Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing shall be published in the County's newspapers of general circulation. The published summary shall describe the contents and purpose of the Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing and include locations where copies of the entire proposed Consolidated Plan/Assessment of Fair Housing may be examined by the public. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(b)(2)]

The summary shall encourage citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties to examine the contents of the proposed Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing and to submit comments. If available, the summary or a notice announcing the availability of the proposed documents shall be published in a bi-lingual or multi-lingual newspaper to provide non-English speaking persons the opportunity of notice.

Public Hearing for Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing

Hillsborough County shall hold at least one public hearing every Consolidated Program year to obtain citizens' views and to respond to proposals and questions regarding the Consolidated Plan, to review actions undertaken to affirmatively further fair housing consistent with the County's Assessment of Fair Housing, and activities set forth within the Consolidated Plan. The County may hold additional public hearings as needed. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(e)(1)(i)]

Hillsborough County shall also hold at least one public hearing before finalization of its Assessment of Fair Housing. The purpose of this meeting is to obtain the views of the community on the proposed Assessment of Fair Housing, publish and make available data related to the assessment, and publicize proposed actions to affirmatively further fair housing. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(e)(1)(iii)]

Notice of Public Hearing

Notice of public hearings for both the Consolidated Plan and the Assessment of Fair Housing shall be published at least 30 days in advance of the hearings in the County's newspapers of general circulation, the County website, and minority and non-English language newspapers, where available. Notice of the public hearing shall include the time, date, place and procedures of these hearings as well as topics to be considered. Said notices shall encourage all interested parties to participate and solicit their comments and input on the proposed Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(e)(2)]

Copies of the public hearing notices shall be posted at County government offices and public places throughout the County. Said notices shall also be forwarded to those persons and agencies on the Consolidated Plan Mailing List and other mailing lists developed to solicit input regarding fair housing issues in the region. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(e)(2)]

Reasonable efforts shall be made in the form of press releases and possibly flyers to inform residents of these public hearings including the time, date, place and procedures of these hearings as well as topics to be considered. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(e)(2)]

Time and Location of Meetings

The public hearing shall be held at a time and location convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(e)(3)] In the event of a Local State of Emergency, public hearings will be held virtually or in a hybrid (virtual and in person) format.

Special Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

Should the need present itself, Hillsborough County staff shall make special arrangements for the attendance of persons with disabilities who notify the County at least two business days prior to the meeting or Public Hearing and request said special accommodations. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(e)(3)]

Non-English Speaking Persons

Should the need present itself, a qualified translator shall be made available at all County meetings where a significant number of non-English speaking persons or interest groups notify the staff at least two business days prior to the meeting or Public Hearing and request said translation services. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(e)(4)]

Availability to the Public

The Consolidated Plan, consolidated plan substantial amendments, Assessment of Fair Housing, revisions to the AFH, and the CAPER shall be made available and accessible to the public. Public access includes the availability of materials in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request. In addition, English-Spanish bilingual staff shall be available to assist non-English speaking residents in assessing this information. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(g)]

Copies of the Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing shall be made available for public inspection and review during regular business hours at the Hillsborough County AHS office located at 601 E. Kennedy Boulevard, Tampa, Florida 33602. In the event of a local State of Emergency, documents will be available on the Affordable Housing Services webpage.

Public Comments on the Proposed Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing

In preparing the final Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing, Hillsborough County shall consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at the public hearings. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, shall be attached to the final Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(b)(5)]

Amendment Process

Substantial Amendment and Amendments to the Annual Action Plan, the Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing

Substantial Amendment Process for Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan

Hillsborough County shall consider the following changes to be Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan subject to a citizen participation process, in accordance with this Citizen Participation Plan: [24 CFR 91 §91.105(c) (1) and §91.505(b)]. A substantial change is defined as:

1. A change in the use of any CPD program funding from one eligible activity to another. [24 CFR 91 §91.105(c)(1)]
2. When any change exceeds 15 percent of the annual grant awarded to the County.
3. A change in the project location beyond a five mile radius of the original project location.
4. Changes to Priority Need Levels as identified in the Strategic Plan Priority Needs Summary Table.
5. An administrative decision to reallocate all funds allocated to an eligible activity in the Action Plan or other eligible activities or equal or lesser priority need level, unless the decision is a result of any of the following:
 - A. A federal government reduction of appropriated funds, or appropriations are so much less than anticipated that the County makes an administrative decision not to fund one or more activities.
 - B. The governor declares a state of emergency in the County and the County reallocates federal funds to address the emergency.
 - C. A unique affordable housing opportunity arises where the County administration asks that Federal grants be used to take advantage of the opportunity with the prior approval of HUD.

Changes in the use of CPD Program funds that do not meet the definition of a substantial change as defined above will be added to subsequent Substantial Amendments for the purpose of memorialization. All other changes will be considered revisions (non-substantial) and will be accomplished administratively by HCDD.

In order to streamline local citizen participation processes during a federal or state disaster, the Participating Jurisdiction will make disaster response and recovery a priority in its current Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans. In addition, it will ensure that these plans are aligned with this Citizen Participation Plan. In this way Hillsborough County will be able to charge pre-award costs under 24 CFR 570.200(h), 24 CFR 92.212 and 2 CFR 200.458 for the response and recovery activities not covered in an approved action plan [CPD-17-06].

Criteria for Determining Revision Requirements to the Assessment of Fair Housing

Hillsborough County shall consider the following criteria when determining the need for revisions to its Assessment of Fair Housing: [24 CFR 91 §91.105(c)(ii)]

1. A material change in circumstances in the County that affects the information on which the Assessment of Fair Housing is based. [24 CFR §5.164]
2. A written notice from HUD specifying a material change that requires a revision.

Availability of the Substantial Amendment and Revision to the Assessment of Fair Housing – Public Notice

A notice advertising the availability of the proposed Substantial Amendment or Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions shall be published in the County's newspapers of general circulation and on the County's website, and shall establish a 30-day public review and comment period [24CFR 91 §91.105(c)(2)] See below for greater detail, and the alternate conditions occurring during the *The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act* (CARES Act) (Public Law 116-136) related waiver for public comment period).

The notice shall encourage all interested parties to participate and solicit their comments and input on the proposed Substantial Amendment and Revisions to the Assessment of Fair Housing. The notice shall also include locations where copies of the entire proposed Substantial Amendment or Revisions to the Assessment of Fair Housing may be examined by the public. Upon request, the County shall also make free copies of the proposed Substantial Amendment and Revisions to the Assessment of Fair Housing available to citizens and groups.

Publication of Substantial Amendment Summary

A summary of the proposed Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions shall be

published in the County's newspapers of general circulation and on the County's website. The published summary shall describe the contents and purpose of the Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions and include locations where copies of the entire proposed Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions may be examined by the public.

The summary shall encourage citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties to examine the contents of the proposed Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions and to submit comments. If available, the summary or a notice announcing the availability of the proposed Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions shall be published in a bi-lingual or multi-lingual newspaper to provide non-English speaking persons the opportunity of notice.

Public Review and Comment Period

A public review and comment period of not less than 30 days shall be established for the receipt of comments from citizens and all interested parties on the proposed Substantial Amendment to the Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions. [24CFR 91 §91.105(c)(2)]

A relaxation of the 30 day comment period was offered by HUD in March of 2020, in response to the spread and effects of the Corona Virus 2019 Pandemic (COVID-19). As a result of the CARES Act, HUD waived 24 CFR 91.105(c)(2) and (k), 91.115(c)(2) and (i) in order to balance the need to respond quickly to the 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, or ESG funds.

Thus the 30-day minimum for the required public comment period is waived for substantial amendments, provided that no less than 5 days are provided for public comments on each substantial amendment. The waiver, sought by Hillsborough County and approved by HUD, is available through the end of the Program Year 2020 (September 30, 2021). Further amendments to prior year plans, following the 2020 Program Year, can be submitted during the development of the 2021 Annual Action Plan.

Publication and Public Hearing Notice for the Substantial Amendment

Hillsborough County shall conduct a public hearing to consider the proposed Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions. This hearing shall follow the public review and comment period, noted above. Notice of this public hearing shall be published at least 30 days in advance of the hearing. If available, the notice shall be published in a bi-lingual or multi-lingual newspaper to afford non-English speaking persons the opportunity of notice.

Notice of these public hearings shall include the time, date, place and procedures of these hearings as well as topics to be considered. Said notice shall encourage all interested parties to participate and solicit

their comments and input on the proposed Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions

Availability to the Public

The Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions shall be made available and accessible to the public. Public access includes the availability of materials in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request. In addition, English-Spanish bilingual staff shall be available to assist non-English speaking residents in accessing this information.

The Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions shall be made available for public inspection and review during regular business hours at Hillsborough County AHS office located at 601 E. Kennedy Boulevard, Tampa, Florida 33602. In the event of a Local State of Emergency, the proposed Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions shall be available on Affordable Housing Services webpage.

Public Comments on the Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions

Hillsborough County shall consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, electronically, or orally at the public hearings, in preparing the final Substantial Amendment and Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions. Questions (including requests to review supporting documentation) or written comments regarding the proposed Amendment and Revision shall be directed to Hillsborough County AHS. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, shall be attached to the Substantial Amendment and the Assessment of Fair Housing Revisions. [24CFR 91 §91.105(c)(3)]

Changes in Federal Funding Level

A change in federal funding levels after the expiration of the Consolidated Plan's draft comment period and the resulting effect on the distribution of funds shall not be considered an Amendment or a Substantial Amendment.

Annual Action Plan Process

Each year, Hillsborough County shall reassess the housing and community development needs in order to review and develop proposed activities for the upcoming program year through an Action Plan.

Consultations with Other Agencies and the Public

General

During development of the Annual Action Plans, Hillsborough County shall consult with citizens, public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services and social services, as may be required. Consultation shall include individual and group meetings, as needed, and requests for data related to housing, health services, social services, children, HIV/AIDS, the elderly and person with disabilities and their families, and homeless persons.

Hillsborough County shall consult, as needed, with adjacent municipalities and government agencies, including local government agencies with metropolitan-wide planning responsibilities where they exist, particularly for problems and solutions that extend beyond a single jurisdiction.

Availability of the Annual Action Plan, and Environmental Reviews of Activities Listed in the Annual Action Plan – Public Notice

A notice advertising the availability of the Annual Action Plan shall be published in the County's newspapers of general circulation and the County's website, and shall establish a 30 public review and comment period (see below). The Notice shall encourage all interested parties to participate and solicit their comments and input on the Action Plan. The notice shall also include locations where copies of the entire proposed Action Plan may be examined by the public. Upon request, the County shall also make free copies of the proposed Action Plan available to citizens and groups.

Environmental Reviews, conducted for activities listed in the Annual Action Plan, will be made available for public review by the following means: Floodplain Notices following the 8 Step process will be published in the local newspaper specifying comment procedures. Notice of Request for Release of Funds and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be posted at the County library located near the project area, at the project location by way of free standing or existing signage, and at the office of grant recipient, if feasible; posting will provide scope of work and comment procedure. Notice of Environmental Reviews will also be made available on Affordable Housing Services (AHS) website and a hard copy will be available at the AHS Departmental office. In the event of a Local State of Emergency the FONSI will be posted to the Affordable Housing Services webpage.

Availability to the Public

The Annual Action Plan shall be made available and accessible to the public. Public access includes the availability of materials in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request. In addition, English-Spanish bilingual staff shall be available to assist non-English speaking residents in accessing this information.

The Annual Action Plan shall be made available for public inspection and review during regular business hours at Hillsborough County AHS office located at 601 E. Kennedy Boulevard, Tampa, Florida 33602. In the event of a Local State of Emergency the proposed Annual Action Plan shall be posted on the Affordable Housing Services webpage.

Public Review and Comment Period

A public review and comment period of not less than 30 days shall be established for the receipt of comments from citizens and all interested parties on the proposed Annual Action Plan.

Publication and Public Hearing for the Annual Action Plan

Hillsborough County shall conduct a public hearing to consider the proposed Action Plan. This hearing shall follow the public review and comment period, noted above. Notice of this public hearing shall be published at least 30 days in advance of the hearing. If available, the notice shall be published in a bi-lingual or multi-lingual newspaper to afford non-English speaking persons the opportunity of notice.

Public Comments on the Proposed Annual Action Plan

Hillsborough County shall consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at the public hearing, in preparing the final Annual Action Plan. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, shall be attached to the final Annual Action Plan.

Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) Process

Each year, Hillsborough County shall review and report, in a form prescribed by HUD, on the progress it has made in carrying out its Strategic Plan and Annual Action Plan. This Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) must include a description of the resources made available, the investment of available resources, the geographic distribution and location of investments, the families and persons assisted (including the racial and ethnic status of persons assisted), actions taken to affirmatively further fair housing, and other actions indicated in the Strategic Plan and the Annual Action Plan.

This CAPER report shall be submitted to HUD within 90 days after the close of the County's program year. [24CFR 91 §91.520(a)]

Availability of the CAPER – Public Notice

A notice advertising the availability of the CAPER shall be published in the County's newspapers of general circulation, and the county's website, and shall establish a 15-day public review and comment period (see below). The Notice shall encourage all interested parties to participate and solicit their comments and input on the CAPER. The notice shall also include locations where copies of the entire proposed CAPER may be examined by the public. Upon request, the County shall also make free copies of the proposed CAPER available to citizens and groups. [24CFR 91 §91.105(d)(1)]. In the event of a Local State of Emergency, the proposed CAPER shall be posted to the Affordable Housing Services webpage.

Public Review and Comment Period

A public review and comment period of not less than 15 days shall be established for the receipt of comments from citizens and all interested parties on the proposed CAPER. [24CFR 91 §91.105(d)(1)]

Public Hearing

At least one public hearing will be held to facilitate public comment on the CAPER.

Public Comments on the Proposed CAPER

Hillsborough County shall consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing in preparing the annual CAPER. A summary of these comments or views shall be attached to the annual CAPER. [24CFR 91 §91.105(d)(2)]

Availability to the Public

The CAPER shall be made available and accessible to the public. Public access includes the availability of materials in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request. In addition, English-Spanish bilingual staff shall be available to assist non-English speaking residents in accessing this information. [24CFR 91 §91.105(g)]

The CAPER shall be made available for public inspection and review during regular business hours at Hillsborough County AHS office located at 601 E. Kennedy Boulevard, Tampa, Florida 33602.

Access to Records and Information

Hillsborough County shall provide citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to this Citizen Participation Plan, the Consolidated Plan, the AFH, and the County's use of assistance under all programs covered by the Consolidated Plan during the preceding five years. The public shall be provided with reasonable access to housing assistance records, subject to all local, state and Federal laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality, during the public comment periods. [24CFR 91 §91.105(h)]

Citizens, public and private agencies, and other interested parties, including those most affected, shall have the opportunity to receive information, review and submit comments on any proposed submission concerning the amount of funds available, including the estimated amount proposed to benefit low, very low and moderate income level residents.

The Consolidated Plan, any amendment thereto, the AFH, revisions to the AFH, the Annual Action Plans and the CAPER shall be made available for public inspection and review during regular business hours at Hillsborough County AHS office located at 601 E. Kennedy Boulevard, Tampa, Florida, 33602. In the event of a Local State of Emergency, the Proposed Consolidated Plan, any amendment thereto, the AFH, revisions to the AFH, the Annual Action Plans and the CAPER shall be made available on Affordable Housing Services webpage.

Technical Assistance and Application for Funds Process

Many organizations seek funding from CDBG, HOME and ESG programs through AHS. Hillsborough County shall continue its policy of providing planning and technical assistance, prior to the release of a request for a proposal (RFP), to groups representing persons of low and moderate income such as lower income neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations, including minority organizations, in developing proposals for funding assistance under any of the programs or actions covered by the Consolidated Plan and Assessment of Fair Housing. Hillsborough County staff shall provide technical assistance, to the greatest extent feasible, to all applicants or potential applicants and their constituents, prior to the release of an RFP. Technical assistance does not include or ensure the provision of funds. [24CFR 91 §91.105(i)]

Such technical assistance shall include helping individuals or groups understand the program requirements, determination of eligible/ineligible activities and providing suggestions on structuring new programs. Technical assistance may include the authorization of studies and formal research to identify and develop fund matching opportunities to make the most of existing funding. Assistance with completion of grant request applications and grant writing assistance in preparing proposals for the CDBG, HOME, and ESG program may also be provided prior to the release of an RFP.

Technical assistance is available by contacting:
Hillsborough County
Affordable Housing
Services (813) 612-5397

Comments and Complaints Process

Comments

Hillsborough County shall consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at public hearings, in preparing the final Consolidated Plan, an amended Consolidated Plan, AFH, AFH revisions, the Annual Action Plan or the CAPER.

Complaints and Grievance

Hillsborough County shall provide a timely, substantive written response to all written complaints received concerning the Consolidated Plan, any amendment thereto, the AFH, AFH revisions, the Annual Action Plan, or the CAPER within 15 working days, where practicable. [24CFR 91 §91.105(j)]

Comments or complaints regarding the Consolidated Plan process, an amended Consolidated Plan, the AFH, AFH revisions, the Annual Action Plan or the CAPER must include:

1. A description of the objection with supporting facts and data
2. Name, address, telephone number and the date of the complaint

To facilitate a timely response, comments or complaints should be addressed and directed as follows:

Consolidated Plan –Commentary
Department of Affordable Housing Services
Hillsborough County
601 E. Kennedy Boulevard
Tampa, Florida 33602

Complaint Review and Appeals Process

If unsatisfied with the County's response, a Complainant may request that a review of their complaint be conducted by the Complaint Review Committee.

The County shall set up a four-member Complaint Review Committee consisting of:

1. A staff member from the Department of Affordable Housing Services.
2. A member appointed by the Hillsborough County Administrator.
3. A member of the Board of County Commissioners – Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB).
4. A member of the Hillsborough County Equal Opportunity Office.

When deemed necessary, the County may contract with an outside service provider to conduct formal research on a complaint and to make recommendation(s) to the Complaint Review Committee.

After deliberations, the Complaint Review Committee shall submit a report upon its review of the complaint to the Complainant and the Director of AHS for resolution. Said report may include a validation of research and related data, a recommendation for funding during a current or future funding cycle, or a recommendation for non-funding and the reasons therefore.

If still unsatisfied with the Department of AHS' complaint resolution process, the Complainant may further appeal to the Hillsborough County Administrator at 601 E. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa, Florida 33602

or to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – CPD, Jacksonville Field Office, Charles Bennett Federal Building, 400 West Bay Street, Suite 1015, Jacksonville, FL 32202-4410.

Comments and Availability of Citizen Participation Plan

Hillsborough County shall provide citizens with a reasonable opportunity to comment on this Citizen Participation Plan and on any substantial amendments thereto. This Citizen Participation Plan and any amendments thereto, shall be public documents and available to any member of the public. This Citizen Participation Plan shall be made available in a format accessible to persons with disabilities and non-English speaking persons, upon request. [24CFR 91 §91.105(a)(3)]

To solicit review and input on the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, prior to its adoption, Hillsborough County shall distribute the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, or any proposed subsequent amendments thereto, to various social service providers and groups that represent or serve persons with low and moderate incomes, persons living in slum and blighted areas and in areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used, persons with special needs, residents of public housing, persons who are homeless, members of minority groups, non-English speaking persons, and persons with disabilities. This review process may occur as part of the public comment period for the Consolidated Plan and the Assessment of Fair Housing.

Copies of this Citizen Participation Plan shall be kept on file at the offices of Hillsborough County AHS located at 601 E. Kennedy Boulevard, Tampa, Florida 33602, and shall be made available for public inspection and review during regular business hours. An electronic version will be made available on the AHS webpage.