

CLARENDON COUNTY

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR CDBG-FUNDED PROJECTS

1. Clarendon County will make this written Citizen Participation (CP) Plan available for public review. This will be accomplished by a public hearing or by a publicly advertised Notice of Availability for Review at a location(s) convenient to residents of Clarendon County. Such Notice will be given to the public at least seven days prior to any public hearing regarding economic development, community development, and housing needs assessments required for participation in the HUD CDBG program.
2. All notices of public hearings will be published in “The Item” newspaper for general local circulation, at least seven days prior to the date of a public hearing. Such notice(s) will be prominently advertised in the non-legal, non-classified section of said newspaper. Public notices will include a statement regarding Clarendon County’s policy on non-discrimination.
3. Should a public health challenge, pandemic and/or national emergency be declared, and such circumstances require limiting public gatherings, such as those used to obtain citizen participation, virtual public hearings will be used as the platform for public hearings instead of in-person hearing. The published and/or posted Notices will include a statement regarding the meeting being a virtual meeting to include the toll-free telephone number and participant pass code.
4. Clarendon County will, to the extent determined necessary by its governing body, make direct efforts in soliciting the participation of the residents, particularly those low to moderate income residents, and other interested parties in the area(s) in which CDBG Funds, if made available, are anticipated to be expended. Possible methods might include requesting appropriate community leaders and public and private non-profit community service agencies to inform their constituents about the proposed use of CDBG funds; distributing of notices in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, particularly potential project target areas; posting of notices at U.S. Post Offices and neighborhood businesses, and radio or television public service announcements.
5. All public meetings concerning the CDBG program will be held at times and locations convenient to the citizens of Clarendon County, particularly to those who are potential or actual beneficiaries, and no meetings will be held before 6:00 p.m. on weekdays, or 2:00 p.m. on Sundays, or scheduled to begin after 8:30 p.m. The location of such meetings will be accessible to the handicapped or the announcement of such meetings will indicate that assistance will be provided to accommodate the special needs of handicapped persons.

6. Prior to the development of any application for HUD CDBG funding, the County will assess the community's economic development and housing needs, particularly those of low- and moderate-income residents. The citizens of Clarendon County are encouraged to participate in the assessment process and the results of this Needs Assessment will be documented and presented to the citizens of Clarendon County at one or more advertised public hearings. Citizens' comments will be considered in the preparation of requests for HUD CDBG funding assistance. An application public hearing must be held at least seven (7) days following the Needs Assessment hearing. An application for CDBG funds should include only those activities which address needs identified in the Needs Assessment.
7. At the public hearing(s) where the Needs Assessment results are presented and specific activities are proposed in relation to identified needs contained in the Needs Assessment, the County will also present information concerning the current CDBG Program, including the amount of CDBG funds available, the range of activities that may be undertaken with such funds, an amount of funds that may benefit low to moderate income persons, any proposed activities that are likely to result in displacement of persons, and the local government's anti-displacement and relocation plans.
8. Technical assistance will be provided to the authorized representatives of low- and moderate-income persons that request such assistance in developing proposals for CDBG funding. This assistance shall be limited to the provision of information concerning the current State CDBG program and shall be provided on the condition that the activities to be addressed in the proposal are consistent with identified economic and community development, and housing needs, State CDBG funding program guidelines, that CDBG funds are available for funding proposed activities, and that the governing body of Clarendon County gives its approval for providing technical assistance. Clarendon County will consider any proposals developed by authorized representatives of low to moderate income persons, following all the requirements for public participation; however, the final determination to submit the proposal to the State for CDBG funding consideration is the prerogative of Clarendon County, since the submission of any CDBG application requires approval by the governing body of the jurisdiction in which the proposed project activity will be located.
9. After the development of an application for CDBG funding and prior to submission of the application to the South Carolina Department of Commerce, a public hearing will be held to review the proposal and to solicit public comment upon the proposed activities. Public comments, if provided, will be submitted with the application.
10. If it is determined that 10% or more of the actual or potential beneficiaries of a CDBG project are determined to be non-English speaking, provisions will be made at the appropriate public hearing(s) for translation of comments and documents into the native language of the majority of the non-English speaking residents present. It has been determined that, at present, less than 10% of the residents of Clarendon County are non-English speaking and that there are no significant concentrations of non-English speaking residents within the community, based upon the most recent census data.

11. Clarendon County will provide for a timely, written answer to written complaints and grievances concerning the CDBG program generally within 15 working days after receipt of the written complaint. Grievances are to be delivered to the County Administrator, (803) 435-0135, who will then attempt to resolve the reasons for the complaint. If the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the aggrieved party, an appeal to Clarendon County is the next step available to the party. Complaints or grievances including State law or policy, State CDBG program guidelines, or federal regulations governing the CDBG program shall be directed to the South Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Community Grant Programs, for review and appropriate resolution action. Clarendon County will then correct the grievance according to the direction of the South Carolina Department of Commerce. An appeal of any written grievance action to the Division of Community Grant Programs is an option; however, the Division of Community Grant Programs will deny those appeals which involve the consistent application of the Community's local program policies relating to CDBG funds. Complaints involving local law or program policies will be resolved on the local level. After the above appeal process has been exhausted, the complainant may seek relief in the appropriate court of law.
12. Citizens will be provided with reasonable access to records concerning any project undertaken with CDBG funds. These records are available at the Clarendon County Administrator's office between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, upon the submission of a written request stating the reason for requesting access to such records. Confidential information normally protected under the State and Federal Freedom of Information Laws may not be made available for public review; for example, information not normally available to the public concerning personal or business financial statements, earnings or sources of income.
13. Upon the completion of any project funded with CDBG funds, Clarendon County will conduct one or more advertised public hearings to review program performance and accomplishments. At least one public hearing must be held when all activities are completed and prior to the South Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Community Grant Programs, closing out of the grant. Project records will be maintained for at least three (3) years following final close-out.