



Citizen Participation Plan

2024-2026

Prepared By
Florida Housing Coalition



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Purpose of Citizen Participation Plan	3
Encouraging Citizen Participation	4
Consultation	4
Encouraging Participation by Special Populations	5
Alternative Methods of Outreach and Engagement	6
Language Access Strategy	6
Development of the Consolidated Plan	7
Availability of HUD Data	7
Access to Program Information	7
Anti-Displacement	7
Public Participation Process	9
Public Hearings / Meetings	13
Public Comment	13
Notification Procedures	14
Plan Availability to the Public	15
Substantial Amendments	15
Annual Performance Report	15
Access to Records	16
Technical Assistance	16
Disaster or Declaration of Emergency	17
Comment, Grievance, and Compliant Procedure	17
Use of the Citizen Participation Plan	17

Introduction

In accordance with 24 CFR Section 91.105, Hernando County Housing and Supportive Services has prepared a Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) to provide for and encourage citizen participation in the process of preparing and implementing plans and activities related to programs funded by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Federal grant funds administered by Hernando County include the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program.

As a requirement of the above-named entitlement grants, the county must prepare the following documents:

- **Consolidated Plan:** The Consolidated Plan serves as the planning document and application for HUD formula grant programs and consists of a housing needs assessment, a housing market analysis, a three-year strategic plan, and the first-year Annual Action Plan. The three-year Consolidated Plan identifies local housing and community development needs and sets forth a funding strategy for addressing those needs.
- **Annual Action Plan:** An Annual Action Plan summarizes the activities that will be undertaken during one program year to address the needs outlined in the Consolidated Plan.
- **Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER):** A Performance Report that evaluates the progress during the program year in carrying out the activities outlined in the Annual Action Plan.
- **Fair Housing Plan:** The county is obligated to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH) as a recipient of HUD funds and has the option to comply with this requirement through the preparation of a fair housing plan. These plans may be called an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice or Housing Equity Plan. The fair housing plan identifies local and regional fair housing issues and set goals for improving access to equitable housing particularly for members of protected classes.

Purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan

The CPP is intended to promote a community-wide dialogue to identify housing and community development priorities to be incorporated into the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan and to provide transparency about program performance and impact. The Citizen Participation Plan provides a guide for citizens and organizations to participate in an advisory role in assisting with the development of the HUD regulatory plans and reports mentioned above. The CPP sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation, which are designed to maximize the opportunity for engagement in the community development process. The CPP describes herein the process the county will use to collect public input and involve the public in the preparation of the required HUD regulatory plans.

Encouraging Citizen Participation

In the preparation of the Consolidated Plan and other HUD regulatory documents, the county will consult with the applicable populations and organizations necessary to complete the plans. The public and stakeholders will be invited to participate in all aspects of plan development, however the county may consult stakeholders at different stages of development and ask for participation in specific components of the plans.

Consultation

Special emphasis has been placed on encouraging participation by:

General Public

- persons of low and moderate incomes
- residents of blighted neighborhoods and areas where housing and community development funds are utilized
- residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods identified by Hernando County
- minority populations
- non-English speaking persons
- individuals with disabilities
- residents of public housing

Agencies and Organizations

- local and regional institutions
- Continuums of Care
- businesses
- developers
- nonprofit organizations
- philanthropic organizations
- community-based and faith-based organizations
- broadband internet service providers
- emergency management organizations

Public Housing Authority

- residents of public and assisted housing developments
- resident advisory boards
- resident councils
- resident management corporations
- other low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas in which the developments are located.

Encouraging Participation by Special Populations

Low- and Moderate-Income Persons

The public participation process outlined herein is designed to promote participation by low- and moderate-income citizens, as well as residents of blighted neighborhoods and CDBG or HOME project areas. The county may take additional steps to further promote participation by such groups, or to target program information to these persons should officials feel that such persons may otherwise be excluded or should additional action be deemed necessary. Activities to promote additional participation may include posting of notices in blighted neighborhoods and in places frequented by low- and moderate-income persons and holding public hearings in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods or areas of existing or proposed CDBG or HOME project activities.

Individuals with Disabilities

Persons with special needs who require assistance to participate in public hearings or meetings are requested to notify the county's ADA Coordinator at (352) 754-4776 or (352) 754-4025, at least three business days in advance of the event.

The county will consult with local disability advocacy groups to identify the most effective ways to reach persons with different types of disabilities, and if willing, use their communication networks to provide notice of upcoming events of interest to the disability community. The county will also make efforts to utilize tools like the Online Suite for Effectively Engaging Individuals with Disabilities in Consolidated Planning (hosted by Florida Housing Coalition), a platform that provides tools for Entitlement Communities to increase participation by the disability community in the Consolidated Plan process.

The locations of all public hearings as described herein shall be made accessible to individuals with disabilities. The county shall provide a sign language interpreter whenever the ADA Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more hearing impaired individuals will be in attendance. The county shall provide reasonable accommodation whenever the ADA Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more hearing or visually impaired persons will attend a meeting. Additionally, the county shall provide reasonable accommodations whenever the ADA Coordinator is provided reasonable advance notification that one or more persons with mobility, or developmental disabilities will be in attendance.

Stakeholders

Federal regulations require Hernando County to consult with public and private agencies when developing and implementing the Consolidated Plan. Hernando County will encourage the participation of local and regional institutions, Continuums of Care, businesses, developers, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community-based and faith-based organizations in the process of developing and implementing the Consolidated Plan and Fair Housing Plan.

Public Housing Agencies

Hernando County will encourage, in conjunction with consultation with public housing agencies, the participation of residents of public and assisted housing developments (including any resident advisory boards, resident councils, and resident management corporations) in the process of developing and implementing the Consolidated Plan and Fair Housing Plan, along with other low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas in which the developments are located. The county will provide information to the Gainesville Housing Authority (GHA) about Consolidated Plan, Fair Housing Plan, and AFFH activities related to its developments and surrounding communities so that the housing authority can make this information available at the annual public hearing(s) required for the PHA Plan.

Alternative Methods of Outreach and Engagement

When possible, Hernando County will explore alternative public involvement techniques and quantitative ways to measure efforts that encourage citizen participation in a shared vision for change in communities and neighborhoods, and the review of program performance. Engagement efforts will include traditional methods including notices in local news circulations and on the county's official website, but the county will make concerted efforts to also provide non-traditional methods of outreach and engagement. These methods may include a hybrid approach of on-site and virtual public hearings/meetings and the use of social media and/or virtual engagement web pages for the distribution of public notices and to solicit participation by the public and stakeholders. The county may also use the latest technology or tools to increase participation by underserved and marginalized populations.

Alternative efforts may include:

Outreach Efforts

- Social media
- Local media outlets
- Listservs
- Utility inserts
- Flyers

Engagement Efforts

- Surveys
- Virtual engagement experiences
- Polls
- Questionnaires
- Interviews

Language Access Strategy

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the county will take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access to benefits, services, information, and other important aspects of the programs

covered by the HUD regulatory plans and related documents for individuals with Limited English Proficiency.

With advanced notice to the Department of Housing and Supportive Services, the county will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate non-English speaking citizens expected to participate in a public hearing or meeting. Printed notices of such meetings will be prepared in the language of the non-English speaking citizens and the county will employ the services of an interpreter to assist in translating the event for the benefit of the non-English speaking citizens.

Development of the Consolidated Plan

The Consolidated Plan establishes Hernando County's long-range strategy and three-year investment plan for community development, housing, and homeless services. The Consolidated Plan allocates federal resources from the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME).

Hernando County will meet the following minimum requirements when developing the Consolidated Plan:

Availability of HUD Data

As soon as feasible after the start of the public participation process Hernando County will make the HUD-provided data and any other supplemental information the jurisdiction plans to incorporate into its consolidated plan available to its residents, public agencies, and other interested parties. Hernando County may make the HUD-provided data available to the public by cross-referencing to the data on HUD's website.

Access to Program Information

During the annual planning process the county shall make program information available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties. Through a public notice or engagement meetings, the county will provide information on anticipated receipt of grant funds, including an estimate of the amount of CDBG, HOME, and program income expected in the program year along with a description of the range and types of activities than can be funded with these resources. The county will provide an estimate of the amount of these funds that will benefit low- and moderate-income people. This transfer of program information may align with Annual Action Plan community engagement meetings or with the county's Request for Applications process for public service funding.

Anti-Displacement

The county seeks to minimize, to the greatest extent feasible, the involuntary displacement, whether permanently or temporarily, of persons (families, individuals, businesses, nonprofit organizations, or farms) from projects funded with CDBG or HOME involving single or multi-family rehabilitation, acquisition, commercial rehabilitation, demolition, economic development, or capital improvement activities.

When carrying out assisted activities under the CDBG and HOME programs, the county will take appropriate steps to minimize displacement of families and individuals from their homes and neighborhoods. The county will consider taking the following steps to minimize the direct and indirect displacement of persons:

1. Assess proposed projects to determine potential displacement and consider any alternatives that may minimize displacement. This assessment may include:
 - a. Give priority to rehabilitation of housing as opposed to demolition
 - b. Demolish or convert units that are vacant and not able to be occupied
 - c. Limit the undertaking of projects that minimize benefit due to excessive displacement
2. Phase the proposed rehabilitation projects to allow displaced persons in multi-family housing to remain in the building during and after rehabilitation.
3. Assist in identifying temporary relocation housing facilities for persons displaced short-term.
4. Evaluate each project closely to ensure that established owners and tenants do not incur excessive financial burden to meet local housing codes.
5. Require a displacement mitigation or relocation plan for CDBG and HOME applications proposing displacement and relocation activities.
6. Require the project's developer to assist displaced persons to remain in the neighborhood by:
 - a. Establishing on-site counseling centers to provide information on benefits available
 - b. Providing Section 8 vouchers to low/mod families who would otherwise be unable to afford new housing
 - c. Coordinating with area Section 8 cooperating landlords, media, Chamber of Commerce, and local realtors to locate vacancies for persons facing displacement
 - d. Giving priority to displaced persons to return on-site

If displacement is precipitated by activities that require the acquisition (whole or in part) or rehabilitation of real property directly by Hernando County, all appropriate benefits as required by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 and amendments, the "Uniform Act", or the county's Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan under Section 104(d) shall be provided to the displaced person or persons. Information about these programs will be provided to all persons who may potentially be displaced in the form of informational brochures on these programs and detailed explanations by county staff.

Public Participation Process

In the development of the county's HUD regulatory plans and implementation of HUD programs, the county will conduct an intentional and inclusive public participation process focused on promoting equity in programs and increasing participation by underrepresented and marginalized populations. The county will follow the public participation guidelines below in preparing the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Fair Housing Plan, Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report, and any related Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan. The number of public hearings required depends on the type of plan, amendment process, or performance report considered, but the county intends to engage citizens at the onset of the project's planning process.

The table below summarizes the public hearing, meeting, notification, comment period, and submittal requirements by type of plan, amendment process or performance report considered:

Public Participation Table					
TYPE OF SUBMITTAL:	Consolidated Plan (including Year 1 Annual Action Plan)	Annual Action Plan	Fair Housing Plan	Substantial Amendments	Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)
<i>Description</i>	Once every three (3) years, Hernando County must develop a Consolidated Plan that identifies goals and strategies for providing affordable and decent housing, a safe and suitable living environment and adequate economic opportunities for program-eligible populations. The Consolidated Plan includes the Year 1 Annual Action Plan.	Each program year, Hernando County must develop an Annual Action Plan that identifies sources of funding and projects to be completed during the program year to implement the Consolidated Plan. The Year 1 Annual Action Plan is included in the Consolidated Plan process. The remaining Year 2 through Year 5 Annual Action Plans are developed subsequently.	Hernando County is obligated as part of the Consolidated Plan to certify Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH). An option for complying with this certification is to develop a Fair Housing Plan to identify fair housing issues in the jurisdiction and region. The Fair Housing Plan sets goals to overcome fair housing issues and informs subsequent housing and community development planning processes.	A substantial change in the proposed use of program funds requires that amendments to the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan be submitted to HUD.	Each program year, Hernando County will issue a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) showing how the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan were implemented. The CAPER includes a description of the resources available and investment of those resources in terms of geographic distribution and populations assisted.
<i>Public Hearings</i>	Minimum of two (2) public hearings to encourage citizen participation, the first to be held early in the planning process and prior to publishing the plan for public comment and the second to be held after the draft plan	Minimum of one (1) public hearing after the draft plan has been published for comment but prior to submitting to HUD.	Public Hearings are currently not required by HUD regulation for the preparation of a Fair Housing Plan. At the county's discretion, a minimum of one (1) public hearing to adopt the plan.	Consolidated Plan/Fair Housing Plan Amendments: Same as for the Consolidated Plan Action Plan Amendments: Same as for the Annual Action Plan.	Minimum of one (1) public hearing after the draft plan has been published for comment but prior to submitting to HUD.

Public Participation Table					
Type of Submittal:	Consolidated Plan (including Year 1 Annual Action Plan)	Annual Action Plan	Fair Housing Plan	Substantial Amendments	Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)
	has been published for comment but prior to submitting to HUD.				
Public Meetings	Minimum of two (2) public meetings with neighborhoods and/or stakeholder groups, to be held early in the planning process	Minimum of one (1) public meeting with neighborhoods, stakeholder groups, and/or sub-recipients to be held early in the planning process	Minimum of two (2) public meetings with neighborhoods and/or stakeholder groups, to be held early in the planning process	Consolidated Plan Amendments: Same as for the Consolidated Plan Action Plan Amendments: Same as for the Annual Action Plan.	Public meetings are not required by HUD regulation for the preparation of the CAPER.
Published Notice of Plan Availability for Review/Comment	Minimum of one (1) notice of plan availability for public review and comment, including a summary of the plans and locations and hours of availability; published in a newspaper of general circulation and any smaller publications serving program-eligible populations; and published at the start of the 30-day comment period.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Minimum of one (1) notice of CAPER availability for public review and comment; including a summary of the CAPER; locations and hours of availability; published in a newspaper of general circulation and any smaller publications serving program-eligible populations; and published at the start of the 15-day comment period.
Comment Period	Hernando County will make a draft of the plans	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Hernando County will make a draft of the

Public Participation Table					
Type of Submittal:	Consolidated Plan (including Year 1 Annual Action Plan)	Annual Action Plan	Fair Housing Plan	Substantial Amendments	Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)
	available for a 30-day comment period. Copies of the draft plans will be made available for review at the Clerk of the Commission's office, Housing and Supportive Services offices and public libraries serving program-eligible populations. The plans will also be posted to the county's website and a reasonable number of additional copies will be provided to citizens upon request.				CAPER available for a 15-day public comment period. Copies of the draft CAPER will be made available for review at the Clerk of the Commission's office, Housing and Supportive Services offices, and public libraries serving program-eligible populations. The CAPER will also be posted to the county's website and a reasonable number of copies will be provided to citizens upon request.
<i>Submission of the Plan</i>	Submitted to HUD no later than 45 days prior to the start of the program year, including all HUD-required forms and certifications.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Currently not required by HUD regulation to submit the Fair Housing Plan for approval.	Consolidated Plan/Action Plan Substantial amendments may be submitted up to six (6) times per program year.	Submitted to HUD by December 30th or within 90 days of the close of the program year. Hernando County's program year begins on October 1st and ends on September 30th.

Public Hearings/Meetings

In accordance with 24 CFR 570.486, the county will hold at least two public hearings each year to obtain views of citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties on housing and community development needs, development of proposed activities, and review of program performance.

The public hearings are conducted at a minimum of two different stages of the program year. The county will hold at least one of these hearings before the proposed Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan is published for public comment. Public hearings will be held in person.

The county will also hold a minimum of two public meetings during the development of the Consolidated Plan. To maximize participation, the county will implement a hybrid engagement approach for public meetings. Meetings may be held in person in the target neighborhoods as identified in the Consolidated Plan and Action Plans or virtually using ZOOM, WEBEX or an available public access application.

These meetings will focus on topics of special interest to the neighborhood, the public or the agency, and may be held to obtain feedback about ideas prior to the publication of plans or documents. Public meetings will be open to residents, housing and homeless partners, nonprofit organizations, service providers, businesses and other groups, and individuals to make sure there is on-going communication and transparency in the transfer of information.

The purposes of the public hearings and public meetings are to:

- Receive comments from citizens, public agencies, community members and other interested parties;
- Respond to proposals and comments at all stages of the submittal process;
- Identify housing and community development needs;
- Review the proposed use of funds;
- Review program amendments; and
- Review program performance.

Public hearings and meetings will be held in buildings accessible to all persons (for in person), and at times and locations convenient to stakeholders and potential beneficiaries of each federally funded program. These public hearings and meetings will address the needs of the community, particularly those of program-eligible populations.

Public Comment

The county will post draft plans for no less than 30 days for the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Fair Housing Plan, and any substantial amendments, and no less than 15 days for the CAPER, so that all interested residents will have a sufficient opportunity to review and comment.

All residents, particularly those low- and moderate-income residents of neighborhoods targeted for the use of CDBG and HOME, will be afforded opportunities to participate in discussions on these programs. Residents can make comments by (1) communicating directly with the Department of Housing and

Supportive Services; (2) attending public meetings; and (3) attending public hearings with the County Commission when such items are being considered. Any citizen or citizen's group desiring to comment or object to any phase of the planning, development or approval of the application for CDBG or HOME funds, to the implementation of any CDBG or HOME program, performance reports, or to any substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan or Fair Housing Plan should submit comments electronically by email, in writing by mail, or by telephone.

Citizen comments are received during regular office hours of the county and can be submitted by emailing vraramirez@co.hernando.fl.us, calling Housing and Supportive Services at (352) 754-4000, or by mail addressed to:

Department of Housing and Supportive Services
Hernando County Board of County Commissioners
621 West Jefferson Street
Brooksville, Florida 34601

The county will consider any comments or views of residents of the community received in writing or verbally at public hearings and during the comment period. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons why, shall be attached to the final consolidated plan.

All meetings of the County Commission are open to the public in compliance with the Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Law. The county ensures that all parties are afforded adequate opportunities to review and comment on plans, programs, activities, and draft reports. This includes providing reasonable accommodations for people with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities.

Notification Procedures

Hernando County will give adequate notice of public hearings, meetings, or plan availability related to federal programs. As required by HUD, documentation of these notices must be submitted with the respective application for federal funds. To reach the broadest audience possible, the county places meeting notices in various media outlets and in a variety of languages, when applicable.

Residents are notified of public hearings, meetings, and plan availability in the following manner:

- Public Notice published in the Hernando Sun
- Public Notice published on the Housing and Supportive Services webpage at <https://www.hernandocounty.us/departments/housing-and-supportive-services>
- Public Notice published on the county's official social media sites

The county may employ additional methods of notification for public hearings or meetings including distribution of flyers or handouts, announcements on the radio or television, virtual campaigns, or blast emails to stakeholders. Notifications of the availability of federal funds may be made in a like manner.

Notice of all public hearings will be published in the Hernando Sun at least 14 days in advance of the event. Notice of public meetings will be published in a like manner.

Information about public hearings and meetings can also be accessed by calling Housing and Supportive Services at (352) 754-4000.

Plan Availability to the Public

The Consolidated Plan and its contents will be made available to the public by making copies of the document available on the internet, on the jurisdiction's official government website, and as well at libraries, government offices, and public places. All printed documents incorporate a statement which serves to inform interested participants that it can be made available in alternate format. Additionally, each public notice includes language which informs the reader of the availability of special arrangements for persons with disabilities. These provisions will be made available with a minimum of three (3) working days' notice in advance, on the part of the participant in need. In addition, Hernando County will provide a reasonable number of free copies of the plan to residents and groups that request it.

Substantial Amendments

The Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan can be amended to provide for changes in the purpose, location, scope or beneficiaries of an activity. Substantial amendments are triggered by the following actions:

- The addition or elimination of an activity differing from the ones originally described in the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan.
- A change in the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity.
- Budget changes to any activity that is equal to at least fifteen (15) percent of the annual entitlement grant.

A substantial amendment does not apply for the correction of an inadvertent omission of any data or funding details that were available for public comment, and subsequently approved by the Hernando County Commission. Documents may be amended to correct such oversights without implementing the Substantial Amendment Process.

Citizens will be given reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan. Public notice and public comment requirements will be implemented in accordance with the public participation process described above (also refer to the public participation process table).

Annual Performance Report

Every year, the county must submit to HUD the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER), within 90 days of the close of the program year. In general, the CAPER describes how funds were actually spent and the extent to which these funds were used for activities that benefited low- and moderate-income people. The Annual Performance Report shall be made available for review and

comment. Public notice and comment requirements will be implemented in accordance with the procedures described in the Public Participation Process sections of this CPP and the related table.

Access to Records

Full access to the Housing and Supportive Services program information, documents, and schedules of meeting times and publication dates will be provided to the public. Program records and information, consistent with state and local laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality, are available for citizen review at the Department of Housing and Supportive Services, Hernando County Board of County Commissioners, 621 West Jefferson Street, Brooksville, Florida 34601. The Housing and Supportive Services office may be reached by telephone at (352) 754-4000 during normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Upon request, Hernando County will provide copies of standard documents at no charge to the general public.

Key documents of Housing and Supportive Services are placed on file for public inspection in its offices. All documents which are reviewed by the County Commission are also on file in the offices of the Clerk of Circuit Court & Comptroller. Key documents include, but are not limited to:

- The Consolidated Plan;
- The Annual Action Plan;
- The Fair Housing Plan;
- The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER); and
- Other HUD Reports, as applicable.

Other information and records relating to the county's use of various federal and state program funds may be reviewed by the public in the offices of Housing and Supportive Services in compliance with the Florida Public Records Law and applicable HUD regulations.

Technical Assistance

Upon request, Housing and Supportive Services will provide technical assistance to groups representing the needs of program-eligible populations, especially those groups representative of persons of low or moderate income, as may be required to adequately provide for citizen participation in the planning, implementation and assessment of the CDBG and HOME funded programs.

Such technical assistance is intended to increase citizen participation in the community development decision making process and to ensure that such participation is meaningful. Technical assistance shall also be utilized to foster public understanding of federal program requirements.

Technical assistance shall be provided on request and may include, but not necessarily be limited to: interpreting the CDBG and HOME program rules, regulations, procedures and/or requirements; providing information and/or materials concerning the CDBG or HOME programs; and, assisting low and moderate income citizens, and residents of blighted neighborhoods to develop statements of views, identify their

needs, and to develop activities and proposals for projects which, when implemented, will resolve those needs.

Technical assistance for developing proposals will be limited to guidance in completing applications for funding, providing information on deadlines and project eligibility, and providing technical assistance concerning HUD regulations. County staff members will neither prepare applications, nor appear as advocates for or against specific project proposals.

Disaster or Declaration of Emergency

In the event of a disaster or a declaration of emergency, public participation activities may be altered at the direction of HUD to expedite grantee response to affected communities. Additionally, public participation activities will be facilitated by the most feasible means available at the time (i.e. call-in or virtual meetings in lieu of public meetings). Information to those with vision and hearing impairments, as well as non-English speakers will be provided to the extent feasible.

Comment, Grievance, and Complaint Procedure

Hernando County will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally, at public hearings and meetings. A summary of all comments or views, as well as how they were addressed in the relevant document, will be included in the final Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Fair Housing Plan, substantial amendments to the plans, or performance reports.

Hernando County will provide citizens with timely responses to grievances or complaints. Citizens may submit a written grievance or complaint to the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners at 15470 Flight Path Drive, Brooksville, FL 34604. The county will make reasonable effort to issue a written response to every written grievance or complaint within 15 working days of receipt. When this is not possible the county shall, within 15 working days of receipt, issue a letter indicating the status of the response and approximate anticipated date of a final determination.

Use of the Citizen Participation Plan

Hernando County will use this Citizen Participation Plan when preparing and implementing plans related to programs funded by HUD.

If there are changes because of legislative authority or HUD causes changes in rules, regulations or guidelines which impact its federal programs, such changes will supersede the provisions contained in this Citizen Participation Plan.

In addition to the Housing and Supportive Services office address and phone numbers referenced herein, inquiries and comments regarding federal programs may also be directed to HUD's Community Planning and Development Division located at the Charles Bennett Federal Building, 400 W. Bay Street, Suite 1015, Jacksonville, FL 32202, or by calling (904) 232-2627.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in all phases of the CDBG and HOME programs and will be provided full access to program information. However, final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of the CDBG and HOME programs, and related plans, will lie with Hernando County.