

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
FOR THE BAMBERG COUNTY
SOUTH CAROLINA**

The following Citizen Participation Plan is developed in accordance with Section 104 (a)(2) and (a)(3) of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 as amended through 1987 (the Act).

This plan lists the guidelines and requirements as set forth by federal and state law to assure citizen participation in the planning and implementation of community and economic development projects which will involve Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

Needs Assessment

Realizing the need for community improvements, the residents, community leaders, community groups, political leaders, and other concerned constituents of the Community, employing the technical assistance (at a specified type and level that has been pre-determined by the Council) of the Council, will form as State and federal guidelines require, a Review Panel to identify specific problems and seek possible solutions to these problems.

In order to determine the extent and severity of the need for community or economic development in the Community, a door-to-door survey may be required to determine the qualifications and needs of the citizens of the community, including the needs of low to moderate income individuals. Using the results of this door-to-door survey, the Community may then assess its major needs and document these needs for future presentation in a public forum.

Public Hearings

CP Plan & Needs Assessment Hearings

Prior to the Needs Assessment Public Hearing, Bamberg County will post a Notice of Availability of the Citizen Participation Plan and the Notice of Public Hearing Concerning Needs Assessment in the Courthouse Annex, and other prominent places within the County for a period of at least ten (10) days.

At the Needs Assessment Public Hearing those in attendance will be presented with information concerning the CDBG program, including the amount of CDBG funds available, State funding guidelines, and the range of activities that may be undertaken with such funds. Those in attendance will be informed that the grant can be used to fund projects such as infrastructure improvements, neighborhood revitalization, public facilities, limited rehabilitation, public services, downtown revitalization, demolition and clearance, brownfields improvements, and other projects that meet CDBG criteria. All CDBGs project must meet a national objective and meet specific requirements of the South Carolina CDBG program.

It should be noted that in conducting public hearings, the Community will adhere to the guidelines and hold all public hearings concerning the CDBG program at times and locations convenient to its citizens, particularly those who are potential or actual beneficiaries. The community will also hold all public meetings in locations that are accessible to handicapped individuals or will provide assistance to handicapped persons for meetings lacking handicapped access ramps.

It should also be noted that the community will maintain the names and phone numbers of persons attending the hearings and will also maintain comments by local officials and citizens.

Also, using the latest Census Data the community will determine if less than 10% of its community is non-English speaking and also determine if a significant concentration of non-English speaking persons reside in the community. If 10% or more of the potential or actual beneficiaries of the CDBG project are determined to be non-English speaking, then provisions will be made at the appropriate public hearings for translation of comments and documents into the native language of the majority of the non-English speaking residents affected.

Application

Following the Needs Assessment Public Hearing, the Community will allow at least seven (7) days for public review and comment of data gathered. The document will be available for review at the Courthouse Annex, 1234 North St., Bamberg, SC 29003, phone number (803-245-5191) during regular business hours. Comments will be directed to the attention of the authorized contact person for the project. If no negative comments are received, the Community will proceed to prepare an application to forward to the Department of Commerce, Grants Administration Program.

Grievances

Any grievances or complaints made in reference to a CDBG project should be directed to the appropriate above referenced office and must be in writing. All grievances received at any point in the program are to be dealt with in a reasonable time period (as determined by the local unit of government but no more than 15 working days). A written response is to be forwarded to the party or parties initiating the grievance. Once a grievance or complaint is received, it shall be brought in its written form to the attention of the governing Council at the earliest scheduled meeting possible. The Council shall review the document and respond in the aforementioned method. If the initiator of the complaint is not satisfied with the response he may pursue his grievance with the South Carolina Department of Commerce Grants Administration by submitting his original written document and a cover letter stating his failure to receive satisfaction from his council. If satisfaction is not gained after contacting the Division the complainant may choose to pursue other non-legal avenues or may pursue his case in the appropriate court of law.

Prior to any response to a written grievance which involves State law or policy, State CDBG program guidelines, or federal regulations governing the CDBG program, the community will provide the written grievance and its proposed response to SC Department of Grants, Administration which will review and approve the response, or deny the response. However, the division will deny those appeals which involve the consistent application of the community's local program policies.

Changes to the Application

Prior to making any substantial change in a CDBG funded project, the community will hold one or more public hearings to inform its citizens, particularly those who might be affected, of the proposed change and to solicit public comment. Such changes include an

increase or decrease in the number or location of the beneficiaries as described in the approved application, addition of a new activity or deletion of an approved activity, and an increase or decrease of 10% or more in a line item in the approved budget. State must approve proposed changes to the original application and the community must provide State with evidence that an appropriate public hearing was held. The Citizen Participation Plan will remain available for public review during the entire duration of this CDBG project. Those wishing to view the plan should contact the appropriate local governing body responsible for the project.

Also by contacting the aforementioned governing body during regular business hours, citizens may have access to records concerning any CDBG funded project. Information requested for projects not on file at this office will be referred to the appropriate agency. It should be noted that confidential information normally protected under the State and federal freedom of information laws may not be made available for public review. (This includes such information as personal or business financial statements, and earnings or sources of income.)

Close-out Proceedings

In the last phase of the project, the community shall conduct one or more public hearings (following State and federal guidelines) to review and assess program performance and accomplishments. The community will hold at least one public hearing when all project activities have been completed and prior to the South Carolina Department of Commerce, Grants Administration closing out the grant.

The CP Plan and all project records will be maintained until at least three years following the final close-out.