

Seminole County Citizen Participation Plan 2020-2024

I. INTRODUCTION

Citizen Participation (CP) must be an integral part of the planning and implementation processes for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), and Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) and Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP1 and NSP3) Programs pursuant to the rules and regulations governing administration of the Programs. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in their attempt to assure adequate opportunity for participation by Program beneficiaries and the general public, have prescribed minimum Consolidated Plan (Plan) pre-submission, Plan amendment, grantee performance, subrecipient monitoring and record maintenance requirements.

The County is not only interested in complying with Federal regulations, but wishes to insure that all County residents, and principally families with low or moderate incomes, have the opportunity to participate in the needs identification and strategy development process for these programs. The Citizen Participation (CP) Plan outlines the steps developed by the County to insure compliance with federal regulations governing implementation of the three federal programs administered by the Community Services Department, and meets their requirement to involve local residents in the planning and implementation of related projects and programs.

The participation process involves: scheduling, publicizing and conducting meetings and public hearings; providing technical assistance to applicants and other interested persons/groups; and maintaining accurate and current information regarding the programs administered by the Community Development Division which is available to citizens upon request. Each of these processes are further explained under subsequent sections of this Plan.

II. ENCOURAGEMENT OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The purpose of this Plan is to encourage residents of the Seminole County to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan, any substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan, and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). HUD and the County strongly encourage all County residents, particularly residents of economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities, those persons living in areas designated by the as a revitalization (target) area or in a slum and blighted area. Feedback is encouraged in areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used. Minorities, non-English speaking persons, and persons with disabilities are welcome to work with the County to assess local needs and plan projects to address them.

Seminole 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 AFH or AI Report and the Consolidated Plan along with other low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas in which the developments are located.

Seminole County will make an effort to provide information to the Public Housing Authority (PHA) about the AFH, Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) strategy, or the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI) Report and Consolidated Plan activities related to its developments and surrounding communities so that the PHA can make this information available at the annual public hearing(s) required for the PHA Plan.

Where practical, Seminole County may 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; e.g., use of focus groups and the Internet.

1. AVAILABILITY OF PLANS, DOCUMENTS

The Seminole County Citizen Participation Plan, past and current Consolidated Plans and amendments thereto, Annual Action Plans, past and current Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPERs), and the Assessment of Fair Housing or Analysis of Impediments of Fair Housing Choice, once complete, are available for public review at any time. Copies of these documents may be obtained through the Community Development Office, Reflections Office Plaza, and 534 West Lake Mary Boulevard, Sanford, FL 32773 during normal business hours which are Monday through Friday from 8AM-5PM.

At the time the Citizen Participation Plan, any Consolidated Plan, any Action Plan, any CAPER, or Assessment of Fair Housing is initially proposed, the public will be informed of its availability through a summary notice in the Orlando Sentinel newspaper, as a display ad in the Seminole section of the newspaper, and on the County's website (Community Services and/or Community Development page) to include the location where copies of the requested document can be obtained. A reasonable number of free copies will be made available. Upon request, the document(s) will be made available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities. This process will be repeated at any point where any listed document is updated or this process is required by Federal or State law.

2. PUBLIC MEETINGS and HEARINGS

There will be at least two public meetings/ hearings per year to obtain feedback from community stakeholders such as residents, public housing agencies, non-profit agencies/ service providers and potential grant applicants. Any comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at the public meetings will be considered in preparing the Consolidated Plan, Action Plan, CAPER, or Assessment of Fair Housing. Together, the meetings must address the public's feedback on housing and community development needs, development of proposed activities and review of program performance. One public meeting will be held before the proposed Consolidated Plan, Action Plan, or Assessment of Fair Housing or Analysis of Fair Housing Choice Report is published for public the second public hearing may be held after the draft plan is published. Public feedback may include various advisory board meetings, neighborhood or community meetings, and public hearings such as Board of County Commissioner meetings and work sessions.

Notices of public meetings will be published in the Orlando Sentinel newspaper and posted on the Seminole County Community Development Website at least 7-14 days prior to the public hearing as a display ad in the Seminole Section of the newspaper. Language will be included in the notification that persons with disabilities whom need assistance to participate in the proceedings should contact the Human Resources Department ADA Coordinator 48 hours in advance of the meeting, the appropriate contact information will be included.

Regarding Municipal Partners participating in Urban County Cooperative Agreements

Federal regulations require that municipal partners hold a public hearing with regard to the proposed use of CDBG funds. The public hearing will allow citizens of the city to have access and participation in the process in which decisions are made, as outlined in the municipality's cooperative agreement with Seminole County. This public hearing is typically a City Commission Meeting.

3. SPECIAL NOTIFICATION

In addition to notices in newspapers, Seminole County will notify persons of proposed Community Development activities and projects in unincorporated County designated "impact areas" (target areas) through neighborhood-based methods. The target areas are considered low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and traditionally have a higher minority concentration. These methods may include direct contact with local neighborhood leaders; posting and/or distribution of notices. Similarly, notification will be provided to the Seminole County Housing Authority in order to encourage the participation of their residents.

4. ACCESSIBILITY

Unless otherwise noted, all public meetings concerning the HOME, CDBG, NSP 1 & 3, and ESG programs will be held at the Seminole County Community Services Department Large Conference Room, 534 W. Lake Mary Boulevard, Sanford FL, 32773. Public Hearing related to the approval and adoption of Consolidated Plans Action Plans will be held at the Community Services Building Commission Chambers, located at 1101 E. First Street, Sanford, FL 32771. To encourage community participation community meetings will be held in the evening on weekdays, staff will attempt to hold public meetings associated with the 5-Year Consolidated Plan in target areas. Meeting locations will be accessible to persons with disabilities. The meeting announcement will indicate how to request additional modifications for the special needs of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities whom need assistance to participate in the proceedings should contact the Human Resources Department ADA Coordinator 48 hours in advance of the meeting, the appropriate contact information will be included in the published notice.

Due to the coronavirus, the CARES act provides that in-person public hearings are not required for program related actions related to drafting, proposal, or amendment the Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plans, Annual Action Plans, and Substantial Amendments to those plans. The public hearing requirement may be satisfied with virtual public hearings if health authorities recommend social distancing and limited public gatherings and if virtual public hearings provide reasonable notification and access for the public, provide timely responses from local officials to public concerns, suggestions, and questions, and the public has access to the local officials' responses.

5. INFORMATION TO/FROM PUBLIC

Prior to the development of the Annual Action Plans, Seminole County will make public to its citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties, information that includes the amount of assistance that the County expects to receive (including grant funds and anticipated program income), the range of activities that will be undertaken, including the estimated amount of funding that will benefit persons of low- and moderate income). The participation of citizens will be encouraged as part of the determination of the community's needs. The public's written comments

and oral suggestions at the public hearing will be considered as part of the development of the Community Development Needs Assessment.

6. COMMENTS/CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED PLANS AND ASSESSMENT OF FAIR HOUSING

Prior to approval of each 5-Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Substantial Amendments to the Annual Action Plan, and Assessment of Fair Housing or Analysis of Impediments for Fair Housing Choice by the Board of County Commissioners, a thirty day (30) public comment period will be held to solicit public comment for the proposed drafts. Written comments should be made to the Seminole County Community Development Office, 534 West Lake Mary Blvd, Sanford, Florida 32773. All comments will be considered and a summary of all comments received will be appended to the Plan(s) and Assessment submitted to HUD.

Prior to submission of the CAPER to HUD, a minimum 15-day public comment period will be held to solicit public comment for the performance report. Written comments should be made to the Seminole County Community Development Office, 534 West Lake Mary Boulevard, Sanford, Florida 32773. All comments will be considered and a summary of all comments received will be appended to the Report.

In accordance with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES).

CARES ACT substantial amendments related to special funding in response to COVID-19, have a minimum 5-day public comment period. The public will also have reasonable notice regarding the public comment period. Seminole County applied and received the necessary HUD waivers for this expedited comment period, to ensure funds can reach communities as quickly as possible during this unprecedented crisis. A summary of the proposed amendments will be published in the Orlando Sentinel and documents posted on the County Website. Comments will be received by email or standard mail to accommodate social distancing requirements.

7. TRANSLATION TO OTHER LANGUAGES

Federal regulations governing the CDBG, HOME, NSP 1 & 3, and ESG programs require that the Citizen Participation Plan to address the needs of non-English-speaking residents. If ten percent or more of the potential or actual beneficiaries of a HOME, CDBG, NSP 1 & 3, or ESG program project are determined to be non-English-speaking, 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.

8. WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments or complaints concerning Seminole County's Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, any Substantial Amendments, CAPER, and the Assessment of Fair Housing or Analysis of Fair Housing Choice will be reviewed and given a written response within (15) working days. All comments will be considered and a summary of those comments or views will be appended to the respective document. Written comments should be made to the Seminole County Community Development Office, 534 West Lake Mary Boulevard, Sanford, Florida 32773.

9. PROGRAM CHANGES

Federal Regulations (24 CFR 91.505) require Seminole County to establish criteria which defined actions or events that constitute a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan. HUD requires a substantial amendment to make a change in allocation activities, to undertake

and activity not described in the action plan, or to substantially change the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity.

Seminole County defines substantial amendments as follows:

- A change in the basic activities as defined in 24 CFR 570.201 or
- A change (increase or decrease) in funding of more than sixty-five percent (65%) or
- A change from an area benefit activity to a limited clientele activity or vice versa; or
- A change in location from one service area to another or
- Carrying out an activity using funds from any program covered in the plan that was not previously approved in the Action Plan

The following changes are **not** considered substantial amendments:

- Changes to the budget are less than sixty-five percent (65%) of the activity budget
- Consolidated Plan data updates such as census data, income limits, fair market rents, subsidy limits, and similar types of data does not constitute a substantial change.

Citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties will be provided with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on all Substantial Amendments. The County will advertise in the Orlando Sentinel and on its own website and will provide no less than 30 days to receive comments on any amendment before the amendment is implemented. A summary of any comments, including the reasons for those not accepted, will be appended to the amendment.

10. AVAILABILITY OF PROGRAM RECORDS

Citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties of Seminole County will be provided with reasonable access to records concerning any activity undertaken with CDBG, HOME, NSP 1 & 3, or ESG Program funds. Any such request for access to records should be made in writing to Seminole County Community Development Office, The telephone number is 407 665-2300 and the TTY number is 407-665-6511. Seminole County may charge reasonable fees for the duplication and provision of materials. Confidential information normally protected under state and federal freedom of information laws will not be available for public review.

11. PLANS TO MINIMIZE DISPLACEMENT

The County will make every effort to minimize displacement of households and businesses, and has prepared an Anti-displacement and Relocation Plan to address the actions it will take to do so. That Plan is under separate cover, and is incorporated herein by reference.

12. ASSISTANCE TO GROUPS

Technical assistance is available to groups representative of persons of low and moderate income that request assistance in developing proposals for funding assistance under any of the programs covered by the Consolidated Plan, or for assistance to comment on the Assessment of Fair Housing. Seminole County provides Technical Assistance workshops for all agencies interested in applying for CDBG, HOME and ESG funding each grant cycle

13. DEFINITIONS

Predominately low- and moderate-income neighborhoods: A geographical location that consists of a minimum of 51% of the households in the area being at or below 80% of the area median income.

Consolidated Plan – serves as the plan in which Seminole County must submit to HUD in order to apply for funding under CDBG, HOME ESG and NSP grant programs. The Consolidated Plan establishes a vision for community development actions. Seminole County describes its goals and plans for community development and housing programs for a five (5) year period. The US Department of Housing and Neighborhood Development will evaluate the County’s performance by reviewing the County’s accomplishments.

One Year- Action Plan- serves as the application for funding under CDBG, HOME and ESG programs. The Annual Action Plan includes the amount of assistance the City expects to receive (including grant funds and program income) from each of the federal programs and a description of the activities, including funding allocations that the City will undertake to address the needs and priorities established in the Consolidated Plan.

Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) - This report describes the accomplishments of each activity undertaken during the previous program year. The report is prepared on a yearly basis and will outline the accomplishments made and the persons assisted in the CDBG, HOME and ESG programs

15. ADDITIONAL PARTICIPATION

Seminole County receives State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP) provides funds to local governments as an incentive to create partnerships that produce and preserve affordable homeownership and multifamily housing. The program was designed to provide very low, low and moderate income families with assistance to purchase a home, money to repair or replace a home, and many other types of housing assistance. The SHIP program was created by the William Sadowski Act in 1992. In accordance with Florida Statutes and the Florida Administrative Code, Seminole County has an Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) that represent 8 specific areas of expertise with regard to planning and affordable housing. The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC).The purpose of the AHAC is to recommend specific initiatives and incentives to encourage or facilitate affordable housing as provided in Florida Statute §420.9076. The committee meets quarterly or more often as needed.

Seminole County Also receives Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds from the State of Florida aimed at addressing poverty in Seminole County. The CSBG program has an advisory Board that meets regularly to discuss CSBG funding and other initiative aimed at reducing poverty. The Board is made up of community representatives, non-profit agencies and municipal leaders. Where there are opportunities to encourage and gain input about programs under the Consolidated Plan, Seminole County Community Development Division conducts outreach and requests to present at the advisory groups

15. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN COMMENT PERIOD

The 2020-2024 Citizen Participation Plan was available for public comment from January 4, 2021 to February 21, 2021. A notification and summary was published in the Orlando Sentinel, documents were posted on the Seminole County website. The plan was also available at the Community Services Offices, for those without computer access.