

State Citizen Participation Plan

Hurricane Francine
(Public Law 118-158)



**Louisiana Office of
Community Development**
Disaster Recovery



State citizen participation plan

Overview

The main goal of the state citizen participation plan is to give all Louisiana residents a chance to be part of the planning, running, and review of the state's recovery programs funded by Community Development Block Grants – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR). This plan explains how people can get involved, especially those with low- to moderate-incomes and those living in areas impacted by disasters. We'll make sure everyone can share their thoughts, including minorities, non-English speaking persons, and persons with disabilities.

HUD's Federal Register notice requirements

Federal law gave the State funding to help recover from disasters in 2023 and 2024.¹ This plan follows the rules set by HUD for these funds.

Louisiana was granted some flexibility on certain requirements, such as holding public hearings and working with local governments. We'll communicate with people and gather their input on how recovery funds should be used. These comments, along with our responses, will be included in the action plan. The state citizen participation plan will be available on [the Louisiana Office of Community Development - Disaster Recovery's \(LOCD-DR\) website](#). Local governments and organizations receiving funds will also need to have a similar plan that follows CDBG-DR rules and takes the provided waivers into account.

¹ Public Law 118-158 provided funding to help with unmet needs and disaster prevention for events in 2023 and 2024. Under HUD's Federal Register notice ([FR-6512-N-01](#)), Louisiana received \$117 million to recover from Hurricane Francine (DR-4817) in 2024.



Citizen participation plan

We're focused on involving people in three key steps of creating the action plan: 1. preparing the plan, 2. asking for public feedback on the plan and major changes, and 3. sharing program information.

Preparing the action plan

We'll work with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and other groups affected in the impacted areas while creating the action plan. This will include organizations that represent protected classes, vulnerable populations, and underserved communities impacted by the disaster.

We'll ask how the storms affected the community's services and facilities, how much damage is still unrepaired, and what the community's top recovery needs are. We'll also ask about any recent mitigation efforts and what future mitigation activities the community would prioritize if funding becomes available.

We'll work with other government agencies, like state and local emergency management agencies responsible for FEMA funds, when necessary.

Requesting public feedback on the action plan and major changes

Posting the action plan

Before the action plan and any updates are sent to HUD, a summary of the plan will be published in at least four major newspapers, including The Advocate, which is Louisiana's legal journal, and newspapers in parishes where the funding will be used.

The plan will also be available on our website for the public to review and comment on. When the public comment period starts, a press release will be sent to media outlets across the state and members of the Louisiana Legislature. A limited number of copies of the plan will be available for free upon request, and copies will be available for review at our Baton Rouge and New Orleans offices.



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The public comment period will last at least 30 days. This process will be repeated whenever there are major updates to the plan.

Holding public hearings

We'll hold at least two public hearings about the proposed action plan after posting it on our website and before submitting it to HUD, as required based on our grant amount of \$117 million. According to Section I.C.2.b. of the [Universal Notice \(90 FR 1754\)](#), we may hold these hearings virtually, in-person, or as a combination of both.

These hearings will be held virtually to ensure everyone can participate regardless of transportation or childcare limitations. Virtual hearings also allow people to join from anywhere in the designated area, making it easier for all community members to attend. During virtual hearings, attendees will be able to ask questions in real time through the online platform, and our representatives will respond. Comments can also be submitted by email to ocd@la.gov for those who prefer to provide feedback in writing.

If we choose to hold additional hearings that are in-person, each will take place in a different location within the designated area, ensuring good geographic coverage and easy access for everyone. All in-person hearings will be held in locations that are accessible to people with disabilities. If a physical location is not accessible, we'll provide alternative ways for individuals with disabilities to participate.

For both virtual and in-person hearings, we'll ensure that:

- Hearings are scheduled at convenient times for all potential beneficiaries
- Individuals with disabilities have needed accommodations and services for effective communication
- Non-English speakers receive assistance when a significant number are expected to attend
- People are notified about the hearings at least two weeks in advance



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- All questions and concerns receive prompt responses
- Questions and answers are made publicly accessible

These measures will help ensure everyone in a community has a meaningful opportunity to participate in the recovery planning process, regardless of any barriers they may face.

Collecting public comments

People and organizations can share their comments on the state's action plan and any major updates by:

- Visiting [our website](#)
- Emailing ocd@la.gov
- Calling (225) 219-9600 or using the LA Relay Service at 7-1-1
- Faxing to (225) 219-9605
- Mailing to the Louisiana Office of Community Development - Disaster Recovery,
P.O. Box 94095, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9095

The action plan and any major updates will be available in Vietnamese and Spanish to help people who don't speak English well. People with disabilities or those needing other assistance can contact us using any of the options above.

Responding to public comments

After the public comment period ends, we'll review the feedback and provide meaningful responses to each comment. These comments and responses will be included in the appendix of the Action Plan or any major updates sent to HUD for approval. We'll clearly highlight any changes made to the action plan based on the public's feedback.

Making major changes to the action plan

A substantial amendment is when there's a big change in benefits or eligibility, when an activity is added or removed, or when a certain amount of money is moved around. For this funding, a



substantial amendment means moving more than \$5 million or changing a program budget by 15 percent or more.

The public will get reasonable notice and a chance to comment on these substantial amendments to the action plan. The process for public comments will be the same as it was for the original action plan. People will have at least 30 days to share their thoughts, and we'll include responses in the final version sent to HUD for approval.

Smaller changes to the action plan (non-substantial amendments) will be posted on our website after HUD is notified and the amendment is effective. Each amendment, whether substantial or non-substantial, will be numbered and posted on our website.

Sharing program information

We'll provide residents, public agencies, and other interested people with reasonable and timely access to information and records about our consolidated plan and our use of assistance from these programs over the past five years. We'll make our documents available to the public in several ways:

- **Website:** We'll post all relevant documents on our official website for easy access.
- **Physical copies:** People can visit our offices to request physical copies of the documents.
- **Press and newspapers:** We'll publish important announcements in local newspapers and press releases to keep the community informed.
- **Community bulletin boards:** We'll use bulletin boards in community centers to display information and documents.
- **Social media:** We'll share updates and links to documents on our social media platforms to reach a wider audience.
- **Direct contact:** Anyone can call, email, or fax us to request documents or ask questions.

These methods will ensure that everyone has access to important information. Before we start accepting applications for any program, we will:



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- Post the program's policies and procedures on our website.
- Keep these documents available online throughout the program.
- Ensure the policies are clear and accessible to everyone who needs them.

These policies and procedures will help applicants understand program requirements before they apply.

Ensuring access for people with disabilities and limited English proficiency

We'll make sure that everyone, including people with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency (LEP), has equal access to program information. Important details about the programs will be available in the main languages spoken in the area served by the subrecipient. This will follow HUD's guidelines on making information accessible to people with limited English skills.

We'll translate the action plan into Spanish and Vietnamese to meet the needs of people with limited English skills in these languages. If people need the action plan in other languages, we have a translation service available upon request.

For people with hearing or speech disabilities, or those who use TDD/TTY devices, they can call (800) 846-5277 toll-free using the Relay Louisiana Service at 7-1-1. Relay Louisiana offers phone access for people who can't use regular phones due to speech or hearing issues. More information about this service is available on the [Louisiana Relay website](#).

Keeping the state website updated

We'll keep an easy-to-access public website that shows how all grant money is spent and managed. This site will include links to action plans, changes to the action plans, program rules, performance reports, and information on community involvement. It will also have details about all contracts and procurement policies for projects in the action plan. We'll regularly update the website to make sure it always has the latest information on how the funds are used and any changes to policies.



Offering technical assistance

We'll help people who want to participate, especially to groups that represent low- to moderate-income people. The type of help given will depend on what the community needs. We'll provide different ways for people to communicate, including a website, TTY and relay services, email, and fax. These options will help people who applied for recovery assistance get timely updates on the status of their applications. For technical assistance, people can contact us at (225) 219-9600 or ocd@la.gov.

Creating performance reports

We'll send reports to HUD every three months on how we're using CDBG-DR funds. These reports are called Quarterly Performance Reports (QPRs), and we'll send them through HUD's Disaster Recovery Grant Reporting (DRGR) system within 30 days after each quarter ends.

Each QPR will include:

- The project name, location, and which national objective it meets.
- How much money was budgeted, spent, and used.
- Any non-CDBG-DR funds used for the project.
- Start and end dates for activities.
- Results, like the number of homes completed or how many low- to moderate-income people benefited.
- The race and ethnicity of people who got direct help.

We'll also report how much money went to each contractor and what we did to promote fair housing. We'll post each QPR on our website within three days after we send it to HUD.

Keeping the public informed

We'll keep the public updated on how we're using grant funds, including details about contracts and programs. This information will be available online and upon request.



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Our first QPR is due after the first full quarter when grant funds are given, and we'll post reports every quarter until all the funds are used.

Citizen advisory group

We'll create a citizen advisory group to provide input on our disaster recovery programs. This group will:

- Include members that represent our community's different populations and needs
- Meet at least once a year to review and provide feedback on program decisions
- Help ensure our programs are effectively serving all community members

More details about the group's structure and operations will be added as they are developed.

Citizen complaint procedures

We'll address complaints from people about the action plan, its updates, or quarterly reports. If you have a complaint, please send it to us in writing either by email at ocd@la.gov or by mail at:

Louisiana Office of Community Development – Disaster Recovery

P.O. Box 94095

Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9095

ATTN: Executive Director

We'll reply in writing within 15 working days after receiving your complaint. We'll also make sure that any groups receiving funds follow a similar complaint process. If you're not happy with their response, you can file a complaint with us.

Citizen participation requirements for CDBG-DR subrecipients and local governments

Each subrecipient and local government receiving assistance from us must follow a detailed citizen participation plan that satisfies the requirements of [24 CFR 570.486](#) (except as provided



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for in waivers and alternative requirements) and show that they're following it during the grant period. This plan should:

- A. Encourage participation – Make sure people, especially those with low- and moderate-incomes, can take part in discussions about how funds will be used.
- B. Provide access to information – Give people timely access to local meetings, information, and records about how funds are being used.
- C. Offer technical assistance – Help groups that represent low- and moderate-income people who ask for assistance. The type of help will depend on the community's needs.
- D. Gather public feedback – Create opportunities for people to share their opinions and ask questions throughout the development process. Information must be posted on the subrecipient's official website or in public places if there is no website. Additionally, public service announcements can be used to inform the community. All comments received must be answered and kept on record.
- E. Address complaints – Respond in writing to complaints within 15 working days when possible.
- F. Support non-English speakers – Explain how the needs of non-English speaking people will be met.

The citizen participation plan doesn't take away the subrecipient's ability to run its community development program. This includes:

- 1. Program design phase: Decide how to share information and gather public comments. Summarize these comments and send them to LOCD-DR when possible.
- 2. Implementation phase: During the grant period, provide timely access to information about the program, how funds are used, and contracts made with CDBG-DR funds. This information should be on the subrecipient's official website and available upon request.



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3. Substantial amendments: Make any significant changes to the program available on the subrecipient's website.
4. Complaint procedures: Have clear written procedures for people to complain about issues. This information should be posted on the subrecipient's website or provided upon request. The plan must state that people can write to LOCD-DR to object to the approval of a CDBG-DR application. Objections will be considered if:
 - a. The applicant's needs and goals don't match available facts.
 - b. The planned activities don't meet the stated needs and goals.
 - c. The application doesn't follow the rules in the action plan or other laws.Objections should specify unmet requirements and provide supporting data.
5. Close-out: Make all performance reports available to the public on the website and upon request.