

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT- DISASTER RECOVERY

HURRICANE IRMA - VOLUNTARY HOME BUYOUT PROGRAM

Grantee: Monroe County, Florida

Recipient's Address: Murray Nelson Government Center, 102050 Overseas Highway, Key Largo, Florida 33037

Contact Person: Cynthia Guerra, Grant Manager

Contact Email: Guerra-Cynthia@MonroeCounty-FL.Gov

Contact Phone #: (305) 453-8756

The primary goal of the Citizen Participation Plan is to provide citizens, especially low and moderate income citizens of the community where CDBG-DR funded activities will take place, an opportunity to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the programs and projects.

The Citizen Participation Plan is required by Section 104(a)(2) of the Housing and Community Development Act and by regulations at 24 CFR 570.486 and as required under the State of Florida Action Plan for Disaster Recovery for Hurricane Irma.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) has been prepared and implemented pursuant to federal regulations (U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Regulations 24 CFR Part 570.486). Monroe County has designed this community-wide Citizen Participation Plan to provide for and encourage citizen participation in the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Voluntary Home Buyout Program (VHBP). This Plan is an essential element of the Monroe County community disaster recovery process from Hurricane Irma.

The primary goal of this Citizen Participation Plan is to provide all citizens of the community with adequate opportunity to participate in and be advised on the implementation of Monroe County's CDBG-DR funded VHBP. Citizens are encouraged to participate in all phases of the program and will be provided full access to program information. Final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of the program will lie with Monroe County.

2. SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION

This Plan sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation as it relates to the County's CDBG-DR funded VHBP. Special emphasis has been placed on encouraging participation by persons of low and moderate incomes, residents of areas where community development funds are utilized, and within areas most significantly impacted by Hurricane Irma.

Monroe County will make reasonable efforts to provide for citizen participation during the community disaster recovery process and throughout the implementation of the County's CDBG-DR VHBP, with a focus on citizen application intake periods and reporting on program progress and accomplishments.

3. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION CONTACT PERSON

The following individual has been designated as the primary contact person for citizen participation efforts in relation to the VHBP:

Cynthia Guerra, VHBP Grant Manager

Email: Guerra-Cynthia@MonroeCounty-FL.Gov

Phone: (305) 453-875

The VHBP Grant Manager will serve as the contact persons for all matters concerning citizen participation activities under the CDBG-DR funded VHBP. This person shall be responsible for overseeing citizen participation throughout the community disaster recovery process and the implementation of all citizen participation activities and functions.

The specific duties and responsibilities of the citizen participation contact person shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: disseminating information concerning the status of current project activities; receiving written comments; serving as a vehicle by which public comments may be transmitted to program staff, County departmental staff and/or County officials. Additionally, this individual is responsible for monitoring the citizen participation process and proposing such amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan as may be necessary.

4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The staff of Monroe County shall provide technical assistance to individual citizens and citizen groups upon request. Focus should be placed on those groups and representatives of persons of low or moderate income impacted by Hurricane Irma. Technical assistance shall also be utilized to foster public understanding of CDBG-DR funding source and the VHBP requirements and will be provided on request. Technical assistance may include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- Interpreting the rules, regulations, procedures and/or requirements of the VHBP and CDBG-DR funding source;
- Providing information and/or materials concerning the County's VHBP;
- Assisting low and moderate income citizens impacted by Hurricane Irma to identify their needs, and to help ensure they are informed of the availability and status of the program.

a) Sign Language Interpretation Services

Monroe County will make reasonable accommodations and services necessary for sensory-impaired and disabled citizens. Hearing-impaired residents and applicants will be provided contact information for the County Manager's Office in public announcements notifying residents of public engagement activities. Upon request, the County will provide hearing assistive services at any such events. Content on the county's webpage has been designed with accessibility guidelines and links to accessibility tools are provided on the webpage, see <https://www.monroecounty-fl.gov/1033/Accessibility>.

b) Limited English Proficiency Residents

Monroe County will undertake reasonable actions to facilitate the participation of persons with Limited English Proficiency. Program staff will undertake all reasonable actions necessary to allow such persons to participate in the community disaster recovery process. Such actions may include the provision of materials in languages other than English. Content on the County's webpage is accessible through language translation tools provided on the webpage, see <https://www.monroecounty-fl.gov/1033/Accessibility>.

c) Home Visits

In some instances, the program may encounter applicants with disabilities or other mobility limitations and the County has taken steps to ensure that the program provides reasonable accommodations to assist as necessary. This may require a program Case Manager to conduct home intake visits.

NOTE: Due to COVID-19 restrictions, intake and eligibility activities will occur remotely, to the extent possible. Communication will occur via telephone, text, email, and mail. Paperwork can be emailed, mailed, or sent via text to the VHBP case manager. In person office hours will not be available, except when all other options have been exhausted without result; in such cases a contactless visit will be scheduled through the VHBP case manager. The procedure is as follows:

- 1) Applicant requests an at-home visit with a program Case Manager.
- 2) Applicant must indicate mobility or health issue - Elderly, disabled, or otherwise incapacitated and unable to access assistance in transportation to County offices as verbally indicated by the Applicant over a phone call or as indicated in writing through an email.
- 3) The visit will be scheduled by appointment.
- 4) If possible, the visit will take place outdoors at the applicant's residence. If the Case Manager must enter the residence, appropriate masking and social distancing protocols will be followed.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A public hearing was held during the launch of the program to allow citizens to voice opinions and express interest in participating in the VHBP. Additional public hearings will be held as needed to allow local officials to respond to questions and solicit interest from citizens. Citizens may also express comments and views concerning the VHBP to the governing body at any regularly scheduled BOCC meeting.

Public hearings will be held at times and locations which will be accessible to all citizens, especially persons of low and moderate incomes, CDBG-DR project areas, and areas impacted by Hurricane Irma. Hearings will normally be held at the regularly scheduled monthly Board of County Commissioner Meetings in either Key Largo, Key West, or Marathon. For a complete listing of Board of County Commissioner meeting dates, times, and locations go to the following website: <https://www.monroecounty-fl.gov/757/9297/All-Meetings-Agendas-Minutes>. Each building site is accessible to persons with disabilities.

At public hearings, citizens will be provided with information concerning the CDBG-DR program which may include: the goals and objectives of the CDBG-DR program; the total amount of CDBG-DR funds available for the fiscal year and for the funding round; the role of citizens; the range of activities which may be undertaken; a statement the CDBG-DR funds will be used to benefit low-to-moderate income people; and to provide citizens with contact information such as address, telephone number, and dates for submitting applications and processes for complaints or grievances.

5.1 Assessment of Performance

Citizens of Monroe County will be provided with the opportunity to comment on the performance of local officials, Monroe County staff, consultants, engineers, and contractors, and the actual use of CDBG-DR funds during the implementation of a CDBG-DR program. At the conclusion of the VHBP project, a community meeting will be held to review program activities and to assess

program performance. This meeting shall be held prior to the submission of any required closeout documents to the DEO for the VHBP project. This hearing will be used to ensure community-wide participation in the evaluation of the VHBP.

5.2 Additional Hearings

Other public hearings may be held as deemed necessary by Monroe County in order to inform citizens of community development project(s) and activities, and to solicit citizen opinions and comments. All additional hearings shall comply with the requirements set forth in this Plan.

5.6 Public Hearing Notice

Notice of public hearings will be published in three local newspapers of general circulation no more than 25 days prior to the meeting date. Each notice of a hearing shall include the time, date, place, and topics and procedures to be discussed. Monroe County will publish all Public Hearing Notices in the Key West Citizen, the Keys Weekly, and the News Barometer. Additionally, when deemed appropriate, the Monroe County Public Information Officer will distribute a press release to the County's media contacts.

5.7 Accessibility to Persons with Disabilities

The locations of all public hearings as described herein shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities. Additionally, Monroe County shall provide reasonable accommodations whenever the VHBP Grant Manager is notified in advance that one or more persons with mobility or developmental disabilities will be in attendance who require additional accessibility accommodations.

Monroe County will make reasonable accommodations and services necessary for sensory-impaired and disabled citizens at the public meeting. Additionally, language translation services may be offered upon request and availability. Individuals requiring special accommodation in order to participate in public hearings should contact the County Administrator's Office, by phoning (305) 292-4441, between the hours of 8:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m., prior to the day of the scheduled meeting. Hearing or voice-impaired individuals should call "711". Live Closed Captioning is available on the County's web portal at <http://monroecountyfl.iqm2.com/Citizens/Default.aspx>.

6. PROGRAM INFORMATION

To facilitate citizen access to the VHBP information, the Grant Manager will keep all documents related to the VHBP in a digital format on a project management software system maintained by the County's CDBG-DR technical services provider. Program forms, applications, policies and

other related programmatic material, which is not project case specific, will be made available on the County's website located at www.monroecounty-fl.gov/1133/Voluntary-Home-Buyout-Program. Information for the program shall be made available for examination and duplication, on request, during regular business hours. In no case shall Monroe County disclose any information concerning the financial status of any program participant(s), which may be required to document program eligibility or benefit. Furthermore, Monroe County shall not disclose any information that has regulatory confidentiality protection.

Materials to be made available to the public shall include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The Citizen Participation Plan
- Records of public hearing
- Mailings and promotional materials
- Fair housing materials
- Solicitations for services
- Contracts with consultants, contractors, vendors or other service providers.
- Performance and evaluation reports
- Other reports required by the DEO and/or HUD
- Copies or links to resources for the applicable Federal and State rules, regulations, policies, requirements and procedures governing the CDBG-DR program.

7. PROCEDURES FOR COMMENTS, OBJECTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

Citizens are encouraged to submit their views and proposals on all aspects of a community development program at the public hearings. Citizens may, at any time, submit written comments or complaints to Monroe County. Complaints regarding the County's VHBP should be submitted to the program using the forms and processes described in the Monroe County, Florida – Voluntary Home Buyout Program Guidelines available at the County's website: www.monroecounty-fl.gov/1133/Voluntary-Home-Buyout-Program

Citizens may, at any time, contact the DEO and/or HUD directly to register comments, objections or complaints concerning the Monroe County VHBP. Citizens are encouraged, however, to attempt to resolve any complaints at the local level as outlined above prior to contacting the DEO or HUD.

All comments or complaints submitted to the DEO or the HUD shall be addressed in writing to:

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
Office of Disaster Recovery
107 E. Madison Street
Caldwell Building, MSC 160
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

or:

Department of Housing & Urban Development
Charles E. Bennet Federal Building
400 West Bay Street, Suite 1015
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Records of all comments, objections and/or complaints by citizens concerning the Monroe County VHBP and subsequent action taken in response to those comments shall be maintained on file at Monroe County.

8. AMENDMENTS

Monroe County may, from time to time, modify the provisions outlined herein through amendment to this Citizen Participation Plan. It shall be the policy of Monroe County to periodically review and discuss the effectiveness of this Citizen Participation Plan in allowing citizen participation in the community disaster recovery process and in helping to meet the community development needs and goals identified by the citizens of Monroe County. To this end, the Plan will be reviewed and monitored by program and departmental staff as needed during weekly programmatic meetings. Amendments to the Plan will be made as necessary. All amendments shall be approved by the Grant Manager and other Monroe County staff as required.

9. AUTHORITY

No portion of this Citizen Participation Plan shall be construed to restrict the responsibility and authority of the elected officials of Monroe County in the development, implementation and execution of any Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery Program.