

PIKE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Citizen Participation Plan

In Accordance with the HUD Guidelines for the Community Development
Block Grant Program

June 2, 2021



PIKE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

506 Broad Street, Milford, PA 18337

www.pikepa.org

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

Community Development Block Grant Program

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this county-wide Citizen Participation Plan is to provide for and encourage citizen participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. This Plan is an essential element of the County's present and future community development process and has been developed to comply with the regulations and requirements of the CDBG program as administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This Plan supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans which may have been previously adopted by the Pike County Commissioners.

The primary goal of this Citizen Participation Plan is to provide all citizens of the community with adequate opportunity to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the County's CDBG program(s). The Plan sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation, which are designed to maximize the opportunity for citizen participation in the community development process.

To the greatest extent possible, participation shall be encouraged from the following:

1. Low- and moderate-income (LMI) persons
2. People living in low- and moderate-income areas
3. People in areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used
4. Members of minority groups
5. Non-English speaking persons
6. People with disabilities
7. Public housing residents and residents of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy areas
8. Local and regional institutions
9. All persons directly or indirectly impacted or affected by Pike County's CDBG Program and/or all other Federal programs, if applicable

Citizens are encouraged to participate in all phases of the CDBG program(s) and will be provided full access to program information. However, final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of CDBG program(s) will lie with the Pike County Commissioners.

SECTION 2 – SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION

Pike County will make reasonable efforts to provide for citizen participation during the community development process and throughout the planning, implementation and assessment of all CDBG program(s) undertaken by the County. Local officials will make every effort to involve citizens in all phases of the development, implementation and assessment of community development programs including, but not limited to, the following phases:

- a) Identification and assessment of housing and community development needs; determination of CDBG projects and documentation; and the development of CDBG applications;
- b) Modifications to approved CDBG projects; and,
- c) Assessment of CDBG program performance.

All phases of the community development process will be conducted by local officials in an open manner. Citizens of Pike County are encouraged to participate at all levels and will be given access to program information during each phase of any CDBG program as outlined in this plan.

SECTION 3 – CITIZEN PARTICIPATION CONTACT PERSON

The Pike County Human Development Executive Director has been designated as the Citizen Participation Coordinator by the Pike County Commissioners and will serve as the contact person for all matters concerning citizen participation activities. This person or her or his designee shall be responsible for overseeing citizen participation throughout the community development process and the implementation of all citizen participation activities and functions.

The specific duties and responsibilities of the Citizen Participation Coordinator shall include, but not necessarily be limited to:

1. disseminating information concerning proposed projects and the status of current project activities;
2. coordinating various groups which may be participating in the community development process; receiving written comments;
3. serving as a vehicle by which ideas, comments, and proposals from local residents may be transmitted to local officials and/or program staff; and

4. monitoring the citizen participation process and proposing such amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan as may be necessary.

All questions concerning citizen participation in the community development process should be addressed to the Citizen Participation Coordinator. The Citizen Participation Coordinator may be contacted at:

506 Broad Street, Milford, PA 18337
(570) 296-3434
rruiz@pikepa.org

SECTION 4 – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Pike County Citizen Participation Coordinator, or her or his designee, shall provide technical assistance to individual citizens and citizen groups, 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 CDBG 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 CDBG program requirements.

Technical assistance shall be provided upon request and may include, but not necessarily be limited to: interpreting the CDBG program and its rules, regulations, procedures, and/or requirements; providing information and/or materials concerning the CDBG program; and, assisting low and moderate income citizens, and residents of blighted neighborhoods to development statements of views, identify their needs, and to develop activities and proposals for projects which, when implemented, will resolve those needs.

Technical assistance may be obtained by contacting the Pike County Commissioners or the Citizen Participation Coordinator.

SECTION 5 – PUBLIC HEARINGS

Citizen participation in the community development process will be conducted on a county-wide basis and will actively involve the views and proposals of all citizens.

Public hearings will be held during various phases of the community development process, as outlined herein, to allow citizens to voice opinions and offer proposals

concerning the development and performance of CDBG programs. Local officials will respond to questions and proposals from citizens at each public hearing. Any questions that citizens may have concerning a program will be answered and their comments, suggestions, and/or proposals will be received. Citizens may also express comments and views concerning the community development process or any specific CDBG project to the governing body at any regularly scheduled meeting.

5.1 Public Hearing Times and Locations

All public hearings will be held at an ADA-accessible location that is also accessible to low- to moderate- income people and people impacted by CDBG projects.

Hearings will normally be held at Pike County Administration Building, 506 Broad Street, Milford, PA 18337. This site is generally accessible to all citizens. This building is also accessible to persons with disabilities. Hearings may, however, at the option of the County, be held at an alternate location to be specified in the public hearing notice(s).

Public hearings will be scheduled for convenient times as determined by the Pike County Commissioners. Public hearings may be held at any site which, in the opinion of Pike County, provides adequate access for citizen participation.

5.2 Application Public Hearing

At least two public hearings shall be held during any CDBG program fiscal year prior to the submission of an application to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) for CDBG assistance. The primary purposes of the public hearings shall be to assess community needs and problems in an effort to determine the most critical needs to be addressed by the CDBG program; and also to present for public comment and review the program activities which have been selected by the County to resolve the identified needs.

An initial public hearing will be held during the development of each year's CDBG program to discuss items regarding community development and housing needs, the CDBG program, and the application process. The objective of citizen participation at this stage is to provide meaningful, community-wide citizen input into the decision-making process during the assessment of community needs and the consideration of priorities and options associated with the development and submission of a CDBG application. Local officials will also entertain proposals and comments from citizens concerning community development activities at this hearing.

This hearing will normally serve to discuss and review the information appropriate for all applications submitted by the County during any fiscal year. Substantial changes in community development or housing needs in the community as determined by local officials may necessitate another hearing to fulfill the role of the first public hearing prior to the submission of other CDBG applications later in the fiscal year.

Citizens will be provided with information concerning the CDBG program at this public hearing. Such information shall include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- the goals and objectives of the CDBG program
- the total amount of CDBG funds available
- the role of citizens in program planning, implementation, and assessment
- the range of activities which may be undertaken
- the process to be followed in developing a CDBG application
- the application timetable(s)
- activities previously funded in the County through the CDBG program
- identification of projects which could result in the relocation of area residences or businesses and the actions that would be undertaken if such relocation were necessary
- identification and solicitation of any known environmental impacts of the proposed projects
- the effectiveness of the Citizen Participation Plan in allowing citizen participation in the community development process and potential changes and/or amendments to the Plan will also be discussed at this meeting
- discussion of Section 3 and the M/WBE Action Plan
- review of the Fair Housing Notice
- review of Anti-Displacement Plan and declaration of any expected displacement
- request public input regarding facility deficiencies

A second public hearing will be held prior to the submission of a CDBG application. The objective of this second hearing is to inform citizens of the proposed project activities to be included in the CDBG application(s) and to solicit comments from citizens concerning these activities.

Citizens attending this second hearing will be provided with information concerning the CDBG project(s) proposed including, but not necessarily limited to: specific project activities to be included; the location of the project activities; the approximate cost estimate for the proposed activities; the estimate of local match required; the impact of the project on low and moderate income persons; and, the anticipated application submittal date.

The County may, at the option of local officials, review multiple CDBG project applications at one hearing when more than one application is to be submitted during the same fiscal year. Such hearings shall be held prior to, and in preparation for, the application's approval by the Pike County Commissioners.

5.3 Modification Public Hearings

Pike County will assure the opportunity for citizen participation during the consideration of any modifications to previously-approved CDBG program(s). Citizen participation shall be obtained and considered prior to the approval of any modification to a CDBG program which involves the addition of any new activity to a CDBG program and/or the deletion of any previously-approved activity. Citizen participation will also be sought in the event that the service area or beneficiaries of an activity are substantially changed from what has been approved by DCED.

To ensure adequate opportunity for citizen participation during CDBG programs, the County shall hold a public hearing on all formal modifications which require the approval of DCED. For "local" revisions (as defined by DCED) and changes for which DCED approval is not required, input from citizens concerning changes or amendments will be received at regularly scheduled meetings of the Pike County Commissioners where such changes or amendments are considered.

5.4 Additional Hearings

Other public hearings may be held as deemed necessary by the Pike County Commissioners 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.

5.5 Public Hearing Notice

Notice of public hearings will be posted on the Pike County website (www.Pikecounty.gov) and social media accounts, and be emailed to the Regional Homeless Advisory Board (RHAB) and Local Housing Options Team (LHOT) at least (5) days prior to the hearing date. The RHAB and LHOT email lists include representatives from the local housing authority, government agencies, and organizations that provide services to low-income residents and residents with disabilities.

Each notice for the first public hearing shall include:

- The time, date, and location of the hearing

- CDBG dollars anticipated
- Criteria necessary to meet the range of activities for which the funds may be used:
 - Eligibility: explicitly authorized activities and
 - Fundability: meeting one of the three national objectives
- Percentage or dollar amount committed to LMI persons
- Any displacement that is expected to occur as a result of the use of CDBG funds
- List of potential projects currently identified
- Statement that the County will provide technical assistance, upon request, to any groups or persons, especially LMI persons or their representatives, when developing proposals intending to use CDBG funds
- Provide for timely written responses to written complaints or grievances, within 15 working days when practicable
- Offer of assistance to disabled persons
- Provide for language assistance for Limited English Proficiency persons as needed
- Identify the County of Pike's point of contact to address needs, complaints, and/or grievances.

Each notice for the second public hearing shall include:

- the time, date, and location of the hearing
- Funds available
- Intention to apply or submit plans
- Funded activity(s) and dollars allocated to each
- Provide for timely written responses to written complaints or grievances, within 15 working days when practicable
- Offer of assistance to disabled persons
- Provide for language assistance for Limited English Proficiency persons as needed
- Identify the County of Pike's point of contact to address needs, complaints, and/or grievances.

There will be a public comment period of at least 10 days after the notice for any CDBG public hearing is published.

5.6 Accessibility to Low- and Moderate- Income Persons

The public hearing procedures outlined herein are designed to promote participation by low- and moderate- income citizens, as well as residents of blighted neighborhoods and CDBG project areas. Local officials 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 project activities.

5.7 Accessibility to Persons with Disabilities

The locations of all public hearings described herein shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities. The County shall attempt to provide reasonable accommodations whenever the Citizen Participation Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more persons with hearing, vision, mobility, or developmental disabilities will be in attendance.

5.8 Schedule

The County of Pike shall follow the schedule below when preparing its annual application to DCED. Annual applications are typically due to DCED in October. This schedule may be adjusted if the annual application to DCED is released or due at a different time.

June	Advertise first public hearing
July	First public hearing
August	Review and prioritize local projects
September	Advertise second public hearing
October	Second public hearing

SECTION 6 – PROGRAM INFORMATION

Citizens will be provided full access to CDBG program information during all phases of a CDBG project. Local officials of the County shall make reasonable effort to assure that CDBG program information is available to all citizens, especially those of low- and moderate- incomes and those residing in low- and moderate- income areas, people with disabilities, non-English speaking persons, public housing residents, and residents of CDBG project areas.

To facilitate citizen access to CDBG program information, the Citizen Participation Coordinator will keep all documents related to a CDBG program on file in the Pike County Administration Building. Information from the project files shall be made available for examination and duplication, on request, during regular business hours. CDBG program information and materials, concerning specific CDBG projects will be available and distributed to the public at the regularly scheduled public hearings as outlined in this Plan. Furthermore, information concerning any CDBG project will be available at regularly scheduled County Commissioner meetings where the program is discussed.

Materials to be made available shall include, but are not necessarily limited to: the Citizen Participation Plan; records of public hearings; mailings and promotional materials; prior CDBG program applications; letters of approval; grant agreements; environmental review records; financial and procurement records; project design and construction specifications; labor standards materials; performance and evaluation reports; other reports required by PaDCED and/or HUD; proposed and approved CDBG program application(s) for the current year or project; written comments or complaints received concerning the community development program, and written responses from the County; and, copies of the applicable Federal and State rules, regulations, policies, requirements and procedures governing the CDBG program.

In no case shall the County disclose any information concerning the financial status of any program participant(s) which may be required to document program eligibility or benefit. Furthermore, the County shall not disclose any information which may, in the opinion of the Pike County Commissioners, be deemed of a confidential nature.

SECTION 7 – PROCEDURES FOR COMMENTS, OBJECTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

The public hearings scheduled, as described in this Citizen Participation Plan, are designed to facilitate public participation in all phases of the community development process. Citizens are encouraged to submit their views and proposals on all aspects of a community development program at the public hearings. However, to ensure that citizens are given the opportunity to assess and comment on all aspects of the community development program on a continuous basis, citizens may, at any time, submit written comments or complaints to the County.

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 funds, or to the implementation of any CDBG program, should submit such comments, or objections in writing to the Pike County CDBG Administrator. Should, after a reasonable period, a party believe that his/her comment or complaint has not been properly addressed or considered by the Pike County CDBG Administrator, then the aggrieved may appeal his/her case to the Pike County Commissioners.

Local officials shall make every effort to provide written responses to citizen proposals or complaints within fifteen (15) working days of the receipt of such comments or complaints where practicable. Should the Pike County Commissioners be unable to sufficiently resolve an objection or complaint, it may be forwarded by the aggrieved party to DCED.

Citizens may, at any time, contact DCED and/or HUD directly to register comments, objections or complaints concerning the County's CDBG application(s) and/or program(s). Citizens are encouraged, however, to attempt to resolve any complaints at the local level as outlined above prior to contacting DCED or HUD.

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

PA Department of Community & Economic Development
Center for Community Financing
Commonwealth Keystone Building, 4th Floor
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

or:

US Department of Housing & Urban Development
Philadelphia Regional Office
The Wanamaker Building
100 Penn Square East
Philadelphia, PA
19107-3380

Records of all comments, objections and/or complaints by citizens concerning the County's CDBG program and subsequent action taken in response to those comments shall be maintained on file at the Pike County Administration Building and shall be made available for public inspection upon request.

SECTION 8 – AMENDMENTS

The County may, from time to time, modify the provisions outlined herein through amendment to this Citizen Participation Plan. It shall be the policy of the County to periodically review and discuss the effectiveness of this Citizen Participation Plan in allowing citizen participation in the community development process and in helping to meet the community development needs and goals identified by the citizens of the County. To this end, the effectiveness of the Plan will be discussed at public hearings held in conjunction with the community development program as discussed herein, and potential amendments to the Plan will be reviewed at this time.

Amendments to the Plan will be made as necessary. All amendments shall be approved by the Pike County Commissioners and shall be incorporated into this Plan.

SECTION 9 – AUTHORITY

No portion of this Citizen Participation Plan shall be construed to restrict the responsibility and authority of the elected and appointed officials of Pike County in the development, implementation, and execution of any Community Development Block Grant program.

SECTION 10 - OTHER SPECIAL PROJECT GRANTS OR EMERGENCY DECLARATION

In the event that other federal special programs are awarded to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or an emergency declaration is made that affects the administration of the existing federal programs, that are authorized under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended and administered by DCED, the citizen participation requirements will be followed in accordance with either the statute or regulations set forth for the program or provide HUD with a request for waivers to the citizen participation process in accordance with information provide by HUD. Once the waiver is granted by HUD to the Commonwealth, the special conditions will be passed to its grantees, if necessary, to streamline the citizen participation process in accordance with the regulations in place.

Pike County must amend their Citizen Participation Plan if the required action is not already covered in their Citizen Participation Plan.

AMENDMENT – 5-2020 - CARES ACT AUTHORIZATION:

Emergency Declaration Citizen Participation and Expedited Modification Process:

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) allows for a grantee to adopt and use expedited procedures to prepare, propose, modify, or amend its statement of activities to the FY 2019 and FY 2020 grant and new CARES funding related to the use of funding to address emerging COVID-19 response. In addition, per DCED guidance, grantees may adopt and use expedited procedures to modify or amend its statement of activities for previous fiscal years. These expedited procedures are described in the next paragraph.

As long as national or local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons, Grantees do not need to hold in-person public hearings but instead “may create virtual public hearings to fulfill applicable hearing requirements for all grants from funds made available under this law.” In addition,

Grantees “shall provide citizens with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment of no less than 5 calendar days.” Any virtual hearing “shall provide reasonable notification and access for citizens in accordance with the grantee’s certifications, timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues, and public access to all questions and responses.”

APPROVED this 2nd day of June, 2021

Attest:

Signature:

Gary Orben 6-2-21
Gary Orben, Chief Clerk Date

Matthew M. Osterberg 6-2-21
Matthew M. Osterberg, Chairman Date

Ronald R. Schmalzle 6-2-21
Ronald R. Schmalzle, Commissioner Date

Steve Guccini 6-2-21
Steve Guccini, Commissioner Date

