

Citizen Participation Plan

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to outline the method by which Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service (TCHHSVS) will encourage public participation in the planning and implementation of its HUD-funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Travis County is required to prepare and submit a Consolidated Plan every three, five or six years and Action Plans on an annual basis (24 CFR Part 91). The consolidated planning process requires that each jurisdiction adopt a citizen participation plan (24 CFR Part 91.105).

Travis County's Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) outlines the notification procedures by which residents, public agencies and other interested parties will be notified of public hearings and the opportunities available for public to comment on needs, planned use of funds and performance of all CDBG funded projects. In addition, the plan outlines how Travis County will ensure accessibility of all meeting notices, public hearings, and posted documents for public review to all segments of the population, including people with unique needs, language barriers, or limited ability.

Background/References

24 Congressional Federal Regulation (CFR) Part 91.105

Policies and Procedures

A. Jurisdiction

Travis County intends to administer CDBG funded projects in the unincorporated areas of the County. Travis County is in a unique position due to the fact that the population in the unincorporated areas of the county is large enough for Travis County to be considered an Eligible Metropolitan Area. As such, community development and housing opportunities in geographic areas outside of the incorporated cities and villages in Travis County will be considered.

B. Citizen Participation and Access to Meetings

Travis County's Citizen Participation Plan provides residents, public agencies and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to local meetings and records. Travis County encourages citizen participation in the development of its Citizen Participation Plan (CPP), Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans, and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER), particularly in low- to moderate-income target areas.

Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities and non-English speaking populations will be made. Meetings will be made accessible by choosing locations that are ADA compliant, when available. In addition, Census data will be analyzed to identify areas where non-English speakers reside. If more than 25% of the population within the precinct speaks a language other than English, interpreters speaking those languages may be present at public hearings.

C. Notice of Public Hearings

Travis County HHSVS will post notices of the public hearings, including the times, dates, and locations, at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of the hearing. Notices may be posted in any of the following ways: Newspapers of general circulation, Travis County Community Centers, social service agencies that target low- to moderate-income residents, Travis County website, public access TV station, radio, mail outs, list serves, etc.

D. Public Hearings

Consolidated Plan:

Travis County's Consolidated Plan is developed through a collaborative process. Citizen Participation is critical to the development of the Consolidated Plan. The Consolidated Plan is a strategic plan that identifies needs and sets priorities, outcomes and objectives in the unincorporated areas of Travis County for a three, five- or six year period.

To elicit public input on the needs of those living in the unincorporated areas of Travis County for the development of the Consolidated Plan, Travis County HHSVS will hold public hearings at several locations throughout the County in two different formats to acquire information. Public Hearings are held at two different times throughout the development of the Consolidated Plan. All hearings will include an overview of the amount of funds expected from CDBG, the purpose and intent of CDBG dollars, and eligible activities.

1. Public hearings will be held to inform the Needs Assessment, and will ask participants for input regarding their housing, community development and public service needs.
 - a) Two (2) meetings will be held at Travis County Commissioners Court during the normally scheduled voting session. These public hearings will be held in the traditional public hearing format with oral testimony.
 - b) At least one (1) public hearing will be held in each of the four (4) precincts. These hearings will be structured as an information session regarding the uses of CDBG, with facilitated discussion and decision-making for meaningful, comprehensive input from

participants regarding their housing, community development and public service needs.

2. After the development of the Consolidated Plan for public comment, public hearings will be held to inform and enable the community to comment on the proposed uses of CDBG funds.
 - a) During the thirty (30) day review period, two (2) public hearings will be held at the Travis County Commissioners Court during the normally scheduled voting session. These public hearings will be held in the traditional public hearing format with oral testimony.

Annual Action Plan:

Each year the County must submit an annual Action Plan to HUD reporting how the year's funding allocation for CDBG will be used to achieve the goals outlined in the Consolidated Plan. In the year that the Consolidated Plan is developed, the public hearings for input on the Annual Action Plan and Consolidated Plan will be held at the same time. The public hearings will be outlined in the following manner:

1. Public hearings will be held to ask participants for input for the year's proposed Action Plan, including funding allocations.
 - a) One (1) hearing will be held at Travis County Commissioners Court during the normally scheduled voting session. These public hearings will be held in the traditional public hearing format with oral testimony.
 - b) At least one (1) public hearing will be held in each of the four (4) precincts. These hearings will be structured as an information session regarding the uses of CDBG, with facilitated discussion and decision-making for meaningful, comprehensive input from participants.
2. After the development of the Action Plan for public comment, public hearings will be held to inform and enable the community to comment on the proposed uses of CDBG funds.
 - a) During the thirty (30) day review period, two (2) public hearings will be held at the Travis County Commissioners Court during the normally scheduled voting session. These public hearings will be held in the traditional public hearing format with oral testimony.

Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports:

The County is required to submit annually by December 30th a CAPER to HUD that describes the County's progress in meeting the goals within the Consolidated Plan.

1. After the development of the CAPER for public comment, a public hearing will be held to receive oral comment on Travis County's performance.
 - a) During the fifteen (15) day review period, one (1) public hearing will be held at the Travis County Commissioners Court during the normally scheduled voting session. The public hearing will be held in the traditional public hearing format with oral testimony.

E. Surveys

For the development of the Consolidated Plan, surveys will be used in various ways in order to assess citizens' perceptions of their needs. Surveys will be sent via list serve to public agencies that serve residents in the unincorporated areas. Surveys will also be used to collect data at the public hearings. In addition, survey boards will be placed in five (5) of the Travis County Community Centers as well as other strategic locations to increase resident participation in the information gathering process. Surveys will be available in both English and Spanish. For other accommodations, contact the CDBG office at 854-3460.

F. Access to Information, Records and Response to Public Comments

Information will be provided to residents, public agencies and other interested parties, through various media formats (written, internet, etc.) including those most affected by proposed projects. Opportunities to receive information, review documents and submit comments will be provided with reasonable notice and time allowed. The information will be retained and available for public review for no less than five years after approval by Travis County Commissioners Court.

Throughout the CPP, Travis County Commissioners Court is mentioned as a source of information. Travis County Commissioners Court is televised and close captioned on the public access channel, and repeats several times throughout the week. Contact information for the program is routinely provided during the Commissioners Court meetings. The Travis County Commissioners Court agenda is posted via the Travis County website prior to each voting session in accordance with applicable laws. The County website is located at www.co.travis.tx.us.

Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities and for non-English speaking populations will be made upon request and as appropriate. To request information, documents, records or accommodations, contact via telephone at 512.854.3460 or via mail to:

Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service
CDBG Program
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, TX 78767

Citizen Participation Plan:

Travis County HHS/VS will draft the Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) and present it to the Travis County Commissioners Court during a regularly scheduled voting session. After presentation to Travis County Commissioners Court, the CPP will be posted for written comment for one (1) week prior to approval by the Travis County Commissioners Court.

Comments on the CPP may be received via phone and email to the Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service CDBG staff. The CPP will be posted on the Travis County website and copies will be located at the seven (7) Travis County Community Centers for public review.

Consolidated Plan:

Travis County HHSVS will draft the Consolidated Plan and present it to the Travis County Commissioners Court during a regularly scheduled voting session. After presentation to Travis County Commissioners Court, the Plan will be posted for written comment for thirty (30) days prior to approval by the Travis County Commissioners Court.

Comments on the Plan may be received in writing via email or regular mail to the Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service CDBG staff. The Plan will be posted on the Travis County website and copies will be located at the seven (7) Travis County Community Centers for public review. Summaries of the Plan may be available at other locations throughout the unincorporated areas of Travis County. Notification of availability of the draft will appear in newspaper(s) of general circulation.

Annual Action Plan:

Travis County HHSVS staff will draft the Annual Action Plan and present it to the Travis County Commissioners Court during a regularly scheduled voting session. After presentation to Travis County Commissioners Court, the Action Plan will be posted for written comment for thirty (30) days prior to approval by the Travis County Commissioners Court.

Comments on the Action Plan may be received in writing via email or regular mail to the Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service CDBG staff. The Plan will be posted on the Travis County website and copies will be located at the seven (7) Travis County Community Centers for public review.

Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER):

Travis County is required to submit annually by December 30th a CAPER to HUD that describes the County's progress in meeting the goals in the Consolidated Plan.

Travis County will draft the CAPER and present it to the Travis County Commissioners Court during a regularly scheduled voting session. After presentation to Travis County

Commissioners Court, the CAPER will be posted for written comment for fifteen (15) days prior to approval by the Travis County Commissioners Court.

Comments on the CAPER may be received in writing via email or regular mail to the Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service CDBG staff. The CAPER will be posted on the Travis County website and will be located at the seven (7) Travis County Community Centers for public review.

Travis County will document and report all public comments from citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties in preparing its final submissions. Public comments will be considered when feasible and beneficial, preceding final approval of Travis County Commissioners Court.

For public comment on the Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan or CAPER contact:

Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service
CDBG Program
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, TX 78767

G. Use of Alternate Projects

Travis County will include a list of alternate projects for public review each year in the Annual Action Plan. If a funded project has cost savings, slows down or discovers a barrier to completing it, an alternate project from the current Annual Action Plan may be selected to continue the timely spending of grant funds.

Alternate Projects will contain the same level of information that funded projects contain in the Annual Action Plan to ensure appropriate review by the public. Approval by the Travis County Commissioners Court will be necessary to replace a funded project with an alternate or to fund an alternate with cost savings from a completed project regardless of whether or not the increase or decrease exceeds 25%. These actions will not require a substantial amendment since the alternate projects will have gone through a public review process.

H. Amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan

Once approved by the Travis County Commissioners Court, any changes to the Citizen Participation Plan must go through a fifteen (15) day public comment period after the draft presentation to the Travis County Commissioners Court. Any written comments may be sent to the above referenced address.

Travis County will document and report all public comments from citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties in preparing its final submission. Public

comments will be considered when feasible and beneficial, preceding final approval of Travis County Commissioners Court.

I. Substantial Amendments to Consolidated Plan/Action Plan

When the location or beneficiaries of a project proposed under the Consolidated Plan or Action Plan are changed, the scope of the project is increased or reduced by more than 25%, or a new project is funded that was not originally subject to public review, Travis County HHSVS shall amend its plan.

Use of an alternate project by the process, as defined in Section G, will not require a Substantial Amendment. Approval by the Travis County Commissioners Court will be necessary to replace a funded project with an alternate or to fund an alternate with cost savings from a completed project regardless of whether or not the increase or decrease exceeds 25%.

If a project, which is replaced by an alternate, is deleted permanently, a substantial amendment will be completed in the Summer during the next Annual Action Plan process to allow for public comment on the deletion of the project. Consideration of any project that was not identified as an alternate will go through the normal substantial amendment process.

The amendment process includes public notice, a thirty (30) day public comment period, and a public hearing at Travis County Commissioners Court.

As necessary, such notice may also include a public hearing in the precinct in which the project has been changed or added. Amendments to the Consolidated Plan may take place at any time during the program year.

Travis County will document and report all public comments from citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties in preparing its final submissions. Public comments will be considered when feasible and beneficial, preceding final approval of Travis County Commissioners Court.

J. Technical Assistance

Technical assistance will be made available by appropriate Travis County staff to assist low- and moderate-income representative groups or agencies that request such assistance in developing proposals for funding assistance under this consolidated plan. Appropriate staff will be assigned based on expertise required for the specific proposal. The TCHHS/VS Executive Manager determines the level and types of assistance to be provided at any time based on a number of considerations including, but not limited to, space, expense, and staff workloads.

K. Response to Complaints

During the CDBG planning and implementation process, complaints and feedback are encouraged and expected. All complaints must be in writing. If a person is unable to provide the complaint in writing for any reason, assistance may be provided.

Complaints need to include the resident's name, address and daytime telephone number, if applicable, in case TCHHSVS staff need to clarify the nature of the complaint.

Complaints or Grievances need to be sent to:

Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service
CDBG Program
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, TX 78767

All written complaints will receive a timely written response mailed within fifteen (15) days of receipt of it. This written response will provide appropriate, substantive feedback to the resident. If CDBG Staff is unable to be compliant with the fifteen (15) day period, the complainant will be notified of an approximate date a response will be provided.

It is up to the discretion of the Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service Department to determine if a public hearing regarding an issue is needed. If a public hearing is needed, appropriate notice and location(s) of the hearing will be made, depending upon the implications of the issue.

Effective Date

Upon approval of Travis County Commissioners Court, The Citizen Participation plan, as amended, is effective as of July 20, 2010.