

North Country HOME Consortium

Citizen Participation Plan - 2021 Update

Introduction

In accordance with the Federal regulations (24 CFR Part 570.431), the North Country HOME Consortium (Consortium) will utilize the following Citizen Participation process to ensure that residents have ample opportunity to review and comment on the North Country HOME Consortium Program, the annual HOME funding rounds and applications, the Consolidated Plan, and Annual Action Plan. This Citizen Participation Plan, or any amended version thereof, shall be included as permanent Appendix to the Consortium's Consolidated Plan required under 24 CFR Part 91.

Policies and Procedures for Citizen Participation

All residents of municipalities within Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties, which are participating in the Consortium, are encouraged to participate and comment on proposed and actual uses of HOME funds. The following policies and procedures are designed to reasonably encourage and accommodate such participation.

1. Meetings, Information and Records

The Consortium will give timely and reasonable notice of and access to North Country HOME Consortium meetings and public hearings. Notices of meetings and public hearings will be published in the Watertown Daily Times and posted on the webpages of the three county planning departments and social services departments. Furthermore, records and information relating to Consortium plans and activities will be available to the public as allowed under New York State Freedom of Information Laws.

Specific issues and topics that will be regularly discussed and documented through the above procedures include:

- The amount of HOME funds expected to be available for the coming year, including the grant and anticipated program income.
- The range of activities that may be undertaken with HOME funds.
- The estimated amount of funds proposed for activities that will benefit low and moderate-income persons.
- Any displacement that may occur as a result of HOME activities and the Consortium's plans, consistent with policies developed under Section 570.606 (b), for minimizing displacement of persons as a result of proposed activities.
- The types and levels of assistance the Consortium/sub-recipients plan to make available to persons displaced by North Country HOME Consortium funded activities, even if the Consortium expects no displacement to occur.

2. Technical Assistance

The three Counties through their respective Planning Departments will provide technical assistance to groups representing low to moderate-income individuals in developing supporting or alternative proposals for HOME programming. This assistance will be considered, if requested and if staff resources are available. The level and type of assistance available will be at the Consortium's discretion, nor does such assistance include the provision of funds to such groups. Availability of such technical assistance shall be considered and documented at North County HOME Consortium meetings.

3. Public Hearings

The North Country HOME Consortium will hold two annual public hearings at different stages of the Annual HOME Process. Exact scheduling will be dependent on HOME funding cycles. These hearings will address the North Country HOME Consortium's housing needs, development of proposed activities and review of program performance. One hearing will address the Consortium's Consolidated Plan (CP) and Annual Action Plan (AAP) and another hearing will cover the Consortium's Annual Performance Assessment Report (CAPER). Public hearings will be noticed ten (10) days in advance of the hearing in the Watertown Daily Times and online on the webpages of Jefferson, St. Lawrence, and Lewis Counties and DANC. Hearings are planned to be held at the Development Authority's Office located in the State Office Building, 317 Washington Street, Watertown, New York 13624. In the case of offices being closed due to a public health emergency where in-person meeting is not possible for health and safety purposes, public hearings, administrative, planning and coordination meetings will be held remotely via Phone, Zoom or Comparable Remote Platform. Materials will be provided, if requested, in formats suitable for the visually and hearing impaired.

The public meeting for the FYE 2021-2025 Con Plan was held in accordance with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) waiver of Community Planning and Development (CPD) Grant Program and Consolidated Plan Requirements to Allow for Virtual Public Hearings in the Preparation of FY 2021 Consolidated Plans and Annual Action Plans.

4. Special Language Accommodations

Accommodations will be made available at public hearings to meet the needs of non-English speaking residents, though participation of such residents is not expected given the low percentage of non-English speaking residents within the Consortium.

5. Citizen Complaints

All written citizen complaints regarding the North Country HOME Consortium's programs will be responded to within 15 working days of receiving such complaints.

6. Citizen Participation by Low to Moderate Income Residents

To encourage participation by low and moderate-income residents, notices of hearings and HOME planning sessions will be published in the three County Region's Newspaper (Watertown Daily Times) provided to the Community Action Planning Council, the three County Continuum of Care (Points North Homeless Housing Council) as well as Jefferson,

Lewis & St. Lawrence County's Departments of Social Services (DSS) and Planning . These agencies are representative of groups that directly assist the Consortium's low and moderate-income population. Through this notification process, these agencies will be encouraged to notify beneficiaries of the HOME planning process and the opportunity to input through this Citizen Participation Plan.

Publication of the Consolidated & Annual Action Plan/s

The Consortium will publish a summary of any proposed Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan in one or more of the three Counties 'officially designated newspapers. Such summary will briefly describe the contents of the Consolidated Plan, the proposed activities to be undertaken and their relationship to local community objectives. The summary will inform the public that full versions of the Consolidated and or Annual Actions Plan/s are available for review at the Consortiums respective Planning & Social Service Departments.

The public will have the opportunity to examine the Plan's contents and submit comments on the Plan and the performance of the applicant. The Con Plan, Annual Action Plan & CAPER will be posted on the webpages of the three county's planning departments as well as the Development Authority of the North Country website www.danc.org.

Preparation of Final Consolidated Plan

The final Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan will include consideration, if deemed appropriate by the Home Administrative Board & Staff of comments and views received during the comment period for the proposed Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan. As with all requests for Federal assistance, the final HUD Approved Plans will be available for public review on the three counties websites and the Development Authority of the North Country website.

Amendments to the Final HUD Approved Consolidated & or Annual Action Plan's

The need may arise during implementation to modify the approved Consolidated Plan or the Annual Action Plan. The Consortium will amend its plans whenever it makes one of the following decisions:

- To make a change in its allocation priorities or the method of distributing funds;
- To carry out an activity using funds from any program covered by the Consolidated Plan (including program income) not previously described in the action plan; or
- To change the purpose, scope, location and or beneficiaries of the activity.

The Consortium will use the following criteria to determine what changes in planned or on-going activities constitute a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan: Substantial change is when the cumulative effect of any activity's original budget allocation is increased or decreased by more than fifteen percent (15%), or when interim financing such as float loans are provided. Substantial change is not rolling over funds from unencumbered project balances from one year to subsequent years for similar activities within the same target area. Nor is it executing transfers within the same HUD-eligible activities.

The Consortium will conduct a public hearing to provide citizens an opportunity to comment on substantial amendments. The Consortium will notify the public via publication in the Watertown Daily Times ten (10) days prior to the date of the hearing and posting on the three counties webpages. The public hearing notice will include information on where the amendment is available for the public's review. The Consortium will also make the amendments available on the Jefferson County and Development Authority website. The public notice will also include information on the start and end of the 30-day public comment period.

The Consortium will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at public hearings. If any, in preparing a substantial amendment of the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan. The Consortium will attach to the Plan a summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments not accepted and the reasons therefore. Written comments will be responded to within a reasonable timeframe, within 15 working days whenever practicable.

Amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan

Should the need arise to amend the Citizen Participation Plan; the Consortium will conduct a Public Hearing to provide citizens an opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment.

The Consortium will publish a notice ten (10) days in advance of the public hearing in the Watertown Daily Times and post on the three counties webpages.

Amendments will be made available during the 30 day public comment period at the three Counties' Planning & Social Services Departments offices and also on the webpages of the three counties as the Development Authority of the North Country website www.danc.org.