

**MARENGO COUNTY
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT BLOCK
GRANT – DISASTER
RECOVERY (CDBG-DR)
CITIZENS PARTICIPATION
PLAN**

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MARENGO COUNTY - *Citizens Participation Plan*

Introduction

Marengo County, Alabama (the County) has been designated by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a Most Impacted and Distressed (MID) county as a result of the impacts related to Hurricanes Sally and Zeta. As a designated MID county, the County is eligible to receive Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding from the Hurricanes Sally and Zeta Local Recovery and Resilience Capacity Program (LRRCP) and the Local Recovery Housing Competition Program (LRHCP) (collectively, the Programs). In order to receive funding under the Programs, the County must submit applications to ADECA for approval. Once approved, funds will be allocated by ADECA and will be implemented by the County. This policy is to outline the methods by which the County will collaborate with partners and the public in the submission of applications and implementation of any of the County's CDBG-DR funded projects and programs that are approved for funding by ADECA (Approved Projects).

The Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA) was previously designated by ADECA through the Local Recovery Planning Program (LRPP) to commission a comprehensive Local Recovery Plan (LRP) for a seven-county consortium of the MID counties, including Dallas, Washington, Clarke, Escambia, Perry, Wilcox, and Marengo Counties. The LRP was submitted and approved by ADECA on February 18, 2025. Through that process, the ACCA, with assistance from Marengo County, has identified appropriate stakeholders relating to the potential projects for which Marengo County may submit applications. By way of resolution dated May 13, 2025, the County has engaged the ACCA to assist the County with the submission of applications and administration and implementation of Approved Projects. Through the ongoing engagement of identified stakeholders and the local community, the County will remain informed of continuing unmet needs in participating jurisdictions. The gathering of feedback via public participation is an important step to ensuring the applications and Approved Projects meet the diverse needs of the identified population.

This Citizens Participation Plan outlines the various ways citizen participation can be encouraged and facilitated throughout the application and implementation processes and satisfies the requirements of 24 CFR 570.486(a)(1). The County encourages citizen participation, particularly by low- and moderate-income persons who reside in slum or blighted areas and areas in which CDBG-DR funds are proposed to be used.

Purpose

This Citizens Participation Plan is intended to guide and coordinate all organizations working together to conduct a robust community engagement process. The goals of Community Outreach are to:

- Continue engagement from stakeholders identified in the LRP;
- Solicit feedback on proposed project activities;
- Solicit feedback on Approved Project progress; and
- Ensure transparency in the application and Approved Project implementation.

This plan outlines the various ways citizen participation can be encouraged and facilitated throughout the application submission and implementation of the County's ADECA-Approved Projects.

Scope

Citizens Participation Plan

This Citizens Participation Plan was created to comply with the requirements specified in the two Federal Register Notices (Vol. 87, No. 23 (Feb. 3, 2022) and Vol. 87, No. 100 (May 24, 2022) for the CDBG-DR grant awarded to the State of Alabama in response to Hurricanes Sally and Zeta. This plan is intended to satisfy the requirements of 24 CFR 570.486 and outline the policy and procedure for facilitating citizen participation for the County.

Upon adoption of this Citizens Participation Plan, the County will be responsible for ensuring that the requirements outlined within this Plan are enforced.

Public Comment

This CDBG-DR Citizens Participation Plan and any amendments to this Plan will be presented at a regularly scheduled Commission Meeting, special meeting, or other legal meeting of the Commission ("Public Meeting") and will be publicized on said Public Meeting's agenda, posting on the County's bulletin board, and posting on ACCA's public website. The County will provide a period of at least fifteen (15) days following the Public Meeting to receive comments on this Plan or any amendment and will consider all public comments received in the CDBG-DR Citizens Participation Plan's finalization process. Following the public comment period, County will consider adopting the Citizens Participation Plan or any amendment to the Plan at a following Public Meeting.

Amendments to the Plan

Future amendments to this Plan will be undertaken, as warranted, in response to updated requirements or as stipulated by governing agencies. All amendments will be made publicly available through ACCA's Website, on the County's bulletin board, and presented at a Public Meeting with the opportunity for review and comments by the public as described above before the Plan is submitted to ADECA for review and acceptance.

Availability

The County will have the County's CDBG-DR Citizens Participation Plan, as well as any amendments to that Plan, posted on ACCA's public website, will maintain a copy at the County's Commission Office, and will provide a reasonable number of copies to citizens upon request. All materials will be made available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request, updated requirements or as stipulated by governing agencies. All amendments will be made publicly available for review and comment by the public as described above.

Accessibility

The County has followed the guidance provided in ADECA's Language Access Plan to determine the need to undertake reasonable actions to facilitate the participation of persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). In accordance with ADECA's guidance, a Four-Factor Analysis was completed by ACCA on behalf of the County prior to publishing the notice for conducting a public hearing. The results of the Four-Factor Analysis did not identify a significant need for translation services for public meetings or the requirement to provide translated documents for public posting.

Four-Factor Analysis Results

Area Name	Total	Do Not Speak English well	Do Not Speak English very well as % of Total	Speak Spanish	Speak Spanish as % of Total	Speak Other Indo European	Speak Other Indo European as % of Total	Speak Asian or Pacific Islander	Speak Asian or Pacific Islander as % of Total	Speak Other	Speak Other as % of Total
Marengo	17943	157	0.87%	105	0.59%	44	0.25%	0	0.00%	8	0.04%

The CDBG-DR Citizens Participation Plan and any amendments to this Plan may be made available in English and if needed in Spanish. Other languages and other formats will be provided upon request to ensure accessibility to persons with disabilities or Limited English Proficiency, where practicable. Persons with disabilities or special needs who may require special materials, services, or assistance with accessing program materials should call the ACCA Coordinator of Events and Education at 334-263-7594 or email Jennifer Datcher at MarengoGrants@alabamacounties.org.

Applications and Approved Project Progress Updates

Consultation

During preparation of the applications, in conformance with Program guidelines, the County will consult with the stakeholders identified in the LRP, which may, depending upon the project, include the following: local tribal entities, county and local agencies and governments, Federal partners, nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, private sector business owners and associations, other stakeholders, and affected parties in the surrounding geographic areas, including organizations that advocate on behalf of members of protected classes, vulnerable populations, and underserved communities affected by the disaster.

The County also encourages the participation of other county and regional institutions, continuums of care, and organizations that work with those affected by the proposed activities in the development of the application and implementation of Approved Projects. The County specifically encourages the participation of private and public organizations, including agencies that manage public water and land, emergency management agencies, and internet service providers.

The County encourages all citizens, especially low- and moderate-income persons, particularly those living in areas targeted with this funding, to participate in the development of the applications through public hearings and comments.

Public Hearings and Meetings

Public Hearings will be held in person at accessible locations for all citizens, especially those with low to moderate income, and will, if possible, be held during a regularly scheduled Commission Meeting, in order to encourage maximum participation from the public during the application process. Once an Approved Project has been established, the County will also keep all interested parties informed of the progress of Approved Project through Public Meetings and at least one Public Hearing. A notice of the Public Hearing will be published in a widely circulated newspaper in the County for a minimum of seven (7) days and maximum of fifteen (15) days before the scheduled date of the hearing. Public Hearings and Meetings will be included on the agenda, notices will be posted on the ACCA website and the County's bulletin board, and through any other requested or required methods from ADECA. Identified stakeholders, including, potentially, chief elected officials of local governments, public agencies, citizen groups, and other interested parties will be notified via email.

We are committed to making accommodations for persons with disabilities and those with Limited English Proficiency upon request, ensuring their full participation.

Public Comment

Public comments will be collected in two ways: through Public Hearings and email and phone communication. Through a multifaceted approach to feedback collection, the County will take best practices to ensure citizen participation in the application process.

In public hearings, citizen participants will be provided with ample opportunity to express priorities, feedback, concerns, and complaints.

The public will also be given the opportunity to provide direct feedback through phone or email communication. The County has identified Jennifer Datcher as the point of contact for this feedback. The phone number to reach her is 334-263-7594 and her email address is MarengoGrants@alabamacounties.org. The public will have a minimum of fifteen (15) days following the posting of the applications on the ACCA's website to provide feedback and comment.

All feedback received through both methods will be formally notated to ensure citizen concerns are considered when developing the applications.

Availability

The County will post proposed applications on the ACCA's public website for review and comment and will maintain a copy in the County Commission Office. The ACCA, on behalf of the County, will provide a reasonable number of copies to citizens upon request. All materials related to the application shall include the names and contact information of the agencies or individuals designated as points of contact.

The County will furnish citizens information, including, but not limited to:

- The amount of CDBG-DR funds expected to be made available for the current fiscal year (including the grant and anticipated program income);
- The range of activities that may be undertaken with the CDBG-DR funds;
- The estimated amount of the CDBG-DR funds proposed to be used for activities that will meet the national objective of benefit to low- and moderate-income persons; and
- The proposed CDBG-DR activities are likely to result in displacement and the unit of general local government's anti-displacement and relocation plans required under 24 CFR [§ 570.488](#).

The final applications and any proposed additions, deletions, or substantial changes to any Approved Project will be posted on ACCA's public website and will be made available to citizens, citizen groups, public agencies, and other interested parties upon request. The applications and all amendments, updates, and revisions will also be made available in various formats and languages and shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities and to persons of Limited English Proficiency, when requested.

Citizen's Complaints

Complaints, questions, and grievances raised by the public will be addressed immediately with best efforts made to resolve issues before they become formal complaints. The relevant party will promptly investigate all grievances and complaints. A response to the complaint will be provided within fifteen (15) working days, when possible. If the response takes longer than fifteen (15) days, the reason for the extension will be documented. Parties may contact the County's representative

with ACCA Monday-Friday 8:00 am-5:00 pm, at (334) 263-7594 or by email at MarengoGrants@alabamacounties.org. Citizens may also submit complaints in writing to:

In care of Jennifer Datcher
On behalf of Marengo County
P.O. Box 5040 Montgomery, AL 36103

Methodology - Community Engagement

Community engagement for the applications and Approved Projects is designed to achieve the following goals:

- Keep the public and identified stakeholders informed;
- Engage the public to understand their priorities, goals, and concerns with proposed project activities;
- Provide opportunities for feedback and input;
- Ensure that all internal staff and consultants are aligned in messaging; and
- Compile feedback and incorporate into the proposed applications.

The primary activity for public engagement with the applications and Approved Project progress will occur through Public Hearings and Meetings or through additional methods may also be used to ensure engagement opportunities are widely accessible.

The County will provide citizens with reasonable advance notice of, and opportunity to comment on, proposed activities in an application to ADECA and, for grants already made, activities which are proposed to be added, deleted, or substantially changed from the unit of general local government's application to ADECA. Substantially changed means changes made in terms of purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries as defined by criteria established by ADECA.

Engagement with Public Agencies and Officials

All communication regarding engagement, including meeting invitations, will be sent via email from either designated County staff or ACCA staff to relevant public agencies and officials.

Staff members and officials representing public agencies participate as part of their job or official responsibilities. When agency leaders believe the decision-making process is valuable to their agency, they attend themselves or assign staff to attend meetings and provide input.

Engagement with Stakeholders

A stakeholder is a person or group of people likely to be affected by or affect change. Often, stakeholder identification is limited to formally organized interest groups. For the purposes of the applications and Approved Projects, stakeholders have been identified through the LRP process.

Engagement with stakeholders will be conducted through meetings and via phone calls. The meeting locations will be held remotely or will be county-based to ensure that stakeholders in all relevant areas are included. Information about the meetings will be sent via email invitation. The goal of these stakeholder meetings is to receive feedback and obtain information necessary to submit the application in such a way that is thorough and accurately depicts the needs of the stakeholders and affected communities and engage these stakeholders, as appropriate, for the successful

implementation of the Approved Projects. Additionally invitations to Public Hearings and Meetings will be sent via email invitation to appropriate stakeholders and advertised as described above.

Citizen Engagement

Citizen Engagement is an essential, although often challenging, part of the application process. Residents and property owners fall into different groups based on gender, age, employment, income, cultural heritage, etc., which influences their level of interest and willingness to participate in decision-making processes. By providing multiple avenues and opportunities to engage, and promoting a transparent decision-making process, the County can help mitigate some of these challenges to citizen engagement. Additionally, through stakeholder engagement, especially with organizations that work closely with affected vulnerable populations, the County can encourage public participation and engagement with the development of applications and implementation of Approved Projects and ensure that the needs of affected communities and community members are considered.

Public Hearings and Meetings will be county-based and will, if possible, occur during regularly scheduled Commission Meetings, to ensure maximum participation from relevant stakeholders and the general public. Public Hearings will be advertised via email invitation to identified stakeholders in the LRP, and by publication on the meeting agenda, through newspaper advertisement, the County's bulletin board, and by posting on ACCA's website. The goal of these Public Hearings is to present the proposed activities in the applications to the public to solicit input on applications and, once the project is approved by ADECA, to present relevant status reports on project implementation or substantial changes to the Approved Project. Periodic Approved Project progress reports may also be provided via Public Meeting.

All comments provided in these Public Hearings will be formally documented to ensure feedback is captured for consideration in the development of the applications and any amendments.

Citizens will also be provided with the opportunity to engage through public comment. The phone number and email for comment will be made publicly available and presented to the County Commission for their information.

Accessibility

The County will ensure that residents will be given reasonable and timely access to Public Hearings and Meetings consistent with accessibility and reasonable accommodation requirements in accordance with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the regulations at 24 CFR part 8, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and the regulations at 28 CFR parts 35 and 36, as applicable, as well as information and records relating to the unit of local government's proposed and actual use of CDBG-DR funds.

Public Hearings and Meetings will be advertised widely and unbiasedly to ensure engagement from a diverse group of community members.

The location of each meeting will be in a building that is generally accessible. Translation services and disability accommodation services will be provided when requested. It is the intent of the County to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes in all respects. If an attendee or participant at a public hearing and/or meeting

needs special assistance beyond what is normally provided, the County will attempt to accommodate these people in every reasonable manner.

By providing updates at regularly-scheduled Commission meetings, the County can specifically target vulnerable populations who may see travel time as a barrier to meaningful participation.

Additionally, through first engaging with identified stakeholder groups that represent vulnerable populations, the County can ensure that the needs of these populations are considered in this Citizens Participation Plan, as well as in the proposed applications.

Limited English Proficiency

If requested, the County, with assistance from the ACCA, will provide translations of all relevant documents, including the applications and any amendments.

When requested, the County will take all reasonable action to accommodate Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals. These actions may involve the use of interpreters or other translation services. This accommodation will encourage the participation of LEP individuals and help to remove barriers to access.

Technical Assistance

The County will provide technical assistance to groups that are representative of persons of low- and moderate-income that request assistance in developing proposals (including proposed strategies and actions to affirmatively further fair housing) in accordance with the procedures developed by the State.