



Citizen Participation Plan

Community Development Block Grant – Disaster
Recovery

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Version History

Version	Date	Notes
1.0	May 26, 2023	Original version posted on Resilient SRQ webpage for comments

Section A: Background

Sarasota County is a recipient of Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery grant funds (CDBG-DR). Sarasota County established the Resilient SRQ program in the Office of Financial Management to support the use of CDBG-DR funds. The Consolidated Planning requirements at 24 CFR Part 91, Subpart B, require this Program to adopt a Citizen Participation Plan and the following document describes the citizen participation plan for adoption of CDBG-DR funds in accordance with applicable regulations. Sarasota County encourages citizen participation, particularly from low to moderate income households along with persons with disabilities or with limited English proficiency (LEP).

In compliance with 24 CFR 91.105(a)(3) this Citizen Participation Plan will be published for public comment on the Sarasota County CDBG-DR webpage for a minimum of 14 days.

Section B: Action Plan

Sarasota County is required to complete and submit an action plan detailing how the County will use all available funding to support unmet needs. The action plan lays out Program designs for each area of assistance along with projected timelines, performance, and expenditure schedule. The plan will be made accessible to persons with disabilities and those with LEP as described in Section E: Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Section F: Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities.

Before adopting the Action Plan, the County will seek public input on activities and the feedback received during this period will be included in the Action Plan submitted to HUD. Opportunities for feedback will be provided during public hearings, public comments, and other methods described in this Plan.

Substantial Amendments to the Action Plan

In the event amendments are needed to the Action Plan, Sarasota County will follow the process in Section C: Community Outreach. Comments will be accepted for thirty days, and a summary of these comments will be attached to the substantial amendment.

An amendment will be considered substantial if it meets one or all of the following conditions:

1. Incorporation of Additional Funds: If additional funds are allocated for the current or subsequent disaster, subject to applicable federal register notice requirements; or
2. Substantial Amendment Criteria: If an amendment that, at a minimum, satisfies the “Substantial Amendment Criteria” of the County which is defined here as any of the below criteria:
 - a. Addition or deletion of a program benefit or eligibility criteria;
 - b. Addition or deletion of an entire program or activity; or
 - c. Increase, decrease, or reallocation of funds amongst other approved activities, where alternation of funds constitutes at or above \$20 million of the total current award.

Section C: Community Outreach

Effective public outreach is essential to the Action Plan and Sarasota County will conduct outreach to the following groups:

- Local governments including City of North Port, City of Sarasota, City of Venice, and Town of Longboat Key
- Nonprofit, social service, and other organizations that advocate on behalf of vulnerable populations and underserved communities impacted by the disaster.
- The local chambers of commerce
- Public housing authorities
- Local or regional emergency management agencies that have primary responsibility for the administration of FEMA funds, if applicable
- Sarasota County residents
- Key stakeholders and Community Representatives, to include any locally established recovery focused groups

The Action Plan will also be presented at a public Board of County Commissioners (BCC) meeting and will need to receive approval from the BCC before it is submitted to HUD. The BCC meeting will provide citizens an additional opportunity to provide input on the Action Plan.

Public Notice for Action Plan and Substantial Amendments

For the Action Plan or substantial amendment, citizens will be given reasonable opportunity to review. The full Action Plan or substantial amendment will be posted electronically on the CDBG-DR webpage, or “Resilient SRQ”, www.scgov.net/ResilientSRQ. Citizens may request a hard copy of the Plan by emailing resilientSRQ@scgov.net. Summaries of the Action Plan or substantial amendment will be provided at the following locations:

- Public libraries.
- Community Centers.
- Other municipal government buildings.
- One or more local newspapers.

Comment Period for Action Plan and Substantial Amendments

Sarasota County will collect any comments made on the Action Plan or substantial amendment. The comments will be considered in the following formats:

- Via email to ResilientSRQcomments@scgov.net ;
- Using an online form available on the CDBG-DR website;
- Comments collected from public hearings; or,
- Via mail to: Resilient SRQ, 3rd FL, 1660 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota, FL, 34236.

The Action Plan or substantial amendment will be made available for thirty days to allow for public comments unless the federal government specifies an alternative public comment period or waives the required public comment period. Sarasota County will inform affected citizens of the comment period through various methods including e-mails, press releases, media announcements, and contacts with

neighborhood and community organizations. Sarasota County will consider all comments received both orally and in writing on the Action Plan or substantial amendment.

Public Website

Information related to CDBG-DR will be posted on a consolidated webpage, accessible at www.scgov.net/ResilientSRQ. The webpage will allow individuals and entities awaiting assistance to see how all grant funds are used and administered.

Copies of the relevant documents will include at a minimum this citizen participation plan, the Action Plan including all substantial amendments, quarterly performance reports, procurement policies and procedures, information on each CDBG-DR program, any relevant notices or outreach information, and contact information.

Section D. Public Hearings for Action Plan

A minimum of one in-person public hearing will be conducted within a HUD-identified Most Impacted and Distressed (MID) area to provide comments on the Action Plan.

The hearing will be held in a facility that is physically accessible to persons with disabilities to ensure effective communication in accordance with 24 CFR 8.6.

Questions received and answers provided will be made available on the CDBG-DR website within a reasonable time frame.

Hearings will be held at times and locations convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries, with accommodation for persons with disabilities and appropriate auxiliary aids and services to ensure effective communication. For individuals with LEP, Sarasota County will provide a translation of the documents in Spanish and will take reasonable steps to provide additional language assistance as identified in **Section E. Limited English Proficiency (LEP)**. Comments from other languages will be accepted and translated into English. For individuals with disabilities, Sarasota County will follow the process listed in **Section F. Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities**.

Section E. Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Under the five-year estimates for 2019 of the American Community Survey (ACS), Sarasota County is 3.1 percent Spanish speaking. Based upon this assessment, CDBG-DR notices, outreach materials, and other vital documents will be made available in both English and Spanish. Additional language assistance to LEP persons, to include in Spanish and other languages, may include, but is not limited to:

- Oral interpretation services;
- Bilingual staff;
- Telephone service lines interpreter;
- Written translation services;
- Notices to staff and recipients of the availability of LEP services; or
- Referrals to community liaisons proficient in the language of LEP persons.

Request for any the above language assistance, outside of translation of notices, outreach materials, and vital documents into Spanish, may be submitted to resilientSRQ@scgov.net and reasonable steps shall

be taken by Sarasota County to ensure meaningful access to LEP persons. Requests may also be made to Sarasota County's ADA/Title VI Coordinator via email at adacoordinator@scgov.net or phone by calling 3-1-1

Any persons who would like information available in an alternative format or a language other than English can contact Sarasota County's ADA/Title VI Coordinator via email at adacoordinator@scgov.net or phone by calling 3-1-1. A request may also be made by emailing resilientSRQ@scgov.net.

Comments received during the public comment period in a language other than English will be translated into English and incorporated into the Action Plan or Substantial Amendments.

Section F. Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

Sarasota County will, upon request, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified persons with disabilities so they can participate equally in Sarasota County services, programs, or activities. Possible aids and services include qualified sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, and other ways of making information and communications accessible to people who have speech, hearing, or vision impairments.

Sarasota County is committed to continuously improving access to all services, including the county's website. If an individual is unable to use any aspect of the county's website, PDF files, or other attachments, he or she should contact adacoordinator@scgov.net, or call 941-861-5000 (TTY voice: 7-1-1 or 1-800-955- 8771); and the county will provide the individual or group with assistance within a timeline both parties deem reasonable.

Sarasota County will make all reasonable modifications to policies and services, programs, or activities to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to utilize services.

Section G. Application Status

Applicants can check the status of their application by visiting the application webpage, calling 311, or emailing resilientSRQ@scgov.net to determine the status of their application.

Section H. Citizen Complaints

Citizens may submit a complaint by emailing resilientSRQ@scgov.net or calling 311. All complaints received shall be reviewed by Sarasota County CDBG-DR program staff for:

1. Conducting investigations, as necessary;
2. Finding a resolution; or
3. Conducting follow-up actions.

Sarasota County will provide a written response to every citizen's complaint within 15 business days following the receipt of the complaint. If additional time is needed, Sarasota County will document the reason for needing additional time. Any complaints regarding fraud, waste, or abuse of government funds will be handled in accordance with Sarasota County's CDBG-DR policies on fraud, waste, or abuse and substantiated complaints will be forwarded to the HUD OIG Fraud Hotline (phone: 1-800-347-3735 or email: hotline@hudoig.gov).