

State of Minnesota

Citizen Participation Plan

Effective July 2006

This Citizen Participation Plan was drafted in accordance with Section 91.115 of HUD's Consolidated Plan regulations.

The State of Minnesota recognizes the importance of public participation in both defining and understanding current housing and community development needs, and prioritizing resources to address those needs. The state's Citizen Participation Plan is designed to provide citizens of all ages, genders, economic levels, races, ethnicities and special needs equal access to become involved in development of the Consolidated Plan and to comment on state performance.

The Consolidated Plan is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirement that combines the planning and application process of four HUD grants (formula grants): the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), and Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA). In addition to being part of the formula grant application, HUD requires that applications for competitive grants and public housing plans from areas under the jurisdiction of the state's Consolidated Plan include certificates of consistency with the Consolidated Plan signed by the state's lead agency for the Consolidated Plan. The Consolidated Plan examines the housing and community development needs of the state, sets priorities for the above-mentioned HUD grant monies, and establishes an action plan for meeting current and future needs.

The Consolidated Plan consists of the following parts: A housing and homeless needs assessment; a strategic plan; an action plan; certain certifications; and a monitoring plan. The entire Consolidated Plan is rewritten every five years. The action plan, which describes resources and their expected use in the coming program year, is written with citizen participation every year and constitutes an update to the larger Consolidated Plan.

Use of the term "Consolidated Plan" within this Citizen Participation Plan refers either to the entire five-year plan, or the annual action plan, depending on which year of the five-year planning cycle the state is in.

Purpose of Citizen Participation Plan

In order to ensure maximum participation in the Consolidated Plan process among all populations and needs groups, and in order to ensure that their issues and concerns are

adequately addressed, the State of Minnesota will follow the standards set forth in this Citizen Participation Plan during development of its Consolidated Plan.

The Citizen Participation Plan also provides citizens an opportunity to evaluate and comment on the state's performance, as reported in the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

The participation process will be developed and monitored by a Consolidated Plan Coordinating Committee consisting of representatives from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA), and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

Relevant Areas

The term "entitlement areas" refers to cities and counties that qualify to receive one or more formula grants. These areas must complete a Consolidated Plan separately from the state's to receive funding. For purposes of this report, "non-entitlement" refers to cities and towns that do not file Consolidated Plans individually or as part of a consortium and are not eligible to receive formula funding from HUD directly. Communities/counties not covered by the Minnesota Consolidated Plan currently include: the cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul, Moorhead, St. Cloud, Rochester, Duluth and the counties of Hennepin (includes the cities of Bloomington and Plymouth), Anoka, Dakota, Ramsey, Washington, St. Louis, Cook, Koochiching, Lake and Itasca. Individuals wishing to contribute to the Consolidated Planning process in these areas should contact housing and community development specialists in these cities/counties.

Citizen Involvement

The Consolidated Planning and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) processes will offer many opportunities for citizen participation. The state will particularly encourage participation of persons with special needs and/or persons who are often underrepresented in public process (low-income, persons of color, non-English speaking persons, persons with disabilities, persons who are homeless). The state will also encourage the participation of statewide and regional institutions and organizations that are involved or affected by the formula grants in the process of developing and implementing the consolidated plan. Participation will be solicited and encouraged through the following activities.

Public Hearings. At least two public hearings will be held before the publication of the final Consolidated Plan. The primary purpose of the first public hearing is to gather citizen input on housing and community development needs and the proposed Consolidated Plan before it is published for comment. The second public hearing will

be held during the Consolidated Plan 30-day public comment period, and will be for review and comment on the Consolidated Plan draft. The public hearings will be announced at least two weeks prior to being held. Announcements may be made through the DEED and MHFA websites and at least one newspaper of statewide circulation.

The public hearings will take place in locations identified in the announcement of the public hearings that are accessible to persons with disabilities. The dates, times and locations for public hearings will be convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries. Non-English speaking persons and those with disabilities will be encouraged to attend. Where a significant number of non-English speaking residents are expected to participate, the state will provide translators.

Regional and Interest Area Forums. In addition to the public hearings, DEED, MHFA, and DHS may solicit input on housing and community development issues and needs of the homeless population at regional or interest area forums.

If forums are conducted, agencies, advocates, statewide and regional institution and organizations, and community residents will be informed of the forums through state agencies' websites, personal contact, media releases, and other methods that the state believes may be productive. All sites selected for the forums will be accessible to the physically disabled. The state will work with advocacy groups to determine the need for special accommodations (beyond physical accessibility) of special needs groups and non-English speaking attendees.

The forums will be conducted with the intention of providing Minnesota residents the opportunity to voice their opinions and provide insight into the issues prevalent in their communities. The forums will also provide an opportunity for citizens and interested parties to obtain information about state housing and community development programs, the administering agencies, and funding requirements. Technical assistance will also be offered during the forum sessions.

Public Comment on the Consolidated Plan. Prior to the adoption of a Consolidated Plan, the state will make available to interested parties the draft Consolidated Plan and Executive Summary for a comment period of no less than 30 days. Notification of the availability of the proposed Consolidated Plan will appear in at least one newspaper that is circulated throughout the state.

The proposed Consolidated Plan will be available at selected depositories for the full public comment period. A list of the depositories where we expect the Consolidated Plan to be available appears at the end of the Citizen Participation Plan. The proposed Consolidated Plan will also be available for viewing on MHFA's website, <http://www.mhfa.state.mn.us> and DEED's website, <http://www.deed.state.mn.us>.

Although interested parties will be encouraged to use the depositories' copies or view the Consolidated Plan on the Internet, a reasonable number of the proposed Consolidated Plan will also be available from DEED and MHFA during the public comment period.

Citizens or groups that have attended any of the forums or public hearings will be notified by mail or e-mail of the Consolidated Plan's availability for comment.

The draft Consolidated Plan will describe the amount of assistance the state expects to receive and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income and the plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced.

The state will openly consider any comments of individuals or groups received verbally or in writing, including e-mail, during the Consolidated Planning process or at public hearings. A summary of the written and public hearing comments will be included in the final Consolidated Plan, along with the state's response to the comments.

Public Comment on the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report.

Before the state submits a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) to HUD, the state will make available to interested parties the proposed CAPER for a comment period of no less than 15 days. Citizens will be notified of the CAPER's availability through newspaper notification.

The CAPER will be available on MHFA's and DEED's websites for the full public comment period. Hard copies of the CAPER will be available upon request from DEED and MHFA during the public comment period. The state will consider any comments of individuals or groups received verbally or in writing, including e-mails, or at public hearings. A summary of the written and public hearing comments and the state's responses will be included in the final CAPER.

Public Access to Records

The state will provide all interested parties with access to information and records related to the state's Consolidated Plan and the state's use of assistance under all programs covered by the Consolidated Plan during the preceding five years. The public will be provided with reasonable access to housing assistance records, subject to laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality.

Consultation with Organizations and State Agencies

When preparing the Consolidated Plan, the state will actively consult with public and private agencies that provide housing, health, and social services in order to ensure that

the interests and needs of all groups are being adequately addressed. This consultation may occur through regional and interest area forums, interviews conducted with such organizations (especially those that provide services to special needs populations), and incorporation of data and reports produced by such organizations into the Consolidated Plan.

Substantial Amendments

Substantial Amendment Criteria. Occasionally, public comments or circumstances will warrant an amendment to the Consolidated Plan. The criteria for whether an amendment requires citizen participation is referred to by HUD as Substantial Amendment Criteria.

The state has determined that changes in the described method of distributing funds to local governments or nonprofit organizations to carry out activities constitute a substantial amendment.

Elements of a “method of distribution” are:

- Application process for local governments or nonprofits;
- Grant size limits; and
- Selection criteria.

Citizen Participation in the Event of a Substantial Amendment. In the event of a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan, the state will comply with the following citizen participation process:

1. The state will notify citizens of the availability of the draft substantial amendments, a minimum 30 day comment period, and time and location of a public hearing through a newspaper of statewide circulation.
2. The substantially amended sections of the Consolidated Plan will be distributed to the statewide-designated depositories and will be available for the full public comment period. A full list of the depositories where we expect the Consolidated Plan to be available is attached. In addition, the substantially amended sections of the Consolidated Plan will be made available on MHFA’s website, <http://www.mhfa.state.mn.us>, and DEED’s website, <http://www.deed.state.mn.us>, and hard copies will also be available from MHFA and DEED for the full duration of the public comment period.
3. After the 30 day comment period, the state will conduct a public hearing in a location that is accessible for physically disabled citizens.

Consideration of Public Comments on the Substantially Amended Plan. In the event of substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan, the state will openly consider any comments on the substantially amended Consolidated Plan from individuals or groups. Comments must be received in writing, including e-mail, or at public hearings. A summary of the written and public hearing comments on the substantial amendments will be included in the final Consolidated Plan. Also included in the final Consolidated Plan will be a summary of all comments not accepted and their reasons for dismissal.

Changes in Federal Funding Level. Any changes in federal funding level after the Consolidated Plan's draft comment period has expired and the resulting effect on the distribution of funds will not be considered an amendment or a substantial amendment.

Complaints

The state will provide a substantive written response to all written complaints related to the Consolidated Plan, amendments and the CAPER within 15 working days of receiving the complaint.

Citizen Participation Requirements for Local Governments Receiving CDBG (Small Cities Development Program) Funds from the State

Units of general local government must provide for and encourage citizen participation as prescribed at 24 CFR 570.486. All Small Cities Program applicants for CDBG funds are required to provide citizen notification and involvement in planning and implementation of the proposed projects through one or more public hearings and other informational efforts. Public hearings must be held at times and in places that are convenient to all community residents, particularly those who will be affected by implementation of the project(s). The needs of persons with disabilities and non-English speaking persons should be considered for the dissemination of information and the location of public hearings and meetings must be accessible to persons with disabilities. In addition, applicants are required to conduct a community development survey to allow for citizen input on the housing and community needs of the jurisdiction.

Depositories

Libraries

Arrowhead Library System, 701 11th Street North, Virginia
Bemidji Public Library, 6th & Beltrami, Bemidji
Duluth Public Library, 520 West Superior Street, Duluth
East Central Regional Library, 244 South Birch, Cambridge
Grand Marais Public Library, Post Office Box 280, Grand Marais
Great River Regional Library, 405 St. Germain, St. Cloud
Lake Agassiz Regional Library, Post Office Box 699, Moorhead
Marshall-Lyon County Library, 201 West Lyon Street, Marshall
Minneapolis Public Library, 300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis
Minnesota Valley Regional Library, 100 E. Main Street, Mankato
Nobles County Library, Post Office Box 99, Worthington
Northwest Regional Library, 101 East First Street, Thief River Falls
Owatonna/Steele County Library, Post Office Box 387, Owatonna
Red Wing Public Library, 225 East Avenue, Red Wing
Rochester Public Library, 101 Second Street SE, Rochester
St. Paul Public Library, 90 West 4th Street, St. Paul
Willmar Public Library System, 410 W. 5th Street, Willmar
Winona Public Library, Post Office Box 1247, Winona

Regional Development Commissions

Arrowhead RDC, 221 West First Street, Duluth
East Central RDC, 100 South Park Street, Mora
Headwaters RDC, P.O. Box 906, Bemidji
Metro Council, 230 East Fifth Street, St. Paul
Mid-Minnesota, 333 West Sixth Street, Willmar
Northwest RDC, 115 S. Main Ave., Ste. 1, Warren
Region Five, 611 Iowa Avenue, Staples
Region Nine, P.O. Box 3367, Mankato
South West RDC, 2401 Broadway Ave., Ste. 1, Slayton
Upper Minnesota Valley RDC, 323 West Schlieman, Appleton

Housing Partnership's Regional Network Project Offices

Central Minnesota Housing Partnership, 810 W. St. Germain, Ste. 303, St. Cloud
Minnesota Housing Partnership, 122 W. Franklin Ave., Ste. 230, Minneapolis
Southeast Minnesota Housing Network, 1414 North Star Drive, Zumbrota
Southwestern MN Housing Partnership, 2401 Broadway Avenue, Ste. 4, Slayton
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, P.O. Box 607, Crookston
West Central Minnesota Housing Partnership, 220 West Washington Avenue, Ste. B3, Fergus Falls

Minnesota Initiative Offices

Central MN Initiative Fund, 70 SE First Avenue, Little Falls
Northland Foundation, 202 West Superior, Ste. 610, Duluth
Northwest MN Initiative Fund, 722 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji
Southeast MN Initiative Fund, 540 West Hills Circle, Box 685, Owatonna

Southwest MN Foundation, P.O. Box 428, Hutchinson
West Central MN Initiative Fund, 220 West Washington, Ste. 205, Fergus Falls

Councils, Associations, and Other Locations

American Indian Housing Group, 2020 Bloomington Ave. South, Minneapolis
Asian Pacific Minnesotans, 100 Meridian Bank, 205 Aurora Ave., St. Paul
Central Cultural Chicano, 1915 Chicago Ave. S., Minneapolis
CLUES, 220 S. Robert St., Ste. 103, St. Paul
Council on Black Minnesotans, 2233 University Ave., 426 Wright Building, St. Paul
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, 122 West Franklin, Ste. 5, Minneapolis
Chicano Latino Affairs Council, 555 Park St., Ste. 480, St. Paul
Upper Midwest American Indian Center, 1113 W. Broadway, Minneapolis