



Version 5.0 | February 16, 2023

# Citizen Participation Plan

## State of North Carolina

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### Revision History

Version	Date	Description
2.0	March 24, 2020	Revises and replaces a defunct version of the Citizen Participation Plan and combines the CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT citizen participation plans into a single document.
3.0	September 18, 2020	Clarified public comment and public hearing requirements for the CDBG-MIT Action Plan. Simplified substantial Action Plan amendment criteria.
4.0	April 30, 2021	Established policy for virtual public hearings.
5.0	February 16, 2023	Clarified Citizen Complaint Process. Added additional language about public hearings and application status. Included a sample Spanish Press Release for a public hearing to Appendix.

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# 1.0 General Citizen Participation and Public Comment

To better engage the citizens of North Carolina, the North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR) has developed an updated citizen participation plan for Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and Community Development Block Grant– Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funding. Specific citizen participation requirements are generally prescribed in the Federal Register Notices that set forth the rules and requirements for each source of funding. NCORR complies with these Federal Register Notices, and may issue specific updates or alternate plans to comply with that guidance.

In the absence of alternate citizen participation plan (CPP) guidance, this guide serves as a consolidated CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT CPP guide. The CDBG-MIT specific section begins at Part 2.0 below.

## 1.1 Overview and Encouragement of Citizen Participation

NCORR is the administrator of CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT funds provided to the State by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These funding sources support NCORR’s long-term disaster recovery programs, including the ReBuild NC Homeowner Recovery Program. With this funding, NCORR and its partners are able to assist storm-impacted residents by providing services to restore housing and support communities damaged by presidentially declared disasters or to act to mitigate against future disaster.

NCORR is committed to ensuring that all populations impacted by a presidentially declared disaster are aware of available resources, have an opportunity for input, and have equal access to information about the programs to assist in recovery and mitigation efforts. Through in-person meetings, virtual meetings, outreach events, online and traditional media, NCORR requests public comments on plans, publicizes existing programs and changes to existing plans and programs, and conducts outreach efforts throughout the storm-impacted areas. In addition, the Governor’s Office has engaged a grassroots community-driven process that engages the public as a key stakeholder in the planning and rebuilding process.

NCORR values the input of its many impacted citizens and the decision makers and stakeholders that represent the vulnerable communities affected by storms or at risk for future flooding and storm damage. NCORR requests input from all citizens and will perform additional outreach efforts to low- and moderate-income (LMI) persons, racial/ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons with Limited English Proficiency to obtain input. Each NCORR program may have additional specific outreach and citizen participation responsibilities however, each program will adhere to the citizen participation requirements outlined below. To meet the public participation requirements of the CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT grants, NCORR

commits to the processes described below for citizen participation, complaints, appeals, and the public notice period.

## 1.2 Citizen Participation and Outreach for Action Plans

For each disaster recovery or mitigation grant provided by HUD, HUD requires the creation and maintenance of an Action Plan that provides a strategy for the use of the disaster recovery funds. NCORR invites and encourages citizen participation in the development of its Action Plans according to the regulatory requirements for each funding allocation. Citizen participation is also sought during the associated amendment processes that are done according to regulatory requirements (the amendment process is discussed more fully in each Action Plan). At a minimum, Substantial Action Plan Amendments must follow the public comment period timelines indicated in the table below. Substantial Action Plan Amendment criteria include:

- A change in program benefit or eligibility criteria.
- The addition or deletion of an activity.
- The addition of a “Covered Project” for Infrastructure (CDBG-MIT only).
  - See the definition of a Covered Project at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-08-30/pdf/2019-18607.pdf>.
- A change in program allocation based on a threshold set in each Action Plan.

Table 1 - Public Comment Period Lengths by Action Plan

Action Plan	Public Comment Period
Hurricane Matthew – DR	14 days
Hurricane Matthew – MIT	30 days
Hurricane Florence – DR	30 days
Tropical Storm Fred -DR	30 days

NCORR may elect to align the Hurricane Matthew – DR public comment period with the Hurricane Florence – DR, Tropical Storm Fred - DR or CDBG-MIT public comment period of 30 days when the content in each of those amendments is similar, to simplify the receipt of public comment.

NCORR will perform outreach through various state and local stakeholders, including the engagement of recovery partners such as the Recovery Support Function (RSF) Groups, tribal communities, public housing authorities, church and faith-based organizations, professional organizations that advocate on behalf of member of protected classes, vulnerable populations, and underserved communities impacted by the disaster, other known constituency groups, and citizens who have requested notification.

NCORR will advertise opportunities for public comment on the draft Action Plan on its website at <https://rebuild.nc.gov/action-plans> and if required, NCORR will also hold public meetings or hearings in impacted communities or virtually if physical public meetings or hearings are not



able to be held due to emergency situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. NCORR will advertise open comment period through:

- Neighborhood associations and groups, community-based organizations, agencies, and churches providing services to or advocating for low- and moderate-income persons, racial/ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons with Limited English Proficiency; and
- Media sources that have direct contact with low- and moderate-income persons, culturally diverse persons, racial/ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons with Limited English Proficiency.

During COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on in-person gatherings, NCORR's outreach efforts were modified to ensure public and staff safety. In-person public meetings were suspended in accordance with state requirements and print and media outreach took precedence during the restrictions.

### **1.3 Public Hearings, Public Notice, Comment Period, and Website**

Following the creation of the action plan or substantial amendment and before the grantee submits the action plan or substantial amendment to HUD, the grantee must publish the proposed plan or amendment for public comment. A comment period for a minimum of the length of time indicated in Table 1, as required by HUD, shall be provided for citizens, affected local governments, and other interested parties to comment on the initial draft and subsequent substantial amendments to Action Plans.

Prior to the submission of the initial action plan to HUD and during the public comment period, NCORR will hold at least one public hearing. The public hearing may be virtually (alone, or in concert with an in-person hearing). All in-person hearings must be held in facilities that are physically accessible to persons with disabilities. For both virtual and in person hearings, the times and locations of the hearings will be convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries, with accommodation for persons with disabilities and appropriate auxiliary aids and services to ensure effective communication, as specified in NCORR's Reasonable Accommodation policy.

In accordance with CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT requirements, NCORR has developed and will maintain a comprehensive website regarding all disaster recovery activities assisted with these funds. NCORR will post all Action Plans and amendments on the NCORR's website at <http://www.rebuild.nc.gov/action-plans>. Specific information on the CDBG-MIT grant can be found at <https://rebuild.nc.gov/mitigation>.

The website gives citizens an opportunity to read draft Action Plans and to submit comments. The website is featured prominently on, and is easily navigable from, NCORR's homepage.

Paper copies of Action Plan Amendments will be available in both English and Spanish as needed at ReBuild NC Centers as well as online. Other accessibility needs, such as availability in a language other than English, is available upon request as needed. Center locations are found

on the NCORR website at <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov>. Note that during certain COVID-19 restrictions, ReBuild NC Center services may be temporarily suspended, may have limited capacity, or impose other safety precautions in accordance with state or local guidance.

After the conclusion of the required comment period, all comments are reviewed and NCORR provides responses to comments in a revised version of the Action Plan. NCORR's consideration of and response to all public comments can be reviewed in the Appendices of the final Action Plan Amendments which are posted on the NCORR website (<https://rebuild.nc.gov/action-plans>) after HUD approval of the action plan draft.

NCORR will take reasonable measures to increase coordination, communication, affirmative marketing targeted outreach, and engagement with underserved communities and individuals, including persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency. In addition to Action Plans and amendments, the NCORR website includes the following information for citizen review:

- The current approved Disaster Recovery Grant Reporting System (DRGR) Action Plans.
- Citizen participation requirements.
- Procurement policies and procedures.
- Current procurements for goods and services.
- Performance reports, such as Quarterly Performance Reports (QPR).
- Current contract agreements.
- A summary of all procurements.

Citizens interested in NCORR's Mitigation Program plans, activities, Citizen Advisory Committee and program expenditures may access the Mitigation webpage from the NCORR website. The Mitigation webpage will be updated regularly and is available at <https://rebuild.nc.gov/mitigation>.

## 1.4 Individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Based on LEP data within the impacted areas collected by the State, action Plans, Action Plan amendments, and NCORR program materials including manuals, forms and policies will be available in both English and Spanish. In addition, the instructions for commenting on and access to the Action Plan are also translated into Spanish.

NCORR provides both oral interpretation and written translation services to persons at no cost and these services are available upon request. Meaningful and equal access to federally funded programs and activities is required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

NCORR evaluates the LEP needs of each individual community using HUD's final guidance on the "four-factor analysis", available here: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/promotingfh/lep-faq#q7](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/promotingfh/lep-faq#q7).

To communicate effectively with LEP individuals, NCORR has developed a Language Access Plan that governs when and how communication in languages other than English is developed, disseminated, and provided by NCORR and its agents. Based on the four-factor analysis, NCORR

has concluded that critical program documents will be provided in Spanish. Other program materials will be provided in Spanish or other languages as needed when working in and coordinating with the public in those impacted communities based on that analysis. A link to the Language Access Plan is available at <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/about-us/plans-policies-reports/policies-and-procedures>.

## 1.5 Individuals with Disabilities

NCORR programs will be accessible to all persons with disabilities and will operate in a manner that does not discriminate or limit access to program services and benefits to persons with disabilities. To ensure that programs such as the Homeowner Recovery and Strategic Buyout Programs are operating in compliance with Section 504 requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), NCORR will:

- Ensure that all facilities where clients will have face-to-face interaction with program staff are readily accessible and usable by persons with disabilities.
- Assist program Intake Specialists/Case Managers in providing written and verbal communication to program applicants regardless of their disability or limited proficiency with the English language to include sign language, braille, interpreters, etc.
- Assist program Intake Specialists/Case Managers in completing home visits with applicants who are homebound or cannot access a ReBuild NC Center as needed.
- Ensure that reasonable accommodation modifications to an applicant's home are part of a program scope of work as applicable.
- Appropriately address any identified hearing, visibility, or mobility limitations of a program applicant and/or applicant's household members as required by Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Work with a disabled program applicant's designee who has power of attorney or any non-profit organization that is representing the applicant as needed.

In addition, NCORR complies with Section 508 requirements that require accessibility to electronic and information technology for individuals with disabilities. NCORR's program management vendor assists with ensuring that all public communications, including its website, meet Section 508 requirements. The online materials will also be accessible for the visually impaired. NCORR will ensure that all print, verbal, or electronic communications with the public regarding distribution of CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT funding and actionable information are simultaneously communicated to persons with disabilities and others with access and functional needs via qualified channels (i.e. ASL interpreters, open captions, Braille, large, high contrast print, formats accessible to screen readers, podcasts etc.) in an equitable, timely, and efficient manner. Information will be presented in an understandable manner, using plain language and identifying whom to contact for clarification or additional information. For more information on how people with disabilities can access and comment on the Action Plan, dial (833) ASK-RBNC.

## 1.6 Response to Citizen Complaints

Complaints are statements received from citizens related to situations concerning NCORR's disaster recovery programs, Action Plans, substantial amendments, quarterly performance reports, or related to the unsatisfactory or unacceptable behavior of an NCORR representative carrying out a disaster recovery program. Complaints will be referred to the appropriate NCORR management staff to be researched and responded to within 15 working days, where practicable. Citizen complaints can be submitted via NCORR staff, [info@rebuild.nc.gov](mailto:info@rebuild.nc.gov), 833-ASK-RBNC, or PO Box 110465, Durham, NC 27709.

Written complaints or grievances regarding accessibility and requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act can be reported to:

North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency  
ATTN: FHEO Officer  
PO Box 110465  
Durham, North Carolina 27709  
[fairhousing@rebuild.nc.gov](mailto:fairhousing@rebuild.nc.gov)

All subrecipients will be required to develop complaint procedures that align with the requirements set by NCORR, payment offer, eligibility, or other.

## 1.7 Response to Appeals

NCORR will execute a standardized appeals process in response to written appeals received relative to a CDBG-DR or CDBG-MIT program and will require subrecipients to adopt a similar process. Additional details on such process are found in NCORR's Appeals Policy Manual.

In programs that directly serve individuals, applicants or tenants, as applicable, may appeal for a reversal or revision of a program determination that affects their eligibility and/or assistance as contingent on program policies. However, it should be noted that NCORR does not have the authority to grant an appeal of a statutory or HUD-specified CDBG-DR or CDBG-MIT requirement.

## 1.8 Public Comments Contact Information

Public comments may be submitted using NCORR's contact information as follows:

- Email comments to [publiccomments@rebuild.nc.gov](mailto:publiccomments@rebuild.nc.gov).
  - Include the Action Plan or funding source of the comment in the subject line.
- Telephone: (984) 833-5350, TDD (800) 735-2962
- Fax: (919) 405-7392
- Written comments may be mailed to:

North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR)  
Attn: Public Comments  
PO Box 110465  
Durham, NC 27709

NCORR will post all Action Plans and amendments on the State's CDBG-DR website at <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/action-plans> to give citizens an opportunity to read the plan and to submit comment(s).

## 1.9 Application Status

NCORR is committed to sharing timely and accurate updates on applications to the multiple programs that take applications directly from recovering individuals and families.

For all direct applicant service programs, applicants can learn more about the status of their application through the following methods:

- 833-ASK-RBNC (833-275-7262).
- Phone call directly to the assigned case manager.
- Direct email to the assigned case manager.

Additional information on how applicants can learn more about the status of their application may be found in the program manual for the corresponding program directly serving applicants.

Some of NCORR's programs do not interface with individual applicants directly. Instead, for those programs NCORR will coordinate directly with the selected subrecipients, public housing authorities, or other entities to review applications for funding and provide other updates to projects.

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## 2.0 Mitigation Citizen Participation and Outreach Plan

To receive CDBG-MIT funds, NCORR is required to incorporate specific citizen participation requirements into its CDBG-MIT Action Plan. This plan outlines how NCORR intends to meet or has already met these requirements.

As the agency administering CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT funds, NCORR is committed to furthering fair housing through established affirmative marketing and outreach activities. NCORR will take steps based on the Fair Housing Act of 1968 to reduce disparities in housing choice, access, and opportunities based on protected class (e.g., race, color, religion, familial status, sex, national origin or disability). Toward achieving that objective, NCORR will ensure that its outreach, communication and public engagement efforts are comprehensive in order to reach as many impacted citizens as possible.

### 2.1 Outreach Activities and Public Hearings

The objectives of NCORR's outreach activities are to ensure that all citizens are aware of the CDBG-MIT funding and planning process, have an opportunity to comment on or suggest proposed uses for the funds, and to maximize public awareness and access to MIT program funds when available. In addition, if the MIT Action Plan is amended, NCORR will allow the required 30 days for public comment so that the public may have sufficient time to provide input on suggested revisions.

### 2.2 Outreach and Public Hearings Prior to Publishing the Draft MIT Action Plan

Under the CDBG-MIT requirements, NCORR was required to hold one public hearing before the development of the draft CDBG-MIT Action Plan. Because 68 counties were impacted by Hurricanes Matthew and Florence, NCORR decided to hold three public hearings in different MID counties prior to publishing its draft Mitigation Action Plan to maximize citizen input. The three Public Hearings were held in the following MID-counties: Robeson, Edgecombe, and Craven counties. While Craven County was not a declared MID for Hurricane Matthew CDBG-DR funding, NCORR correctly anticipated that it would be a declared MID county based on Hurricane Florence impacts.

In order to inform citizens of the public hearings and opportunity for input, a digital media campaign started October 3, 2019 with the promotion of the public hearings and comment period through the NCORR website, Facebook, and Twitter. Notification of these hearings was also made via distribution of a press release (on October 3, 2019), a media advisory on October 11, 2019, and publishing a notice in the following newspapers of general circulation (see Appendix A for the text of the published public notice): The News and Observer (Raleigh);

The Fayetteville Observer; Rocky Mount Telegram; The Robesonian; and the New Bern Sun Journal. In addition, the press release was also directly issued to 1,175 community stakeholder organizations and partners. The text of the press release was as follows:

Figure 1 - Notice of Public Hearing

**North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency**  
Community Development Block Grant – Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) Notice of Public Hearings

The North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR) will hold three public hearings to offer citizens the opportunity to provide public comment and input into the plan for spending \$168 Million of CDBG-MIT funding allocated by Federal Register notice 84 FR 45838 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on Aug. 30, 2019.

CDBG-MIT funds represent an opportunity for the State of North Carolina to use this assistance in areas impacted by Hurricanes Matthew and Florence to carry out strategic and high-impact projects that will mitigate disaster risks and reduce future losses. While it is impossible to eliminate all risks, CDBG-MIT funds will help communities mitigate against future disaster risks and coordinate State and local planning activities. This funding is separate from the HUD CDBG-DR funding that was provided to the State for assistance to individual households.

The hearings will:


- Explain what mitigation is and how CDBG-MIT funding may be used
- Allow members of the public to provide comments and ask questions
- Offer interactive breakout sessions focused on different mitigation topics

The public will have access to the hearing facilities at 6 p.m. and the presentation will begin at 6:30 pm. If you need special accommodations to attend these hearings, please call 984-833-4344. For additional information check the NCORR website at <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/>.

**Public Hearing Dates, Times and Locations**

<p><b>Robeson County</b> Monday, Oct. 14 Robeson Community College A.D. Lewis Auditorium (Building 15) 5160 Fayetteville Road Lumberton, NC 28360</p>	<p><b>Craven County</b> Wednesday, Oct. 16 Grover C. Fields Middle School Performing Arts Center 2000 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard New Bern, NC 28560</p>
<p><b>Edgecombe County</b> Tuesday, Oct. 15 Edgecombe Community College Keihin Auditorium 2009 W. Wilson Street Tarboro, NC 27886</p>	

NCORR is a division of the N.C. Department of Public Safety.





Each public hearing was led by NCORR staff. After welcoming comments and an overview provided by Ms. Laura Hogshead, Chief Operating Officer for NCORR, a brief 10-minute presentation was given; it covered CDBG-MIT Action Plan development, citizen participation plan requirements, potential uses for the funding, and eligible activities. The presentations were followed by formal public comment sessions. In addition, informational tables on Infrastructure, Buyout, Resiliency and Planning and Affordable Housing were set up where the public could ask questions, make suggestions and get information on these activities. Information and Case Management tables were also available at all three hearings for persons wanting general information or information about their disaster assistance application.

Attendance at the public hearings was significant. The table below illustrates the attendance by MID county public hearing event.

Location of MID County Public Hearing	# of Citizen Attendees	# of Public Speakers	# of Written Comments*
Robeson	88	9	5
Edgecombe	112	14	4
Craven	73	11	0

\*Includes written comments, if any, made by public speakers

Written transcripts in English and Spanish of all three public hearings were made and can be viewed by accessing the NCORR website. The CDBG-MIT requirements specify that NCORR summarize the comments made and respond to all citizen comments. A summary of oral and written comments made by citizens and NCORR’s responses is included in Appendix A of the CDBG-MIT Action Plan. If citizens are interested, they may also listen to the three public hearing sessions and public comments by accessing the recordings on the [website](#).

### 2.3 Publishing the Draft Mitigation Action Plan

The draft Action Plan was released and published, in English and Spanish, for public review and comment on November 8, 2019. The public comment period ended on 5:00 PM on December 23, 2019, which adheres to the 45-day comment period requirement. The draft Action Plan was posted on the Mitigation webpage found at <https://rebuild.nc.gov/mitigation>.

In addition, press releases were issued advising the public of the draft plan’s availability and two public hearings were held to solicit public comment on the plan.

### 2.4 Outreach and Public Hearings after Publishing Draft MIT Action Plan

Under the CDBG-MIT requirements, NCORR was required to hold one public hearing after publishing the draft CDBG-MIT Action Plan. Because 68 counties were impacted by Hurricanes Matthew and Florence, NCORR decided to hold two public hearings after publishing its draft

Mitigation Action Plan, one in a Hurricane Matthew MID county (Wayne County) and one in an anticipated MID county for Hurricane Florence (Carteret County). These public hearings were held in different areas as required by HUD to maximize citizen input.

In order to inform citizens of the public hearings and opportunity for input, the digital media campaign continued with the promotion of the public hearings and comment period through the NCORR website, Facebook, and Twitter. Notification of these hearings was also made by the distribution of press releases on November 12, 2019 and November 25, 2019 and a media advisory on December 2, 2019. A notice advising the public of the upcoming hearings was published in eleven newspapers of general circulation (see Appendix A for the text of the published public notice): Que Pasa, The News and Observer (Raleigh); Herald Sun (Raleigh); The Greensboro News and Record; Winston-Salem Journal; The Fayetteville Observer; The Charlotte Observer; Asheville Citizen Times; Wilmington Star news; Gaston Gazette; and Daily Reflector. In addition, the press release was also directly issued to a total of 2,885 community stakeholder organizations and partners. The text of the press releases can be found at:

<https://www.ncdps.gov/news/press-releases/2019/11/25/state-hold-second-round-public-hearings-use-federal-disaster>

Each public hearing was led by NCORR staff. A brief 15-minute presentation of the draft Mitigation Action Plan was given; it covered CDBG-MIT Action Plan development, citizen participation plan requirements, potential uses for the funding, and eligible activities. The presentations were followed by formal public comment sessions overseen by Ms. Laura Hogshead, Chief Operating Officer of NCORR. In addition, informational handouts were available. Case Management staff were available at the Wayne County public hearing to answer applicant questions as the ReBuild NC Program is already active in Wayne County based on the need and funding for Hurricane Matthew.

The table below illustrates the attendance by public hearing event.

Location of MID County Public Hearing	# of Citizen Attendees	# of Public Speakers	# of Written Comments*
Wayne County (Matthew MID)	53	17	0
Carteret County (Florence MID)	12	5	1

\*Includes written comments, if any, made by public speakers

## 2.5 Local Government and Stakeholder Input

While some government representatives attended the three public hearings and made comments on the record, NCORR developed a survey instrument designed to obtain input from units of general local government (UGLG) and other stakeholders. The aim of the survey instrument was to capture stakeholder input into local mitigation needs and funding priorities. A total of 663 organizations were provided with the survey instrument and 173 responded to the survey, a response rate of 26 percent. A summary of the data obtained through the survey process is included in section 11 of the draft Mitigation Action Plan.

## 2.6 Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

NCORR will follow its policy as stated in section 1.4 above on outreach and communication with LEP individuals. As the CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT grantee, NCORR is required to ensure meaningful access to agency services, programs, and activities for persons who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

For the initial public hearings, materials were translated into Spanish. All materials and program signage provided at the five public hearings were in English and Spanish. In addition, the Communication Access in Real-Time Translation (CART) system by Carolina Captioning was utilized during the hearing. CART provides for the immediate provision of captioning and translation of the presentation and comments into written text into both English and Spanish.

The draft and final MIT Action Plan have also been translated into Spanish and can be found on the NCORR website at: <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/about-us/plans-policies-reports/action-plans>

## 2.7 Accessibility at the Public Hearings

The three Public Hearings held prior to the publishing of the draft Mitigation Action Plan were held in physically accessible facilities. Additionally, an American Sign Language (ASL) sign language interpreter was signing at all three public hearings held in October 2019. The opening comments, presentation and comments made by the public were all provided in ASL. The two Public Hearings held after the publishing of the draft Mitigation Action Plan were held in physically accessible facilities in December 2019.

## 2.8 Complaint Policy

In accordance with NCORR's Complaints procedures previously outlined in the Citizen Participation Plan, all CDBG-MIT related complaints will be handled through the same standardized process and responded to in writing within 15 working days, where applicable.

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## 3.0 Outreach and Citizen Participation after Publishing the Draft CDBG-MIT Action Plan

### 3.1 Public Website

To provide the public with comprehensive information on the status of Mitigation activities, NCORR's website has a link to a Mitigation webpage. Information on public hearings, the availability of the draft Mitigation Action Plan, the dates of the 45-day public comment period on the Action Plan, the final Action Plan, and other relevant information is available on the website. Program staff will update and maintain the website as needed to ensure public access to the most recent Mitigation program information and developments.

The Mitigation site also includes the recorded comments and written transcripts made at the three October 2019 and two December 2019 public hearings, a summary of the comments made by the public and NCORR responses, and other relevant information. The site also includes the final HUD-approved CDBG-MIT Action Plan, any action plan amendments, performance reports, program availability, Quarterly Performance Reports (from the HUD DRGR system), CDBG-MIT citizen participation requirements, details of contracts and procurement policies, all executed contracts that will be paid with CDBG-MIT funds; the status of services or goods currently being procured (e.g., phase of the procurement, requirements for proposals, etc.); and other required and pertinent information.

### 3.2 Public Hearings

Upon submission of the Mitigation Action Plan to HUD and acceptance of that plan, NCORR has satisfied the public hearing requirement. No further public hearings are required for substantial Action Plan amendments according to HUD guidance. The 30-day public comment period for Action Plan amendments and other public comment requirements stated in this Citizen Participation Plan remain in effect for CDBG-MIT funds.

On January 6, 2021, a Federal Register Notice was released that allocated an additional \$34.6 million in CDBG-MIT to the State of North Carolina. This notice requires that at least one public hearing is held on the use of these funds, unlike other CDBG-MIT substantial action plan amendments which do not require public hearings.

#### 3.2.1 Virtual Public Hearings

86 FR 568 allows for virtual public hearings in consideration of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions on in-person meetings. NCORR will exercise the use of Public Hearings for the duration of ongoing COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions on in-person gatherings to protect the safety and health of NCORR staff as well as the public.

Virtual public hearings will be held in a manner consistent with the requirements for traditional public hearings above, including publication, advertising, and accommodations made for those with disabilities or for Limited English Proficiency. Meeting content may be pre-recorded to safeguard against technical challenges in live presentations, however public comment will be taken and responded to in real time by NCORR staff. A moderator may be used to ensure that the content of questions is germane for and appropriate to the topic of the hearing.

Virtual public hearings will be recorded and preserved for later viewing. Hearing content will be presented live in English and translated into Spanish. Transcription and captioning services for the hearing impaired will also be used. Presentation materials, including a slide deck and referenced action plans and program manuals, will be available where indicated on the NCORR website.

### **3.3 Citizen Advisory Committee**

As part of the expectations of the CDBG-MIT Action Plan, a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) has been established to meet at least twice a year in an open forum. The purpose of this committee is to provide on-going public input into mitigation activities, to continuously inform the mitigation program and assist with program refinement, and solicit and respond to public comment on mitigation activities.

Updates on the Committee can be found on NCORR's CDBG Mitigation website:

<https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/mitigation>.

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## 4.0 Mitigation Program Outreach

### 4.1 Local Government and Public Participation for the Strategic Buyout Program

Because the Strategic Buyout Program is a large component of NCORR's mitigation strategy, NCORR will follow its Outreach and Public Consultation process as outlined in its Strategic Buyout Program Manual. NCORR will undertake a series of meetings with UGLGs to review potential Disaster Risk Reduction Areas (DRRA).

In order to have the greatest mitigation impact, the ReBuild Program will implement the Strategic Buyout Program in targeted areas damaged by recent hurricanes and at-risk of future storm damage. Therefore, the Strategic Buyout Program is being carried out in identified DRRA.

HUD requires that CDBG-MIT grantees administering a buyout program consult with units of general local government. For the Strategic Buyout Program, this may entail the following process that will be modified as needed:

- The Program will identify draft DRRA. The DRRA will be mapped indicating clear boundaries for program participation. The maps for DRRA will be submitted to the relevant local government body for review, discussion, and input. At least one meeting with governmental officials will be held to review the draft areas, discuss the Buyout Program, and obtain comments.
- With collaborative guidance from the local government, the Program will schedule a community meeting to review the proposed DRRA with the public and to answer questions about the program. NCORR program representatives will schedule at least one community meeting at a location(s) within close proximity to each priority area. A site considered to be focal to the community will be selected for the meeting. Both the location and building where the meeting will be held must be accessible according to Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. If a citizen expresses interest, but is unable to attend the meeting, they will be provided an email/physical address to submit their comments/concerns/questions to the Program.
- Program eligibility criteria, requirements and benefits will be communicated at the community meetings. Outreach material will clearly state to potential beneficiaries that ***participation in the Strategic Buyout Program is voluntary.***
- After the consultation process with the UGLG, the Program will formalize its recommended list of DRRA. Once finalized, all initially considered communities/program beneficiaries will be notified of the final decision. The DRRA boundaries/map will be published on the Strategic Buyout Program webpage available at: <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/homeowners-and-landlords/strategic-buyout-program>



## 4.2 Mitigation Program Outreach

The Program will perform ongoing outreach activities to inform the public of the program and increase participation. To the extent that potentially eligible program participants may have moved from critical areas due to storm damage, every effort will be made to find and notify them of the program's availability.

In general, the Program will communicate information about the program and public meetings through community organizations, social media and news media outlets, including, but not limited to:

- Advertisement in local news media outlets, including newspapers and broadcast media that provides unique access for persons who are considered members of a protected class under the Fair Housing Act or have Limited English Proficiency (LEP).
- Informational flyers advertising the program provided as inserts in tax bills.
- Distribution of informational flyers through government agencies, the faith community, schools, public and/or non-profit organizations, and other community groups.
- Use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, when appropriate.

Outreach activities may also include door-to-door canvassing and special efforts to communicate with hard-to-reach populations such as senior citizens, persons with disabilities, or LEP populations. Measures will be taken to make the program accessible to people who are a protected class under the Fair Housing Act by holding community meetings in buildings that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and providing reasonable accommodations when asked with reasonable advanced notice.

For CDBG-MIT funds, HUD has required that 50 percent of the CDBG-MIT funds are spent assisting households whose incomes are at or below 80 percent of AMI. To ensure that the program serves these citizens, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that low-to-moderate income (LMI) citizens are aware of the Strategic Buyout Program's availability by providing informational materials through government agencies, faith communities, schools, public and/or nonprofit organizations and other community groups, as well as commercial establishments that may be accessed by this population.

## 4.3 Program Access for LEP Participants

NCORR will follow its policy as indicated in section 1.4 above and its Language Access Plan when performing outreach and service to applicants. NCORR has staff able to provide information in Spanish through its 833-ASK-RBNC (833-275-7262) information phone service. In addition, from intake to closeout, Intake Specialists and Case Managers will identify applicants

who have difficulty speaking or reading English and will ensure that the following services are available to them in accordance with the NCORR Language Access Plan:

- Provision of an interpreter who translates to and from the person's primary language.
- Translation of Program documents.

As necessary, Intake Specialists and Case Managers will utilize 833-ASK-RBNC to communicate with LEP applicants.

## 4.4 Special Needs and Accessibility

In general, after CDBG-MIT Action Plan finalization and approval, all Mitigation Programs will be accessible to all persons with special needs and will operate in a manner that does not discriminate or limit access to program services and benefits to persons with disabilities. To ensure that the Mitigation Program is operating in compliance with Section 504 requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), NCORR has assigned staff in accordance with its Section 504 Compliance Plan who will:

- Ensure that all facilities where clients will have face-to-face interaction with program staff are readily accessible and usable by persons with disabilities.
- Assist Intake Specialists/Case Managers in providing written and verbal communication to program applicants regardless of their disability or limited proficiency with the English language to include sign language, braille, interpreters, etc.
- Assist Intake Specialists/Case Managers in completing home visits with applicants who are homebound or cannot access a housing assistance center as needed.
- Ensure that reasonable accommodation modifications to the applicant's home are part of a program scope of work as applicable.
- Appropriately address any identified hearing, visibility, or mobility limitations of the applicant and/or applicant's household members as required by Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Work with a disabled applicant's designee who has power of attorney or any non-profit organization that is representing the applicant as needed.

All services listed above can be provided upon verbal or written request from the applicant. No additional documentation is required.

In addition, NCORR complies with Section 508 requirements that require accessibility to electronic and information technology for individuals with disabilities. NCORR's program management vendor assists with ensuring that all public communications, including its website, meet Section 508 requirements. The online materials will also be accessible for the visually impaired. NCORR will ensure that all print, verbal, or electronic communications with the public regarding distribution of CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT funding and actionable information are simultaneously communicated to persons with disabilities and others with

access and functional needs via qualified channels (i.e. ASL interpreters, open captions, Braille, large, high contrast print, formats accessible to screen readers, podcasts etc.) in an equitable, timely, and efficient manner. Information will be presented in an understandable manner, using plain language and identifying whom to contact for clarification or additional information. For more information on how people with disabilities can access and comment on the Action Plan, dial 833-ASK-RBNC.

## 4.5 Fair Housing

The Fair Housing Act requires all grantees, partners, subrecipients, and/or developers whose capital projects are wholly or partially funded with federal assistance to certify that no person was excluded from participation in, denied the benefit of, or subjected to discrimination in any housing program or activity because of their age, race, color, creed, religion, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability or marital status. NCORR and its contractors shall ensure that no applicant is treated in any way that does not comply with the federal Fair Housing Act, the Civil Rights requirements of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act, and the North Carolina Fair Housing Act (Chapter 41A of the North Carolina General Statutes). NCORR has assigned staff who will ensure that: NCORR programs affirmatively further fair housing; fair housing complaints are directed to HUD or other appropriate agency; and programs are administered in accordance with NCORR's Fair Housing Plan.

# Appendices – Sample Public Notices and Press Releases

## *Public Notice*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 3, 2019

Contact: [Bridget Munger](#)

Phone: 984-212-1052

### **State to hold public hearings on use of federal disaster mitigation funds**

*Hearings scheduled for Robeson, Edgecombe and Craven counties*

RALEIGH, N.C.–The North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR) will hold three public hearings to receive public comment and input on a draft action plan for spending \$168 million in Community Development Block Grant–Mitigation funding allocated to North Carolina by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Under federal guidelines, the funds must be used to implement community projects that strengthen local infrastructure and reduce future losses in areas impacted by hurricanes Matthew and Florence.

“These funds will help communities coordinate local planning activities and projects that will make them more resilient in the face of future storms,” said Governor Roy Cooper. “It’s important for people to have an opportunity to weigh in and learn how communities can rebuild smarter and stronger.”

Interactive sessions and presentations planned for the hearings will include information on what mitigation is and how the HUD mitigation funding may be used. People who attend will also have an opportunity to provide public comments and ask questions of state mitigation experts. Public hearing dates and locations are as follows:

#### **Robeson County**

6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 14  
Robeson Community College  
A.D. Lewis Auditorium (Building 15)  
5160 Fayetteville Road  
Lumberton, NC 28360

#### **Craven County**

6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 16  
Grover C. Fields Middle School Performing  
Arts Center  
2000 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard  
New Bern, NC 28560

#### **Edgecombe County**

6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 15  
Edgecombe Community College  
Keihin Auditorium  
2009 W. Wilson Street Tarboro, NC 27886

At all three hearings, doors will open at 6 p.m. and presentations will begin at 6:30 p.m. People who would like to provide public comments will be given three minutes to speak. Those wishing to speak are encouraged to bring a written copy of their comments to the hearing. Written public comments may also be submitted by email to [publiccomments@rebuild.nc.gov](mailto:publiccomments@rebuild.nc.gov) or by mail to P.O. Box 110465, Durham, NC 27709. Anyone needing special accommodations at a public hearing should call 984-833-4344 or send an email to: [info@rebuild.nc.gov](mailto:info@rebuild.nc.gov). For additional information, please visit the [NCORR website](#).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 25, 2019

Contact: [Bridget Munger](#)

Phone: 984-212-1052

**State to hold second round of public hearings on use of federal disaster mitigation funds**

*Public comment period open through Dec. 23*

RALEIGH, N.C.—The North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR) will hold two public hearings to receive public comments on a draft action plan for spending \$168 million in Community Development Block Grant–Mitigation funding allocated to North Carolina by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Federal guidelines require that the funds be used to implement community projects that will reduce future losses in areas impacted by hurricanes Matthew and Florence. The state held public hearings in Lumberton, Tarboro and New Bern last month as part of a previous public comment period to obtain initial feedback on development of the draft plan.

As part of the current comment period, two public hearings are planned to receive feedback on the draft mitigation action plan. Hearings dates and locations are as follows:

**Wayne County**

6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 3  
Goldsboro City Council Chambers  
200 N. Center Street  
Goldsboro, NC 27530

**Carteret County**

6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 5  
One Harbor Church  
214 Turner Street  
Beaufort, NC 28516

On both dates, doors will open at 6 p.m. and the hearing will begin at 6:30 p.m. People who would like to provide comments at the hearings will be given three minutes to speak. Those wishing to speak are encouraged to bring a written copy of their comments to the hearing. Anyone needing special accommodations at a public hearing should call 984-833-4344 or send an email to: [info@rebuild.nc.gov](mailto:info@rebuild.nc.gov).

Copies of the draft mitigation action plan in English and Spanish are available online at: <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/mitigation>. Public comments on the draft plan may be submitted by email to: [publiccomments@rebuild.nc.gov](mailto:publiccomments@rebuild.nc.gov). Written comments may also be submitted by mail to: Mitigation Action Plan, P.O. Box 110465, Durham, NC 27709. The deadline for submitting public comments on the draft plan is 5 p.m. Monday, Dec. 23, 2019.

### *Spanish Press Release*

## **Se invita al público a comentar sobre plan de acción para fondos federales de recuperación por tormenta tropical Fred**

La Administración para la Recuperación y Resiliencia de NC (*NCORR*, en inglés) invita al público a opinar sobre el texto preliminar del plan de acción para el gasto de US\$7.9 millones en fondos provenientes de la Subvención en Bloque para el Desarrollo Comunitario por Recuperación de Desastres (*CDBG-DR*, en inglés), del Departamento de Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano de EEUU (*HUD*, en inglés), para propósitos de recuperación de la Tormenta Tropical Fred. Carolina del Norte recibió la subvención con el fin de implementar medidas de asistencia de recuperación ante desastres ocurridos en áreas de la región oeste de Carolina del Norte que han sido designadas por el gobierno federal como las más afectadas y devastadas por los estragos de las tormentas.

El texto preliminar del plan de acción está disponible para su revisión en el sitio web de *NCORR*, consulte [aquí](#). También están a disponibilidad copias impresas del texto preliminar del plan de acción llamando al (984) 833-5350.

Los comentarios públicos escritos pueden enviarse por correo electrónico a: [publiccomments@rebuild.nc.gov](mailto:publiccomments@rebuild.nc.gov) o bien, por correo postal a la atención de: *NCORR, Attn: Tropical Storm Fred Action Plan*, P.O. Box 110465, Durham, NC 27709. Los comentarios públicos sobre el texto preliminar del plan de acción deben enviarse antes de las 5 p.m. del 30 de agosto, 2022.

### **Audiencia pública**

Como parte del período de recepción de comentarios públicos, la Administración *NCORR* efectuará una audiencia pública el próximo 15 de agosto en el Condado Haywood para recibir las opiniones del público respecto al texto preliminar del plan de acción.

**Qué:** Audiencia sobre el texto preliminar del plan de acción por la tormenta tropical Fred

**Cuándo:** 5:30 p.m. Lunes 15 de agosto

**Dónde:** Tribunal histórico *Haywood County Historic Courthouse* consulte [aquí](#), 215 North Main St., Waynesville, NC

El gobernador Roy Cooper estableció la Administración *NCORR* después del acontecimiento del huracán Florence, con el fin de simplificar los programas de recuperación de desastres en todo el estado y para ayudar a las comunidades en las labores de reconstrucción de manera más inteligente y sólida. A la fecha, la Administración *NCORR* ha establecido compromiso por más de US\$473.3 millones en subvenciones *CDBG-DR* del estado por motivo de los huracanes Matthew y Florence y así proveer soporte a la recuperación de propietarios de viviendas, programas de vivienda asequible, infraestructura local, pequeñas empresas y otras iniciativas más de recuperación a largo plazo en áreas del estado que se vieron afectadas por las dos tormentas Para obtener más información más sobre *NCORR*, visite la página web [aquí](#).