



The eCon Planning Suite:

Citizen Participation and Consultation Toolkit

Version: July 2014



UPDATES TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION TOOLKIT

Date: July 22, 2014

This update to the Citizen Participation and Consultation Toolkit reflects the correct links to the Citizen Participation and Consultation requirements, to reflect the Emergency Solutions Grant Interim Rule that became effective on January 4, 2012.

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INTRODUCTION

The overarching goal of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Planning and Development (CPD) programs covered by the Consolidated Plan is "to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities," principally for low- and moderate-income persons. In this effort, HUD looks to its state and local government grantees to "extend and strengthen partnerships among all levels of government and the private sector, including for-profit and non-profit organizations, in the production of affordable housing." (See 24 CFR 91.1)

State and local government grantees that receive annual block grants for community development, affordable housing, and homelessness must—as a condition of receiving the grant funds—engage stakeholders and the public regarding the community's needs in these areas. Grantees report the results of their citizen participation and consultation efforts in their 3-5 year Consolidated Plans and Annual Action Plans.

Citizen participation and stakeholder consultation are key components of every state or community's Consolidated Plan. A well-designed citizen participation and consultation strategy can help grantees:

- Incorporate local data into planning process and validate the accuracy of this data
- Gather input on priority needs and target areas
- Increase coordination among consultation partners
- Leverage Consolidated Plan activities with other public and private funding sources and programs
- Expand upon the outreach efforts of existing planning processes
- Increase citizen feedback, buy-in, and support of Consolidated Plan activities

CPD introduced the eCon Planning Suite in 2012 to support Consolidated Planning efforts by providing electronic Plan templates, synthesized data, and a web-based, publicly accessible mapping program. The eCon Planning Suite tools can help to effectively incorporate meaningful citizen participation and consultation into the Consolidated Plan needs analysis and strategic decision-making process. These web-based tools offer opportunities to go beyond regulatory minimums to establish best practices in consultation and citizen participation. However, recent innovations in internet-based tools and platforms are only a portion of the toolkit available to enhance these efforts.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS DESK GUIDE

The objectives of this manual are to help grantees:

- Use the eCon Planning Suite to analyze and communicate housing and community development needs to stakeholders and meet the citizen participation and consultation requirements of the Consolidated Planning process.
- Assess their existing citizen participation and consultation efforts and identify strengths and weaknesses to improve future efforts.
- Enhance efforts to engage stakeholders and the public in developing strategies to address needs and improve and the Consolidated Plan as a whole.
- Learn about some “Best Practices” in citizen participation and consultation that can be achieved through the use of new technology such as the eCon Planning Suite and other internet-based platforms.

STRUCTURE OF THE DESK GUIDE

This Desk Guide is divided into four sections:

1. Getting Started: an overview of the citizen participation and consultation process
2. Self-Assessment and Planning Tool: assess past citizen participation and consultation activities and create citizen participation and consultation priorities and goals
3. Citizen Participation and Consultation Activities: potential methods or approaches grantees can use to support outreach to the public and stakeholders
4. Case Studies: examples of citizen participation and consultation strategies that have been successful at the local level

The appendices contain sample documents and guides to citizen participation and consultation activities.

GETTING STARTED

INTRODUCING THE ECON PLANNING SUITE

The eCon Planning Suite helps grantees meet citizen participation and consultation regulatory requirements by making community and economic development data more accessible to the grantee, its partners, and citizens.

The CPD Maps component of the eCon Planning Suite presents the same data available in the Consolidated Plan template in IDIS in a publicly available mapping system. Through CPD Maps, program staff can create maps to evaluate local conditions and to supplement their Consolidated Plan narratives. Additionally, CPD Maps can be used outside the Consolidated Plan template. Grantees can develop maps to share housing and community development conditions and needs with the public and stakeholders during the consultation and citizen participation period.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION

The Consolidated Plan requirements for citizen participation and consultation are set forth in Subpart B of 24 CFR Part 91, “Consolidated Submissions for Community Planning and Development Programs.” These requirements are laid out in the following sections:

Table 1. Citizen Participation and Consultation Requirements as Defined in the Code of Federal Regulations.

	Citizen Participation	Consultation
Local Governments	24 CFR Part 91.105	24 CFR Part 91.100
States	24 CFR Part 91.115	24 CFR Part 91.110
HOME Consortia	24 CFR Part 91.401	

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Table 1 cites the citizen participation regulations that grantees must follow when developing their Citizen Participation Plan (CPP). The CPP should consist of the following broad elements:

- Description of the public participation process, including public hearings and public comment periods
- Ensured opportunities for involvement of affected persons and other concerned citizens in the planning process
- Transparency of the planning process and freedom of access to the draft Plan
- Instructions to guide the public’s submission of comments and the standards for the grantee’s response

- Procedures for continuity of participation throughout all stages of the Plan’s development

The CPP sets forth the grantee’s policies and procedures for citizen participation throughout the Consolidated Planning process. The CPP must facilitate citizen participation throughout the Consolidated Plan’s initial development, substantial amendment process, and annual performance report. CPP regulations require grantees to actively encourage widespread citizen participation, with a special emphasis on efforts to encourage participation from the following populations:

- Low- and moderate-income persons
- Residents of slums, blighted areas, and predominately low- and moderate-income areas
- Non-English speaking persons
- Persons with disabilities
- Public housing residents and other low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas

The Citizen Participation Plan is a pathway for all citizens to exercise their voice and influence decisions that affect their communities, neighborhoods, and way of life.

While allowing grantees flexibility to determine their own citizen participation process, the regulations require that certain information regarding outreach be documented in the Consolidated Plan. This includes a description of how the outreach is conducted, how and when meetings are held, the defined period for comment before final draft approval, and a description of how the grantee addresses public comments.

The CPP must include the criteria by which grantees determine whether an amendment to the Consolidated Plan constitutes a “substantial” amendment, requiring additional public notice and comment (91.105(c); 91.115(c)). It must also describe opportunities for the public to comment on performance reports (91.105(d); 91.115(d)).

Example of Citizen Participation

The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) [2013 Consolidated Plan](#) consultation process reached out through 8 regional “listening sessions” that engaged local elected officials from across the state in a discussion of housing and community development needs. To gain direct agency input, OCRA met with Regional Planning Commission members, while the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority met with housing groups. These meetings provided a thorough discussion of issues, which informed the state’s draft method of distribution (MOD). After development, the state held video conference/webinar public hearings on the draft MOD, which can be accessed at 6 regional locations. Leveraging local elected officials and regional organizations in this way allowed OCRA to collect input from across the state, and the innovative use of webinars ensured that both urban and rural communities had an opportunity to provide public feedback.

CONSULTATION

In addition to citizen participation requirements, the HUD Consolidated Plan regulations identify categories of organizations the grantee must consult with during the Plan's development. Entitlement grantees must consult with public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services, and fair housing services for children, veterans, youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDS, and their families. Consultation requirements for state grantees differ from those for local governments. State grantees must consult with agencies that provide assisted housing, health services, social and fair housing, and those that serve the chronically homeless and address lead-based paint hazards and consult with local governments in non-entitlement areas of the state. For a complete list of required consultation partners, follow links to regulations cited in Table 1, above.

When preparing its homeless strategy, both state and local grantees must consult with the Continuum of Care (CoC) and other agencies that provide homeless assistance and homelessness prevention services.

CONSULTATION ACROSS MULTIPLE JURISDICTIONS

24 CFR 91.100(a)(4) and (5) require that local entitlement grantees consult with the appropriate adjacent units of general local government, particularly regarding issues and solutions that extend beyond a single jurisdiction. Consultation should include:

- Adjacent local governments, with regard to non-housing community development needs
- Agencies with metropolitan-wide planning responsibilities
- The local public housing authority, with regard to public housing needs

The Consolidated Plan template in IDIS supports submission of a Regional Consolidated Plan

As a result of consultation among multiple jurisdictions, some grantees may find it advantageous to develop a regional Consolidated Plan to better address the regional housing market or align strategic target areas and goals. A regional plan option is available in the IDIS template and allows multiple grantees to collaborate and produce one Needs Assessment, Market Analysis, and Strategic Plan for the region. To learn more, see the [Con Plan Desk Guide](#).

24 CFR Part 91.110 requires that states conduct consultations as an integral part of the statewide planning process. States must consult with local governments in non-entitlement areas, regarding the statewide strategy for CDBG assistance distribution.

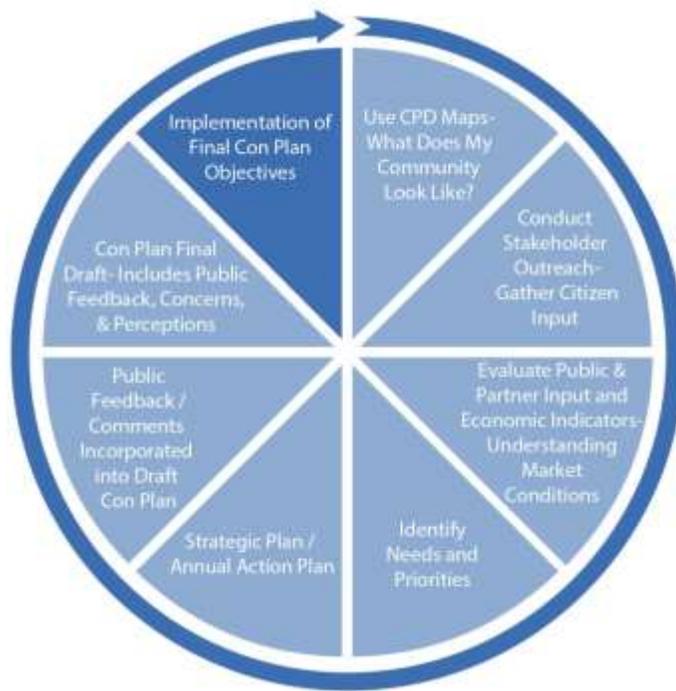
OVERALL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

Citizen participation and consultation are an ongoing process. Effective public input is needed at the onset of the Consolidated Planning process and is a critical component within each phase of the planning/implementation/feedback cycle, beginning with the identification of community needs and

priorities, and eventually leading to development of the final Consolidated Plan as evidenced in the public input flowchart and sample timeline below. While each grantee’s process may not exactly mirror the process outlined below, identifying points where citizen and stakeholder feedback is incorporated in the planning process is important for an effective public participation strategy.

Figure 1 presents a generalized flowchart for incorporating public input at each stage of the consolidated plan process. Stakeholder outreach begins at the earliest stages and helps grantees identify needs and establish objectives for the upcoming plan period. Once these objectives have been established, grantees will often prioritize further consultation based on partnerships that will help them implement plan objectives. Grantees will continue to collect public feedback and consult with partners following the development of the draft Strategic Plan / Annual Action Plan and incorporate the knowledge gained through this process into the final Consolidated Plan / Annual Action Plan, at which point the process is set to begin again.

Figure 1. The Flow of Public and Citizen Actions to Create a Consolidated Plan



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TIMELINE

The grantee’s CPP must provide timelines and policies for the required public comment and notice periods for the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan/Performance Reporting. Based on the minimum standards set out in the regulations, Table 2 below provides a sample timeframe to achieve the citizen participation requirements for the Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan/performance reporting

process including public notice, public comment period, and public hearings. Depending on grantee size and other schedule constraints, schedules may be shorter or longer than the example below.

Table 2. Citizen Participation Sample Timeline (Timeline uses start of Program Year (PY) as reference point)

Timeline	Activity	Con Plan Benchmark	Regulation
6 months before start of PY	Notice of Public Hearing on housing and community development needs	Notice of Public Hearing on housing and community development needs	91.105(e)(2); 91.115 (b)(3)(ii)
5 ½ months before start of PY	Public Hearing on housing and community development needs (if not held earlier)	Public Hearing on housing and community development needs (if not held earlier)	91.105(b)(3) and (e)(1) 91.115(b)(3)
4 months before start of PY	Notice of Comment Period on draft Con Plan/Action Plan - at least 2 weeks prior to start of comment period	Notice of Comment Period on draft Con Plan/Action Plan	91.105(e)(2); 91.115(b)(3)(ii)
3 ½ months before start of PY	Copies of Plan available online, at government offices, etc. for 30-day comment period	Draft Con Plan/Action Plan to public for comment	91.105(b)(2) and (g); 91.115(b)(2) and(f)
2 ½ months before start of PY	End of 30-day comment period on draft Con Plan/Action Plan	End of comment period on draft Con Plan/Action Plan	91.105(b)(4); 91.115(b)(4)
2 ½ months before start of PY	(Recommended: allow 4 weeks for internal review of Plan)	Internal review of Con Plan/Action Plan by grantee. All comments must be addressed in the final Plan; any accepted comments are incorporated into the Action Plan.	
1 ½ months before start of PY	Submission deadline for Action Plan - minimum of 45 days prior to beginning of PY	Con Plan/Action Plan due to HUD	91.15(a)(1)
-	Program Year begins	Plan is approved by HUD	91.500(a)
1 ½ months after start of PY	If Plan is rejected by HUD, grantee must submit revised Plan within 45 days of notice of disapproval	Revised Plan must be submitted if previously disapproved.	91.500(d)
1 ½ months after start of PY	Notice of comment period and public hearing on prior program year's performance reports 2 weeks prior to beginning of comment period (may also include Notice of Hearing on housing and community development needs for the following year)	Notice of hearing and comment period on prior program year's performance reports (may include housing and community development needs)	91.105(e)(2); 91.115 (b)(3)(ii)
2 months after start of PY	Public hearing on performance reports; comment period on performance reports begins (may also include hearing on housing and community development needs)	Public hearing on performance reports; comment period on performance reports begins	91.105(e)(1)
2 ½ months after start of PY	Minimum 15-day comment period on performance reports ends	Minimum 15-day comment period on performance reports ends	91.105(d)(1)
3 months after start of PY	90 days after end of PY	2012-2013 CAPER/PER due to HUD	91.520(a)

ONGOING CONSULTATION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

24 CFR 91.100 (local government) and 91.110 (states) requires that the grantee include state and local government agencies in the planning process. In particular, entitlement jurisdictions must consult with adjacent local governments (91.100(a)(5)). State grantees must consult with non-entitlement local

governments (91.110) as well as statewide and regional agencies involved with the target population, and state and local agencies involved with public housing, lead-based paint, and regional planning (e.g. see 91.110 and 91.115(a)(2)). The Consolidated Plan must note all agencies that have participated in the process during the Plan's development.

Establishing effective partnerships with stakeholders offers many benefits. Many organizations have key data, financing, and other resources with which the grantee can align its goals and programs. The jurisdiction can leverage other public and private resources such as economic development, transportation, and public health funding. Further, establishing strong relationships provides greater opportunity across all parties, including the community. Examples of key partners include the following:

- For-profit and non-profit developers
- Neighborhood associations
- Community development organizations
- Transportation department and planners
- Parks and recreation department
- Workforce and economic development agencies
- Chambers of Commerce
- Key departments in the jurisdiction (public safety, public works, code enforcement, human services, etc.)
- Neighboring jurisdictions (cities, towns, counties, townships, etc.)
- Regional government associations
- Foundations
- Key institutional employers (including hospitals, schools, universities, etc.)
- Land use planners
- Non-profit organizations representing populations for which Consolidated Plan regulations require special emphasis:
 - Low- and moderate-income persons
 - Residents of slums, blighted areas, and low- and moderate-income areas
 - Non-English speaking persons
 - Persons with disabilities
 - Public housing residents and other low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas
 - Special needs populations

Additional Opportunities for State Consultation

In addition to the required consultation with non-entitlement units of local government, states may have key statewide partners such as trade associations in finance, real estate marketing and development, and human and homeless services; statewide and regional financiers and intermediaries; rural development agencies; the statewide LIHTC allocating agency and tax credit syndicators; etc. Consultation partners such as these can provide an important link to regional constituencies spread throughout the state.

Through ongoing dialogue, grantees can identify and connect the Consolidated Plan with other continuous planning efforts resulting in a range of community-focused plans including:

- Land use plans
- Economic or development plans
- Downtown development plans
- Transportation plans
- Parks and recreation plans

While the regulations define minimum requirements that apply during Consolidated Plan development, ongoing citizen participation and consultation throughout the program year will achieve greater results. Continued communication will allow both the grantee and the stakeholders to assess effectiveness of programs throughout the year, and what may be improved in future planning cycles. Based on this communication and feedback, grantees may prioritize further consultation based on partnerships that will help them implement specific projects and activities. Building partnerships with stakeholders around shared priorities can provide a strong foundation that supports continued collaboration.

Example of Consultation

The City of St. Petersburg, Florida successfully incorporated its environmental review process as part of its 2011-2016 Consolidated Plan. Although the environmental review process requires interaction between myriad state and local agencies such as the State Historic Preservation Office and the State Environmental Protection agency, St. Petersburg's Consolidated Plan established a framework for all future environmental reviews involving numerous government entities.

"The City has collaborated with Pinellas County and developed a strategy for environmental review of housing related activities as well as for environmental review of infrastructure (street paving, sidewalk improvements, street lighting, etc.) related activities. Sites are evaluated using a site-specific review checklist. The site-specific review is completed prior to committing federal funding for the project. The new 5-year environmental review has been prepared and published, and will be forwarded to HUD after notice and comments have been received and the Review has been presented to the Board of County Commissioners."

SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING TOOL

The Citizen Participation and Consultation Self-Assessment and Planning Tool can be used to 1) assess the effectiveness of past citizen participation and consultation activities and 2) determine how these strategies can be improved for future activities.

The self-assessment is intended to increase the likelihood of successful public outreach by aligning citizen participation goals with the ability to implement a particular strategy. The Self-Assessment Tool will help grantees select **what** participation activities to undertake, and communicate internally and externally about **why** certain activities were chosen.

Grantees may decide the level of detail for each step, but the entire assessment can be completed in two to four hours. Table 3 outlines a self-assessment process for evaluating citizen participation and consultation strategies, and is discussed in greater detail in the narrative that follows. After completing this self-assessment process, grantees can identify specific citizen participation and consultation strategies and determine how to implement them in Section 3 of this guide.

Table 3. Grantee Self-Assessment and Planning Process

<i>Step</i>	<i>Objective</i>
Step 1: Identify Prior Citizen Participation and Consultation Activities	Create a list of past citizen participation and consultation activities, compare to the CPP, and document quantitative and qualitative results of the activities.
Step 2: Identify the Principal Goals of Activities Listed in Step 1	Determine the principal goals of past citizen participation and consultation activities identified in Step 1.
Step 3: Identify Gaps in Past Activities	Assess which goals identified in Step 2 were adequately met; Determine which citizen participation and consultation goals, if any, were not accounted for by past activities; Note any major strengths or weaknesses of past activities.
Step 4: Assess Current Resources Available to Perform Citizen Participation Activities	Conduct an accurate assessment of the monetary, personnel, and other resources available to perform various citizen participation and consultation activities.
Step 5: Establish Citizen Participation and Consultation Goals	Establish goals for the jurisdiction's citizen participation and consultation activities based on the goals and resources identified in Steps 3 and 4.

To assist in the completion of Steps 1-3, grantees can use the Past Participation Activities Table. A sample is provided below as Table 4 and a blank table is also included in the appendices.

Table 4. Sample Past Participation Activities Table

1. Title	2. Citizen Participation or Consultation	3. Time Frame	4. Location	5. Description	6. Goal	7. Evaluation
Citizen Advisory Board Meeting	Citizen Participation	Ongoing throughout the planning cycle	Entire jurisdiction	A multi-member citizen board drawn from target communities that regularly meets to discuss CDBG activities. Board provides ongoing feedback through regular public hearings.	Receive feedback and input on activities and projects from representatives of various populations within the community.	Members represent seven key target groups. Attendance of target groups at hearing and topics discussed were documented easily. Members voiced community concerns and served as advocates for target populations.
Internet Survey	Both	A one-time activity	Entire jurisdiction	Posted a survey form on city website to solicit input on plan.	Reach a broad set of the population to solicit feedback on community needs.	143 responses received. One of the four target geographies was not represented in survey responses.
Neighborhood Planning	Consultation	Ongoing throughout the planning process	Target area	Coordinated with neighborhood planning efforts in central downtown area for feedback on Con Plan goals and projects.	Leverage existing planning efforts to identify opportunities for collaboration in target geographies and priority needs.	Aligned goals and objectives with neighborhood planning activities. Coordinated outreach meetings with central downtown planning process. Received support and buy-in from local stakeholders.
State example: Regional Public Hearings	Citizen Participation	During Con Plan Development	Three locations statewide	Engage the public in more remote areas who may feel disconnected or be underserved.	Conduct remote public hearings to allow participation from multiple geographies in the state.	Participation by 75 citizens who would not have been able to attend a hearing involving longer travel; participants appreciated the presence and attention of state officials.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY PRIOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

Objective

Create a list of past citizen participation and consultation activities, compare to the CPP, and document quantitative and qualitative results of the activities.

The first step in the process is to document recent citizen participation and consultation activities and to review the grantee's own analysis on the outcomes, strengths, and weaknesses of those activities. 24 CFR Part 91.105 (ii) states that jurisdictions "should explore alternative public involvement techniques and quantitative and qualitative ways to measure efforts to encourage citizen participation." To accomplish this, jurisdictions may examine prior methods to determine their success and seek new "alternative public involvement techniques," as necessary, to assure a robust local discussion of the Consolidated Plan.

Documentation of previous activities does not need to be extensive. It could simply entail filling out the first five columns in Table 4 above. When documenting past activities, be sure to brainstorm all citizen participation and consultation activities conducted in the past planning cycle.

The first four columns are self-explanatory. The Description column (column 5) can contain as much information as desired. For example, it could include details about who facilitated the activity, the extent of resources required for the activity, feedback received, and any other information that may be useful in selecting future participation strategies and activities.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE PRINCIPAL GOALS OF ACTIVITIES LISTED IN STEP 1

Objective

Determine the principal goals of past citizen participation and consultation activities identified in Step 1.

After completing an inventory of prior citizen participation and consultation activities, grantees should identify the principal goals that each activity sought to achieve and if the activity achieved its goal. These goals should be listed under Goal (column 6) of Table 4.

For example, a grantee may conduct an activity with the goal of maximizing participation by low- and moderate-income persons or drawing other specific stakeholders into a discussion on housing and community development strategies.

Questions to Consider

- What were the primary outcomes sought from each past citizen participation and consultation effort? Which outcomes met the grantee’s highest priorities?
- What issues of local importance were targeted by this activity?
- Were any goals not addressed by past activities? If any goals were not addressed, create a separate list of these goals for documentation.
- Were the activities designed to reach specific sub-populations? Who are these groups? Make note of any specific populations described in 24 CFR 91.105(a)(2)(i) and 115(a)(2) who were encouraged to participate.
- Were there any geographic targets for outreach such as specific locations, neighborhoods, cities, or regions?

STEP THREE: IDENTIFY GAPS IN PAST ACTIVITIES

Objective

Assess which goals identified in Step 2 were adequately met; Determine what citizen participation and consultation goals, if any, were not accounted for by past activities; Note any major strengths or weaknesses of the past activities.

After completing Steps 1 and 2, grantees can compare how well past citizen participation activities achieved the grantee’s goals for citizen participation and consultation. The grantee can also highlight strengths or weaknesses of past efforts. This exercise enables the grantee to assess effectiveness and highlight gaps where key constituencies may not be reached by current activities.

Completing this comparison and strengths/weaknesses analysis helps a grantee target outreach activities to ensure that goals are aligned with an effective implementation method. The evaluation of the past activities should be completed under Evaluation (column 7) of Table 4.

Questions to Consider

- Did past activities fully address the citizen participation and consultation goals established in Step 2? What goals were not fully addressed?
- Did gaps exist in what the established goals addressed? Should additional goals have been identified for citizen participation and consultation activities?
- If activities were designed to reach specific sub-populations, did the targeted activity increase the desired group’s participation and create a successful dialogue?

- Are there demographic sub-groups within the target audience that might require different strategies? Who are these groups? For example, if a targeted sub-group is low-income, Spanish-speaking senior citizens, it may be necessary to develop a different outreach and participation strategy than the methods used for other sub-groups within the overall target audience. (See the example in the call-out box below.)
- Were prior activities and strategies geographically distributed in a manner that achieved maximum input from all neighborhoods or regions? Are there specific geographic areas that should be targeted for special outreach?
- Was there adequate attendance and did the hearing or meeting lead to meaningful input from the target population? How does the grantee define adequate attendance?
- What goals for outreach and input were best addressed? What goals were poorly achieved or not addressed?
- Has the process grown stale and attendance dropped off? Can the use of new social media and other innovative outreach methods reach a wider range of citizenry and invite a fuller discussion of ideas and projects regarding the Consolidated Plan?
- Who are the key partners whose activities impact low- and moderate-income households and neighborhoods (e.g., lenders, employers, institutions, etc.) Have they been engaged to leverage their resources and initiatives?

At the end of this exercise, grantees will be able to produce a list associating each outreach goal with an effective past activity as well as highlight activities that were ineffective. A completed list will help identify goals that do not currently have an associated activity or effective means of implementation.

Example of Targeted Outreach Efforts

The [City of Santa Fe, New Mexico](#) identified a gap in its past outreach efforts to Spanish-speaking residents prior to its 2013-2017 Consolidated Plan. The City then conducted its citizen participation survey of residents and employers in both English and Spanish to determine the housing needs of Spanish-speaking residents of the city. The survey and its results were provided on the city website in both languages so that local Spanish-speaking residents knew their concerns were being heard and were welcomed at public hearings.

STEP FOUR: ASSESS CURRENT RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO PERFORM CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

Objective

Conduct an accurate assessment of the monetary, personnel, and other resources available to carry-out citizen participation and consultation activities.

Once the grantee has 1) documented its past activities, 2) reviewed its prior goals, and 3) understands where gaps, if any, exist when comparing goals with past activities, the grantee can develop a plan to supplement or modify its current activities to best meet its citizen participation and consultation needs.

To do this effectively, the grantee should account for current resources available for citizen participation and consultation activities. These resources may include, but are not limited to:

1. Monetary resources
2. Staff experience and availability
3. Appropriate facilities
4. Networks of community leadership
5. Other grantee or partner agency outreach efforts
6. Program contacts serving similar clientele or geographic areas

Ongoing fiscal constraints at all levels of government might be viewed as an impediment to meaningful outreach. However, innovative methods can maximize limited resources and lead to successful outcomes. State and local grantees should consider partnerships with agencies and organizations that leverage each other's resources and ongoing outreach activities to supplement and broaden their own efforts. For example, grantees can utilize feedback collected via neighborhood or regional planning efforts to inform the Consolidated Plan.

Once available resources are quantified, grantees may compare resources with the matrix of goals and past activities to determine what changes or new activities are feasible. Alternatively, a grantee could use the resource self-assessment to identify resource gaps for certain strategies and then investigate opportunities to fill those gaps.

Example of Statewide Outreach Effort

The [Maine Office of Community Development](#) leveraged outreach efforts by the Maine Community Development Association to jointly conducted an informal public forum in support of its 2010 Annual Action Plan development. The forum was designed to gather information and ideas from interested parties about statewide housing and community development needs and to review potential program updates prior to the formal public hearing. In addition to the public forum, the CDBG program has a

separate and final public hearing in which Maine receives and responds to comments before submitting the final Plan. The Main Office of Community Development also consults regularly with program staff from the Maine Department of Rural Development, the Main Department of Human Resources and other state agencies that provide funds for community and economic development activities that align with Con Plan priorities and goals in an effort to coordinate resources for public outreach.

STEP 5: ESTABLISH CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION GOALS

Objective

Establish goals for the jurisdiction's citizen participation and consultation activities and for the citizen participation process as a whole, based on the gaps and resources identified in Steps 3 and 4.

Grantees may revise or set new citizen participation and consultation goals after assessing past activities, goals, and the gaps between goals and outcomes. The questions below may be useful internally or in discussions with stakeholders.

Questions to Consider

- What are the primary goals of citizen participation and consultation outreach? How do current goals relate to past goals?
- What are the specific outcomes or goals sought from participation activities and how do they relate to the primary goals of citizen participation and consultation as a whole? Which outcome is the number one priority?
- What are the key planning processes that will affect low-income communities over the next five years (e.g., economic development, transportation, land use, regional plans, etc.)? Is the grantee maximizing the beneficial input of the activities these plans will generate or prioritize? Can citizen participation and consultation outreach for the Consolidated Plan be combined with other planning activities?
- What are the current key issues of local importance that will enhance local discussions and engage a broad range of citizens and local stakeholders?
- What means are available to make citizens and other stakeholders aware that the Consolidated Plan hearings will address local concerns?
- Are there key concerns for various sub-populations? Will discussion of issues that are important to a specific sub-population increase participation and ensure a successful dialogue?

- Would “themed” sessions in areas such as housing markets, economic development, and homelessness create opportunities for targeted outreach and discussion with key stakeholders?
- Have prior activities successfully targeted all groups and sub-groups within the target audience? (Make note of any specific encouragement of low- and moderate-income citizen participation included in 24 CFR 91.105(a)(2)(ii) and 115.(a)(2)). Who are these groups? Are there groups that have not been adequately targeted?
- Are there demographic sub-groups within the target audience that might require different strategies? Are there any geographic goals for outreach? Are there specific locations, neighborhoods, cities, or regions that should be specifically targeted with outreach?
- Are there alternate approaches that may achieve the objectives more successfully than previously conducted activities?
- At the state level, barriers to participation are often geographic. Does the state plan activities to help citizens overcome this barrier, such as regional meetings or web meetings?
- Is the state reaching out to all non-entitlement units of local governments statewide?
- Will strategies generate meaningful feedback on proposed housing and community development needs?

Example of Innovative Practices

The [City of Davenport, Iowa](#) has implemented several innovative practices for its 2010-2014 Con Plan that provide its citizens with a meaningful voice in how federal housing and community development funds are spent. These efforts include the establishment of the city’s Neighborhood Empowerment and Wellness initiative (NEW), which increased discussion of public funding and allocation and collaboration between the city and stakeholders. Through NEW, the city held multiple public hearings in which nearly 300 residents participated. The city also established a 15-member Citizen Advisory Board to make recommendations each year. For the 2010-2014 Five-Year Plan, they sought to expand participation at hearings with a survey of all attendees.

After considering these questions, grantees will be able to develop a simple list of new goals for citizen participation and consultation efforts tailored to specific needs. These goals should relate to the grantee’s objectives, unique populations, and geography but must be broad enough to provide for a range of activities and implementation strategies.

The grantee may want to input these new goals in a clean version of Table 4 (Appendix 1). This table can be populated with proposed activities to achieve each identified goal. The grantee should leave the evaluation column blank until the activity is completed. This work will support future adjustments to the grantee’s CPP for the next Consolidated Plan or Action Plan.

One of the most basic requirements of the Citizen Participation Plan is the need to obtain public comment. When particular constituent populations are consistently under-represented at hearings or in public comment, grantees will want to establish a goal of conducting more effective outreach mechanisms targeting these populations. Specific strategies are discussed in the subsequent section.

Example of Goal Setting

In its 2009 Consolidated Planning cycle, the City of Seattle, Washington prioritized a goal of more effectively reach a range of hard-to-reach populations, including persons living with HIV/AIDS, senior citizens, refugee and immigrant populations and homeless youth. To increase the identified populations' participation in hearings and the public comment process, city staff worked together with representatives from advocacy and social service agencies, issue specific community groups, universities and Advisory Councils to obtain comments from target subpopulations through a diverse set of means, including; 1) creating targeted drafts of specific sections of the Consolidated Plan vetted through ongoing cross-organization workgroups for comment, 2) staffing of issue specific community groups and obtaining feedback from those participants, 3) advertisement of public comment opportunities through media targeted to specific populations and, 4) leveraging of academic research to obtain comments from specific ethnic populations.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

The following section presents an overview of strategies and activities that grantees can adopt as part of their citizen participation and consultation efforts. Activities in this section are grouped by category and apply to either (or in some cases, to both) the citizen participation or consultation portions of the Consolidated Planning process.

Table 5 presents the categories and associated activities. This section highlights suggested and current practices used by grantees across the country, but it is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Grantees should review the list, identify activities that align with their resources, needs, and goals, and modify the activities to meet their exact objectives. The suggested activities are described in more detail in Appendix 2.

The categories included are:

- **Traditional Media:** public hearings, print, radio, and television.
- **Internet-Based:** email, websites, social media, etc.
- **Data-Visualization Technologies:** using maps and graphics as communication aides.
- **Coordination with public institutions and government:** consultation with local, regional, and state institutions of government.
- **Coordination with private partners:** consultation with private interests.

The activities listed under each category heading in Table 5 are generally ordered to represent the degree of difficulty or amount of resources required to undertake an activity. The first activity under a given category heading can be thought of as a "basic outreach" approach to that strategy. Implementing subsequent activities for that category, in addition to the first activity, represents the progression towards a "best practice" scenario. While grantees are encouraged to select a mix of activities that best meet their resources, needs, and goals, increasing the number of activities undertaken, whenever possible, is likely to result in a more successful implementation of the given category or general strategy.

Many of the activities listed in Table 5 overlap with activities relating to different strategies and objectives. The table lists the associated objectives of each activity under the column heading "Objectives." Understanding these objectives can help grantees employ citizen participation and consultation activities that are complimentary to one another. These objectives are: 1) Information Sharing, 2) Identifying Priorities, 3) Collecting Data, and 4) Alignment/Coordination.

1. Information sharing: Distributing information into the community effectively before the formal hearings begin.

It is important to share as much information as possible about the needs assessment and priority-setting undertaken during the Consolidated Planning process. By publicizing such information and soliciting

feedback, the grantee allows community members and stakeholders to share their opinions across a variety of forums.

Information sharing includes publishing the Con Plan or sections of the Plan on the internet or in hard copy and seeking feedback and responses to it. In addition to publishing text from the Plan, the grantee can share data, maps, or other pieces of information to illustrate its approach and rationale.

Feedback on the information shared can then be received through surveys, in-person meetings, stakeholder groups, or other methods that best serve the grantee's objectives.

Posting key maps with discussion questions prior to a meeting, generates interest in the topics of the meeting and encourages citizens and stakeholders to come with questions regarding the posted maps and questions.

2. Identify community priorities: Early in the planning process, grantees may seek feedback on what housing and community development issues the public prioritizes in their community.

Grantees can work with stakeholders and citizens to receive feedback on the most pressing priorities in the community or in specific neighborhoods. Soliciting feedback early in the process can increase citizen and stakeholder buy-in as well as ensure that priorities align with the experience of citizens and stakeholders "on the ground."

To help facilitate this process, grantees can share data or maps or request ideas from citizens and stakeholders in community meetings, surveys, or through other means of electronic and in-person communication. Effective outreach offers a chance to discuss meaningful issues and provide examples of past issues that have been successfully addressed. Outreach to advocacy organizations who work with specific sub-populations should also be explored.

Example of Soliciting Community Input

The [Charlotte and Mecklenburg County Consortium](#) in North Carolina is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country, covering a vast geographic area. Successfully soliciting citizen participation is a daunting task. The Consortium chose numerous outreach efforts for its 2011-2015 Consolidated Plan to gain citizen input on local priorities. They used a range of survey instruments to poll residents in various areas and employed intermediary organizations that were active with various target groups to collect data and surveys. The Consortium organized focus groups of low- and moderate-income community leaders as another method to inform their efforts.

3. Collect data: Identify local data sets and other key quantitative and qualitative information.

In addition to distributing data provided by HUD and working from U.S. Census data, grantees should solicit data and other information from advocacy organizations and stakeholder groups to supplement existing information. For example, grantees are required to consult with the applicable Continuum of

Care (CoC) to obtain the most recent point-in-time count of homeless persons for specific areas within the jurisdiction.

Questions to Consider

- If homeless counts suggest a large homeless population in the targeted area, how can a willingness to discuss the issue encourage more involvement from local CoC agencies?
- Have local universities and colleges performed community poverty studies that may provide more clarity or a different perspective?
- Has the Regional Planning Agency completed specific area studies?

Grantees may also gather qualitative information, such as a description of public services or youth services available in the area. This information can be used to supplement the quantitative data and analysis presented in the Plan.

4. Alignment/Coordination: Coordinate participation efforts and planned activities with other organizations or ongoing activities.

Grantees can align with other agencies and stakeholders in two ways. First, a grantee can combine its outreach efforts with other, ongoing efforts to limit potentially repetitive requests for feedback and comment.

Second, as grantees begin to identify priorities and goals, they can work with local organizations and agencies to coordinate efforts and leverage each group's investment. Aligning efforts with other stakeholders requires effective pre-planning and ongoing coordination among all actors. To achieve this, activities such as ongoing roundtable discussions or stakeholder meetings may be helpful.

Table 5. Quick Start Guide Overview: The table outlines strategies for conducting citizen participation and consultation, summarizes activities associated with each category, and describes common characteristics of each activity. The activities are presented in more detail as "Quick Start Guides" in the remainder of this document.

		Objectives	Description
	Category: Traditional Media		
Basic Outreach	Facilitate effective public meetings.	Information-sharing; Identifying priorities; alignment/ coordination	Effective meeting facilitation is essential to conducting successful public outreach events. The Quick Start Guide for this activity suggests guidelines for conducting effective public meetings and achieving successful public input on Consolidated Plan issues and priorities.
+	Employ alternative methods of public notice with traditional media outreach.	Information-sharing	The Quick Start Guide for this activity discusses innovative ideas for expanding public notice distribution (e.g., combine public mailings with utility or other general mailings to reach a broader audience, recruit local law enforcement, faith-based groups, or other community leaders, schools, etc., to distribute Con Plan materials and public meeting announcements).
+	Use of alternative language media targeting language and ethnic sub-groups.	Information-sharing; alignment/ coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity describes the benefits of using non-English language media to target specific geographic areas or populations, and focus on issues of interest to the targeted demographic.
Best Practice	Use of local television and radio stations to reach a wider audience.	Information-sharing	The Quick Start Guide for this activity describes the use of public figures, TV news coverage and radio public service announcements to improve attendance at hearings and generate interest in the citizen participation process.

		Objectives	Description
	Category: Internet-based		
Basic Outreach	Email announcements (via listserv and other electronic communication methods).	Information-sharing	The Quick Start Guide for this activity discusses the use of email listservs to reach the broadest possible audience.
+	Website publications (publish specific Consolidated Plan material and general public notice information on website).	Information-sharing; Identifying priorities	The Quick Start Guide for this activity describes the use of websites to publish public notices and substantive information on potential priorities and proposed or potential projects, and to generate comments and interest in the plan.
+	Use of Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter and other forms of social media to collect and disseminate information.	Information-sharing; Data collection; Identifying priorities;	The Quick Start Guide for this activity discusses the use of social media communications on existing grantee or other public agency Facebook, Twitter, etc., accounts and creating a dedicated social media presence for Con Plan activities or larger community development projects.
+	Web-based survey and comment methods.	Data collection; Identifying priorities; Alignment and coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity describes the use of email or web-based survey technology to collect data and comments on Con Plan activities, target audience, and stakeholders.
Best Practice	Conduct virtual public meetings through online forums	Data collection; Identifying priorities; Alignment and coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity outlines the use of virtual meeting technology to connect with stakeholders and residents who are unable to participate in in-person meetings. Meeting participants are able to engage policy makers to discuss needs and recommendations for HUD programming.

		Objectives	Description
Category: Data Visualization Technologies			
Basic Outreach	Map available resource locations.	Information-sharing; Alignment and Coordination;	The Quick Start Guide for this activity describes the production and use of maps that depict the locations of existing community assets and investments in the community.
+	Map stakeholder locations.	Information-sharing; Data Collection; Identifying priorities; Alignment and Coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity discusses the usefulness of mapping of stakeholder locations in the community, region, or state to show where agencies and their current activities are located. Stakeholders can include both 1) the location of potential consultation partners, and 2) information on the geographic distribution of citizens participating in the community's outreach process.
+	Create themed maps to generate discussion and stimulate citizen input.	Information-sharing; Identifying priorities; Alignment and Coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity outlines the production and use of maps targeted to specific projects, geographic areas, and/or target populations that present stakeholder, resource, and market conditions in a manner designed to solicit feedback and discussion for a particular project or issue.
Best Practice	Employ data visualization methods, such as info-graphics and traditional charts and graphs, to relate programs to key problem-areas.	Information-sharing; Identifying priorities; Alignment and Coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity discusses the presentation of data in alternative visual formats such as graphics that relate to specific problems, target areas, or market conditions. For example, an info-graphic that portrays housing market conditions (vacancy, REO properties, mortgage delinquency data) versus unemployment over time.

		Objectives	Description
Category: Coordinate with local and regional public entities ongoing efforts			
Basic Outreach	Establish common data with public and private partners.	Data Collection; Alignment and Coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity describes the process and benefits of working with stakeholders to identify best available housing, demographic, economic, and other data for the community, and reaching agreement on data interpretation: what do the data suggest about current market conditions and Consolidated Plan priorities?
+	State strategies for effective consultation.	Identify priorities; Alignment and Coordination;	The Quick Start Guide for this activity outlines strategies for States to employ while working with UGLGs to identify project funding and priority criteria for allocation of CDBG resources and coordinating with UGLGs to ensure responsive applications and comply with the requirements for the Annual Action Plan 24 CFR 91.320(k)(1)(i).
+	Coordination with other local government staff who are interfacing with neighborhood groups/citizens on a regular basis.	Alignment and Coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity outlines how to identify staff in the community, county, or state responsible for general relations (ombudsman or other similar position) and describes strategies that minimize staff time investment and generate targeted feedback.
Best Practice	Inventory and engage other planning processes already underway. Explore ways existing planning processes can benefit from increased linkages to Consolidated Planning process.	Identify priorities; Alignment and Coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity discusses the process of identifying ongoing city or regional planning processes and key contact persons (land use plans, master plans, transportation plans, economic development plans, park plans, etc.) and coordinating complimentary activities between departments and Con Plan processes to create new or stronger stakeholder partnerships.

		Objectives	Description
Category: Coordinate with private stakeholders and establish common goals			
Basic Outreach	Connect with the private sector (banks, major employers, CHDOs, etc.) to identify opportunities for coordinated efforts with private interests.	Alignment and Coordination; Information-sharing	The Quick Start Guide for this activity discusses the importance of conducting wide-ranging private consultation activities to identify synergies among programs and to motivate private partner participation in Consolidated Plan goals and strategies.
Best Practice	Conduct topic-oriented stakeholder sessions to create buy-in around strategies for specific projects (for partners and community).	Information sharing; Alignment and Coordination	The Quick Start Guide for this activity outlines the process and benefits of holding topic-oriented meetings or conducting tours at past project locations to show the impact of specific types of CPD investment activities to private stakeholders.

Appendix 2 of the Desk Guide details each of the activities presented in Table 5 in a brief "Quick-Start Guide." The quick-start guides are not intended to be comprehensive 'how-to' guides for each strategy, but instead present a framework that describes each strategy's objective and relationship to the Consolidated Plan, provides a brief summary of the activity, describes the desired outcome, and provides tips and best practices guidelines for implementing the strategy.

Each Quick Start Guide includes the following information:

- Summary and description of activity objective
- Application to the Consolidated Planning process
- Potential target audience
- Required resources
- Examples of activity implementation

CASE STUDIES

THE CITY OF DAVENPORT, IOWA

The requirements for citizen participation in the [Consolidated Plan](#) ensure that local residents play a powerful role in determining housing and community development expenditures in their community. The city of Davenport, IA has used the broad flexibility of the requirements to forge a partnership that gives their citizens a meaningful voice in housing and community development decision-making.

The first innovation Davenport introduced is the use of a Citizen Advisory Board to make recommendations on how HUD funds are allocated. This fifteen-member board is appointed by the mayor and also monitors the performance of organizations that receive funding under the Consolidated Plan (Strategy: *Coordinate with local and regional public entities ongoing efforts. Applicable activities; Establish Common Data, Inventory and Engage Other Planning Processes*).

When considering how to increase citizen participation for the 2010-2014 Consolidated Plan, the city used their typical public meeting process and sought public comments over an eight-week period. However, to give greater voice and create an enduring record of comments at the outset of the process, the city provided all attendees with surveys to assess what they saw as the “Priority Needs” of Davenport (Strategy: *Traditional Media. Applicable activities; Facilitate Effective Public Meetings, Alternative Methods of Public Notice*).

The survey included a demographic section as well as an opportunity for residents to rank the importance of key considerations for the new Consolidated Plan. The following expenditure considerations were presented for citizen input:

- Citizens were asked to rank the expenditure categories the city had undertaken during the prior Five-Year Plan period.
- Citizens were asked to prioritize special needs and social service populations according to their assessment of need.
- Finally, citizens were asked whether Consolidated Plan funds should be targeted to specific areas or spread city-wide.

The response rate of the surveys was exceptional. More than 63% of attendees at the public hearings completed and returned a survey. Although the demographic profile indicated that the vast majority of respondents were homeowners and therefore, the results might be somewhat skewed, it did create a visible public record of input from citizens. For example, the most popular funding category determined by participants was the homeowner rehab program. The survey was one mechanism for increasing participation at the hearings and gave the Citizen Advisory Board powerful input into their decision-making. Most importantly, through this survey and the Citizen Advisory Board, Davenport increased opportunities for collecting and using citizen input. Consequently, the city is able to implement programs that have been well-vetted by the community. It is a strong example of how one city has

expanded upon the Consolidated Planning regulations to achieve its own goals and assure a meaningful platform for citizen participation.

CITY OF CHARLOTTE AND MECKLENBURG COUNTY CONSORTIUM, NORTH CAROLINA

The [Consortium](#) represents a large geographic area with a densely populated urban center. Charlotte, NC is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the southern United States and is the 23rd largest in the country according to Census figures. Gaining insight from low- and moderate-income citizens in such a large area is a daunting task, but the Consortium mapped a successful plan. This case study is valuable, however, not only for similarly large cities—its methods can be adapted for use in any jurisdiction.

In January 2010, the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Consortium sent a survey to all neighborhood leaders and others included on a neighborhood mailing list maintained by city staff (Strategy: *Internet-based*. Applicable activities; *Email Announcements, Web-based Surveys*). A total of 186 people responded to the survey. In addition to requesting respondent demographic information, the survey asked for responses to questions relating to:

- Overall priorities of need
- Populations with the greatest needs
- Community development/human services needs strategies
- Housing priorities
- Neighborhood revitalization needs and strategies
- Homeless and non-homeless special population needs

In addition to its 2010 survey, the Consortium leveraged a number of Charlotte Housing Authority's ongoing resident input strategies to further inform the Consolidated Plan's Needs Assessment Plan (Strategy: *Coordinate with local and regional public entities ongoing efforts*. Applicable activities; *Establish Common Data, Coordinating Jurisdiction Staff, Inventory and Engage Other Planning Processes*).

The Housing Authority's activities included conducting a number of additional surveys and focus groups. Leveraged Housing Authority included:

- A survey of over 4,000 residents of public housing and Section 8 residents conducted by Central Piedmont Community College's Center for Applied Research to identify specific service needs and barriers residents face. One-on-one interviews were conducted as a portion of this survey.
- A survey of landlords who rent to low- and very low-income households who identified, among other data, the primary reasons landlords may refuse rentals to certain households. A total of 216 landlords responded to the survey.
- A focus group conducted by Crisis Assistance Ministry – the agency that provides emergency rent and utility assistance – provided guidance on existing barriers to increase household wealth and securing housing.

- The Housing Authority partnered with the Urban Ministry Center and Common Ground to conduct an in-depth survey of individuals who are chronically homeless in Charlotte. Teams of volunteers interviewed approximately 800 chronically homeless individuals to identify the most vulnerable among those interviewed and to identify specific needs and barriers faced by this population.

APPENDIX 1: PAST PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES TABLE

1. Title	2. Citizen Participation or Consultation	3. Time Frame	4. Location	5. Description	6. Goal	7. Evaluation

APPENDIX 2: QUICK-START GUIDES

As referenced in the “Citizen Participation and Consultation Strategies” section, Appendix 2 contains a series of activities to address different priorities or gaps in the Consolidated Plan citizen participation and consultation activities. Table 6 helps identify the best activities to accomplish specific citizen participation and consultation objectives (information sharing, data collection, identify priorities, and alignment/coordination) while taking into consideration the level of staff engagement and understanding of technology required.

Table 6. Citizen Participation and Consultation Activity Matrix

Topic		Citizen Participation	Consultation	Information Sharing	Data Collection	Identify Priorities	Alignment/Coordination
Facilitate Effective Public Meetings		✓		✓		✓	✓
Alternative Methods of Public Notice		✓		✓			
Alternate Language Media Targeting Non-English Pop.		✓		✓			✓
Local Television and Radio		✓		✓			
Email Announcements		✓	✓	✓			
Website Publications		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Social Media		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Web-based Surveys		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Online Forums		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mapping Community Resources		✓	✓	✓			✓
Mapping Stakeholder Locations		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Creating Thematic Maps		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Advanced Data Visualization Graphics		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Establish Common Data With Public and Private Partners			✓		✓		✓
State Strategies for Consultation with Local Governments			✓			✓	✓
Coordinating Jurisdiction Staff			✓				✓
Inventory and Engage other Planning Processes			✓			✓	✓
Collaborate With Private Stakeholders			✓	✓	✓		✓
Topic-Oriented Stakeholder Sessions			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Staff Time Burden
 = Low = Moderate = High

Technology Requirement
 = Low = Moderate = High

Traditional Media

Facilitate Effective Public Meetings

Objective

The objective of this activity is to provide strategies for conducting effective public meetings, hearings, and forums as part of the Consolidated Plan process. Effective meetings help to maximize feedback and input from residents regarding the planning process.

Summary

A strong facilitator is a key component of an effective public meeting. Grantees can designate a staff member as the facilitator or hire a facilitation professional. This person is responsible for managing meeting participants and for guiding the meeting toward its objectives. The facilitator is responsible for the following tasks:

- *Develop Agenda:* Establishing and publishing the agenda well in advance of the meeting along with any supporting documents will allow participants to review and prepare for the meeting.
- *Establish the Meeting Purpose:* Confirm the purpose and desired outcomes of the meeting for all participants at the onset of the meeting.
- *Set and Implement Meeting Ground Rules:* The facilitator should also establish ground rules, which may include the process for sharing ideas or tabling off-topic comments for future discussion.
- *Manage Time:* Manage time during the meeting to ensure that meeting goals are met and the desired outcomes are reached.
- *Be an Active Listener:* The facilitator should remain a neutral, active listener to comments and feedback and facilitate ongoing dialogue among participants. The active listener focuses their attention solely on the speaker and then summarizes the speaker's points in the listener's own words before moving on. This process helps the speakers confirm that the audience has understood their message.
- *Encourage Participation:* Encourage active participation from all meeting attendees and prevent a subset of the group from dominating the conversation. The facilitator should ensure that the meeting environment is one in which all participants feel comfortable sharing comments and thoughts.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Public meetings are one of the most fundamental forms of citizen participation outreach used by grantees and a minimum requirement for the Consolidated Plan. Good meeting facilitation is a primary factor in achieving successful public input on Plan issues and priorities.

Logistics and Materials Needed

In addition to employing the standard facilitation practices outlined above, a number of techniques can be employed to increase participation and to create an interactive meeting environment. Strategies include:

- *Rotating Flip Charts:* For meetings in which the grantee wants to generate a list of brainstormed ideas, the rotating flip chart activity can be useful. To do this, divide participants into small groups (4-8 people). Ask participants to respond to certain questions and record their answers on a piece of flip chart paper. After 5-10 minutes, the facilitator should rotate each group's paper to a different table to allow each group to review another group's brainstorm and comment/expand upon their

ideas. Once the papers have been rotated several times, review each flip chart list with the entire group and have a discussion about the brainstormed ideas.

- *Dot Voting:* For meetings in which the grantee wants feedback on a number of ideas or proposals, dot voting is an interactive activity that involves all participants. The facilitator should affix a number of ideas or proposals to a wall (either a title or a more detailed proposal). Depending on the number of ideas, participants are given 1-4 sticker dots and asked to place a dot next to their favorite idea(s). After everyone has voted, the facilitator should tally the votes and lead a discussion on the ideas receiving the most votes.
- *Sticky Notes Comments:* Similar to the dot voting strategy, sticky notes comments allow participants to post comments anonymously on ideas or proposals. Each participant is given a number of sticky notes and is encouraged to write comments about the presented ideas and attach their sticky notes to proposal descriptions affixed to the wall. The facilitator then leads a conversation reviewing the comments on each proposal.
- *Consensus Pairing:* Consensus pairing works best with smaller groups. Participants are asked to brainstorm three responses to a question posed by the facilitator. After brainstorming the responses, each participant finds a partner, compares the two lists, and comes to consensus on three responses between the pair. After five minutes, the pair is asked to find another pair, share lists, and come to consensus on three responses between their two lists. Depending on the size of the group and type of question, this can be done again. The facilitator should then ask each group to report on their brainstormed consensus list and facilitate a conversation discussing all ideas reported by the groups.
- *Use of Visual Aids:* Use of maps and other visual aids can encourage feedback from participants. Some participants may be able to better recognize issues or prioritize needs if they are depicted visually in addition to narrative text or data tables. Prior to the meeting, the grantee can use CPD Maps or another mapping application to create maps that indicate community needs, existing facilities or services, concentrations of populations, or housing market features. These maps can be printed or displayed electronically during the meeting.

Alternative Methods of Public Notice

Objective

The objective of this activity is to establish strategies to widely distribute public notices into the hands of all citizens. This includes leveraging service providers and other partner organizations to reach persons who are most likely to have concerns about Consolidated Planning priorities, strategies, and projects.

Summary

This activity expands on the basic public notice requirement of the Consolidated Plan regulations by suggesting creative coordination with local partners to reach a broader audience. For example, coordinating with public and private entities to access their mailing lists, or partnering with institutions and advocacy organizations to help publicize citizen participation opportunities and generate interest.

Reaching out to these local organizations before public hearings can help publicize citizen participation opportunities and create interest. In general, partnering with more than one type of organization or group will allow a grantee to reach a wider audience. Potential partners can include:

- Local government or membership based organizations through regular mailings or other membership communication.
- Utility companies or regulatory agencies through distribution with utility bills.
- Large employers through email listserv or other communications with their employees.

Alternative methods of public notice may be especially beneficial to States, who often must reach geographically dispersed groups that have very different issue concerns. Alternative distribution of public notice can be used to target different constituencies with messages tailored to their particular economic needs such as: urban / rural issues, Colonias communities, seasonal and migrant worker communities, and unique Native American governance issues.

Additionally, institutional partners such as universities and non-profit groups may be willing to assist with preliminary activities to create interest prior to formal hearings. Activities could include conducting surveys or holding informal, single-issue meetings to generate interest in issues that will be discussed at official Consolidated Plan hearings.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Employing a wide range of innovative public notice methods can help grantees successfully involve all of their target populations and demographics in Consolidated Plan outreach and citizen participation.

Target Audience/Usage

This activity targets residents who may not receive or respond to more traditional public notice and outreach methods.

Logistics and Materials Needed

- Written notice may need to be tailored to the groups receiving the information, or to address the requirements of partnering organizations.
- Written notices may also include surveys that seek to engage the public and generate interest in the Consolidated Plan process. If included, the surveys should contain instructions on how to return responses. Including return postage with survey forms can increase response rates. Relying on an employer, advocacy group, or other stakeholder with a vested interest in an issue or project to promote citizen participation activities may give the appearance of bias. Including a wide variety of partner organizations should offset the use of such groups for promotion.

Examples of the Use of Alternative Methods of Public Notice

- The [City of Corona](#), CA includes notification of public hearings and meetings in its city electronic newsletter titled “The Inner Circle.” In addition to publishing notices in traditional methods via the newspaper and on its website, the city of Corona is able to notify recipients of the newsletter, which includes stakeholders and city residents.

Alternate Language Media Targeting Non-English Populations

Objective

The objective of this activity is to promote effective outreach targeting non-English speaking populations within the community, and to better meet the requirements set forth in [24 CFR Part 91](#).

Summary

States and localities can improve outreach efforts to non-English speaking populations via notices published in non-English languages, and in non-English language publications, radio and television stations. Translated content can be tailored to emphasize topics of particular interest to non-English speaking communities. Using the social media presence of non-English media organizations can produce innovative partnerships.

Potential ways to target non-English speaking communities include:

- Publishing translated announcements in weekly and daily non-English language newspapers.
- Non-English language radio stations.
- Posting translated content on public transit billboards and ads in geographic corridors with a high density of targeted non-English speaking populations.
- Sharing translated content through non-English speaking media organizations' social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Translating public notices into non-English languages for inclusion in English language publications.
- Tailoring translated announcements to highlight the concerns of non-English speaking populations.
- Consultation can involve key non-profit and public agencies serving non-English speaking sectors of the state or community and may require language accommodations to facilitate participation.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Using non-English language media and communications can help increase successful outreach to non-English speakers in the Consolidated Plan process.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audience for this activity is non-English speakers and other target sub-populations in the jurisdiction.

Logistics and Materials Needed

There are a wide variety of mechanisms to consider when exploring how to effectively publicize hearings and other citizen participation activities to non-English speaking communities. Grantees may find that an inventory of non-English speaking communities within the state or locality is necessary. Non-profit and public agencies can serve as helpful conduits of information and resources to specific non-English speaking communities.

Services such as [Google Translate](#) can quickly develop initial draft translation of flyers and public notices, which can then be revised by a qualified translator. Media outlets themselves may be willing to make limited translation services available as a public service for the communities they serve. Once non-

English speaking communities have been effectively reached, translation services for public hearings will be necessary.

In addition to producing translated material, grantees should consider developing a more comprehensive strategy for cultural and linguistic organizational competence. Some ideas for improving the effectiveness of alternate language media communications include:

- Recruiting a bilingual spokesperson from the community who can speak fluently about the role of citizen participation in the Consolidated Plan process, both to reporters and on radio and television appearances.
- Using the guide to interpretation services published by the [American Translator's Association](#) to understand how to work with translation services and implement non-English language translation strategies best practices.
- Understanding the audience of non-English media outlets. For example, are some publications or programs targeting specific age or income groups within a non-English speaking population? Are some media outlets or programs seen as a more credible source of news than others? Is there are particularly popular radio or television personality or program that should be targeted?
- Fostering relationships with non-English language journalists. Journalists with a special focus on specific ethnic communities can be helpful in targeting communication with non-English speakers.

Examples of the Use of non-English Media

- The city of San Francisco, CA placed translated Chinese and Spanish language public notices in libraries as well as prominent local non-English community-based publications. Additionally, the city's website for Community Development provides a [pull down menu](#) that allows for all content to be translated into over 70 languages.

Local Television and Radio

Objective

The objective of this activity is to engage a greater percentage of the general public and reach a wider demographic by partnering with local radio and television media outlets to promote Consolidated Plan Citizen Participation activities.

Summary

Local radio and television reach a wide range of the general population, and local media outlets may be interested in publicizing public hearings and other Consolidated Plan citizen participation activities as a public service (public radio and TV), or a news item of local interest (local TV news). Partnering with known public figures to record radio spots or make brief television appearances may further increase public interest and participation. Additionally, working with public television and cable access channels in larger jurisdictions that regularly televise legislative hearings and other public interest programming may allow for broadcast of local and regional public hearings.

- Consolidated Plan public hearings address issues of real public concern that many local media outlets will be interested in reporting, reaching a broad segment of the affected public.
- Consolidated Plan citizen participation activities satisfy the requirements of public radio and TV stations to provide public service airtime.
- Using well known public officials to make brief radio and TV announcements can increase the profile of activities and encourage public participation.
- Discussion of key issues of concern within the Plan may forge innovative partnerships with local media outlets interested in public interest programming.

Statewide and rural jurisdictions stand to benefit significantly from the use of radio and television media. Radio and TV broadcasts can be effective at reaching dispersed or geographically isolated populations that can be difficult to notify by other means.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Employing local radio and TV as part of a public notice strategy can help grantees to both successfully publicize opportunities for public participation and generate interest in the Consolidated Plan process.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audience for this activity is all residents in a community.

Logistics and Materials Needed

- A partnership with local media outlets to carry Consolidated Plan citizen participation content as public interest programming or local news items. This may require an innovative media strategy for presenting Consolidated Plan activities (e.g., public personalities) to solidify partnership ventures with media outlets.
- The willingness of public officials to participate and appear in pre-recorded or live radio and television spots discussing the importance of the Consolidated Plan and the opportunity for citizen input on Plan direction and the priority needs of the community.
- For live broadcast of hearings, a scripted yet flexible plan for managing a live hearing is necessary. This can include a visually engaging presentation of the Consolidated Plan, and/or a facilitation

strategy geared toward a media audience (e.g., a moderator with a set of questions or a prepped group of stakeholders who are willing to make comments to fill periods of silence). Optionally, a mechanism to allow remote participation in the hearings may be beneficial (e.g., call-in capacity or another form of remote participation to allow the broadcast audience to participate).

Examples of the use of radio and TV stations

- Travis County, TX has adopted a [Citizen Participation Plan](#) that specifies the use of radio and public television advertisements to provide notice of public hearings.
- The city of Hartford, CT [broadcast its public hearings](#) on their cable access channel. The event was pre-recorded by the local public access station and broadcast at a later date. Spanish language translators and a hearing impaired interpreter were available for the broadcast.

Internet-Based

Email Announcements

Objective

The objective of this activity is to enhance the effectiveness of communication through the use of email lists. The grantee's consultation process can benefit from using an email listserv to conveniently distribute information to partner organizations. Citizen participation can also benefit if consultation partners or managers of community-based listservs are willing to forward Consolidated Plan information to their listserv subscribers.

Summary

Many public agencies and stakeholders maintain a listserv that can be adapted to send out Consolidated Plan announcements or requests for citizen input and the times and locations of public hearings. Convenient and effective, email notifications are received immediately and can be widely distributed to most residents, even those with lower-incomes. Emails – paperless, environmentally friendly, and very low-cost for the partner – can also be also applicable for communicating updates to consultation partners.

Additionally, the grantee could publish information prominently on its website, as well as on other public notices and through media outlets, on how to sign up for the listserv and receive future email announcements. The announcement might list an email address, website link, or other method whereby interested parties can submit their comments.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Employing email communication as part of a strategy of innovative public notice can help grantees to both successfully publicize opportunities for public participation and generate interest in the Consolidated Plan process by reaching residents who may not otherwise receive notice of hearings and meetings.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audience for this activity is both stakeholder organizations and residents with access to email who are comfortable and capable of corresponding electronically. Citizens of particular interest to grantees may include both young people, who are frequent users of mobile email, and also elderly persons or persons with limited mobility, who may be more difficult to reach through other forms of public outreach.

Logistics and Materials Needed

- Email content may need to be tailored to the groups receiving the information, or to address the requirements of partnering organizations.
- Grantees and partner organizations must be careful to respect the anonymity of recipients by using the bcc: field to avoid disclosing recipients' email addresses.
- Grantees and partner organizations must be mindful of the technical limitations of embedding HTML images, formatting, or other complex content in email communications.

Examples of Using Email Announcements

- The [City of Boston](#), MA maintains a Consolidated Plan email list of interested citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties to provide notice of the issuance of Consolidated/Annual Action Plans, subsequent public comment periods, and any public hearings related to the development of these plans.
- The [Delaware State Housing Authority \(DSHA\)](#) utilizes its mass email list to notify citizens of public meetings for the Consolidated Plan. Additionally, DSHA uses this mailing list to send personal invitation emails for these meetings to public officials and other interested parties. Public comment period notification is also provided via email and interested parties can respond by emailing their comments.
- Iowa City, IA's [Citizen Participation Plan](#) includes a section on developing comprehensive electronic mailing lists of interested parties, adjacent local governments, religious organizations and public and private agencies that provide affordable housing and use these email lists to send summary information, public hearing, or comment period notices.

Website Publications

Objective

The objective of this activity is to promote the effective use of website publications to share information between jurisdictions, their coordinating agencies, and the public at large to enhance both the consultation and citizen participation processes.

Summary

This activity involves jurisdictions publishing important information about their Consolidated Planning process on their websites or those of partner agencies. Published information might include dates, times, and locations of public hearings, the Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan for the jurisdiction and related documentation, and instructions on how residents can submit comments on these publications. The website should also provide information on the agency's priorities and how they address community needs, market conditions within the jurisdiction, and proposed or potential projects, all of which can serve to generate comments and interest from residents.

The jurisdiction should organize the content on its website in a clear and concise manner so that citizens can easily obtain publications and other information along with simple instructions on how to provide comments. Moreover, the website should provide links where interested parties can access additional information on the agency's Consolidated Planning process, including links to the agency's Twitter and/or Facebook page, and an email address and phone number for residents to submit additional questions.

In some cases a stand-alone website (a website with its own domain name) may be created for the purpose of soliciting public comment, depending on the effectiveness and ease of use of the jurisdiction's current website. If a stand-alone website is created for this purpose, hyperlinks to the new site should be prominently displayed on the main websites of the jurisdiction and its partner agencies.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Employing website communications can help grantees to both make planning documents available to a wide public audience and generate interest in the Consolidated Plan process.

Target Audience/Usage

This activity's target audience is citizens and stakeholders with regular access to the city website.

Logistics and Materials Needed

- Grantees must either work with the jurisdiction's IT or web development team to develop the website or create a simple stand-alone website such as WordPress or Google Blogger.
- Website content must be developed far enough in advance to be vetted and approved by jurisdiction management.

Examples of the Website Publications

- The city of Austin, TX's main website has a [webpage](#) for Neighborhood Housing and Community Development. The "Recent News" section of this webpage contains a link to a press release

requesting public comment on the city's 2013-2014 Action Plan. The link accesses a PDF version of the Action Plan draft and instructions on how residents can submit comments.

- Fairfax County, VA's Redevelopment and Housing Authority [website](#) contains a link to a public notice soliciting comments on a draft of the agency's proposed funding priorities for the 2015-2016 Annual Action Plan. The public notice contains the necessary contact information for residents interested in providing comments. In a separate link directly below the public notice link, residents can download the draft of funding priorities.
- The New Orleans, LA Office of Community Development (OCD) [website](#) contains a series of hyperlinks from which residents can download the latest Consolidated Plan and other documents, including an RFP for providing housing to homeless persons and an accompanying application for prospective developers. Additionally, there are well-advertised links to access other reports, including the latest CAPER and additional performance reports, and a link for obtaining the latest news from OCD, which includes notice of any future public comment periods.

Social Media

Objective

The objective of this activity is to promote the effective use of social media to disseminate information and encourage dialog within the social media universe. Social media has greater potential to increase citizen participation, but can inform the consultation process as well.

Summary

Public agencies are increasingly using social media resources (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.) to disseminate information and facilitate dialogue with citizens. Social media offers many advantages, including low implementation costs and rapidly expanding public use. The demographic of social media users, particularly younger persons, may be underserved by traditional media sources as they move away from television and print news.

Social media also provides grantees with a flexible, real-time tool for two-way communication with the public. Social media strategies typically involve a two-step approach:

- Posting citizen participation related information on a new or existing public agency social media account.
- Partnering with other linked accounts (e.g., "friends", "re-tweets", etc.,) to popularize the published information and achieve the widest distribution possible.

The jurisdiction may elect to either set up a separate social media account for Consolidated Plan activities, use its own general account (e.g., Facebook page or Twitter account) or leverage the social media presence of public officials or other personalities to post Consolidated/Annual Action Plan updates, such as the dates of upcoming hearings and public comment periods, and information on how residents can provide their comments (web link, email address, etc.). The jurisdiction should then promote its social media presence through as many means as possible, asking residents to follow the agency on Facebook, Twitter, or other popular social media outlets to receive the latest news on the status of the Consolidated Planning process.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Social media is a quickly growing form of communication that grantees can employ as part of a strategy of innovative media outreach to both generate interest in the Consolidated Plan and involve all of their target populations and demographics in outreach and citizen participation opportunities by reaching residents who may not otherwise be aware of the Consolidated Plan process.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audience for this activity is media savvy residents who are familiar with social media and use it on a regular basis.

Logistics and Materials Needed

- Increasing the number of followers, friends, etc., of social media accounts can play a critical role in distributing information as widely as possible, and in recruiting new linked accounts.

- Social media is often conducted most successfully with brief, attention grabbing headlines or images. Creative and to the point social media postings will raise the "sharing" value of each post.
- The use of tagging, twitter hashtags, etc., is a valuable way to create dialog between linked accounts around a specific subject. For example, the Twitter hashtag #GothamHousingIssues could be used to promote a discussion around housing problems that could then be tracked beyond the grantee's own followers to every account using the hashtag #GothamHousingIssues.
- The Mayor of a large city's official Twitter account, which often has 10-20,000 or more followers, can serve as a supplemental outlet to announce citizen participation opportunities.
- Social media platforms offer a variety of analytic tools that allow for robust demographic and other data collection on who is receiving and providing input.
- Agencies can use social media to obtain resident input on the Consolidated Planning process either by allowing citizens to post comments directly to the agency's social media presence (e.g., Facebook page, Twitter account) or by providing an email address, and/or other contact method whereby residents can share more detailed feedback.

Examples of the Use of Social Media

- The city of Roswell, GA uses its official [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts to inform the public of Consolidated Plan meetings.
- Kansas City, MO set up a [Facebook page](#) to keep residents informed of its latest updates, including the scheduling of public hearings regarding the development of their new 5-year Consolidated Plan.
- Official Facebook pages are maintained by the city of Houston, TX's [Department of Housing and Community Development](#), the city of Philadelphia, PA's [Office of Housing and Community Development](#) and the [Community Development Department](#) for the city of Cambridge, MA where each agency posts its latest news on their respective Consolidated Planning processes, publishes drafts of their Consolidated Plans and Annual Action Plans, and provides information on how residents can submit public comments on these drafts.

Web-based Surveys

Objective

The objective of this activity is to increase the opportunities for residents to comment on the Consolidated Planning process and for grantees to collect feedback on specific questions, components, or other points of interest related to the development and implementation of the Consolidated Plan.

Summary

Web-based surveys are an effective means to complement paper-based or other traditional methods of data collection. Using web-based surveys allows grantees to reach a greater proportion of the population because they are easily distributed and may more successfully reach persons who rely exclusively on electronic media for news and information. Disseminating surveys electronically (e.g., social media, websites, email lists, etc.,) may also increase the response rate by eliminating the need to mail or deliver the survey response.

Application to Consolidated Plan

Surveys enable grantees to request feedback from residents and stakeholders to inform various parts of the Consolidated Planning process, including the needs assessment, market analysis, and programmatic components such as priority selection and geographic targeting. Surveys can be used at any point during the Consolidated Planning process as a way to inform the Plan, collect feedback on certain components, or analyze current or past activities.

When targeting larger audiences, web-based surveys should be conducted in concert with paper-based surveys to ensure that those without access to or familiarity with the internet have an equal opportunity to provide feedback.

Target Audience/Usage

Grantees can focus on any number of target audiences in the survey process. The survey could focus on:

- Geographic areas (e.g. leveraging neighborhood listservs)
- Certain populations (by leveraging stakeholder email lists—e.g. education and parks and recreation organizations for feedback on after school programs)
- Recipients of funding (consultation partners and residents or beneficiaries of CPD programs)
- Jurisdiction-wide (broader feedback)

Grantees should be aware that not all residents may have access to a computer or be comfortable completing a web-based survey, and should continue to offer paper-based surveys concurrently. Additionally, guidance on completing the survey could be provided at locations with publically accessible computers, such as a public library. Grantees might elect to host a "survey open-house" at which citizens can receive help filling out surveys.

Logistics and Materials Needed

Many web-based survey tools are available online for free or a small cost, including:

- [SurveyMonkey](#)
- [Google Forms](#)
- [Zoomerang](#)

- [SurveyGizmo](#)
- [PollDaddy](#)

The timeline for publishing and collecting feedback from a web-based survey is similar to that of a paper-based survey and should include ample time for participants to respond. The timeline depends on the target audience and breadth of the survey, but at minimum should allow 2-3 weeks response time. Possible benefits of offering web-based surveys include:

- Web-based surveys are low cost and many of the providers of these services offer pre-built question formats that reduce the amount of staff time necessary to implement the survey.
- Internet users increasingly rely on web-based sources of news and information exclusively, and therefore web-based surveys may represent an important means of reaching a new audience, particularly younger generations, who may be less likely to respond to traditional survey methods.
- Web-based survey services offer a variety of pre-built survey questions that help minimize bias and decrease the time required to design effective survey protocol.
- Web-based survey services offer a variety of analytic tools for agencies and businesses for robust demographic and other data collection on who is receiving and providing input.
- Web-based surveys may allow grantees to more easily sort and filter comments for incorporation into the planning process.

Examples of Web-based Surveys

- The City of [Fairfield, California](#) developed a paper- and electronic-based survey that it distributed via Facebook and email, and published on its website. The survey received responses from 139 residents.
- The City of [Santa Fe, New Mexico](#) published paper- and electronic-based surveys in both English and Spanish for community feedback.
- The city of Pharr, TX conducted a [Community Needs Survey](#) using SurveyMonkey in both Spanish and English to help determine the needs of Pharr residents as part of their Consolidated Planning process.

Online Forums

Objective

Online forums allow citizens to interact directly with policy makers with minimal time demands on all parties. The objective of this activity is to provide a new means of facilitating citizen participation that can reach a broad audience using the state or local jurisdiction's internet presence.

Summary

In states and local jurisdictions where public hearings are poorly attended, online forums have proven a successful alternative. Policy makers whose time constraints prevent their participation in traditional public meetings can take part in online discussions that provide for interaction with citizens, and the public is provided an opportunity to discuss real issues with policy makers.

State and local jurisdictions can publicize the availability of key public officials via their website, social media presence, email listservs, and traditional methods of reaching low- and moderate-income citizens. Advertising the availability of key policy makers for direct one-on-one question and answer sessions can generate enthusiasm among citizens and invigorate a citizen participation process that is suffering from low attendance. Online forums can have a single-issue focus relating to a controversial project or can be open-ended in focus.

For example, a city could highlight the opportunity for citizens to comment on a particular project and its impacts in the community, promising direct access to policy makers during a specific time window. The actual window can be relatively brief for a large number of online questions to be collected. Answers may then be provided by staff over a longer period of time, as necessary. The forum can also serve as a prelude to public hearings whereby questions raised online can be carried over to the hearings. The discussion of key issues identified online can serve to attract citizens to public hearings and other citizen participation forums.

In their simplest form, online forums usually take place in a public, text-based chat format. More sophisticated forms of online forums can also involve the use of audio and/or video to allow the display of slides or text.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Online forums enable grantees to collect information to support the needs assessment and market analysis as well as establishing priority needs for the Strategic Plan. As part of a strategy of innovative media outreach, online forums can help grantees to both generate interest in the Consolidated Plan process and involve all of their target populations and demographics during outreach and citizen participation.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audiences for this activity are policy-makers, stakeholder groups, and citizens who are capable of participating in an online forum.

Logistics and Materials Needed

- Grantees need to be aware of the technical barriers to online forum participation and take steps to minimize the requirements on the user's end. Examples include using HTML based tools versus Java, and avoiding the necessity for users to install specialized software to participate in the online forum.
- Grantees can take advantage of a variety of analytic tools that allow for robust demographic and other data collection on who is participating and providing input.
- Online forums represent a significant opportunity to solicit input from persons with disabilities who may be discouraged from attending traditional public meetings. Efforts should be made to encourage this population to participate and to provide for specialized accessibility needs.
- Adequate advance notice of the public official's availability on the site as well as in publications and media outlets.
- Policy makers who are willing to spend brief periods of time chatting directly with citizens about matters of concern that affect the Consolidated Plan.
- Follow up by staff and key public officials on all questions and comments from the online forum to assure that citizens receive a thorough response to their concerns.
- Use of online forum content to guide and inform public hearings. For example, public hearings can be a venue for follow up to forum questions.
- Posting of all live talk, follow up, and future forums on the jurisdiction's website.

Examples of Online Forums

- In 2012, the city of Fremont, CA introduced an online, facilitated forum titled [Fremont Open City Hall](#). The website asks residents for feedback and input on planned and ongoing initiatives in the city as well as more general feedback on current city operations.
- [St. Clair County, MI](#) established an online forum to support the development of its 2040 Master Plan. On the forum, residents can submit new ideas or recommendations, vote on existing ideas, and provide general comments and input on the Plan.

Data Visualization Techniques

Mapping Community Resources

Objective

The objective of this activity is to create maps that depict the location of all available resources and investments in the community.

Summary

Mapping the location of existing Consolidated Plan grant investments, public housing, and other community assets can assist grantees in understanding and communicating the geographic distribution of past investments. The maps can help determine geographic coverage and gaps when planning for future investment activities.

Application to Consolidated Plan

Understanding the geographic distribution of existing community investments and resources is a key component of the self-assessment process outlined in this guide. Maps that depict the location of existing resources can help grantees identify underserved areas, and can provide a framework for conducting citizen participation and consultation outreach.

Target Audience/Usage

The target use is primarily promoting a grantee's understanding of the geographic distribution of past investments and coverage gaps, and to provide resource maps to share this information with consultation partners, in community meetings and presentations, on community-facing websites and blogs, and within the Consolidated Plan document narrative.

Logistics and Materials Needed

Maps depicting HUD funded community assets are easily created using [CPD Maps](#), a Consolidated Plan mapping tool developed by HUD that includes data on:

- CDBG funded activities and property locations—housing, economic development, public improvement, and public services projects, etc.
- HOME funded activities—homebuyer and rental assistance, multifamily development, etc.
- Public Housing—including the name and total number of units, occupancy rate, etc.
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program activities
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit properties
- HUD Multifamily Properties
- Additionally, grantees may add geographic points within CPD maps that depict custom locations (e.g., project locations funded by local resources or other key sites).

Alternatively, many state and local governments have implemented web-based mapping resources that allow for mapping of locally funded programs such as public transportation, neighborhood revitalization zones, home buyer and development opportunity areas, etc.

Examples of Resource Mapping

- The city of Los Angeles, CA Commission on Community and Family Services produced a [series of maps](#) depicting community resources, along with Consolidated Plan goals, transportation resources, and community amenities (such as grocery stores, senior and youth centers, job centers, etc.) as part of its Consolidated Plan outreach.

- Washington County, OR produced an online [Opportunity Mapping tool](#) that allows the public to interactively map addresses against a variety of community resources including proximity to hospitals, care clinics, and grocery stores, as well as access to services such as child care, senior and youth centers, and job training.
- King County Consortium in King County, WA created a [series of maps](#) depicting the locations of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Properties and Housing Authority Properties as part of its Consolidated Plan.
- Saint Louis County, MO produced a [series of CDBG activity maps](#) as part of their Consolidated Plan depicting participating municipalities with CDBG funded projects in public facilities, parks and recreation, private property rehabilitation, and street improvements.

Mapping Stakeholder Locations

Objective

The objective of this activity is twofold: 1) to map the location and/or service jurisdiction of potential consultation partners, and 2) to collect data on the geographic distribution of citizens participating in the community's outreach process.

Summary

Mapping the location of community stakeholders can assist grantees in understanding the geographic relationships of stakeholder activities and locations. As part of the consultation process, maps can be used to help determine important partners for consultation in targeted locations, and can help grantees to coordinate planning activities with the ongoing activities and investments of their consultation partners.

As a part of the citizen participation process, maps can be used to better understand the geographic areas from which citizen comments are received. This information can be helpful in assessing the success of past citizen participation outreach, in identifying the priorities of different citizen participant demographics, and in identifying demographic or geographic gaps in citizen participation.

Application to Consolidated Plan

Understanding the geographic distribution of potential consultation partners is a key component of the Alignment and Coordination process outlined in this guide. Maps that depict the locations and/or service jurisdictions of important partner organizations can help grantees to identify target geographies that may benefit from coordinated efforts with partner organizations and agencies.

Mapping the geographic and demographic profile of citizen participation in the Consolidated Planning process is an important factor in assessing the outcome of citizen participation outreach and creating an equitable citizen participation process. This process can also include requesting residents' input on identifying key institutions or stakeholders with the goal of creating transparent and effective public-private partnerships.

Target Audience/Usage

Mapping of consultation partners and their activities is primarily for coordination with consultation partners, but can also be helpful to share consultation partnerships and coordination strategies in community meetings and presentations, on community-facing websites and blogs, and within the Consolidated Plan document narrative.

Mapping the geographic location of citizen participants engaged through community outreach is intended to improve the outcome of the citizen participation process by helping grantees to assess the outcome of outreach efforts.

Logistics and Materials Needed

Maps depicting stakeholder locations can be created in a number of ways, including:

- [CPD Maps](#), a Consolidated Plan mapping tool developed by HUD that includes geographic data on adjacent local and statewide grantee jurisdictions, non-entitlement units of general local government, and Continuum of Care jurisdiction boundaries.

- The Upload Point File widget in CPD Maps allows grantees to geocode geographic points (e.g., the address of consultation partner offices) and display them on a map.
- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides an online [Data-Warehouse map tool](#) that can map the location of HHS providers and services such as Health Educators and Health Care Delivery Sites.
- Many state and local governments have implemented web-based mapping resources, or geospatial clearing houses providing geographic data and services that allow for mapping of locally funded projects and programs such as: locally based human services provider agencies, public development authorities, neighborhood associations, community based development organizations, etc.

Maps depicting the geographic and demographic profile of citizen participants can be created in several ways:

- Grantees can ask for the resident zip code or full address of citizens providing comment on the Consolidated Plan.
- Grantees can have citizen participants identify their neighborhood or census tract on a map as part of the comment process.
- When grantees have an interest in a narrowly focused target demographic, custom geographic areas can be created using one or more census tracts with [CPD Maps](#). For example, this method could be used to delineate a target neighborhood or a demographic group such as; areas meeting specific employment status or income criteria defined by the grantee, areas with a large percentage of non-English speakers, etc. Grantees can then ask citizen participants to identify their home geography on a map as part of the comment process, and use this information to determine if they are adequately reaching the target population.

Creating Thematic Maps

Objective

The objective of this activity is to create maps that depict information about a topic or theme of interest in an easy to understand and visually appealing manner. Interesting and intuitive thematic maps are an effective visual aid for reinforcing key concepts from the Consolidated Plan narrative and for soliciting directed feedback.

Summary

Thematic maps display data about a topic or theme of interest occurring within the boundaries of selected geographic areas, such as census tracts or counties (for example, the distribution of income within a jurisdiction's boundaries). The data are typically grouped into a number of value categories and symbolized with distinct colors to represent each category.

Thematic maps are an effective visual aid for presenting community data in an intuitive way, particularly for persons who are not subject matter experts. Maps can quickly show the geographic concentration of housing and economic conditions, community resources, and infrastructure important to the Consolidated Plan process. Once created, maps are easily re-usable in a variety of formats.

Maps can be employed in slideshow and printed presentations, within Consolidated Planning publications, and on a website. Maps can also be used as a presentation aid in public meetings. Presenting maps in a public meeting allows residents to visualize existing data, proposed target areas and other community needs.

Note: It is important to select an appropriate geographic unit for mapping data of interest based on the geographic scope of the study area. For example, state grantees and others using CPD Maps who want to display comparative conditions over a broad area will find that displaying data at the “county” level rather than the “tract” level is more appropriate for depicting these conditions. Similarly, local grantees may find that displaying data at the census tract level is more helpful. Grantees can refer to the [CPD Maps Desk Guide](#) for instructions on how to select specific geographic units.

Application to Consolidated Plan

Including themed maps in citizen participation and consultation outreach is an effective way to generate directed feedback and reinforce key concepts from the Consolidated Plan narrative.

Themed maps can also facilitate a discussion of low-income population concentrations as required by the Consolidated Plan.

Target Audience/Usage

The target usage can include community meetings and presentations, community-facing websites and blogs, public and private stakeholder consultation processes and Consolidated Plan document narratives. For example, thematic maps can help focus discussions around specific issues, such as

homelessness, economic development, market analysis, etc. They can also be used to demonstrate strategic decisions and policy options when discussing the needs of different target groups and geographic areas with consultation partners.

Logistics and Materials Needed

Maps can be created in a number of ways, including:

- [CPD Maps](#), a Consolidated Plan mapping tool developed by HUD that includes data on housing and economic conditions, CDBG, HOME, and other HUD funded community assets.
- [Census Data Mapper](#), a web-based mapping application for viewing, saving, and printing 2010 Census demographic data.
- Free offline GIS data products such as [Google Earth](#), which can be used together with any KML source data [including U.S. Census Bureau data](#).
- Partnering with local government planning staff in the use of professional GIS software, such as the ESRI ArcGIS suite of mapping products.

Examples of Thematic Maps Used in the Consolidated Plan Process

Many localities have begun publishing thematic maps on their websites and within their draft Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plans as a resource for citizens. The maps provide a way to better inform community stakeholders about the market conditions and demographics of the jurisdiction and improve the quality of citizen feedback by providing a situational context to questions and concerns. Examples of jurisdictions successfully using thematic maps include:

- The Austin, TX Office of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development maintains a [Reports and Publications](#) website where it posts thematic maps and other Consolidated Plan materials as resources for citizens and stakeholders, including a map of Race/Ethnicity breakdown for Low-Mod Income Families by Census Tract.
- League City, TX has produced [thematic maps](#) as part of their Annual Action Plan to illustrate the current and proposed block groups targeted for CDBG eligible activities based on projected low- and moderate-income data from the U.S. Census Bureau.
- The city of Medford, OR has created a set of [thematic maps](#) as part of their Consolidated Planning process, including persons in poverty, median income, and housing density maps.
- Washington County, OR has created an online searchable set of [Opportunity Maps](#) that include themes such as Access to Medical Care, Public Transportation, and Low Income Housing as part of their latest Consolidated Plan.

Advanced Data Visualization Graphics

Objective

The objective of this activity is to produce graphical representations of data or concepts to help convey information to stakeholders and the general public.

Summary

Studies have shown that conveying information visually can improve communication of key concepts, enhance memory retention, and make complex information more easily understood than written text alone¹. Data visualization can take a variety of forms, including info-graphics, charts, graphs and maps, and each of these forms can be either static or interactive:

- Info-graphics often use familiar objects or icons to present data in a compelling way. Info-graphics often take the form of a visual "story" and are commonly presented in a flow-chart format to depict relationships between the various elements of the graphic.
- Charts and graphs are used to present large numerical or statistical datasets in a visual way. Charts and graphs are often interactive, allowing the user to manipulate a "slider" on a computer screen to add or remove data from the visual presentation and interpret results.
- Maps are often included together with other data visualization forms, either as a component of an info-graphic or in a series of visualizations depicting data in various ways. Maps can also be utilized as part of an interactive graphic and change dynamically as the user alters the content of accompanying charts or graphs, as described above.

The examples linked below show a range of data visualizations that have been applied to economic and community development data and initiatives and include a mixture of the techniques described above.

Application to Consolidated Plan

Including graphics and data visualizations can make complex information more easily understood than written text alone and is an effective way to generate directed feedback and reinforce key concepts from the Consolidated Plan narrative.

Target Audience/Usage

The target usage can include community meetings and presentations, community-facing websites and blogs, public and private stakeholder consultation processes, and Consolidated Plan document narratives.

Logistics and Materials Needed

Data visualization products can be created in a number of ways, as indicated by the following examples:

- The U.S. Census Bureau has created a [data visualization primer](#) that covers the use of census data to create info-graphics, flow-charts, and interactive plots and graphs.
- Free online resources such as [Piktochart](#), [infogr.am](#) and [easel.ly](#) can be used to create interactive info-graphics from numerical data, and include pre-set themes, layouts and graphic styles.
- The free statistical software, [R](#), is a powerful tool for creating data visualizations from raw data sources, such as U.S. Census Bureau data. The website Flowing Data (see below) includes tutorials on the use of R to create advanced data visualizations.

- [Flowing Data](#), a website that explores the use of data graphics by designers, statisticians, and computer scientists, has a [tutorial section](#) that covers the use of free and pay software to create a wide variety of interesting and interactive data visualization graphs, charts, and maps.

Examples of Data Visualization Used in Economic Development and Urban Planning Projects

- The state of Michigan's Department of Economic Development has launched a successful comprehensive media strategy that includes [infographics touting the department's successes](#).
- Lee County, FL has created an infographic to promote it's "Lee County Town Hall" [online forum](#), where it collects public opinions and ideas on proposed projects in southwest Florida, including the Consolidated Plan.
- The city of Portland, OR has created a [series of compelling infographics](#) that are used throughout the Portland Plan, a comprehensive [25-year plan](#) for economic, housing, and sustainability initiatives.
- The New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning created an online visualization tool for state and local planners, [Cost of Sprawl](#) (including [case studies](#)), that incorporates land use, infrastructure, and economic data to depict the impact of future development across the state in a compelling visual report format.
- The city of Chicago, IL has created an info-graphic promoting and describing the [Chicago Cultural Plan](#), a blueprint for creating new opportunities for arts and cultural growth with a focus on economic impact, community development, and cultural leadership.
- Harvard University and UC Berkeley collaborated on a [national study](#) showing the spatial relationship between geography and income mobility. The [data is publically available](#), and has been used by the New York Times to produce an [interactive visualization](#) of income mobility by age and percentile of household income.

¹ http://web.mit.edu/11.522/www/discussion_notes/11%20522_Discussion_notes_yizhu.pdf

Strategic Public Sector Coordination

Establish Common Data With Public and Private Partners

Objective

The objective of this activity is to create a common foundation of quantitative data regarding geographic service areas, market conditions, and the demographic environment for jurisdictions and their public and private consultation partners. In so doing, partners establish a mutual understanding of common issues that can be addressed with HUD-funded programs covered by the Consolidated Plan.

Summary

HUD makes a wide variety of public data available to state and local grantees, primarily derived from US Census Bureau data, to inform each jurisdiction's Consolidated Planning process. Other public agencies may have unique data about their clients (e.g., homeless point-in-time counts, tallies of a social service agency's client base, etc.). Large employers, real estate firms, and banks create private sector economic data or purchase such data from forecasting firms. Consultation partnerships with these organizations provide opportunities to share data and expand the available information that will be used to determine Consolidated Plan needs and priorities and are a key component of effective planning for HUD's low- and moderate-income programs.

While most Consolidated Plans include the surrounding state and local government entities in their consultation strategies, the more innovative plans cast a wider net in establishing partnerships. Given the budget constraints that limit the ability of most state and local jurisdictions to purchase private economic forecasting and real estate market data, governments can gain access to such useful information by seeking partnerships with local private and public institutions that use it routinely.

Grantees can collaborate with public and private partners during the consultation phase to identify common data

opportunities, especially those that utilize local data sources. Doing so can provide more detailed data than any one institution possesses individually, which will assist the grantee in determining market conditions, setting goals, and determining priorities. Additionally, data sharing and discussion forms the basis for mutual determination of market conditions and the changing demographic environment within a community. Creating this shared vision is essential to allow consultation partners to support Consolidated Plan goals, priorities, and projects.

Establishing common data with private partners will differ in important ways from engaging in this process with public institutions. When engaging with private partners, the process of establishing common data will often take place within a broader consultation framework where private stakeholders may have concerns about how Consolidated Plan objectives will affect their projects and business activities. Data sharing as part of the consultation process can bridge this gap with private partners by creating consensus around market conditions within a community, an important first step towards persuading private stakeholders to align their activities with applicable goals in the Consolidated Plan.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Sharing data with stakeholders enhances the consultation process by providing grantees with data and resources available to these private consultation partners and enables coordination and alignment in

the needs assessment and market analysis by creating a shared understanding of the market conditions among partners.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audience of this activity is key stakeholders and partner agencies, especially those collecting data as part of their activities or using data to inform their decisions.

Logistics/Materials Needed

The first step is creating a dialog with partners to understand how each party's data can fill in gaps to achieve a more informed Consolidated Plan. For example, organizations that advocate for non-English speaking constituencies may provide data to the jurisdiction about their clients' needs. The organization may benefit in-turn from access to local census data about their geographic service areas. Partnerships and data sharing are born of mutual benefit and common needs.

Tools that facilitate this strategy include the following:

- An inventory of existing public and private datasets that the grantee could use to improve Consolidated Plan decision-making. At a minimum, grantees must consult with Continuums of Care (CoCs) and Public Housing Authorities for data for the homeless and non-homeless special needs sections of the Needs Assessment and Market Analysis.
- An inventory of local institutions with access to data beyond what is available to the jurisdiction.
- Strategies for mutual benefit that will encourage local actors to participate in the planning process and share information on the local economy, local real estate, and other factors such as employment, wages, and benefits.

Examples of Establishing Common Data

- The city of Cleveland, OH has established a partnership called the [Cuyahoga County Land Bank](#). The city, county, state, and federal authorities have established a joint database of available land for development. The goal is to return vacant and abandoned properties to re-use in productive ways that benefit the entire community. Foreclosed properties held by private banks, as well as those held by quasi-public institutions such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are part of the information sharing. The Land Bank is an important partner in the Cleveland's Consolidated Plan.

State Strategies for Effective Consultation

Objective

The objective of this activity is to ensure that current and potential State partners have an opportunity to achieve effective consultation on the State’s planned use of funds under its Consolidated Plan, given the geographic challenges and economic diversity presented in many states.

Summary

State consultation requirements are summarized on the chart below:

	Consultation Partners	Citation
Consolidated Plan; Annual Action Plan	Public and private agencies that provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisted housing (including any state public housing agency) • health services • social and fair housing services (including agencies focusing on services to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, and homeless persons) 	24 CFR 91.110(a); 91.300(b); 91.320(b)
Homeless Strategy	Each Continuum of Care within the state; Public and private agencies that provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisted housing • health services • social services Publicly-funded institutions and systems that may discharge persons into homelessness, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health-care facilities • mental health facilities • foster care and other youth facilities • corrections programs and institutions • Business and civic leaders 	24 CFR 91.110(b); 91.110(e); 91.305(a); 91.320(k)(3)(v)
Lead Paint Hazards	State or local health and child welfare agencies	24 CFR 91.110(c)
CDBG Method of Distribution*	Local governments in non-entitlement areas of the state	24 CFR 91.110; 91.320(k)(1)(i); 91.325(b)

Application to Con Plan

As noted above, the Consolidated Plan regulations specify the consultation requirements for the Con Plan and the Annual Action Plan. The eCon Planning Suite helps grantees organize the

* Note: Unlike CDBG entitlement grantees, the States do not implement CDBG activities directly; they make grants to units of general local government (UGLGs), according to requirements described in a Method of Distribution. As a result, they do not list planned activities for CDBG in their Annual Action Plan. Instead, the States are required to consult with non-entitlement units of general local government (UGLGs)—their potential sub-grantees—regarding the methods they will use to distribute funds.

required consultation components of the plan and in addition can help State grantees identify their full range of stakeholder groups. For States, these include:

- Narrative field addressing the consultation process in the executive summary (screen ES-05)
- Provision of a consultation narrative and a template for developing a roster of consultation partners linked to IDIS (PR-10)
- Provision of narrative fields for grantees to record the role of consultation in the determination of housing needs (NA-10), homeless needs (NA-40), and non-housing community development needs (NA-50)
- Narrative fields to record the role of consultation in identification of target areas (SP-10) and priority needs (SP-25) in the strategic plan
- Quality checks to help grantees ensure that consultation elements are fully addressed in the Consolidated Plan

In addition, CPD Maps supports the engagement of consultation partners statewide through the creation of thematic maps that display housing and economic conditions throughout the State. By mapping conditions at the county level, states can communicate the diversity of needs and opportunities across a varied statewide geography. Specific themed maps can engage groups of stakeholders by identifying regional differences in such areas as:

- Housing conditions
- Change in employment in various occupational areas (tract-level only)
- Change in local housing costs (tract-level only)
- Housing affordability

Target Audience/Usage

States will engage many of the same target audiences as local jurisdictions; recent revisions to Part 91 expand the State's required consultation partners to include the Continuum of Care throughout the State, institutions discharging persons into homelessness, and business and civic leaders.

In addition, the non-entitlement UGLGs comprise a primary target audience. Strategies should engage this audience to ensure (a) that the State understands local needs and (b) the State's potential subrecipients understand its policy and program priorities.

Logistics and Materials Needed

Many of the strategies that apply to entitlements may be used by States to overcome geographic barriers, including web-based publications, social media strategies, online forums, etc. In particular, states should consider:

- Geographic outreach through regional consultations. Communities at some distance from the state capital will often "turn out in force" for a local consultation to provide input on the subject of the action plan in relationship to local issues. They especially appreciate a physical presence of local officials focused on their local needs.
- Theme-based consultation around local issues. Depending on the local economy, challenges and needs vary in different parts of the state. Various areas may be dependent on manufacturing, natural resource management, tourism, or agriculture. Each type of economy creates different challenges for low and moderate-income households, and each type presents a range of opportunities for growth.

- Inclusion of consultation partners across various business sectors. While consultation with local governments on the method of distribution is required, local consultations may also include a range of stakeholders, including representatives of business, lending, human services, philanthropy, etc., as appropriate. Statewide trade associations (e.g., lenders, cities, planners, social service agencies, etc.) are often effective representatives for stakeholders that reflect the diversity within these groups throughout the State.

Examples of Effective UGLG Consultation

- [Maine Public Forums on Housing and Community Development Needs](#): Maine Housing and the Maine Office of Community Development jointly conduct four regional public hearings in support of the development of its Annual Action Plan. The hearings are designed to gather information and ideas from interested parties about housing and community development needs throughout the State, identify impediments to fair housing in the State, and to review potential program changes. In addition to the public forums, the CDBG program has a separate and final public hearing where comments are received and then responded to before enacting the final plan.
- Indiana Regional “Listening Sessions”: The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) conducted eight regional “listening sessions” for local elected officials to discuss their housing and community development needs. OCRA also met with Regional Planning Commissions and the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority met with housing groups. These meetings were held prior to the development of the State’s draft method of distribution (MOD). Then the State held [two video conference/webinar public hearings](#) on the draft MOD which could be accessed at six regional locations.

Coordinating Jurisdiction Staff

Objective

The objective of this activity is to promote consultation and coordination with local government staff regularly interfacing with neighborhood, regional, or other segments of the population, with the goal of developing local relationships and facilitating a broader dialogue at the local level.

Summary

The existing relationship between local staff and specific neighborhoods or between state staff, regions, and cities is the starting point for the community outreach that initiates the Consolidated Planning process. Nearly every state and local jurisdiction has staff who regularly interface with regional populations. The quality of citizen participation and consultation outcomes depends on how well these relationships are incorporated into outreach methods to produce dynamic and compelling Consolidated Plans.

Additionally, grantees may want to survey local government programs and staff who regularly interact with grassroots organizations to reach out for broader participation in the Consolidated Planning process.

State grantees may want to liaison with the governor's office or consult broadly with other state departments that have local contacts connected to Consolidated Planning issues, including offices of economic development, human services, historic preservation, low-income tax credit programs, land use, transportation, etc.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Coordinating outreach and planning efforts with other agencies' staff enhances the consultation and citizen participation process by leveraging the efforts and resources of these organizations to benefit the Consolidated Plan.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audience for this activity is representatives of other government agencies, especially representatives from agencies working in the same target area or with mutual goals or priorities.

Logistics and Materials Needed

Every neighborhood, city, county, or region has institutions with which grantees can partner to achieve wider participation in the Consolidated Plan. Local planning staff is often best equipped to provide outreach to special populations or interest groups, such as homeless persons or non-English speakers, or for initiating discussions around areas of special interest like parks and recreation or historic preservation. Potential partners for coordination include citizen liaisons from organizations such as:

- Ombud's Office
- Office of Neighborhood Involvement
- Local Advisory Councils
- Housing Bureaus
- Homeless Services Providers
- Institutions such as neighborhood associations that regularly interface with the community

Tools that can help grantees coordinate with local organization staff include:

- Use of email lists to facilitate wider publicity about hearings, online tools, and other Consolidated Plan materials within a geographic area. Many local planning staff will maintain email distribution lists of citizen contacts, and will be willing to help distribute information to their constituents.
- Coordinate market and demographic analysis with place-based populations or special interest groups through local liaisons. The best place to start is [HUD's eCon Planning Suite](#) for an overview of the tools and resources available to assist grantees.
- Coordinate with local staff to conduct educational sessions with citizen groups to present information on market and demographic analysis and request feedback on Consolidated Plan goals and priorities.

Inventory and Engage other Planning Processes

Objective

The objective of this activity is to catalog concurrent planning processes ongoing in the community and region, and to coordinate and leverage these activities for the benefit of the Consolidated Plan.

Summary

As part of the consultation process with public agencies and other stakeholders, the grantee can identify other planning processes that they are currently conducting. Examples of other planning processes include, but are not limited to:

- Master Plan
- Transportation Plan
- Neighborhood Plan
- Station Area Plan
- Parks and Recreation Plan

The first step is to create an inventory of these plans by identifying the goals and objectives for each. Once the list of plans is established, the grantee can identify plans that could align with the Consolidated Plan and meet with the plan's developers to accomplish two goals:

1. Identify shared goals and opportunities to leverage the activities of each plan with the other. For instance, if a transportation plan is proposing a new public transit stop or development, the grantee could leverage this and target affordable housing development in the same area.
2. Coordinate public outreach and input between the two plans. To maximize public participation in the planning process, the grantee can coordinate public outreach and public comment opportunities with other planning processes. By aligning outreach efforts, residents may be more likely to comment on both planning processes as opposed to only commenting on the plan that conducts outreach first.

State grantees can identify and collaborate with metropolitan and regional planning organizations to understand the needs in those regions and to coordinate goals and activities with those already identified by regional planning agencies.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Identifying and coordinating with other on-going planning efforts that focus on topics similar to those outlined in the Consolidated Plan (24 CFR Part 91.100 and 24 CFR Part 91.110) enhances the consultation and citizen participation processes by leveraging the efforts and resources of these complimentary activities.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audience for this activity is primarily consultation partners (public and private agencies) who are developing or have developed plans that align with the Consolidated Plan. The process also targets residents, if the grantee coordinates public outreach with other planning processes' outreach efforts.

Logistics and Materials Needed

The grantee may be aware of existing planning processes, and may readily identify others by meeting with other local agencies. To supplement this list, the grantee should include a question in all consultation interviews or surveys asking the relevant organization what planning processes they have conducted in the past and are currently conducting, or if they are aware of other planning processes that could be aligned with the Consolidated Plan.

Once these plans have been identified, the grantee should conduct a more detailed consultation meeting with the relevant planning organization to identify specific opportunities for coordination and/or alignment.

Strategic Private Sector Coordination

Collaborate With Private Stakeholders

Objective

The objective of this activity is to provide guidance on consulting with private stakeholders in the community, as opposed to public stakeholder agencies, with the goal of fostering beneficial and transparent public-private partnerships that advance the goals of the Consolidated Plan.

Summary

Private stakeholders are another key constituency to advancing the goals of the Consolidated Plan. Private stakeholders can include a wide variety of organizations, including banks, developers, realtors, major employers, colleges and universities, media organizations, Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs), Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), and many other special interest organization types. The grantee's goal is to consult broadly with a wide array of private stakeholder organizations that can help in the implementation of individual projects, the crafting of strategies, and the overall vision of the Consolidated Plan.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Collaboration with private stakeholders offers grantees the opportunity to align private stakeholder activities and resources with the goals and priorities of the Consolidated Plan, and to meet the requirement of consulting with private stakeholders who focus on housing and community development issues.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audience of this activity is stakeholders and other private organizations operating in the community or jurisdiction.

Logistics and Materials Needed

Private stakeholders may have concerns about how Consolidated Plan objectives will affect their projects and business activities. Grantees may have an interest in aligning the projects of private organizations with the goals of the Consolidated Plan. Effective consultation will bridge this gap by creating a common vision of community issues and solutions, and by explaining what benefits private stakeholders will result from aligning their activities with applicable goals in the Consolidated Plan. Grantees will benefit from public-private partnerships by leveraging private resources, and by proactively guiding private interests away from acting at cross-purposes to Consolidated Plan goals and priorities. Partners can be found in every sector of the economy and every region of the community. Grantees may want to develop an outreach strategy to engage as many private stakeholders as possible in ongoing discussions about the Consolidated Plan, including:

- Creating a comprehensive list of major employers and institutions that are active in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods to be approached for consultation partnerships.

State grantees may have additional options for creating private consultation partnerships. These can include organizations such as state chapters of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), Associations of Planners and Realtors, and other professional groups who are represented by umbrella organizations. Such associations are valuable consultation partners for states.

- Creating a comprehensive list of advocacy organizations, social service agencies, homeless service providers, and organizations that work with non-English speaking populations for whom stakeholder input into the Consolidated Plan is essential.
- Conducting topically-focused consultation sessions with one or more private partners to identify geographic areas, program resources, and business opportunities that may align with Consolidated Plan goals. For example, hosting a consultation round-table on economic development with business leaders, chamber of commerce, developers, workforce development organizations, and large institutions.
- Using the data available from HUD's [eCon Planning Suite](#), including [CPD Maps](#), as a resource for discussing the jurisdiction's market conditions and community development needs with private consulting partners to identify and align activities and goals.

Examples of Successful Consultation with Private Partners

- The [City of St. Paul, MN](#) worked with the major local newspaper, the St. Paul Pioneer Press, to publish the Executive Summary of the Consolidated Plan. St. Paul also worked with a local foundation that supported parts of the city's local comprehensive plan.
- The [City of St. Louis, MO](#) engaged a private consulting firm of planners and community outreach and development professionals to take a fresh look at their Consolidated Plan. The firm used a variety of public forums, surveys, and meetings to incorporate a wide range of stakeholder groups in the process in meaningful ways. The resulting collaboration included 54 private consultation partners including non-profits, advocacy organizations, and other key stakeholder organizations.

Topic-Oriented Stakeholder Sessions

Objective

The objective of this activity is to generate detailed responses from stakeholders on specific topics or activities.

Summary

The grantee conducts stakeholder meetings focused on specific topics. These sessions could focus on an on-site tour of an existing activity, development, or project, or be a roundtable discussion facilitated by a subject matter expert on a specific topic.

By conducting a meeting at a project site, stakeholders may better understand the development conditions and thus provide more informed and detailed feedback on past projects as well as community needs and proposed goals. On-site meetings or facilitated discussions can also serve to increase interest in a project or topic beyond what may be achievable through the traditional public meeting format. Tours can include a presentation from the project manager to discuss the components of the project and the effect it has had on the surrounding community.

State grantees may be unable to coordinate an in-person meeting that is accessible to stakeholders from across the state. Alternatively, states could design a remote video tour that is presented via webinar or sent electronically to stakeholders or invite a project manager or subject matter expert to participate in a conference call with the stakeholder group to facilitate a discussion on the needs and potential approach to various community development projects.

Additionally, grantees can facilitate meetings with a group of stakeholders to discuss a specific topic of local interest and the associated needs and potential goals around that subject. For example, the grantee could conduct a meeting session on potential or active housing development and invite developers, lenders, realtors, CHDOs, CDFIs, and other housing stakeholders to discuss needs and challenges associated with for-sale housing development in the jurisdiction. Grantees could invite a subject matter expert to facilitate this discussion and use maps and data as presentation aids during the meeting.

Application to the Consolidated Plan

Topic oriented meetings or tours offer the grantee a means to generate interest in Consolidated Plan goals and priorities among consultation partners with interest in specific housing and community development activities.

Target Audience/Usage

The target audience for this activity is public and private stakeholders. When coordinating and planning a meeting, the grantee can either target stakeholders by geographic area (specific neighborhoods or regions, etc.) or by subject matter (housing, special needs populations, homelessness, etc.)

Logistics and Materials Needed

When preparing for a meeting or tour with a group of stakeholders, the grantee must:

- Coordinate schedules with stakeholders

- Prepare meeting topics and discussion questions
- Identify a tour guide or meeting facilitator
- Locate meeting space (if meeting is held on-site)
- The data and maps from the eCon Planning suite can help grantees identify projects and locations that may be useful for conducting on-site tours or topic oriented sessions that both align with these groups' concerns, based on the demographics and or/needs of the area.