

**LOCAL RECOVERY PLANNING PROGRAM
COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND
OUTREACH PLAN FOR HARDEST HIT MOST
IMPACTED AND DISTRESSED AREA (HHMID)
STAKEHOLDERS**

**FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT – CDBG-DR DISASTER
RECOVERY FUNDS – HURRICANES SALLY AND ZETA -
RECEIVED THROUGH THE STATE OF ALABAMA**

BALDWIN COUNTY COMMISSION



April 25, 2024

BALDWIN COUNTY COMMISSION
LOCAL RECOVERY PLANNING
PROGRAM COMPREHENSIVE
COMMUNICATIONS AND
OUTREACH PLAN

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT –
DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM – HURRICANES
SALLY AND ZETA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
Section 1. INTRODUCTION	2
Section 2. SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION	3
Section 3. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION COORDINATOR	3
Section 4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	4
Section 5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	4
Section 6. COMMUNICATIONS PLAN	6
Section 7. PROGRAM INFORMATION	8

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

The Baldwin County Commission has developed this Local Recovery Planning Program Comprehensive Communications and Outreach Plan to provide for local municipality and tribal participation in the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program. Development of this Plan is a requirement of Agreement NO. DR-21-001 between the Baldwin County Commission and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), in consideration of the County Commission's acceptance of Federal CDBG-DR funds supporting the long-term recovery from the impacts of Hurricanes Sally and Zeta in 2020. As described in this plan, the County shall encourage participation by local and regional institutions, Continuums of Care, and other organizations (including businesses, developers, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community based and faith-based organizations).

The primary goal of this policy document is to provide all participating municipalities, tribal governments, and other community partners with adequate opportunity to contribute in an advisory role in the planning and implementation of the Baldwin County Commission's CDBG-DR program for Hurricanes Sally and Zeta. Successful collaboration and engagement with stakeholders will result in community information supporting operational capacity, strategic planning, and the identification of programs and projects to address remaining localized unmet recovery and mitigation needs for areas of Low-to Moderate-Income persons (LMI), to be described within an adopted Local Recovery Plan (LRP). The adopted LRP must be deemed to have been developed through a comprehensive and inclusive planning process with key local populations, as may be facilitated through reliance on this communications and outreach plan.

Consistent with guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the development of the LRP will rely on practices to facilitate equitable engagement for maximizing community participation in the decision-making process. Special emphasis has been placed on environmental justice strategies to foster participation by persons of low-to moderate-income, residents of blighted neighborhoods, and residents of areas where expenditure of local recovery funds is found to be eligible.

Communities are encouraged to participate in all phases of the CDBG-DR program and will be provided full access to program information. It is recognized that certain populations experience additional barriers to accessing information and the Baldwin County Commission will provide accessible participation options to these populations. A four-factor analysis will be conducted to determine whether a population exceeding 1,000 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons occurs within the program area. To support open and inclusive stakeholder outreach, a Language Access Plan (LAP) will be formulated for Limited English Proficiency persons if warranted.

SECTION 2. SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION

The Baldwin County Commission will make reasonable efforts to provide for stakeholder participation during the local recovery plan development process and throughout the implementation of all eligible CDBG-DR programs and activities to be included in the LRP. All phases of the disaster recovery process will be conducted by local officials and their representatives in an open manner to ensure that the media, community groups, political leaders, and key stakeholders within the most impacted and distressed areas receive timely and easy to understand information about the local recovery program.

Local and regional agencies, community development organizations, and other project partners of the County are encouraged to participate at all levels and will be given access to program insight and feedback during each phase of any CDBG-DR program as outlined herein. It is expected that networking with local agencies, public meetings, open houses and other in-person outreach events, public service announcements, community surveys, and digital or virtual communication strategies will be utilized to promote stakeholder engagement and program outreach.

SECTION 3. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION COORDINATOR

The Baldwin County Commission's Grants Administrator (or designee) shall serve as the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator for all matters related to the public participation in development of the Local Recovery Plan for the Baldwin County Commission and will serve as the contact person for all matters concerning stakeholder communications and outreach activities. This person shall assume the lead role for overseeing stakeholder participation throughout the disaster recovery planning process and during the implementation of all programs and projects identified in the LRP. Resource documents from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development may be relied upon for guidance through the various stages of the program lifecycle.

The specific duties and responsibilities of the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: issuance of public notifications, dissemination of information concerning proposed projects and the status of current project activities; coordinating various groups which may be participating in the community development process; receiving written comments; serving as a vehicle by which ideas, comments, and proposals from local residents may be transmitted to local officials and/or program representatives; and, monitoring the stakeholder participation process to ensure open and inclusive participation throughout the LRP development and implementation. The Stakeholder Participation Coordinator shall also monitor effectiveness of communication and outreach activities supporting the local recovery program, and shall carry out changes or adjustments in communications approaches, messaging, and/or delivery methods, as deemed necessary.

The Stakeholder Participation Coordinator may be contacted at the Baldwin County Commission office at 251-937-0264 during regular business hours. All questions concerning public participation in the LRP development process should be addressed to the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator.

SECTION 4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In support of the LRP development, technical assistance shall be provided to individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups, especially those groups representative of persons of low- to moderate-income, persons with disabilities, non-English speaking persons, or those with Limited-English Proficiency, as may be required to adequately provide for open and inclusive stakeholder participation in the planning and implementation phases of the CDBG-DR program.

Such technical assistance is intended to increase community participation in the LRP development process and to ensure that such participation is meaningful. Technical assistance shall also be utilized to foster public understanding of CDBG-DR program requirements.

Technical assistance shall be provided on request and may include, but not necessarily be limited to, interpreting the CDBG-DR program and its rules, regulations, procedures and/or requirements; providing information and/or materials concerning the CDBG-DR program; and, assisting low-to moderate-income communities. Technical assistance may be obtained by contacting the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator.

SECTION 5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Participation in the Local Recovery Plan development process will be conducted on a community-wide basis and will actively involve the views and proposals of all key participating stakeholders and priority populations, especially low-to moderate-income communities and residents of areas where eligible CDBG-DR programs may be developed for implementation. Communication approaches will be tailored to meet the unique needs of each stakeholder group. HUD's *Reducing Barriers to Participation* document will be relied upon as a guide for engagement strategies for various populations.

In-person public meetings will be held during all phases of the local recovery planning process, as outlined herein, to allow stakeholders to voice opinions and offer insight concerning the development, adoption, and implementation of the CDBG-DR Local Recovery Plan. Public meeting facilitation guidance from HUD may be relied upon to guide dialog and discussion during engagements. Consistent messaging will be developed concerning the local recovery process, anticipated projects, and implementation timeline, for dissemination to participating communities. This messaging will focus on transparency and methods to engage the program stakeholders and to encourage their contributions to the overall Local Recovery Plan development. HUD's *Public Engagement Worksheet* may be utilized for guidance on effective engagement strategies.

5.1 Public Meeting Times and Locations

All public meetings will be held at times and locations which will be accessible to all stakeholders, especially persons of low-to moderate-incomes, residents of blighted neighborhoods, and identified CDBG-DR project-eligible areas. HUD's *Meeting Logistics* resource will be relied upon to support engagement strategies with various stakeholder groups. Each public stakeholder meeting will be scheduled for convenient times as determined by the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator, or their designee. Public meetings may be held at any site which, in the opinion of the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator, provides adequate access for stakeholder participation.

Stakeholder and public meetings will be conducted in areas of impact throughout the county as will be identified. All selected facilities will be accessible to persons with disabilities. Non-traditional locations such as community centers, churches, or public libraries will be utilized as first preference for stakeholder and public meetings so as to avoid government centers.

Stakeholders will be provided with information concerning the CDBG-DR program at public meetings. Such information shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the goals and objectives of the CDBG-DR program; the total amount of CDBG-DR funds available; the role of citizens in program planning and implementation phases; and the schedule of meetings and associated workshops. Local Recovery Plan information concerning the CDBG-DR project(s) which may be developed will also be provided. This information may include, but is not necessarily limited to, eligible project activities; the eligible locations of the recovery program activities; approximate cost estimates for the proposed activities; the estimate of local match required; potential environmental impacts; and the impact of projects on low-to moderate-income persons.

5.2 Additional Meetings

Other public meetings and information sessions with identified stakeholder groups may be held as deemed necessary by the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator to inform stakeholders of local recovery project(s) and activities, and to solicit stakeholder input and comments. All additional hearings shall comply with the requirements set forth in this plan.

5.3 Limited English Proficiency Stakeholders

The County has followed the guidance provided in ADECA's Language Access Plan to determine the need to undertake reasonable actions to facilitate the participation of persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Local officials will undertake all reasonable actions necessary to allow such persons to participate in the community development process, if warranted. Such actions may include the provision of an interpreter and/or the provision of materials in the appropriate language or format for persons with Limited English Proficiency. The HUD *Reducing Barriers to Participation* resource will be utilized as a guide for engagement solutions as well.

5.4 Public Meeting Notice

Notice of public meetings will be published in a local newspaper a minimum of fourteen (14) days prior to the date of public outreach efforts. Additionally, public notices posted in public places may be used to supplement notices published in the newspaper. Each notice of a meeting shall include the time, date, place, and topics and procedures to be discussed. Key stakeholders will receive notice via email or mailed communications. Notice of meetings will also be published on the Baldwin County website, in community newsletters and through the County's social media channels. Notices for public meetings may be run or posted, separately or together, as may be deemed necessary by the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator or their designee.

5.5 Accessibility to Low-to Moderate-Income Persons

The public meeting procedures outlined herein are designed to promote participation by low-to moderate-income communities, as well as residents of blighted neighborhoods and CDBG-DR project areas in any public meeting(s). Local officials may take additional steps to further promote participation by such groups, or to target program information to other designated communities if these stakeholders may otherwise be excluded, or should additional action be deemed necessary. Activities to promote additional participation may include posting of notices in blighted neighborhoods and in predominantly low-to moderate-income areas and holding public meetings in low-to moderate-income neighborhoods or areas of proposed CDBG-DR programs or activities.

5.6 Accessibility to Persons with Disabilities

The locations of all public stakeholder meetings as described herein shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities. The County shall provide a sign language interpreter whenever the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more deaf persons will be in attendance. The County shall provide a qualified reader whenever the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more visually impaired persons will be in attendance. Additionally, the County shall provide reasonable accommodations whenever the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more persons with mobility or developmental disabilities will be in attendance.

SECTION 6. COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Consistent with provisions within the communications plan, stakeholders will be provided full access to CDBG-DR program information during all phases of a CDBG-DR project. The Outreach and Communications Plan will consider the specific needs of each stakeholder audience and include these considerations in the overall communications strategy for the Local Recovery Program. Relying on effective outreach strategies, County officials shall make reasonable effort to assure that CDBG-DR program information is available to all stakeholders, especially those of low-to moderate-incomes and those residing in blighted or limited English proficiency neighborhoods and/or areas which may be identified for CDBG-DR programs or initiatives. To facilitate stakeholder access to CDBG-DR program information, the Stakeholder Participation Coordinator will keep all documents related to a CDBG-DR program on file, and available upon request.

6.1 Key Audiences and Stakeholders

Key stakeholders within the Hardest Hit Most Impacted and Distressed (HHMID) areas for Hurricanes Sally and Zeta have been identified for inclusion in program-related communication and outreach, to ensure development and implementation of a successful recovery program. As described by guidance within HUD resource documents, possible community partners have been identified and a comprehensive contact list has been established for the project. These stakeholder bases may include but are not limited to:

- The Nature Conservancy
- Mobile Bay NEP
- Baldwin County Emergency Management Agency
- Baldwin County Building Official / Floodplain Administrator
- Baldwin Soil and Water Conservation District
- Gulf Coast RC&D Council
- Baldwin County Highway Department
- Baldwin County Council on the Aging
- Area Chambers of Commerce
- 14 Municipalities
- South Alabama Regional Planning Commission
- Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance
- Community Housing non-profits
- Poarch Band of Creeks
- Faith-Based community organizations
- Baldwin County Commission Appointed Committees
- P.L.A.N. (Plan Lower Alabama Now)
- South Alabama Regional Planning Commission
- Media
- Churches and Civic Organizations
- Homeowners / Property Owners Association Boards
- Other Citizen Advisory Groups
- Others, as may be identified.

6.2 Communications Strategy

The Baldwin County Commission will conduct a diverse, multifaceted outreach approach to ensure that the public is aware of important program developments and milestones. Program documents will be made available to citizens, citizen groups, public agencies, and other interested parties upon request and will also be available on the public website. The materials will also be made available in various formats and in Spanish language, upon request. These outreach materials shall be accessible to persons with disabilities and persons of Limited English Proficiency. The Baldwin County Commission, its subrecipients, and procured professional services providers will collaborate on the best methods of outreach, engagement, and application intake. Appropriate accommodation will be provided for those who require assistance.

6.3 Communications Plan Implementation Schedule

The Baldwin County Commission held two noticed public meetings with community leaders on February 15, 2024, in the Foley and Bay Minette Commission locations. Additionally, an all-day listening session with community partners may occur in the Fairhope Commission Chambers on May 9, 2024, to inform the Local Recovery Plan through community input concerning the types of recovery programs the County should seek to implement. To further Baldwin County's practice of equitable engagement, the County will engage through accepted community planning processes with communities and vulnerable populations to inform its recovery and mitigation of unmet needs and identify projects that will equitably benefit those communities. As guidance for stakeholder engagement, HUD's *Discovering Unmet Needs* document will be used as a resource to identify potentially underserved populations and potential unmet need. Notifications for each public meeting will be published consistent with applicable statutes.

6.4 Adaptive Management

The HUD guidance checklist will be utilized to support identification of target populations as well as specific types of recovery projects that may be needed in defined communities. HUD's *Evaluation Criteria Checklist* will be relied upon by the Baldwin County Commission to evaluate the effectiveness of the communications and outreach strategies within the identified populations for the CDBG-DR project. Additionally, for assessing effectiveness of in-person outreach, HUD's *Participant Satisfaction Survey* will be applied. Results of the survey will guide the County's Stakeholder Participation Coordinator for the CDBG-DR recovery project in the recommendation and implementation of revisions to the communications practices for the project. HUD's CPEE Toolkit internal assessment resource will also be used to assist the Baldwin County Commission in assessing the overall effectiveness of outreach processes and to identify possible process improvements.

SECTION 7. PROGRAM INFORMATION

Information from the project files shall be made available for examination and duplication, on request, during regular business hours. CDBG-DR program information and materials concerning specific CDBG-DR projects will be available and distributed to the public at the regularly scheduled public meetings as outlined in this plan.

Materials to be made available shall include, but are not necessarily limited to: the Local Recovery Planning Program Comprehensive Communications and Outreach Plan; records of public meetings; mailings and promotional materials; grant agreements; the environmental review record; financial and procurement records; project design and construction specifications; labor standards materials; performance and evaluation reports; other reports required by the ADECA and/or the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); and copies of the applicable Federal and State rules, regulations, policies, requirements and procedures governing the CDBG-DR program.

In no case shall the County disclose any information concerning the financial status of any program participant(s) which may be required to document program eligibility or benefit. Furthermore, the County shall not disclose any information which may, in the opinion of the Chairman, be deemed of a confidential nature.