

Maine  
Cumberland **County**

*Community Development Department  
2022-2026 Citizen Participation Plan*



**Adopted as part of the 2022-2026 Five Year Consolidated Action Plan**

**Prepared by  
Cumberland County Office of Community Development  
142 Federal Street, Suite 109  
Portland, Maine 04101**

**Introduction**

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires Cumberland County, as a HUD Entitlement Jurisdiction, to adopt and follow a Citizen Participation Plan, as outlined in Section 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations part 91.105. The County's plan contains policies and procedures for involving the community and strongly encourages residents to participate in:

- The development of Five Year Consolidated Plan,
- Annual Action Plan
- Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER)
- Any substantial amendments to these documents as necessary

Included in the Citizen Participation Plan are policies and procedures for developing, reviewing, and amending these documents. Each year, the Cumberland County seeks community participation to identify community needs and determine how the County should distribute Entitlement funds at the local level throughout the County.

**Purpose**

The purpose and principal focus of the Citizen Participation Plan is to encourage Participation from all Cumberland County residents in the development of the Annual Action Plan, the Consolidated Plan and any substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan and the review of the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). The plan will assure that all residents are afforded adequate opportunities to articulate needs, express preferences about proposed activities, assist in the selection of priorities and have questions or complaints answered in a timely and responsive manner.

To do this, the County will ensure that it undertakes an effective public process encouraging input and participation from residents, non-profit organizations, community officials, Public Housing Authorities and interested parties. The Plan's focus is to provide formal and informal mechanisms to encourage and facilitate input particularly from low and moderate income persons and organizations that represent and provide services to low and moderate income persons.

In its initial program year, the County established two set-aside allocations for the City of South Portland and the Town of Bridgton. These communities will hold public meetings concerning the expenditure of program funds within their jurisdictions. These meetings will be coordinated by County and municipal program staff.



**Participation**

To encourage participation, involvement and input from a broad range of Cumberland County residents, particularly low/moderate income residents, the County has adopted the following elements of its Citizen Participation Plan.

1) Municipal Oversight Committee

The Municipal Oversight Committee (MOC) serves as the representative legislature of the program’s member communities. The MOC is responsible for establishing program policy and oversight in the allocation and expenditure of program funds. The Committee is responsible for approving the Consolidated Plan and Annual Allocation Plan and recommending adoption to the County Commissioners.

MOC members are appointed by the legislative body of each municipality (Town Council, Board of Selectmen, and City Council) for a one-year term. Members will consult and seek the advice of low/moderate income residents and organizations serving low/moderate income residents concerning their participation on and decisions of the MOC.

All MOC meetings are open to the public with an opportunity provided at each meeting for the public to address the group.

2) Information Dissemination

To the maximum extent feasible the County and its Community Development Office will provide information on a regular basis to the residents of the County and its municipalities concerning program activities and the development of the Consolidated Plan. This will include press releases, a web-site based newsletter, presentations at municipal meetings and presentations at agencies, organizations, and Public Housing Authorities serving low/moderate income persons.

3) Regional Community Meetings

Each year the County will hold a series of at least three meetings throughout the jurisdiction to inform the public of the Community Development program and anticipated funding, including program income. When possible, these meetings will be held at Municipal Buildings dispersed throughout the County for convenient access. All facilities used will be fully accessible. Input from the public will be solicited at the meetings regarding specific activities and the need for and location of future activities. The County will utilize these meetings to inform the public of the Consolidated Plan development process.

In addition to the County-wide meetings, public meetings for residents of South Portland and Bridgton concerning the use of CDBG set-aside program funds in these communities



will also be conducted. These meetings will be planned and conducted jointly by staff of the County and the communities.

4) Special Solicitation by Relevant Stakeholders

The County will request information from housing, economic development and social service organizations that provide services in Cumberland County for inclusion in the Consolidated Plan. Information regarding current needs, future trends and strategies for addressing these will be requested. An evaluation of the County's performance of recent activities will also be requested.

**Access to Information**

Prior to adopting of the Consolidated Plan, the County will make available to residents, public agencies, municipalities, Public Housing Authorities and other interested parties information regarding the purpose and process for developing the Consolidated Plan, anticipated funding including any program income to be received and the range of activities to be undertaken.

The County will use mechanisms described in the previous section to provide access to information including: Municipal Oversight Committee, Regional Meetings; Set-aside Community Meetings, special solicitations, brochures and web-site. The County will also take the following steps to provide access to information on the Consolidated Plan:

- 1) Publish a legal notice of the proposed Consolidated Plan in the newspaper, prior to the 30-day comment period.
- 2) When possible, the proposed Consolidated Plan will be available for review at the Cumberland County Court House, Room 109, 142 Federal Street, Portland, Maine.
- 3) The proposed Consolidated Plan will be available for review on the Cumberland County web-site – [www.cumberlandcounty.org](http://www.cumberlandcounty.org)
- 4) When possible, the proposed Consolidated Plan will be available for review at the municipal offices of participating member communities.
- 5) Upon request, within reasonable limitations the County will provide hard copies of the Consolidated Plan.
- 6) Conduct a 30-day public comment period to receive comments from residents, organizations, municipalities and interested parties. The 30-day comment period will be advertised in a legal notice in the newspaper prior to its commencement.
- 7) Translation services for non-English speaking persons will be made available as requested.
- 8) Residents, organizations, municipalities and interested parties will have access to records on a timely basis concerning the County's Consolidated Plan, proposed activities and past utilization of program funds. Translation services for non-English speaking persons will be made available as requested. Records are available at the Cumberland County Court House, Room #109, 142 Federal Street, Portland, Maine.



### **Public Hearings**

In addition to the three public regional meetings, special set-aside community meetings and meetings of the MOC, the County Commissioners will hold a minimum of two formal Public Hearings annually to obtain input on housing, public services, economic and community development needs, the proposed allocation of CDBG resources and program performance.

The Public Hearings will be held prior to the County Commissioners' adoption of the Consolidated Plan and vote on its annual budget plan. The County will notify the general public of the time and dates of the Public Hearings by placing a legal advertisement in the newspaper at least 15 days prior to the dates of the hearings. The County will notify public agencies, organizations and other interested parties through a special mailing or electronic mailing 7-10 days prior to the hearing.

When possible, one of the Public Hearings will be held at the Cumberland County Court House, 142 Federal Street, Portland, Maine. The second meeting will be held either at the same location or at a suitable handicap accessible public building within Cumberland County. The alternative location to the County Court House, if selected, will be chosen to enhance participation by the public in the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan process.

Interpreters will be made available at any hearings when a significant number of non-English speaking citizens are expected to attend. Interpreter services in other languages and sign interpreters for the hearing impaired will be provided upon advance request of at least ten (10) days prior to the scheduled hearing. The County and its set-aside communities will seek to accommodate other language interpretation needs to the best of its ability, upon advance request.

### **Virtual Hearings**

If virtual hearings are used, real-time responses and accommodation for persons with disabilities and/or with limited English proficiency will be made available to the greatest extent possible. Also, the virtual hearing method will only be used in lieu of in-persons hearings if the County or State of Maine deem in-person meetings temporarily unsafe or not feasible. The public notice will provide the details on how to access the virtual hearing, along with providing accommodations for the hearing impaired and non-English speaking Citizens.

In the event of a declared State of Emergency, such as the Covid-19 pandemic or a natural disaster, the Public Notice period for a Virtual Public Hearing(s) will follow the guidance published by HUD or the State of Maine, whichever is longer.



**Technical Assistance**

Cumberland County, through its Community Development Office will make reasonable efforts to provide assistance to organizations, agencies and Public Housing Authorities serving low/moderate income areas or persons for the purpose of developing proposals for funding under the programs of the Consolidated Plan. The Community Development Office will conduct ongoing outreach to municipalities to ensure understanding of the program, the application process and the eligibility of activities.

**Comments and Complaints**

The County will consider all comments, whether in writing or orally, during the development of the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan, substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan and related Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER). A summary of comments received during the preparation of the Plan, Substantial Amendments and CAPER and in the instance of comments not incorporated, the reason(s) why, will be attached to the Final Consolidated Plan, amendment to the Plan, or performance report.

The County will respond to all complaints regarding the Consolidated Plan, or activities implemented under the Plan in writing within 15 working days from time of receipt. The Community Development Director is charged with responding to all complaints and may consult with the County Manager. If warranted the Community Development Director and County Manager may refer the complaint to the County Commissioners for review and resolution.

**County Website and Social Networking Sites**

The County’s website provides up to date information on the Community Development Block Grant, and HOME Consortium Program. The CDBG application, process, dates and additional information is listed and updated regularly on the website. The current Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPER), and Annual Action Plans are available on the web site all year. The website can be accessed at: [www.cumberlandcounty.org](http://www.cumberlandcounty.org) .The County will also ensure that electronic materials are accessible via screen reader technology for the visually impaired and that translation of website content is available. Additionally the set a side communities of Bridgton and South Portland will also follow the same website and networking model listed above.

**Amendments to the Five Year Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan**

As defined in Section 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 91.510, Cumberland County will amend its approved plan whenever changes in needs, funding, or other revisions to the Consolidated Plan are deemed necessary. Most changes will be minor requiring only a modest transfer of funds from one project account to another to complete a planned,



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approved activity. Some changes may be substantial requiring significant alteration of the Consolidated Plans 5-year strategy and activities within the Annual Action Plan.

A.) Substantial Amendments Defined as:

1. The County proposes to use 25% or more of its fiscal year allocation, from any one HUD program, to undertake one or more new activities.
2. The County proposes to alter the location or beneficiaries of previously approved activities whose cost exceeds 25% of the fiscal year allocation for any one HUD program.
3. The County proposes to alter the 5-year Consolidated Plan strategy by adding a new priority, previously not considered, to undertake new activities with the fiscal year.

Substantial amendments require a written submission to and approval by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) prior to implementation. Prior to submission to HUD the following will be completed:

1. The MOC will review the proposed change and recommend action to the County Commissioners.
2. For the set-aside Communities of South Portland and Bridgton, the local CDAC committee will review the proposed change and require approval by the South Portland City Council or Bridgton Board of Selectmen prior to action by the County Commissioners.
3. A legal notice will be placed in the newspaper describing the proposed change a minimum of 15 working days prior to consideration by the County Commissioners.
4. The County Commissioners will hold a Public Hearing on the proposed change(s) prior to review and adoption.

B.) Minor Funding Revisions: Minor funding revisions are modest programmatic or budget changes to fund new activities or ensure adequate funding to complete an approved activity. Minor funding revisions will be addressed as follows:

- New activities proposed to be funded with reprogrammed funds or funds from another account will require approval of the County Commissioners, preceded by a Public Hearing. The MOC will review and recommend action to the County Commissioners.
- A fund transfer from one activity to another increasing the under-funded activity in excess of 25% of the original approved allocation will require approval of the County Commissioners preceded by a Public Hearing.



- Fund transfers from one approved activity to another or from reprogrammed funds under 25% in an over-funded or under-funded situation may be approved by administrative staff.

C. Minor Funding Revisions for Set-aside Communities: will follow a similar process as the County's minor revisions policy: Minor funding revisions will be addressed as follows:

- New activities proposed to be funded with reprogrammed funds or funds from another account will require approval of the South Portland City Council or Bridgton Board of Selectmen, preceded by a Public Hearing. The local CDAC will review and recommend action to the elected officials.
- A fund transfer from one activity to another increasing the under-funded activity in excess of 25% of the set-aside community's annual allocation will require approval of the South Portland City Council or Bridgton Board of Selectmen, preceded by a Public Hearing. The local CDAC will review and recommend action to the elected officials.
- Fund transfers from one approved activity to another or from reprogrammed funds under 25% of the set-aside community's annual allocation may be approved by County administrative staff.

### **Adoption of the Citizen Participation Plan**

The Citizen Participation Plan will be adopted as part of the County's Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan. The Citizen Participation Plan will receive the identical review, comment and adoption process as the entire Consolidated Plan ending with a 30-day public comment period and County Commissioner approval.

Amendments and changes to the Citizen Participation Plan will be addressed in the annual update of the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan.

### **Anti-Displacement Policy**

It is not anticipated that activities funded by the Cumberland County Community Development program will lead to the displacement of any persons, households or businesses. This policy is required by the U.S. Dept. of HUD in the unlikely event that such displacement occurs.

Assistance will be provided if persons should be displaced by any of the County's CDBG funded projects, including projects funded by the set-aside communities of South Portland and Bridgton. Households will receive appropriate notices and other advisory services to assure they are fully informed of their rights, make informed decisions and receive referrals to appropriate services that may be needed.



Replacement housing, including the offer of a comparable replacement dwelling and if necessary, financial assistance to make the unit affordable, will be provided if such a displacement should occur during the implementation of the Consolidated Plan. Every effort will be made to provide financial assistance in the form of a Replacement Housing Payment or tenant-based assistance such as a Section 8 certificate voucher. In addition, displaced persons will receive assistance in the form of moving and related expenses to cover costs of the move. Cumberland County, in compliance with the U.S. Dept. of HUD CDBG program will review each situation on a case-by-case basis.

The County will provide displaced persons, households and businesses with all the benefits and assistance prescribed pursuant to the Uniform Relocation Assistance as described in 49 CFR Part 24, or through Section 104(d) of the Housing & Community Development Act and Real Property Acquisition Policy Act of 1970.

**Methods of Soliciting Citizen Input**

One or More of the following will be used to solicit Citizen Input:

- **ELECTRONIC MAILINGS** Electronic mailings like e-mails and newsletters will be sent out to interested organizations and individuals. A mailing list will be maintained and updated on a regular basis.
- **WEBSITE** Notices, agendas, news releases, annual action plans, the consolidated plan, annual performance reports and application forms will be posted regularly on the County's website at:
- **NEWS RELEASES** News releases will be mailed out to all news media at all stages of the citizen participation process. Every effort will be done to ensure that the information is sent out in English and Spanish.
- **LEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS** Legal advertisements will be published in the legal section of the local newspaper when legally required.
- **BULLETIN BOARDS** Information may be posted on public bulletin boards at County offices, the Public Library, County Departments, community recreation facilities and any other available bulletin boards in public places within the County.



**Definitions**

**Annual Action Plan** The County is required to prepare an Annual Action Plan which describes how it will use CDBG and HOME funds during each new fiscal year to address the needs discussed in the Consolidated Plan. The Annual Action Plan must be consistent with the multi-year Consolidated Plan. The Annual Action Plan must be submitted to HUD 45 days prior to the beginning of the program year. For the County of Cumberland, the beginning of the program year is July 1st.

**CDBG Program** Community Development Block Grant Program is administered by HUD and is authorized under Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended. The purpose of CDBG Program is to enhance and maintain viable urban communities through the provision of decent housing, a suitable living environment, and the expansion of economic opportunities, principally for low and moderate income persons.

**CHDO** Community Housing Development Organizations are housing non-profit organizations that meet certain requirements set forth by HUD under the HOME program. The federal government requires the City of Portland & Cumberland County Consortium to set aside 15% of its HOME Program allocation for CHDO's.

**CAPER** Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report describes the accomplishments of the County's CDBG and HOME Consortium programs at the end of each fiscal year. The Plan is an assessment of the County's progress in accomplishing the goals of the Annual Action Plan and the Consolidated Plan. There is also a discussion of some of the additional funds that the County has accessed during the year to leverage the HUD funding.

**Consolidated Plan** The County is required to prepare a five year Consolidated Plan to receive Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds. The plan includes a description of the housing and community development needs of the County, the County's priorities given the limited financial resources available to the County, and a strategy toward addressing those needs.

**HOME** Home Investment Partnerships Program is administered by HUD as authorized by the 1990 National Affordable Housing Act, as amended by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992. The intent of the HOME Program is to expand the supply of decent, safe, sanitary and affordable housing.

**HUD** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the federal agency which administers the CDBG and HOME funds. The County must abide by HUD regulations for these programs as a condition for receiving these funds.

