



**CONSOLIDATED HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR THE STATE OF ALASKA**

Citizen Participation Plan

January 31, 2023

BACKGROUND: The State of Alaska participates in several federally-funded housing and community development programs that provide both annual entitlements and competitive funds which state agencies, local governments, regional housing authorities, and non-profit organizations use to carry out a broad range of activities. These programs include the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), McKinney/HEARTH Act Homeless Assistance Programs, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), public housing, and others. To maintain the eligibility of these organizations so that these program funds can be received, the State must prepare and maintain a Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan (HCD Plan), for approval by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Content of the HCD Plan is prescribed by federal regulations (24 CFR Part 91), and must include an assessment of the State's housing and community development needs, description of the federal and non-federal resources available to the State to address those needs, and priorities for assistance. The HCD Plan supersedes and replaces the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), the CDBG Final Statement, the ESG State Plan and the HOME Program Description. The Plan consists of three major components: a baseline 5-Year Strategic Plan, Annual Action Plans, and Annual Performance Reports. Each component is subject to review and comment by the public.

The State of Alaska's HCD Plan is a cooperative effort of the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA), and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. By designation of the governor, AHFC acts as lead agency in the effort, staffing an Interagency Steering Committee, facilitating the planning process, and providing a central point-of-contact for the public for matters connected with the HCD Plan.

Because the process involves collaboration of several state agencies, the resulting HCD Plan is not the plan of any one agency, but rather represents the collective priorities of the State of Alaska for the various housing and community development programs funded and/or managed by the participating agencies. The HCD Plan strives to embrace and reflect the adopted plans of each individual participating agency.

In addition to state and local governments, non-profit organizations, regional housing authorities and the private sector, development of the HCD Plan must involve private citizens, particularly those with low incomes or residing in areas in which community development activities are likely to take place. Federal regulations (24 CFR 91.115) require the State to develop and adopt a Citizen Participation Plan, encouraging the participation of the public in the HCD Plan process, and outlining the steps the State will take to solicit public input.

SCOPE OF THE HCD PLAN: The geographic scope of the HCD Plan encompasses the entire State of Alaska with the exception of the Municipality of Anchorage. The Municipality receives separate allocations of CDBG, HOME and ESG directly from the federal government, and must therefore prepare a separate plan for its jurisdiction. The Municipality follows a separate public participation process, governed by its own Citizen Participation Plan. Questions concerning the Anchorage plan or public participation process should be directed to the Municipality of Anchorage.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Citizen Participation Plan is to establish: 1) how the public can participate in the HCD Plan process; 2) how the public will be able to access information about the HCD Plan and the HCD Plan process; 3) how groups interested in participating in the specific federal programs covered by the HCD Plan can obtain assistance in developing proposals for funding; 4) criteria for amending the Plan, 5) how citizens can access HCD records, 6) the adoption and applicability of the Citizen Participation Plan, and 7) procedures for citizen complaints.

1) HOW THE PUBLIC CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE HCD PLAN PROCESS: Alaska's size and range of social, economic, and physical environments present several challenges to any planning process. Many communities served by the funding programs based on the HCD Plan are located in remote areas which cannot be reached by road; often the travel required to get to these communities includes a series of diminishing aircraft; jet *and* small aircraft and/or boat which is costly in both time and money. Severe weather conditions also play a major role; often flights into and out of these communities are significantly delayed or cancelled, causing unplanned additional expenses for travelers.

Still, it is imperative that reliable information be obtained from the field to establish the base from which public policies are drafted and defined. This is especially true when the programs involved so intimately impact the quality of life experienced by people throughout the state. While the best information about local trends, conditions and desires may be generated through direct contact with affected citizens, Alaskans have recognized that use of new and emerging communication technologies is highly effective in accessing a great number of citizens across the state and often produces a greater depth and breadth of results than traditional methods. To that end, the HCD Plan process offers a variety of avenues for public participation, emphasizing the internet and telecommunications, designed to accommodate a range of cultural, communications and learning

styles, and to afford the public ample opportunity to participate without regard to proximity.

- a. Public Hearing.* As required by federal regulations, at least one statewide public hearing will be held on housing and community development needs before the proposed plan is published for comment.

Notice will be published at least two weeks prior, and not more than three weeks prior, to the hearing date. Notice will contain sufficient information about the subject to permit informed comment. Notice may be published in at least one newspaper with general statewide circulation and may be published in local newspapers that circulate in affected areas of the State and on the AHFC website. Notice will be circulated electronically using address lists that include individuals, units of local government and organizations that function in the areas of housing and community development, may be affected by policies regarding housing and community development and/or have expressed an interest in these areas. Notice will be published on the AHFC website.

All public hearings will be available via audio teleconference, and will be held at times and locations convenient to potential program beneficiaries, with accommodation for persons with disabilities, when so requested of AHFC in advance. If a significant number of non-English speaking residents are reasonably expected to participate, translation will be obtained.

- b. Use of new and emerging technologies.* In recognition of the abilities of new and emerging communications technologies to inexpensively and effectively reach a broad and deep section of the citizens of Alaska, the state may use such methods as internet online surveys, email, teleconferencing, webinars, social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter or other similar methods to solicit participation by the citizenry of Alaska.
- c. Review of Baseline 5-Year Plan and Annual Action Plans, Submission of Public Comments.* In order to receive comments from citizens and units of general local government before adoption, a draft of the baseline 5-year HCD Plan and each Annual Action Plan will be published for public comment, with a formal public comment of not less than 30 calendar days following publication. The draft will, at a minimum, include information on:

The amount of assistance the state expects to receive;
The range of activities that may be undertaken;
The estimated amount that will benefit persons of low and moderate income,
and;

Plans to minimize displacement and to assist any persons displaced by housing and community development activities.

An announcement of the availability of the Plan and a Summary of the Plan may be placed in at least one newspaper of statewide circulation. An announcement will be circulated electronically using address lists that include individuals, units of local government and organizations that function in the areas of housing and community development, may be affected by policies regarding housing and community development and/or have expressed an interest in these areas. Notice will be published on the AHFC website.

The Summary of the Plan will describe the contents and purpose of the Plan and list locations where the entire HCD Plan may be examined. The announcement will specify the duration of the comment period, and where the public may obtain copies of the draft Plan in its entirety.

The Plan will be published on the AHFC website, thereby being made available for review by anyone having access to the internet. It is recognized that free internet access is obtainable at public schools, public libraries, the Legislative Information Offices (LIO) in Alaska, DCCED field offices (as well as other state offices) and many local government offices statewide. In many of the remote villages in bush Alaska, the school, library, city office or LIO serves as a community center and routinely provides internet access. For citizenry and groups that request it, a reasonable number of free hardcopies of the Plan will be made available by AHFC.

During the comment period, citizens may submit written comments to AHFC for consideration and inclusion in the final document.

- d. *Review of Annual Performance Reports.*** A draft of each Annual Performance Report will be published for public comment, with a minimum formal public comment period of 15 calendar days, as stipulated in federal regulations. An announcement of the availability of the report may be placed in at least one newspaper of statewide circulation and will be published on the AHFC website and circulated via email. The announcement will specify the duration of the comment period, and how and where the public may obtain copies of the draft.
- e. *Participation in Working Groups.*** The State, through its Interagency Steering Committee, *may* elect to form one or more small working groups, focusing on specific topics, as part of its HCD Plan process. Participation of citizens in these groups, if formed, will be encouraged.
- f. *Linkage with Other Planning Efforts.*** The Consolidated Housing and Community

Development Plan will utilize input from relevant local, regional, and statewide planning efforts of public, private and non-profit organizations on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Through the Interagency Steering Committee, on-going and new sources of input will be identified. Potential linkages between the HCD planning process and these other planning efforts will be also be determined by the Interagency Committee.

- g. *Interaction with Related Groups.*** A series of interactive presentations may be made to related groups at various locations throughout the state. Groups may be selected considering their purpose and area of involvement and may include such organizations as local and statewide Homelessness Coalitions, Community Councils, local Community Development groups, Regional Housing Authorities and other similar organizations. Locations will be selected to ensure geographic diversity, and will likely change from year to year. The number of presentations made will vary each year depending upon budget considerations, travel schedules, and availability of staff. The State may, at its option, elect to hold one or more workshops by electronic means, such as video conferencing, internet, or similar technologies. Regardless of the methods used to convene the workshops, the following topics may be addressed:

Orientation to the HCD Plan process;

Review of the programs covered by the HCD Plan, the range of activities eligible under those programs, and the amount of funding anticipated to be available;

Review of how the State has employed the resources available to it in addressing the state's housing and community development needs;

Opportunity for citizens to identify local housing and community development needs and issues, with particular emphasis on new or emerging needs;

Prioritizing among needs and issues;

Discussion of possible State responses to these priorities,

Identifying resources communities may mobilize to complement or coordinate with state and federal resources.

- h. *Printed Materials.*** A variety of printed materials will be posted on the internet at the AHFC website; these may include:
- i. *HCD Plan Process Description.* A concise description of the HCD Plan

- process that acquaints citizens with the agencies involved and provides direction for submitting comments;
- ii. *Program Descriptions*, outlining each of the major programs covered by the HCD Plan;
 - iii. An *HCD Plan Executive Summary*, containing a concise summary of the major findings and goals of the HCD Plan;
 - iv. A complete version of the current approved 5-Year HCD Plan;
 - v. Complete versions of the Annual Action Plans for the existing approved 5-Year Plan; and/or,
 - vi. Complete versions of the accepted Performance Evaluation Plans for each year of the current HCD Plan.

The State will consider comments or views of citizens or units of local government received through this process, either in writing or orally at public hearings, in preparing the final HCD Plan, Annual Action Plans, any amendment to the Plan, or performance report. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of those comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, will be attached to the final published HCD Plan, Annual Action Plan, amendment, or performance report.

Participation of lower-income, minority, disabled, and non-English speaking Alaskans is particularly encouraged. Notices for all public meetings and hearings will include directions for requesting accommodation of a disability for the purpose of participating in the meeting. Cultural diversity is a fact of life in Alaska, and a valued aspect of the state's rich heritage. If a significant number of non-English speaking citizens are expected to attend any public meeting held under this Plan, translation will be provided in the appropriate language(s).

2) HOW THE PUBLIC WILL RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE HCD PLAN: Alaskans receive information in a variety of ways, depending upon their individual situation and their geographic location. The HCD Plan process will provide information to the public through several media, to provide broadest possible access to the process.

- a. **Newspaper Coverage.** Advertising space may be purchased to publish announcements and required summaries in a newspaper of general statewide circulation. When appropriate, multiple newspapers may be used, including local non-daily publications, and papers serving minority communities. Display advertisements as well as legal advertisements may be used. The State may also issue press releases, and provide background information to encourage press coverage of HCD Plan events as news stories.
- b. **Other Media.** The State may prepare Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and press releases about interactive presentations and public hearings and provide them to broadcast television and radio stations and cable television systems for their use.

PSAs may also be used to recruit citizen participation in working groups (if used) and to announce the availability of the HCD Plan, Annual Action Plans or performance reports for public comment. The State may also use other media as appropriate, such as flyers, bulletin boards, cable television, Internet, libraries, etc.

- c. **Email.*** The State will maintain a master email list of persons and organizations interested in receiving information about the HCD Plan. Persons signing attendance lists at interactive presentations, public hearings or other venues connected with the Plan will be added to the email list. Persons on the email list will receive notice of availability of the Citizen Participation Plan, announcements of interactive presentations and public hearings, and notices pertaining to availability of the draft HCD Plan, Annual Action Plans, and performance reports.
- d. **Local Governments.*** Local governments, as listed in the Alaska Municipal Officials directory published by DCCED, will receive notification of availability of the draft plan, Annual Action Plans and performance reports which will make these materials available to the public at a central point in each community.
- e. **State Library System and Legislative Information Offices.*** The state library system and legislative information offices will receive notice of the availability of the Plan and copies of the draft HCD Plan, Annual Action Plans, and performance reports will be available to the public through the state library system and at each Legislative Information Office statewide.

3) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO GROUPS INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING PROPOSALS FOR PROGRAMS COVERED BY THE HCD PLAN: At a minimum, the State will provide interested groups with written information about the HOME Investment Partnerships, National Housing Trust Fund, Community Development Block Grant, Emergency Shelter Grant, and McKinney/HEARTH Homeless Assistance programs and how groups may make applications to receive funding through these programs. For each program; the HCD Plan will specify eligible applicants, the anticipated amount of funds to be made available, and the method of distribution the State intends to use (i.e. competitive grants, allocations to local governments, direct administration), and the appropriate state agency to which inquiries should be directed. The State will also refer potential applicants to workshops or other technical assistance opportunities provided through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, and its contracted technical assistance intermediaries.

4) CRITERIA FOR AMENDING THE PLAN: During a program year, it may be necessary to make minor adjustments to the amounts and types of assistance to be provided, to accommodate changes in the funding environment, or respond to new challenges or opportunities. Generally, such changes will not constitute "substantial changes" to the Plan (24 CFR 91.505(b)). Under federal regulations, a substantial change requires the State to provide the public with reasonable notice of the change and an opportunity to comment. For purposes of this Plan, a "substantial change" shall be defined as a change that:

- Proposes to add a new activity to the Plan, not previously included in the priorities for funding; or
- Eliminates a priority activity identified in the Plan; or
- Changes the use of CDBG funds from one eligible activity to another or changes the method of distribution of such funds.

In the event that a substantial change becomes necessary, the State may make announcement of the proposed- change (including a description of the activities involved in the former proposed uses, the program and amount of funds involved, location of activities, and the state agency responsible for administration of the program) in a newspaper of statewide circulation. Announcement of the proposed change will be published on the AHFC website and may be circulated via email. The announcement will also specify how and where the public may obtain copies of relevant documents, and how interested parties may submit comment to the state HCD Plan Coordinator. The public will have thirty (30) calendar days from the date of publication of the announcement in which to submit written comments. The State must consider public comments received prior to implementing any substantial change to the HCD Plan or Annual Action Plans.

5) ACCESS TO RECORDS: The State shall provide citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records pertaining to the HCD Plan, Annual Action Plans, performance reports and the State's use of assistance under the programs covered by the Plan during the preceding five years. Persons desiring access to such records must submit, in writing, a formal request to the HCD Plan Coordinator at AHFC, who will act as an interagency clearinghouse for such requests. The HCD Plan Coordinator, shall, within 15 working days, respond in writing to the request, advising the requestor how and where the records may be viewed, and the charge, if applicable, for copies of the requested records.

Under Alaska state law, certain categories of records may be confidential. Nothing in this Citizen Participation Plan shall be construed to supersede or replace these requirements.

6) ADOPTION AND APPLICABILITY: The Citizen Participation Plan becomes effective upon adoption by the State, through its Interagency Steering Committee. A notice announcing the availability of a draft Citizen Participation Plan will be published in a newspaper of general statewide circulation, soliciting public comments for a period of 15 calendar days. Copies of the plan will be made available to the public through the main office of the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, and may be obtained by contacting the HCD Plan Coordinator. Persons with disabilities requiring an alternative format in which to review the Citizen Participation Plan, or other documents related to the HCD Plan, are encouraged to contact the HCD Plan Coordinator to arrange for reasonable accommodation. Views and comments of citizens will be considered by the State for incorporation into the Citizen Participation Plan, either immediately, or in an amendment subsequent to the Plan's adoption by the State.

The State of Alaska reserves the right to make minor editorial changes to the Citizen Participation Plan, provided such changes do not alter the intent of the Plan, the time periods allotted for public review and comment on the HCD Plan or related documents, or substantially modify the methods by which the State will provide public notice and involve the public in the HCD Plan process. Amendments falling outside these parameters will be deemed "substantial changes" to the Citizen Participation Plan and will invoke the same public notice and comment process as described in the preceding paragraph.

7) CITIZEN COMPLAINTS: All complaints concerning the HCD Plan, Annual Action Plans, amendments, or performance reports are to be presented, in writing, to the following address:

Regan Mattingly
Planner 1
Planning and Program Development Department
Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
4300 Boniface Parkway
Anchorage, Alaska 99510
907-330-8235 or toll-free 800-478-AHFC
E-mail rmattingly@ahfc.us

The HCD Plan Coordinator will act as a clearinghouse for citizen complaints, and when practicable, will provide within 15 working days a written response to each complaint received. All responses will be coordinated with the appropriate state agency/agencies for the program(s) involved. Complaints will be handled by the appropriate agency/agencies, in accordance with procedures as established in state law, regulation or policy as applicable. Because of the interagency nature of the HCD Plan process, more than one letter of response may be necessary to fully address or resolve the complaint.

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