



ReBUILD NC

V1.0, November 1, 2019

CDBG-MIT Citizen Participation and Outreach Plan

State of North Carolina

For CDBG-MIT Funds

(Public Law 115-123, February 9, 2018 and Public Law 116-20, June 6, 2019)



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1.0 Mitigation Citizen Participation and Outreach Plan

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

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

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2.0 Mitigation Planning and Citizen Participation

2.1 Outreach Activities and Public Hearings

The objectives of NCORR’s outreach activities are to ensure that all citizens are aware of the CDBG Mitigation funding and planning process, have an opportunity to comment on or suggest proposed uses for the funds, and to maximize public awareness and access to MIT program funds when available.

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

Under the CDBG-MIT requirements, NCORR is required to hold one public hearing before the development of the draft CDBG-MIT Action Plan (MAP). Because 53 counties were impacted by Hurricanes Matthew and Florence, NCORR decided to hold three public hearings in different MID counties prior to publishing its draft MAP to maximize citizen input. The three Public Hearings were held in the following MID-counties: Robeson, Edgecombe, and Craven counties. While Craven County was not a declared MID for Hurricane Matthew CDBG-DR funding, NCORR anticipates that it will be a declared MID county based on Hurricane Florence impacts.

In order to inform citizens of the public hearings and opportunity for input, a digital media campaign started October 3, 2019 with the promotion of the public hearings and comment period through the ReBuild NC website, Facebook, and Twitter. Notification of these hearings was also made via distribution of a press release and publishing a notice in the following newspapers of general circulation (see Appendix A for the text of the published public notice): The News and Observer (Raleigh); The Fayetteville Observer; Rocky Mount Telegram; The Robesonian; and the New Bern Sun Journal. In addition, the press release was also directly issued to 663 community stakeholder organizations and partners. The text of the press release was as follows:

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

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

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

The hearings will:

- Explain what mitigation is and how CDBG-MIT funding may be used

- Allow members of the public to provide comments and ask questions
- Offer interactive breakout sessions focused on different mitigation topics

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

Public Hearing Dates, Times and Locations

Robeson County

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

Craven County

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

Edgecombe County

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

ReBuild NC is administered by the N.C. Office of Recovery and Resiliency.



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

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

Location of MID County Public Hearing	# of Citizen Attendees	# of Public Speakers	# of Written Comments*
Robeson	88	9	5

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

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

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

2.3 Local Government and Stakeholder Input

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

2.4 Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

As the CDBG-DR grantee, NCORR is required to ensure meaningful access to agency services, programs, and activities for persons who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Over 12% of the population in Pender County is Hispanic so materials have been translated into Spanish as well as English. All materials and program signage provided at the public hearings held October 14-16, 2019 were in English and Spanish. In addition, the Communication Access in Real-Time Translation (CART) system by Carolina Captioning was utilized during the hearing. CART provides for the immediate provision of captioning and translation of the presentation and comments into written text into both English and Spanish.

The draft MIT Action Plan has also been translated into Spanish and can be found on the ReBuild NC website at: <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/>

2.5 Accessibility at the October 2019 Public Hearings

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

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

3.1 Public Website

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

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

3.2 Citizen Advisory Committee

After the approval of the MAP, a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) will be established which will meet at least twice/year in an open forum. The purpose of this committee will be to provide on-going public input into mitigation activities, to continuously inform the mitigation program and assist with program refinement, and solicit and respond to public comment on mitigation activities.

3.3 Public Hearings to be Held after the draft CDBG-MIT Action Plan is Published

After the draft MAP is published for review and comment, two public hearings will be held during the 45-day comment period. These hearings will be held in MID counties to obtain citizen input into the proposed plan for the allocation of mitigation funds and corresponding activities. The same outreach and communication processes will be employed for these public hearings as were employed for the public hearings held in October 2019.

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4.0 Mitigation Program Outreach

4.1 Local Government and Public Participation for the Buyout Program

Because the Buyout and Acquisition Program is a large component of NCORR's mitigation strategy, NCORR will follow its Outreach and Public Consultation process as outlined in its Buyout Manual. NCORR will undertake a series of meetings with UGLGs to review potential Disaster Risk Reduction Areas (DRRA) that comprise Buyout Zone #1.

In order to have the greatest mitigation impact, the ReBuild Program will implement the Buyout and Acquisition Program strategically. Therefore, the Buyout/Acquisition Program will be carried out in identified DRRAs.

HUD requires that CDBG-DR grantees administering a Buyout Program consult with units of general local government. NCORR intends to extend this HUD requirement to its CDBG-MIT Program. For the Buyout/Acquisition Program, this may entail the following process that will be modified as needed:

- The Program will identify draft DRRAs collectively called Buyout Zones. The Buyout Zone areas will be mapped indicating clear boundaries for program participation. The maps for Buyout Zones will be submitted to the relevant local government body for review, discussion, and input. At least one meeting with governmental officials will be held to review the draft areas, discuss the Buyout/Acquisition Program, and obtain comments.
- With collaborative guidance from the local government, the Program will schedule a community meeting to review the proposed Buyout Zones with the public and to answer questions about the program. NCORR program representatives will schedule at least one community meeting at a location(s) within close proximity to each priority area. A site considered to be focal to the community will be selected for the meeting. Both the location and building where the meeting will be held must be accessible according to Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. If a citizen expresses interest, but is unable to attend the meeting, they will be provided an email/physical address to submit their comments/concerns/questions to the Program.
- Program eligibility criteria, requirements and benefits will be communicated at the community meetings. Outreach material will clearly state to potential beneficiaries that ***participation in the Buyout/Acquisition Program is voluntary.***
- After at least one public meeting and one meeting with government officials, the Program will formalize its recommended list of DRRAs/Buyout Zones. Once finalized, all initially considered communities/program beneficiaries will be notified of the final decision. The Program will specifically address any questions concerning why a community may not be considered to advance.

4.2 Mitigation Program Outreach

The Program will perform other outreach activities in addition to the public meeting(s) described in 4.1. above. To the extent that potentially eligible program participants may have moved from critical areas due to storm damage, every effort will be made to find and notify them of the program's availability.

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

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

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

In addition, HUD has required that 70 percent of the CDBG-DR Hurricane Matthew funds be spent on assisting households whose incomes are at or below 80 percent of AMI. For CDBG-MIT funds, HUD has required that 50 percent of the CDBG-MIT funds are spent assisting households whose incomes are at or below 80 percent of AMI. To ensure that the program serves these citizens, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that low-to-moderate income (LMI) citizens are aware of the Hurricane Matthew Phase I Buyout Program's availability by providing informational materials through government agencies, faith communities, schools, public and/or nonprofit organizations and other community groups, as well as commercial establishments that may be accessed by this population.

4.3 Program Access for LEP Participants

Once HUD approves the MIT Action Plan and the MIT programs become operational, ReBuild NC has staff able to provide information in Spanish through its 2-1-1 information phone service. In addition, from intake to closeout, Intake Specialists and Case Managers will identify

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

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

As necessary, Intake Specialists and Case Managers will utilize 2-1-1 to communicate with LEP applicants.

4.4 Special Needs and Accessibility

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

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

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

4.5 Fair Housing

The Fair Housing Act requires all grantees, partners, subrecipients, and/or developers whose capital projects are wholly or partially funded with federal assistance to certify that no person was excluded from participation in, denied the benefit of, or subjected to discrimination in any housing program or activity because of their age, race, color, creed, religion, familial status,

national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability or marital status. NCORR and its contractors shall ensure that no applicant is treated in any way that does not comply with the federal Fair Housing Act, the Civil Rights requirements of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act, and the North Carolina Fair Housing Act (Chapter 41A of the North Carolina General Statutes). NCORR has assigned staff who will ensure that: ReBuild Programs affirmatively further fair housing; fair housing complaints are directed to HUD or other appropriate agency; and that ReBuild Programs are administered in accordance with NCORR's Fair Housing Plan.

Appendix A: Public Notice

North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency
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Performing Arts Center

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New Bern, NC 28560

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