The primary goal of the New Jersey Citizen Participation Plan is to provide all New Jersey citizens with an opportunity to participate in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the State’s Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) recovery program(s). The Plan sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation, which are designed to maximize the opportunity for citizen involvement in the community development process. The State will provide all citizens with the opportunity to participate, with emphasis on low- and moderate-income individuals, and access by non-English speaking or those requiring special options due to disabilities, and in CDBG-DR targeted communities.

New Jersey has developed a specific Citizen Participation Plan to meet the requirements of the CDBG-DR funding for Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Ida and to comply with the requirements outlined in 24 CFR Part 91.115. The Plan reflects the alternative requirements as specified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the Federal Register (FR-5696-N-01 and 6326-N-01) and notice of specific waivers. The State will ensure that any local governments who receive funds will be required to follow this citizen participation plan.

The New Jersey Citizen Participation Plan for CDBG-DR Recovery will be placed on the official website of the Department of Community Affairs at https://www.nj.gov/dca/.

In order to facilitate citizen participation requirements and to maximize citizen interaction in the development of the New Jersey Disaster Recovery Action Plan for Hurricane Ida, substantial amendments to the Action Plans of Ida and Superstorm Sandy, and the quarterly performance reports for Ida and Superstorm Sandy, the State has laid out targeted actions to encourage participation and allow equal access to information about programs by all citizens, especially those of low and moderate income, those living in slum and blighted areas and in areas where CDBG-DR funds are proposed to be used, non-English speaking persons, minorities, and those with disabilities. The State also encourages the participation of statewide and regional institutions and other organizations (including businesses, developers, and community and faith-based organizations) that are involved with or affected by the programs or activities covered by the Action Plan.
I. Public Notices and Comment Period

While the citizen participation waivers provided by HUD permit a more streamlined public process, the State Citizen Participation Plan will ensure that there is reasonable and timely access for public notice, appraisal, examination, and comment on the activities proposed for the use of CDBG-DR grant funds. The State has and will continue to coordinate outreach meetings with state entities, local governments, non-profits, private sector and involved associations. The State will also invite public comment to the New Jersey Disaster Recovery Action Plan and Substantial Amendments for a minimum thirty (30) days, posted prominently and accessed on the Department of Community Affairs’ official website.

Per the Federal Register’s approach for CDBG-DR, at least one public hearing is required during the 30-day comment period. The process below will be followed for a public hearing regarding use of the CDBG-DR funds or a substantial amendment.

All public hearings will be held at a time and accessible location convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries, and with accommodations for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency (LEP). Both in-person and virtual hosted hearings will be promoted for at least 10 business days prior to the hearing.

New Jersey Ida Disaster Recovery Action Plan

The State will prominently post a notice and the proposed Disaster Recovery Action Plan (“Action Plan”) on the official website of the Department of Community Affairs. The Action Plan includes the following:

1. The amount of assistance expected to be received, based on projected amounts provided by HUD;

2. The range of activities that can be undertaken including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low and moderate income;

3. Plans to minimize displacement of persons and assist any persons displaced;

4. An anticipated time schedule for submission of the Action Plan to the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and

5. Incorporation of and response to public comments received during the public comment period.

The Action Plan (as proposed and then when approved) will be made available for public review at www.nj.gov/dca/. It will be made available in English and Spanish.

For those that otherwise cannot obtain a copy of the Action Plan, DCA will make copies available upon request at the Department of Community Affairs.
The State will consider any comments or views received in writing or via email on the proposed Disaster Recovery Action Plan. The State will identify a deadline for the submittal of written comments on the proposed Plan; the period for the submittal of comments will be no less than thirty (30) days. Written comments may be submitted to the Department of Community Affairs via email at DisasterRecoveryandMitigation@dca.nj.gov or to Post Office Box 800, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0800. A summary of all comments received, and responses will be included in the final Action Plan.

B. Substantial Amendments to the Action Plan

Substantial amendments to the CDBG-DR Action Plan for Ida and The State has defined Substantial Amendments to the Action Plan as those proposed changes that require the following decisions:

- Addition or deletion of any allowable activity described in the approved application
- The allocation or re-allocation of more than $10 million
- Change in the planned beneficiaries

Those amendments which meet the definition of a Substantial Amendment are subject to public notification and public comment procedures. Citizens and units of local government will be provided with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on proposed Substantial Amendments to the Action Plan. A notice and copy of the proposed Substantial Amendment will be posted on the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs’ official website. Copies will be provided upon request at DCA, if otherwise not accessible for review by any residents. Citizens will be provided with no less than thirty (30) days to review and comment on the proposed Substantial Amendment. Written comments may be submitted to the Department of Community Affairs via email at DisasterRecoveryandMitigation@dca.nj.gov or to Post Office Box 800, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0800. A summary of all comments received will be included in the Substantial Amendment that is submitted to HUD for approval and posted to the Department of Community Affairs’ official website.

Non-substantial Amendments are amendments that do not meet the threshold for a substantial amendment and do not require a public comment period. Non-substantial amendments to either the Ida or Sandy Action Plan will be posted on the Department of Community Affairs’ official website after notification is sent to HUD and the amendment becomes effective. Every Amendment to the Action Plan (substantial and non-substantial) will be numbered sequentially and posted on the website.

C. Performance Reports

The State must submit a Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) through HUD’s Disaster Recovery Grant Reporting (DRGR) system no later than thirty (30) days following the end of each calendar quarter for both Sandy and Ida. QPRs will be posted on the Department of Community Affairs’ official website for public review The State’s first QPR is due after the first full calendar quarter after the grant award. QPR’s will be posted on a quarterly basis until all funds have been expended and all expenditures have been reported.
Each QPR will include information about the uses of funds in activities identified in the Action Plan as entered in the DRGR reporting system. This includes, but is not limited to: project name, activity, location, and national objective; funds budgeted, obligated, drawn down, and expended; the funding source and total amount of any non-CDBG-DR funds to be expended on each activity; beginning and actual completion dates of completed activities; achieved performance outcomes such as number of housing units complete or number of low and moderate income persons benefiting; and the race and ethnicity of persons assisted under direct-benefit activities. The State must also record the amount of funding expended for each contractor identified in the Action Plan. Efforts made by the State to affirmatively further fair housing will also be included in the QPR.

During the term of the grant, the grantee will provide citizens, affected local governments, and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the approved program and to the grantee’s use of grant funds as well as contracts procured with CDBG-DR funding. This information shall be posted on the grantee’s official website [www.nj.gov/dca/](http://www.nj.gov/dca/), and provided on request.

II. Citizen Participation Plan and Accessibility for CDBG-DR

To ensure Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals and persons with disabilities have prior notice and access to the public hearings, DCA will take the following actions:

- Include a statement in public hearing notices indicating that participants may request language interpretation to assist in their participation, via email or phone.
- Include a statement in notices of public hearings that location of the meetings is accessible to persons with physical disabilities.
- Include a statement in public hearing notices that attendees can request reasonable accommodations from DCA to participate in the public meetings.
- DCA will make a reasonable effort to translate significant documents and include a "Google Translate" on the State’s website to accommodate LEP communities.

III. Technical Assistance

The State will provide technical assistance to facilitate citizen participation where requested, particularly to groups representative of persons of low and moderate income. The level and type of technical assistance shall be determined by the applicant/recipient based upon the specific need of the community's citizens.

IV. Citizen Complaint Procedures

The State will accept written citizen complaints from citizens related to the disaster recovery programs, the Action Plan, substantial amendments, or quarterly performance reports. Written complaints should be submitted via email to DisasterRecoveryandMitigation@dca.nj.gov or be mailed to:

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs,
Post Office Box 823,
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0823
Attention:
The State will make every effort to provide a timely written response to every citizen complaint within fifteen (15) working days of the receipt of the complaint, where practicable.

The State will require that its Subrecipients follow a Citizen Complaint procedure reflective of the goals of the Citizen Participation Plan. A copy and/or summary of the citizen complaints received by subrecipients will be forwarded to the Department of Community Affairs. The complainant must be made aware by the subrecipient that if she or he is not satisfied with the response, a written complaint may be filed with the Department of Community Affairs.
Complaints regarding accessibility can be reported to the State’s 504 Coordinator. Plan publication efforts must meet the effective communications requirements of 24 CFR 8.6 and other fair housing and civil rights requirements, such as the effective communication requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

State 504 Coordinator:
Daniel Santos
Daniel.santos@dca.nj.gov
609-292-3750

V. Citizen Participation Requirements for Local Governments Participating in CDBG-DR Programs

To ensure that local governments comply with citizen participation requirements in 24 CFR 570.486, the state must describe those requirements in its own citizen participation plan. To further advance public participation in the CDBG-DR programs, the State is also setting out requirements for Units of Local Government funded directly by the state.

All units of local government which receive CDBG-DR funds must have a written and adopted Citizen Participation Plan that includes the following:

(1) Provide for and encourage citizen participation, particularly by low and moderate income persons who reside in slum or blighted areas and areas in which CDBG-DR funds are proposed to be used;

(2) Ensure that residents will be given reasonable and timely access to local meetings, consistent with accessibility and reasonable accommodation requirements in accordance with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the regulations at 24 CFR part 8, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and the regulations at 28 CFR parts 35 and 36, as applicable, as well as information and records relating to the unit of local government's proposed and actual use of CDBG funds;

(3) Furnish citizens' information, including but not limited to:

   (i) The amount of CDBG-DR funds expected to be made available for the current fiscal year (including the grant and anticipated program income);
(ii) The range of activities that may be undertaken with the CDBG funds;

(iii) The estimated amount of the CDBG funds proposed to be used for activities that will meet the national objective of benefit to low- and moderate-income persons; and

(iv) The proposed CDBG activities likely to result in displacement and the unit of general local government’s Anti displacement and relocation plans required under § 570.488.

(4) Provide technical assistance to groups that are representative of persons of low- and moderate-income that request assistance in developing proposals (including proposed strategies and actions to affirmatively further fair housing) in accordance with the procedures developed by the State. Such assistance need not include providing funds to such groups;

(5) Provide for a minimum of two public hearings, each at a different stage of the program, for the purpose of obtaining residents' views and responding to proposals and questions. Together the hearings must cover community development and housing needs (including affirmatively furthering fair housing), development of proposed activities, and a review of program performance. The public hearings to cover community development and housing needs must be held before submission of an application to the State. There must be reasonable notice of the hearings and they must be held at times and accessible locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries, with accommodation for persons with disabilities. Public hearings shall be conducted in a manner to meet the needs of non-English speaking residents where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can reasonably be expected to participate;

(6) Provide citizens with reasonable advance notice of, and opportunity to comment on, proposed activities in an application to the state and, for grants already made, activities which are proposed to be added, deleted or substantially changed from the unit of general local government’s application to the state. Substantially changed means changes made in terms of purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries as defined by criteria established by the state.

(7) Provide citizens with the address, phone number, and times for submitting complaints and grievances, and provide timely written answers to written complaints and grievances, within 15 working days where practicable.

The provision and implementation of a Citizen Participation Plan may not be construed to restrict the responsibility or authority of the grantee for the development and execution of its community development program.