

MA CDBG Municipal Community Engagement Assessment Response Summary

Contents:

1. Data
2. Assessment Responses
3. Key Focus Areas and Recommendations
 - a. Housing Production Plans
 - b. Communication and Outreach
 - c. Community Engagement
 - d. Engagement Strategies
 - e. Information Dissemination
 - f. Inspiration and Collaboration
 - g. CDBG Citizen Advisory Committee
 - h. Resource Library (see attached)
4. Appendix
 - a. Copy of CE assessment questions

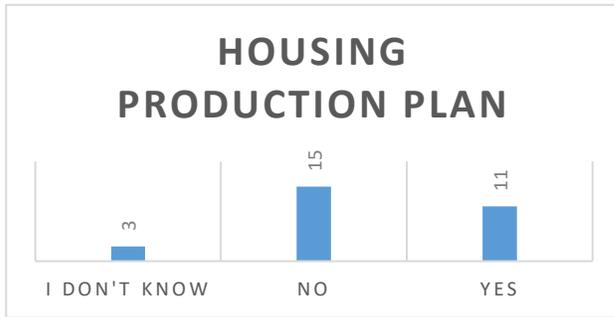
Data:

- Survey:
 - Total FFY22-23 CDBG-Funded Municipalities: 71
 - Total Responses: 29
- FFY22/23 Competitive Application Review
 - 17 out of 39 grantees have Community Planning deficiencies.
 - 22 out of the 39 grantees did not have Community Planning deficiencies.
 - Of the 22 grantees with high scores for CDP, 16 have CDBG Community Advisory Committees, and 3 are in the process of developing CDBG Community Advisory Committee
 - Common deficiency
 - Limited or no community engagement and wide citizen participation, particularly of low-and moderate-income persons/groups in the planning, implementation, and completion of CDBG-funded programs.
 - Common strength
 - Cities and towns with CDBG Citizen Advisory Committees had medium to high community engagement and wide citizen participation, providing residents with the opportunity to actively participate in the planning, implementation, and assessment of CDBG-funded programs and projects.

Housing Production Plans

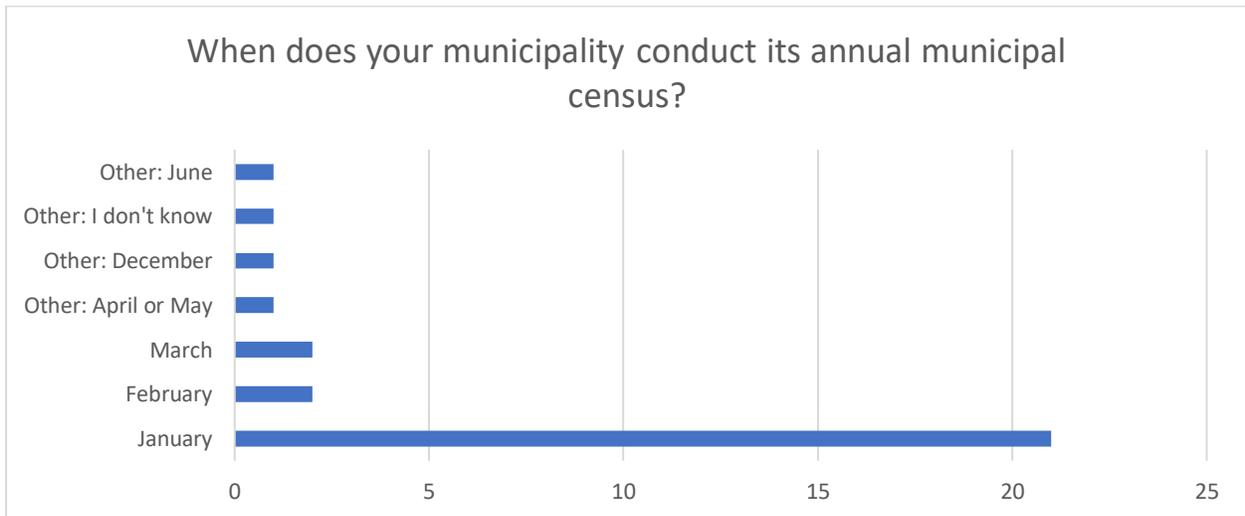
- Housing Production Plan:
 - Yes: 11
 - No: 13
 - I don't know: 6
- CERTIFIED Housing Production Plan:

- Yes: 3
- No: 5
- I don't know: 5



Communication and Outreach

- Annual Municipal Census Timing:
 - January: 20
 - February: 2
 - March: 2
 - April or May: 1
 - June: 1
 - Other (Specify):
 - December: 1
 - I don't know: 2



- Annual Municipal Census Method:
 - Mailed letter and form: 28
 - Postcard mailer: 2
 - Other (Specify):
 - Mail & Online: 1

- Annual Municipal Census Contact Information:
 - Municipal Website, Staff contact name and title, Phone number, Staff or department email: 22
 - Phone number: 10
 - Other (Specify):
 - QR code for Town website and QR Code for voter registration: 1
 - Also includes dog license form: 1
 - All of the above: 1

- Mass in Motion Community Status:
 - Yes: 8
 - No: 11
 - I don't know: 11

- Consultation Frequency with Mass in Motion Coordinator(s):
 - Daily to weekly: 1
 - 3-4 times a year: 1
 - 1-2 times a month: 2
 - Other (Specify):
 - Various staff work with Mass in Motion and may be once a month or more depending on projects: 1
 - Never: 3

- Awareness of Digital Equity Initiatives and/or Stakeholders:
 - Yes: 9
 - No: 21

- Format of Public Meetings:
 - Hybrid with in-person and online options: 21
 - In person only: 5
 - Remote/Online only: 2
 - Other (Specify):
 - Also Televised: 1
 - Some are in-person only, others are hybrid options: 1

- Access to Interpretation and Translation Services:
 - Yes: 16
 - No: 6
 - I don't know: 8

- Translation of Communications:
 - Yes: 10
 - No: 12
 - I don't know: 8

- Communication or Media Point Person/Staff Member:
 - Yes: 13
 - No: 10
 - I don't know: 7

- Media Directory/List:
 - Yes: 11
 - No: 9
 - I don't know: 10

- Last Updated Media Directory/List:
 - In the past month: 2
 - Past 3 months: 2
 - Past 6 months: 2
 - One year or more: 2
 - I don't know: 2

Community Engagement

- Ways in which municipalities engage with beneficiaries and stakeholders utilizing the Massachusetts Community Engagement Continuum:
 - Inform and Consult: 53
 - Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower, Community-Driven/-Led, All of the above: 28
 - All of the above: 27
 - Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Community-Driven/-Led: 26

- Citizen Advisory Committee roles vary by municipality:
 - All of the above: 11
 - A group of volunteer citizens who provide advice and comments on a project or issue. A way for citizens to share their opinions and perspectives, study issues, and develop recommendations: 9
 - Other:
 - Special Interest Boards and Committees exist for multiple departments and report concerns and comments directly to the municipality. Public hearings are held and opinions are voiced: 1
 - The committee makes funding recommendations to the Town after reviewing proposals: 1
 - I'm confused by this question. In our community, the Citizen Advisory Committee is an existing local government board that has been appointed to provide advice and comments on our CDBG program. I'm sure the exact role varies from community to community: 1

- Presence of Citizen Advisory Committee or Commission in Municipality:
 - No: 16

- Yes: 10
- I don't know: 4
- Various challenges faced by municipalities in their community engagement efforts include:
 - Getting people to attend public meetings
 - Reaching people who do not speak English
 - Encouraging participation in surveys or focus groups
 - Informing people without internet access
 - Engaging people with limited staff capacity
 - Time constraints and responsibilities
 - Residents may not think the program applies to them
 - Local politics can be contentious
 - Difficulty connecting with the most at-risk groups
 - Residents pushing unrelated issues:
 - Other challenges related to local context: Mentioned challenges related to part-year residents

Engagement Strategies

- Approach to Setting Strategy and Success Metrics:
 - Yes, always set a clear strategy and define success metrics: 10
 - Sometimes, depending on the project, we set a strategy and define success metrics: 13
 - No, we don't have time to get to it and/or don't know where to start: 11
- Responses to the diverse processes municipalities employ when setting strategies and defining success metrics for their community engagement projects.
 1. Determine target audience, list means of obtaining engagement, success is measured by the number of participants
 2. We have a strategy but not always metrics
 3. Create a community engagement plan for each project with steps to follow. Define specific success metrics for each project
 4. Assisting the town and community with activities using focus groups, interviews, and surveys. Outreach strategies aim for diversity and lived experience
 5. Selection of projects with defined scopes and timelines. Metrics may vary based on the project, e.g., ongoing evaluations for Housing Rehab
 6. Meetings held with clearly set performance benchmarks/attendance goals. Committee reviews comments as part of the evaluation
 7. Oversight committee or staff defines the number of groups and individuals to connect with
 8. Post-meeting and advance community notification. Discuss projects, seek input, and maintain ongoing consultation with the public
- Status of Organized Engagement Plans:
 - Yes, we have a comprehensive and well-structured engagement plan: 5
 - Partially, there's an engagement plan but it could probably use some improvements: 10
 - Not yet, but we are currently in the process of creating one: 3

- What is an engagement plan?: 7
- Investment in Training or Development Opportunities:
 - No, we do not currently provide specific trainings: 16
 - Yes, we provide comprehensive training and resources for all involved in community engagement: 4
 - We occasionally sign up for webinars and/or newsletters: 7
 - We refer to a stakeholder or community partner that provides training and community engagement and connection opportunities: 7
- Online Feedback and Suggestions:
 - Yes, they can through email: 28
 - Yes, they can via a form on our website: 23
 - Yes, we have a community engagement platform: 4
 - Other:
 - We also monitor comments made on our public hearing and notices on social media platforms and take them into consideration
 - Telephone
 - They can through social media (Facebook)
 - Depending on the project, we may have surveys on social media or our website
 - Open door policy to all residents of the town
 - Through attendance & participation in various public meetings
- Response to Feedback and Suggestions:
 - Email: 23
 - Phone: 19
 - Public meeting: 21
 - Social media: 9
 - Other: When feedback is delivered in person - response is also done in person

Information Dissemination

Information Dissemination methods are employed in diverse ways in which municipalities share information with their residents, utilizing a combination of traditional and digital channels.

1. Watching meetings online and newspaper
2. Email, web page, postings around town
3. Cable access, mailings, website, in-person
4. Town website, local cable TV, announcements at public meetings (live streamed on social media) and social media posts
5. Mailers, online postings, public meetings, email distribution lists, flyers posted
6. Town meetings, online postings, social media, flyers posted, mailers
7. Website, regular emails from the Town, public meetings- including forums
8. Local Newspaper, Local TV Access, Website, Facebook Postings, Flyer Postings around town, Town bulletin boards
9. Mailing, website, reverse 911
10. Website, social media, and mailings
11. Online, Mail

12. Social Media (Town Facebook, Town Website), community bulletin boards, local cable access channel
13. Participation in public meetings, viewing of public meetings on PEG access TV, local media, town website and Facebook sites, partner Facebook and websites
14. Town website/Facebook page and several local website pages. One-call communication for town-wide alerts, Cable network broadcast of public meetings
15. Town website, email distribution lists, local newspaper
16. Website and Committee or Board televised meetings
17. Website, bulletin board postings, newspaper
18. Online postings, newspaper articles and ads, targeted mailings
19. Milford Daily News/Milford TV/Public Meetings and Hearings/Social Media/Telephone/Reverse911/mailings
20. Through the website and subscribing to receive notifications
21. Newspaper, email, Facebook, city website, flyers, word-of-mouth
22. Local newspaper, City's social media and website, public meetings
23. Social media
24. Newspaper, local cable, public postings
25. Newspaper, word of mouth, local cable access, postings
26. Website, direct mailing, CCTV of public meetings
27. Website, social media blasts, legal ads, posted notices
28. Town newspaper, Town website and/or Facebook

Outreach methods employed by municipalities demonstrate a multi-faceted approach to connect with residents:

1. Announcement(s) on municipal website
2. Hybrid meetings
3. In-person meetings
4. Newspaper announcement
5. Paper surveys
6. Tabling at community and/or municipal events
7. Childcare stipends or on-site availability during meetings
8. Focus groups
9. Group texting
10. Online surveys
11. Participatory budgeting
12. Partnerships
13. Phone banking
14. Posting flyers
15. Radio advertising
16. Social Media
17. Transportation Stipends for residents to attend in-person meetings
18. Virtual meetings
19. Open house
20. Community Liaison(s)
21. Door knocking
22. Storytelling
23. Translation and Interpretation services

24. Digital Equity Navigator(s)
25. Resource Guides and pamphlets of current programs
26. Television announcement

Q30 - Information is shared through diverse channels with community members, demonstrating a comprehensive and multi-channel communication approach:

1. Social media
2. Government website
3. Government building bulletin boards
4. News outlets
5. Local TV Access Provider
6. Town/Citywide mailer
7. Newsletter
8. Citizen Engagement Software
9. Constituent Services
10. Community partners
11. Online surveys
12. Open house
13. Storytelling
14. Digital Equity Navigator(s)
15. Resource Guides and pamphlet of current programs

Q31.a. Social Media

There is a predominant use of Facebook and occasional incorporation of Instagram, Twitter, and one municipality has a dedicated engagement website.

Q31.b. Citizen Engagement Software

There is one response to using CivicEngage as a citizen engagement software.

Q31.c. Constituent Services are facilitated through various channels, including:

- Community Liaison(s)
- Mayor/Town Manager office
- Reverse 911

Additionally, there are other methods mentioned:

- Through the select board office and departments
- Involvement of City Councilors, Senior Center, Community Development Advisory Committee

Q31.d. The methods through which government boards, departments, offices, committees, and commissions communicate with community members include:

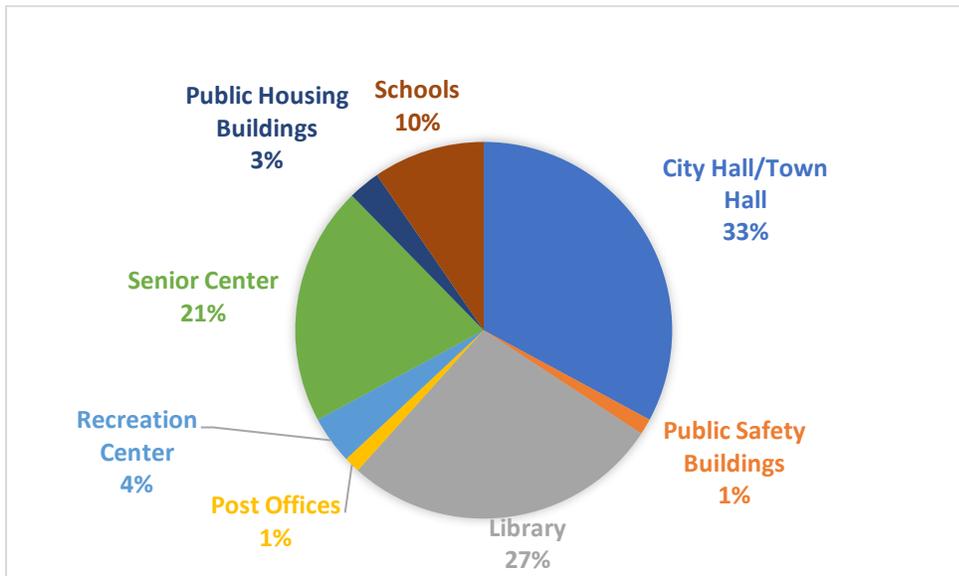
- ADA officer or Commission
- Conservation Commission
- Elected officials (City Council/Board of Selectmen)
- Inspectional Services
- Library

- Mayor/City or Town Manager
- Planning / Zoning Board
- Public Safety
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Health
- Public Works/Public Infrastructure
- School department
- Senior Center/Council on Aging
- Transportation
- Utility or Tax bill

There are variations in the specific entities mentioned across different responses, showcasing the diversity of channels involved in community communication. Additionally, some responses include additional details, such as the mention of a Housing Partnership and Affordable Housing Trust, or the clarification that the selections are entities in municipal government, not necessarily all related to CDBG.

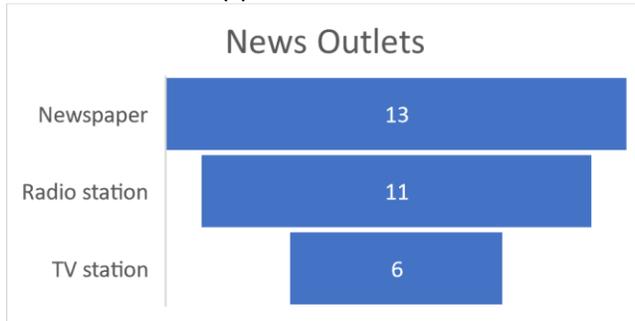
Q31.e. Government building bulletin boards used for information sharing with community members include:

- City Hall/Town Hall: 24
- Public Safety Buildings: 1
- Library: 20
- Post Offices: 1
- Recreation Center: 3
- Senior Center: 15
- Public Housing Buildings: 2
- Schools: 7



Q31.f. News outlets used for information sharing with community members include:

- Newspaper(s)
- Radio station(s)
- TV station(s)



Q31.g. Town/city-wide mailers are sent:

- Once a year (multiple responses)
- Twice a year
- Quarterly (other: as needed)
- Other: Not sure

Q31.h. Newsletters are distributed:

- Monthly by the COA (Council on Aging)
- Quarterly
- Yearly (multiple responses)

Q31.i. Various community partners include:

- Businesses (bank, real estate, restaurants, grocery store, etc.)
- Chamber of Commerce
- Childcare Provider(s)
- Civic Organization(s)
- College or University
- Community Action Agency
- Community Based Organization(s) and/or Non-Profit Organization(s)
- Community Center
- Community Coalition
- Community College
- Community Development Corporation
- Cultural Organization(s)
- Department of Transitional Assistance, DTA
- ESOL Program or Class(es)
- Farmers Market
- Food Pantry
- Homeless Shelter(s)
- Hospital
- Housing Authority
- MassHire Career Center and/or Regional Employment Board
- Neighborhood Association, Group, or Council

- Parent Teacher Organization or Association
- Regional Planning Agency
- Religious Institutions
- Social Service(s) Agency
- Sports and/or Recreational Organization(s)
- Transitional Home(s) and/or programs
- Veterans Services Office
- Women, Infants, and Children, WIC
- Other:
 - Conservation Trust & Ponds Coalition
 - Early Childhood Resource Center
 - Community Action hosts a listserv through which our department connects with these and other local programs

Inspiration and Collaboration

These responses suggest a mix of approaches in collaboration with neighbors, with some municipalities actively engaging with neighbors for insights, some occasionally seeking inspiration, and others primarily relying on their own methods:

- Occasionally, we take inspiration from neighboring cities/towns, but we primarily rely on our own methods: 15
- Yes, we often collaborate with and learn from our neighboring cities/towns to enhance our engagement strategies: 15
- We are interested in learning opportunities from our neighbors for inspiration: 5
- No, we focus on our own strategies and do not typically look to other cities/towns for inspiration: 5

Municipalities are collaborating and learning from various neighboring cities/towns to enhance their engagement strategies:

1. Great Barrington, Sheffield, Alford, Mount Washington:
 - Collaboration on transportation and human resources.
2. Other Mini-Entitlement communities (e.g., Greenfield, West Springfield, Chelsea, Webster, etc.):
3. Quincy, Milton, Braintree:
4. All towns on Martha's Vineyard:
5. Lower Cape Towns (Brewster, Dennis, Wellfleet):
 - Collaboration through Community Development Partnership's Housing Institute.
 - Quarterly regional housing peer group for sharing experiences and strategies.
 - Regional CDBG funding program with Brewster, Dennis, and Wellfleet.
 - Brewster providing CPA funds for housing programs in Dennis and Wellfleet.
6. Hilltowns:
 - Regional collaboration is helpful.
7. Erving, Greenfield, Athol:
8. Buckland, Shelburne:
9. Hudson, Marlborough, Franklin:

- Driving engagement methods from these towns.
 - Providing collaboration opportunities with smaller neighbors.
10. Northampton:
 11. All South Berkshire County Communities:

These collaborations cover a range of activities such as transportation, human resources, housing initiatives, and regional engagement programs. The emphasis on regional collaboration suggests a proactive approach to shared learning and improvement of municipal engagement strategies.

Municipalities use additional communication and engagement methods not listed in the previous responses:

1. Reverse 911 phone calls
2. Informational flyers distribution:
 - Sending informational flyers to various entities, including religious institutions, multifamily complexes, public housing, and senior housing facilities.
3. Engaging consultants for specific projects:
 - Involving consultants to lead community engagement processes or projects.
4. Project-specific email lists and mailers:
 - Using targeted email lists and mailers for specific projects.
5. Daily engagement by staff members:
 - Staff members engage daily with various community stakeholders such as business owners, neighborhood groups, downtown residents, etc.
 - Residents also have the option to visit the office in person.
6. Faith-based community involvement and participation in regional activities:
 - Engaging with the faith-based community.
 - Participating in events like Farmer's Markets, cultural organizations, and other regional activities.

These additional methods showcase a diverse range of approaches to community engagement, including technology-driven solutions, targeted communication strategies, consultant involvement, and active daily engagement by municipal staff.

Responses regarding community engagement and ways the EOHLC technical assistance can support municipal efforts include:

1. Desire for Guidelines and Examples:
 - Expressing a need for set guidelines or examples of community engagement plans.
 - Specific details on how EOHLC prefers engagement with the community.
2. Capacity Challenges in Small Towns:
 - Small towns, particularly in Chesterfield and surrounding Hilltowns, face limited professional capacity due to small budgets.
 - Requesting non-competitive funding similar to an entitlement zone for these towns to address infrastructure, climate mitigation, digital technology, housing, transportation, and basic needs.
3. Balancing Planning and Community Needs:
 - Emphasizing the importance of balancing community planning with the busy economic lives of residents.

- Cautioning against "overplanning" and recognizing the need to address daily life needs.
4. Challenges with Income Eligibility Surveys:
 - Highlighting the difficulty of conducting income eligibility surveys in poor neighborhoods.
 - Recognizing the surveys as intrusive, which hinders planning for projects benefiting marginalized communities.
 5. Community Engagement Burnout:
 - Small communities facing burnout among community members due to excessive outreach meetings.
 - Acknowledging the importance of community engagement while expressing concerns about grant program requirements that may subvert the intent of outreach efforts.
 6. Incorporating Community Engagement into Projects:
 - Stating that community engagement is an integral part of almost every project.
 - Recognizing that prior outreach efforts, not counted towards grant program requirements, often occur before applying for grant funding.
 7. Digital Equity, Translation Services, and ADA Accessibility:
 - Encouraging continued support for digital equity efforts and funding.
 - Requesting funding and assistance for translation services in CDBG communities.
 - Seeking assistance and funding for awareness of ADA accessibility issues in municipal settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing

In Massachusetts, Housing Production Plans (HPPs) and Certified Housing Production Plans (CHPPs) are important tools in the state's efforts to address housing needs and promote sustainable development. Here are some key reasons why these plans are significant:

1. **Compliance with Chapter 40B:**

- Massachusetts Chapter 40B is a state law that encourages the development of affordable housing. It allows local zoning boards to approve affordable housing projects under flexible rules if a certain percentage of the units meet affordability criteria.
- Having an approved and certified Housing Production Plan can provide a municipality with a safe harbor or moratorium from certain unwanted Chapter 40B developments. A community can become certified if they:
 - Permit affordable housing units equal to at least 0.5% to 1.0% of their year-round housing stock within a 12-month period.
 - Produce affordable units per the plan.
 - A certified community has “safe harbor” from developments that seek to bypass their zoning laws.
 - Affordable housing is housing targeted to households that meet specific income eligibility levels. In Massachusetts, these households typically earn below 80% of the metropolitan area's median income.

2. **Local Control and Planning:**

- Housing Production Plans are part of the state's emphasis on local control and planning. They enable communities to take a proactive approach to address their housing needs while aligning with local priorities and values.
- These plans allow municipalities to set their own housing production goals based on their unique characteristics and needs.

3. **Eligibility for Funding and Grants:**

- Municipalities with approved Housing Production Plans may be eligible for various state grants and funding programs. These resources can be used to support housing development, infrastructure improvements, and other community development initiatives.

4. **Community Engagement and Collaboration:**

- The process of developing an HPP involves community engagement and collaboration. Municipalities work with residents, local organizations, and other stakeholders to identify housing needs, preferences, and potential solutions. This inclusive approach helps ensure that the plan reflects the community's values and priorities.

5. **Certification Process:**

- The certification of a Housing Production Plan by the state signifies that the plan meets certain criteria and has been reviewed and approved. This certification is important for a municipality seeking protection under Chapter 40B and eligibility for related benefits.

6. **Addressing Housing Challenges:**

- Massachusetts, like many states, faces challenges related to housing affordability, availability, and diversity. Housing Production Plans provide a framework for addressing these challenges by promoting the creation of a range of housing options, including affordable housing, to meet the needs of residents.

7. **Statewide Housing Goals:**

- Housing Production Plans contribute to the state's broader goals of increasing the overall housing supply, particularly affordable housing, to meet the demands of a growing population.

Housing Production Plans and Certified Housing Production Plans in Massachusetts are essential tools for municipalities to proactively address housing needs, engage with the community, and gain certain benefits and protections under state law. They play a crucial role in fostering sustainable development and balancing the need for housing with local planning objectives.

Communication and Outreach

Communication and outreach play a crucial role in CDBG-funded projects for several reasons:

1. **Community Awareness:**

- Effective communication and outreach efforts raise awareness about the existence and purpose of CDBG-funded projects within the community. This helps residents understand the initiatives, their goals, and potential benefits.

2. **Public Participation:**

- CDBG projects emphasize the importance of public participation in decision-making processes. Communication and outreach activities encourage residents to actively participate in community meetings, hearings, and other engagement opportunities, ensuring diverse voices are heard.

3. **Transparency and Accountability:**

- Transparent communication fosters accountability among government agencies and project developers. Clear information about project plans, funding allocation, and progress builds trust with the community and ensures accountability for achieving project goals.

4. **Meeting National Objectives:**

- CDBG projects must meet one of three national objectives: benefit low- and moderate-income (LMI) individuals, prevent or eliminate slums or blight, or address urgent community development needs. Communication helps ensure that project activities align with these objectives and meet the intended targets.

5. Addressing Local Needs:

- Outreach efforts help in identifying and understanding the specific needs of the community, ensuring that CDBG projects are designed to address those needs effectively. Tailoring projects to local requirements contributes to their success and sustainability.

6. Cultural Competence:

- Massachusetts is a diverse state with various communities, each with its unique cultural context. Effective communication ensures cultural competence, respecting the diversity of the population and ensuring that projects are inclusive and sensitive to cultural nuances.

7. Stakeholder Engagement:

- Outreach activities engage various stakeholders, including local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. Collaboration with these entities enhances the overall impact of CDBG projects and contributes to the achievement of national objectives.

8. Mitigating NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard):

- Some community members may initially resist development projects due to concerns about potential negative impacts. Proactive communication helps address these concerns, dispel misconceptions, and build community support for CDBG initiatives.

9. Accessibility and Inclusivity:

- Communication efforts should be accessible to all members of the community, including those with language barriers or disabilities. Ensuring inclusivity in outreach enhances community engagement and participation.

10. Grant Compliance:

- There are specific communication and reporting requirements for CDBG projects. Adhering to these requirements ensures compliance with grant regulations and demonstrates responsible stewardship of public funds.

11. Feedback and Adaptation:

- Continuous communication allows for the collection of feedback from the community. This feedback loop is essential for adapting projects as needed, ensuring that they remain responsive to changing community dynamics and needs.

Effective communication and outreach are essential for successful CDBG projects. These efforts, which promote community engagement, transparency, and accountability, play a crucial role in achieving national objectives, addressing local needs, and building sustainable and inclusive communities.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is crucial for CDBG-funded initiatives for several important reasons:

1. Local Input and Needs Assessment:

- Community engagement allows for the active involvement of residents and stakeholders in the decision-making process. It helps in assessing the unique needs and priorities of the community, ensuring that the CDBG projects address local concerns effectively.

2. Enhanced Project Relevance:

- Involving the community in the planning and implementation of CDBG projects ensures that the initiatives are relevant and responsive to the specific challenges and opportunities within the community. This helps in tailoring projects to meet the actual needs of the residents.

3. Increased Community Ownership:

- When community members are engaged in the development process, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership and pride in the resulting projects. This can lead to increased community support, cooperation, and long-term success of the initiatives.

4. Building Trust and Relationships:

- Community engagement fosters trust between government agencies, project developers, and community members. Establishing open lines of communication and transparent decision-making processes contribute to stronger relationships and collaboration.

5. Identification of Barriers and Opportunities:

- Engaging with the community helps identify any potential barriers to project success or implementation. It also allows for the identification of opportunities that may not be immediately apparent to external planners, enriching the project's overall design and impact.

6. Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity Considerations:

- Different communities have diverse cultures, needs, and perspectives. Community engagement ensures that projects are developed with cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity, avoiding unintended negative impacts on certain groups within the community.

7. Maximizing Project Impact:

- Engaging the community increases the likelihood that CDBG projects will have a positive and lasting impact. By incorporating the insights and knowledge of local residents,

projects can be designed to address the root causes of issues and create sustainable solutions.

8. Effective Communication of Project Goals:

- Community engagement helps in effectively communicating the goals and benefits of CDBG projects to residents. Clear and transparent communication builds support for the projects and helps manage expectations.

9. Legal and Regulatory Compliance:

- In many cases, community engagement is a requirement for compliance with various laws and regulations related to community development projects. Ensuring active participation helps meet these legal obligations.

10. Feedback and Continuous Improvement:

- Community engagement provides an avenue for ongoing feedback throughout the project lifecycle. This feedback loop allows for adjustments and improvements based on real-time information and evolving community needs.

Community engagement is a fundamental component of successful funded CDBG projects. It ensures that projects are community-driven, culturally sensitive, and sustainable in the long term. Engaging residents and stakeholders in the decision-making process contributes to the overall success, acceptance, and positive impact of meeting CDBG National Objectives.

Engagement Strategies

Enhance the success of projects by utilizing the MA Community Engagement Continuum. The continuum, which spans from "inform" to "community-driven/led," offers a structured approach to community engagement. Here's how CDBG grantees can leverage each level of the continuum:

1. Inform:

- **Communication Strategy:** Provide clear and balanced information about the project to the community.
- **Awareness Building:** Create awareness among community members about the project, its goals, and potential impacts.

2. Consult:

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish channels for obtaining community feedback on project plans, alternatives, and solutions.
- **Community Input:** Actively seek and consider input from the community in decision-making processes.

3. Involve:

- **Direct Collaboration:** Work directly with the community throughout the project to understand and address concerns and aspirations.

- **Partnerships:** Form partnerships with community members to ensure ongoing involvement and participation.
4. **Collaborate:**
- **Community Partnership:** Partner with the community at every stage of the decision-making process, including the development of alternatives and identification of preferred solutions.
 - **Shared Decision-Making:** Engage in collaborative decision-making, taking into account community input and preferences.
5. **Delegate:**
- **Community Empowerment:** Delegate decision-making authority to the community, allowing them to have a significant role in shaping the project.
 - **Empowerment Programs:** Support initiatives that empower the community to take charge of decision-making processes.
6. **Community-Driven/Led:**
- **Support Community Initiatives:** Actively support and facilitate actions initiated, driven, and led by the community.
 - **Empowerment and Autonomy:** Provide resources and autonomy to the community for self-driven development initiatives.

General Strategies:

- **Tailored Approach:** Choose the level of engagement that best suits the community's characteristics and preferences.
- **Progressive Engagement:** Consider progressing along the continuum as the project advances, moving towards higher levels of community involvement.
- **Transparent Communication:** Maintain transparent and open communication throughout the engagement process.
- **Capacity Building:** Invest in building community capacity to enable effective participation in decision-making.

In summary, a thoughtful and progressive application of the Massachusetts Community Engagement Continuum allows CDBG grantees to adapt their engagement strategies based on the unique needs of each community. This tailored approach contributes to the overall success of CDBG programs by fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and community-driven development.

Information Dissemination

CDBG grantees can effectively disseminate information through stakeholders to reach community members and meet national objectives for funded projects by employing a strategic and inclusive communication approach. Here are key strategies:

1. **Identify Stakeholders:**

- **Mapping Stakeholders:** Identify and map out key stakeholders, including local community groups, nonprofits, businesses, local government officials, and residents.
- **Stakeholder Analysis:** Understand the influence and interests of each stakeholder group in relation to the CDBG-funded project.

2. **Develop a Communication Plan:**

- **Targeted Messaging:** Tailor messages to resonate with the specific concerns and interests of different stakeholder groups.
- **Clear Objectives:** Define clear communication objectives, outlining what information needs to be disseminated and the desired outcomes.

3. **Utilize Diverse Communication Channels:**

- **Community Meetings:** Host town hall meetings, public forums, and community workshops to directly engage with residents.
- **Digital Platforms:** Use websites, social media, and other online platforms to share project updates and information.
- **Print Materials:** Develop brochures, flyers, and newsletters for distribution in community centers, libraries, and local businesses.
- **Local Media:** Collaborate with local newspapers, radio stations, and community newsletters to share project updates.

4. **Engage Community Leaders:**

- **Local Leaders:** Leverage the support of influential community leaders to help disseminate information.
- **Community Organizations:** Partner with local community organizations to amplify messages and reach a broader audience.

5. **Establish Feedback Mechanisms:**

- **Surveys and Comment Periods:** Implement surveys and comment periods to gather feedback from community members.
- **Community Liaisons:** Appoint community liaisons to serve as a bridge between the project team and community, facilitating two-way communication.

6. **Cultivate Partnerships:**

- **Business Partnerships:** Partner with local businesses to display project information in storefronts or distribute materials.
- **Educational Institutions:** Collaborate with schools and educational institutions to disseminate information through students and parents.

7. **Multilingual Approach:**

- **Translation Services:** Provide project information in multiple languages spoken by the community to ensure inclusivity.
- **Cultural Competence:** Consider cultural nuances to effectively communicate with diverse populations.

8. **Timeline and Frequency:**

- **Regular Updates:** Provide regular and consistent updates on project progress, milestones, and any changes.
- **Timely Notifications:** Inform the community in a timely manner about upcoming events, meetings, or decisions.

9. **Accessibility:**

- **Accessible Formats:** Ensure that information is presented in accessible formats for individuals with disabilities.
- **Varied Mediums:** Use a mix of written, visual, and verbal communication methods to cater to diverse learning preferences.

10. **Educational Workshops:**

- **Workshop Series:** Conduct educational workshops to inform the community about the purpose, benefits, and expected outcomes of the project.

By employing these strategies, CDBG grantees can establish a comprehensive communication plan that leverages stakeholders as conduits for information, ensuring that project details are effectively disseminated to the community. This inclusive approach contributes to meeting national objectives by fostering transparency, engagement, and community support for CDBG-funded projects.

Inspiration and Collaboration

CDBG grantees can find inspiration and collaboration through neighboring municipalities and stakeholders to reach community members and meet national objectives for funded projects by fostering a spirit of cooperation, sharing best practices, and leveraging collective resources. Here are several strategies to achieve this:

1. **Establish Regional Networks:**

- **Convene Regional Meetings:** Organize regular meetings or forums that bring together representatives from neighboring municipalities, community organizations, and stakeholders.
- **Regional Collaborative Platforms:** Develop online platforms or forums where representatives can share ideas, challenges, and success stories.

2. **Joint Workshops and Training Sessions:**

- **Collaborative Training:** Host joint workshops or training sessions that focus on common challenges faced by municipalities and stakeholders in the region.
 - **Expert Panels:** Invite experts and professionals to address shared concerns and provide guidance on effective project implementation.
3. **Shared Resources and Funding Opportunities:**
- **Pooling Resources:** Explore opportunities for shared services, such as joint purchasing, to maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
 - **Joint Grant Applications:** Collaborate on grant applications that benefit multiple municipalities, tapping into larger funding opportunities.
4. **Cross-Municipal Projects:**
- **Interconnected Projects:** Identify projects that have regional significance and collaborate on their planning and implementation.
 - **Resource Sharing:** Share project resources, such as equipment or expertise, to enhance overall project outcomes.
5. **Cross-Communication Strategies:**
- **Shared Communication Channels:** Develop joint communication strategies to disseminate information about projects and initiatives to a wider audience.
 - **Cross-Promotion:** Promote projects in neighboring municipalities to encourage community members to engage with initiatives across the region.
6. **Community Engagement Events:**
- **Regional Events:** Plan community engagement events, festivals, or fairs that involve multiple municipalities, showcasing the collective impact of CDBG-funded projects.
 - **Collaborative Outreach:** Engage with community members from neighboring areas through joint outreach efforts.
7. **Inter-Municipal Task Forces:**
- **Joint Task Forces:** Establish task forces or committees that bring together representatives from different municipalities to address shared challenges or goals.
 - **Problem-Solving Sessions:** Collaborate on problem-solving sessions to find innovative solutions to common issues.
8. **Interagency Collaboration:**
- **Government Agencies:** Collaborate with other government agencies, such as regional planning commissions, to align goals and resources.
 - **Nonprofit Organizations:** Partner with regional nonprofits that may have experience working across multiple municipalities.

9. Knowledge Sharing Platforms:

- **Best Practice Showcases:** Organize events where municipalities can showcase successful projects and share best practices.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning:** Facilitate peer-to-peer learning opportunities, allowing representatives to learn from each other's experiences.

10. Regional Visioning Sessions:

- **Visioning Workshops:** Host visioning sessions that involve representatives from multiple municipalities to collectively plan for the region's future.
- **Common Goals:** Align project goals with a shared vision for the entire region, emphasizing the interconnectedness of communities.

By actively seeking collaboration with neighboring municipalities and stakeholders, CDBG grantees can tap into a wealth of collective knowledge, resources, and inspiration. This collaborative approach not only enhances the effectiveness of individual projects but also contributes to meeting broader national objectives by fostering regional cooperation and sustainable community development.

CDBG Citizen Advisory Committees

Create a strong base for active and sustained community engagement by developing CDBG Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs). CACs are important for CDBG programs for several reasons:

1. **Community Representation:** CACs provide a platform for diverse community representation. Including members from different backgrounds, demographics, and perspectives ensures that the needs and priorities of various community segments are considered.
2. **Local Input:** CACs offer a mechanism for gathering local input and insights. Engaging citizens in the decision-making process ensures that CDBG-funded projects align with the actual needs and aspirations of the community.
3. **Transparency and Accountability:** The presence of a CAC promotes transparency in the allocation and utilization of CDBG funds. It allows community members to understand how decisions are made, holding both the local government and CAC accountable for the effective use of resources.
4. **Community Engagement:** CACs facilitate ongoing community engagement. This engagement goes beyond specific projects and helps build a continuous dialogue between local government and the community, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for community development.
5. **Project Prioritization:** CACs can assist in prioritizing projects based on community needs. Their input helps identify the most pressing issues and ensures that limited CDBG resources are directed toward projects that will have the greatest positive impact.
6. **Enhanced Program Effectiveness:** With community members directly involved, CACs contribute to the effectiveness of CDBG programs. The insight and local knowledge provided by the committee can lead to more informed decision-making and better outcomes for funded projects.

CDBG Citizen Advisory Committees can play a vital role in fostering community engagement, promoting transparency, and ensuring that CDBG-funded projects align with the unique needs and priorities of the communities they serve.

Resource Library

A resource library is important for CDBG community engagement efforts for several reasons:

1. **Information Accessibility:** A resource library serves as a centralized repository of information. This ensures that stakeholders, community members, and other participants have easy access to relevant information.
2. **Empowering Stakeholders:** By providing a comprehensive collection of documents, reports, tools, guidelines, and relevant materials, a resource library empowers stakeholders and community members. It enables them to make informed decisions, understand program requirements, and actively participate in the community engagement process.
3. **Capacity Building:** It serves as a tool for capacity building within the community. By offering educational resources, best practices, and relevant literature, the resource library supports the development of knowledge and skills among local leadership, staff, and community members, enhancing their ability to engage effectively.
4. **Training and Orientation:** For new staff, stakeholders, community members, or committee members, a resource library can serve as a training and orientation tool. It provides newcomers with the necessary background information and context on relevant focus areas.

A resource library can enhance community engagement efforts by providing accessible information that can be adapted and tailored to fit the needs of municipalities and communities. It can empower stakeholders, support capacity building, and contribute to the overall effectiveness and accountability of local and regional community engagement efforts.

Appendix

- a. Massachusetts CDBG Community Engagement Assessment, 2023:
https://massgov.formstack.com/forms/cdbg_community_engagement_assessment