

Citizen Participation Plan

The towns of Erving (lead), New Salem, Northfield, Warwick and Wendell submit this application at the request of their low and moderate-income residents. The need for a regional fuel assistance safety net and an affordable housing rehabilitation program for all 5 towns was identified by the townspeople in two ways:

(1) through the lengthy public process of developing their Community Development Strategies; and,

(2) requests made by individual low and moderate income residents of the towns to the Boards of Selectmen to apply for Community Development Block Grant funding. These requests have come in the form of letters, telephone calls to the Boards, and attendance at public hearings and informational meetings. The Boards of Selectmen held 5 formal public hearings and 5 informational meetings to provide for and encourage citizen participation in the selection and development of activities to be requested in the Community Development Block Grant application/Community Development Fund (See Public Hearing Section).

Technical assistance will be provided to low and moderate income groups and/or groups representing low and moderate-income persons throughout the grant term. Technical Assistance will be accomplished by program staff working individually with low and moderate income persons and/or providing technical assistance by attending group meetings.

The Boards of Selectmen will commission a 5-member Citizens Advisory Committee with representatives from various locations of the 5-town region (1 member from each of the 5 participating towns); at least 1 member of the Committee will be low/moderate income. This committee will provide independent oversight of the program performance during the grant term. Their mission will be to ensure that all proposed activities would accomplish the goals stated in the towns' Community Development Strategies. The Citizens Advisory Committee will receive quarterly progress reports from the towns' administering agency, the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority. **For additional citizen participation opportunities, see ongoing beneficiary involvement in the housing rehab project packet**

If funded, a public hearing will be held during the grant cycle to obtain citizen comments on the outcome and effectiveness of the programs, and to elicit suggestions on how they could be improved upon in the future. In addition, if the community decides to amend its grant agreement in order to substantially alter the design of a funded activity, delete an activity or add a new one, it will hold a public hearing before petitioning DHCD for a contract amendment.

Grievances and complaints will hopefully be resolved immediately at the lowest level -- that is, directly between aggrieved clients and administrators of an activity component. Should that in some instances not prove satisfactory the following grievance procedure will be initiated:

Grievance between HRA and Program Participants: In the event that a program participant (homeowner, tenant or owner) feels that s/he has not been treated fairly by the program, or that the HRA did not meet its obligations to the participant as specified in the program guidelines: (1) The program participant shall state the grievance in writing to the Director of Community Development ...[who] shall meet with the program participant within 10 business days of the receipt of the written notice. The program participant will be given a written response from the Director of Community Development within 5 business days of the meeting. (2) If the grievance is not resolved, the program participant may request in writing a meeting with the Executive Director...[who] shall meet with the program participant and the Director of Community Development within 10 business days of receipt of the written notice. The program participant will be given a written response from the Executive Director within 5 business days of the meeting. At this meeting both the program participant(s) and HRA shall have the right to be represented by legal counsel, to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses presented by others. Retaining legal counsel for him/herself shall be the responsibility of the program participant.

(3) The decision of the Executive Director shall be the final administrative review by HRA.

(4) If the program participants are not satisfied with the HRA Executive Director's decision, he/she may bring the grievance to the Lead Town's Board of Selectmen for a final determination. There will be no further administrative review.

Accommodations will be made for handicapped and non-English speaking clients. All group/client meetings will be held in fully handicapped accessible buildings. Additionally, interpreters will be available as necessary to accommodate hearing impaired and non-English speaking clients.