



# NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WEEK

## 2017 PLANNING GUIDEBOOK



## **2017 NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WEEK PLANNING GUIDEBOOK**

The U.S. Conference of Mayors, National Association of Counties, National Community Development Association, National Association for County Community and Economic Development, National Association of Local Housing Finance Agencies, and Council of State Community Development Agencies have formed a partnership to promote the 2017 National Community Development Week.

The 2016 National Community Development (CD) Week will be celebrated from **April 17-22, 2017**. It provides the opportunity for CDBG and HOME grantees to meet with their congressional members, showcase projects and programs, and involve the local community, including local businesses, citizens, and community groups in the week-long celebration.

This year marks the 43rd anniversary of the CDBG Program and the 31<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Community Development Week campaign. This annual campaign is designed to focus local as well as national attention on the numerous outstanding accomplishments over the past 43 years of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and over the past 26 years of the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program.

National Community Development Week provides an ideal opportunity to educate citizens at the local level as well as members of Congress regarding CDBG and HOME and their importance in the lives of low- and moderate-income citizens. Please join us in the 2017 national celebration.

### **CDBG**

The CDBG Program was enacted into law as part of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. CDBG's main purpose is to provide decent, safe and sanitary housing, a suitable living environment and economic opportunities to low- and moderate-income people. To this day, CDBG remains the principal source of revenue for states and localities to use in devising flexible solutions to prevent physical, economic and social deterioration in lower-income neighborhoods and communities throughout the nation.

### **Cuts to the Program**

In FY 2001, the program received \$4.406 billion in formula funding, its highest funding level ever. That level now stands at \$3 billion for FY 2016. President Trump's recent proposal to cut non-defense discretionary funding by \$54 billion may drastically affect future funding of CDBG. While the CDBG Coalition has made strides in the last five years to protect CDBG funding, we all need CDBG grantees to get behind the National CD Week Campaign and our efforts to push for higher formula funding for CDBG in FY 2017 and FY2018.

### **HOME**

Enacted into law in 1990, the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program was developed

to provide resources to communities to provide decent, safe and affordable housing opportunities for low-income persons. Program funding has been used nationally to complete over one million units of affordable housing. Prior to the creation of the HOME Program, there were few options available to communities to develop affordable housing. Families lived in overcrowded situations and in unsafe housing. Working families struggled to save enough for a down-payment. Communities lacked the resources to design large-scale affordable housing programs to address these problems.

### **Cuts to the Program**

The HOME Program has been reduced to \$950 million in FY 2016 from \$1.825 billion in FY 2010, almost a \$1 billion decrease. We need HOME participating jurisdictions to join us in supporting a higher funding level for HOME in FY 2017 and FY2018.

### **WHY NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WEEK?**

National CD Week provides the opportunity for grantees, their subrecipients, contractors, and State and local partners to come together to harness grassroots support for both CDBG and HOME by showcasing projects, educating the community on program benefits, and, most importantly, ensuring your congressional members attend CD Week activities and are made aware of the benefits of the programs to the local economy and to the families served by the programs.

It is more important than ever for CDBG and HOME grantees to celebrate National Community Development Week. Both programs have been cut significantly over the past four years and given the federal deficit and budget climate, CDBG and HOME are at risk of further cuts in FY17 and FY18. In our visits to congressional members this year, many offices informed us that they are not hearing from many communities on the CDBG and HOME programs. Grassroots support is the key to the continued funding of these programs. We need all grantees to take action during the National CD Week to promote CDBG and HOME.

Many state housing and community development agency staff have indicated that they are often not permitted to contact Congressional staff regarding advocacy of CDBG and HOME. If this is the case with your state, you can contact your local subgrantees, housing developers, businesses, contractors and beneficiaries to get them involved in communication with Congressional staff.

### **CD WEEK ACTION ITEMS**

- 1. *Organize the Working Group.*** The CDBG and HOME grantee should organize a working group to plan and implement National CD Week. A lead staff person should be appointed to shepherd the process and assignments given to working group members to accomplish the CD Week activities. Involve other departments and groups who receive CDBG and HOME funds.
- 2. *Assess Your Community.*** Every grantee should assess community perception of the

CDBG and HOME programs. It is probably best to assume that the community (citizens, congressional delegation) must be brought up to speed and benefits of both programs on the community.

3. ***Identify Your CDBG and HOME Constituency.*** It is important that CDBG and HOME be recognized as a critical form of support for many of the high priority activities in the state and in communities. Include partners that invest in your CDBG and HOME projects in your CD Week activities, such as businesses, banks, and contractors.
4. ***Plan Your CD Week Activities; Start Now.*** Public support from your congressional delegation, state and community groups, the media, business and community leaders, and the beneficiaries of the program is vital.
  - When was the last time you briefed your state and local community groups, banks and businesses about the CDBG and HOME activities in your community?
  - When was the last time an article appeared in your local media on CDBG or HOME?
  - When was the last time you spoke to a member of your congressional delegation about CDBG and HOME?
  - When was the last time you involved program subrecipients and beneficiaries your CD Week activities?

***Start to plan your 2017 CD Week activities now.***

**Involve the local community: state and local elected officials, neighborhood groups, area banks, local businesses.** Ask local businesses and banks to sponsor activities.

**Invite your congressional members.** Plan to meet with your congressional members (Senators and Representatives) in their district offices during CD Week. Invite them to tour a CDBG- and HOME-funded project.

**Involve the media.** Provide a press release on your CD week activities. Invite the press to your events. Ask them to write an article on CDBG or HOME during CD Week.

**Select positive venues.** Select locations that showcase CDBG- and HOME-funded projects and programs.

**Announce your events.** National Community Development Week should begin with press releases and informational materials distributed as soon as possible. Announce planned events to your state and local media, community groups, and your congressional delegation. Consider producing a video or a PowerPoint, which is inexpensive and can show before and after photos.

Most importantly, *start planning your activities now!*

5. ***Your CD Week Message.*** The message should be simple:

“CDBG and HOME are valued programs in our state and communities, contributing to the state and local economy, serving households in need, maintaining and stabilizing neighborhoods, and providing the flexibility to develop partnerships and projects that are vital to the well-being of our area. Therefore, we strongly support the continued flexibility provided by both programs and strongly support increased funding for CDBG and HOME so that grantees can continue to respond to current and emerging community development needs, including the creation of jobs, development of affordable housing, improvement of existing housing stock, the delivery of vital services, and important infrastructure improvements.”

- Emphasize how the program has helped your state and community (e.g., projects and programs have been developed through the programs to assist the community and its residents and the impact on the local economy). **Develop a state and local fact sheet on CDBG- and HOME-funded activities** and distribute it to the press, your congressional members, and at CD Week activities. We have included a sample fact sheet. Include the amount of CDBG and/or HOME funds provided to projects and the amount of funds leveraged from other sources.

6. ***Focus on your congressional members.*** Ask your congressional members to participate in your CD Week activities or plan to meet with them at their district offices during CD Week – or plan to visit them in Washington, DC. Meeting with a member of Congress is a very effective way to convey a message about a specific issue or legislative matter. Since Congress will be in recess during CD Week, congressional members will be in their home districts. Plan to meet with them.

***Steps to meet with your congressional member***

Check with your state or jurisdiction first to understand any policies, procedures or restrictions you must follow before meeting with your congressional member.

- (1) **Make an Appointment:** Start planning your visit at least two months in advance. Congressional members are extremely busy and their calendars fill up quickly. When attempting to meet with a member, contact the appointment secretary/scheduler at the local district office. Explain your purpose and who you represent. You can obtain your member’s information at <http://www.house.gov> and <http://www.senate.gov> When you speak to the scheduler, ask to have a face-to-face meeting with your member of Congress at their local district office during CD Week.

- (2) **Make the issues real:** Convey to your member how the programs help constituents in their district. Provide specific examples. If possible, bring a subrecipient or beneficiary to the meeting with you. Congressional members are interested in hearing directly from the organizations or people the programs directly benefit. You should bring the following information with you to the meeting:

**Good data.** Convey your program accomplishments and community development need by providing data, such as:

- The number of people served by CDBG and HOME over the last five years.
- The state and local economic benefit:
  - # of jobs created and maintained and in which sectors
  - amount of goods and services purchased through the program (by contractors, sub-contractors, subrecipients, and the grantee)
  - any positive benefits to the tax base (e.g., construction of homeownership and rental projects, creation of new businesses, improvements to existing homes and businesses, etc.)
  - the offsetting of local and state government costs through services provided by the programs (e.g., code enforcement, water and sewer projects, staff costs)
- At the same time, it is important to outline the demand for the programs in your community through:
  - the # of persons on waiting lists for assistance (rehabilitation assistance, purchase assistance, etc.)
  - the # of viable programs and projects not funded due to the lack of CDBG and HOME funding

**Actual examples.** Tell the story of a particular family or business that was assisted through the programs. Again, if you have brought along a subrecipient or beneficiary to the meeting, have them tell their story. Or, arrange a projects or neighborhoods tour for your congressional delegation to see first-hand the accomplishments of both programs.

- (3) **Be Responsive and Follow-Up:** Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information in the event the member asks questions. Follow-up the meeting with a thank-you letter. Send along any additional information and materials requested.

In addition to the meeting, it is *imperative* that you undertake the following additional activities to increase congressional support for CDBG and HOME in FY 2018:

Have your program beneficiaries fill-out CD Week postcards, writing a quick note



on how either CDBG or HOME have helped them. Mail the postcards to your congressional members, or present the postcards to them at your CD Week event, or at a meeting with your congressional members.

Start a state-wide or community-wide petition in support of increased funding for CDBG and HOME. Some communities have done this in the past, collecting thousands of signatures, and it has been very effective. Present the signatures to your congressional members.

Invite your congressional members to a CDBG- and HOME-funded project. Ask them to be part of a ribbon cutting ceremony, coffee with residents, or sit-in on a program or activity (e.g., senior citizen event or youth event).

Have your state and local elected body issue a proclamation of support of CDBG and HOME during National CD Week.

### **EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD**

The following provides you with actual examples of activities undertaken by communities during National Community Development Week. We have also included a sample proclamation.

- See the State of Nebraska's plans for 2017 National CD Week:  
<http://www.neded.org/community/community-info/community-improvement/community-development-week?highlight=WyJjb21tdW5pdHkiLCJjb21tdW5pdHkncyIsImNvbW11bml0eScuIiwiZGV2ZlWxvcG1lbnQiLCJkZXZlbg9wbWVudCdzIiwid2VlayIsIndlZWsnIiwY29tbXVuaXR5IGRldmVsb3BtZW50IiwY29tbXVuaXR5IGRldmVsb3BtZW50IHdlZWsiLCJkZXZlbg9wbWVudCB3ZWVrIl0=>
- During the 2000 National CD Week Campaign, Burlington, Vermont, Mayor Peter Clavelle hosted a CD luncheon where both Senator Sanders and Senator Jeffords participated.
- In Richmond, California, the focus was on a graduation ceremony for 17 participants in micro-enterprise business start-ups.
- In Greenville, South Carolina, the Greenville Recreation District, and the Freetown Community celebrated the groundbreaking of a new \$600,000 (CDBG funded) community center, which will provide recreation activities, services for the elderly, early childcare, and after-school programs.
- In 2007, the City of Austin, Texas kicked off CD Week with a news conference that included the mayor, city departments, and CDBG subrecipients.
- Harris County, Texas highlighted the results of projects recently completed with CDBG

funds through stories from persons assisted with the funds – the story of a single mom who purchased a home with assistance from CDBG, the story of a local cab owner who provides medical transportation to low-income and elderly citizens



**CDBG AND HOME ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
FOR THE CITY/COUNTY/STATE OF \_\_\_\_\_  
FOR THE PAST YEAR**

**SAMPLE FACT SHEET DOCUMENT**

*Provide this fact sheet to your local elected officials, congressional members, and local press during CD Week.*

- A total of \_\_\_\_\_ households were assisted through the CDBG program and \_\_\_\_\_ households were assisted through the HOME program.
- CDBG created or retained \_\_\_\_\_ jobs in the past year.
- For every one dollar of CDBG funding another \$\_\_\_\_\_ in private and public funding was leveraged. For every one dollar of HOME funding another \$\_\_\_\_\_ private and public funding was leveraged.
- CDBG funds in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ were spent on economic development activities such as a direct financial assistance to businesses, commercial and industrial improvements, and technical assistance.
- CDBG funds in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ were spent on public improvements, such as the development and improvements of public facilities, street and sidewalk improvements, water and sewer improvements, senior centers and child care facilities, and the development of parks and recreational facilities, among others.
- CDBG funds in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ were spent on public services, such as services for senior and youth projects, health services, employment training, services for abused and neglected children, services for the disabled, and fair housing activities, among others.
- CDBG funds in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ were provided for housing activities, such as construction, rehabilitation, homebuyer assistance, lead-based paint testing and abatement, and code enforcement, among others.
- HOME funds in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ were provide for housing activities, such as homebuyer assistance, rental assistance, and the production of affordable rental units.
  - A total of \_\_\_\_\_ units of affordable housing were created
  - \_\_\_\_\_ households received assistance in purchasing their first home
  - \_\_\_\_\_ rental units were constructed and/or rehabilitated
  - \_\_\_\_\_ homeowners received rehabilitation assistance

## **Tips on Writing to a Member**

Due to tightened security of the mail to Congress, a letter can take up to 3 weeks to reach your member, so please ALSO FAX AND E-MAIL a copy of the letter to your member. Their fax number and e-mail address can be found on their website.

### ***Addressing Correspondence:***

#### **To a Senator...**

The Honorable (Full Name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
Dear Senator (Last Name):

#### **To a Representative...**

The Honorable (Full Name)  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
Dear Representative (Last Name):

### **Sending an E-Mail to Congress**

When addressing an e-mail to a member of Congress, follow the same suggestions as for a printed letter. For the subject of your e-mail, identify your message by topic or bill number. The body of your message should use the following format:

Your Name  
Address  
City, State, Zip  
Dear (Title)(Last Name),

### **The Roles of Congressional Staff**

Each member of Congress has staff to assist him/her during a term in office. To be most effective in communicating with Congress, it is helpful to know the titles and principal functions of key staff.

**Administrative Assistant (AA) or Chief of Staff (CoS):** The AA reports directly to the member of Congress. He/she usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcomes of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The AA is usually the person in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of key staff.

**Legislative Director (LD), Legislative Assistant/Aide (LA) or Legislative Counsel (LC):** The LD is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding pros and cons of particular issues. In some congressional offices, there are several Legislative Assistants/Aides and responsibilities are assigned to staff with particular expertise in specific areas.

**Appointment Secretary or Scheduler:** The Appointment Secretary or Scheduler is responsible for controlling the member's calendar. This includes arranging meetings for constituents, arranging speaking dates, and arranging visits to the district.