

National Community Development Week Tool Kit

National Community Development Week
April 13 – 17, 2020
CDBG and HOME Make Communities
Better Places to Live and Work
#CDWeek2020



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Figure 1: President Ford signs CDBG into law, 1974.

This Tool Kit was developed by the National Community Development Association. Please contact Vicki Watson, Executive Director, National Community Development Association at vwatson@ncdaonline.org with any questions.

National Partners

This year, the following sixteen national organizations are working together to market National Community Development Week. Members of these organizations are encouraged to use this tool kit to advocate for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) programs by engaging in an activity during National Community Development Week.

[National Community Development Association](#)

[National Association of Counties](#)

[U.S. Conference of Mayors](#)

[National League of Cities](#)

[American Planning Association](#)

[Council of State Community Development Agencies](#)

[Housing Assistance Council](#)

[International Code Council](#)

[National Association for County Community and Economic Development](#)

[National Association of Development Organizations](#)

[National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials](#)

[National Association of Local Housing Finance Agencies](#)

[National Association of Regional Councils](#)

[National Recreation and Park Association](#)

[Rebuilding Together](#)

[Rural Community Assistance Partnership](#)

An Overview of National Community Development Week

National Community Development (CD) Week, April 13-17, 2020, provides the opportunity for communities to highlight the impact of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) CDBG and HOME programs in a weeklong celebration with Congress, program partners, program participants, and the public.

The objective of National Community Development Week is to educate the community and Congressional Members about the CDBG and HOME programs, their impact on the community, and **the need for increased program funding**. Lawmakers will return to their states and districts for the week, giving you an opportunity to highlight the good work you do in your community using CDBG and HOME dollars.

National Community Development Week was created in 1986 to bring national attention to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program at a time when the program was facing scrutiny by Congress. The week-long celebration has expanded to include the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program. National Community Development Week provides the opportunity for communities to promote, educate and advocate on behalf of both programs. It is intentionally held during the Congressional appropriations season to allow for a concerted grassroots effort and voice to be heard on the importance of both programs and their impact on communities nationwide. National Community Development Week drives local and national attention to the CDBG and HOME programs. It provides a united voice of support and harnesses the power of grassroots engagement to educate members of Congress and the community on the successes of the programs and their value to local communities.

The Administration's FY21 Budget eliminates funding for CDBG and HOME. It is imperative that all communities that receive these resources participate in National Community Development Week. National Community Development Week will occur during a critical time when Congress is making decisions about federal program spending levels. Our organizations will be seeking increased funding for CDBG (\$3.8 billion) and HOME (\$1.5 billion) in FY21 and your participation in National Community Development Week helps tremendously in these efforts.

Planning for National Community Development Week

April 13 – 17, 2020 – National Community Development Week!

Legislators will be home. Meet with them or their staff in the District Office. Take them on a projects tour or invite them to a ribbon cutting opportunity. Showcase exemplary existing projects but also **make them aware of projects and neighborhoods that need funding.**

Preparing for National Community Development Week

Start planning your National CD Week events now. Organize staff, involve program partners and beneficiaries, decide upon activities, include Congressional offices, and market National Community Development week.

Organize Staff

The first step to a successful National Community Development (CD) Week campaign is organizing a working group to plan and implement the CD Week activities. A lead staff person should be appointed to shepherd the process and assignments given to working group members to accomplish the CD Week activities. This effort must involve departments and groups who receive CDBG and HOME funds. Regular meetings will ensure CD Week activities are planned and implemented on time.

Many jurisdictions have created CDBG and/or HOME advisory boards to assist them in allocating their program funds. These boards are often appointed by the mayor, county executive or city council and usually consist of community members with community development and affordable housing experience and other relevant participants. The focus of such boards is to serve in an advisory capacity to the local elected officials and CDBG/HOME staff to determine funding priorities, evaluate funding proposals and make funding recommendations. Many communities work with these boards in planning and implementing their National CD Week activities.

Other communities without advisory boards tend to create a special committee to focus on National CD Week planning and implementation. Whatever method is chosen, CDBG and HOME program staff must be central in leading the National CD Week effort.

Example:

- **Arlington, TX** established a National Community Development Week planning committee that consisted of various stakeholders. The planning committee met regularly and gathered data and facts on the impact of CDBG and HOME dollars in the City of Arlington, created fliers and infographics on CDBG and HOME accomplishments, developed press releases and formal invitations for their CD Week event, and organized a ribbon cutting event showcasing grant dollars at work which included the beneficiaries of those grant programs.

Involve Program Partners and Beneficiaries

Subrecipients and program beneficiaries are on the front lines of providing and receiving CDBG and HOME assistance. Because of their connection to the programs, they should be part of National CD Week. The CDBG and HOME stories cannot be told without incorporating the testimony of the many beneficiaries who are served through these critical federal funds. Put a face on your programs by including beneficiaries and subrecipients in your National CD Week events.

Example:

- **Quincy, MA** engages CDBG subrecipients early in the planning process to seek input on their involvement in CD Week.

Involve your Congressional Offices

National Community Development Week provides a perfect forum to cement the importance of CDBG and HOME in the minds of those in Washington. With the proposed elimination of funding for CDBG and HOME in the Administration's budget, your participation in National Community Development Week is particularly critical in 2020. Highlighting the work that occurs with CDBG and HOME dollars in your community creates a tangible connection for lawmakers between the funding they appropriate for these programs and improvements to their states and districts. Events like National Community Development Week attract positive attention and publicity for CDBG and HOME.

How to invite your Congressional Members to at least one National Community Development Week event:

- **First, decide what type of event you'd like to hold.** Have the following information ready to share with the Congressional scheduler: who will participate, what is the size of the event, where and when is the event, what is the focus, will the Senator/Representative be asked to make remarks, and will there be media. If the date and time of your event is flexible, you may be able to work with staff to better fit in the Senator's or Representative's schedule.
- **Second, contact Congressional offices.** You will need to identify who handles scheduling for your legislator and what is required by the office to submit a formal invitation. Start by calling your most local district office - phone numbers for district offices are available on the legislators' web sites. Some offices schedule exclusively through their DC office, so you may need to make several calls before you get in contact with the appropriate staffer.

Where to locate the district office information for your Congressional delegation:

House of Representatives: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

U.S. Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>

- **Third, follow-up frequently.** Schedulers are extremely busy and constantly inundated with requests. Make sure your request gets the proper attention by contacting the scheduler frequently, initially twice a week but increase that to daily in the two weeks leading up to the event if you still have not received an answer. Make sure you ask the staffer handling your request what the best way to get in touch with him/her is and use those communication methods. If you are having trouble getting in touch with the person handling your request, leave messages with the office receptionist, too.
- **Finally, do not get discouraged** if members of Congress or their staff cannot attend your event. Work with the office on alternative ways they can participate - ask them to issue a press release about your event, promote it on social media, or begin a scheduling request for a district work period later in the year. They may have other ideas on how they can participate, so be flexible.

How to meet with your Congressional Members locally:

Plan to meet with your Congressional offices during National CD Week. Meeting with a member of Congress, or Congressional staff, is a very effective way to convey a message about a specific issue or

legislative matter. With the continued focus on reducing the federal budget, it is important to meet with your Congressional Members to inform them of the importance of CDBG and HOME **and the need for more funding**. With budget constraints, it is impractical for most grantees to travel to Washington, DC to meet with lawmakers. Scheduling a meeting in the district office is just as effective. If possible, bring a sub-recipient or beneficiary to the meeting with you. Congressional Members like to hear directly from the organizations or people whom the programs serve. Locate the phone number for the District offices of your Congressional Members using the following links. Call each office and speak with the scheduler to arrange a meeting during National Community Development Week. Introduce yourself. State who you are and make the district connection: For example, my name is XX and I'm from the XX organization in the Congressperson's district. Inform the scheduler that you would like to meet with the Congressional Member (or their staff) to discuss and share information on community development (CDBG) and affordable housing (HOME) programs in their district/state.

Where to locate the district office information for your Congressional delegation:

- House of Representatives: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>
- U.S. Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>

Meeting Plan:

1. **Be on Time.** Staff and members are on a tight schedule.
2. **Acknowledge and thank your Member of Congress** (and their staff) for the meeting.
3. **Present your issues** (e.g., importance of CDBG/HOME to your community and need for increased CDBG/HOME funding in your community). Bring CDBG- and HOME-funded project examples. Discuss the impact of the projects on the community and how the programs have changed lives. If you have brought a sub-recipient or beneficiary to the meeting, let them tell the Congressional Member how the program has helped them. Be prepared to answer questions.
4. **Pose for a photograph.** At the end of the meeting, ask the member or their staff for a picture with your group. Tweet and post the picture with the hashtag #CDWeek2020.
5. **Follow-up** the meeting with a thank you letter or email. Attach any additional pertinent information and materials, especially if the Congressional Member or staff requested additional information.

How to Address Emails/Correspondence:

The Honorable (Full Name)

District Office Address

Dear Senator/Representative (Last Name):

Decide Upon National Community Development Week Activities

Projects can be showcased in a variety of ways depending on your capacity. Simple activities like writing a letter to your lawmakers describing your project and the role CDBG and HOME played in making it happen can make a huge difference. Most of the activities require minimal effort. Combined with the voices of your colleagues across the country, planning a successful activity or set of activities could create one of the most impactful National Community Development Weeks for your community to date. As mentioned previously, invite your Congressional delegation to participate in at least one National Community Development Week event. **Reiterate the need for increased funding for CDBG and HOME in whatever activities you choose.**

Activity Ideas:

- Write a letter to your lawmakers describing recent community development projects and the role CDBG and HOME programs played in making them happen and the impact of the projects on your community.
- Meet with Congressional Members/staff at their district offices to discuss the importance of CDBG and HOME to your community and the need for more program funding.
- Issue a press release and proclamation announcing National CD Week and outline how CDBG and HOME funds are used in your community. Send the press release and proclamation to your lawmakers and local media. These activities require minimal effort and can be undertaken by every grantee. A sample press release and proclamation are included in this Tool Kit. Some communities also hold special ceremonies or press briefings to announce the passage of the proclamation to gain further media attention for National CD Week.
- Conduct a tour of local CDBG and HOME funded projects for your lawmakers, local elected officials, and the media.
- Work with your communications department/staff to develop a YouTube video of some of your CDBG and HOME funded projects. Ask your mayor, city administrator, or council person to provide an introduction. Include sub-recipients and beneficiaries in the video. Send it to your Congressional Members via email.
- Hold a groundbreaking ceremony or ribbon-cutting of a CDBG or HOME funded project. Invite your lawmakers, local elected officials, and the media.
- Have CDBG and HOME program beneficiaries sign on to a CDBG/HOME support letter to your lawmakers.
- Collect stories from program beneficiaries on how the programs have changed their lives. Send the stories to your Congressional offices.
- Ask your local newspaper to write a story on one of your projects.

Examples from Past National CD Week Participants:

- **Tulsa, OK** proclamation video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPCX4KS_DM0
- **St. Louis, MO bus tour of local projects:**
<https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/community-development/events/upload/CDA-Bus-Tour-Final.pdf>
- **McAllen, TX CDBG video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0k7wzmv80&t=3s>
- **La Crosse, WI** kicked off CD Week in a neighborhood revitalization area where the Mayor, State Senators, Congressional Members, members of the neighborhood association, and council members toured four homes funded with CDBG and completed in partnership by the City of La Crosse, Western Technical College and Habitat for Humanity.
- The **Nebraska Department of Economic Development** released [CDBG](#) and [HOME](#) impact statements showcasing how the programs support communities and housing in the state.
- **Arlington, TX** asked their non-profit CDBG subrecipients to have their clients complete [post cards](#) describing how the funding had helped them. The post cards were sent to Congressional offices.

- The **Louisiana Division of Administration** sends a [memorandum](#) to all CDBG recipients to encourage participation in National Community Development Week.
- **Florence, AL** issued a National Community Development Week [proclamation](#) and developed a [map](#) showing CDBG investment in the community over a five year period.
- **Knoxville, TN** worked with local media to do a [story](#) on the proposed elimination of CDBG and HOME.
- **Bridgeport, CT** held a [rally](#) to bring attention to the proposed budget cuts to CDBG and HOME.
- **Durham, NC** developed a [CDBG and HOME fact sheet](#) for use in their projects tour which included the participation of Rep. David Price, Chairman of the House Transportation, HUD Subcommittee.
- The **Arkansas Economic Development Commission** issued a [press release](#) highlighting both overall CDBG investments and specific projects benefitting from the program.

Promote National Community Development Week

Promotion is critical to a successful National CD Week campaign. Communities must use a variety of methods to reach all stakeholders and publicize activities and events. Congressional Members want to hear how program dollars are being spent to improve their communities; therefore, the use of local media (such as print, television, and radio) is important to documenting your National CD Week activities and ensuring your Congressional Members and the community are made aware of your program activities.

Marketing Ideas:

- Issue a press release and media advisory in advance of National Community Development and/or on the first day of National Community Development Week. Include information on the impact of the programs in the community.
- Use social media to alert followers to National CD Week activities. **#CDWeek2020**
- Use your jurisdiction’s website to advertise National CD Week events and provide information on CDBG and HOME funded projects.
- Invite local television, radio and print media to cover your events.
- Post signage at CDBG and HOME funded projects.

Examples:

- **Burlington, VT** sent out a [press release](#); highlighted five CDBG subrecipient projects on the city’s Facebook page; aired public service announcements (PSAs); and produced programming for a local radio show by interviewing two CDBG subrecipients.
- **Shreveport, LA** posted the dates of National Community Development Week on a digital billboard on Interstate 20.
- **Richland County, SC** released [information on events](#) and posted signage at local CDBG- and HOME-funded projects to make the public aware of the programs.



- The **Arkansas Economic Development Commission** issued a [press release](#) highlighting both overall CDBG investments and specific projects benefitting from the program.

Social Media Guidance

Importance of the # (Hashtag) - #CDWeek2020

Hashtags (#) label posts for ease of searching for social media content by topic. When organizations do not use the hashtag, that content is discoverable searching keywords, e.g. “Community Development Week;” however, the hashtag is clickable and can pull together the content under one umbrella very quickly. This increases the chances of engagement with others who are posting about the same topic. Engagement drives reach. The more reach the posts have, the more “return on investment” of the time staff is putting into social media posting.

Practical Applications

- Use social media to “call to action” such as asking followers to call legislators about CDBG and HOME funding in the Federal budget.
- Share exciting stories in more than one format. Give readers more than a headline by writing a blog article. Share more than one photo per post to give viewers a broader perspective of the story behind the post.
- Cross-reference and utilize multiple media channels. Post links or photos of newspaper articles. Include event registration links in press release or in posts if applicable. Be aware of formatting content appropriate to each platform. Make yourself familiar with each platform and how they are different.
- Post familiar faces. Include photos of Mayor, other dignitaries, and participants. Use photo release for children under 18.
- Engage with individuals and organizations both in person and online. Engage with other pages to drive engagement on your page. Make the request for individuals and organizations to participate in the social media campaign and provide guidance.
- Consider enhanced content options such as podcasts, recorded videos, live streaming, infographics, and blogs.

Advice on Personal Branding

- Keep your personal and your organization voice separate. Interact between the two accounts if comfortable. For example, like and share the organization content as yourself. Be aware of privacy settings. (Boilerplate: “Postings on this site are my own and do not reflect or represent the opinions of the agency for which I work.”) Do not use your government email address for personal accounts, for various reasons.
- Review agency social media policy; seek required communication reviews, permission to disclose public information, and permission to tag.
- Participate in live events (such as Twitter Chats or Facebook Live). Join or start a group. Tweet and share using relevant hashtags. Be a thought leader.

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

Sample Proclamation/Resolution

Share this proclamation with local media outlets and your Congressional offices during National Community Development Week.

WHEREAS, the week of **April 13-17, 2020** has been designated as National Community Development Week to recognize and celebrate the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program; and

WHEREAS, since 1975, the CDBG Program has provided annual funding and flexibility to local communities to provide affordable housing, a suitable living environment, and economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, since, 1992, the HOME Program has created and preserved affordable housing for low-income families; and

WHEREAS, over the past five years, our community has received more than \$_____ in CDBG funds and \$_____ in HOME funds; and

WHEREAS, both programs have suffered funding cuts over the years; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City/County of _____ designates the week of **April 13-17, 2020** as National Community Development Week in support of these two valuable programs that have made tremendous contributions to the viability of the housing stock, infrastructure, public services, and economic vitality of our community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress and the Administration to recognize the outstanding work being done locally with CDBG and HOME funds by providing increased funding for both programs in **FY 2021**.

Sample Press Release

Use this press release to announce National Community Development Week to media outlets, program partners, and elected officials.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Phone Number:

E-Mail:

The City/County of _____ Celebrates National Community Development Week; April 13-17, 2020

The City/County of _____ will recognize the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program during National Community Development Week, **April 13-17, 2020**. The week-long celebration brings together citizens, elected officials, media, program staff, subrecipients and beneficiaries through events that recognize and showcase the programs. National Community Development Week also serves as a venue for educating the public about the programs.

For more than 40 years, CDBG has provided local communities with an important source of funds to address affordable housing and community and economic development needs. The CDBG program provides grants to over 1,200 local governments to create neighborhood approaches that improve the physical, economic and social conditions in communities. Every \$1.00 of CDBG leverages more than \$4.00 in other funding; bringing additional vital resources to communities.

For more than 25 years, the HOME program has helped communities provide access to affordable housing for low-income households. The HOME program provides grants to over 600 local participating jurisdictions to create safe, sanitary, and affordable housing in communities nationwide. Every \$1.00 of HOME leverages \$4.44 in other funding.

Both programs are administered nationally by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. These programs are needed more than ever to help our most vulnerable citizens and improve the overall condition of our neighborhoods. The City/County will highlight both programs during National CD Week by conducting the following activities [Describe your CD Week activities].

Sample Program Fact Sheet

Please complete this fact sheet and send it to your Congressional delegation during National Community Development Week.

Executive Summary

Describe how CDBG and HOME funding are used to improve the community

Who are the program beneficiaries?

Why is more CDBG and HOME funding needed in my community?

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Accomplishments

In the past five years, \$_____ in CDBG funding has been invested in the community.

This investment has leveraged \$_____ in additional funding.

In the past five years, _____ people have been served by the program.

Important results: Outline one or two projects/programs that have made an important impact on the community.

HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program Accomplishments

In the past five years, \$_____ in HOME funding has been invested in the community.

This investment has leveraged \$_____ in additional funding.

In the past five years, _____ people have been served by the program.

Important results: Outline one or two projects/programs that have made an important impact on the community.