



**OFFICE OF LONG-TERM RESILIENCY**

**HURRICANE IRMA  
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Version 2.4  
March 19, 2023

## VERSION HISTORY

Version Number	Date	Summary of Changes
1.0	7/16/2019	Draft Citizen Participation Plan posted to website
2.0	1/1/2021	Updated list of open Rebuild Florida centers, updated Disaster Recovery address, updated phone number for Fair Housing complaints
2.1	3/25/2021	Updated references to Office of Disaster Recovery (ODR) to the program's new name, Office of Long-Term Resiliency (OLTR)
2.2	10/28/2021	<p>Updated formatting for consistency with other program documents, added Version Policy language.</p> <p>Updated "Public Notice" section and subheadings "Notice of Substantial Amendments" and "Notice of Public Hearings" with information on FloridaCommerce's efforts to encourage participation and keep citizens informed</p> <p>Updated "Public Comment" section with information on the availability and duration of public comment periods for FloridaCommerce's Action Plan and its amendments</p> <p>Updated "Accessibility" section by separating information on Accessibility for individuals with Limited English Proficiency and individuals with disabilities, into two sections. Added information on efforts FloridaCommerce makes to ensure meaningful access to LEP and disabled individuals in compliance with the requirements at 24 CFR 91.115</p> <p>Updated "Public Outreach" by adding the sections "Outreach Plan" and "LEP Outreach." Moved Public Outreach chart from Public Notice and Comment Period to Public Outreach</p> <p>Updated Citizens Complaints and Inquiries to specify that written responses will be provided within 15 working days to all complaints</p> <p>Updated "Anti-Fraud, Waste, and Abuse" section</p>
2.3	1/4/2022	Updated Non-Substantial Amendment text regarding the posting of non-substantial amendments and the consolidated action plan.
2.4	3/19/2024	<p>As of July 1, 2023, and per Florida HB 5, ch. 2023-173, L.O.F. the former Florida Department of Economic Opportunity has been renamed the Florida Department of Commerce, referred to as "FloridaCommerce."</p> <p>To reflect this change, all references to the former Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (including "the Department" and "DEO") have been updated to represent FloridaCommerce. Associated branding (including logos, fonts, and colors) has been updated throughout the document.</p>

## **VERSION POLICY**

Version history is tracked in the table above, with notes regarding version changes. The dates of each publication are also tracked in this table.

This manual will be updated as needed to incorporate changes based on information obtained from attending CDBG-DR and program-related training workshops, seminars, webinars, and other resources, including changes in federal and state laws, rules, regulations and program policies and procedures. In addition, information obtained at the training sessions and an overview of the training sessions will be provided to all staff in the Office of Long-Term Resiliency that did not attend the training as part of a continuous education program. Updated guidelines specific to each program will also be posted on the Office of Long-Term Resiliency webpage. Information about FloridaCommerce's Office of Long-Term Resiliency can be found at: [www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR](http://www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR).

Substantive changes in this document that reflect a policy change will result in the issuance of a new version of the document. For example, a substantive policy change after the issuance of Version 1.0 would result in the issuance of Version 2.0, an increase in the primary version number. Non-substantive changes such as minor wording and editing or clarification of existing policy that do not affect interpretation or applicability of the policy will be included in minor version updates denoted by a sequential number increase behind the primary version number (i.e., Version 2.1, Version 2.2, etc.).

## **POLICY CHANGE CONTROL**

Policy review and changes for the State of Florida Office of Long-Term Resiliency are considered through a change-control process. Policy clarifications, additions, or deletions are needed during the course of the program to more precisely define the rules by which the Program will operate. Program staff will document policy-change requests that will be tracked in the program files. Requests are compiled and brought before supervisory staff in a policy meeting. Subject matter experts working in a particular policy area or task area that will be affected by the policy decision may be invited to assist in policy evaluation, if necessary. Policy meetings will be held as frequently as is necessary to consider policy decisions critical to moving the Program forward in a timely manner. Policy decisions will be documented and will result in the revision of the document in question.

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## Introduction

The primary goal of this plan is to provide Floridians with definitive opportunities to participate in the long-term recovery efforts of the Florida Department of Commerce's (FloridaCommerce) Office of Long-Term Resiliency. The FloridaCommerce Office of Long-Term Resiliency Citizen Participation Plan for the Hurricane Irma allocation was developed based on the requirements outlined in U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Federal Register Notice, Volume 83, No. 157 published Tuesday, August 14, 2018 and HUD Federal Register Notice, Volume 83, No. 28 published Friday, February 9, 2018.

According to the Notice No. 28, "To permit a more streamlined process, and ensure disaster recovery grants are awarded in a timely manner, provisions of 42 U.S.C. 5304(a)(2) and (3), 42 U.S.C. 12707, 24 CFR 570.486, 24 CFR 1003.604, and 24 CFR 91.115(b) and (c), with respect to citizen participation requirements, are waived and replaced by the requirements below. The streamlined requirements do not mandate public hearings but do require the grantee to provide a reasonable opportunity (at least 14 days) for citizen comment and ongoing citizen access to information about the use of grant funds."

The most current version of the Office of Long-Term Resiliency's Citizen Participation Plan for Hurricane Irma will be placed on the official Office of Long-Term Resiliency website at [www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR](http://www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR).

## Action Plan

The State of Florida Action Plan for Disaster Recovery for Hurricane Irma, and any following amendments, defines how the Office of Long-Term Resiliency will effectively use all available funding to support a data-driven recovery based on the calculation of unmet need across the state. The action plan describes Florida's proposed allocation by activity and lays out program designs for each area of assistance. The plan also identifies the beginning and end dates for each disaster recovery activity, performance and expenditure schedule.

Before adopting the State of Florida Action Plan for Disaster Recovery, FloridaCommerce sought public input on program design issues including the amount of assistance Florida expected to receive, the range of activities that may be undertaken, the estimated amount of benefit expected for persons of low-to-moderate income and plans to mitigate displacement. A summary of outreach feedback is included in the State of Florida Action Plan approved by HUD. The final plan approved by HUD is posted to [www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR](http://www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR).

## Amendments to the Action Plan

### Substantial Amendment

As additional information and funding becomes available through the grant administration process, amendments to this Action Plan are expected. Prior to adopting any substantial amendment to this Action Plan, the Office of Long-Term Resiliency will publish the proposed plan or amendment on the official website and will afford citizens, affected local governments, and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine the plan or amendment's contents. At a minimum, the following modifications will constitute a substantial amendment:

- a change in program benefit or eligibility criteria;
- the addition or deletion of an activity; or
- the allocation or reallocation of more than 10 percent of the original appropriation.

Citizens will be provided with no less than 30 days to review and provide comment on proposed substantial changes. A summary of all comments received will be included in the final substantial

amendment submitted to HUD for approval. Final substantial amendments approved by HUD will be posted to RebuildFlorida.gov.

## Non-Substantial Amendment

The Office of Long-Term Resiliency will notify HUD when it makes any plan amendment that is not substantial. HUD will be notified at least five (5) business days before the amendment becomes effective. HUD will acknowledge receipt of the notification of non-substantial amendments via email within five (5) business days.

Every amendment, substantial or not, will be numbered sequentially and posted on RebuildFlorida.gov.

## Public Notice and Public Comment Period

Before the Action Plan for this grant or any substantial amendment to this grant is adopted, the Office of Long-Term Resiliency will publish the proposed plan or amendment on [www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR](http://www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR), and will cross-reference with additional agency websites: <http://floridajobs.org/rebuildflorida> and <http://rebuildflorida.gov>.

## Public Notice

### Notice of Substantial Amendments

- *Constant Contact* email will be sent to stakeholders in relevant impacted areas to encourage community participation.
  - Email will be sent on first day of the public comment period providing dates and instructions for comment submission.
  - Reminder email will be sent 7 days before the close of the public comment period.
- Public comment periods for housing-related amendments will be noted in the weekly social media content for FloridaCommerce Twitter and Facebook pages in the week the public comment period begins and will continue through the end of the public comment period.
- LEP Consideration- Social media posts will provide reasonable access to Spanish and Creole-speaking individuals. (Posts will be available in Haitian Creole and Spanish, or infographics will be included with verbiage on how to access info in other languages.)

### Notice of Public Hearings

- Notice of a public hearing will be provided 7 days before publication on RebuildFlorida.gov.
- *Constant Contact* email will be sent to stakeholders in relevant impacted areas to encourage community participation.
- Outbound phone calls will be made to Long Term Recovery Organizations and community stakeholders in impacted regions, to encourage event participation.
- Postings will be made in local newspapers in all relevant languages at least 1 week in advance of the hearing.
- LEP Consideration- Inclusion of content in relevant languages will be provided. Additional translation services are able to be provided, upon request.

## Public Comment

- Florida's citizen public comment period is open for the following timeframes:
  - Public comment period for the original Action Plan was open for 14 days from the publication of the Action Plan to RebuildFlorida.gov.
  - Public comment period for Substantial Amendments will remain open for 30 days from the publication of the Substantial Amendment to RebuildFlorida.gov.

The Office of Long-Term Resiliency will take comments via USPS mail, fax, email, or through the main website:

Attention: Rebuild Florida Constituent Services

Florida Department of Commerce

Division of Community Development

107 East Madison Street

Caldwell Building, MSC 420

Tallahassee, FL 32399

E-mail: [CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov)

Website: [www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR](http://www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR)

## Consideration of Public Comments

The Office of Long-Term Resiliency will consider all written comments regarding the Action Plan or any substantial amendment. A summary of the comments and the response to each will be located in the appendix section of the Action Plan or substantial amendment submitted to HUD.

All comments and responses will be submitted to HUD with the Action Plan or substantial amendment.

## Accessibility

Florida is committed to providing all citizens with equal access to information about the disaster recovery program, including persons with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Florida follows HUD's regulation, 24 CFR Part 1, "Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development—Effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," which requires all recipients of federal financial assistance from HUD to provide meaningful access to LEP persons and persons with disabilities.

The Office of Long-Term Resiliency will ensure that all citizens have equal access to information about the programs, including persons with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and will ensure that program information is available in the appropriate languages for the geographic area served by the jurisdiction.

To ensure meaningful access for individuals with disabilities or LEP, FloridaCommerce developed and implemented a Rebuild Florida Language Access and Accessibility Plan, which details how Florida will address these needs. The Language Access and Accessibility Plan is available on the Office of Long-Term Resiliency website at <http://www.floridajobs.org/cdbq-dr>.

Additional interpretive and translational services are available upon request.

## Limited English Proficiency

Persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English may be entitled to language assistance with respect to a particular type of service, benefit or encounter. To address this need, FloridaCommerce developed and implemented a Rebuild Florida Language Access Plan, which details how Florida will address the needs of LEP individuals. This Language Access Plan is available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole on the Office of Long-Term Resiliency website at <http://www.floridajobs.org/cdbq-dr>.

Translators will be present when a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate in public hearings or open comment periods. FloridaCommerce brings to each public hearing, printed, Spanish and Haitian Creole copies of the presentation to be given at the



hearing. In addition to these copies, copies translated into other languages can be provided, if requested. Requests for translation of a public hearing presentation can be sent to [CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov).

Outreach materials and citizen comments will also be translated into the appropriate language.

The State of Florida Action Plan for Disaster Recovery, any ensuing amendments, outreach materials, the application and related guidance materials will be published in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole. The languages selected were selected based on the entire eligible area of the CDBG-DR funds allocated for Hurricane Irma Disaster Recovery, and the proportion of LEP individuals. Recognizing there may be a need for individuals to have access to the document in additional languages, the Office of Long-Term Resiliency will be contracting with an as needed translation service to provide personalized translations of the Action Plan and other program documents, upon request. Rebuild Florida Centers and any public places that work directly in programs available to private individuals will carry signage (e.g., “I speak” visual card containing a wide range of language samples) detailing the availability of this specialized translation service.

FloridaCommerce has also posted an Interpretive and Translation Services Notice on [RebuildFlorida.gov](http://RebuildFlorida.gov) and [www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR](http://www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR) informing individuals that free interpretation services are available upon request in at least 15 different languages. OLTR will ensure that program information is available in the appropriate languages for the geographic area served by the jurisdiction.

Additional interpretive and translational services are available upon request.

## Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

In accordance with 24 CFR 91.115(a)(3) and (f), this Citizen Participation Plan and other program documents including but not limited to the CDBG-DR Hurricane Irma Action Plan for Disaster Recovery and its amendments, will be provided in a form accessible to persons with disabilities upon request.

FloridaCommerce strives to provide all information posted to its website in forms that are accessible by screen-readers and other assistive technology.

Auxiliary aids and service are available upon request to Individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers on this and all other FloridaCommerce documents may be reached by persons using TTY/TTD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.

FloridaCommerce has posted additional accessibility information on the Accessibility page of [RebuildFlorida.gov](http://RebuildFlorida.gov) at <https://floridajobs.org/rebuildflorida/accessibility>. This page links to the [Language Access and Accessibility Plan](#) and contains information on the availability of TDD/TTY services for individuals who are in need of relay services, and the availability of additional translation services upon request.

FloridaCommerce welcomes comments on how to improve accessibility for users with disabilities. Individuals who use assistive technology are encouraged to contact the Office of Long-Term Resiliency at [CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov) if the format of any material on the Office of Long-Term Resiliency Rebuild Florida website interferes with their ability to access the information.

Additional interpretive and translational services are available upon request.

## Sign Language Interpretation Service

When communicating with hearing-impaired applicants, the Rebuild Florida program provides support via Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) with Legal Language Services. Each Rebuild Florida Center is equipped with designated technical equipment (e.g. laptop, USB camera, speakers) to accommodate hearing-impaired applicants. Rebuild Florida staff will secure a private meeting location to setup VRI with a hearing-impaired applicant.



Sign language interpretation services can be provided at public hearings for individuals who require interpretation, if advance notice is provided. Individuals in need of such services should notify FloridaCommerce via email at [CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov).

## Technical Assistance

Citizens with disabilities or those who need technical assistance can contact the Rebuild Florida program for assistance at 844-833-1010 or visit one of the nine Rebuild Florida Centers located throughout the state.

**All Rebuild Florida Centers are open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.**

### **BROWARD COUNTY**

Next to CareerSource Broward  
2680 West Oakland Park Blvd.,  
Ft. Lauderdale

### **DUVAL COUNTY**

WorkSource Career Service building  
215 Market St.,  
Jacksonville

### **LEE COUNTY**

Department of Children and Families building  
(DCF)  
2295 Victoria Ave.,  
Fort Myers

### **MONROE COUNTY**

State of Florida Office Building, 2nd Floor  
796 Overseas Hwy., Suite 219-A,  
Marathon

### **ORANGE COUNTY**

Office complex  
6101 Chancellor Dr., Suite 100-B,  
Orlando

## Home Visits

Since the Rebuild Florida Program is prioritizing applicants with disabilities in Phase 1, it is important that the program provides reasonable accommodations to assist whenever and wherever necessary. This may require Rebuild Florida Intake Specialists to conduct home intake visits. The procedure is as follows:

1. Applicant requests an at-home visit with an Intake Specialist or Call Center Agent.
  - A. Applicant must be homebound - Elderly, disabled, or otherwise incapacitated and unable to access assistance in transportation to an Intake Center as verified by an Intake Specialist through a screening call.
2. Center Managers will determine who will be assigned to conduct the home visit. The files should be assigned based on geography of an applicant's current address and proximity to an Intake Center.
3. The file must be scheduled in AppointmentPlus with the appropriate Intake Center. The Intake Specialist will be required to make the appointment, choosing the "Home Visit" option from the dropdown menu. Calls received by the Call Center requesting an at-home visit will be documented in SharePoint for the appropriate Center Manager to review for assignment and outreach.
  - A. Home visits must be scheduled a minimum of one (1) week from the date requested and approved by the Center Manager.
  - B. Should a home visit need to be scheduled within one (1) week, it must be approved by the Single-Family Housing Manager.
4. The Intake Specialist contacts applicant to review information, inform them of the documentation requirements, and confirms appointment 24 hours prior.

- A. Intake Specialists can ask about pets in the home for both aggression and allergy issues. Homeowners should be advised that they must have pets locked away at the time of the home visit.
5. The Center Manager will assign an additional program staff member to attend the home visit with the Intake Specialist. For safety reasons, at-home visits should be conducted by two Program staff members together.
6. The Intake Specialist will bring a mobile kit (scanner/MiFi/laptop) to the visit.
7. The Intake Specialist and additional program representative will arrive at the applicant's location.
  - A. The assigned Intake Specialist will review the program and complete the application with the applicant.
  - B. The other staff member will complete the scanning of any required documents.
  - C. The Intake Specialist will record any issues for follow-up requested by the applicant.
8. Staff should keep track of the mileage and submit for reimbursement in accordance with the program's travel policy.

## Public Outreach

### Community Consultation

The Florida Department of Commerce (FloridaCommerce) staff conducted stakeholder meetings in each of the 14 HUD-identified most-impacted and distressed areas. At these meetings, participants were given a brief overview of the program and an opportunity to ask questions. FloridaCommerce worked with participants to identify each community's remaining unmet needs and discuss various program options that may be available to meet those needs. FloridaCommerce also asked for the participants' feedback and program preference to get a sense of what types of programs would be most beneficial to communities.

Stakeholder meetings were held from March 1, 2018 through March 20, 2018 at the following locations:

- Thursday, March 1, 2018
  - Monroe County
  - Flagler County (32136)
- Friday, March 2, 2018
  - Miami-Dade County
  - Broward County
  - Wednesday, March 7, 2018
    - Clay County (32068)
    - Bradford County (32091)
- Monday, March 5, 2018
  - Volusia County
  - Brevard County
  - Orange County
  - Monday, March 19, 2018
    - Desoto County (34266)
    - Polk County
- Tuesday, March 6, 2018
  - Duval County
  - Tuesday, March 20, 2018
    - Lee County
    - Collier Count

FloridaCommerce conducted a digital outreach campaign consisting of three webinars to keep stakeholders informed of the process and to solicit their feedback. FloridaCommerce also developed a survey to capture feedback from communities that were outside the HUD-identified, most-impacted and distressed areas and to allow for additional input from communities that were not able to attend stakeholder meetings. Finally, FloridaCommerce created an open mailing list, which provides ongoing outreach information. The mailing list is open to the public and the registration information is prominently

displayed on [RebuildFlorida.gov](http://RebuildFlorida.gov). FloridaCommerce has continued its public outreach efforts and has remained available to answer questions from communities and stakeholders.

## Community Outreach Events

Through public-private partnerships and coordination with local organizations, Rebuild Florida facilitated more than 100 public outreach events in the most impacted communities during the initial registration and application phases.



*Figure 1: Outreach Tabling Event at Milagro Restaurant (Initial Registration Period)*

*Big Pine Key, FL*



*Figure 2: Outreach Tabling Event at Northwest Branch Library (Initial Registration Period)*

*Pompano Beach, FL*

## Public Website

The Office of Long-Term Resiliency will make the following items available on [www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR](http://www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR): (1) the Action Plan (including all amendments); each Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) as created using the DRGR system; (2) procurement, policies and procedures; (3) executed CDBG-DR contracts; and (4) status of services or goods currently being procured by the Office of Long-Term Resiliency (e.g., phase of the procurement, requirements for proposals, etc.). In addition to the specific items listed above, the Office of Long-Term Resiliency will maintain a comprehensive website regarding all disaster recovery activities assisted with these funds. This includes reporting information on the Office of Long-Term Resiliency's main website and additional in-depth program information on a separate site dedicated specifically to disaster recovery, [rebuildflorida.gov](http://rebuildflorida.gov). Both websites will be updated monthly to reflect the most up-to-date information about the use of these funds and any changes in policies and procedures.

## Performance Reporting

In accordance to HUD requirements, Florida will submit a Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) through the HUD Disaster Recovery Grant Reporting (DRGR) system no later than 30 days following the end of each calendar quarter. Three days before submission to HUD, Florida will post each QPR for public review and comment on [www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR](http://www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-DR). Program QPR's will be posted on a quarterly basis until all funds have been expended and all expenditures have been reported.

## Citizen Complaints and Inquiries

OLTR will handle citizen complaints and inquiries through a Constituent Services Management staff. All complaints and inquiries received by the state, its contractor, and/or other program sources, will be reviewed by the Constituent Services Management staff for:

1. Investigation, as necessary;
2. Resolution; or
3. Follow-up actions.

Citizens may file a written complaint or inquiry by email to [CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov) or by postal mail to the following address:

Attention: Rebuild Florida Constituent Services  
Florida Department of Commerce  
Division of Community Development  
107 East Madison Street  
Caldwell Building, MSC 420  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

The state will provide a written response to all complaints within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint via email or U.S. mail. Following the initial response, the state will make every effort to provide a resolution to complaints within the 15-working day period. If a resolution cannot be reached within the 15-working day period, the complainant will receive a status update on the issue(s) and, if possible, a timeframe for when a resolution can be reached. Constituent Management Services Lead will monitor response times to ensure compliance and will adjust timeframes for additional responses as needed.

Constituent Management staff will maintain files that include:

1. The name of the person who filed the complaint;
2. The date the complaint was received;
3. A description of the complaint;
4. The name of each person contacted in relation to the complaint;
5. A summary of the results of the review or investigation of the complaint; and
6. An explanation of the resolution (e.g., the reason the file was closed)

## Appeals

All applications, guidelines and websites will include details on the right to file a complaint or appeal, and the process for filing a complaint or beginning an appeal. Complaints may be lodged regarding all concerns that arise related to the procedures followed and services provided by the Rebuild Florida Housing Repair and Replacement Program (HRRP). Appeals may be lodged only upon the deliverance of an adverse program decision regarding eligibility, closure of an application or denial of relocation assistance to a tenant and only within the parameters set by the Appeals procedure. No person may appeal program policy.

## Housing Repair and Replacement Program - Appeals

During the course of the program's operations, decisions will be made on housing assistance applications and/or housing unit projects to be delivered. These decisions will be made based on applicable statutes, codes of federal regulation, state and local codes and ordinances, local guidelines, and program

operational procedures, as each is interpreted by the State of Florida. During the course of these activities, it is possible that citizens may decide they have a legitimate reason to appeal a decision. In order to allow for such circumstances, applicants are allowed to appeal program decisions related to one of the following activities:

1. A program eligibility and/or priority determination;
2. A program assistance award calculation; and
3. A program decision concerning housing unit damage and the resulting program outcome.

## Process

An appeals process initiated by the applicant or a tenant will include an informal and formal, written grievance procedure which may include but not be limited to informal hearings, third-party review or administrative review. HRRP will render a decision regarding exception reviews and formal appeals. Appeals, grievances, and exceptions will be further explained in the Complaints, Appeals and Exceptions Procedures.

1. Once an applicant is deemed ineligible following the IEM reconsideration and cure process, the applicant must submit a written request to appeal to FloridaCommerce within 30 days of the ineligibility determination
  - Appealable issues include: denial of application based on eligibility requirements, damage assessment, environmental review, etc.
2. The appeal can be sent via email, fax or mail
  - o [CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:CDBG-DR@Commerce.fl.gov)
  - o Office of Long-Term Resiliency, Appeals Lead  
Florida Department of Commerce  
Division of Community Development  
107 East Madison Street  
Caldwell Building, MSC 420  
Tallahassee, FL 32399
  - o Once received, the Hearing Officer will date stamp the request for appeal
3. The Hearing Officer will prepare and mail a Notice of Hearing to the applicant using delivery confirmation within 15 days of receiving the request for appeal.
  - The Notice of Hearing will include the date and time of the hearing as well as the issue to be addressed during the hearing.
    - o The hearing will be scheduled no fewer than 10 business days in advance of occurrence.
  - The applicant will have the option to forward additional documentation to the Hearing Officer prior to the hearing, if applicable.
    - o Any additional documentation received by the Hearing Officer will be date stamped and must be received at least 24 hours prior to the hearing.
4. The hearing will be held telephonically on the date and time listed on the Notice of Hearing. The hearings will be recorded using the digital recording system (TBD) or a handheld recording device.
  - The hearing officer will dial the number for the applicant listed on the Notice to Appeal
    - o At least two attempts should be made to contact the applicant
  - The hearing officer will validate the delivery confirmation as to when the applicant received the Notice of Hearing on the record
5. During the hearing, the Hearing Officer will establish the record addressing any issues of ineligibility, review all additional documents with the applicant and allow for testimony of the applicant.



6. Following the conclusion of the hearing, a final written decision will be issued by the Hearing Officer based on the merits of the case, testimony of the applicant, additional documentation and program policy and procedure.
  - The final decision will be mailed using delivery confirmation to the applicant within 30 days following the hearing.
7. The Hearing Officer will update the applicant's record and eligibility status in SERA to approve or reject the applicant from moving forward in the process.
8. If the applicant is dissatisfied with the final decision of the Hearing Officer, the applicant has the ability to appeal with the Florida Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH).

## Fair Housing



**Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended, makes discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin illegal in connection with the sale or rental of most housing and any vacant land offered for residential construction or use.**

The Rebuild Florida program is committed to affirmatively furthering fair housing through the established affirmative marketing policies summarized below. The goal is to ensure that eligible persons from all racial, ethnic, national origin, religious, familial status, the disabled, "special needs," gender groups, and populations least likely to apply for assistance are given the opportunity to rehabilitate their rental property that sustained damages due to Hurricane Irma and/or its after effects.

1. In accordance to the affirmative marketing policies and procedures, program participants will be informed about available opportunities and supporting requirements via counselors, printed and electronic materials, publications, direct contact, workshops/seminars, and through the placement of flyers and posters in public facilities.
2. The Housing Repair and Replacement Program will conduct marketing through widely available media outlets. Efforts will be taken to affirmatively market the Rebuild Florida CDBG-DR program as follows:
  - A. Advertise with media outlets, which provides unique access for persons who are considered members of a protected class under the Fair Housing Act.
  - B. Reach out to public or non-profit organizations under the Fair Housing Act.
  - C. Conduct other forms of outreach tailored to reaching the eligible population, including door to door outreach if necessary.
3. Applications and forms will be offered in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. In addition, every effort will be made to assist limited English proficient potential applicants in the application process.
4. Measures will be taken to make the program accessible to persons who are considered members of a protected class under the Fair Housing Act by holding informational meetings in buildings that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), providing sign language assistance when requested (with a three-day notice), and providing special assistance for those who are visually impaired when requested (also with a three-day notice).
5. All marketing measures used, including copies of all advertisements and announcements, will be documented and retained and made available to the public upon request.
6. The Housing Repair and Replacement Program will use the Fair Housing logo in program advertising, post Fair Housing posters and related information, and, in general, inform the public of its rights under Fair Housing regulations.

## Suggested Activities for Landlords, Managers, Agents, and the General Public

The Rebuild Florida program is committed to affirmatively furthering fair housing through the following suggested information-based activities for landlords, managers, agents, and the general public:

1. Information Outreach: Requesting landlords to post or provide Fair Housing Notices.
2. Information for the General Public: Topics include overview of the Fair Housing laws, (classes, illegal acts, and penalties) rights and responsibilities in buying and selling homes, tenant selection criteria, family issues (e.g., occupancy standards, safety), and renting to the disabled, etc. See 24 CFR.50, 100.65, 100.80.
3. Information for Rental Managers, Agents, and Landlords: Topics include overview of the Fair Housing laws, (classes, illegal acts, and penalties) tenant selection criteria, family issues (e.g., occupancy standards, safety), renting to the disabled, record keeping, advertising, and evictions.

## Fair Housing Complaints

Persons alleging a violation of fair housing laws will be referred to FloridaCommerce's local contact and process to file a complaint. FloridaCommerce will retain a log and record all fair housing inquiries, allegations, complaints and referrals. In addition, FloridaCommerce will report suspected non-compliance to HUD. The contact for Fair Housing Complaints is:

[FairHousing@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:FairHousing@Commerce.fl.gov)

## Anti-Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

Rebuild Florida constituents, employees and contractors may report suspected fraud, waste, or abuse by contacting Constituent Management Services staff, submitting information via the Report Fraud, Waste or Abuse online form (<http://floridajobs.org/rebuildflorida/report>; (all contact information fields are optional to allow for anonymity) or by sending an e-mail to [cdbg-dr\\_antifraudwasteabuse@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:cdbg-dr_antifraudwasteabuse@Commerce.fl.gov).

All suspected cases of fraud will be taken seriously, and complaints will be reported to OLTR's Compliance and Reporting Manager and FloridaCommerce's Office of the Inspector General at [OIG@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:OIG@Commerce.fl.gov). If FloridaCommerce's OIG determines that it is appropriate, it will coordinate its investigation with agencies such as the Florida Office of the Inspector General, the Florida Office of the Attorney General, or the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation.

All substantiated cases of fraud, waste, or abuse of government funds will be forwarded to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Inspector General (OIG) Fraud Hotline (phone: 1-800-347-3735 or email: [hotline@hudoig.gov](mailto:hotline@hudoig.gov)) and FloridaCommerce's HUD Community Planning and Development (CPD) Representative. *OLTR must provide a timely response within 15 working days of the receipt of a complaint, as stated in 84 FR 169.*

**Office of Long-Term Resiliency's comprehensive Anti-Fraud Waste and Abuse Policy can be found [here](#).**

## Public Record Requests

Pursuant to Article 1, Section 24, Florida Constitution and Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, the Department of Commerce is subject to the Florida Public Records Law. Accordingly, unless an exemption exists, all records produced or received pursuant to law or in connection with the official business of FloridaCommerce can be requested and provided for inspection. All Public Records requests will be



processed in accordance with [FloridaCommerce Administrative Policy 1.06](#), Processing Public Records Requests.

A Public Records Request may be verbal or take any form (e.g., email, written correspondence, in-person). The Public Records Act does not require that requests be in writing, comply with a certain form or have any specific content. A public records request may come from a member of the media, the general public, an employee, or any other individual. FloridaCommerce cannot mandate receipt of the name of the requestor or purpose of the request in order to fulfill the Public Records Request.

A Public Record is defined as all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance, or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.

Public records include all things made or received in connection with FloridaCommerce business. All such materials, electronic and on paper, regardless of whether they are in draft or final form, are open to public inspection unless exempt or confidential.

The Public Record Coordinator is the person appointed by FloridaCommerce charged with the responsibility of maintaining the Office of Public Records, including processing and tracking public record requests. The Public Record Coordinator is responsible for overseeing FloridaCommerce's compliance with public record/open government requirements and maintains a complete record of all FloridaCommerce public record requests and corresponding disclosures. The Public Record Coordinator also serves as the primary liaison between FloridaCommerce and the Office of Open Government in the Executive Office of the Governor.

The Office of Long-Term Resiliency's Constituent Services Manager will act as a Public Record Division Liaison, and is the primary contact for all public record requests regarding the Office of Long-Term Resiliency or the Rebuild Florida Program. The Office of Long-Term Resiliency's Public Record Division Liaison will coordinate with the respective managers of each program to determine (1) what is and what is not a responsive record; and (2) where to find all responsive records.

## Procedures

### Intake and Processing

1. When an Employee receives a Public Records Request:
  - A. All employees who receive a Public Records Request will immediately forward the request to the Public Records Coordinator ([PRRequest@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:PRRequest@Commerce.fl.gov)) for acknowledgement and tracking.
  - B. Employees should then immediately notify their supervisor and Division Liaison regarding the request.
  - C. Any Employee receiving a Public Records Request will immediately coordinate with a supervisor and the Division's Public Records Liaison regarding questions pertaining to the request such as:(i) what is and what is not a responsive record; and (ii) where to find all responsive records.
  - D. Employees will diligently and expediently work with their Division Liaison to gather all responsive records to provide to the Public Records Coordinator, however collaboration with the Public Records Coordinator is expected throughout the process.
  - E. The Public Records Coordinator will remain, at all times, the point of contact between the requestor and FloridaCommerce.
2. When a Division Liaison receives a Public Records Request:
  - A. Division Liaisons will immediately forward the request to the Public Records Coordinator ([PRRequest@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:PRRequest@Commerce.fl.gov)) for acknowledgement and tracking.

- B. Division Liaisons will then work with staff in their Division to expeditiously gather all responsive records to provide to the Public Records Coordinator.
  - C. The Public Records Coordinator will remain, at all times, the point of contact between the requestor and FloridaCommerce.
3. When the Public Records Coordinator receives a Public Records Request:
- A. The Public Records Coordinator will communicate with the requestor to acknowledge receipt of the public record request by email, letter, or facsimile, as appropriate.
  - B. The Public Records Coordinator will then work with Division Liaisons to gather all responsive records to complete the request.
  - C. If the request is from a member of the media, the Public Records Coordinator will immediately forward the request to the Office of Communications and External Affairs ([media@Commerce.fl.gov](mailto:media@Commerce.fl.gov)). The Office of Communications and External Affairs will acknowledge all media Public Records Requests. The Public Records Coordinator will be informed of all responses to media that include public records.
4. Estimates
- A. The Public Records Coordinator will communicate in writing with the requestor to provide the actual cost and an estimate of the special service charge, if applicable.
  - B. Payment of the estimated costs is required prior to processing the records for production.
5. Review and Redaction
- A. Once the requested materials have been gathered by the Division, the Division will redact confidential and exempt information before releasing the records to the Public Records Coordinator for transmittal.
  - B. The Division will specify and provide all citations for any redactions.
  - C. The Liaison and/or Division employee will consult with OGC as necessary regarding redactions.
  - D. Each Division is responsible for redacting records with redaction tape or electronically and, if necessary, must be prepared to assume the cost of paper copies used in the redaction process. Do not redact with a marker.

## Production of Records to Requestor

1. Responses to Public Records Requests will be made within a reasonable time taking into account the extent and nature of the request.
2. Copies of the request, acknowledgment, response, invoice, records produced, or a record of what was produced, any related correspondences, and payments will be maintained by the Public Records Coordinator.
3. When the requestor requests in-person inspection of the records, and all necessary fees have been paid, the Public Records Coordinator and the Division Liaison, if necessary, must supervise the inspection of records to ensure confidential information is protected.

## Public Record Requests for Email Correspondences

1. The Public Records Coordinator will review the request and consult with the requestor and Liaison as necessary, to determine possible search terms and time frames to obtain the information requested.
2. The Public Records Coordinator will provide the request for emails to IT with search terms and time frames.
3. Once emails have been retrieved by IT, an estimate will be transmitted by the Public Records Coordinator, if applicable, including the cost of retrieval and review of the emails for exempt or confidential information.

4. Upon retrieval and payment of necessary costs by requestor, the Public Records Coordinator will provide the emails to the Division Liaison for review and redaction (if required), and then provide all responsive documents to the requestor.