CDBG MITIGATION CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Virtual Full Committee At-Large Meeting Report
Monday, June 27, 2022
11:00-12:00 PM

Zoom Meeting

*Note: This meeting was recorded**

Meeting Objective: Agree to a Committee plan of work resulting from the *CDBG-MIT Program Challenges Survey* input from Committee members and stakeholder.

11:00-11:15 Welcome & Around the Virtual Room
Amanda and Katya welcome members. Committee members will be asked to state their name and association.

11:15-11:30 GLO Guidance
Colleen provides input from HUD on a plan of work.

11:30-11:55 Discussion: Committee Workplan
Committee discusses a plan of work, reviewing proposed work items from the survey, including the below. Chairs are advising to select no more than three.

- *Blue Sky Planning* – help with fwd. thinking on how to improve a MIT Action Plan in advance of the next disaster
- *Advice on Specific GLO Programs/Plans*– provide feedback on specific programs/developing areas of work, e.g., housing study, training modules, revised websites, amendments, future action plans, etc.
- *Engagement, Communications & Clarification* – foster two-way communication by examining who we're missing, how we're communicating, and in doing so broaden our reach. Also enhance communications to clarify various programs/components.
- *Local Data for understanding Vulnerability* – identify data that would better reflect vulnerability to disasters on the ground, in addition to standard measures like LMI, Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI), etc.
- *Policy Changes* – use the Committee's voice to demonstrate the impacts of the challenges we've discussed, e.g., by gathering data to document the challenges/cost of changing policies/requirements.
- *Application & Program Guidance*: get preliminary application materials and past program materials to answer questions brought forth by Applicants and Program Managers and build an approved guidance manual for Frequently Asked Questions, from an end-user perspective.

11:55-12:00 Next Steps

CDBG Mitigation Citizen Advisory Committee

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Meeting Objective: Agree to a Committee plan of work resulting from the *CDBG-MIT Program Challenges Survey* input from Committee members and stakeholders.

Attendees (Organization/Residence):

Dr. Katya Wowk (Harte Research Institute)
Dr. Diana Del Angel (Harte Research Institute)
Colleen Jones (Texas General Land Office)
Gwyneth Teves (City of Wharton)
Charles Burchett (Jasper, Newton & Sabine Counties)
Derek Katznelson (City of Edinburg)
Kathy Holcomb (City of Deer Park)
Jaime Salazar (Hidalgo Drainage District #1)
Shelly Stewart (Portland Chamber of Commerce)
Kristie Hadnot (City of Huntsville)
Yvette Barrera (Hidalgo County Drainage District #1)
Glen Smith (City of Palacios)
Sylvea Jones (Texas General Land Office)
Omar Anzaldua, Jr (Hidalgo County Drainage District #1)
Dude Payne (Brazoria County)
Kathy Holcomb
Keith Downey (Northeast Houston Development Council)
Amanda Fenwick (Galveston County)

11:00-11:15 Welcome & Around the Virtual Room
Amanda and Katya welcome members and give charge for (2) CDBG-MIT Citizens' Advisory Committees joining together.

Introductions between attendees occur. Attendees give name and affiliation/residence.

11:15-11:30 GLO Guidance
Dr. Wowk presented a listing on possible areas of work (included below in "Committee Workplan") to hone in on potential future committee endeavors.

Dr. Colleen Jones (Texas General Land Office) thanked the committee for joining today. She updated the committee on a HUD technical assistance visit on the CDBG-MIT mitigation grant to provide context for committee discussion. Dr. Jones noted the undertaking of the North Carolina CDBG-MIT Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) that provided input on the State of North Carolina's CDBG-MIT Action Plan amendments. She noted that the NC CAC would provide input on possible amendments. Dr. Jones noted that another item of discussion would be how for the GLO to bridge the gap between the TX CAC committee up into the GLO's current programs. She reiterated the charge of the TX CAC and HUD limitations on Action Plans and Federal Register, such as LMI population impacted.

Dr. Jones noted that the key takeaway from the HUD Technical Assistance meeting was the two-way communication to and from the TX CAC, communities and the GLO. She noted that excellent first step of completing the CDBG-MIT survey to understand the items identified. Dr. Jones stressed the importance of continued communications. She highlighted the needs for the communication strategies for Texas General Land Office's programs.

Dr. Wowk summarized the main perspective of HUD on two-way communication between stakeholders and the Texas General Land Office (GLO).

11:30-11:55 Discussion: Committee Workplan

Dr. Wowk presented the Committee Workplan contained below. She dissected each of following bulleted items:

Committee Workplan

• *Blue Sky Planning* – help with fwd. thinking on how to improve a MIT Action Plan in advance of the next disaster
• *Advice on Specific GLO Programs/Plans*– provide feedback on specific programs/developing areas of work, e.g., housing study, training modules, revised websites, amendments, future action plans, etc.
• *Engagement, Communications & Clarification* – foster two-way communication by examining who we're missing, how we're communicating, and in doing so broaden our reach. Also enhance communications to clarify various programs/components.
• *Local Data for understanding Vulnerability* – identify data that would better reflect vulnerability to disasters on the ground, in addition to standard measures like LMI, Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI), etc.
• *Policy Changes* – use the Committee's voice to demonstrate the impacts of the challenges we've discussed, e.g., by gathering data to document the challenges/cost of changing policies/requirements.
• *Application & Program Guidance*: get preliminary application materials and past program materials to answer questions brought forth by Applicants and Program Managers and build an approved guidance manual for Frequently Asked Questions, from an end-user perspective.

Dr. Wowk mentioned the flexibility available for the TX CAC committee to tackle a portion of the workplan due to the longevity of the TX CAC committee. She mentioned that simplicity of the workplan would be a desire for the CAC's co-chairs.

Mr. Keith Downey thanked Dr. Wowk for mentioning the difficulties for minority communities facing the red tape of recovery in both small towns and large municipalities. He noted that there exists a feeling of difficulty in receiving aid for these communities. Mr. Downey commented on the importance of the program to be people friendly, within the parameters.

Ms. Amanda Fenwick commented that a committee focus could be to engage with people in our communities to transmit actionable intelligence about the programs.

Mr. Burchett provided a specific example on his long-term recovery group. He noted that the first HAP (Housing Assistance Program) house applicant for his community was delayed by 36 months. Mr. Burchett provided this counterexample as how communication behind-the-scenes between GLO and the HAP representative led to the delay, rather than messaging or education to the resident.

Dr. Wowk suggested intermediaries for advocating on behalf of the applicant to keep the process moving forward.

Mr. Burchett explained that each applicant or neighbor is assigned an advocate yet answers to questions were hard to obtain from the HAP representative or from the GLO.

Mr. Downey commented that community leaders, schools, or churches are ways to communicate information to the masses.

Dr. Wowk brought up Ms. Fenwick's suggestion that programs of work could combine. She noted that communicating the understanding of the conditions on the ground.

Mr. Katznelson commented that reviewing situational case studies could integrate program materials and application process to provide context on roadblocks or delays. He suggested creating lean program manuals and applications for simplicity for end-users.

Dr. Jones posited that general communications could integrate Blue Sky Planning and Application & Program Guidance to have plans and communications in place ahead of time.

Mr. Burchett asked how much data is shared between GLO & FEMA during the application process.

Dr. Jones noted that data should be shared between GLO & FEMA to avoid any duplication of benefits.

Mr. Burchett noted that when applicants to FEMA apply, the applicants may not understand the application entries. He noted that, unless the applicant reaches out to the long-term recovery group, the long-term recovery group would not know to help the applicant through the appeals process.

Dr. Jones commented that education on application and application data may be beneficial to have successful applications.

Mr. Downey noted that applicants do not understand how to fill out an application, which may lead to denials. He suggested the agency could reach out to applicants on missing or errant data entries, and how he recommends to applicants about following up with their applications.

Dr. Wowk noted the difference between online tutorials and a trusted advisor. She noted the energy around the communications and clarifications point for further committee movement.

Mr. Smith commented that small, rural communities rely on the cities, themselves, for sources of communications about GLO programs. He noted that their avenues of communication in City administration are usually overburdened following a disaster.

Dr. Wowk also noted how community leaders change, and asked how to understand how new leaders arise.

Mr. Smith connected the local community vulnerability data would provide a mechanism to update communities, especially small, rural communities.

Mr. Downey commented on the situation in urban Houston, where word-of-mouth networks are the preferred communication channel. He noted that trusted institutions, e.g. libraries, churches, schools, can get the information at the individual level. Mr. Downey noted that people are perishing from a lack of knowledge.

Mr. Smith reiterated that word-of-mouth is also the best way, but it could bring challenges for negative news, inaccurate data, and misinformation to travel as quickly as positive news and correct information.

Ms. Fenwick discussed visioning a concept working document on how and where communications can get to community members by assisting GLO in the effort.

Mr. Downey provided an example after Hurricane Harvey where community members are served with food boxes that contain information and applications. He noted that those same people during Harvey may need help in the event of another disaster.

Mr. Burchett commented that, after Hurricane Harvey, the GLO communicated well with the government agencies, yet when the government agencies were tasked with communicating to the average citizen needing help, it was not communicated well. He noted that reading the information or knowing where to get the application did not flow out to residents. Mr. Burchett provided an example of a school distribution where misinformation led to issues.

Dr. Wowk expressed the expertise of the TX CAC, and how they are the ones who may know what may work or not for their communities. She noted the focus on communication, engagement, and clarification aspect of a potential program of work.

Dr. Wowk commented that the leadership group for the TX CAC will get together to propose a parsed-out program of work for achievable goals and timeline. She asked the committee on timeframe for the workplan.

Ms. Hadnot suggested 6-month intervals to gauge effectiveness for the TX CAC program of work. She noted that there would be a multitude of issues like public communication and GLO's in-house changes. Ms. Hadnot commented that the GLO's Action Plans to be informed about how the Action Plan may apply to their local communities with their mitigation process. She noted the consistency between the public's perception of misunderstanding process and protocols to achieve their needs and alleviate issues they may have. Ms. Hadnot discussed the red tape confusion and information overload on programs. She noted residents' overwhelmed response to the comprehensiveness of implementation guides. Ms. Hadnot suggested an understandable, resonating communication to deliver to residents.

Ms. Sandra commented and agreed on information simplicity. She suggested to self-sufficiency for laymen's terms for the manuals, documents, and program guidance. Ms. Sandra provided an example where an awarded applicant's yard was poorly leveled and noted the struggle to correct the error.

Dr. Wowk thanked Ms. Sandra on providing the example, as it would provide insight into the root causes for the GLO program.

Ms. Fenwick commented that manuals can be refined into digestible chunks to create easy-to-read manuals.

Dr. Wowk proposed that next steps for TX CAC committee leadership will be to draft a forward progress plan. She proposed possibly the creation of working groups for committee members in the future.