



CDBG-MIT

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

OPERATIONAL GUIDE



DEPARTMENT OF

HOUSING

GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

July 1, 2025

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PUERTO RICO DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING
CDBG-MIT PROGRAM
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE OPERATIONAL GUIDE
VERSION CONTROL

VERSION NUMBER	DATE REVISED	DESCRIPTION OF REVISIONS
1	May 12, 2021	Original version.
2	June 17, 2021	Revision throughout the document after receiving from various organizations and/ or entities and CAC members.
3	May 31, 2022	The content of this document has been replaced to redirect the focus of the CAC's efforts towards the CDG-MIT Program, specify responsibilities and objectives in accordance with federal requirements.
4	October 3, 2023	Revision throughout the document, approved on March 27, 2023, by the CDBG-MIT Citizens Advisory Committee members.
5	July 1, 2025	Revision throughout the document to clarify and better define the faculties and responsibilities of the CAC.

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1 General Vision

1.1 Legal Base

The Citizen Advisory Committee (**CAC**) for the Community Development Block Grant – Mitigation (**CDBG-MIT**), was created through the Federal Register Notice Vol. 84, No. 169 (August 30, 2019), 84 FR 45838, 45853. The Federal Register Notice sets forth the rules established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (**HUD**) for the participation of the CAC in the CDBG-MIT Program as follows:

After the approval of the action plan, each recipient must create one or more citizen consulting committees that will meet in an open forum, at least, twice a year with the purpose of providing greater transparency in the implementation of the CDBG-MIT funds, to request and respond to the comments and contributions from the public in relation to the recipient's mitigation activities, and to serve as a continuing public forum that offers feedback to the recipient's CDBG-MIT projects and programs. The recipient can also opt to form one or more of these committees as part of their preparation process for the initial presentation of the CDBG-MIT action plan to HUD.¹

At the same time, the CDBG-MIT Action Plan contains the requirements set forth by HUD in the Federal Register Notice regarding the CAC:

As per federal requirements for CDBG-MIT, a Citizen Advisory Committee shall be formalized once the CDBG-MIT Action Plan has been approved. Per HUD guidance at 84 FR 45838, 45853, the Committee shall meet in an open forum, not less than twice annually, to provide increased transparency in the implementation of CDBG-MIT funds. The Committee will solicit and respond to public comment and input regarding PRDOH's mitigation activities and serve as an on-going public forum to continuously inform the PRDOH CDBG-MIT projects and programs. These meetings will provide the opportunity to solicit and respond to public comments on the mitigation activities.²

The Operational Guide describes the structure, purposes, duties, and responsibilities of the CAC in accordance with the Federal Register Notice.³ It is adopted pursuant to the provisions of Act No. 97 of June 10, 1972, as amended, known as "Organic Act of the Department of Housing", 3 LPRA § 441 *et seq.* This guide also promotes the alignment

¹ Federal Register Notice 84 FR 45838, 45853.

² See the CDBG-MIT Action Plan at: <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/en/cdbg-mit/> (English) and <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/cdbg-mit/> (Spanish).

³ 84 FR 45838, 45853.

of the CAC with state and federal regulations on access to public information under the “Transparency and Expedited Procedures for Access to Public Information Act” as reflected in the Puerto Rico Department of Housing (**PRDOH**) Record Keeping, Management, and Accessibility Policy (**RKMA**). The RKMA Policy provides that:

[P]recise and accurate recordkeeping and management are vital elements to ensure the responsible and successful administration of the Program. Moreover, having clear and uniform recordkeeping and management rules and principles, as well as simple and effective procedures for granting access to PRDOH’s public information, ensures transparency and public accountability in the administration of the CDBG-DR/MIT Program.⁴

1.2 Definitions

- **CAC Coordinator(s)** – PRDOH Office of Disaster Recovery staff designated to support, coordinate, and collaborate with the CAC and execute responsibilities identified in the Citizen Participation Plan.⁵
- **CDBG-MIT** – Community Development Block Grant Program – Mitigation.
- **Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)** – A multi-sectoral and voluntary working group appointed by the PRDOH Secretary, in compliance with federal regulations governing the administration of CDBG-MIT funds in Puerto Rico. The CAC shall be composed of no more than fifteen (15) voting members, and no fewer than eleven (11). Members shall be appointed for an initial term of eighteen (18) months, considering the disaster vulnerability areas identified in the CDBG-MIT Action Plan, and ensuring that the Committee reflects the geographic, racial, and socioeconomic diversity of Puerto Rico.
- **Collaborators** – Community leaders, non-profit entities, and non-governmental organizations, as individuals or as representatives of communities, sectors, and stakeholders that can contribute to and collaborate with the functions of the CAC.
- **Coordinating Board** – Body consisting of three (3) or five (5) CAC members, appointed by a majority of the CAC for a term of eighteen (18) months to manage the work.

⁴ CDBG-DR/MIT Record Keeping, Management, and Accessibility Policy, available in English and Spanish at <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/en/download/record-keeping-management-and-accessibility-policy-rkma-policy/> and <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/download/politica-sobre-manejo-administracion-y-accesibilidad-de-documentos/>.

- **Extraordinary meeting** – Meetings (in addition to regular meetings) that may be convened by the CAC Coordinating Board, when deemed necessary.
- **Subcommittees** – Working groups created by the CAC for the general purpose of helping to implement work plans or to carry out special assignments designated by the CAC. May be a forum for reaching consensus or agreement on controversial issues.
- **Quorum** – Quorum is established when more than half of the voting members attend, either in person or virtually. For voting purposes, a majority is defined as the votes of more than half of the voting members present and casting a vote. Members who are present but abstain from voting are still counted toward establishing a quorum.
- **Regular meeting** – Regular meetings of the CAC to be held at least quarterly at a time and place to be determined by the CAC Coordinating Board.
- **Vulnerable communities** – Groups of people who share a common vulnerability, whether physical, economic, social, cultural, or environmental. These vulnerable social units are often disproportionately affected by natural events or disasters. Examples include but are not limited to communities with low socio-economic status, high concentrations of poverty, lack of basic infrastructure, unacceptable environmental conditions, poor housing conditions and a high level of social stressors; communities located on land adjacent to a body of water or in flood zones, landslide-prone areas, and other natural hazards; and historically marginalized and discriminated communities that share a special need or functional diversity.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the CAC Operational Guide is to establish the rules of operation governing the Committee and its members, as well as the coordination of the participants with PRDOH.

1.4 Applicability

The provisions of this Operational Guide apply to CAC members, CAC subcommittee members, and the PRDOH CAC Coordinators team, in support of and in compliance with the CDBG-MIT Action Plan.

Voluntary participation in the CAC carries with it an important responsibility to our citizenry to ensure representation of the broad public interest, including vulnerable

communities identified in the CDBG-MIT Action Plan. General responsibilities apply to individuals, organizations, and entities that comprise the CAC in carrying out actions and activities in their representative capacity as members of the CAC.

2 Citizen Advisory Committee

As grantee of CDBG funds, PRDOH developed the Citizen Participation Plan (**CPP**).⁵ In order to increase citizen participation, the CPP address the creation of a Citizen Advisory Committee “as a voluntary, consultative, and advisory body of PRDOH, to which it is organizationally and functionally subordinate”.

According to Section 4.3 of the CPP, the main functions of the CAC are:

- Provide guidance and serve as a collaborator with, and to inform PRDOH of the needs, interests, and priorities of the individuals and sectors it represents during the development of CDBG-MIT programs.
- If invited, participate in working groups, as experts, and individuals in the public or private sector in relation to issues under discussion.
- Promote program objectives related to vulnerable populations and facilitate awareness of risk mitigation needs that should be a priority in the design and implementation of plans outlined for the use of CDBG-MIT funds by communities.
- Support PRDOH through efforts to encourage the participation of those they represent by providing accurate information about CDBG-MIT programs to promote program opportunities and benefits.

The CAC will perform the required tasks related to CDBG-MIT Program. HUD guidance, at 84 FR 45838, provides that the Committee will meet in an open forum at least two (2) times per year to increase transparency in the implementation of CDBG-MIT funds, solicit and respond to comments submitted by the public regarding the mitigation activities of the recipient, and serve as an ongoing public forum to keep the public informed about PRDOH CDBG-MIT projects and programs.

⁵ PRDOH has developed a Citizen Participation Plan in accordance with 24 C.F.R. § 91.115 and applicable HUD alternative requirements as published in the Federal Register Notices for Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and Community Development Block Grant-Mitigation (CDBG-MIT), which supersede/waived and replace certain requirements with respect to citizen participation.

2.1 CAC Mission

CAC's mission is to serve the interest of the citizens of Puerto Rico through voluntary representation on this advisory body, under the leadership of PRDOH. The CAC informs and advises PRDOH on the disaster mitigation needs, implementation, and improvement of CDBG-MIT programs so that they serve the needs of the people of Puerto Rico within regulatory and administrative limits. The CAC will assist PRDOH in the public outreach of CDBG-MIT programs by distributing accurate information on available assistance.

2.2 CAC Vision

The CAC is committed to supporting and encouraging community and citizen participation to reduce risk conditions through the CDBG-MIT programs administered by PRDOH. It is also committed to the principles of representation, transparency, participation, accessibility, and accountability. The CAC will maintain an effective, respectful, and diligent working relationship between its participants and PRDOH to engage in participatory and productive discussions that result in meaningful, concrete, and actionable recommendations to strengthen the CDBG-MIT programs.

2.3 Composition and Duties of the CAC

The PRDOH Secretary will receive recommendations from individuals and non-governmental organizations representative of community leadership and service or expertise that provide support to different sectors of the citizenry to be considered for membership on the CAC. The PRDOH Secretary will invite selected individuals and organizations to serve on the CAC.

2.3.1 CAC

The CAC will be composed of no fewer than eleven **(11)** and no more than fifteen **(15)** voting members. The initial members will be nominated and designated by PRDOH Secretary, **for a term of eighteen (18) months**, considering the disaster-vulnerable areas identified in the CDBG-MIT Action Plan. Members must reflect the geographic, racial, and socioeconomic diversity of Puerto Rico. The CAC will strive for broad and diverse representation in both its plenary body and working groups. It will work intentionally to provide visibility to vulnerable communities affected by natural disasters and to facilitate communication between these communities and PRDOH.

Each member shall designate an alternate who may consistently represent them when necessary, ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of the CAC's work.

Once formally established, the CAC will review and approve a Work Plan in collaboration with PRDOH. The CAC may create subcommittees, define their composition, outline the issues to be addressed, and set expectations for their work.

- **Successive Nominations and Designations for CAC Members** - For subsequent appointments to the CAC, any interested individual or organization may submit a nomination to PRDOH using the following digital form: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/c51510f7a72941a886b85401cc93b3e5>.

Nominations will be compiled and reviewed. Those with no conflict of interest will be forwarded to the CAC for recommendations to the PRDOH Secretary. The nomination list will be provided to the CAC at least fifteen (15) days before a meeting of the CAC for their consideration. The PRDOH Secretary shall designate the necessary members to fill vacancies on the CAC. If a vacancy results from separation or resignation, the new member will serve the remainder of the original term.

- **Absence /Separation** - Members who are absent without justification from two (2) consecutive meetings (either extraordinary or regular) may be removed by the Coordinating Board. The Coordinating Board may also establish additional criteria that may lead to a member's separation. The process for successive nominations and designations will be used to fill any resulting vacancies.

2.3.2 CAC Coordinating Board

The Coordinating Board is a group of **three (3)** or **five (5)** CAC members selected by the majority of the CAC for a term of eighteen (18) months. The CAC will take into consideration the following criteria to make their selection: ability, process understanding, diversity (racial, expertise, life experiences, etc.), sector representation, level of commitment, previous history, community service, contributions in discussions and debates, among others. The Coordinating Board must attend to matters related to schedule development and calendar management. The Coordinating Board will ensure that meetings are executed in a manner that responsibly addresses and complies with the objectives established for them. The meeting objectives will be

explicit in the announcements. The Coordinating Board will maintain continuous communication with PRDOH regarding all tasks relevant to the CAC.

The Coordinating Board will assist in the implementation of the CPP as it relates to CDBG-MIT. To this end, it will be supported by the CAC, subcommittees, and/or the CAC Coordinators of the PRDOH CDBG-MIT Program.

2.3.3 Criteria for Selection of the CAC Coordinating Board

Members of the CAC Coordinating Board must ensure their participation in the Coordinating Board meets the following minimum requirements:

- Be a resident of Puerto Rico;
- Commit to regular participation on a voluntary committee;
- Attend sessions and contribute to discussions;
- Have an area of expertise relevant and pertinent to the CDBG-MIT Program that can be shared with the group for the benefit of making recommendations; and
- Commit to attend public “open forum” meetings held two (2) times a year for CDBG-MIT.

2.4 CAC Responsibilities

The CAC must comply with the following:

- Advise and inform PRDOH of the needs, interests and priorities of the people and sectors that it represents during the processes of the CDBG-MIT Program.
- Support PRDOH through outreach efforts, providing precise information about the CDBG-MIT Program.
- Promote the opportunities and benefits offered by all the CDBG-MIT programs.
- Serve as continuous forum in the distribution of information to citizens and the collection of relevant data and information.
- After collecting information and data, the CAC will provide all the information to PRDOH and will explain in detail, through written communication, the needs of vulnerable communities identified in the CDBG-MIT Action Plan.
- Develop and submit to PRDOH a six-monthly report summarizing the actions taken by the CAC, in accordance with the responsibilities assumed and listed in

this Guide as well as any other responsibilities assumed by the group. This six-monthly report will be published on the CDBG-MIT Program website.

- Submit to the PRDOH CAC Coordinator(s) the meeting minutes, six-monthly reports, and any other public documents to be published on the CDBG-MIT Program website.
- Provide advice on the CDBG-MIT Action Plan, as amended, for the use and distribution of CDBG-MIT funds, its programs, and overall disaster mitigation processes. Such advice will be provided in accordance with input from the general public, especially of those vulnerable populations affected by disasters.
- Review the draft of each Substantial Amendment to the CDBG-MIT Action Plan and submit comments and observations to PRDOH during the 30-day public comment period, either as part of the public comment process or through a report, meeting minutes, or meeting records.
- Provide advice and feedback to PRDOH on the guidelines developed for each CDBG-MIT program at any time during their implementation. Feedback may be submitted through a report or meeting minutes. This feedback aims to support risk mitigation efforts and help reduce the impact of future disasters. Recommendations may be considered for future updates or versions of the guidelines. However, the final decision-making and determination rest solely with PRDOH.
- Promote the exchange of experiences, opinions, and recommendations between the civil society, the public, and the communities with PRDOH. For this purpose, the CAC could request the assistance of PRDOH's resources to encourage and create dialogue spaces.
- Provide PRDOH with ongoing access to information, data, resources, and any additional relevant elements in connection with the work of the CAC.
- The CAC could be invited by PRDOH to participate in working groups, responding to surveys, contributing their opinions through the "Advisory Committee Formal Questions and Recommendations Form", and sharing information with people from the public or private sectors on matters under discussion.
- Provide advice requested by PRDOH on any other aspect not listed previously.

- The issues undertaken by the CAC and any subcommittee must serve the interests of the residents of Puerto Rico through proper research of the topic and the formal submission of a written recommendation to PRDOH.

2.5 CAC Coordinating Board Responsibilities

The CAC Coordinating Board shall have the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate CAC's efforts;
- Facilitate and moderate CAC meetings;
- Represent the CAC at meetings, activities, and initiatives relevant to the work of the CAC;
- Carry out tasks delegated by the CAC;
- Submit recommendations to the CAC on future courses of action;
- Develop and implement the CAC Work Plan;
- Convene ordinary and extraordinary meetings of the CAC;
- Designate a member of the Coordinating Board to attend to responsibilities relevant to the CAC Secretary, such as: meeting minutes, semi-annual reports, among others; and
- Attending to any other matters related to the fulfilment of the CAC's role, as established in federal regulations.

2.6 Responsibilities of the CAC Coordinator(s) and PRDOH

The PRDOH CAC Coordinator(s) will coordinate and collaborate to facilitate the work of the CAC and CAC subcommittees. PRDOH Coordinator(s) will receive comments and recommendations from the CAC, and channel them through the relevant CDBG-MIT Program areas.

PRDOH will accept as advice any supported recommendation that the Committee makes. However, the PRDOH Secretary will make the final decision. The PRDOH Secretary reserves the right to disagree with the advice of the Committee when their recommendation conflicts with the collective interest, public policy, or compliance with state and federal regulations.

The PRDOH Secretary and the Disaster Recovery Deputy Secretary, or their authorized representatives, will hold biannual meetings with the CAC as part of the commitment to dialogue and collaborate with the various sectors of the citizenry.

If the need arises to acquire resources that support the operation and objectives of the CAC and its subcommittees, PRDOH will assess those needs and provide the necessary resources, subject to federal regulations. Any costs to be incurred by PRDOH must undergo eligibility and reasonableness analysis. All costs attributable to the Programs must comply with federal financial management regulations, including requirements for reasonableness and document retention.

PRDOH will notify the CAC of each Substantial Amendment draft to the CDBG-MIT Action Plan and the commencement of the public comment period. These comments will be responded by PRDOH and included as an addendum to the Action Plan to be submitted to HUD.

In addition, PRDOH will notify the CAC of the final CDBG-MIT Program Guidelines so that they may submit their comments at any time during program implementation. The Compliance Area, along with the corresponding Program Area when applicable, will review the CAC's comments and assess its recommendations to determine their possible incorporation in future updates or revisions of the guidelines.

2.7 Establishment and Responsibilities of Subcommittees

The CAC may establish subcommittees for the general purpose of assisting in the implementation of the work plans or to carry out special assignments designated by the CAC. Subcommittees may be thematic in nature, regional in nature, or responsive to particular issues. Responsibility for leading the efforts of each subcommittee will rest with a member of the CAC.

Each subcommittee shall be a group of interested and representative stakeholders to provide advice and input to the planning and decision-making process. Among others, it serves the following purposes:

- Creates a balanced group of stakeholders to advise on the project and the public participation process; and
- Allows for a more detailed analysis of project issues with a more informed group of the public (including people with expertise on relevant issues and policies). Can be a forum for reaching consensus or agreement on controversial issues.

2.8 Adoption of Interim Processes

Once the members of the CAC have been appointed, the first regular meeting of the CAC should present the CAC's Operational Guidelines and consider endorsing them

and adopting the necessary processes to ensure compliance with the responsibilities assumed.

2.9 Holding Meetings

The CAC meetings for the CDBG-MIT Program will be held at the time and place determined by the Coordinating Board. PRDOH will make its operational facilities, personnel, team, and space available in the Central Office and regional offices across the island. Also, the following rules are established for holding CAC meetings:

- The CAC shall hold regular meetings as it deems appropriate to develop and implement its Work Plan. However, they shall hold no fewer than two (2) meetings per year, as required by the Federal Register.⁶ This will not limit the continuous and constant nature of the CAC's work as a public forum to advice, inform, and collect data relevant to the mitigation processes.
- The CAC's Coordinating Board may convene extraordinary meetings, when deemed necessary. However, in the meeting announcement, the reasons for holding an extraordinary meeting will be stated, as well as the meeting agenda.
- The Coordinating Board will notify the CAC, at least five (5) days in advance, the date, time, and place for the meeting. The announcement will be accompanied by the meeting agenda.
- The Coordinating Board will notify PRDOH, at least fifteen (15) days in advance, the date, time, and place for the meeting. The announcement will be accompanied by the meeting agenda.
- If possible, and subject to coordination by the CAC, the CAC will hold meetings in communities or community centers, in affected areas, and in project areas.
- Regular and extraordinary meetings of the CAC and subcommittees may be face-to-face, virtual, or hybrid.

2.10 Quorum and Majority

Virtual or in-person attendance by half plus one of the voting members will constitute the quorum. For voting purposes, a majority is defined by the votes of half plus one of the present voting members. The presence of a member who abstains from voting shall be counted toward determining a quorum. However, in the event of a vote, an

⁶ 84 FR 45838.

abstention shall be counted as a vote against, in accordance with general parliamentary rules.

2.11 Ethic Requirements

All members are required to complete a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form to ensure compliance with the conflict of interest requirements under PRDOH's CDBG-MIT Program, as outlined in the Conflict of Interests and Standards of Conduct Policy (**COI Policy**) which can be accessed through the CDBG-DR/MIT website at: <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/en/download/conflict-of-interest-and-standards-of-conduct-policy/> (English) and <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/download/politica-de-conflictos-de-interes-y-estandares-de-conducta/> (Spanish).

As defined in PRDOH's COI Policy, a conflict of interest is a situation in which a personal or economic interest is, or could be, reasonably against the public interest. No one will use or attempt to use their official position to obtain privileges or advantages for themselves or others, nor will they act in their official capacity in any matter involving a direct or indirect personal financial interest that could reasonably affect their objectivity or independence of judgement. While acting as PRDOH advisors, neither the CAC nor its members will influence or persuade the decisions of PRDOH for their own or their organization's benefit.

Special attention should be given to activities that are not related to procurement, subrecipient activities, or program execution. Also, all employees, vendors, contractors, and applicants related to the CDBG-MIT programs must reveal any real or potential conflict of interest. The Standards of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest section of PRDOH's COI Policy establishes general areas of compliance for public servants, as outlined in the Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office Organic Act, Act 1-2012, as amended, 3 LPRA § 1854 *et seq.*, regarding conflicts of interest that are emphasized for purposes of this Operational Guide.

The Anticorruption Code for the New Puerto Rico, Act 2-2018, as amended, 3 LPRA § 1881 *et seq.*, is the governing body of the ethical obligations and responsibilities. Among its titles, topics such as public policy and conflicts of interest with respect to contractors, vendors, and applicants for economic incentives are discussed, 3 LPRA § 1883a. The provisions of Act 1-2012 and Act 2-2018 apply to the relationship between PRDOH and the CAC.

The data and information obtained or developed by the CAC in the performance of its duties are considered confidential while in work draft format. The CAC cannot publish information about the sessions without the written consent of PRDOH or until the general public is made aware through the CDBG-DR/MIT website.

The CAC members must safeguard all the information and data in their possession, without prejudice to their duty to actively and continuously communicate with the general public or with the communities, or their duty to collaborate with the judicial and administrative authorities in the terms established by law.

3 Accessibility

The CAC must comply, in all meetings, with PRDOH's Language Access Plan, the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) Policy, and the Reasonable Accommodation Policy. These can be found on the CDBG-DR/MIT website: <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/en/resources/policies/general-policies/> (English) and <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/recursos/politicas/politicas-generales/> (Spanish).

PRDOH will use a presentation or other resources to share the information visually and verbally in Spanish, and will make it available in English, as needed. Sign language interpreters will be provided upon request in advance of the meeting to ensure full participation for any members who require this service.

4 CAC and PRDOH Communication Standards

PRDOH will inform CAC members about important information, announcements, and updates.

This information can be shared using methods that PRDOH and the CAC determine are most appropriate and accessible to CAC members, such as:

- E-mail;
- SMS messaging (text messages);
- Public announcements in newspapers; and
- Web page pop-ups.

5 Public Nature of CAC Documents

All documents generated by the CAC, that the Board of Directors approves and deems final, will be of public nature. PRDOH maintains a website that provides information

about the CAC, including documents, meeting minutes, among other resources. The information published about the CAC is available through the following links: <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/comite-de-asesoria-ciudadana-cdbg-mit/> (Spanish) and <https://recuperacion.pr.gov/en/citizen-advisory-committee-cdbg-mit/> (English).

END OF GUIDELINES.