

Charlotte County, FL
Community Development Block Grant
Disaster Recovery



Chapter 2: Citizen Complaint Policy



Purpose and Scope

Intent: This policy establishes a formal process for Charlotte County residents to submit and resolve complaints related to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. It is intended to ensure transparency, accountability, and public participation in compliance with all applicable federal and state requirements. The policy is grounded in Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and implements the citizen participation and complaint-handling provisions of 24 CFR Part 570 (CDBG regulations) and 2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Administrative Requirements). It also satisfies the requirements of the Florida Small Cities CDBG Program as authorized by Chapter 290, Florida Statutes (Florida Small Cities CDBG Act) and implemented by Rule 73C-23, Florida Administrative Code, and the guidelines of FloridaCommerce (Florida Department of Commerce) for CDBG competitive applications.

Scope: This policy applies solely to citizen complaints, grievances, or inquiries regarding Charlotte County's CDBG-funded projects and activities. It covers all stages of the CDBG program, including planning, implementation, and closeout of CDBG projects. Complaints unrelated to the CDBG program (for example, general county services or other grant programs) are outside the scope of this policy and should be directed to the appropriate agency. Charlotte County will ensure that all citizens, particularly low- and moderate-income persons affected by CDBG activities, have the opportunity to voice concerns and receive timely, fair responses. The County's elected officials and staff shall administer this policy in a manner consistent with the legal authorities cited above and shall not restrict or impede the public's right to participate in and scrutinize the CDBG program.

Submission of Complaints

How to File a Complaint: Charlotte County encourages citizens to submit CDBG-related complaints or grievances through any of the following methods. The County will accept both written and oral complaints, and will assist individuals in documenting oral complaints in writing to ensure a clear record. In all cases, the complainant should provide as much detail as possible regarding the issue (dates, location, persons involved, and any supporting information) to facilitate investigation and resolution. The County has designated the CDBG Program Coordinator in the Human Services Department (Neighborhood Services Division) as the primary point of contact for CDBG complaints. Complaints may be submitted by:

- **In Writing (Mail or In-Person):** Deliver or mail written complaints to the Charlotte County Human Services Department – Neighborhood Services Division, Attn: CDBG Program Coordinator. Address: 21500 Gibraltar Drive, Unit 1, Port Charlotte, FL 33952. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM (excluding holidays). This office will accept hand-delivered letters or forms, as well as mailed correspondence.
- **By Email:** Submit complaints via email to the CDBG Program Coordinator at CDBG@CharlotteCountyFL.gov. Note: Under Florida's Public Records Law (Chapter 119, F.S.), email communications to the County are public records; if you do not wish to disclose your email address, you may use an alternative method of submission.



- **By Telephone:** Call the Charlotte County Neighborhood Services Division at 941-833-6500 to submit a complaint by phone. The CDBG Program staff will either address the issue directly or transcribe your concerns into a written complaint for further action.
- **In Person:** Citizens may also visit the Human Services Department – Neighborhood Services Division at the above address to speak with a staff member in person. Staff will provide a standard complaint form if needed and assist in documenting the complaint in writing.

Acknowledgment of Receipt: Regardless of submission method, the County will provide an acknowledgment of the complaint. If a complaint is made in person or by phone, staff will acknowledge it during the conversation and document the date and content. If a complaint is received by mail or email, a written or email reply acknowledging receipt will be sent to the complainant within five (5) business days. The acknowledgment will include the date the complaint was received, a tracking/reference number (if applicable), the name and contact information of the staff member or program coordinator assigned to review the complaint, and an expected timeframe for response.

Information to Include: To expedite processing, a complainant should ideally include their name, preferred contact information (mailing address, phone, or email), and a clear description of the concern. However, anonymous complaints will be accepted and investigated to the extent feasible. If a complaint is submitted anonymously or without contact information, the County will still investigate the issue but cannot provide a direct response to the complainant.

Timely Response and Resolution

Charlotte County will investigate and respond to all CDBG program complaints in a prompt and fair manner. The following timeline standards shall apply:

- **Substantive Response Within 15 Working Days:** The County will provide a written answer addressing the complaint's merits within fifteen (15) working days of receiving a written complaint, where practicable. The substantive response will summarize the County's understanding of the issue, the findings of any investigation, and the proposed resolution or action to be taken. If the complaint involves a decision (for example, eligibility for a CDBG-funded benefit), the response will state whether that decision is upheld or modified and explain the reasons. This written response will be mailed or emailed to the complainant (or made available for pick-up) and filed in the complaint records.
- **Interim Updates if Delayed:** If a full resolution cannot be provided within 15 working days (for example, because the matter is complex or requires additional investigation, a public hearing, or Board action), the County will send an interim communication to the complainant by the 15th working day. This interim response will acknowledge the ongoing review, explain the reason for delay, and provide an updated estimate of when a final response will be ready. The goal is to resolve most complaints as quickly as possible, typically no later than within 30 calendar days, unless extenuating circumstances require more time.



- **Resolution Actions:** In its response, the County will detail any corrective actions or remedies it will undertake if the complaint is found valid. Possible resolutions may include: arranging a meeting with the complainant to discuss and resolve the issue; correcting an error or oversight in program administration; providing a service or accommodation that was previously denied; implementing disciplinary action or additional training for staff; or other appropriate adjustments to CDBG activities or procedures. The response will also inform the complainant of their right to pursue appeal if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.

Charlotte County is committed to good faith resolution of issues. Even after a formal response is issued, if new information or concerns come to light, the County will review and, if necessary, re-open the matter to ensure fairness. All resolutions will be consistent with CDBG regulations and County policies. The complainant will not be asked to waive any rights as a condition of resolution.

Appeals Process

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the County's response or proposed resolution, or if the complainant believes the issue has not been adequately addressed, an appeal may be pursued. The following appeal process shall apply:

1. **Program Coordinator Review:** The complainant may submit a written appeal to the CDBG Program Coordinator requesting reconsideration. Additional documentation or clarification should be included. The Program Coordinator will review the file and issue a written determination within ten (10) working days.
2. **County Administrator:** If unresolved, the complainant may appeal to the Charlotte County Administrator. A meeting will be scheduled to review the grievance, during which the complainant may present their concerns. The County Administrator will issue a final local decision following the meeting.
3. **FloridaCommerce Appeal:** A citizen may submit a complaint directly to FloridaCommerce, Small Cities CDBG Program, 107 E. Madison Street, MSC 400, Tallahassee, FL 32399-6508. The State will review the issue and respond in writing.
4. **HUD Review:** Citizens may also file complaints with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Jacksonville Field Office, 400 West Bay Street, Suite 1015, Jacksonville, FL 32202, or contact HUD's Office of Inspector General or Office of Fair Housing, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Appeals should be submitted within 30 days of receiving the County's formal response. The County encourages resolution at the local level whenever possible but supports the right of citizens to elevate complaints to state or federal oversight agencies without fear of retaliation.

Accessibility and ADA Compliance



Charlotte County is committed to ensuring that the complaint process is accessible to all individuals, including persons with disabilities. All meetings, communications, and materials related to CDBG citizen participation and complaints will be conducted in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The County will not discriminate against qualified individuals on the basis of disability in the provision of services, programs, or activities.

- **Accessible Facilities:** All public meetings and complaint-related activities will be held in accessible locations with necessary accommodations available, including FM sound enhancement units at the Murdock Administration Complex.
- **Auxiliary Aids and Services:** Upon request, Charlotte County will provide auxiliary aids and services such as qualified sign language interpreters, Braille materials, large print documents, or assistive listening devices at no charge.
- **ADA Coordinator Contact:** Requests for accommodations or complaints regarding accessibility should be directed to David Lyles, ADA Coordinator, at 941-743-1381 (voice), TDD/TTY 941-743-1234, or via email at David.Lyles@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.
- **Reasonable Modifications:** The County will make reasonable policy modifications as necessary to ensure equal access. No eligibility criteria, surcharges, or restrictions will be imposed on the basis of disability.

Charlotte County strives to ensure that all community members have full and fair access to participate in the CDBG complaint process.

Recordkeeping and Confidentiality

Charlotte County will maintain a complete record of all CDBG-related complaints, including the original complaint, correspondence, investigation notes, and resolution. Complaint records will be retained for a minimum of three (3) years after the grant closeout or the final resolution of the complaint, in compliance with 2 CFR §200.334 and applicable state retention rules.

All records will be kept in a secure location and made available for inspection upon request, subject to exemptions allowed under Florida's Public Records Law (Chapter 119, F.S.). The County will protect the identity of complainants to the extent permitted by law. Personal information will not be disclosed without the individual's consent unless required by law.

Charlotte County prohibits retaliation against any individual who submits a complaint or participates in the complaint process.

Oversight and External Authorities

Citizens may contact the following oversight bodies if they believe a complaint has not been resolved appropriately at the local level:



- **FloridaCommerce – CDBG Program**
107 E. Madison Street, MSC 400
Tallahassee, FL 32399-6508
Phone: (850) 717-8405
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**
Jacksonville Field Office
400 West Bay Street, Suite 1015
Jacksonville, FL 32202
Phone: (904) 232-2627

Complaints involving fraud, waste, or abuse may also be submitted to HUD’s Office of Inspector General. Discrimination complaints may be filed with HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at 1-800-669-9777 or TTY 1-800-927-9275.

Equal Employment Opportunity and Fair Housing

Charlotte County is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The County does not discriminate in employment or the provision of services based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic protected by law.

The County affirms its commitment to fair housing. No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any CDBG-funded housing or community development program. Charlotte County complies with all applicable laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act, the Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Fair housing complaints may be directed to the Charlotte County Fair Housing Coordinator at 941-833-6500 or filed with HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.