



DEPARTMENT OF
HOUSING



Stakeholder Engagement Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 22, 2021, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published an allocation of \$1.93 billion for the Government of Puerto Rico for Electrical Power System Enhancements and Improvements. The Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program represents a unique opportunity for electrical power system improvements in communities to prevent loss from future disaster threats and to create energy resilience and reliability.

The Puerto Rico Department of Housing (PRDOH) presents the CDBG-DR Stakeholder Engagement Report for the electrical power system improvements as a chapter in the continuing story of the Citizen Participation Program. Within these pages, PRDOH presents a summary of the outreach and engagement efforts undertaken by the agency during collaboration, consultation, and planning sessions in the development of the Action Plan.

OUTREACH STRATEGY

Special Considerations for COVID-19

The Puerto Rico response to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions to social movement continued to be adapted according to circumstances at the time—nationally, internationally, and in Puerto Rico. As a result, throughout the planning process, PRDOH has implemented innovative engagement strategies to overcome obstacles to public participation, including leveraging of technology, radio and stakeholder networks.

Impact on Engagement Strategy

On March 20, 2020, HUD released the CDBG-DR COVID-19 Fact Sheet, which granted flexibilities on timelines, eligible activities, and citizen participation as communities worked to prevent and respond to the spread of COVID-19. In the COVID-19 Fact Sheet, HUD suspended the on-site public participation requirement and acknowledged "...its interpretation of public hearings in the context of the CDBG-DR FRN to include virtual public hearings (alone, or in concert with an in-person hearing) if it allows questions in real-time, with answers coming directly from the elected representatives to all 'attendees'."

Method of Engagement

PRDOH utilized various electronic methods, media, and community networking to maintain a vigorous outreach process. PRDOH set out to be fully inclusive of the diverse population of Puerto Rico while working within public health constraints on a rapid planning timeline. PRDOH set out to leverage social media and the public website as the foundation for the CDBG-DR outreach effort, understanding that most of the population was turning to technology to stay connected during the pandemic.

Cloud-based platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom were utilized to deliver briefings, conduct roundtables, and host individual planning meetings connecting PRDOH staff to federal agency personnel, Puerto Rico agency personnel, municipalities, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and one another. In-person roundtables were conducted with small groups of organizations to maintain compliance with COVID-19 protocols.

As part of the FRN requirements outlined in Federal Register Vol. 86, No. 117 (June 22, 2021), 86 FR 32681, for allocations of \$1 billion or more CDBG-DR grantees must hold at least two (2) public hearings with at least one (1) of these public hearings occurring before the publication of the Energy Action Plan for public comment. PRDOH set out to reach the masses by utilizing widespread mediums including live broadcasting on social media platforms with simultaneous broadcast via radio.

Outreach methods included:

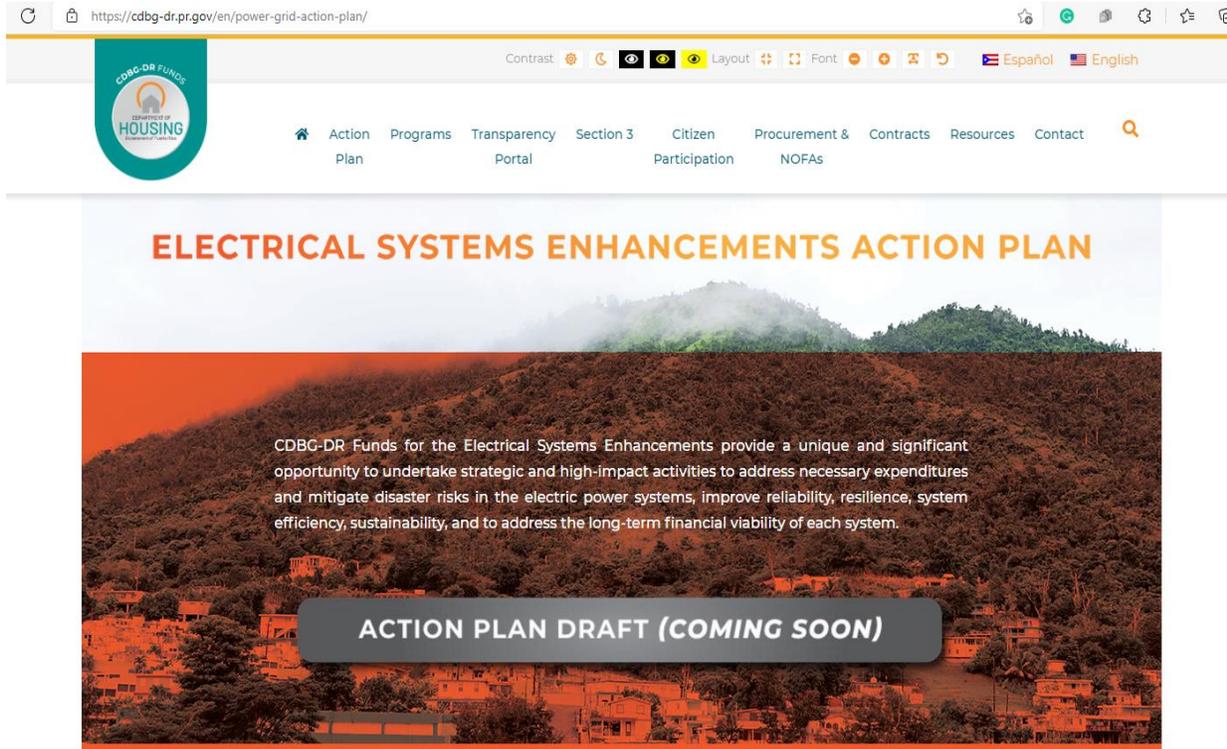
- **Public Website** – English and Spanish webpages available at <https://www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov/CDBG-DR> and used as a resource to access general information about CDBG-DR, as a method to promote engagement activities, as a tool for constituents to participate in the planning process, and to receive updates on the CDBG-DR Energy Action Plan, as the official site for posting of the Energy Action Plan draft for comment, and eventually, as a resource for updates on implementation plan;
- **Emails** – Utilizing a subscriber database from CDBG-DR programs, new registrants from the CDBG-DR web page, and a database from municipalities, entities, Academia and NGOs, English and Spanish emails were used for invitations, conveying surveys and tools, and various reminders.
- **Social Media** – The CDBG-DR Facebook page and CDBG-DR YouTube channel were used to announce activities, e.g., public hearings, important announcements (such as Energy Action Plan Posting, Energy Action Plan Public Comment Period). Additionally, social media links were shared with the Federal members of the Technical Coordination Team (TCT) for distribution to their related networks.
- **Press Releases** - used to announce activities to general media.
- **Newspaper Public Announcements** - used to publish public hearing notices.

Outreach tools included:

- **Forms and Surveys** – web forms used to allow for registration and public input.
- **Presentations** – captivating presentations (Spanish and English) used in briefings, roundtables, and various individual meetings.
- **Follow-up calls** - for the roundtable attendance and to ensure stakeholder participation and questionnaire submission.
- **Call Center Assistance** – call center services were promoted as an available method for citizens to submit questions or comments during the public hearing. Comments and questions posted during the public hearing were read live during simulcast public hearing events.

Website

Public information is made available on a dedicated webpage within the CDBG-DR Program website at <https://cdbg-dr.pr.gov/en/power-grid-action-plan/> in English and at <https://cdbg-dr.pr.gov/plan-de-accion-de-red-de-energia/> in Spanish.



From this page, entity and private citizen stakeholders can find up-to-date information and register for program-related notifications and find formal announcements for public participation opportunities. These opportunities included the following:

- Public Hearing events and opportunities for participation.
- The opening of the CDBG-DR Energy Action Plan public comment period.

The website serves as an information hub during the preparation of the CDBG-DR Energy Action Plan. Once the CDBG-DR Energy Action Plan is approved by HUD and program information becomes available, the final plan will be posted in its entirety to the CDBG-DR Energy Action Plan and amendments page where all versions of the CDBG-DR Energy Action Plan and amendments will reside at <https://cdbg-dr.pr.gov/en/action-plan/> in English and at <https://cdbg-dr.pr.gov/action-plan/> in Spanish.

Focused Roundtables

Recognizing their unique and ongoing contributions to Puerto Rico's recovery from the hurricanes, PRDOH held a series of Focused Roundtables to initiate engagement with public and private sector partners, including Community Leaders and Academic Partners.

An objective of these roundtables was to provide an overview of the federal CDBG-DR Program for Electrical System Enhancements. More specifically, PRDOH sought the assistance of Community Leaders in providing valuable insight regarding unmet needs. Academic Partners were provided a preview of the technical issues for the electrical power system improvements and their expertise recommended solutions.

To a great extent, agencies and organizations that participated in Focused Roundtables had previously provided data, resources, and literature to the recovery of Puerto Rico. The roundtables provided the opportunity for discourse among the members, synergies across those resources and helped to guide consensus toward a path forward. The plan for each Focused Roundtable was appropriate to the topic, and the group's participation was an excellent example of that.

The Energy Roundtable was convened to exchange ideas to contribute to the stability and resilience of vulnerable communities in Puerto Rico. Discussion included identifying those communities, the characteristics that make them particularly vulnerable, and past or current efforts to mitigate vulnerability and enhance energy resilience and exploring the potential resources CDBG-DR for Electrical System Enhancements.

Individual Meetings

As presented in earlier outreach agendas, PRDOH recognized that meetings with one or more individuals or entities participating in briefings and roundtables might be engaged individually and more frequently. These meetings could facilitate focused planning efforts necessary for beneficial data exchange, idea generation, or coordination that would yield a tangible benefit in the planning process. The main stakeholders responsible for the essential services (water and energy supply) at the agency level were cited individually: the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA), the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), and LUMA Energy LLP. The purpose was to request unmet energy needs not funded by other federal programs.

The table below summarizes the individual meetings PRDOH conducted with key agency partners during the outreach and engagement process.

INDIVIDUAL PUERTO RICO AGENCY MEETINGS CONDUCTED

- Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA)
- LUMA Energy LLP
- Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA)
- Puerto Rico Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DEDCC)
- Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3)

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – ROUNDTABLE AND INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS		
Date	Entities	Topic
07/28/21	DOE	TCT Meeting Goals
08/10/21	DOE, EDA, FCC, FEMA, FOMB, GAO, USACE, USDA, Treasury, HUD	Energy Action Plan
08/17/21	Federal Members of the TCT and Puerto Rico Energy Bureau (PREB); Puerto Rico Aqueducts and Sewers Authority (PRASA); Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DEDC) Energy Public Policy Program; Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3); Puerto Rico Public-Private Partnerships Authority (P3A)	Disaster Impact & Other Assistance Received
08/20/21	DEDC	Stakeholder Engagement
08/24/21	Federal Members of TCT and Puerto Rico Energy Bureau (PREB); Puerto Rico Aqueducts and Sewers Authority (PRASA); Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DEDC) Energy Public Policy Program; Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3); Puerto Rico Public-Private Partnerships Authority (P3A); LUMA and PREPA	Disaster Impact & Other Assistance Received
08/27/21	DOE, LUMA	Stakeholder Engagement
08/30/21	LUMA, PREPA	Stakeholder Engagement
08/31/21	Federal Members of TCT and Puerto Rico Energy Bureau (PREB); Puerto Rico Aqueducts and Sewers Authority (PRASA); Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DEDC) Energy Public Policy Program; Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3); Puerto Rico Public-Private Partnerships Authority (P3A)	Disaster Impact & Other Assistance Received
09/01/21	COR3	Energy Action Plan PRDOH + COR3 Coordination Call
09/01/21	EPA, DOE	Energy Action Plan PRDOH + EPA + DOE Coordination Call
09/02/21	DOE	Mapping

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – ROUNDTABLE AND INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS		
09/08/21	PRASA	PRASA Stakeholder meeting to discuss data request
09/09/21	COR3	Stakeholder Engagement
09/13/21	LUMA, PREPA	Stakeholder Engagement
09/14/21	FEMA, DOE, HUD, PRDOH, PREB, DEDC, COR3	TCT Meeting - Work Session - Projects with Greater Impact to Maximize Federal Funding
09/20/21	DEDC	Action Plan Development
09/20/21	Resident Commissioner Roundtable	Stakeholder Engagement
09/28/21	Puerto Rico College of Expert Electricians, and Puerto Rico College of Engineers and Surveyors.	Energy unmet needs
09/23/21	PREPA	Energy Unmet Needs Assessment requested documentation
10/05/21	Puerto Rico Manufacturers Association, Pharmaceutical Industry Association of Puerto Rico, DEDC	Stakeholder Roundtable
10/06/21	TCT Committee federal members	TCT Committee Status Update
10/12/21	AMANESER 2025, Solar Libre, Queremos Sol, Cooperativa Hidroeléctrica de la Montaña	Stakeholder Roundtable
10/18/21	Municipalities of Aguadilla, Gurabo, Toa Alta, Quebradillas, Hormigueros, Sabana Grande, Yabucoa, Las Piedras, Cabo Rojo	Municipios Virtual Meeting
10/19/21	Municipalities of Hormigueros, Salinas, San Juan, Las Marías, Añasco	Municipios Virtual Meeting
10/19/21	UPR Mayaguez; Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores de Puerto Rico (CIAPR); Universidad Politécnica de Puerto Rico (PUPR)	Stakeholder Engagement Roundtable - Academics
10/20/21	First Public Hearing	Receive public comments on Action Plan Development
10/25/21	DOE	First Public Hearing, TCT Comments, and Questions for HUD

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – ROUNDTABLE AND INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS			
11/02/21	Mercy Corps, Liga de Ciudades de PR, Proyecto INARO Las Piedras, Voluntariado Ingenieros y Profesionales de PR, Hispanic Federation, Producir Inc., El Puente ELAC, OSAN los Acueductos Comunitarios, SESA, Center for Energy and Society Arizona State University, IDEBAJO	Citizen Committee Roundtable	Advisory (CAC)
12/8/21	Second Public Hearing	Receive public comments on Action Plan draft	

Stakeholder Questionnaire

PRDOH developed the Stakeholder Questionnaire to better understand the participants' knowledge about the Energy Infrastructure Plans for the two leading government agencies, including the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA). These plans are designed for a ten (10) year period and are the basis for the FEMA federal funds obligated funds. PRDOH recognized that this knowledge is limited to the organization's interaction with the government agencies. Stakeholders were asked to complete the questionnaire based on their experience during Hurricane Maria and visualize the Puerto Rico energy crisis solution proposing energy community-based projects that provide resilience and reliability.

During the roundtable meetings, information was collected on the stakeholders' concerns, questions, and recommendations related to the areas and communities with the greatest need to improve the electric power service. Stakeholders were provided with a questionnaire to obtain the information above in more detail.

Further breakdown of the questionnaire responses is enclosed with this report.

Pre-Draft Public Hearing

As provided in the FRN, HUD Guidance states that PRDOH must conduct at least one public hearing prior to posting the action plan for public comment. To balance the democratic opportunity for inclusive public participation with the appropriate response and safety measures established due to the COVID-19 pandemic, PRDOH implemented a unique solution.

PRDOH hosted a transmission through live Social Media (YouTube, and Facebook) with a simultaneous radio broadcast on October 20, 2021.

By simultaneously broadcasting the public hearing on radio and social media, PRDOH's efforts rose to the spirit and intent of the FRN. Citizens could submit questions and comments through the CDBG-DR email, call the PRDOH call center, or complete an online form on the CDBG-DR website. The first public hearing resulted in the submission of seventeen (17) comments from the public.



Figure 1 Screen captures from PRDOH CDBG-DR Facebook page

Second Public Hearing

While the Action Plan draft was publicly available for the citizens' review, PRDOH conducted a second public hearing on December 8, 2021. Just as in the first public hearing, PRDOH hosted a transmission through live social media (YouTube, and Facebook) with a simultaneous radio broadcast. This was performed as a safety measure due to the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring an inclusive public participation. A total of seventeen (17) comments were received from the public.

Additionally, PRDOH launched *Ponencias del Pueblo*, an innovative alternative to allow individuals and organizations to provide brief videos or written summaries of their proposals for the enhancement and improvement of Puerto Rico's electrical power system, as well as to provide their feedback about the Action Plan draft. As a result, PRDOH received and presented six (6) videos submitted by citizens and government officials. The second public hearing received an increased participation from the public with the addition of these video presentations. The full two (2) public hearing broadcasts are available at the CDBG-DR website.¹ Citizens could submit questions and comments

¹ <https://cdbg-dr.pr.gov/en/power-grid-action-plan/> (English version) and <https://cdbg-dr.pr.gov/plan-de-accion-de-red-de-energia/> (Spanish version)

through the CDBG-DR email, call the PRDOH call center, or complete an online form on the CDBG-DR website.



Figure 2 Capture from the CDBG-DR Facebook page - views from the second public hearing as of January 20, 2022.



Figure 3 Capture from the CDBG-DR YouTube page – views from the second public hearing as of January 20, 2022.