

Community Strength Plan Worksheet



Purpose: This worksheet helps you build your Community Strength Plan (Attachment F) as required by the Notice of Funding Opportunity and described in Sections I.G. and V.C. The Community Strength Plan cannot exceed five pages.

Goals of the Community Strength Plan

- Describe how your proposed projects could enhance the overall strength and economic prosperity of your community.
- Explain how you intend to minimize the risk of displacement, which is when disadvantaged households are forced to leave their community due to rising costs.
- Explain how the projects would benefit existing residents, particularly disadvantaged and priority populations, in the Project Area. Priority populations are more vulnerable to climate change risks, like children and older adults. For more information about priority populations, check out the Priority Populations Worksheet.
- Describe how the projects could allow residents to continue to build on the benefits past the life of the project, for future generations.

Part 1: Maximizing Economic Benefits

You should maximize the economic benefits of your proposed projects for residents in the Project Area. Example strategies for maximizing economic benefits include:

Example: Opportunities for Local Small Businesses or Contractors

- Directly inform local businesses, including Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, of open solicitations and encourage them to compete for contracts. These may result in short-term benefits for local businesses.
- Partner with your local government's small business office, minority business associations, unions, or local Chambers of Commerce to advertise contracting opportunities. This may result in short-term benefits for local businesses.

Example: High Quality Jobs for Community Members

- Develop recruitment strategies with your local workforce development board to support project work. Establish goals for hiring individuals from your Project Area on your proposed projects. These strategies can have short- and long-term benefits, providing jobs for the span of the projects and giving workers training and experience for future-related jobs.



- Fund supportive services for workers on grant-funded projects. Examples of supportive services are transportation vouchers, childcare subsidies, and mental health support. These are short-term benefits for workers.

Example: Financial Savings for Residents

- Choose Climate Action and Pollution Reduction projects that reduce costs to provide the community with financial savings. For example, energy-efficient retrofits of homes can save money for homeowners or renters or low-cost public transportation options. This can provide short- and long-term savings for community members.
- Consider using tools such as Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) to ensure lasting benefits. CBAs are legally binding contracts in which parties such as private developers and local governments commit to providing long-term benefits for members of communities. Read below for more information about CBAs.

Part 2: Displacement Avoidance

Large investments in communities can come with the risk of unintended consequences like rising property values. Higher property values can lead to higher rents and property taxes. This can make it difficult for communities to remain affordable for some low-income and other disadvantaged members. Existing residents are sometimes displaced, and newer residents, often with higher incomes, receive the benefits of the community investments.

You should explain how you intend to minimize the risks of displacement. Examples of anti-displacement strategies you might consider include:

Community Benefits Agreements

- A CBA is a legally binding contract between community groups and a private developer. Sometimes government entities are a part of CBAs.
- It can require the developer to provide benefits to the communities. These benefits can include anti-displacement measures such as providing affordable housing and hiring locally.
- You could negotiate for some benefits of the CBA to continue beyond the construction of the project. For example, you could require continued workforce development initiatives.

Education and Outreach

- You could provide existing residents with information about their rights as renters and homeowners.
- This could include distributing information packets or running tenant protection workshops in your community.



- You could also provide information to residents about tenants' unions, which are renter-created groups that advocate for the rights of renters.

Foreclosure Assistance

- [Foreclosure assistance](#) helps households avoid foreclosure.
- Assistance can range from financial counseling to financial aid.
- Research shows that both non-financial and financial foreclosure assistance results in more families being able to keep their homes. This can help reduce displacement.

Inclusionary Zoning

- Local governments create [inclusionary zoning codes](#).
- Inclusionary zoning codes require every housing development to include a minimum percentage of affordable housing units either in their new development or at another location.
- Inclusionary zoning codes can be made mandatory throughout a town or city. They can also include requirements that units are made affordable for a long time span, such as 30 years.
- Providing incentives for developers, such as quicker permit approval processes, often makes inclusionary zoning more successful.
- Consider partnering or collaborating with a local government to create an inclusionary zoning code.

Just Cause Evictions

- Local jurisdictions implement just cause eviction programs.
- Just cause eviction programs allow property owners to evict tenants only for specific reasons, such as not paying rent or otherwise violating their lease.
- These programs often include procedures that property owners must follow to prove that they have cause to evict.
- Just cause eviction programs can help limit how many multi-family rental housing units in your community are replaced with condominiums and other individually owned units.
- Consider partnering or collaborating with a local government if you would like to have a just cause eviction program.

Partnerships with Landlords

- If property owners benefit from your proposed projects, you could require that the landlords that benefit agree to not raise rents for a certain length of time.
- This could be important if the projects increase the value of the property, which if unregulated, could lead to landlords raising rents and potentially displacing disadvantaged community members.



Rent Control

- Local governments can create rent control policies.
- [Rent control policies](#) put limits on rent. These policies may require that rents stay below a certain price or limit how much property owners can increase a tenant's rent each year.
- There are often limits on which buildings or units the rent control restrictions apply. A common limit is that they only apply to units built before a certain year.
- Rent control is not legal everywhere in the United States, so check the laws in your state.
- Local governments have the power to create rent control policies. Consider partnering or collaborating with a local government if you would like to use rent control policies.

Other Considerations

- Consider working with local governments to create other policies, plans, or programs to reduce displacement. These could include zoning policies that encourage dense, affordable housing.
- Consider using a variety of measures together, like rent control policies, just cause evictions and limits on converting rental housing to condominiums. This would help to preserve rent-controlled housing units.



Guiding Questions

Part 1: Maximizing Economic Benefits of Projects

Business Opportunities

1. Are there ways the projects proposed in your application create opportunities for local small businesses? (Note: Do not forget that work must be procured in line with EPA requirements)
2. What outreach methods could you use to ensure that local small businesses and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises are aware of and apply for opportunities related to your project?

Job Opportunities

1. What high quality jobs could your proposed projects create?
2. How do you plan to make sure that residents within your Project Area have access to those jobs? For example, will you partner with a workforce development program (such as a pre-apprenticeship program), and/or collect and publish data about the workers on the projects?
3. How do you plan to retain workers (for example, by funding services such as transportation, childcare, and mental health supports)?



Financial Savings

1. Will Project Area residents receive direct financial benefits from the proposed projects in your application?

2. How can you make sure that these financial benefits last beyond the three-year span of the grant?

Part 2: Displacement Avoidance

1. Is the community in your Project Area vulnerable to displacement associated with your proposed project? Factors that may put communities at risk of displacement, as compared with the wider city or metropolitan statistical area include:
 - Low proportion of owner-occupied housing: Renters have less control over their housing. If property values in an area rise, landlords may choose to sell their properties which may force renters to move.
 - Low median household income: Households with low incomes may not be able to afford the higher rents and property taxes that might come with significant investments in the community.
 - High vacancy rate: Communities with high vacancy rates may be more vulnerable to gentrification because the vacant lots provide more opportunities for investment.

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2. How could your proposed projects create or increase the risks of rising costs for residents, small businesses, and other community members in your Project Area?

3. What programs, plans, or activities already exist in the Project Area to help lessen these risks? For example, is there a citywide anti-displacement plan, a non-profit running renters' rights workshops, a statewide program for foreclosure assistance?

4. What programs, plans, and activities could you propose to help lessen the risks of displacement that your proposed projects might create or increase? What partners would you need to successfully implement those proposed activities?



Tips to Consider

- All parts of your project should be community driven. Use community input to assess and describe the risks of displacement and to identify ways to lessen this risk.
- All jobs you propose creating should follow [Good Jobs Principles](#). Good jobs are high-quality, family-sustaining, community-strengthening jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union.

Resources

1. HUD Displacement of Lower-Income Families in Urban Areas Report
This report suggests key strategies that could address displacement of lower-income families and long-time residents in urban areas.
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/displacementreport.pdf>
2. Sharing in the Benefits of a Greening City
This toolkit presents policies that can be used to prevent residential displacement after large investments in environmental assets.
<https://create.umn.edu/toolkit/>
3. Strategies to Minimize Displacement
A set of fact sheets on strategies and tools to minimize displacement alongside brownfields redevelopment.
<https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/strategies-minimize-displacement>
4. White Paper on Anti-Displacement Strategy Effectiveness
A paper evaluating the effectiveness of common anti-displacement strategies.
<https://www.urbandisplacement.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/19RD018-Anti-Displacement-Strategy-Effectiveness.pdf>