



CRS Credit for Planning Committees

— A Handout for the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System —

The CRS strongly encourages locally designed programs to prevent and reduce flood losses. Three CRS activities specifically credit local planning committees that design such programs and periodically evaluate their effectiveness:

Activity 330 (Outreach Projects) credits a committee that helps develop and evaluates a Program for Public Information (PPI).

Activity 370 (Flood Insurance Promotion) credits a committee that helps develop and evaluate a flood insurance coverage improvement plan (CI).

Activity 510 (Floodplain Management Planning) has two credits for a committee that helps draft a floodplain management or a hazard mitigation plan. The Step 1 committee consists of staff with expertise in different areas and the Step 2 committee is designed to involve the public in the planning process. Members of the public may be part of the planning committee created under Step 1 or they may be organized as a separate committee.

Three of the committees have similar membership criteria. In fact, it is recommended that a community have only one committee, charged with work on all three activities. The committee could be one that already exists, such as a mitigation planning committee or advisory board, or a subcommittee of an existing group, as long as it meets the membership criteria.

Membership. The number of participants and their identities are determined by the community, but the committee's membership must meet the following CRS criteria.

Activity 330 Program for Public Information (PPI) Committee

- There must be at least five people on the committee.
- At least half of the members must be from outside the local government (“stakeholders”).
- There must be representation from the community's floodplain management office and public information office (if there is one).

Activity 370 Committee for the Flood Insurance Coverage Improvement Plan

- Same three criteria as for the 330 PPI committee, plus
- There must be representation from the insurance industry, such as a local insurance agent.

Activity 510 Step 1 Floodplain Management Plan Staff Committee

- The members are staff members from those community departments that implement or have expertise in the activities that will be reviewed in Step 7. Credit is based on how many of the six categories are represented by the offices.

Activity 510 Step 2 Public Planning Committee

- Staff members from the Step 1 staff committee, plus
- For full credit, at least half of the members must be from outside the local government (“stakeholders”). Credit can be prorated if less than half of the members are stakeholders.

Step 7 Categories

- Preventive measures (e.g., codes)
- Property protection (e.g., elevation)
- Natural resource protection
- Emergency services
- Structural flood control projects
- Public Information

Stakeholders. Three of the four committees must have “stakeholders.” Stakeholders are people from outside the local government. They could be members of the public, representatives of key community organizations, and/or agencies and organizations that will likely implement the recommended outreach projects.

Stakeholder participants could be

- Floodplain residents, representatives of neighborhood or homeowner associations
- Emergency/disaster responders, e.g., Red Cross, Salvation Army
- Environmental organizations, “Friends of the River,” etc.
- Chamber of commerce or other business group
- Major employer(s)
- Builders, contractors, or a trade association
- Utility companies
- Developers/real estate organization
- Insurance agencies (for Activity 370 credit)

Staff from other government agencies outside the community, e.g., school district, levee or flood control district, regional planning agency, state coastal management office, or the National Weather Service, can also be counted as stakeholders. However, because the purpose of having public committees is to have non-government people have a significant say in the development of the PPI or plan, the total number of government employees, contractors, and consultants cannot exceed 20% of the committee’s stakeholder members. This does not preclude government employees and consultants from being non-voting advisors to the committee.

Employees and elected officers of a community do not qualify as stakeholders. A member of an advisory board, such as a planning commission, can qualify provided that the board’s authority is limited to making recommendations to another body. If the board has the final authority (as is often the case with a board of appeals), its members are considered community employees or officers.

Stakeholders are counted as individuals. If one person is a member of two or three organizations (e.g., a homeowners association, chamber of commerce, and planning commission), that person is counted as one person toward the 50% criterion.

Multi-jurisdictional committees. Sometimes CRS communities in a metropolitan area or members of a CRS Users Group want to develop a joint or coordinated program or plan. This approach has the advantage of sharing resources and avoiding duplication of effort.

This approach can also have a disadvantage if an individual community’s needs are lost in the bigger operation. Accordingly, in order to avoid this, if a community wants CRS credit for a multi-jurisdictional committee under any of the four credits, then

- (1) The community must send at least two representatives to the multi-jurisdictional committee,
- (2) Except for a Activity 510 Step 1 committee, at least half of the community’s representatives must be stakeholders from outside the local government, and
- (3) At least half of the representatives must attend all the meetings of the multi-jurisdictional committee. In effect, there must be a quorum from each community. Remote attendance, e.g., via a conference call or webinar that allows for everyone to talk, is acceptable.

Getting members. Several communities have noted problems getting volunteer stakeholders because of the potential workload. It must be noted that the committee is the focal point for discussions and decisions. That doesn’t mean that committee members have to do all the work. Staff should conduct the research and draft the reports for review at committee meetings. For a PPI, for example, the work could be done with as few as three committee meetings. For an Activity 510 floodplain management plan, there needs to be at least five committee meetings.