



LOUISIANA
WATERSHED
INITIATIVE



REGION 6 REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT (RCBG)

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING (RSC) GUIDANCE, RESOURCES & MINIMUM STANDARDS

Program featured in the State's Master CDBG-MIT [Action Plan](#)¹ developed in response to Federal Register Notice Docket No. FR-6109-N-02. Regional Steering Committee functions limited to Year 1 Program milestones.

REGION 6 CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT
ADMINISTERED BY:
South Central Planning and
Development Commission

PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY:
Office of Community Development
Division of Administration
State of Louisiana

www.watershed.la.gov

¹ This program may be adjusted or revised based on HUD requirements or later amendments to the Action Plan.

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PART I: MEETING PROCEDURES OUTLINE

Guidance: Components for potential inclusion in the RSC meeting procedures include:

1. **Background:** The circumstances that led to the creation of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative and RSCs
2. **Purpose:** The purpose of the RSC and meeting procedures
3. **Open Meetings Law:** A statement declaring that the RSC will follow the Louisiana Open Meetings Law 42:11-28 and any specific details related to the law
4. **Duties and responsibilities:** A description of the Committee's role and expectations of its members
5. **Composition of Committee:** The method used for selecting members and a list of individuals, offices or entities are represented in the Committee, including whether the seat is held individually or ex officio
6. **Organization and structure:** Naming the Committee positions (chair, vice-chair, etc.), their duties, and how they are elected
7. **Conflict of interest:** A statement directing how the RSC members will act to avoid any real or perceived conflicts of interest
8. **Procedural rules:** How the Committee will vote and make decisions, the rules of order to be followed, etc.
9. **Amendments to procedures:** How the Committee will make amendments to the procedures
10. **Dissolution:** A statement that the RSC is intended to serve an interim function within the Louisiana Watershed Initiative

PART II: MEETING & PROCEDURAL MATERIALS

1. BACKGROUND

Following the Great Floods of 2016, Gov. Edwards issued an executive order that charged state agencies to coordinate statewide flood risk management efforts through a watershed approach, which acknowledges how water naturally moves throughout our communities. State agencies named in the order make up the Council on Watershed Management, which oversees all activities associated with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative.

Through the implementation of its programs, the LWI coordinates enhanced technology, planning, policy and engagement with state agencies, regional partners, and local communities to build support for an improved, long-term, state and watershed region management framework that can more effectively address mounting flood risks statewide.

Funding to support efforts of the Regional Steering Committee (sometimes referred to as the Committee or RSC) meeting here today, is available through recovery dollars from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to enable proactive approaches to water management statewide. These dollars have been programmed through the Office of Community Development via the Regional Capacity Building Grant Program, for which the Committee operating here today is charged with:

1. Adopting an annual work plan
2. Providing input in the development and ultimate implementation of longer-term, formalized coalition with the ability to adopt different levels of a governance structure for project coordination and prioritization. This long-term entity is intended to outlast specific event-related funding allocations and to provide a sustainable, institutional basis to increase continuity, improve flood resilience, and enable more effective flood prevention within our region.
3. Developing a regional watershed project inventory
4. Participating in the selection of projects totaling up to 5 million dollars, in coordination with the Watershed Initiative Round 1 Projects Program

This Committee will dissolve after one year, upon determination of an appropriate long-term watershed coalition framework. Regional activities are intended to continue under this longer-term coalition framework and will build upon the work, input and recommendations of this group. For more information on this statewide program, click on the “Regional Capacity Building Program” under the “Programs” tab at watershed.la.gov.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Committee is to provide policy guidance to the Council on Watershed Management and advance regional coordination for watershed/floodplain-based flood risk reduction and water management.

In an effort to operate efficiently, consistently, transparently, and in accordance with the goals of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative, this document provides the procedures for the administration of the RSC for Region 6 of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative. The procedures contained herein provide the rules by which the Committee will be formed, how the membership will be composed, what rules and regulations will apply to its proceedings.

3. OPEN MEETINGS LAW

As an advisory committee established for the purpose of providing advice and recommendations to the Council on Watershed Management and the Louisiana Office of Community Development (hereinafter “Grantor”), this Committee constitutes a “public body” under La. R.S. 42:13 and is thus subject to and will follow the Louisiana Open Meetings Law (La. R.S. 42:11-28). Consequently, in the event of any conflict between any term, condition, or provision set forth herein and any mandate of the grantor or Open Meeting Law, the latter shall prevail.

In addition, the Committee will follow the guidelines of the Louisiana Office of Community Development and provide notice at least 5 business days of notice for any official meeting of the Committee or sub-committee.

In accordance with 42:14 of the Open Meetings Laws, any individual or representative of any organization will be allowed to address the Committee on any agenda item that requires a vote be taken. To exercise this privilege, no prior request for placement on the agenda is necessary. Comments from the public may, at the discretion of the Chairperson be entertained at the beginning of the agenda or be after introduction of an item to be voted on and before any discussion by members of the Committee. The Committee shall not be required to entertain comments on any item which does not require that a vote be taken and/or does not appear on the agenda, however the Chairperson shall have the discretion to hear such comments.

A person wishing to comment on any agenda item may be requested, at the discretion of the Chairperson, to complete a “public comment form” prior to the meeting indicating the specific agenda item that he/she would like to address.

Any person appearing before the Committee in connection with such agenda item shall first state his/her name and shall limit his/her remarks to three (3) minutes. However, the Chairperson may deviate from this time limitation unless his/her decision is overridden by a majority vote of the Committee. All statements shall be directed to the Committee as a whole and not to any specific member. No person shall speak more than once per agenda item. No dialogue between members of the Committee and/or other members of the public shall be permitted, except at the discretion of the Chairperson and then only to

clarify the nature of questions and/or comments.

Any person who has been recognized to speak to the Committee on an agenda item shall reserve his/her comments to matters that are strictly relevant to that specific item. All comments shall be presented in a respectful manner, and participants must conduct themselves orderly and with civility. Comments or language of a lewd, insulting, or provocative nature shall not be tolerated or permitted. Members of the public shall remain silent unless and until recognized as a speaker by the Chairperson. Moreover, personal and derogatory remarks shall be deemed inappropriate. The Chairperson may, therefore, dismiss any speaker who violates the dictates of this policy.

If an organization, formal or informal, wishes to address the Committee on any specific agenda item, then such entity shall select one person as its spokesperson. This limitation shall not prevent others who are associated with the organization from speaking on their own behalf.

4. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Working in conjunction with the selected grant applicant and South Central Planning and Development Commission the fiscal agent for Region 6 of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative, this Regional Steering Committee (sometimes referred to as Committee or RSC) shall assist in the development and delivery of work products requested by the grantor and endeavor to form a permanent watershed coalition within the parameters defined by the Louisiana Watershed Initiative. The RSC shall further exercise such powers and discharge all other duties and responsibilities as dictated by the grantor, the grant applicant South Central Planning and Development Commission, and/or the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. All activities conducted by the RSC shall be in compliance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including the Open Meetings Laws and Public Records Laws of Louisiana contained at Revised Statutes 42:11 et seq., and 44:1 et seq.

Committee members are expected to attend all meetings. Failure to attend three (3) consecutive meetings without explanation acceptable to the other members constitutes grounds for removal from the Committee. Should a member miss more than five (5) meetings in a twelve month period, the Fiscal Agent will be tasked with coordinating a new appointment amongst parishes represented and may request that the appointing agent for such member appoint another member.

5. COMPOSITION OF THE REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

Criteria and guidance for the composition of the Regional Steering Committee was set forth by the grantor and consists of 17 total members. The Committee shall be composed of 1 representative(s) from each of the 16 parishes which comprise Region 6 of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative and 1 appointment made by South Central Planning Development Commission namely:

Ascension	David Weil
Assumption	John Boudreaux
BTNEP*	Andrew Barron
Iberia	Scott Saunier
Iberville	John Clark
Jefferson	Maggie Talley
Lafourche	Amanda Voisin
City of New Orleans	Brad Klamer
Plaquemines	Richie Blink
Pointe Coupee	Mark Ward
St. Charles	Earl Matherne
St. James	Marril McKarry
St. John the Baptist	Devin Foil
St. Martin	Kasey Courville
St. Mary	Tim Matte
Terrebonne	Mart Black
West Baton Rouge	Kevin Dervin

Membership changes to the Committee will be submitted in writing by the Governing Authority to South Central Planning Development Commission.

6. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

The Committee shall appoint a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson shall serve as the presiding officer at each meeting, and in the absence of the said Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson shall serve in that capacity. Moreover, the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall perform all other duties and responsibilities as commonly ascribed to such offices.

Both the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall be elected by simple majority vote at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee. Where a quorum is present, each shall serve for the duration of the Committee or, upon the resignation or cessation of membership of such officer, until his or her replacement is elected.

Both the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall be voting members on any and all matters that come before the Committee.

South Central Planning and Development Commission, as grant applicant, is hereby designated as the recording Secretary and Clerk for this Committee.

7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

RSC members are subject to the Louisiana Government Code of Ethics and HUD conflict of interest rules, and should not participate in any discussion, deliberation or voting on matters prohibited under those provisions. A committee member must recuse themselves from deliberation and abstain from voting on any matter taken up by the Committee that may affect a business or other entity in which he or she has a significant interest.

8. PROCEDURAL RULES

Except as otherwise dictated by the regulations and mandates of the grantor and United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, or the Louisiana Open Meetings Law, this Committee shall be governed in all proceedings by the most current edition of ***Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised***. The Committee shall meet as dictated by the fiscal agent, South Central Planning and Development Commission, all such meetings shall be announced in advance and shall further be open to the public in accordance with Louisiana Open Meetings Law. Moreover, the meetings shall be conducted pursuant to a written agenda approved by the Chairperson of the Committee, working in conjunction with the fiscal agent/watershed coordinator, and published in advance in accordance with Open Meeting Law and direction provided by the grantor. At any meeting, only members of the Committee may vote but there shall be an opportunity for public comment prior to any vote. A quorum shall be defined as no less than fifty percent (50%) of the membership required at each meeting in order for any action items to be voted upon by the Committee or RSC.

All decisions of the RSC shall be by majority voice vote of the membership present at a meeting where a quorum is present, if required by law. All votes shall be recorded in the minutes or records of the RSC. As previously set forth herein, all members of the RSC shall be entitled to vote on any matter coming before the Committee. RSC members shall be prohibited from appointing alternate designees to the Committee and voting by proxy ballot shall be prohibited.

9. APPROVAL AND AMENDMENT TO MEETING PROCEDURES

These procedures and any amendments thereto shall be approved by majority vote of the members of the Committee. No amendment that restricts or limits the requirements of Open Meetings or Public Records laws will be permitted.

10. DISSOLUTION

This Committee shall exist only for such period of time as required by the Louisiana Watershed Initiative acting pursuant to the rules, regulations, and dictates of the grantor and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, with the intention that it will be replaced by a permanent entity.

PART III. PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Given the temporary suspension of Louisiana Open Meetings Law during this public health emergency which has allowed state agencies, boards and commissions, and local political subdivisions to **convene meetings via teleconference or video conference**, OCD will provide additional flexibility to watershed regions who desire to conduct their upcoming RSC meetings via virtual options. OCD is providing the following standards and procedural guidance for watershed coordinators to take into account as they conduct RSC activities via virtual technologies. Please note that the teleconference and video conference allowances are only in effect during the time period of the public health emergency.

1. TELECONFERENCE & VIDEO CONFERENCE STANDARDS

A) **Assess RSC member capacity to participate or special needs**

Watershed Coordinator (WC) should first reach out to each individual RSC member and assess their availability AND their technological capacity to participate in steering committee activities in next 90 days. This should be complete well in advance of the any scheduled online meeting. It is also recommended this information be collected in list form. In communicating with Committee members, be encouraged to ask the following questions:

- Is the Committee member able to participate?
- Does the Committee member have access to required technology?
For example, could they participate only by telephone or do they have access to a computer and internet?
- Have they ever participated in online/virtual meetings?
If not, would they be open to one-on-one training?

Once all Committee members have been contacted, assess the number of members who are able to attend meetings remotely AND are comfortable using the technology. For those unable to participate, the state encourages WC to work with these members to determine what accommodations would be necessary to enable their participation, while being consistent with COVID-19 restrictions.

B) **Post written certification advising that RSC is unable to meet in-person**

Pursuant to Section 4 of Proclamation Number JBE 2020-30, prior to holding a virtual RSC meeting in the form of a teleconference or video conference, the watershed coordinator must post a notice in the form of a written certification that certifies the RSC will otherwise be unable to operate due to quorum requirements, and therefore is conducting business via teleconference or video conference. Please see Attachment A for a template certification. The written certification can be posted with the meeting notice. Notice requirements are detailed below.

C) **Public notice requirements**

Public notice requirements have not changed as a result of the declared emergency, and virtually held RSC meetings shall be noticed in the same manner as in-person meetings. RSC meetings held by teleconference or video conference should be noticed at least 5

days prior to the meeting, in accordance with OCD policy as well as state law. Posting on the watershed coordinator's agency website and at the location of the meeting is sufficient, since the RSCs do not have an official journal of record like a parish or city council. In addition, if the RSC's meeting procedures or bylaws specifically name the fiscal agent's office, the posting should be displayed there.

OCD does not discourage watershed coordinators from posting the meeting notice in newspapers or other media outlets, as this would encourage participation. OCD also recommends that the notice be posted on each of the participating parishes' websites, where feasible. In accordance with La. R.S. 42:19, the meeting notice shall include the agenda, date, time, and phone number/live stream information of the meeting.

D) Verify quorum of virtual RSC members

Per guidance provided by the Louisiana Attorney General, a public body convening a meeting via teleconference or video conference must still meet the quorum requirement.² Therefore, Watershed Coordinators should ensure that a simple majority of the RSC membership is able to participate in any proposed teleconference or video conference meeting.

2. VIDEO CONFERENCE PROCEDURES

There are several video platforms available for holding a video conference. The software usually requires a monthly subscription. Some popular platforms include *Zoom* and *GoToMeeting*. Watershed Coordinators may use these programs to host virtual meetings; however, OCD can provide assistance in setting up and running virtual meetings if a watershed coordinator seeks this extra support.³ When hosting a virtual meeting, it is recommended that the RSC chairperson/watershed coordinator, or the person who is administering the meeting, have a separate staff person dedicated to running the video telephone conference, so that management of the technical aspects of the meeting delivery can be separated from the overall meeting management. Several procedures should be followed for every videoconference:

Step 1. Prior to each meeting, the facilitator should:

- a. Verify that the platform chosen will allow the number of people expected to participate, will provide a phone and video option and not just one or the other, and confirm that there are no time constraints on the platform in use.
- b. Provide precise system login instructions to all invited participants, including any needed pre-registrations to allow smooth entry at the time of the meeting. Login instructions should also be included in the posted notice.
- c. Obtain all on-screen materials during the meeting and save to the computer to allow swifter access. Post those materials to an accessible site or email to attendees in advance in case some participants lose video connectivity and need to see the materials.

² Additional Open Meetings Guidance in light of COVID-19, Louisiana Department of Justice, March 19, 2020.

³ If a watershed coordinator seeks assistance in setting up a video conference, please contact Miriam Belblidia of the CSRS Program Support Team at Miriam.Belblidia@arcadis.com.

- d. Determine whether multiple people will need to serve as hosts for the meeting (share their own screens and control the meeting delivery); if so, provide training and conduct practice sessions.

Step 2. At the beginning of every meeting, the facilitator should:

- a. Log into the virtual platform at least 20 minutes prior to the meeting start time to smooth out potential issues.
- b. Log into the meeting by calling in on your phone to assure crisper audio functionality.
- c. Adjust platform settings to ensure recording features are enabled.
- d. Adjust settings to either disable or enable chat settings as desired. Removing the ability for people to privately message with each other in the chat box during the session is recommended as the chat section is also a public record. This would mean settings should be set to enable chats, but not private chats. For reference in doing so on Zoom, click [here](#).
- e. Confirm that every participant can see the visual materials and hear the audio.
- f. As participants join the meeting, if the platform allows renaming them in the meeting, do so to allow smoother question/answer processes. If the facilitator is able to confirm with the RSC members ahead of time which phone number they may dial in from, that is helpful in this process.
- g. Provide a tour of the platform's controls demonstrating how participants use the "chat" and/or "raise hand" features and provide an example of how someone would communicate that they cannot hear the audio.
- h. Allow for five to ten minutes at the opening of the meeting to resolve technical issues.
- i. Make it clear that the meeting is public and will become public record, including the chat. Announce at the beginning and the end of the call where the recording will be placed and when for further access.
- j. Announce at which point during the meeting committee members will be unmuted, at which point the public participants will be unmuted and at which point during the meeting public comments will be accepted and in what manner. If all participants are muted by the meeting facilitator, those people with questions or comments could unmute themselves at the question/comment period, for instance.
- k. Announce what agenda items, if any, will include a vote and how that vote will be captured. Some platforms allow an in-meeting "poll" feature to be used that could be useful in some voting situations. All RSC members should be identified in such votes. If a "chat" feature is utilized for voting, identification of said members is critical.
- l. If public comments are to be solicited after the meeting is concluded due to time limitations or technical difficulties, for instance, provide the specific mechanisms for doing so during the meeting so that this information is available when the meeting recording is viewed.
- m. If public comments are to be solicited during the meeting, the meeting facilitator should announce when and how these comments will be taken. Comments could be received in writing via a chat feature and then read into the record by the meeting facilitator, or comments could be delivered orally. If the meeting facilitator is to receive oral

comments, it is suggested that the facilitator set a reasonable time frame for speakers, in terms of minutes per speaker, and set a reasonable maximum number of speakers.

Step 3. After the meeting is concluded, the facilitator should:

- a. Post the recording on your website or LWI’s website. If the meeting is posted to your website, notify LWI of the link and the posting so the post can be replicated on the LWI site.
- b. Post minutes in the same location as the recording if possible. RSCs are still required to prepare written minutes of the proceeding, which will be a public record and shall be available to the public in a reasonable time after the meeting.

3. TELECONFERENCE PROCEDURES

It is recommended that the chairperson, or the person who is administering the meeting, have a separate staff person administer the telephone conference so that management of the technical aspects of the meeting delivery can be separated from the overall meeting management. Several procedures should be followed for every teleconference:

Step 1. Prior to each meeting, the facilitator should:

- a. Verify that the platform chosen will allow the number of people expected to participate, and confirm that there are no time constraints on the platform in use.
- b. Set up a backup phone number for instances where phone lines do not cooperate. Including backup information in all notices provides for easy reference; multiple call-in numbers should be provided, when possible.
- c. Provide precise system login instructions to all invited participants, including any needed pre-registrations to allow smooth entry at the time of the meeting.
- d. Provide all materials to be discussed during the teleconference to RSC members prior to the start of the meeting, and post those materials to an easy to locate website for any members of the public joining the meeting to access.

Step 2. At the beginning of every meeting, the facilitator should:

- a. Log into the teleconference platform at least 10 minutes prior to the meeting start time to smooth out potential issues.
- b. Adjust platform settings to enable the recording feature.
- c. Confirm that every participant can hear the audio.
- d. As participants join the meeting, conduct a roll call to inform all participants of who is in the meeting.
- e. Provide a brief overview of the platform’s controls notifying participants how to use the “unmute” or other relevant features and provide an example of how someone would communicate that they cannot hear the audio.
- f. Allow for a few minutes at the opening of the meeting to resolve technical issues.
- g. Make it clear that the meeting is public and will become public record. Announce at the beginning and the end of the call where the recording will be placed and when for further access.

- h. Announce at which point during the meeting committee members will be unmuted, at which point the public participants will be unmuted and at which point during the meeting public comments will be accepted and in what manner. If all participants are muted by the meeting facilitator, those people with questions or comments could unmute themselves at the question/comment period, for instance.
- i. Announce what agenda items, if any, will include a vote and how that vote will be captured. Meetings that require votes are recommended to be conducted by videoconference or with the use of a quick polling feature, i.e. creating a vote in a web-based platform such as Doodle polls or Google forms, and sending that link to voting members by invitation to facilitate capturing correct data on these votes.
- j. If public comments are allowed after the meeting is concluded due to time limitations or technical difficulties, for instance, provide the specific mechanisms for doing so during the meeting so that this information is available when the meeting recording is heard.

Step 3. After the meeting is concluded, the facilitator should:

- a. Post the recording on your website or LWI’s website. If the meeting is posted to your website, notify LWI of the link and the posting so the post can be replicated on the LWI site.
- b. Post minutes in the same location as the recording if possible. RSCs are still required to prepare written minutes of the proceeding, which will be a public record and shall be available to the public in a reasonable time after the meeting.

4. ENSURING PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY

Watershed Coordinators must consider and take steps to ensure vulnerable and special needs populations have access to meeting materials, RSC discussion, and the ability to provide public comment.

- a. HUD has provided specific guidance to this effect applicable to meetings held via teleconference or virtually, located at:
<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CDBG-DR-COVID-19-FAQs.pdf>
- b. Highlights from HUD’s guidance include:
 - o Whether hearings are in-person or virtual, a grantee must take appropriate steps to ensure effective communication with persons with disabilities consistent with the requirements of accessibility laws, such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - o For virtual hearings, meeting facilitators should ensure that information is provided on an accessible website, that e-mails and other digital notifications are accessible, and that the application or platform used to host the hearing must also be accessible.
 - o Examples of such steps may include:
 - i. Offering teleconference options for participation and/or posting audio recordings that can be reached using a dial-in phone number to access the full meeting recording on demand, for vision impaired participants

- ii. Offering close-captioned mechanisms where possible during the meeting for hearing impaired participants
- iii. Offering a call-in number to allow verbal comments to be entered into the record

5. MANAGING LIMITED RSC PARTICIPATION

The Office of Community Development recognizes that some RSC members may be limited in their ability and availability to participate in the committee meetings and activities during the COVID-19 emergency. It is recommended to make as much of the material available to RSC members via email and other means as possible and only require meeting participation when necessary for conducting official RSC business. OCD and the program management team can also support the Watershed Coordinators in providing one-on-one briefings around the availability of RSC members with limited opportunities to participate.

6. PROMOTING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN VIRTUAL WATERSHED ACTIVITIES

While the state and its local and regional partners will continue to identify additional strategies to engage the public, some tools that can provide broadcast information to the public include telephone town hall meetings, where an automated service dials out to a list of phone numbers provided by your organization. Participants can then opt-in to a phone call meeting and interact when allowed with the speakers/presenters. This is a more proactive way of reaching participants. Social media platforms and streaming services are another proactive method for pushing out important RSC information and receiving feedback from the public. For those with limited digital access, partnering with utilities to provide bill inserts can be a useful method for reaching a broad audience.

7. ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

If you would like additional assistance or information from OCD during this public health emergency, please reach out to your designated OCD staff or the CSRS program support personnel whose information is provided below. Please also inform OCD about any other extenuating circumstances or situations that may impact your RCBG Program work during this time.

CSRS Program Support Staff:

Miriam Belblidia: Miriam.Belblidia@arcadis.com

Makida Zackery: Makida.Zackery@arcadis.com

OCD Regional Points of Contact:

Regions 1 & 3: William.Wicker@la.gov

Regions 2, 6 & 8: Nicolette.Jones2@la.gov

Regions 4 & 5: Bradley.Spiegel@la.gov

Region 7: Evelyn.Campo@la.gov