



OMB Clearance Package

**Study of Post-Disaster Outcomes of Renter Households and Rental Housing
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Community Development Block Grants - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR)**

**Appendix C: Interview protocol - PHA staff, property owners and staff, CDFI staff,
private developers**

DRAFT FOR HUD REVIEW

August 4, 2023

Submitted to:
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20401

GTR: Jagruti Rekhi
Office of Policy Development and Research
Affordable Housing Research and Technology Division
Department of Housing and Urban Development
P: 202-402-4512 E: Jagruti.D.Rekhi@hud.gov

Cooperative Agreement: H-21741CA

Appendix C. Interview protocol - PHA staff, property owners and staff, CDFI staff, private developers

Introduction and consent process

Hi, my name is [NAME] and I am a researcher with the Urban Institute, a non-profit, nonpartisan research institution in Washington, DC. The Urban Institute received a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct a study of post-disaster recovery outcomes for rental housing, renter households, and affordable housing residents.

As part of this study, we are visiting communities across the United States that have been affected by disasters to interview stakeholders about disaster impacts to housing and rental markets and renter populations, as well as about views on the impacts and benefits of recovery investment programs such as HUD's Community Development Block Grant—Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program.

This interview is completely voluntary. You may terminate it at any point for any reason and you may decline to answer any question. Your responses will be used to inform our understanding of disaster recovery outcomes for rental housing, renter households, and affordable housing residents.

We will be taking notes during this interview and, with your permission, would like to audio record the interview to ensure we are accurately capturing the information you provide. If you would prefer to not record the interview, we can proceed with written notes only. The notes and recordings will only be accessed by our research team at the Urban Institute and will be stored on a secure, password-protected server at the Urban Institute. The audio recording is not a requirement of participation. HUD will not have access to any of your direct responses, and all information shared will be in aggregate after de-identification. All members of the research team have signed confidentiality pledges. We will protect your identity and will not release your name or any other identifying information beyond the research team. We will not attribute any direct quotes to you. In any reports, documentation, or other work product, your name and identifying information will not be included. However, you should know that we are only speaking with a small number of people, and it is possible someone may be able to identify you from a quote even if though your name will not be given. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your interactions with your employer or any government agency.

There are no direct benefits to your participation other than the knowledge that you are contributing to research to inform future program planning at HUD to improve disaster recovery for rental housing and renter populations in communities affected by disasters.

[if in person]

If you choose to participate, we recommend that we meet at a location that is agreeable to you and outside the eye or earshot of others.

[if remote/over Zoom]

We recommend that you participate within a private setting, outside the eye or earshot of others. Even so, we have no way of knowing who may be within earshot or viewing range at your location, so cannot guarantee that non-participants will not hear what you share today. We also recognize that video meetings can be hacked, and though we have taken steps to prevent this from happening, it is still a possibility. Please keep these potential risks in mind if you choose to participate.

[all interviewees]

We are seeking your approval to participate in today's interview. We want to be sure that you freely consent to participate, that you are aware that you are not obligated to answer any questions, and that you understand the potential risks and benefits of participating.

Do you consent to participate in the interview? [Solicit verbal consent].

Do you consent to this interview being recorded? [This is not a requirement to continue]
[if yes, start recording and proceed; if no, proceed without recording]

Background Questions

Thank you again for your participation in this interview. We will be respectful of time and keep to the [x] minutes we have scheduled.

As a reminder, our study is focused on post-disaster recovery for rental housing and renter households. In addition to your community, we are conducting research in two other communities that experienced a disaster in the last 15 years. We are interested in the recovery process for renters and the loss and rehabilitation of rental housing. Our research also has a special focus on renters with low- and moderate incomes and on their housing options.

Before we dive into the substance, we have a few questions to better understand your professional role and experience in [community/region] with relation to [main disaster event].

1. In couple of sentences, please describe your role with [agency/organization/office]?

Follow-up: [if not addressed] How long have you been in this role?

2. Please briefly describe the portfolio of rental housing properties or investments [respondents' organization] maintains in [community/region]?

Follow-up: [if not addressed] How many units? What affordability levels? What type of finance does your organization typically offer/use for housing projects?

3. How would you describe your familiarity with [main disaster event]?

Follow-up: Did you experience it personally?

Follow up: Did you have any professional role/roles related to the disaster? How would you rate your level of familiarity with immediate impacts and response related to housing? What about the longer-term rebuilding and recovery?

*We would like to start by asking you to reflect on [main disaster event] and consider the **immediate** effects of the disaster. We would also like you to think about the response and recovery in the **short term**—meaning approximately the first year after [main disaster event].*

[If the respondent expressed no familiarity with the immediate impacts of and response to the main disaster skip to question 7]

4. Based on your recollection, please describe the impacts of [main disaster event] on renters and rental housing and an approximate timeline of the recovery process? We are interested in hearing about properties you own/manage/finance, as well as your observations about housing more broadly in the community.

Probe: Consider severity of damage; types of housing with the most severe damage; most affected populations, most affected neighborhoods, as well as any indirect impacts of the disaster.

Follow-up: how did you identify units that were damaged and estimate extent of damages?

Follow up: Did you observe any differences in the disaster damages for rental housing as compared to owner occupied housing)? What about for higher-income vs low-moderate income residents? If so, to what degree?

Follow up [if not addressed]: Thinking about the immediate disaster response period, cleanup process, and post-disaster recovery and rebuilding phases, approximately how long was each phase?

Follow up: Did you observe any differences in the recovery timeline for rental housing as compared to owner occupied housing? What about for higher-income vs low-moderate income residents? If so, do you have any sense why that was?

5. A year after the disaster, what if any changes did you observe in [community/region]'s rental housing market? You could think about things like availability, quality, accessibility, and affordability of housing...

Probe: Were there any changes in your agency's portfolio of rental housing? Such as number of units available, price, etc.

Probe: What about housing more broadly in the community?

Follow-up: [if not addressed] What kind of units were available for rent during this period and what shape were they in? Were they more expensive, less expensive, or about the same as before the [main disaster event]? Was it harder, easier, or about the same as before the [main disaster event] to find available units?

6. Now let's turn to the residents themselves, approximately one year after the disaster, what if any changes did you observe in [community/region]'s rental population?

Follow up: were you able to bring the residents back to your property?

Probe: Did you notice any changes in residents at your properties? Think about income wealth, demographics, financial distress, ability or inability to pay rent or other ways you would describe different groups

Probe: What about renters more broadly in the community? Think about income wealth, demographics, financial distress, ability or inability to pay rent or other ways you would describe different groups. Was this different than immediately before the disaster?

Follow up: Who was displaced and didn't move back? Where do they live now? Were there new arrivals?

*Let's shift gears to the **longer-term, post-disaster recovery phase**. By longer-term we mean approximately 5 years after the disaster when much of the rebuilding has occurred.*

7. Thinking longer-term, how would you characterize the rental housing market in [community/region]? How similar or different is the rental market from immediately before the disaster?

Probe: Were there any changes in your organization's portfolio of rental housing properties/investments?

Follow up [If not addressed]: What about more broadly in the community: What kind of units were available for rent during this period and what shape were they in? Were they more expensive, less expensive, or about the same as before the [main disaster event]? Was it harder, easier, or about the same as before the [main disaster event] to find available units?

Follow up: Do you attribute any of these changes to the disaster? If so, why?

Follow up: What if any other factors led to changes in the rental housing market over this period?

Probe: You could think about significant events such as recessions, other disasters, or other causes of population influxes or losses, and things like this—does anything come to mind?

8. What about changes in the rental population? How similar or different was the rental population 5 years after the disaster compared to immediately before the disaster?

Probe: Did you notice any changes in residents at your properties? Think about income wealth, demographics, financial distress, ability or inability to pay rent or other ways you would describe different groups

Probe: What about broadly in your community? Think about income and wealth, demographics, financial distress, ability or inability to pay rent or other ways you would describe different groups. Was this different than immediately before the disaster?

Follow up: Do you attribute any of these changes to the disaster? If so, how?_

Follow up: What other factors led to changes in the renter population over this period?

9. What data, if any, did your organization/company collect or use to understand the short-term and long-term impacts on rental housing makers and renters? Are there any data sources, reports or maps you would be able to share with our research team?

Let's shift gears to talk about recovery efforts since the disaster to offset or prevent the loss of rental housing. By recovery efforts, we mean both publicly and privately funded programs, policies, or actions designed to support recovery of rental housing in the short- and long-term.

10. [Basic Information about programs to complement information gathered from document review] From our review of publicly available materials and your community's CDBG-DR action plan, we understand your [organization/agency] was involved in the following property projects or programs to mitigate the loss of affordable rental housing post-disaster [list all relevant programs]. Is this correct?

Did we miss any relevant programs? Think about any projects or programs you were a part of with other offices, agencies, or organizations, as well as any such projects or initiatives you may have launched or led.

[If correct, and basic information was missing from document review, ask *only about what is missing* below. Only probe on rental-specific programs/projects] **I'd like to follow up on some specific elements of [this/these] program/s that we did not uncover in public documentation...**

Follow-ups relevant from gaps identified in document review:

- How did your [organization/agency] become involved with these other [project/programs], and what was your role? (partnership role, leadership role?)
- What is the current status of [activity or program name]?
- How were these projects or activities financed? Were any of these activities funded using CDBG-DR dollars?
- Were any funds from other sources leveraged to provide additional dollars for [program or activity]?
- Describe the scale of [program or activity]-how many units, how many people are served/benefit?
- Which, if any, partners were involved in implementation?
- What, if any, kind of affordability protections were included?
- What did the project achieve? What effects did it have?

[If there were missing rental-related programs] **Can you describe these other projects/programs?**

Follow-ups if they do not address:

- How did your [organization/agency] become involved with these other [project/programs], and what was your role? (partnership role, leadership role?)
- What is the current status of [activity or program name]?
- How were these projects or activities financed? Were any of these activities funded using CDBG-DR dollars?
- Were any funds from other sources leveraged to provide additional dollars for [program or activity]?
- Describe the scale of [program or activity]-how many units, how many people are served/benefit?
- Which, if any, partners were involved in implementation?
- What, if any, kind of affordability protections were included?
- What did the project achieve? What effects did it have?

Follow-up: If there were multiple projects/programs, how would you characterize them in order of impact or importance?

Follow-up: What about activities by other agencies or programs you weren't involved with but may be aware of? What do you consider to be the most important other initiatives or programs?

11a. [If involved in CDBG-DR program to support rental housing] **Thinking specifically about the CDBG-DR [project name] project to support rental housing recovery, can you tell us about your experiences identifying community needs and securing and using this funding?**

Follow-ups if they do not address:

- **[identifying community needs, if not addressed in #11]** How were community housing recovery needs identified? Describe any formal and informal processes, to your knowledge, and who or what groups were involved.
 - o Through community engagement activities like community listening sessions or public meetings? And/or through

- observation or knowledge of most affected areas, housing types, or populations? Something else?)
- Overall, would you say that the CDBG-DR requirements for accessing and using the CDBG-DR funding supported or encouraged affordable rental housing recovery in your area? Please describe.
 - To your knowledge, were there any HUD or CDBG-DR requirements that limited your organization/agency's ability to [re/develop rental housing after [disaster]; finance development projects or activities; meet the needs of renters living in your properties...]
 - What if anything did the [community members/applicants/beneficiaries] communicate about needs either for short term rental assistance, or long-term renter assistance through CDBG-DR?

11b. Do you think there was a need for CDBG-DR to provide additional support for renters or the rehabilitation and reconstruction of rental housing? Why or why now?

Follow up: Were the needs of renters being met by other recovery programs? Were other recovery programs involved in rebuilding or repairing rental housing?

Now let's talk about anything that supported—or was a barrier to—action on rental housing recovery in [community name] more broadly.

12. Who or what enabled progress on housing recovery post [main-disaster event]?

Probe: Think about **factors** like policies or law, federal disaster declarations, etc.;

Probe: What about **people and groups**, like advocate or stakeholder groups, public support, policymakers at the local or other level...

Follow-up: What about for your specific portfolio of projects/properties/investments?

Probe: Was the overall funding sufficient to address the extent of housing recovery need? What about nonmonetary resources? (things like technical assistance; staff or personnel expertise and capacity; consultants and agency/office partnerships)

13. Were there any obstacles that delayed, challenged, or complicated these recovery activities we've been talking about?

Probe: Think about things like policies or law, public feedback, access to resources, or other things like this that you see as dis-incentivizing action...

Follow-up: Do any rental housing recovery needs persist that you attribute to these barriers?

14. Thinking about all of the federal, state, and local government efforts to rehabilitate or offset the loss of rental housing during recovery and rebuilding phases, were they adequate and sufficient to meet the rental housing recovery needs in your opinion? In what ways?

15. During any re/development, to what extent were measures taken to protect new or rebuilt units from serious disasters like [disaster name] in the future? Please describe.

Probe: Think about things like special retrofits (for example, home or property elevations; fire or flood resistant building materials; community- or neighborhood-scale infrastructure like levees, berms, or stormwater improvements...) property- or utility- scale resilience investments (like distributed energy); new land use or zoning rules; tax incentives or abatements;

Follow-up: [if significant] To your knowledge, how were these [activities, measures] identified, prioritized, and implemented? Who or what [groups/stakeholders] made the decisions, and how did they decide on which [activities, measures] to implement? In your opinion, is anything missing, or could more be done?

Follow-up: [if significant] With these new [activities, measures], are you aware of any policies or actions to preserve the affordability of these units for low income renters?

Follow-up: [if none] In your opinion, why do you think these kinds of [activities, measures] were not included?

To close, we'd like to ask about your recommendations—for other providers/developers/financiers and HUD—in accessing and administering CDBG-DR, and other agencies administering disaster recovery resources and supports.

16. What do you consider most important to support recovery for renters, prevent the loss of rental housing, and maintain housing affordability after a disaster like [main disaster event]?

Probe: Think about things like timing, accessibility of supports, access to local, state and federal emergency and recovery resources, organizational, staff, or institutional capacity...

Follow up: What lessons or insights would you offer to other [provider/developer/financier] stakeholders and leaders to help develop, preserve, and protect affordable housing after disasters?

Follow-up: What about capacities and inputs specifically needed for CDBG-DR?

17. [We've discussed this a little already...] What recommendations would you provide to HUD to improve or streamline this process for providers/developers/financiers working with grantees?

Probe: Consider things like eligibility requirements, timing requirements or constraints, justifying need or costs, qualifying populations or projects, and anything else like this.

Probe: How can CDBG-DR better align its requirements and policies to meet affordable housing policy needs and maintain affordability in communities/regions like yours?

18. How prepared do you feel [community/region] is for future disaster events like this in terms of rental housing and renter populations? What does that preparedness look like or what would need to change for you to feel more prepared?

Closing

19. That concludes our questions for today. Is there anything else that you'd like to share before we conclude our time? Are there other individuals you might suggest we speak to?

Follow-up: If we have additional questions related to this work, could we contact you at a later date?

[Sincere thank you]