



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 D: Interview protocol - Advocacy organizations and other private sector
professionals**

DRAFT FOR HUD REVIEW

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Appendix D. Interview protocol –Advocacy organizations and other private sector professionals

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 organization's mission and your professional role?

Follow-up: [if not addressed] What work does your organization do related to rental housing or renter populations?

Follow-up: [if not addressed] What role does your organization play with regard to disaster recovery or resilience planning?

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

2. 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?

*To start, we have a few questions asking you to reflect on the [main disaster event] and consider the **immediate** damages of the disaster, focused on rental housing and renter populations, as well as how the housing market for affordable rental housing—and renters themselves—were affected by the [main disaster event] In the short term, approximately one year after the disaster.*

[If the respondent expressed no familiarity with the immediate impacts of and response to the main disaster skip to question 6]

3. 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 your experiences of community members you serve, as well as your observations about rental housing more broadly in the community.

Probe: Consider severity of damage; most impacted housing types; most impacted populations, most impacted 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 impacts 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: 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?

4. 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...

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?

Follow up: What concerns did community members you work with raise regarding rental housing during this period?

5. 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 renter population?

Probe: Think about income and other economic characteristics, demographics, financial distress, rental cost burden 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.*

6. 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?

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?

Follow up: What concerns did community members you work with raise regarding rental housing during this period?

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?

7. 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: 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?

8. What data, if any, did your organization collect or use to understand the short-term and long-term impacts on rental housing makers and renters? Are there any data sources, maps or reports 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.

9. [Basic Information about programs to complement information gathered from document review] From our review of publicly available materials and your community's CDBG-DR [project name] action plan, we understand your [community/region] received the following CDBG-DR award/s to support affordable rental housing recovery after the [disaster name] [list all relevant programs by name]. Is this correct? Did we miss any relevant programs?

Follow-up: [confirm organization's involvement, if any, in partnering on or administering CDBG-DR award/s] **Please describe your knowledge of or involvement with the [CDBG-DR award], in any capacity (formal, informal), including planning phase and public comment all the way through to implementation.**

I'd like to ask a few follow questions about the planning phase:

- At the time of planning and assessing unmet need, how much of a priority was rental housing from the community perspective? What were some key issues that emerged?
- What opportunities existed for non-profits and community members to shape priorities through public meetings and other comment opportunities? What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of that community engagement approach?
- Did you see the community priorities reflected in the action plan and implementation?

[if organization was involved with CDBG-DR award/s in any capacity] **Let's shift to implementation, tell us about your organization's experiences [partnering in/leading] and implementing the [CDBG-DR project name] award. What were your experiences, and how successful do you think this project [was/is] in meeting needs of renters moving forward?**

Follow-ups [if not addressed]:

- Tell us about your experiences with other partner organizations/agencies implementing this [project name] award. What facilitated collaboration, and were there any challenges?
- What resources or supports were needed to secure and implement the CDBG-DR funding
- after [main disaster event]?
 - Probe: Think about things like identifying and accessing funds, staff capacity, hiring consultants, potential new hires, technical expertise, political capital or connections; developer, provider, or advocacy organizational relationships. How/were you well-positioned to access and implement CDBG-DR funding, and how if at all were you not well-positioned?
- To your knowledge, were waivers requested for any for CDBG-DR program requirements and if so, what did that process look like? [if unclear from document review]
 - Why did the project team request the waiver; what was the waiver for; why was it needed?
 - How long did the process take and were they successful? Please describe any support you received from HUD in planning, preparing, and soliciting the waiver/s?

10. Overall, would you say that the CDBG-DR recovery efforts supported or encouraged affordable rental housing recovery in your area? Please describe why or why not.

Follow ups [if not addressed]:

- Did you see a need for renter's assistance not being met through the CDBG-DR project/program? What about more broadly, apart from the CDBG-DR award?
- What if anything did the [community members/applicants/beneficiaries] communicate about needs either for short term rental assistance, or long-term renter assistance?
- How well aligned do you think the requirements of CDBG-DR or HUD were to meeting the rental housing needs of renters in your community? Think about population needs and CDBG-DR and HUD policies, timelines, requirements, and any contact with or support from HUD.

11. [If there were missing rental-related programs in 8] Can you describe these other projects/programs we missed in our review of action plan materials?

Follow ups [if not addressed]:

- How did your organization become involved with [project name] and what was your role? (Partnership? Leadership?)
- What is the current status of the activity/ies?
- How were these projects or activities financed? Were any of these activities funded using CDBG-DR dollars?
- Were any funds leveraged for additional dollars from other sources?
- Describe the scale-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 Impacts 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 your organization, or 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?

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...

Probe: Was the overall funding available 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 mitigate loss of affordable rental housing in the region, were they adequate and sufficient to meet the rental housing recovery needs after [disaster]? In what ways?

Follow-up: To your knowledge, during any re/development, to what extent were measures taken to protect these units against serious environmental or climate hazards and disasters in the future?

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

15. 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 [organizational] stakeholders and leaders like you to help develop, preserve, and protect affordable housing after disasters?

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

16. What recommendations would you provide to HUD to improve or streamline this process for nongovernmental organizations like yours working with CDBG-DR grantees?

Probe: Consider things like population needs, 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?

17. 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

18. 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]