Overview: Approaches to an Inclusive Recovery

The recovery effort will supplement the community's existing funding (e.g. HOME, CDBG, CoC, ESG, LIHTC) with new disaster recovery resources (FEMA, CDBG-DR, SBA, long-term recovery groups) to scale up existing housing and service programs (such as housing vouchers and supportive housing) and where necessary develop new ones, including development of new housing and facilities. The infusion of recovery resources provides many opportunities; the challenge can be using each source for its best use for those most vulnerable populations in the community. Many supplemental disaster funds have waiver authority, so you can be creative in your use of these funds. Also, consider your current funding programs and their unused funds to see if they can be adapted or modified for a more pressing use.

BE PREPARED TO MAKE THE CASE FOR INVESTMENTS THAT ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

Investments in reducing homelessness yield returns. Investments in affordable housing may seem costly, compared to the cost of repairing or rebuilding homeless shelters. However, research shows significant costs associated with people living in shelters and on the streets. Emergency room visits and hospitalization, medical treatment, police interventions, court costs and incarceration, as well as emergency shelter expenses are all costs borne by taxpayers. When seen in this light, an investment in transitional and permanent housing options is attractive. Learn more about the costs of homelessness.

While the effects of the disaster are often severe for people experiencing homelessness, their need for housing and services may be overshadowed by the businesses, landlords, and homeowners, who tend to have more political voice. A healthy recovery requires an investment in housing and services for people experiencing homelessness and very low-income people, even when those investments reduce the funds available in other areas. All stakeholders – local officials, agency staff, the service provider network, and others – must be prepared to articulate and defend the value of investments, in terms of lives saved, equity, quality of life, and long-term cost savings.
BUILD INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS

Remember that people experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable people may face barriers to participation in disaster recovery programs. These barriers can cause precariously housed people to slip into homelessness and households experiencing homelessness to fall deeper into crisis.

**Adopt a community-wide Housing First orientation to assist people experiencing homelessness.**

Housing First aims to remove barriers to housing for people experiencing homelessness by eliminating preconditions, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements. This approach assumes that supportive services are more effective in addressing needs when the individual or family is housed and the daily stress of being homeless is taken out of the equation. This strategy has increased urgency in a stressful post-disaster environment. See the guidance on [Housing First](https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/disaster-recovery-homelessness-toolkit/recovery-guide/).

**Market disaster recovery programs to households experiencing homelessness and other hard-to-reach populations.** Make sure that all disaster recovery programs in our community have active outreach components to engage hard-to-reach populations.

- Involve your disaster case managers and partner with your CoC to find and inform people experiencing homelessness about new housing opportunities.
- Ensure your recovery outreach plan includes provisions for outreach to hard-to-reach populations including people experiencing homelessness or precariously housed.
- Use the CoC’s coordinated entry process to ensure that no matter where a person experiencing homelessness enters the system, they are assessed and connected to appropriate housing and services.

**Establish set asides and homeless preferences in rental housing.** HUD-funded public housing units, housing choice vouchers, and multifamily properties have flexibility for homeless preferences. For example, ten percent of units in a property can give preference to people experiencing homelessness for the first sixty days of the lease-up period or each third unit that becomes vacant could be allocated to a homeless preference.

- In rental properties developed with recovery funds, reserve a portion of units for persons experiencing homelessness. Hold these units for a specific time period before opening them to other eligible renters.
- See the [guidance on establishing homeless preference](https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/disaster-recovery-homelessness-toolkit/recovery-guide/).

**Recruit very low-income people and people experiencing homelessness into jobs programs.** Leverage key disaster projects to provide jobs for very low-income people, including those experiencing homelessness.

- Link construction, infrastructure, and economic development projects to job training programs.
Ensure active recruitment for very low-income residents and people experiencing homelessness.
Work with job placement centers to focus on opportunities for people experiencing homelessness.

ADDRESS BROAD NEEDS IN RECOVERY PLANS

A successful recovery addresses the effects of the disaster to property and community. This means implementing a broad spectrum of housing and service programs that address the impacts of the disaster beyond the loss of property. Programs should address ancillary impacts of the disaster, such as the loss of community, transportation, jobs, and services. CDBG-DR grantees are not limited to returning to pre-disaster conditions. In fact, HUD directs grantees to carry out activities in a way that meets the full needs of their post-disaster population. Ultimately, a successful recovery allows all former residents to return to a stronger and more resilient community.

Use the CDBG-DR needs assessment to measure the full gap in housing. This requires an evaluation of all housing needs – interim and permanent, owner and rental, single-family and multifamily, affordable and market rate – and identifying the gap in affordable pre-disaster housing that caused people to be precariously housed or experience homelessness. Additionally, the assessment requires an evaluation of the various funding sources that are covering the gap, and what remains ‘unmet.’ This unmet need is the gap in funding CDBG-DR addresses.

Articulate a strategy to address homelessness in the Action Plan. The Action Plan must describe the grantee’s plans to encourage housing for all income groups and the specific activities to address the transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and permanent housing needs of individuals and families that are experiencing and at-risk of homelessness. Strategies can include a mix of approaches including tenant rental assistance and homeless preference in multifamily housing.

CDBG-DR Grantees Must Address Homelessness

The CDBG-DR program directs grantees to incorporate measures in its recovery programs to address homelessness and supportive services. As first seen post Hurricane Sandy, FR Notices on CDBG-DR Allocations include several provisions that require consideration of vulnerable populations and allow the necessary flexibility to include responsive programs.

- The needs assessment requires an evaluation of housing needs including interim and permanent, owner and rental, single-family and multifamily, affordable and market rate, and housing to meet the needs of people who were experiencing homelessness before the disaster.
- The Action Plan must also include descriptions of how the grantee will promote the provision of housing for all income groups and the activities planned to address the transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and permanent housing needs of individuals and families that are experiencing and at-risk of homelessness. The grantee must also describe its planned activities to prevent low-income individuals and families from becoming homeless.

Grantees are not limited in their recovery to returning to pre-disaster conditions. Rather, HUD encourages grantees to carry out activities in such a way that not only addresses the disaster-related impacts, but leaves communities positioned to meet the needs of their post-disaster population, economic, and environmental conditions.