

# Recommendations for Policy & Practice

## **1. Housing stability is life stability. Prioritize housing stability in shelters and in FEMA/HUD-supported housing initiatives.**

People need a steady place to live to rebuild their lives. Survivors consistently struggled to find and maintain stable, appropriate housing. This is particularly important for those needing accessible housing and for those relying on vouchers, who are often forced to move on short notice. Strong legal protections for tenants, ensuring safe and fair housing conditions before a disaster, can help protect renters after a disaster.

## **2. Focus on effectively and appropriately meeting survivors' housing needs by incentivizing short-term rentals to provide medium-term housing for fire-affected households.**

Resources are scarce in post-fire settings, and competing priorities can exacerbate issues associated with resource scarcity. This is often the case with housing, as finding post-disaster housing that allows survivors to maintain employment, keep kids in school, and work toward recovery is in high demand. Creating relationships with rental companies pre-disaster and utilizing targeted incentives could make more housing resources available to affected households.

## **3. Advocate for national-level policy changes that will dramatically improve the recovery process, beginning with instituting a one-stop aid application that covers multiple aid sources (FEMA, HUD, SBA, state, etc.).**

Dealing with paperwork shouldn't be another trauma. Wildfires are difficult enough, and redundant, time-consuming administrative processes make things even harder. Aid applications could be consolidated to reduce time and frustration associated with accessing help.

## **4. Develop a single rental application portal that can help reduce the cost and time required to find rental units.**

Renters encountered a number of challenges in finding available rental units, as well as unanticipated costs when applying for rental units. Establishing a centralized online rental application portal could help coordinate renter applications, charge a single rental application fee, and make applicant information available to local landlords to match potential tenants with available rental housing. This could save time, cut costs, and help connect renters and landlords more fairly.

## **5. Businesses need support in recovering, too – particularly small, local businesses that are directly tied to local employment opportunities for fire-affected residents and families.**

Survivors in the post-wildfire environment consistently struggle to find jobs. This is harder for people who work in small and medium enterprises, since local business owners are often recovering themselves. Likewise, SBA loans are not always right for small businesses, especially for owners close to retirement, or owners that are already overleveraged. The government should work with these enterprises to navigate their recovery in the post-wildfire environment with monetary incentives and regularly scheduled workshops.

## **6. Invest in community organizations, where levels of trust and connection tend to be higher.**

Community-based organizations have deep roots and an understanding of what people need. Investing in and empowering these organizations to help the community during the recovery process can lead to a quicker and more equitable recovery for the community. These organizations benefit from better buy-in and face less resistance from survivors, making this a good approach even if it appears to be less ideal from a policy perspective. On Maui, community-based organizations adapted to support survivors and advocate for local needs such as renters' rights.