



Pre-Disaster Housing Planning Initiative

2023 Final Report

July 2024



FEMA



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Joint Letter from the FEMA Administrator and the Acting Secretary of HUD

Communities throughout the country must prepare for the impacts of extreme weather. FEMA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are taking a proactive approach to addressing some of the existing housing market challenges that are worsened when disasters strike.



Through the Pre-Disaster Housing Initiative, our agencies set off to promote collaborative approaches to disaster housing recovery and to bolster state, Tribal Nation, and territorial planning efforts to help stabilize pre-existing housing issues during recovery.

In this report, we expand on some of the lessons learned, successful strategies and recommendations for future initiatives, and opportunities to engage with states, tribes, and territories to enhance their disaster housing missions. This is a first of its kind partnership between FEMA and HUD.

Our agencies are proud to report this pilot partnership received such positive feedback and outcomes, that we will be working to initiate a second cohort with new state partners to continue this important work.

In the following pages we provide insight into the strategies that enabled the pilot states to successfully engage in this lifesaving planning. While our missions may seem separate and unique, the fact is, our operations intersect and enhance one another. During disasters, FEMA is responsible for interim housing recovery efforts while HUD is responsible for long-term housing solutions that may extend over several years.

FEMA and HUD's joint priority is to provide resilient, affordable, and safe housing for disaster survivors. And this report is a tool to help bring us one step closer to reaching this goal. Our agencies remain committed to leveraging our expertise to help people and communities prepare for and recover from disasters.

Deanne Criswell

Adrienne Todman

FEMA Administrator

Acting Secretary, HUD

Executive Summary

1. Shifting the Housing Planning Dynamic

In almost every state, locality, tribe, and territory (SLTT) in the United States, disaster events compound existing housing market challenges. Constrained housing supply has led to increased housing cost burdens, especially among populations vulnerable to disaster. Wide-spread exclusionary zoning practices limit the housing supply that the market would naturally bear. This has led to a rise in housing insecurity during steady state. When disasters occur, a patchwork of recovery assistance programs and timelines, and restrictions on what disasters qualify for support coalesce with these steady state challenges to slow community housing recovery efforts. These pre-existing problems cannot be solved in the aftermath of a disaster. The nation requires better solutions for planning and executing post-disaster housing, and the time to address this is before the next disaster occurs.

To plan effectively for post-disaster housing recovery, emergency management and housing and development agencies must work together on the federal and SLTT levels. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for interim housing recovery efforts, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is responsible for those long-term recovery efforts that may extend over several years. At the state level, housing development agencies are working to address housing challenges as a normal course of action in steady state. Both emergency management and housing development agencies need to work together to address post-disaster housing. Addressing post-disaster recovery also requires combined effort at the federal, state, tribal, and territorial levels. FEMA and HUD developed the Pre-Disaster Housing Planning Initiative (PDHI) to promote collaborative approaches to disaster housing recovery challenges and support state planning for housing recovery before disasters occur.

“To hear from the partners in the housing space - to hear from the affordable housing partners about where the challenges are - helps emergency managers understand where the survivors are coming into this disaster from. Our housing colleagues helped us understand the disasters survivors were already experiencing before the ‘official’ disaster occurred.” – Louisiana Working Group Member

2. Initiative Approach

PDHI provided technical assistance to four states (Louisiana, Montana, New Jersey, and Washington) over the course of 2023. Each state began the Initiative by convening working groups to discuss the issues they face related to housing and housing recovery. Following these conversations, the state working groups identified deliverables that would assist them in addressing their housing challenges and developed a work plan to develop their chosen deliverables over the course of the Initiative. The

state working groups met virtually with their PDHI provided subject matter experts (SME) and facilitators over the course of seven months in 2023, and all states met with FEMA, HUD, and their PDHI SMEs in person at the mid-point and end of the Initiative.

Throughout PDHI, the states accomplished the following:

- **Louisiana:** Louisiana used the Initiative to revise its 2019 Disaster Housing Strategy. The State focused on identifying and clearly defining transitions between agencies during the housing response and recovery phases. Additionally, the State working group discussed developing in-state educational efforts to increase the public's and local housing agencies' knowledge of state and federal resources. In addition to ongoing recovery efforts still underway following Hurricanes Laura, Delta, and Ida, there were several response operations that arose during the Initiative, including the summer wildfires and the saltwater intrusion, which delayed the State's plan to complete this work by the Final Working Session. The State remains committed to revising their plan and have continued to work toward finalizing the Disaster Housing Strategy following the November working group meeting.
- **Montana:** Montana used the Initiative to update its Disaster Housing Strategy Framework. To identify what areas of the Framework needed additional input, the State working group conducted a gap analysis. The gap analysis findings were then used to develop an updated strategy that included a framework and guidance for continued and future planning/development. Although stakeholder input and review were not complete by the end of the Initiative, Montana emergency management and housing partners have continued to engage their Disaster Housing Working Group in reviewing the Strategy, creating a subgroup and developing a project plan for finalizing the Strategy, and addressing findings from the gap analysis.
- **New Jersey:** New Jersey used the Initiative to create a Housing Recovery Support Function (RSF) Annex to complement the State's existing Emergency Support Function (ESF) plans, which focused on short-term and sheltering actions with limited detail for long-term housing recovery operations. The working group focused on defining roles and responsibilities in the RSF, developing a concept of operations for housing recovery, identifying state and federal housing recovery resources, and defining preparedness activities such as training, exercising, and updating the plan. The State is also scheduling quarterly meetings with State, FEMA, and HUD leaders to discuss strategies for furthering the State's housing recovery preparedness.
- **Washington:** Washington used the Initiative to revise their existing RSF plan for housing. In addition to revising their Housing RSF, the State working group formed a Disaster Housing Committee to carry on their collaborative housing work after the Initiative ended.

In addition to supporting the four states chosen for the 2023 cohort, FEMA and HUD developed federal guidance for non-2023 cohort states. The PDHI Checklist, PDHI Guide, and PDHI Timeline

and Compendium tool pulled on lessons learned by the 2023 cohort and were created so all states can begin maturing their pre-disaster housing strategies.

"Our state has very limited capacity to dedicate to this work; during this Initiative, we have been able to make significant strides forward in housing recovery strategy and establish a pathway for continued development." – MT Working Group Member

3. Lessons Learned

This was a first of its kind partnership between FEMA, HUD, and the states. This report looked at the aspects of PDHI that enabled the states to successfully engage in pre-disaster housing planning. The key lessons learned from the first year of PDHI include:

- PDHI is an opportunity for states to tackle housing recovery challenges in a blue-sky environment. The Initiative acts as a forum for emergency management and housing and development agencies at both the federal and state levels to share knowledge and information.
- In-person meetings improved state deliverables and strengthened states' commitment to pre-disaster housing planning.
- States benefit from learning from other state's experiences.
- States are eager to learn from FEMA, HUD, and SMEs how to plan for and improve housing recovery.
- PDHI was designed to be flexible and provide federal resources that met the states' current needs, as articulated by the states. Not holding the states to a strict end product benefited the Initiative. The state's deliverables and work plans changed as the Initiative progressed, and they uncovered additional work that needed to be completed first.

"This is what the initiative has given us, [now] we have shared vocabulary and have built the relationships we need." – New Jersey Working Group Member

4. Strategy for Success

PDHI benefited from being highly flexible. The success of this program lies in tailoring federal support and resources for states. As the lessons learned from this cohort are implemented in future iterations of the Initiative, the structure of the state engagements will evolve and become standardized. While the structure of the program could be developed to allow it to be scaled to support more states, the Initiative is most successful when it prioritizes providing participating states an opportunity to:

- Dedicate time and attention to pre-disaster housing planning with federal resources and support.
- Develop and strengthen cross agency working relationships between state emergency management and housing and development agencies.
- Connect states with other states to learn from one another and discuss disaster housing planning and recovery.

“I cannot state enough the brilliance of bringing together different states from different regions, with different hazards, to learn from one another's experiences.” – Washington Working Group Member

5. Recommendations for Future Iterations

The 2023 PDHI cohort demonstrated that there is a desire and need for this type of pre-disaster housing planning support. As FEMA and HUD plan for future iterations of the Initiative, it will be important to scale the program at a pace that does not dilute the federal support for each state. The following recommendations, based on observations of the 2023 cohort, will allow the Initiative to sustainably grow and support all 50 states in the coming years.

- Select states to foster regional networks for similar geographical challenges and ease of mutual aid/support.
- Consider selecting states with the long-term objective of building regional PDHI alumni networks to foster greater peer-to-peer engagement and learning across geographic regions.
- Expand cohort size gradually. While the 2023 Initiative was a success, FEMA and HUD would benefit from a second iteration of four participating states before scaling to support more states. However, FEMA and HUD could consider expanding from four to eight states per cohort in future years.
- Provide support for housing plan maintenance and revision. States struggle to prioritize and resource pre-disaster planning. In recognition of this reality, FEMA and HUD could consider providing ongoing support for states to periodically review and revise their plans developed as part of PDHI to ensure that plans remain current and actionable.
- Develop a consortium of past state participants. To keep past participants engaged in housing recovery planning, FEMA and HUD could develop a pathway for past participants to stay involved in the Initiative through educational and networking opportunities after their initial cohort year.

“We’re grateful to have federal leaders from FEMA and HUD present and invested in the initiative to listen to the states’ pain points and suggestions. PDHI provided a platform for the state to feel heard by decision-makers.” – Louisiana Working Group Member

In the absence of dedicated resources to support this interagency effort, FEMA provided the initial financial support to launch this effort. Many states have expressed interest in the dedicated capacity building support provided through PDHI. Expanding this successful initiative to support all the SLTT governments that will benefit from it will require a sustained commitment of resources. FEMA and HUD believe that providing technical support for state housing recovery plans can offer a substantial return on investment by encouraging pre-disaster coordination and collaboration among emergency management and housing stakeholders that will, in turn, directly benefit survivors after a disaster and promote more efficient use of federal funds.

“This Initiative has been an amazing opportunity for our state. Please give other states a chance to experience this.” – Louisiana Working Group Member

Introduction

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) developed the Pre-Disaster Housing Planning Initiative (PDHI) to promote collaborative approaches to disaster housing recovery challenges and support state planning for housing recovery before disasters occur. The 2023 PDHI Final Report summarizes the Initiative's efforts during the inaugural year of the program.

The report is divided into three sections: an introduction, which describes the Initiative's background and FEMA and HUD's partnership; the Initiative's design and organization; and the actual outcomes from the States participating in the 2023 cohort: Louisiana (LA), Montana (MT), New Jersey (NJ), and Washington (WA). The full version of the report, which is intended for internal FEMA and HUD audiences, includes three appendices that provide guidance and resources for implementing future iterations of PDHI.

1. Background

In almost every state, locality, tribe, and territory in the United States, disaster events compound an already challenging housing scenario. Limited housing stock, rising rents, increased cost burden to the most vulnerable populations, and exclusionary zoning that limits housing supply have increased housing insecurity in steady state. When disasters occur, a multitude of discrete recovery assistance programs, each with its own timelines and restrictions on what disasters qualify for support, coalesce with these steady-state challenges to slow community housing recovery efforts. Meanwhile, multiple agencies and entities have responsibilities for different areas of post-disaster housing recovery, yet may lack the coordination and partnerships to address these challenges effectively.

Recovery stakeholders need to find better solutions for planning and executing post-disaster housing, including how states move from short-term sheltering programs to more sustainable housing solutions. In accordance with FEMA's strategic plan, the FEMA Individual Assistance (IA) division has been working on the "Direct Housing Reimagined" effort to ensure IA meets survivors' needs effectively and consistently. The Direct Housing Reimagined program identified the need for improved pre-disaster housing planning at the state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) levels. FEMA and HUD created PDHI to assist states in addressing post-disaster housing recovery challenges and proactively develop pre-disaster housing plans and solutions during steady state.

PDHI provides states with targeted resources and technical support to develop pre-disaster housing strategies. The Initiative also creates a forum for state emergency management and housing agencies to collaborate on comprehensive housing recovery plans. FEMA and HUD believe that providing technical support for state housing recovery plans can offer a substantial return on investment by encouraging pre-disaster coordination and collaboration among emergency management and housing stakeholders that will, in turn, directly benefit survivors after a disaster and promote more efficient use of federal funds.

2. Partnership Between FEMA and HUD

Providing resilient, affordable, and safe housing for disaster survivors is a priority for FEMA and HUD. Both agencies play essential roles in improving outcomes for post-disaster housing recovery efforts. As part of the Federal Government's National Disaster Recovery Framework, HUD leads the Housing Recovery Support Function (RSF) and works with other federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to identify the housing needs and develop a recovery needs assessment. FEMA supports HUD under the Housing RSF and helps to address SLTT recovery needs through a variety of disaster sheltering and housing programs within its IA and Public Assistance (PA) programs. FEMA also provides post-disaster coordination and planning support for SLTT disaster housing operations through its Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) program. However, HUD and FEMA had not previously collaborated to convene state housing and emergency management stakeholders to identify potential housing solutions before a disaster strikes. To effectively address this gap in pre-disaster recovery planning, FEMA and HUD created an initiative that would provide support to both emergency management and housing agencies at the state level.

In January 2023, FEMA and HUD launched the Pre-Disaster Housing Planning Initiative and formed the Collaborative Planning Team (CPT). In spring 2023, the CPT coordinated with both FEMA regional offices and HUD to identify states that were best positioned to take on a pre-disaster housing planning process in 2023. To be considered for PDHI, both the state's emergency management and housing development agencies needed to agree to participate. FEMA and HUD considered which states would be able to invest the time and staff resources necessary to participate in the initiative and which would benefit the most from engaging in the planning process. Once potential states were identified, the CPT tried to balance the cohort to include a range of regions and states with varying levels of experience conducting disaster housing operations.

As a joint Federal initiative, FEMA and HUD collaborated with the state partners throughout the Initiative. Federal support to the states included:

- Project management, engagement scoping, and sharing expertise and best practices;
- Developing and sharing pre-disaster housing planning guidance and other resources with participating states; and
- Providing technical assistance to each participating state through federally funded contract support teams of disaster housing subject-matter experts and plan writers.

State partners were expected to develop an approach that, with support from FEMA and HUD, demonstrated the State's progress toward increasing disaster housing capacity and enhancing communication between the state emergency management and housing agencies.

Initiative Organization

This section describes the scope, timeline, and stakeholders involved in the project. PDHI is a collaborative process between emergency managers and housing agencies at multiple levels of governance. To replicate and improve this Initiative for future cohorts, it is important to understand the program organization and the lessons learned from it.

1. Scope

1.1. Problem Statement

Disasters compound an already complex housing system. Limited housing stock, exclusionary zoning that limits housing supply, a multitude of discrete recovery assistance programs, each with their own timelines, and restrictions on what disasters qualify for support all coalesce after a disaster to slow community recovery efforts.

1.2. PDHI Purpose

The purpose of PDHI is multi-faceted, reflecting that there is not just one answer to the challenges of post-disaster housing recovery. The purpose of this joint FEMA and HUD initiative is to:

- Ensure collaboration on housing operations between the state’s emergency management agency and the state’s housing agencies in steady state and in the event of a disaster by:
 - Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of state agencies; and
 - Building peer relationships among state and federal housing and emergency management agencies.
- Develop or mature the participating states' pre-disaster housing strategy or plan, which will:
 - Identify the existing housing stock in the state and localities;
 - Document current and potential strategies for temporary, intermediate, and permanent housing options; and
 - Create implementable strategies to provide resilient, permanent housing, especially affordable housing, to survivors as quickly as possible.

1.3. FEMA and HUD Guidance for Participating States

PDHI is intended to meet each state at their current level of planning and help them work toward their unique disaster housing planning and coordination priorities. Each state was able to select the

deliverable that they would work on throughout the Initiative. To accommodate the varying resources and recovery experiences of the cohort states, FEMA and HUD set broad parameters for what successful participation in PDHI would include. The expectations for the states participating in the 2023 PDHI Cohort were to:

1. Improve state capacity to manage housing operations, administer housing programs, and strengthen the state's existing post-disaster housing plans to expand their capacity to support their respective community's recovery.
2. Build peer relationships among state housing and emergency management agencies and clarify the roles and responsibilities of state agencies.
3. Determine state-specific pre-disaster housing planning deliverables and identify how FEMA and HUD can support the development of these deliverables.

By completing these steps, FEMA and HUD believe that participating states will expand their capacity to better support their community's post-disaster recovery.

1.4. 2023 Initiative Scope

The project scope of the first year of PDHI was to:

- Provide technical assistance to four states to work on pre-disaster housing planning in whichever way they choose to use the program's support. Each participating state's goals are summarized below:
 - **Louisiana:** Revise its 2019 Disaster Housing Strategy. The State focused on identifying and clearly defining transitions between agencies during the housing response and recovery phases.
 - **Montana:** Update its Disaster Housing Strategy Framework. To identify what areas of the Framework needed additional input, the state working group conducted a gap analysis.
 - **New Jersey:** Create a Housing RSF Annex to complement the State's existing Emergency Support Function (ESF) plans, which focused on short-term and sheltering actions with limited detail for long-term housing recovery operations.
 - **Washington:** Revise their existing RSF plan for housing.
- Develop supporting federal guidance for non-2023 cohort states to begin maturing pre-disaster housing strategies.
 - **Pre-Disaster Housing Planning Checklist and Guide:** The Pre-Disaster Housing Planning Checklist and Guide provide guidance for SLTT governments to improve housing recovery outcomes by preparing a pre-disaster housing recovery strategy that identifies priorities and outlines critical jurisdiction-specific processes and procedures. Pre-disaster housing recovery

strategies help ensure an efficient, deliberate, and coordinated approach to disaster housing resilience and recovery before, during, and after a disaster. The actions outlined in the Checklist and Guide are most successful when done in collaboration with stakeholders across community development, emergency management, housing, and non-profit organizations.

- **Pre-Disaster Housing Planning Timeline and Resource Compendium:** The Pre-Disaster Housing Planning Timeline and Resource Compendium provides a visual overview of when Federal programs for housing and sheltering become available during each phase of the disaster lifecycle. The timeline and compendium are planning tools to help SLTT housing and emergency management agencies easily identify federal resources that are available to help them develop, repair, and replace housing stock, enhance community resiliency, and provide shelter during and immediately following disasters.

2. PDHI Timeline










	FEMA & HUD Initial Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FEMA and HUD partnered to define the PDHI purpose and goals. FEMA and HUD created a Collaborative Planning Team (CPT) to implement PDHI. 	January-February
	CPT Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CPT developed and implemented a project plan and created a timeline to complete PDHI. The CPT defined the roles and responsibilities of FEMA, HUD, and the States; developed the criteria for selecting the States; identified the States; and worked with those States to obtain their commitment to be included in the PDHI. FEMA and HUD sent Welcome Letters to the States in April 2023. 	February-May
	Virtual Kick-Off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CPT planned and conducted a virtual kick-off meeting with senior leadership from FEMA, HUD and the four states. 	May 8
	Initial State Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each State identified initial agencies and staff for a Working Group to complete PDHI. Each State's Working Group conducted an initial kick-off meeting to review the PDHI's purpose and goals and determine the next steps for the Working Group. FEMA and HUD created the first draft of the PDHI Checklist and Guide. 	May
	Strategy & Deliverable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each State's Working Group selected deliverables and created a work plan to meet PDHI's goals. The State Working Groups held bi-weekly meetings to work on their deliverables. The CPT met on a bi-weekly basis to discuss each State's progress, address any outstanding issues/comments from the States, and plan for the in-person mid-point and final PDHI meetings. FEMA and HUD continued developing the PDHI Checklist and Guide. 	June – August
	Mid-Point Working Group in NYC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CPT planned an in-person PDHI mid-point meeting for all the States' Working Groups and FEMA and HUD staff. FEMA and HUD hosted an in-person meeting that included plenary and breakout sessions with an emphasis on networking, peer-to-peer learning and facilitating the States' progress on their deliverables. 	August 1-3
	Montana In-Person Working Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to Montana being unable to attend the in-person session in NYC, Montana's Working Group, with support from FEMA and HUD, held an in-person session for their members in Helena. 	August 30
	Deliverable Development in Working Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CPT continued to meet to discuss the States' progress and plan the in-person final working session. The CPT developed the PDHI Timeline and Compendium tool. The State Working Groups continued to meet and work on their housing strategies and recovery housing plans. 	August – November
	Final Working Group in Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FEMA and HUD hosted a final in-person working session for FEMA, HUD, and the State's senior leadership, staff, and the Working Groups. The focus of the meeting was on each State's accomplishments/outcomes, peer-to-peer learning, lessons learned, and potential improvements to the PDHI going forward. States planned how their interagency partnerships would continue after the conclusion of their participation in the PDHI. 	November 7-8

Figure 1. 2023 PDHI Timeline and Key Phases

3. Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination

PDHI is a collaborative process between emergency managers and housing agencies at multiple levels of governance. To replicate and improve this Initiative, it is important to understand the collaboration structure and the opportunities to expand the program by including additional stakeholders in the future.

3.1. Stakeholders

This section identifies the key stakeholders for the 2023 cohort year.

- FEMA Interagency Coordination Division (ICD)
- HUD Offices of Community Planning and Development and Disaster Management
- FEMA Regional Offices
- State Emergency Management Agencies
- State Housing and Development Agencies
- Local Emergency Management Agencies and Partners
- Local Housing and Development Agencies and Partners
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)

The CPT selected states based on several factors intended to provide a wide cross section of perspectives on the challenges of planning and executing post-disaster housing missions. Considerations included geographic diversity, frequency of major disaster declarations, and the types of disasters they are most likely to face. FEMA engaged its Regions to put together a prospective list of States to create a diverse cohort and collaborated with HUD to narrow that down to a top four list before formally asking the States to participate.

Once approached, the states were asked about their interest in participating, as well as their willingness and ability to lead and partner on this work across departments and offices where emergency management and housing support reside. All partners acknowledged the need to undertake this type of work to increase their capacity for housing recovery. The parameters of this initiative were purposefully broad to allow the states to go at their own pace and adjust their timing and deliverables to accommodate their state priorities and requirements. During the Initiative, some states encountered new disaster operations, which necessitated adjustments to their initial work plan. The ability to remain flexible was noted as a successful model for future implementation.

3.2. Future Partners

PDHI was a first of its kind effort. By bringing together emergency management and housing agencies at federal and state levels to holistically address participating states' disaster housing recovery challenges, FEMA and HUD demonstrated the benefit of this type of inter-government initiative. However, FEMA and HUD are not the only federal organizations with housing responsibilities. FEMA and HUD demonstrated that this type of interagency work directly benefits the nation and have built an Initiative that can allow other federal agencies to work with them to address housing recovery challenges.

Throughout the Initiative, participating states and the CPT identified disaster housing stakeholders whose participation in future Initiatives would be beneficial. The following stakeholders could be considered for inclusion in future iterations:

- **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):** The USDA Rural Development office helps rural residents buy or rent safe, affordable housing and make health and safety repairs to their homes, as well as offers loans, grants, and loan guarantees to support economic and housing development in rural areas.
 - USDA Rural Development plays a vital role in housing across the country. USDA could be invited to participate in future PDHI years, particularly when the state cohorts include states with large rural populations. If USDA cannot join FEMA and HUD as a partner in the initiative, consider engaging USDA to participate in cohort states' discussions and working groups.
- **Small Business Administration (SBA):** The SBA provides disaster loans to help homeowners and renters recover from declared disasters. FEMA and SBA coordinate on the financial assistance available to survivors of declared disasters.
 - States participating in the 2023 PDHI cohort identified data sharing and duplication of benefits as compounding issues that complicated survivors' housing recovery process. One area that they recommended be addressed is how FEMA and SBA coordinate on disaster housing assistance loans. Future cohorts could invite SBA to participate in discussions with FEMA and the states to explore the issue and collaborate on solutions.
- **Other Federal agencies involved in housing recovery efforts:** Many federal departments and agencies are involved in housing recovery work nationwide. These entities include the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Treasury, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
 - PDHI connects states to federal agencies and resources that they may otherwise be unable to access. By including other federal agencies involved in housing recovery, states participating in PDHI cohorts can learn about how these programs work and share their experiences directly with the federal agencies.

3.3. Coordination

This section identifies the critical working relationships that were formed (federal, state, local, and private organizations) to manage and implement PDHI:

- **FEMA and HUD Partnership:** FEMA and HUD are joint partners in PDHI. Both organizations are involved in the planning process, and key representatives from each organization are on the Collaborative Planning Team.
- **Collaborative Planning Team (CPT):** FEMA, HUD, and the contractor team made up the Collaborative Planning Team for the 2023 cohort. The CPT met bi-weekly, or more frequently as needed, throughout the Initiative. The CPT planned and managed the Initiative throughout all phases.
- **State Working Groups:** Each state working group included representatives from the state emergency management and housing and development agencies. Some states included representatives from local voluntary organizations active in disasters (VOAD) and members of local emergency management or housing agencies.
- **Contractor Support Teams:** Each state was supported by a PDHI-funded contract team. The state contract teams were comprised of an SME and technical writer(s). The SMEs facilitated the state working groups and helped guide each state through identifying and developing their deliverable. Each contract team supported the states according to that state's needs; some states relied on the contact team to research and draft their deliverables, while others used them as advisors and project managers.
- **Peer-to-peer support:** Engaging with peer counterparts allows discussion of common issues, challenges, and paths forward in housing plan strategy development. State pairings were intended to allow participating states to learn from one another's experiences and build peer-to-peer relationships. Each state chosen to engage in this Initiative has unique demographics, geographies, hazards, and experiences with post-disaster housing recovery; states with different hazards and complementary experience levels were paired to maximize peer-to-peer learning.
 - Because of the states' busy schedules, there were limited opportunities for the states to meet one-on-one with other states. However, the states connected and learned from one another through the in-person working groups and reported that they appreciated the opportunities to learn from all their peers. In future years, peer-to-peer engagement could be restructured to allow states from previous cohorts to be peer-mentors to states in the current cohort.

During the Kickoff phase of the Initiative, the CPT hosted several kickoff meetings for different stakeholder groups. After the states committed to participating in the Initiative, the CPT hosted a kickoff meeting for individual states where the state agency leaders were briefed on the Initiative and had the opportunity to ask FEMA and HUD questions directly. Following these meetings, FEMA

and HUD held a virtual kickoff call to launch PDHI. This meeting was attended by the HUD Deputy Secretary, FEMA Administrator, leadership from FEMA, HUD, and the state agencies involved in the Initiative. After the initiative-wide kickoff each state held a final kickoff meeting for their state working group members to be briefed on the Initiative, meet their SMEs and begin outlining the work the state intended to accomplish during PDHI. There are many stakeholders and collaborative groups that need to be briefed on PDHI, however the kickoff process can be streamlined for future cohorts.

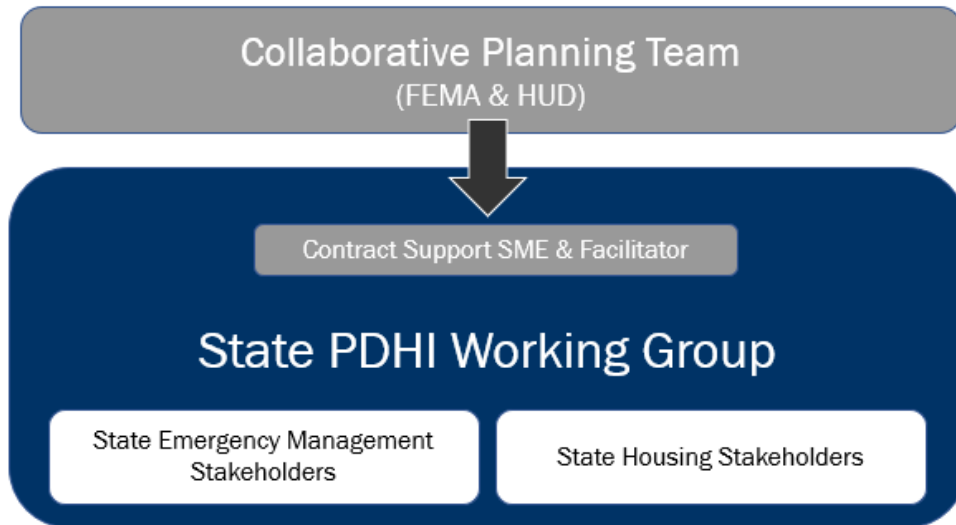


Figure 2. State Working Group Coordination Structure

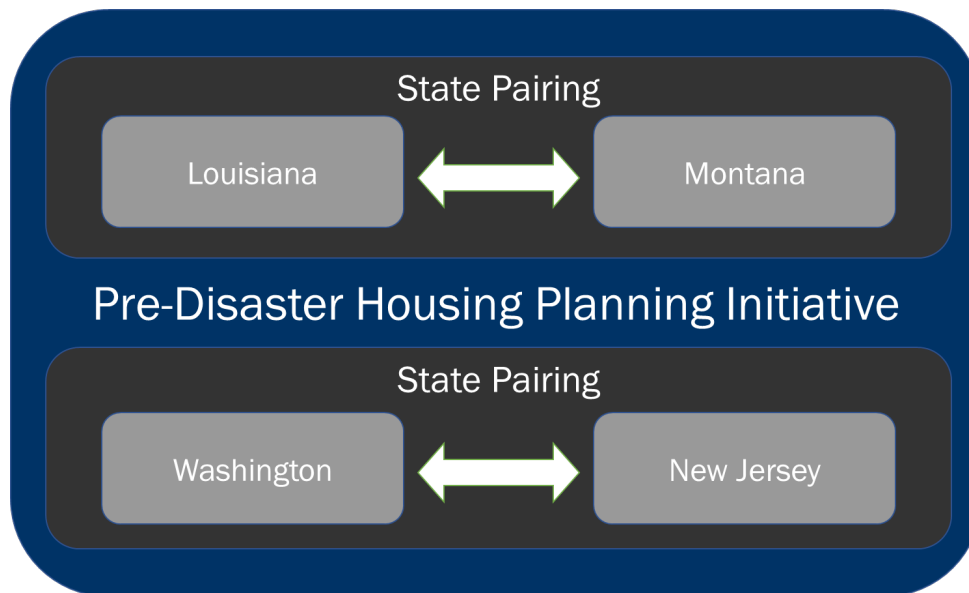


Figure 3. Assigned Peer-to-Peer pairing for the 2023 Cohort

State Overviews

Every state has a unique history of post-disaster housing recovery and different organizational structures that inform their approach to PDHI. Each State’s working group decided on a deliverable(s) for the state to develop through PDHI. Throughout PDHI, the working groups met with their SMEs to develop work plans to complete the deliverables during the Initiative. Throughout the Initiative, some states experienced disasters that diverted staff and resources from their PDHI working group. These summaries detail what each state set out to accomplish and the progress they were able to make toward their goals.

1. Louisiana

“This Initiative has been an amazing opportunity for our state. Please give other states a chance to experience this.” – LA Working Group Member

Louisiana ultimately used the Initiative to revise its 2019 Disaster Housing Strategy. The State used the PDHI process to integrate the priorities and outcomes identified in the table below into the revised Disaster Housing Strategy.

Table 1: LA Priorities and Outcomes

LA PDHI Priorities	Outcomes and Next Steps
Improve defining, tracking, and sharing information/case management and assisting vulnerable populations pre- and post-disaster.	The updated draft of the Disaster Housing Strategy focuses on improving delivery of housing assistance to vulnerable populations pre- and post-disaster. Improving, defining, tracking, and sharing information/case management remains a priority for Louisiana.
Identify and more clearly define transitions between all housing response and recovery phases to include the phases in which FEMA and HUD are involved.	The updated draft of the Disaster Housing Strategy includes defined transitions between phases.
Develop in-state educational efforts to increase the knowledge of the public and local/regional officials and partners of state capacities and how to access available federal resources.	Louisiana will develop educational materials to share lessons learned from PDHI and the revised Disaster Housing Strategy with local partners and the public.

Louisiana has experienced multiple disasters that have impacted its housing stock in recent decades. Although the State was familiar with the housing recovery process, it still benefited from

participating in PDHI. The Initiative allowed the State to formalize, document, and streamline the working relationships that had developed over the course of multiple housing recovery missions. By having emergency management and housing agencies at the table the working group was able to identify gaps in their plan and the stakeholders involved. It was not until the in-person meeting in New York City that the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (LDCFS) was fully engaged in the working group. The LDCFS staff were crucial stakeholders for much of the working group's work. After the NYC meeting, the working group gained momentum and benefited from the involvement of LDCFS. Ongoing recovery responsibilities from prior storms (Laura, Delta and Ida) made it difficult for Louisiana staff to fully participate in the regular cadence of PDHI, but the final PDHI outcomes benefited from action on real-time recovery challenges while working to revise the Disaster Housing Strategy.

Several response operations that arose during the Initiative, including the summer wildfires and the saltwater intrusion into the Mississippi River, delayed the State's plan to complete this work by the Final Working Session in November. However, they are committed to finalizing their plan and have continued to revise their Disaster Housing Strategy following the November meeting.

Table 2: LA Stakeholders

Emergency Management	Housing	Community Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness ▪ FEMA Region Six ▪ Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Louisiana Housing Corporation ▪ Louisiana Office of Community Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acadiana Regional Coalition on Homelessness and Housing ▪ Catholic Charities of Acadiana ▪ Central Louisiana Coalition to Prevent Homelessness ▪ Hope Connections ▪ Lafayette Habitat for Humanity ▪ Northlake Homeless Coalition ▪ The Wellspring ▪ UNITY of Greater New Orleans

2. Montana

"Our state has very limited capacity to dedicate to this work; during this initiative, we have been able to make significant strides forward in housing recovery strategy and establish a pathway for continued development." – MT Working Group Member

Montana intended to use the Initiative to update their Disaster Housing Strategy, which may eventually serve as their new Housing RSF. The State had a Disaster Housing Strategy Outline developed earlier in 2023 that was used as the starting point for their work. Montana’s priorities for the Initiative are detailed in the table below.

Table 3: MT Priorities and Outcomes

MT PDHI Priorities	Outcomes and Next Steps
Conduct a gap analysis of Montana’s existing Disaster Housing Strategy.	MT completed a gap analysis of the State’s existing Disaster Housing Strategy.
Draft an updated Disaster Housing Strategy Outline, with notations in areas that need further development and customization.	The gap analysis revealed further work that needed to be completed before the Disaster Housing Strategy could be completed. MT will incorporate this research into future drafts.
Research Montana’s current housing posture, FEMA/HUD best practices, and comparative research into best practices from other states and counties.	The MT PDHI Working Group used the PDHI meetings and state-to-state pairings to learn about best practices from other states, FEMA and HUD. The research from the initiative and the gap analysis will inform future drafts of the Disaster Housing Strategy.

Montana’s working group members could not attend the first in-person working session in NYC, so Montana’s contract support team traveled to Helena, MT, to conduct a day-long working session with the working group members.

Throughout the Initiative, Montana and the contract support team used the gap analysis results to develop an updated Disaster Housing Strategy. Some elements of the Strategy are complete, while others require additional planning, coordination, and stakeholder input from other state partners to be finalized. Since the Final Working Session in November, Montana emergency management and housing partners have continued to engage their Disaster Housing Working Group in reviewing the Strategy, developing a project plan for finalizing the Strategy, and addressing findings from the gap analysis.

Table 4: MT Stakeholders

Emergency Management	Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Montana Disaster and Emergency Services ▪ FEMA Region Eight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Montana Department of Commerce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Montana Housing Division ○ Community MT Division

3. New Jersey

“Previously, everyone was working towards the same recovery end goals, but we weren’t aware of each other’s work. Through discussions in this initiative, we’ve been able to develop a common language and understanding between agencies and implement that into an RSF plan.” – NJ Working Group Member

New Jersey used the Initiative to develop a Recovery Support Function Annex for Housing Recovery. The State did not have a Housing Recovery RSF prior to PDHI. The State’s priorities for the Initiative are detailed in the table below.

Table 5: NJ Priorities and Outcomes

NJ PDHI Priorities	Outcomes and Next Steps
Develop a Recovery Support Function Annex for Housing Recovery.	The NJ PDHI Working Group completed a Recovery Support Function Annex for Housing Recovery.
Address the gaps between short, intermediate, and long-term recovery housing.	The newly drafted Housing RSF identifies gaps between short-, intermediate-, and long-term recovery housing and outlines actions to bridge the gaps. Finding resources to bridge the gaps is a continuing priority.
Create a roadmap for state agencies’ coordination, formalize their roles, and document the process for future housing partners.	The newly drafted Housing RSF formalized and documented the roles of each state agency, providing greater clarity for future housing recovery missions.

New Jersey’s emergency management and housing staff were familiar with one another at the start of the Initiative. However, they did not have an in-depth understanding of one another’s work, and they did not have a unified understanding of roles and responsibilities during the housing recovery process.

The Team’s progress accelerated during and following the in-person working group in NYC. The focused in-person meeting provided a forum to resolve many outstanding questions and make quick progress on their deliverable. They completed a full draft of their RSF by the November working group and, by the end of the Initiative, were in the process of formally adopting the Annex. Moving forward, the State is planning quarterly meetings with Housing RSF members, along with training and exercises, to maintain preparedness for future disasters. The Annex will also be updated on a biannual basis.

Table 6: NJ Stakeholders

Emergency Management	Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Jersey Governor’s Disaster Recovery Office ▪ New Jersey Office of Emergency Management ▪ FEMA Region Two 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Jersey Department of Community Affairs ▪ New Jersey Department of Human Services ▪ New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency

4. Washington

“I want to emphasize how much we’ve learned from each other during the Initiative; when this started, Emergency Management and Housing didn’t fully understand the depth of partnership the two agencies needed.” – WA Working Group Member

Washington planned to use the Initiative to revise their existing Recovery Support Function plan for Housing Recovery, which was developed in 2018. The State’s goals at the start of the Initiative are detailed in the table below.

Table 7: WA Priorities and Outcomes

WA PDHI Priorities	Outcomes and Next Steps
Revise the 2018 Recovery Support Function plan for Housing Recovery.	WA is continuing to develop a new RSF for Housing Recovery with input from the WA PDHI Working Group.
Create a roadmap and action steps to strengthen state and local partnerships.	The PDHI working group created a Disaster Housing Committee to continue the collaboration and partnerships established through PDHI.

WA PDHI Priorities	Outcomes and Next Steps
Use lessons learned from recent disasters within the Housing RSF.	WA incorporated lessons learned from recent disasters and the 2023 wildfires into the RSF draft. Additionally, the RSF incorporates lessons learned from the ongoing housing crisis and employs a trauma-informed approach.

Washington’s working group was able to complete substantial improvements and incorporate housing recovery outcomes as well as equity considerations into the RSF. Unfortunately, during the summer months of the initiative, Washington dealt with wildfires across the Spokane area, which destroyed many structures and homes. As a result, the Washington team was still working on finishing their RSF revisions going into November. However, the State was able to begin implementing the work they started in the PDHI working group to organize their recovery work from the fires. They were also able to incorporate best practices and lessons learned from their firsthand experience in dealing with wildfires and their associated aftermath.

To continue the work started with PDHI, the Washington working group is in the process of establishing a Disaster Housing Committee (DHC). The WA Department of Commerce and the WA Emergency Management Division will partner to help implement and run the DHC. This group comprises of core state partners and stakeholders from the larger Housing RSF group. The DHC believes it is important to stay current on contacts, share training opportunities, and discuss strategies and best practices. The DHC will be one way WA continues the work of PDHI during blue-sky periods.

Table 8: WA Stakeholders

Emergency Management	Housing	Community Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Washington Emergency Management Division ▪ FEMA Region Ten ▪ King County Office of Emergency Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Washington State Department of Commerce ▪ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AmeriCorps ▪ City of Spokane ▪ County of Snohomish ▪ King County Regional Homelessness Authority ▪ Pierce County ▪ Red Cross ▪ Salvation Army

Conclusion

The PDHI is an innovative initiative that shifted the focus from post-disaster recovery to pre-disaster planning in the housing arena for participating states. The Initiative has demonstrated its efficacy and garnered support from all the 2023 cohort states. FEMA and HUD set out to support four states in getting ahead of the challenges of housing recovery by dedicating resources to pre-disaster housing planning. The PDHI approached this challenge by seeking to:

- Improve state capacity to manage housing operations, administer housing programs, and strengthen the state's existing post-disaster housing plans to expand their capacity to support their respective community's recovery;
- Build peer relationships among state housing and emergency management agencies and clarify the roles and responsibilities of state agencies; and
- Determine state-specific pre-disaster housing planning deliverables and identify how FEMA and HUD can support the development of these deliverables.

By completing these steps, FEMA and HUD believed that participating states would expand their capacity to better support their communities' post-disaster recovery. Each state had the flexibility to determine what they needed to achieve these goals. The CPT remained responsive to the states' requests throughout the Initiative and tailored the delivery of the program to meet the states' needs.

The Initiative benefited from being highly flexible. The success of this program lay in meeting states where they were and matching them with the resources needed for their current situation. The aspects of PDHI that benefited the states the most were the state-to-state connections, SME resources and support, dedicated time, and the structured approach to interagency work. By connecting states with one another and providing access to federal support and housing SMEs, the states were able to incorporate current best practices and understand lessons learned from their peer states.