

TOOLKIT

LESSONS LEARNED: CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

BACKGROUND

In early 2025, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the [Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery](#) (CDBG-DR), the long-awaited Universal Notice outlining the new requirements and recommendations for HUD's long-term disaster recovery program. This notice included **recommendations that states and territories create and facilitate a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)** as they carry out their CDBG-DR programs, a process that the Puerto Rico Department of Housing (PRDOH) has officially implemented since 2021, with the collaboration and advocacy efforts of nonprofit organizations.

WHY THIS MATTERS

In 2017, Hurricane Maria displaced thousands as it made landfall in Puerto Rico. Then came the "storm after the storm": the economic, social, and health impacts of falling through our broken disaster recovery system's cracks. The CAC was created with the goal of ensuring that disaster survivors have a voice in their community's recovery and didn't fall through the broken cracks of the disaster recovery system.

Building on their success, the creation of the CAC is an official recommendation of HUD for all states and territories responsible for administering long term recovery funds.

RESOURCES

[Lessons Learned: Citizen Advisory Committees](#)

On July 8, 2025, the Hispanic Federation and the National Low Income Housing Coalition co-hosted a webinar titled "Lessons Learned: Citizen Advisory Committee." This webinar focused on shared experiences from the CAC. The speakers discussed how the CAC was created in Puerto Rico and highlighted ongoing efforts to promote collaboration among nonprofits and the community, as well as ways to strengthen disaster preparedness and recovery. You can watch the recording of the webinar [here](#).

[HUD Universal Notice](#)

Released by HUD in early 2025, the Universal Notice outlines the requirements for funds provided to states, tribes, territories, and local governments through the agencies long-term disaster recovery program, CDBG-DR. This program provides flexible funding to areas impacted by federally declared disasters. The 2025 Universal Notice contains new language encouraging this use of Citizen Advisory Councils, saying that:

"HUD encourages grantees to gather feedback and recommendations on key program decisions from a citizen advisory group at least annually. A citizen advisory group is a body composed of individuals from a community who volunteer or are appointed to provide input, advice, and recommendations on various issues and policies affecting their community. These groups typically serve as a bridge between the general public and decision-makers, offering insights, perspectives, and expertise to help inform and shape decisions that impact the community's well-being and development.

A citizen advisory group will look different in each community because each community is unique. Generally, the individuals who volunteer or are appointed should represent the demographics of the community it is supporting. For example, a citizen advisory group in a community that is predominantly renters should include individuals who are renters. If a grantee chooses to consult with a citizen advisory group, the grantee can determine the cadence of meetings and how the group will provide feedback to the grantee. As an example, a citizen advisory group may review program specific policies and procedures to determine if programs are adequately reaching and assisting intended beneficiaries and are achieving intended program outcomes. HUD encourages grantees to describe the process they will follow for the citizen advisory group in their citizen participation plan.”- [HUD Universal Notice, section III.A.6.a., pgs. 62-63](#)

[Puerto Rico’s CAC Operational Guide 2023- English](#)

Puerto Rico’s CAC Operational Guide establishes the rules of operation governing the committee and its members, as well as the coordination with PRDOH. [Sec. 1.3, pg. 6.](#)

Among other processes and duties established in the operational guide:

- “The CAC will aspire to have diverse representation in its plenary and work groups. Similarly, it will work with the specific intention of providing visibility to the vulnerable communities affected by natural disasters and facilitating the communication between these communities and PRDOH” [Sec. 2.3.1, pg. 8.](#)
- The CAC should “[p]romote the exchange of experiences, opinions, and recommendations between the civil society, the public and the communities with PRDOH. For this purpose, the CAC could request the assistance of PRDOH’s resources to encourage and create dialogue spaces.” [Sec. 2.4, pg. 10.](#)

[Puerto Rico’s CAC Portal- English](#)

As required in section 5 of Puerto Rico’s CAC Operational Guide, the PRDOH maintains a website/ portal that provides information about the CAC’s operation, including documents, minutes, reports, among other resources. [Sec. 5., pg. 14.](#)

For additional information about the Citizen Advisory Committee, contact Hispanic Federation at prinfo@hispanicfederation.org

For additional information on disaster housing recovery, research, and resilience, contact National Low Income Housing Coalition at outreach@nlihc.org

