



HAWAI'I HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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HHFDC recognized by the National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA) for quickly standing up a housing referral program for displaced Maui residents

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HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC) has received recognition from national housing experts for standing up the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program just days after last year's wildfires that destroyed much of Lahaina and other parts of Maui.

The program was established at the request of Governor Josh Green, M.D., who asked HHFDC to move expeditiously on the program to help the families, couples and individuals who lost loved ones, their homes, jobs and other cherished aspects of their lives.

The Award of Excellence for Special Achievement was announced by the National Council of State Housing Agencies at its annual meeting in Phoenix last week. The award recognizes programs and practices that respond in an outstanding manner to an important state need, have a significant impact on the community and cut across traditional program lines.

Approximately 600 families found immediate housing through the program, which provided those displaced by the disaster with shelter options from a pool of roughly 1,400 properties that were offered by neighbors on Maui and elsewhere.

HHFDC put the call out to homeowners on Maui and throughout Hawai'i to make available their vacant homes, bedrooms and even spare beds. This information was dropped into an electronic database that allowed the survivors the options available to them at a glance.

Modern technological advances helped make the database more “searchable” so families and individuals could easily identify those options more suited to their unique needs and circumstances.

Adding to the website’s visual appeal was a highly popular interactive map that was developed in partnership with the state of Hawai‘i’s ARC GIS Office. This tool allowed users to identify the locations of available properties with a click of a computer mouse.

The online database of available properties was updated continuously with downloadable lists being published twice a day in the immediate aftermath of the fire.

Nearly all of the 60-person staff at HHFDC played a role in the program. Many worked after hours and weekends answering phone calls from survivors, verifying rental listings with homeowners, or coordinating with other organizations.

“I’m extremely proud of the effort that our staff put into this program,” HHFDC Executive Director Dean Minakami said. “Our agency’s core mission is to provide assistance to those in need of housing and this program put on full display our dedication to fulfill this mission. With no additional personnel or other resources — and without a playbook to use as a guide — our staff responded to the call to assist those whose homes and whole neighborhoods were destroyed.”

HHFDC’s entry was one of 18 programs entered in the Special Achievement category. Jurors evaluated the entries based on their innovation, response to an important state need, success in achieving intended results and ability to provide benefits that outweighed their costs.

HHFDC was praised for being able to respond quickly to an urgent and unexpected housing need without additional dedicated resources while at the same time facing supply chain challenges.

Jurors also noted that the program’s success was due in part to the outstanding coordination among the state’s different housing agencies and strong leadership within HHFDC.

The jury panel, which included former housing finance agency executive directors and other senior leaders in the affordable housing community, said that while Hawai‘i’s situation was unique, the HHFDC program offered insights into workable solutions for all states when responding to disasters.

NCSHA’s Awards for Program Excellence initiative honors state housing finance agencies annually for outstanding public-purpose programs and practices. The mission of the program is to recognize exemplary HFA efforts, encourage innovation, identify industry best practices, and facilitate information sharing among HFAs.

NCSHA, which turns 50 this year, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization created to advance, through advocacy and education, the efforts of the nation's state housing finance agencies and their partners to provide affordable housing to those who need it.

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About the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation

HHFDC's primary mission is to advance affordable housing opportunities for the people of Hawai'i. Additional information is available at <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hhfdc/>.

About the National Council of State Housing Agencies

NCSHA's mission is to advance through advocacy and education the nation's state housing finance agencies efforts to provide affordable housing to those who need it. It comprises the state housing finance agencies and more than 350 affiliated members in the affordable housing field. Additional information is available at <https://www.ncsha.org/>.



HHFDC Housing Finance Manager David Oi and Executive Director Dean Minakami accept NCSHA's Award of Excellence for Special Achievement at this year's NCSHA Conference in Phoenix last week.