

FIREAID Annual Grant Report: June 2025

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Grantee Organization Name: REBUILD NORTHBAY FOUNDATION DBA AFTER THE FIRE USA_

Project/Program Title: _Community to Community Deployment Program

FireAid Grant Amount Awarded: \$500,000

Grant Start and End Dates: From January 2025 to December 2025

Primary Contact Person:

Name: Jennifer Gray Thompson

Title: CEO

Email: jennifer@afterthefireusa.org

Phone: 707.953.6034



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COMMUNITIES TO
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SECTION 2: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Provide a brief (1–2 paragraph) summary of the activities and impact specifically supported by the FireAid grant. Do not include unrelated organizational or program-wide updates.

Program Description: Community to Community Fire Survivor and Subject Matter Experts

Since 2017, After the Fire USA has implemented its *Community-to-Community Fire Survivor and Subject Matter Experts* program for every major megafire in the western United States. This flagship initiative brings together survivors of past wildfires and expert practitioners to support newly affected communities during their most critical recovery phases. Through structured delegations, ongoing mentorship, and locally embedded guidance, the program fosters peer-to-peer learning, trust-based leadership, and community-centered strategies for rebuilding with resilience and equity.

The program's strength lies in its continuity and care. By pairing local leaders with those who have walked this path before, *Community to Community* accelerates informed decision-making, strengthens neighborhood cohesion, and helps communities avoid common pitfalls. More than a recovery framework, it is a relationship-driven model designed to transform tragedy into opportunity—helping communities not just rebuild, but reimagine what is possible.



SECTION 3: ACTIVITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. Describe the main activities undertaken using the FireAid grant funds. Focus only on grant-supported efforts.

Between January and June 2025, After the Fire USA led five in-person delegations to Los Angeles to support recovery efforts in the Palisades and Eaton Fire zones. These visits—guided by trust, humility, and experience—were complemented by consistent virtual support via Zoom and a regular local presence from two expert team members, Valerie Brown and Reva Feldman. Since January 7, 2025, our approach has been rooted in deep listening, trust-based coaching, and aligning local recovery efforts with best practices learned from over 15 prior megafire events.

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The generous support of FireAid made these delegations possible by covering associated costs. This enabled After the Fire USA to bring over 60 experienced survivors, recovery leaders, and subject matter experts to Los Angeles, where they volunteered their time and insights to support both communities. These delegations played a critical role in providing real-time coaching, modeling resilient recovery systems, and ensuring newly impacted residents had access to guidance informed by lived experience.





Throughout this period, we helped launch and support two comprehensive block captain networks—one for each fire zone—working closely with the Department of Angels and local neighborhood leaders. Block captains have become embedded pillars in their communities, surfacing needs, sharing accurate information, and advocating for equitable recovery. We also offered tailored consulting to school officials, clergy, nonprofit hubs, and mental health providers, along with templates, policy briefings, and strategic introductions. In June, Val Brown helped lead the *Rebuilding with Resilience* event in partnership with The Resiliency Company and Side Porch. Parallel to these efforts, After the Fire USA has regularly briefed philanthropic leaders to help align funding with real-time community priorities.

Together, these activities reflect a deeply relational and iterative approach—one designed not just to assist, but to empower. We meet communities where they are, walk with them through



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the hardest chapters, and help them build forward with clarity, courage, and community at the center.

After the Fire Team + Volunteer Delegate List (select)

Jennifer Gray **Thompson, MPA**, Founder & CEO, After the Fire USA (North Bay Fires 2017, Kincaid + Walbridge Fires 2019, Glass Fire 2020)

Reva Feldman, Strategic Advisor, After the Fire USA; City Manager (ret), City of Malibu (Woolsey Fire 2018)

Natalie Minuzzo, Executive Assistant & Coordinator, After the Fire USA

Jenn Kaaoush, Community Outreach, After the Fire USA; Co-Founder, Superior Rising; Trustee, Town of Superior, Veteran (Army) (Marshall Fire 2021)

Brad Sherwood, Assistant General Manager, Sonoma Water Agency; Founder, Larkfield Rising (Tubbs Fire 2017)

Valerie Brown, SBP Fellow, After the Fire USA; Chair, California VOAD; (Witch Creek Fire 2007)

Josiah Nishita, Managing Director, County of Maui (Maui Fires 2023)

Chris Smith, Former Director of FEMA Individual Assistance; Director, Individual Assistance and Disaster Housing, IEM – Senior Leader Advisor

Tim Carpenter, Director of Disaster Recovery & Resilience – ESG/Community Impact, Fannie Mae **Sidra Goldwater**, Advisor, Disaster Recovery & Rebuilding, Fannie Mae



Casey Taylor, Superintendent and Founder, Achieve Charter Schools (Camp Fire 2018)

Maddie Pennie, Senior Manager of Development, Good360

Melissa Baurer, Integrated Health & Outreach Director, Santiam Hospital and Clinics (Santiam Canyon Fire 2020)

Dr. Adrienne Heinz, Clinical Research Scientist, VA National Center for PTSD & Stanford University School of Medicine (Tubbs 2017, Kincade + Walbridge 2019, Glass 2020)

Mike Holdner, Mechanical Engineer, Keysight Technologies (Tubbs Fire 2017)

Nicole Huguenin, Co-Director & Founder, Maui Rapid Response (Maui Fire 2023)

Paul Lowenthal, Division Chief - Fire Marshal, City of Santa Rosa (Tubbs Fire 2017)

Jeff Okrepkie, Council Member, Founder of Coffey Strong, City of Santa Rosa (Tubbs Fire 2017)

Reina Pomeroy, Founder, Community for Good Consulting (Marshall Fire 2021)

Margaret Van Vliet, Principal, Trillium Advisors, LLC, (North Bay Fires 2017, Oregon Fires 2020)

David Venables, Technical Advisor, Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH)

Katie Arrington, Resiliency and Recovery Program Manager, Boulder County (Marshall Fire 2021)

Lorez Bailey, Consultant, Lorez Bailey Consulting (North Bay Fires 2017, 2019, 2020)

Steve Rahmn, Chief Operating Officer, Firebrand Electric (Tubbs Fire 2017)

Tennis Wick, Director, Permit Sonoma (North Bay Fires 2017, 2019, 2020)

Jolie Wills, CEO, Hummingly, Christchurch, NZ (Earthquake 2011)

Julie Shiyou-Woodard, President & CEO, Smart Home America

How closely did you follow the original project plan or proposal?

The original project has been followed exactly as awarded.

Staffing and Resources: List key staff and/or contractors involved, and any major resources developed.

Jennifer Gray Thompson, CEO
Natalie Minuzzo, Executive Assistant
Reva Feldman, Strategic Advisor
Valerie Brown, CA Resilience Fellow + Recovery Coordinator
Jennifer Kaaoush, Community Outreach Coordinator

SECTION 4: OUTCOMES & IMPACT

1. What were the intended outcomes of the FireAid grant?



The intended outcomes of the FireAid grant were to provide robust support for local leaders navigating the aftermath of two simultaneous and unprecedented megafires in Los Angeles: the Palisades and Eaton Fires. Specifically, FireAid funding was sought to support After the Fire USA's Community to Community delegations and extend trust-based, strategic recovery assistance to impacted communities. This included peer-to-peer coaching, survivor-led guidance, and direct consultation with grassroots and civic leadership.

2. Describe the actual outcomes achieved with the FireAid grant.

With the support of FireAid, After the Fire USA delivered an expansive, high-touch, and deeply human-centered recovery program between January and June 2025. The grant funded five inperson delegations and enabled us to bring over **60 visits from seasoned fire survivors and subject matter experts** to Los Angeles—entirely as volunteers. These efforts were supplemented by virtual support, over 1,000 meetings with stakeholders, and hundreds of hours of personalized coaching and convening.



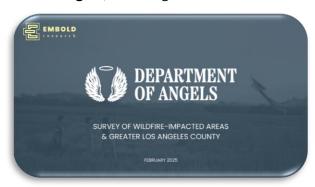


Key achievements included:

- Establishment of two major block captain systems, designed and coached with local leaders in both fire zones.
- Over 30 public and private webinars offering trusted guidance on mental health, FEMA/SBA processes, insurance, recovery financing, and survivor storytelling.
- **Direct strategic advising** for clergy, grassroots leaders, and local organizers.
- Regular briefings with philanthropic funders to ensure aligned and equitable resource deployment.
- **Development and review of policy memos**, participation in technical working groups, and translation of complex disaster finance language for community use.

We also provided tailored support to the **Department of Angels**, including:

- Strategic coaching around vision and structure.
- Advising on the design and scaling of the block captain system.
- Participation in finance, insurance, and communications working groups.
- Facilitating relationship building across institutions, nonprofit partners, and informal leaders.



These structured and unstructured interventions created ripple effects across both fire-affected zones—strengthening civic trust, improving information flow, and building durable community recovery infrastructure.

3. How do you measure success? What tools or evaluations did you use?

We evaluate success through a blend of **quantitative metrics**, **relationship-based outcomes**, and **community feedback**. Tools and indicators include:



- **Delegation debriefs and meeting logs** (e.g., tracking 1,000+ stakeholder engagements)
- Growth and sustainability of block captain networks across both fire zones.
- **Webinar participation and reach**, averaging over an hour of high-engagement content per session.
- Narrative and testimonial collection from community members, funders, and participants.
- **Alignment indicators**, such as reductions in duplicative efforts, improved coordination between sectors, and increased trust between funders and community voices.

We also measure outcomes qualitatively through emergent leadership development, cross-community solidarity, and the ability of fire-impacted neighborhoods to self-organize and advocate effectively.

4. Were there any unintended outcomes (positive or negative)?

Yes—several **positive unintended outcomes** emerged from this phase of the work:





- Sustained mentorship relationships developed between volunteer delegation members and local leaders, continuing long after formal engagements ended in support of key recovery elements to enhance local capacity now and for future disasters.
- The block captain model evolved into a community-owned framework for advocacy, coordination, and trauma-informed leadership for both Fires, unique to the needs of their local community.
- **Cross-sector resilience infrastructure** organically grew as clergy, nonprofits, educators, and mental health providers began working in closer alignment with civic institutions.
- The webinars and panel events attracted new allies and partners, elevating Los Angeles'
 fire recovery efforts into broader state and national conversations about equitable disaster
 response and drawing additional resources to aid in rebuilding and recovery efforts.

No negative unintended consequences have been identified. Instead, we saw Los Angeles communities continue to move from trauma into agency—empowered, connected, and increasingly resilient.

SECTION 5: CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

1. What challenges did you face during the grant period? How did you address them?

The greatest challenge we faced was building an effective recovery infrastructure that reflected the complexity and diversity of Los Angeles while maintaining urgency, clarity, and equity. With two simultaneous megafires impacting distinct and



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densely populated communities, the path forward required more than technical knowledge—it required deep listening and collaborative humility.

A key cultural challenge was navigating Los Angeles' deep-rooted value on **competency**, **speed**, **and competition**—traits that make the city thrive in many sectors, but can pose barriers in disaster recovery. In this space, **admitting "I don't know" is not a weakness—it's a superpower**. Recovery is a profoundly humbling experience that demands vulnerability, adaptation, and collective wisdom. We often observed hesitation to step into uncertainty, even when doing so would have opened pathways for learning and innovation. We are actively working to normalize this learning curve and to reframe uncertainty as a shared strength, not a deficiency.

We also faced the challenge of **collaborative resistance**—the tendency of systems to default toward siloed or competitive behavior. To counter this, we are driving the concept of "fewer elbows, more hands." True recovery requires aligned action, not competing agendas. We continue to emphasize that the only thing worth competing against is the disaster itself. **Collaboration is not optional—it's the only way forward.**



Another major challenge was establishing **real-time**, **trust-based communication loops** between residents, organizations, and funders. Too often, frontline needs are delayed or lost in translation. We worked intentionally to close these loops—advising funders early, coaching community members to articulate evolving needs, and encouraging transparency around who is funding what and why. This structure helps communities feel seen, heard, and supported across every stage of the recovery.

Coordinating five delegations, over 1,000 engagements, and continuous virtual support placed operational demands on our small team—but thanks to FireAid funding and long-term partners, we were able to deliver high-touch, deeply relational support without compromising values. We entered with humility, met each community where they were, and prioritized survivor-led, equity-centered collaboration over efficiency.

What key lessons did your team learn? How will these inform future work?

The most powerful lesson we reaffirmed is that **survivors must be centered in the recovery process—not just as recipients of services, but as leaders, organizers, and innovators.** The most relevant solutions come from those who have lived through the trauma, and their insights form the strongest foundation for long-term systems change. Fire survivors are the best R&D possible in disaster recovery. Their stories, struggles, and strategies inform everything from policy to funding design.

We also learned that **timely, closed-loop communication between communities and funders is essential**. Impact must be felt, seen, and known by those doing the rebuilding. Communities need to understand who is supporting which parts of their recovery—and funders need real-time insight into local needs. Without this feedback loop, trust fractures and momentum stalls. We'll continue to build infrastructure that makes this flow of information efficient, visible, and reciprocal.

Another key lesson was the importance of equity-centered coordination.

Recovery cannot afford silos or competition. Our motto, "fewer elbows, more hands," reflects this shift: only by linking arms across organizations and communities can we truly compete against the disaster—not each other. We saw firsthand that when trust is built across lines of difference—between neighborhoods, nonprofits, institutions, and funders—the recovery moves faster and goes deeper.







Finally, we observed that **curiosity must be normalized as a leadership trait in disaster recovery.** In a region like Los Angeles—where confidence, performance, and professionalism are deeply valued—there can be hesitation to say "I don't know." But we believe this phrase is a superpower. It opens space for shared learning, creative problem-solving, and adaptive systems that grow stronger over time. Future deployments will continue to promote emotional intelligence, humility, and a learning culture as core capacities for disaster response and leadership.

SECTION 6: SUSTAINABILITY

What are your plans for sustaining the wildfire relief and recovery work beyond the grant period?

After the Fire USA is built for the long arc of disaster recovery. As a **survivor-led organization**, we understand not only what megafire recovery looks like on paper—but what it feels like on the ground. Our team has the **deepest depth of experience in this field nationally**, having worked across **4 states**, **20 counties**, and nearly **8 years of wildfire-affected communities**. This perspective informs every step we take and ensures that we are walking beside communities with humility, clarity, and resolve.

In Los Angeles, we are committed to staying engaged beyond the grant period. Our goal is not to "finish" recovery—it's to **build the systems, relationships, and leadership capacity** that allow communities to sustain and expand the work on their own terms. We will continue to support local leaders, enhance peer networks, and refine strategies that support coordination, equity, and innovation.

We are sustaining this work through a multi-pronged strategy:

- Philanthropic partnerships: We are actively cultivating multi-year funding commitments and briefing funders regularly to ensure continued alignment with evolving on-the-ground needs.
- Community capacity-building: Our work supports the transfer of tools, training, and technical assistance directly to neighborhood leaders, block captains, and local organizations.
- **Institutional integration**: By embedding recovery practices into agency partnerships and working groups, we help ensure these systems remain in place long after our direct involvement concludes.
- Narrative and policy impact: Through storytelling, public webinars, and policy briefings, we are contributing to a statewide and national shift in how wildfire recovery is resourced, measured, and led.

This is not a one-year commitment—it's a long-term partnership with Los Angeles and its fire-impacted communities. Our survivor-led, relationship-first approach will continue to serve as the foundation for a recovery effort that is not only sustainable—but scalable, replicable, and just.

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SECTION 7: FINANCIAL REPORTING

Please attach or summarize your financial report on how, specifically, the FireAid grant funds were used.

Our financials cover the January – May 2025 grant period (June expenses have not yet been reconciled). \$ 185,499 in FireAid grant funds were used to support our three programs serving the 2025 Los Angeles Fires:

- Community to Community Program \$123,385 (includes team + volunteer delegate travel, meals, accommodations)
- Network & Convene \$36,114
- Education & Advocacy \$26,000



SECTION 8: SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Please upload or attach any of the following related to the FireAid grant, if available:

- Photos, videos, or promotional materials
 - After the Fire USA LA Community Recovery Webinars Playlist https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGiVHREZs3hTBXR3-TR3K6IGyO2ijQ2zh&feature=shared
 - Residents harden homes after wildfires | On Your Side KCAL News, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DV7ZLqnB_po
 - American Friends of Magen David Adom Experts offer tips on resilience from Israel to Los Angeles in AFMDA (April 15, 2025) - https://afmda.org/news/resilience-webinar/
 - Ethos Giving Social Impact Power Chat with Jennifer Gray Thompson of After the Fire USA (April 29, 2025) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-XmorT27As

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- Eaton Fire Survivors Network Altadena's Future Recovery (April 10, 2025) https://www.youtube.com/@EFSurvivorsNetwork
- Three Homeless Guys: The Palisades Fire by Joel Pollak Podcast
 - After The Fire: THG hosts Jennifer Gray Thompson (March 10, 2025) -<u>https://rss.com/podcasts/three-homeless-guys-the-palisades-fire/1935228/</u>
 - Insurance Claims: Valerie Brown Exposes the Post-Fire Insurance Maze https://youtu.be/N5CYr_ggga4?feature=shared
- Also, please see our LinkedIn profile for more photos and videos https://www.linkedin.com/company/afterthefireusa/

- Publications or reports produced

 Please see attached Altadena Recovery Tools Briefing, Managing Smoke Damage After a Megafire, Remediation Company Vetting, Smoke Damage FAQ and Insurance Know Your Rights (co-produced with Department of Angels)

- Media coverage or press releases

- January 8, 2025, 'A Hellscape in All Directions': The Devastating Fires That Ignited Crisis and Chaos in L.A., The Wall Street Journal
 - https://www.wsj.com/us-news/fierce-winds-unrelenting-flames-and-rushedevacuations-the-night-wildfires-engulfed-los-angeles-3dba318c
- January 8, 2025, Sonoma County firefighters and aid workers rally to help Los Angeles in its time of need, Petaluma Argus-Courier
 - https://www.petaluma360.com/article/news/sonoma-county-firefighters-aid-workers-los-angeles-fires/
- January 9, 2025, Bay Area agency works to help Southern California fire victims recover, NBC
 Bay Area
 - https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/california/california-wildfires/bay-area-agency-help-fire-victims/3756359/
- January 11, 2025, The Last House Standing, The New York Times
 - https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/11/realestate/california-wildfires-homes.html
- January 12, 2025, Gov. Newsom lifts environmental requirements for those rebuilding from LA fires, NBC Bay Area
 - https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/california/california-wildfires/newsom-liftsenvironmental-requirements-rebuilding-la-fires/3758745/
- January 14, 2025, How some larger North Bay organizations are helping with Los Angeles wildfire recovery, The Press Democrat
 - https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/north-bay/la-fire-recovery-donations/
- January 15, 2025, LA Wildfire Resources: Megafire Recovery Experts in Conversation with Evan Spiegel, Snapchat
 - o https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sxwLvvz08k

- January 15, 2025, A long road to rebuilding and fights over government funding await L.A. fire victims, NBC News
 - https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/long-road-rebuilding-fightsgovernment-funding-await-l-fire-victims-rcna187478
- January 15, 2025, Los Angeles' Destruction Was Fueled by Bad Policy—and Bad Incentives, The Dispatch
 - https://thedispatch.com/newsletter/capitolism/los-angeles-destruction-was-fueledby-bad-policy-and-bad-incentives/
- January 16, 2025, People whose homes were spared in L.A. wildfires contend with survivor's guilt, NBC News
 - https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/people-whose-homes-spared-l-wildfirescontend-survivors-guilt-rcna187668
- January 17, 2025, What happens when the California fires go out? More gentrification, Vox
 - https://www.vox.com/policy/395261/california-wildfires-los-angeles-gentrificationdisplacement
- January 17, 2025, North Bay construction-worker shortage eyed for \$2M push to recruit young adults, North Bay Business Journal
 - https://www.northbaybusinessjournal.com/article/industry-news/north-bayconstruction-worker-shortage-eyed-for-2m-push-to-recruit-young-a/
- January 18, 2025, 'Evacuation fatigue' sets in for Southern Californians yet to return home after wildfires, CNN US
 - https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/18/us/los-angeles-wildfires-evacuees-return/index.html
- January 21, 2025, Advice on Recovering from a Wildfire, From Californians Who've Been There,
 KQED Forum
 - o https://www.kqed.org/forum/2010101908557/advice-on-recovering-from-a-wildfire-from-californians-whove-been-there
- January 22, 2025, Wildfires and Mental Health: Community First, Then Therapy, WebMD
 - https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/news/20250122/wildfires-and-mental-healthcommunity-first-then-therapy
- January 23, 2025, How policymakers can help the L.A. wildfire recovery, USC Price School
 - https://priceschool.usc.edu/news/la-wildfire-recovery-policy-government-aid/
- January 24, 2025, Los Angelenos Have a Long Road to Recovery Ahead of Them, Heatmap News
 - https://heatmap.news/climate/los-angeles-fires-rebuilding
- January 31, 2025, Long-awaited tax relief for fire victims clears major hurdle with House vote,
 The Press Democrat
 - https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/long-awaited-tax-relief-for-fire-victimsclears-major-hurdle-with-u-s-hous/
- February 3, 2025, PO Boxes, Endless Lists and Self-Compassion: How to Recover From Losing a Home to a Wildfire, KQED

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- https://www.kqed.org/news/12025125/advice-to-those-recovering-from-wildfire-from-northern-californians-whove-been-there
- February 8, 2025, Insurance commissioner: Wildfire victims should be paid without itemizing lost contents, Los Angeles Times
 - https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-02-08/insurance-commissionerwildfire-possession-losses
- February 9, 2025, Donations topped \$650 million, and the question looms: How to best use it for fire recovery?, Los Angeles Times
 - o https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-02-09/with-fire-relief-donations-topping-650-million-charities-strategize-their-role-in-recovery
- February 13, 2025, What Maui's slow recovery means for L.A. and the rest of the U.S., The Washington Post
 - https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2025/02/13/maui-fires-los-angeles-recovery/
- February 18, 2025, Tubbs Fire survivor offers experience, hope to those displaced by historic
 Los Angeles fires, The Press Democrat
 - o https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/los-angeles-fires-rebuilding-tubbs-fire/
- February 19, 2025, *Recovery After LA Fires*, Gary and Shannon Podcast
 - https://kfiam640.iheart.com/featured/gary-and-shannon/content/2025-02-19-85-gary-and-shannon-recovery-after-la-fires/
- March 7, 2025, Nonprofit created by wildfire survivors helps support Palisades, Eaton survivors through recovery process, CBS News
 - https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/after-the-fire-usa-nonprofit-wildfiresurvivors-palisades-eaton-fire-recovery/
- March 10, 2025, Jennifer Gray Thompson discusses "After the Fire", FOX11 Los Angeles
 - o https://www.foxla.com/video/1606214
- March 25, 2025, With billions at stake, lawyers pour into Altadena and race to courthouse, Los Angeles Times
 - https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-03-25/with-billions-at-stake-lawyerspour-into-altadena-and-race-to-courthouse
- March 29, 2025, First rebuilding permits issued to victims of Los Angeles fires, The Washington
 Post
 - https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2025/03/28/la-fires-rebuilding-permits/
- May 5, 2025, Los Angeles wildfire survivors look to rebuild fire-resilient homes to increase insurability, CBS News
 - https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/los-angeles-wildfire-survivors-fire-resilient-homes-insurance/

- Evaluation or assessment reports

SECTION 9: DECLARATION & SIGNATURE

I confirm that the information provided in this report is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Name: ____Jennifer Gray Thompson_____

Title: Chief Executive Officer

Signature:

Date: 6/30/2025



In partnership, After the Fire USA Team

Gennifer, Reva, Matalie, Jenn + Valerie







