

Launching Community Recovery When Disaster Strikes

1. Convene the jurisdiction's recovery council—this is a group with representatives with widespread representation from government (both elected and appointed officials), community, business and non-profit leaders. Along with the community's governing body, this group examines the community conditions, assesses long-term recovery initiatives and builds support for effective, implementable strategies.
2. Obtain and adopt model legislation to ensure your community has state-of-the-art building codes, performance standards, and recovery/reconstruction authority codified to hasten disaster recovery assistance from governmental agencies.
3. Assemble with regional decision makers to develop larger-scale approaches to the situation. Recovery will be region-dependent in a landscape-scale disaster, so working partnerships with other jurisdictions and regional institutions and bodies will promote a quicker return.
4. Invite state OES and FEMA staff representatives to meet with local, county and state elected representatives and community leaders to initiate recovery of the built environment through public assistance and mitigation funding programs.
5. Review materials from the State Office of Emergency Services and FEMA (Long-term Recovery Manual and other resources guidance available online). Materials are available from the state and regional offices that outline immediate steps to initiate recovery, as well as some best practice material.
6. Draw upon the experience of other disaster-hit communities through the ICMA, National League of Cities, the American Planning Association (APA), the Public Entity Risk Institute (PERI) and academic resource institutions (examples here—HKS; UC Boulder; U of Delaware).
7. Ensure community resilience by launching a recovery planning process that makes sense for your area—some resources include FEMA's assistance through the ESF 14 process or launching a complementary general plan or redevelopment planning process consistent with recovery needs.
8. Look into getting direct support from disaster-experienced government officials through ICMA and the state-level League of Cities. These groups can provide onsite "mutual aid" for executive staff and bolster local capacity.
9. Develop a consultative relationship with the community through the recovery planning process, as well as through frequent, consistent visits to neighborhood-based gatherings, town hall meetings and public briefings.
10. Seek support from the philanthropic community to supplement financial needs not typically covered by government funding to bolster non-profit community organizations supporting the most at-risk community members.

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