

REGIONAL RESILIENCE COLLABORATIVE

# LOCAL LEADER DISASTER RECOVERY GUIDE

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR COUNTY MANAGERS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS



**CENTRALINA**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL



*Centralina*  
Economic Development District

# LOCAL LEADER DISASTER RECOVERY GUIDE



## Key Considerations for County Managers and Elected Officials

Recovery begins in the first days of a disaster. Emergency managers oversee critical life-safety concerns during the response. At the same time, county and city managers, or designated staff members, should lead the mapping out of the elements needed for a successful recovery. If you invested in the work to build a pre-disaster recovery plan, now is the time to reap the benefits.

### Disaster Financial Recordkeeping

Be sure that your finance department is meticulous and thorough in recordkeeping related to the disaster. Federal disaster funding is based primarily on reimbursement. Have someone in the department focus on federal procurement and contracts.

### Damage Assessment

Work with your emergency management team to assess and document disaster impacts. Pay attention to citizen needs with special considerations for vulnerable populations.

### Recovery Leadership

Begin the search for a recovery leader who inspires confidence and can coordinate and build consensus among the many stakeholders involved. Look for a person who can develop and communicate a vision to citizens, staff, partners and government officials. Do not be afraid to look beyond your executive team.

*"Have someone at the Emergency Operations Center that focuses on recovery. Start planning for recovery as soon as possible."*

– Joe Stanton, Assistant Director, North Carolina Department of Public Safety  
Emergency Management

### Recovery Management and Staffing

Assess your team to choose a local disaster recovery manager to execute the recovery vision, manage the process, direct the team, and coordinate across the many recovery sectors. You may decide to hire a new employee to fill that critical role. Consider whether additional staff are needed by anticipating where there may be heavy workloads such as permitting and public works.

### Communications

Map out a strategy to communicate with citizens, local and regional partners and the press. Be consistent, honest and hopeful. No matter who leads the recovery, your community members want and need to hear from you.



# USE RECOVERY AS AN OPPORTUNITY

After a large-scale disaster, you will face tremendous pressure to build back quickly. Do not forgo the planning process. Take time to consider one-time opportunities the disaster presented to rebuild in more thoughtful and resilient ways.

## Incorporate resilience into every aspect of recovery

Building back to pre-disaster conditions should not be your goal; rather the goal should be that recovery strategies, programs, policies and projects increase the resilience of citizens, businesses, homes and infrastructure to future disasters.

*"All communities have to be made whole for the whole community to be able to be sustainable."*

– Dawn Baldwin-Gibson, Co-Chair, North Carolina Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network's African American Council, Executive Pastor, Peletah Ministries

## Advance equity in all recovery actions

Disasters have a disproportionate impact on certain parts of your community. You have an opportunity to advance equity in your recovery. Equality is treating all survivors the same. Equity is giving each survivor what they need. Include the "whole community" in your discussions and decision making.

*"Success in recovery will be determined, not by the implementation of programs, but rather by understanding the needs of those impacted by the disaster - as defined by them."*

– Libby Turner, Former FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer

## Recovery should begin with a vision

Early and often, ask community members how they envision their future and what matters most to them. Remember that your community has spent considerable time setting vision and goals before this disaster through development of other plans like your comprehensive plan, hazard mitigation plan, economic development plans, etc. Build on the years of community dialogue to set a vision.

*"Know what you want to fund before a disaster. Have a picture in your head of where you want to spend money or rebuild differently."*

– Amanda Martin, Chief Resilience Officer, North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency

# CREATE STRONG PARTNERSHIPS



As you build a recovery organization, form working groups mirroring how your state organizes for recovery to simplify coordination and partnerships.

Bring together representatives from government agencies, private sector partners, non-governmental organizations and citizens with the knowledge and expertise to support recovery activities.

After building the working group structure, identify partners with diverse knowledge, expertise and resource to support the various areas of recovery.

*"Take advantage of the tremendous amount of goodwill that exists at the beginning of a disaster. Everyone is willing to put aside personal gain for community goals. Ask people to help early on. You'll be surprised what they will do for you."*

– Jane Cage, Joplin Advisory Recovery Team Chairman



*"Whatever disaster you are dealing with doesn't respect county lines – work regionally."*

– Laura Hogshead, COO, North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency

## Prioritize community engagement

Consistent, two-way exchange of information with the public is essential during recovery. Solicit and honor citizen input including reaching out to under-resourced communities in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways.

**Build new partnerships and strengthen existing ones to benefit the community**



Embrace the philosophy that recovery is more successful when you build a larger table with all available partners. Reach out to your peers that have experienced and recovered from disasters to give you advice. You can set the tone for recovery by actively working to reach across the silos that exist in every community.

# BUILDING WORKING GROUPS



## Economic Recovery

Private economic development efforts fuel recovery. This group can maximize public funds available to assist businesses through reliable transportation, workforce development and risk mitigation.

### Working Group Partners

- Chambers of commerce
- Centralina Regional Council and the Economic Development District
- Regional planning commission
- Business leaders



## Health and Social Services

This group should focus on vulnerable populations, including children and people with physical and mental health challenges.

### Working Group Partners

- Department of human services
- Health department
- Community-based and faith-based organizations
- School districts



## Housing Recovery

Housing is traditionally the most complicated area of recovery. This group can perform market analysis, identify the availability of affordable housing, investigate and sponsor interim and permanent housing solutions, help facilitate insurance and bank loan issues and encourage private housing development.

### Working Group Partners

- Social services and homelessness support providers
- Developers and contractors
- Bankers and mortgage officers
- Insurance professionals
- Non-profit housing providers



## Infrastructure Systems

This group should assist with the damage assessment and promote rebuilding resilient infrastructure suitable for the future.

### Working Group Partners

- Public works
- Water authority
- Utility providers
- Department of transportation
- Storm water/floodplain authority



## Natural and Cultural Resources

Working group members can address environmental contamination or damage to waterways, parks and open spaces. Repair and restoration of important historic landmarks and buildings can help restore a community's identity.

### Working Group Partners

- Planning and development department
- Parks and Recreation, park managers
- Soil and water conservation district
- Environmental and landscape architects
- Historians and cultural societies

# RECOVERY RESOURCES



## Stay committed

Successful leaders stay committed to reaching their community's recovery objectives. Long-term recovery can and most likely will take years. Make it a priority to stay accountable to your community with transparency and effective communication. Be sure to keep your recovery team engaged with ongoing communication and shared learning opportunities irrespective of disaster event conditions. Share successes through your website, social media and public forums to help your community stay engaged and hopeful of the future.

## Reach out for support

Recovery requires a regional perspective. Reach out to other county managers, elected officials, mayors and community leaders from across your region for support. Centralina is a great resource to help convene regional leaders to work together.



**For more information on Centralina's focus on resilience, visit our webpage: [Regional Resilience & Recovery](#)**

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## Learn from your peers

While no two disasters are the same, we can learn from the past. Leaders who have experienced major disasters and endured are usually eager to share what they learned, what went well and where they may have done differently. Don't hesitate to pick up the phone and ask for advice.

Contact Christina Danis, Assistant Director Community Economic Development at [cdanis@centralina.org](mailto:cdanis@centralina.org) or 704-688-6502 to learn more about the Centralina Regional Resilience Collaborative.

## Other Helpful Resources

- [FEMA Effective Coordination of Recovery Resources for State, Tribal, Territorial and Local Incidents](#)
- [HUD Disaster Impact and Unmet Needs Assessment Kit](#)
- [FEMA Community Recovery Management Toolkit \(website\)](#)
- [Joplin Pays It Forward \(Collection of Lessons Learned by Recovery Leaders from the Joplin Tornado\)](#)
- [FEMA Long-Term Community Recovery Planning Process – A Self-Help Guide](#)