

Resilient Community Recovery

A Strategic Decision-Making Guide

BENEFITS

Structured process to address complex challenges

Integrated approach to build resilience across sectors

Stronger community and partner network

Strategic projects funders seek

Prioritized recovery projects

Supported projects with stakeholder buy-in

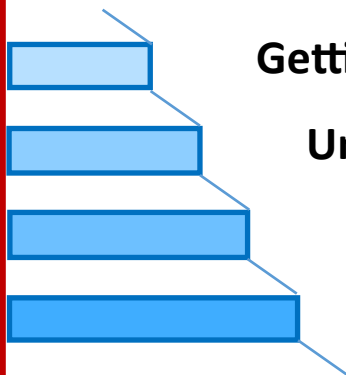
Building Community Resilience

As communities begin to recover and rebuild, local leaders face multiple challenges and must make many expedited yet complex decisions. Communities may have sustained severe impacts in one area, significant impacts across multiple components, or impacts that cross functional sectors or jurisdictional boundaries. To complicate matters, some short-term decisions can have long-term impacts. Communities also may be fiscally constrained to fund recovery.

Communities can build resilience by making strategic decisions that achieve desired recovery outcomes. A resilient community resumes normal operations and recovers faster after disasters and other disruptive events. Resilient communities:

- Understand risks and vulnerabilities
- Participate in public/private partnerships that expand local capabilities
- Develop impactful projects that improve quality of life
- Make data-driven decisions and proactive investments
- Secure stakeholder buy-in for recovery projects before “the vote”

4 STEPS



Getting Organized

Understanding the Situation

Defining Recovery Outcomes

Prioritizing Recovery Solutions

A Strategic Process

Step 1: Getting Organized

☐ Convene a leadership team

Strong leadership is essential to a resilient recovery. Post-disaster the local governing body convenes key leaders to guide recovery efforts. Include representatives from municipal departments, public health, school board, emergency management, faith community, private sector, nonprofits, and elected officials. The team selects (or the governing body appoints) a recovery leader, who serves as spokesperson, kicks off the process, coordinates meetings, and builds partnerships.

☐ Establish a timeline

Capitalizing on community interest following a disaster, major decision points in the process generally can be completed over a period of weeks. The time may vary depending on experience with strategic processes, level of stakeholder engagement, and the community calendar.

☐ Identify stakeholders & partners

Identify stakeholders: residents, business owners, chamber of commerce, nonprofits, critical industries/employers, schools, civic groups, and neighboring counties/communities among others. Key partners include foundations, nonprofits, professional organizations, educational institutions, philanthropy, county and state departments, regional organizations, federal agencies, and the media. These groups bring information and resources to the table: needs, fresh ideas, data, potential funding, technical assistance, expertise, networks, supplies, equipment, volunteers, etc. Early and meaningful engagement fosters buy-in and builds local capacity for implementation later.

☐ Communicate regularly!

Key recovery decisions and actions that represent broad public and private sector interests will emerge during the process. Therefore, good communication and community consensus are important, and public input is essential. Create a communications plan that includes multiple media outlets as well as information-sharing networks.

Step 2: Understanding the Situation

☐ Assess community needs

Consider housing, economic, infrastructure, environmental, health and social needs, and quality of life.

- *What are the long-term disaster impacts: type and extent of damages by sector?*
- *What issues/hazards need to be addressed?*
- *What did you like about your community before the disaster?*
- *What existing opportunities can be bolstered?*

The biggest issues to be resolved may have been issues before the disaster. How has this event exacerbated those issues? What is different?

☐ Review existing plans

What did you envision for your community in your existing plans: comprehensive, mitigation, capital improvement, economic, etc.?

Elements of these plans - vision, issues, strategies, actions, projects, priorities - will intersect with and can inform your recovery. Has this event impacted any of the assumptions made in these plans?

☐ Take a comprehensive approach

Key leaders and stakeholders organize around common issues, generally addressing the biggest local needs and opportunities. Work together to look at issues comprehensively. Actions in one sector can impact the other sectors. This holistic approach will help your community become more resilient.



Sample Resilience Definition

www.coresiliency.com/understanding-resilience

The ability of communities to rebound from, positively adapt to, or thrive amidst changing conditions or challenges and maintain quality of life, healthy growth, durable systems, economic vitality and conservation of resources for present and future generations

Step 3: Defining Recovery Outcomes

Envision your future

You may have a long-term vision expressed in a comprehensive or master plan. Yet the disaster or other circumstances may have altered your vision. Perhaps resilience and sustainability seem more relevant after this event.

- *What recovery outcomes do you want to see?*
- *Are they in keeping with your long-term vision?*
- *Do you see your community differently now?*
- *What are your opportunities for improvement?*
- *Do you need to revise your community vision as you think about your desired recovery outcomes?*

Think big - be inspired by the opportunities to do things better!



Seek stakeholder input

Share draft outcome statements with stakeholders for their input/feedback. By engaging stakeholders from the beginning, you are more likely to secure their support throughout the recovery decision and implementation processes. Input opportunities include: an actual or virtual suggestion box, public meetings, interviews, community asset/opportunity mapping, online or paper surveys, word clouds, social media, etc.

Publish your outcome statement(s)

Garner wide attention for your recovery effort by sharing your desired outcomes:

- website and social media
- traditional media, articles or interviews
- community boards in public places

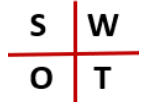
Use your desired outcomes to guide recovery decisions in your community. If all recovery activities and projects are working towards your shared vision, your community is more likely to achieve desired outcomes.

“A safe, vibrant and resilient community united to celebrate our heritage, provide opportunities for all ages, and meet the challenges of the future.”

Step 4: Prioritizing Recovery Solutions

Select the best recovery ideas

Think through your community’s needs, interests and issues as well as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to your recovery.



How can you build on your strengths and opportunities and minimize your weaknesses and threats while meeting the greatest needs?

Brainstorm ideas to address the key needs/issues. Use data to demonstrate the need behind each idea. Also, look at your existing plans - do they contain strategies, actions or projects that address recovery issues? Include stakeholders in this discussion to broaden the range of ideas.

Choose for further development the ideas that will meet the most community needs or interests and strategically position your community to make the most meaningful recovery impacts.

- *Can the idea move your community closer to your desired long-term recovery outcomes?*
- *Can a particular idea make your community more resilient?*

Set your priorities

Generally communities come up with more projects than can be funded or implemented concurrently. Different projects will vary in their level of impacts on the local recovery. Evaluate a number of factors when prioritizing your projects. A high value project:

- *Meets greatest number of post-disaster community needs*
- *Is feasible and cost-effective*
- *Is pre-cursor to/building block for other projects*
- *Stimulates the economy*
- *Reduces risk/builds resilience*
- *Has broad community impacts*
- *Builds community capacity*
- *Includes opportunities to leverage funds*
- *Has a project champion*
- *Creates recovery momentum/has high visibility*

Score your projects to determine priorities, using a high (3), medium (2), low (1) scale. Higher scores equate to higher value. Incorporate these priorities into a recovery timeline. Because recovery is dynamic, some of these factors may change over time. Therefore remaining flexible is important to capitalize on opportunities in a timely manner.

After Decisions Are Made . . .

Bring your partners to the table

Share your prioritized recovery projects with your stakeholders and partners for their input during the development of your projects and specific implementation strategies.

Secure project champions

Seek champion(s) to provide leadership for each action or project. They will continue to flesh out the details of their respective ideas or projects, bring in key stakeholders, and identify resources for implementation. They may be elected officials, local leaders or volunteers, service providers, municipal employees, area nonprofits, or other partners.

Fully develop recovery projects

To scope your projects, consider using a project development guide (e.g., https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1841-25045-2720/ltr_toolbox_508compliant_062112.pdf). Ensure you address all project elements. Some funders ask that you describe other alternatives considered and why you selected the proposed project.

Formally adopt your solutions

Memorialize your decisions with a formal resolution adopted by your governing body, which can identify staff or other individuals as project champions responsible for each project or program. Commemorate the achievement with broad media coverage and a public celebration.

Take action!

Kick off your implementation with a celebration!

Implementation Tips

Designate a recovery manager

Although the local governing body has the overall responsibility for recovery, designating a paid recovery manager (versus collateral duties for existing staff) can literally pay off with a more effective effort. The recovery manager coordinates with project champions and partners to implement recovery strategies and projects. A qualified recovery manager maintains a 50,000 foot view of the entire recovery and oversees the specifics of multiple projects with project champions. Together they use the project development guides to identify grant opportunities, prepare grant applications, and attract other resources for implementation.

Establish and use a tracking system

Some recovery projects may be ready to implement in the first few months, but the bulk of the work will occur over a period of years. Managing multiple projects requires effective communication, strong organizational skills, routine progress checks, financial monitoring and regular reporting to funders, partners, and stakeholders. Use of project management tools - from spreadsheets to software programs - helps keep projects on track.

Ensure your project tracking tools and fund accounting system tie together. Generally funders require periodic reports of work completed, funds expended, and explanation of variances. (If circumstances require changes in project scope, communicate with funders before acting outside the approved scope.) Keeping good records is especially important when you use grant funds.

Sometimes a change in circumstances requires a redetermination of priorities. Review priorities at least annually to make minor adjustments. You may repeat the strategic decision-making process when sweeping changes in leadership or unforeseen events occur. Sustaining strategic decision making and implementation processes over a period of years is essential to achieving a full recovery.

Celebrate Successes!

Celebrate significant milestones, ground-breakings, and program kick-offs with public events and media coverage. Thank project champions, partners, and funders. Share how each success positively impacts your community and achieves desired outcomes.

What Funders Want

Strategic strategic projects address needs

Collaborative multiple engaged partners

Regional benefits more than one community

Replicable a model for others to follow

Sustainable self-supporting, maintainable

Capable demonstrated management capacity