

# NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR DISASTER RECOVERY



**DISASTER RECOVERY** is part of emergency management, which includes the broader components of prevention, preparedness and response. Planning for recovery is integral to emergency preparation and mitigation actions may often be initiated as part of recovery.

**DISASTER RECOVERY** includes physical, environmental and economic elements, as well as psychosocial wellbeing. Recovery can provide an opportunity to improve these aspects beyond previous conditions, by enhancing social and natural environments, infrastructure and economies – contributing to a more resilient community.

## **SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY RELIES ON:**

- **understanding the *context*:**

Successful recovery is based on an understanding of the community context.

- **recognising *complexity*:**

Successful recovery acknowledges the complex and dynamic nature of emergencies and communities.

- **using *community*-led approaches:**

Successful recovery is responsive and flexible, engaging communities and empowering them to move forward.

- **ensuring *coordination* of all activities:**

Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.

- **employing effective *communication*:**

Successful recovery is built on effective communication with affected communities and other stakeholders.

- **acknowledging and building *capacity*:**

Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on community, individual and organisational capacity.



# DISASTER RECOVERY



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***The relationship between the principles.***

*Whilst all are equally part of ensuring effective recovery, the understanding of the context and the recognition of complexity are seen as foundation factors. The paragraphs overleaf describe all six principles in more detail.*



**SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY RELIES ON:**

- understanding the **context**.
- recognising **complexity**.
  - using **community**-led approaches.
  - ensuring **coordination** of all activities.
- employing effective **communication**.
- acknowledging and building **capacity**.



Community and Disability Services  
Ministers' Advisory Council

PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT



# DISASTER RECOVERY



## UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Successful recovery is based on an understanding of the community context. Recovery should:

- appreciate the risks faced by communities;
- acknowledge existing strengths and capacity, including past experiences;
- be culturally sensitive and free from discrimination;
- recognise and respect differences; and
- support those who may be more vulnerable; such as people with disabilities, the elderly, children and those directly affected.

## RECOGNISING COMPLEXITY

Successful recovery acknowledges the complex and dynamic nature of emergencies and communities. Recovery should recognise that:

- information on impacts is limited at first and changes over time;
- affected individuals and communities have diverse needs, wants and expectations, which are immediate and evolve rapidly;
- quick action to address immediate needs is both crucial and expected;
- disasters lead to a range of effects and impacts that require a variety of approaches; they can also leave long-term legacies;
- conflicting knowledge, values and priorities among individuals, communities and organisations may create tensions;
- emergencies create stressful environments where grief or blame may also affect those involved;
- the achievement of recovery is often long and challenging and
- existing community knowledge and values may challenge the assumptions of those outside the community.

## USING COMMUNITY-LED APPROACHES

Successful recovery is responsive and flexible, engaging communities and empowering them to move forward. Recovery should:

- centre on the community, to enable those affected by a disaster to actively participate in their own recovery;
- seek to address the needs of all affected communities;
- allow individuals, families and communities to manage their own recovery;
- consider the values, culture and priorities of all affected communities;
- use and develop community knowledge, leadership and resilience;
- recognise that communities may choose different paths to recovery;
- ensure that the specific and changing needs of affected communities are met with flexible and adaptable policies, plans, and services; and
- build strong partnerships between communities and those involved in the recovery process.

## ENSURING COORDINATION OF ALL ACTIVITIES

Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs. Recovery should:

- be guided by those with experience and expertise, using skilled and trusted leadership;
- reflect well-developed planning and information gathering;
- demonstrate an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and authority of other organisations and coordinate across agencies to ensure minimal service disruption;
- be part of an emergency management approach that integrates with response and contributes to future prevention and preparedness;
- be inclusive, using relationships created before and after the emergency;
- have clearly articulated and shared goals based on desired outcomes;
- have clear decision-making and reporting structures;
- be flexible, take into account changes in community needs or stakeholder expectations;
- incorporate the planned introduction to and transition from recovery-specific actions and services; and
- focus on all dimensions; seeking to collaborate and reconcile different interests and time frames.

## EMPLOYING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Successful recovery is built on effective communication with affected communities and other stakeholders. Recovery should:

- ensure that all communication is relevant, timely, clear, accurate, targeted, credible and consistent;
- recognise that communication with a community should be two-way, and that input and feedback should be sought and considered over an extended time;
- ensure that information is accessible to audiences in diverse situations, addresses a variety of communication needs, and is provided through a range of media and channels;
- establish mechanisms for coordinated and consistent communication with all organisations and individuals; and
- repeat key recovery messages because information is more likely to reach community members when they are receptive.

## ACKNOWLEDGING AND BUILDING CAPACITY

Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on community, individual and organisational capacity. Recovery should:

- assess gaps between existing and required capability and capacity;
- support the development of self-reliance;
- quickly identify and mobilise community skills and resources;
- acknowledge that existing resources will be stretched, and that additional resources may be required;
- recognise that resources can be provided by a range of stakeholders;
- understand that additional resources may only be available for a limited period, and that sustainability may need to be addressed;
- provide opportunities to share, transfer and develop knowledge, skills and training;
- understand when and how to disengage; and
- develop networks and partnerships to strengthen capacity.