

National disaster recovery principle 6: Recognise and build capacity

Speed read

- Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on the resources, capacity and resilience that people, organisations and the community already have.
- Disaster-affected people and communities understand their own needs and capabilities better than outsiders.
- It is important for recovery workers to understand the profile of the community and find effective ways to engage, such as through setting up community recovery committees.

Key points

Recognise community capacity and capability. A community profile with information about community assets, strengths, risk and vulnerabilities is a valuable tool for recovery managers. It will help to understand the community and support its recovery outcomes. Trying to assess community capacity, capability and resilience immediately after the disaster is likely to be inaccurate due to the combined impact of physical damage, disruption, shock and grief. Where possible, try to get hold of a community profile that has been done earlier through community-based emergency planning.

Use predictors to assess capacity and capability. Community capacity and capability will be different from one community to another and it can vary over time. Disasters can mean that community capacity is lower than normal for a while, but even deeply impacted communities can actively contribute to their recovery. Some points to help predict capacity and capability include:

- How supported people feel within their community
- The presence of strong community connections (e.g. through community groups, local schools, faith-based organisations)
- Whether people have access to the services and resources they need (e.g. financial, health, housing and social support)

Engage with local capacity and capability. Setting up a community recovery committee is an important strategy to engage with local capacity and capability. These committees provide community input to recovery planning, implementation and evaluation and are usually made up of local residents, community groups, and representatives from government, business and NGOs. Community recovery committees set up ways to consult with the broader community about prioritising and carrying out recovery activities. It is important to have the 'right people at the table', who are well networked and can honestly and accurately represent their community.

Quick Guide

Recovery workers and volunteers need to collaborate with the community. When skilled recovery workers and volunteers work well with the local community, it significantly enhances the capacity of the community to get through the disaster and achieve good recovery outcomes. Recovery management requires intensive human resources for a long time. Recovery workers have stressful work to do in difficult circumstances and might be personally affected by what happened. Staff and volunteers will need to be provided with high levels of training, care and support.

Take action

- Use [Checklist 4 – Managing People](https://bit.ly/RecoveryChecklists) (bit.ly/RecoveryChecklists)
- Share [Lessons Learned by Community Recovery Committees of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires](#) with your local community recovery committee (bit.ly/RecoveryFurtherResources)
- Put up the [National Principles for Disaster Recovery poster](#) in your office or recovery centre (bit.ly/RecoveryPrinciplesPoster)

More information

- [Community Recovery Handbook](#) (AIDR 2018)
- [Recovery Collection on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub](#)