

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR

# Disaster Recovery

Disasters can deeply impact lives and livelihoods. Working with communities recovering from disasters is complex and challenging. These principles are a way to guide our efforts, our approach, our planning and our decision-making.

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 built, environmental and economic elements, all contributing to individual and social wellbeing.

Recovery can provide an opportunity to improve these aspects beyond previous conditions, contributing to a more resilient community.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES

While all the principles are equally critical to ensure effective recovery, understanding the local and broader **context** and recognising **complexity** are foundational.

The descriptions beneath each principle overleaf provide further guidance for working with communities in disaster recovery.

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## SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY

Understand the **CONTEXT**

Recognise **COMPLEXITY**

Use **COMMUNITY-LED** approaches

**COORDINATE** all activities

**COMMUNICATE** effectively

Recognise and build **CAPACITY**



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Social Recovery  
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## Understand the CONTEXT

Successful recovery is based on an understanding of the community context, with each community having its own history, values and dynamics.

Recovery should:

- Acknowledge existing strengths and capacity, including past experiences;
- Appreciate the risks and stressors faced by the community;
- Be respectful of and sensitive to the culture and diversity of the community;
- Support those who may be facing vulnerability;
- Recognise the importance of the environment to people and to their recovery;
- Be acknowledged as requiring a long term sustained effort as needed by the community; and
- Acknowledge that the impact upon the community may extend beyond the geographical boundaries where the disaster occurred.

## Recognise COMPLEXITY

Successful recovery is responsive to the complex and dynamic nature of both emergencies and the community.

Recovery should recognise that:

- Disasters lead to a range of effects and impacts that require a variety of approaches; they can also leave long-term legacies;
- Information on impacts is limited at first and changes over time;
- Affected individuals and the community have diverse needs, wants and expectations, which can evolve rapidly;
- Responsive and flexible action is crucial to address immediate needs;
- Existing community knowledge and values may challenge the assumptions of those outside of the community;
- Conflicting knowledge, values and priorities among individuals, the community and organisations may create tensions;
- Emergencies create stressful environments where grief or blame may also affect those involved; and
- Over time, appropriate support for individuals and communities, from within and outside, can cultivate hope and individual and collective growth.

## Use COMMUNITY-LED approaches

Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward.

Recovery should:

- Assist and enable individuals, families and the community to actively participate in their own recovery;
- Recognise that individuals and the community may need different levels of support at various times;
- Be guided by the community's priorities;
- Channel effort through pre-identified and existing community assets, including local knowledge, existing community strengths and resilience;
- Build collaborative partnerships between the community and those involved in the recovery process;
- Recognise that new community leaders often emerge during and after a disaster, who may not hold formal positions of authority; and
- Recognise that different communities may choose different paths to recovery.

## COORDINATE all activities

Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach, between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and need.

Recovery should:

- Have clearly articulated and shared goals based on desired outcomes;
- Be flexible, taking into account changes in community needs or stakeholder expectations;
- Be guided by those with experience and expertise, using skilled, authentic and capable community leadership;
- Be at the pace desired by the community, and seek to collaborate and reconcile different interests and time frames;
- Reflect well-developed community planning and information gathering before, during and after a disaster;
- Have clear decision-making and reporting structures and sound governance, which are transparent and accessible to the community;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and authority of organisations involved and coordinate across agencies to ensure minimal service provision disruption;
- Be part of an emergency management approach that integrates with response operations and contributes to future prevention and preparedness; and
- Be inclusive, availing of and building upon relationships created before, during and after the emergency.

## COMMUNICATE effectively

Successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners.

Recovery should:

- Recognise that communication should be two-way, and that input and feedback should be encouraged;
- 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 networks;
- Establish mechanisms for coordinated and consistent communications between all service providers, organisations and individuals and the community;
- Ensure that all communication is relevant, timely, clear, accurate, targeted, credible and consistent; and
- Identify trusted sources of information and repeat key recovery messages to enable greater community confidence and receptivity.

## Recognise and build CAPACITY

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

Recovery should:

- Assess capability and capacity requirements before, during and after a disaster;
- Support the development of self-reliance, preparation and disaster mitigation;
- Quickly identify and mobilise community skills, strengths and resources;
- Develop networks and partnerships to strengthen capacity, capability and resilience;
- Provide opportunities to share, transfer and develop knowledge, skills and training;
- Recognise that resources can be provided by a range of partners and from community networks;
- Acknowledge that existing resources may be stretched, and that additional resources may be sought;
- Understand that additional resources may only be available for a limited period, and that sustainability may need to be addressed;
- Understand when and how to step back, while continuing to support individuals and the community as a whole to be more self-sufficient when they are ready; and
- Be evaluated to provide learning for future and improved resilience.