



Australian Government
National Emergency
Management Agency

Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience



RECOVERY EXERCISING TOOLKIT

AUSTRALIAN DISASTER RESILIENCE HANDBOOK COLLECTION

Recovery Exercising Toolkit

Companion to *Community Recovery* (AIDR 2018) and *Managing Exercises* (AIDR 2017)

This document complements *Community Recovery* (AIDR 2018) and *Managing Exercises* (AIDR 2017). It is available as an online resource on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub:

knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/recovery-exercising-toolkit

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About this Toolkit

Purpose

This Toolkit is a companion guide for the *Managing Exercises Handbook* (AIDR 2017) and *Community Recovery Handbook* (AIDR 2018). The design and conduct of recovery exercises is based on the nationally recognised exercise management methodology, outlined in the *Managing Exercises Handbook*. This Toolkit provides evidence-based guidance that recognises the complexity of disaster recovery and includes recovery considerations and specialised resources to inform the design of recovery exercises.

Who is the Toolkit for?

The Toolkit is primarily intended to guide and assist regional/district and local emergency management and recovery committees and councils responsible for the coordination of disaster recovery. The Toolkit could also be of value to other organisations, planners and managers who work with communities to design and deliver recovery services and programs.

Using the Toolkit

The Toolkit recognises the complexity of disaster recovery and the competing issues and demands faced by recovery practitioners and recovery committees. The wide range of stakeholders that have a role in recovery and the central place of community in influencing and shaping recovery strategies is an important theme throughout the Toolkit.

The Toolkit contains evidence-based guidance and specialised resources, templates and slides that enable emergency planners to follow a guided pathway in the development and facilitation of a recovery exercise.

The Toolkit can be used to support exercise management programs to include a recovery exercise component whenever exercises are conducted.

The stand-alone modules in the Toolkit can also be used outside of an exercise framework and incorporated into recovery workshops or training sessions. The modules can also be used as a 'just in time' training resource to support Recovery Committees that are established after a disaster.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Recovery Exercising

Why conduct recovery exercises

Exercises are an essential component of preparedness, for both response and recovery. Recovery exercises provide the opportunity for a dedicated focus on recovery that goes beyond immediate relief and early recovery and allows for an in-depth exploration of recovery issues over time. Recovery exercises include a broad range of recovery stakeholders that play a part across the short-, medium- and longer-term phases of recovery. Integrating recovery exercises into regional and local emergency management exercising programs supports a holistic approach to preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters.

The value of recovery exercises

Regular exercising of recovery arrangements supports agencies and community organisations to consolidate their own roles and responsibilities; improve familiarity with the roles and responsibilities of other agencies and organisations; and develop constructive networks at a local and regional level.

Recovery exercises support knowledge and skill development; provide a mechanism to identify areas for recovery planning; and contribute to continuous improvement.

Chapter 2: Recovery Exercise Concept

The design and development of a recovery exercise is based on the nationally recognised exercise management methodology outlined in the *Managing Exercises Handbook*. Exercise planners should refer to the Handbook for further guidance. The sections below give some examples wording and concepts to assist in designing the recovery exercise concept.

The Recovery Exercise Concept Template can be found at Appendix 1.

Identify the need

Recovery from a disaster event is a complex and long-term process that requires a multi-agency approach and involves a broad range of stakeholders. A recovery exercise provides an opportunity to explore recovery issues over time; practice community recovery principles and approaches; and strengthen relationships and networks between stakeholders.

Exercise aim

The aim of recovery exercising is to explore a range of short-, medium- and longer-term recovery considerations that arise from a disaster scenario, inform recovery planning and strengthen networks between recovery stakeholders.

Exercise objectives

The objectives of recovery exercises are to:

- Outline regional/local recovery arrangements and plans
- Explore the roles and responsibilities of government, non-government and local community stakeholders in recovery
- Explore key recovery challenges and considerations across the short, medium and longer term
- Practice evidence informed recovery strategies and activities
- Strengthen collaboration and coordination at the regional/local level
- Identify areas for further development to inform recovery planning

Scope

The recovery exercise timeframe will commence at three weeks post the scenario disaster event and explore the short-, medium- and longer-term phases of recovery.

In scope:

- Community recovery principles and practice
- Impact Assessment, consequences and identification of community need
- Recovery considerations over time, from early through to longer term recovery across the four recovery environments, infrastructure/built, environment, economic, social/health and wellbeing
- Identifying community capacity and building connections

Out of scope:

- Evacuations
 - Evacuation and Relief Centres
 - Immediate relief operations
-

Chapter 3: Recovery Exercise Design

Why a discussion exercise?

Discussion exercises are built around discussion of a scenario. Participants can explore issues in depth and provide verbal responses to situations. Discussion exercises are useful for developing agreed approaches to particular events, assess the effectiveness of plans, building relationships, and exploring novel ideas or approaches to managing emergencies (*Managing Exercises*, AIDR 2017).

Discussion exercises are an effective way to exercise recovery as they provide the opportunity for exploration and facilitate a conceptual understanding of issues. Discussion exercises often involve personnel who work at a strategic level (decision-makers) brainstorming solutions to problems,¹ which aligns well with participants who attend recovery exercises.

Recovery exercise participants

The recovery discussion exercise is targeted at recovery stakeholders that would normally be members on a recovery committee, including councils, state agencies, non-government and local community organisations.

The range of stakeholders to consider includes:

- Council staff with responsibility for recovery coordination as well as staff with lead responsibilities across infrastructure; economic; environment and waste; social and community wellbeing; communications and executive roles.
- Members of emergency management committees who also have a role in recovery. This includes regional/local representatives of state/territory government agencies in the following areas:
 - Finance (disaster recovery funding arrangements)
 - Infrastructure
 - Environment
 - Transport
 - Housing
 - Health
 - Education
 - Communications
 - Primary industries
- The emergency services organisation (ESO) with responsibility for the hazard identified in the exercise scenario
- Non-government/community organisations with a formal or demonstrated role in regional/local emergency management arrangements.
- Peak business, industry and tourism groups e.g., Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Community leader representatives
- National Emergency Management Agency Recovery Support Officers

When determining the participants for your exercise make sure that you have included stakeholders that represent all the recovery environments:

- Built: infrastructure, roads and transport, waste and debris
- Economic and financial: business and tourism

¹ *Managing Exercises Handbook*, 2017, Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, p.9.

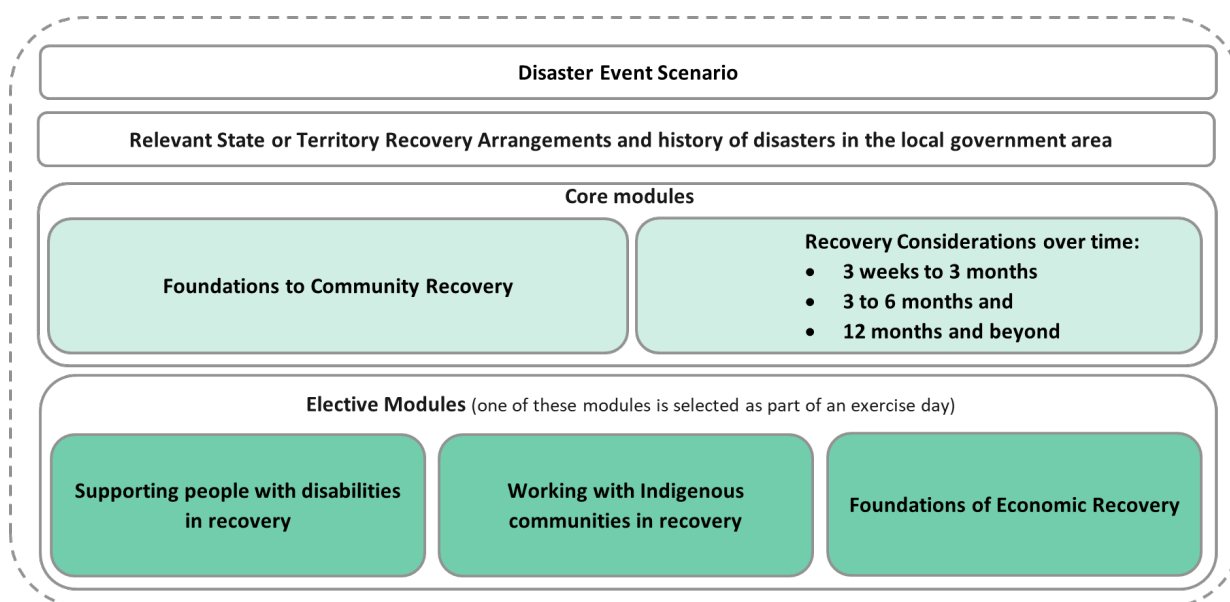
- Natural: environment and waste
- Social: people, wellbeing and community

Exercise day design

Recovery exercises are designed to be a full day activity and can focus on a regional or local emergency management level. A regional exercise will utilise the regional recovery governance arrangements, regional emergency management and recovery committees and include some or all of the councils that are part of the region/zone. Alternatively, the exercise can be designed with a focus on one local government area and the local emergency management committee.

Participants are seated in recovery subcommittee syndicate groups that reflect jurisdictional recovery arrangements. The exercise scenario commences three weeks post the scenario disaster event and focuses on recovery considerations and issues that are likely to be faced over time by a recovery committee.

A number of components are included in the exercise day and outlined below.



Disaster Event Scenario

Central to the exercise day is a disaster scenario based on local context, risk factors and historical data of the LGA or region. The aim of the disaster scenario is to set the context and background for recovery discussions that progress throughout the day from short term recovery through to 12 months and beyond.

Scenarios can be developed with the support of the local ESOs. Consider the local risk profile and history of emergencies in your area to determine the hazard focus for your scenario: fire, flood, storm, earthquake or another hazard. Once you have decided on the type of hazard, work with the ESO with lead responsibility to develop the scenario for that particular hazard. Use the technical and specialist advice of the lead ESO as well your local emergency management plan and council community plan to develop the impacts and consequences of the emergency in your scenario.

An important part of the development of the scenario is a focus on the impacts and consequences of the disaster event. Draw on the ESO initial damage assessments, council intelligence and agency impact data and

modelling to develop a hypothetical picture of how the disaster event will impact on the community functioning and evolving needs. Scenarios used and/or developed should be realistic for the local context and large enough scale to stretch thinking and test assumptions.

The scenario should be written in the past tense, describing events that have already happened. This allows recovery discussions to focus on activities and issues post evacuation and immediate relief, as these phases are often included in the response component of exercises. Commencing recovery discussions at around three weeks post the emergency event is an effective way to ensure a focus on short-, medium- and longer-term recovery.

You may also elect to use a scenario that has been developed for a previous response focused exercise in your area. This scenario can be used as a base with the addition of information about impacts and community consequences and forward focus on recovery. The advantage of this approach is that it leverages on existing planning and exercising and introduces the recovery component.

An Exercise Scenario Template can be found at Appendix 1. While not intended to be a prescriptive formula, the template provides guidance to support scenario design and presentation. Plan for a 20-minute presentation.

State/territory recovery arrangements and regional history of disasters

Providing an overview of recovery arrangements in your state/territory helps to set the context and outline governance arrangements and key responsibilities of agencies across all tiers of government.

Understanding the history of disasters in your region is also important for setting community context. Consecutive disasters have compounding impacts and affect how a community will recover from the next disaster event. Alternatively, where there has not been a disaster event for some time, community preparedness and resilience may be lower and local recovery stakeholders less practiced in recovery.

Develop a slide deck for your state/territory recovery arrangements that includes recent disasters in your region and the challenges that were experienced. Plan for a 20-minute presentation.

Chapter 4: Recovery Exercise Modules

Purpose of the Modules

The Toolkit contains a suite of Modules that focus on a range of recovery considerations that have been identified as important issues for recovery planning through *The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (2020)*; state inquiries and reports into disasters across Australia; and evidence-based research. The Modules contain foundational concepts and links to helpful resources to provide a base level of understanding that will equip participants to undertake further recovery planning and action. Each module has been developed with the guidance of a subject matter expert and informed by evidence-based research and practice.

While the Modules have been developed as key components of a recovery exercise, they are also useful stand-alone resources that can be used in recovery training, workshops and briefings for emergency management and recovery committees. The Modules can also be used as 'just in time' training for recovery committees that have been established after a disaster.

Module's structure

The Modules are designed to be run by facilitators with limited knowledge in the particular subject area. There are three components in each Module that directly support facilitation:

- Module Overview: that summarises key content and includes pre-session planning guidance with suggested actions, background context and information to support facilitators in preparing to deliver the Module.
- Slide Deck: with facilitator notes to assist in delivering the presentation.
- Video of Subject Matter Experts: reinforcing content and key messages.

Each Module takes approximately one hour to conduct.

Core Modules

There are two core Modules designed to be included in every recovery exercise.

Fundamentals of Community Recovery

The Fundamentals of Community Recovery Module is designed to give exercise participants an overview of the context and complexity of community recovery and how disasters affect individuals and communities.

Participants will bring a range of disaster recovery experience to the exercise, with some being introduced to disaster recovery concepts for the first time and others with many years of experience. The module will help to reinforce and validate previous learning and experience and provide a common understanding of key recovery concepts which will enhance group discussions throughout the day.

Recovery Considerations Over Time

Recovery considerations that emerge over the long journey of recovery are explored in 3 sessions throughout the exercise day. Each session focuses on community consequences at particular points in time and recovery strategies are explored over the first 2 years after disaster.

The timeframes for the 3 recovery considerations sessions are:

- 3 weeks – 3 months
- 6 – 12 months
- 12 months and beyond.

Included in each session is a presentation to inform and set the context for recovery considerations in each time frame and a discussion activity where the recovery considerations are explored by syndicate groups across the recovery environments (built, natural, social, environment).

Each session runs for approximately 30 – 40 minutes.

Elective Modules

In addition to the core Modules, there is a suite of elective Modules that allow exercise planners to select a recovery consideration that best fits with local context, planning priorities and identified gaps. Exercise planners choose one elective Module to include in the exercise day. Elective Modules currently include:

- Coordinating Recovery Support for People with Disability
- Working with Indigenous Communities in Recovery
- Foundations of Economic Recovery

There are a number of resources to assist you in selecting the elective Module for your exercise day. The Module Overviews summarise the purpose and key content for each topic and outline pre-session planning activities. Watching the Module video is also helpful way to get a quick understanding of the focus and key messages.

An effective way to present the module is to co-facilitate with a representative from an organisation with expertise in the topic area. For example, a Disabled Persons Organisation, an Indigenous Community Leader or local Indigenous Organisation, a council economic development officer or local Chamber of Commerce.

Chapter 5: Planning the Exercise Day

Exercise planning team

Recovery exercises need to be carefully planned and managed to ensure a coordinated approach to design, conduct and evaluation. The planning team will consist of those directly involved in the planning of the exercise, including representatives from the councils and emergency management committees that are in the geographical footprint of the exercise scenario. It's important that the planning team includes representatives from across the 4 recovery environments, to ensure a holistic approach to planning for the recovery exercise. The lead ESO for the hazard type chosen for the disaster scenario should also be on the planning team.

The planning team identifies which functions are required for the exercise and develops plans and strategies such as:

- Exercise concept document
- Aim and objectives
- Scenario development
- Event logistics
- Detailed budget proposal
- Exercise plan and instructions.

There are a range of templates to assist in design of the exercise day that can be found in the Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Recovery exercise concept template
- Appendix 2: Participant invitation template
- Appendix 3: Exercise agenda template
- Appendix 4: Facilitator guide
- Appendix 5: Facilitator guide Slide Deck
- Appendix 6: Recovery considerations group discussion template

- Appendix 7: Participant feedback form template
- Appendix 8: Participant seating in recovery groups template

Many other useful templates to assist with exercise planning can be found in the *Managing Exercises Handbook*.

Exercise facilitation

You will need to identify one (or more) people as the facilitator/s for the recovery discussion exercise. You may also wish to identify other facilitators to deliver particular Modules.

The Facilitator Guide (Appendix 4) is designed to assist exercise facilitators to tailor sessions for specific scenarios and outcomes and outlines a suggested schedule for the day. The Guide has been designed to be flexible so that you can tailor it to meet the needs of your participant group. The Guide is supported by a Facilitator Guide Slide Deck (Appendix 5), with speakers' notes designed to assist facilitators in the delivery of the exercise day.

Participants table seating plan

The recovery discussion exercise is targeted at recovery stakeholders that would normally be members on a recovery committee, including councils; state agencies; non-government and local community organisations.

While jurisdictions may vary in the way they name recovery environments/domains and how they allocate functions into different task groups or sub-committees the foundations of the 4 environments with community at the centre remains the same.

Seat participants in table syndicate groups that reflect your jurisdictional recovery groupings/sub-committees. Make sure that you have invited sufficient stakeholders to allow for group discussions across:

- Built: infrastructure, roads and transport, waste, and debris
- Economic and financial: business and tourism
- Natural: environment and waste
- Social: people and wellbeing and community

When a regional exercise is conducted with several councils in attendance, form separate syndicate groups for communications and executive staff. Where there are insufficient numbers for separate groups, integrate these representatives across other syndicate groups.

There are two options to arrange participant seating for the exercise:

- Before the day, as part of exercise planning, allocate each participant to a particular syndicate group to ensure there is sufficient people in each group; or
- On the day of the exercise as participants arrive, ask them to choose their seats based on the table group they think is the best fit for their skills and experience.

It can be helpful to identify a leader for each syndicate group prior to the exercise, to help guide and focus the syndicate discussions. For further guidance, see appendix 8: participant seating in recovery groups template.

Participant feedback

A participant feedback form has been developed (Appendix 7) that includes questions for each of the Modules. Delete those that are not applicable to your exercise. Distribute the feedback form in the feedback session and instruct participants to complete the feedback form and place it in the centre of the table before they leave. This is the most effective way of getting the most returns on the feedback form. Participant feedback will help you understand the extent to which you have achieved the outcomes of the day and will inform future exercise planning.

Chapter 6: Exercise Debrief, Analysis and Report

A debrief with the exercise planning team and facilitators should be held as soon as possible after the exercise to collect observations and thoughts.

The exercise planning team should then convene at a later date to conduct an analysis of the discussion exercise which incorporates participant feedback, planning team debrief observations and any other available feedback or reflections from the day.

When conducting an analysis consider the following:

- Were the objectives achieved?
- Do current recovery plans, policies and procedures support effective recovery from an event?
- What areas require further recovery planning?
- What strengths were identified?
- Were there any resource issues identified?
- What should be learned from this exercise?

An exercise report should be developed to ensure that the learnings and identified issues from the discussion exercise are captured and actioned to effect change and improvements. The *Managing Exercises Handbook* provides guidance on the development of an exercise report.

APPENDICES

[Appendix 1: Recovery exercise concept template](#)

[Appendix 2: Participant invitation template](#)

[Appendix 3: Exercise agenda template](#)

[Appendix 4: Facilitator guide](#)

[Appendix 5: Facilitator guide Slide Deck](#)

[Appendix 6: Recovery considerations group discussion template](#)

[Appendix 7: Participant feedback form template](#)

[Appendix 8: Participant seating in recovery groups template](#)



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