



## **Pre-disaster Long-term Strategic Recovery (PDLTR) Plans** **Background:**

Few communities and individuals understand the federal declaration process, or the requirements to ensure an efficient and effective *long term socio-economic recovery*. The Resiliency Institute aims to provide Pre-disaster Long-term Strategic Recovery (PDLTR) Plans to reduce the *time* between immediate response and long-term recovery. This document will serve as a framework for such a plan. While the federal government plays the primary role of initiating and providing mechanisms for funding, effective recovery occurs when local governments are the critical planners and decision makers. Disasters are clearly tragic events causing major disruptions; they are also opportunities to revitalize communities and spur environmentally sound economic development. PDLTR Plans developed over a period of time in the relative comfort can become blueprints for facilitating timely recovery and risk avoidance. Community-based mitigation planning is increasingly becoming a necessary component of emergency management to better build partnerships and serve citizens in the affected area.

A PDLTR Plan can remain as a standalone plan, or incorporated into existing emergency response or economic development strategic plans; at the very least this framework serves an outline for proactive measures to reduce risk. Since 2000 an average of one federal disaster declaration has occurred on a weekly basis. Given the increased frequency and severity of disasters it behooves communities to take the necessary steps to ready themselves should such an event occur. Regardless of whether or not a community is located in a disaster prone area, or has suffered an event, capital flows to communities who are better prepared to cope should such an event occur. Furthermore, a PDLTR Plan illustrates areas of vulnerability and identifies hazard mitigation efforts that can be undertaken proactively. Disaster-resilient communities can better promote sustained economic development, protect and enhance their natural and cultural resources, and provide a better quality of life for their residents.

Furthermore, a PDLTR Plan develops an integrated system that creates a common vocabulary, context and structure for communities to engage in the ongoing dialogue about that nature of the threats that confront communities, and the appropriate measures that can easily be taken to prepare and respond to increased natural hazards. Furthermore, the process informs decisions appropriate to different levels of government and to citizens both at home and at work. Emergency management is trending more to a proactive rather than reactive discipline. Coordinating assistance programs to aid individuals and businesses meet basic needs and return to self-sufficiency is a hallmark of a well *prepared* community. As media scrutiny amplifies the financial and emotional costs of disasters, communities are making long-term investments in mitigation and in so doing, fostering the *culture of preparedness*.

The purpose of developing a PDLTR Plan is to identify what impact a major disaster would have on a community's residents, homes, infrastructure, economy, and environment and to develop processes and procedures to ensure the community is rebuilt safer and stronger.



## **Primer for Understanding the Federal Disaster Declaration Process**

Passed in 1988 the *Robert T. Stafford Act Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act* (Stafford Act) enacted to assist state and local governments and individuals when the response is beyond the capability of those governments to effectively manage the response. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA and now a part of Homeland Security) is governed by the Stafford Act. FEMA's role is to provide response and assist with funding for recovery.

### **The Disaster Declaration Process is activated by the following:**

1. The Governor (s) of the affected state(s) *must* request a disaster declaration by the President.
2. The Governor's request is made through the FEMA Regional Office (there are ten across the country).
3. At the FEMA Regional Office state and federal officials conduct a *Preliminary Damage Assessment* (PDA) to estimate the extent of potential damage and its impact on public facilities and individuals.
4. The PDA demonstrates that the forthcoming event is such that effective response is beyond the capabilities of local and state governments and that federal assistance is required.
5. A PDA can be submitted after a disaster with little or no warning occurs, but a PDA is normally submitted with the request for a Presidential Disaster Declaration.
6. The Governor's request for a Presidential Disaster Declaration automatically puts into play the State's Emergency Operation Plan and the Governor discloses to the federal agencies the state's resources that have already, or will be, dedicated to the emergency response effort. Also, at this point the Governor verifies that all state and local obligations will comply with all applicable cost-sharing requirements.
7. The state's resources committed to the effort must be significant.

### **Types of Assistance:**

FEMA Assistance falls into three (3) categories and *not all programs are activated for every disaster*.

- I. **Individual Assistance** – aid to families and households. Eligible projects include temporary housing; repair, replacement, permanent housing construction and other needs. This program provides financial aid and services in the declared area whose property has been damaged or destroyed and whose losses are not covered by insurance.

SBA Disaster Loan Program is the primary source of disaster assistance for many families and households.

Other programs include: disaster unemployment insurance, legal services, special tax considerations, crisis counseling—all programs have parameters for eligibility.



II. **Public Assistance**—aid for repair, restoration, reconstruction, or replacement of public facilities and /or infrastructure.

State and local governments (and any other political subdivision); Native American Tribes; Alaska Native Villages; and some private non-profit organizations are eligible for this program.

As soon as practical after the disaster, “Applicants Briefing for the State” occurs. These briefings occur with state and federal officials to provide the applicable aid that is available and instructions for application. Request for public assistance must be filed within thirty (30) days after an area is designated for federal assistance.

Public Assistance Projects fall into seven (7) categories:

- Debris Removal
- Emergency Protective Measures
- Road Systems and Bridges
- Water Control Facilities
- Public Buildings and Contents
- Public Utilities
- Parks, Recreation, and Other

FEMA reviews and approves and obligates the federal share of costs which cannot be more than 75% of total costs (only in very rare circumstances is the federal cost-share ration altered).

After approval, the state disperses funds to local applicants.

III. **Hazard Mitigation**—refers to sustained measures to reduce or eliminate long term risk to individuals and property from the effects of natural disasters. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is available through the state. Eligible projects include: acquisition or relocation of property in high hazard areas, elevation of floodplain structures, and seismic rehabilitation of existing structures. FEMA will incur up to 75% of the cost.



## **Pre-Disaster Long-term Recovery Framework:**

### **I. Understanding the Disaster Declaration Process:**

Outline the state and federal emergency declaration processes for better understanding of sources of funds, agencies involved, and system of delivering funds to affected communities to better coordinate resources for response and recovery. There are approximately 30 federal agencies involved in disaster response and recovery. A general concept of the process learned in round table discussions significantly reduces stress in event aftermath. To receive recovery assistance FEMA requires data from both private and public sector; capital flows much easier and faster to communities who are prepared and organized for such an event.

### **II. Pre-Disaster Long-term Recovery Plans accomplish the following:**

#### **1. Community Planning and Capacity Building—process applicable to all sectors**

- Inform residents and prevent unrealistic expectations
- Implement additional resources for community restoration
- Incorporate mitigation measures as feasible
- Establish a coordinator
- Identify and incorporate primary agencies: government, NGOs, Tribal
- Identify and incorporate supporting agencies: faith based, civic and business
- Identify pre-planning and recovery stakeholders and identify their respective roles/responsibilities—avoid duplication of effort and ensuing confusion that can occur as a result
- Perform private-public recovery partnership building
- Prepare community risk assessment
- Maintain accurate hazard and vulnerability data
- Collect & Protect current data on community infrastructure
- Develop a list of priority mitigation projects and post-recovery projects
- Identify and establish agreements with contractors (preferably local engineering, contracting, suppliers, etc.)
- Understand local regulatory requirements that may impact post-disaster recovery and prepare draft legislation to suspend if required and/or desired
- Understand local budget policies and procedures for expenditures, approval, and draft proposed changes required to expedite post-disaster recovery
- Develop public communications plan and exercise annually
- Identify training and exercise requirements and implement annually

(504) 874-5474

[www.theresiliencyinstitute.com](http://www.theresiliencyinstitute.com)



- Identify resources and assets (and lack thereof) required for recovery and establish partnerships/agreements to ensure their timely delivery
- Protect the *Human Capital* required at every level of public and private recovery efforts—challenges to Human Capital underlie almost of rebuilding efforts

## 2. Economic Development

- Establish a central liaison/ombudsman for critical business recovery
- Establish partnerships agencies engaged in re-employment/training, unemployment claims assistance, workforce development, community colleges and universities
- Perform outreach to business and support organizations pre and post disaster—test communication systems annually
- Establish mechanism to track measurable outcomes and post disaster recovery progress
- Establish critical banking infrastructure support—vital to recovery—and determine how best to support key economic drivers, and incorporate new business growth
- Recognize post-disaster recovery an opportunity to for superior economic and community development
- Address local zoning/growth policies that have potential to impeded recovery
- Promote business continuity planning
- Provide alternate business operations capabilities, safety net for small business (retail)
- Incorporate housing – critical for workforce

## 3. Housing

- returning local population
- Identify rental property availability with community survey and real estate partners
- Provide short- term alternatives; long-term housing will take time
- Establish central liaison/ombudsman to remain on site to address issues immediately (services)
- Identify HMPG funding sources and coordinate with state/federal agencies—understand application process and data required to access funding

## 4. Critical Infrastructure and Technical Systems

- Inventory vulnerabilities in physical structure and potential for risk
- Plan and coordinate with private sector—critical partnership must be systemic and well developed
- foster improved understanding of issues/operation constraints among utilities and local emergency management
- Understand pre-staging supply locations and critical distribution points along transportation corridors

(504) 874-5474

[www.theresiliencyinstitute.com](http://www.theresiliencyinstitute.com)



5. Natural and Cultural Resources

- Identify and train staff to address issues
- Historical properties typically governed by separate regulations and will need special attention
- Establish priority for historical preservation if required or desired

6. Health and Health Care Delivery Services

- Inventory vulnerabilities in local/regional health care delivery system
- Inventory hospital capacity to respond to large scale event
- Inventory case management capabilities and assets
- Identify and understand hospital health care mutual aid agreements
- Inventory nursing homes/assisted living facilities and their post-disaster capacity to care for patients/residents

**III. Common Post-Disaster Issues can be overcome with a Pre-Disaster Long-Term Recovery Plan:**

- Confusion as to who is in charge
- Ineffective communication between Executive Office and City Council
- Prioritization of recovery projects (often a major problem)
- Clearly defined management of financial resources
- Transparency of government decision-making process and effective ways to invite public participation
- Spending caps must be flexible post-disaster
- Inadequate staff and equipment to respond short and long term
- Permitting/moratoria, waivers, regulatory requirements and constraints, growth management for superior economic and community development
- Post-disaster governance, Continuity of operations plans
- Address loss of tax base
- Identify roles and responsibilities to assist in preparing applications for recovery aid
- Identify procedures for tracking recovery aid applications
- Identify methods and procedures for spending and distribution of financial aid and public spending
- Identify potential emerging socio-economic populations and any inherent issues with change of demographics