

# Disaster Recovery Coordination:

An overview and recommendations for implementation and support

## **Disaster Recovery Coordination is an essential component of the recovery process.**

Recovery is a long and arduous process, and it is always complicated. In early recovery, communities are often challenged to coordinate resources, identify long-term needs and develop robust long-term recovery efforts. As multiple agencies and organizations, both within and outside the community, provide assistance, community members can struggle to identify where to turn for information and assistance. Duplication of efforts and gaps in available resources can mean that impacted households slip through the cracks and recovery is delayed.

Emergency Management and other governmental agencies are working on recovery efforts focused on accessing local, state and federal resources and developing recovery plans for infrastructure, economy and critical lifelines. These government-centered activities are critical. In many communities, especially those with less government capacity, the burden of assisting individuals and households in recovery typically falls on local non-profits, faith leaders and social service efforts. The government and non-governmental efforts are intended to complement each other and run parallel but must be coordinated to do this effectively.

Often, one organization or volunteer steps in and begins to coordinate resources and information and consider how to organize to meet long-term needs. However, in many cases, recovery coordination is a heavy lift taking significant time and attention. As communities move farther into the recovery period of disaster, fatigue and timing often mean that roles that were filled by volunteers and voluntary

organizations in the long-term recovery groups (LTRG) are superseded by returning to "normal" activities.

We have found that a Disaster Recovery Coordinator (DRC), tasked with leading, cheerleading, coordinating and supporting long-term recovery activities, allows for concentrated effort, energy and momentum towards recovery. The DRC implements, coordinates and advocates for local disaster recovery goals, objectives and outcomes set by the community. The DRC takes a holistic view of implementation recovery activities, linking internal local government activities with those of the community's stakeholders to ensure progress and completion of outcomes identified in community plans, strategies or other recovery objectives.

## The Long-Term Recovery Group

According to the [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters](#) LTRGs are a "cooperative body that is made up of representatives from organizations working within a community to assist individuals and families as they recover from disaster." The goal of LTRGS is to coordinate organizations, community leaders and resources to ensure equitable recovery for all members of the community.

LTRGs vary in size and scope and should reflect the communities needs and culture. They typically include several key elements, and each of these areas can be led by an individual or committee.

- Leadership and administration
- Disaster case management
- Construction or repair/rebuild management
- Volunteer management
- Communications
- Spiritual and emotional care
- Donations management
- Financial controls and reporting

For many communities, a DRC is helpful in ensuring that an LTRG or coalition is developed and effective. The DRC may take on the formal leadership and chair of the LTRG or support the administration needs of the voluntary chair. Some DRCs will need to develop an LTRG. In contrast, others may simply take on the leadership or administration of a pre-existing community coalition or long-term recovery group. This development and leadership focus should be to bring community organizations' and leaders' time, talent, and treasure to bear with the goal of whole community recovery.

More information about LTRGs and their critical role in community-led long-term recovery is available in the resource section below.

## The role of the Disaster Recovery Coordinator

The DRC is a community champion, disaster investigator and advocate for whole community recovery. They will lead, organize, challenge and empower community members and organizations to solve problems and focus on developing the resources needed for recovery. Their roles and responsibilities will vary depending on community need, but we recommend these essential components:

- 1. Assessment:** For successful recovery, the DRC needs to develop a deep understanding of the disaster impact on the community and individuals and households within the community. A full account of what happened and to whom, as well as the potential long-term or cascading impacts on the whole community will allow the DRC/community to develop resources for recovery. They will also assess and communicate the ongoing challenges, gaps in services and needs of the disaster-affected community. The Midwest Early Recovery Fund can provide tools, funding and technical assistance on completing a needs assessment.
- 2. Communication:** The DRC can foster information sharing and manage proactive community engagement, public participation and public awareness. They will also act as a liaison to all state VOAD partners, State Emergency Management and other emergency management professionals, including FEMA, State EMA and city/county government.
- 3. Leadership and Resource Development:** The DRC works to develop resources necessary for community recovery, encourage leaders, systems and organizations to work together towards a common goal and support whole community recovery. They can provide leadership to LTRG staff/volunteers. Their efforts should lead to a well-managed recovery, including developing and coordinating partnerships and a well-administered financial acquisition and grants management process.
- 4. Equity & Transformational Change:** Ensure that all community groups, especially marginalized and/or minority groups, have power and voice in recovery decisions. This is vital so that no group or segment of the impacted population is left out of the recovery process, and resources are distributed equitably. The DRC looks beyond the community's immediate needs, identifies the systems and barriers that created community vulnerability, and considers mitigation, adaptation and preparedness measures.
- 5. Advocate & Cheerleader:** Finally, the DRC will be an advocate and cheerleader for recovery. In this long, often complicated process, the DRC can remind the community of the progress already made and the vision moving forward. Importantly, they can also remind those that were not directly impacted: just because the community appears "normal" (debris piles are gone, homes repaired, systems back and running) doesn't mean that recovery has been achieved.

## Supporting Disaster Recovery Coordination

As a critical part of disaster recovery for the community, LTRGs and organizations coordinating recovery require funding to develop and maintain the capacity.

**Fund staffing:** While there are historically some instances of volunteer disaster recovery coordinators, we contend that the complexity and significance of the work requires compensation. Consider funding other long-term recovery roles in the community as well. Roles that directly support DRC include disaster case management, volunteer management and construction management.

**Fund training and coaching:** The role of the DRC is most successful when it is supported by ongoing coaching or supervision from an individual or organization with experience.

**Fund LTRG development:** This may involve funding facilitators for community meetings, travel for LTRG experts from across the country to participate in LTRG design or meals, technology or meeting spaces.

**Support beyond the check:** As a funder, especially if you are a local funder, you can play a role in convening or providing leadership for the coordinating body, communicating unmet needs to other funders and potential partners and acting as a fiscal sponsor for the LTRG or community-based organization sponsoring a DRC.

## Further Reading/Resources

Midwest Early Recovery Fund: DRC grant overview and sample job description (Appendix A and B below)

- [National VOAD's Long Term Recovery Group Resources](#)
- [Resource Library, Long Term Recovery Groups: Disaster Leadership Team, Inc.](#)
- CDP Resources: [The National Disaster Recovery Framework](#), [Community recovery advocates: Addressing community-specific barriers to equitable recovery](#), [Community & Economic Recovery](#)

## Examples of Disaster Recovery Coordinator grants from CDP's Midwest Early Recovery Fund

- The Old Community House Foundation in Trumann, Arkansas received \$103,400 to support a disaster recovery coordinator for eighteen months of recovery coordination needs in response to the December 2021 tornados.
- Lakota Nation Disaster Resiliency received \$77,926 to support the work of the LTRG and the recovery coordinator and to build community capacity for recovery work. This grant was made in response to multiple, frequent disaster events impacting the land of the Oglala Sioux Tribe in South Dakota.

- The Garfield County Fire Foundation (GCFF) received an \$87,500 grant to support community recovery from the Lodgepole Complex fires in 2017. The grant allowed GCFF to hire a disaster coordinator to lead the recovery.
- The Jefferson County (Missouri) COAD in partnership with Jefferson County Community Partnership and the Salvation Army of Jefferson County, received a grant of \$69,095.71 to hire, train and supervise a full-time, long-term disaster recovery community coordinator (DRCC) in response to 2015 flooding.

## Here to help

If you are interested in implementing or supporting disaster recovery coordination, we are here to help. Reach out before or after a disaster has struck your community. We are ready to provide thought leadership, advice on establishing disaster funds, and connections to colleagues around the nation who can support and inform your efforts.

**Contact:**

Cari Cullen | Director | CDP Midwest Early Recovery Fund | [cari.cullen@disasterphilanthropy.org](mailto:cari.cullen@disasterphilanthropy.org)

## Appendix A:

# Midwest Early Recovery Fund Grant Overview: Disaster Recovery Coordinator

### Purpose

A grant for a Disaster Recovery Coordinator (DRC) from the Fund will support your community's efforts to identify impacts on vulnerable populations, develop sufficient resources and develop long-term recovery efforts. The DRC is a community champion, disaster investigator and advocate for whole community recovery. They will lead, organize, challenge and empower community members and organizations to solve problems and focus on developing the resources needed for recovery.

#### Funding Range:

- \$50,000-105,000\*

#### Typical Timeline:

- Start 3-6 months post disaster
- 12-18 month project period

#### Included with Package:

- Job description of DRC
- Funding for training, salary(ies), travel and office needs
- Technical assistance and ongoing support

\* Varies depending on community location and needs

### What's in a typical Disaster Recovery Coordinator grant application?

We would be happy to assist you in applying for DRC funds and developing application question answers together; we find that answering these questions will help you to better understand and refine the work you will be doing. Each community and each disaster is unique and you will want to tailor your project to the needs of the community AND keep it flexible and broad so you can respond to changing needs.

In the application process you will be asked to identify the following:

1. Project Goal
2. Detailed Project Description
3. Disaster Needs to Be Addressed
4. Activities and Results
5. Budget Narrative

Your organization will be asked to provide:

1. Project budget
2. IRS 501(c)(3) Determination Letter
3. W-9
4. Audit or current board approved budget, current balance sheet and YTD income
5. Form 990

## Next Steps

1. Send email to [Cari.Cullen@disasterphilanthropy](mailto:Cari.Cullen@disasterphilanthropy) or call 320.266.4391 to start the process.
2. CDP will:
  - a. Investigate the disaster and qualify the event as low-attention with significant unmet needs.
  - b. If deemed necessary, make a site visit to engage with community partners to identify challenges and prioritize needs.
  - c. Develop a community disaster impact profile to better understand assets and unmet needs.
3. You may be asked to:
  - a. Provide information to Fund staff to complete a proposal and application.
  - b. Work with Fund staff to develop a recovery work plan and budget.
  - c. Provide updates and reporting to staff as requested.

## Appendix B:

# Midwest Early Recovery Fund Job Description\*: Disaster Recovery Coordinator

### Summary of the Position

The Disaster Recovery Coordinator (DRC) implements, coordinates, and advocates for local disaster recovery goals, objectives, and outcomes set by the community. The DRC takes a holistic view of implementation as sets of recovery activities, linking internal local government activities with those of the community's stakeholders to ensure progress and completion of outcomes identified in community plans, strategies or other recovery objectives.

The DRC is a community champion, disaster investigator and advocate for whole community recovery. They will lead, organize, challenge and empower community members and organizations to solve problems and focus efforts on developing the resources needed for recovery.

### Supervision and Time Commitment

The Disaster Recovery Coordinator reports to [            ].

The position requires [            ] hours per week and is anticipated to last for [            ] months.

### Essential Functions and Responsibilities

#### Coordinate recovery efforts

- Assess and communicate the ongoing challenges, gaps in services and needs of the disaster impacted community.
- Provide leadership to LTR staff/volunteers.
- Partner with other disaster organizations to insure collaboration, cooperation, communication and coordination of any and all recovery resources.
- Ensures a well-managed recovery, including development and coordination of partnerships and a well-administered financial acquisition and grants management process.
- Assist in the development of resources for local long-term recovery operations.

#### DISASTER RECOVERY COORDINATOR COMPETENCIES

Discernment/judgement  
Crisis Management  
Adaptability  
Compassionate  
Professionalism  
Communication  
Attention to detail  
Technical expertise  
Reliability  
Confidentiality  
Continuous learning  
Collaboration  
Problem solving  
Strategic  
Innovative



## **Facilitate and advocate for recovery**

- Fosters information sharing and manages proactive community engagement, public participation and public awareness.
- Communicates community recovery needs and priorities to federal and state agencies.
- Act as a liaison to all state VOAD partners, State Emergency Management and other emergency management professionals including FEMA, State EMA, and city/county government.
- Represent the LTRG/COAD at local/regional/state meetings, when appropriate.

## **Resource coordination**

- Understand what resources and assets are available in the community to assist individuals and households with immediate needs.
- Network with other agencies to stay informed about services and resources.
- Follow up with other agencies to ensure that assistance commitments have been met.

## **Characteristics**

- Respect for the beliefs of others
- Deep concern about people and their welfare
- Respect for cultural, racial and social differences
- A genuine like for people
- An empathetic and effective listener
- Patient with people and circumstances
- Flexible
- Supportive and non-critical of other agencies, fellow workers or clients
- An outgoing personality and the right attitude
- A good sense of humor
- Persevering through adversity
- Able to put personal goals behind those of others in need
- Creative and resourceful
- Observant and objective
- Respectful of the privacy of others
- Able to respect and maintain confidentiality
- Take directions willingly
- Enjoy problem-solving
- Enjoy detailed work
- Realistic
- Have good stress coping skills
- Able to be self-directing

## Qualifications

- Ability to communicate community recovery goals and objectives.
- Experience with disaster response and recovery logistics and operations.
- Ability to be adaptable and flexible in pressure situations.
- Ability to work with and build networks/partnerships with diverse organizations.
- A working knowledge of the disaster-impacted community.
- A basic understanding of construction and local/regional/state building codes.
- Experience working with volunteers and vulnerable populations preferred.

\* We encourage you to adapt the job description to your community and organization's needs.