

Standing Strong

Disasters and Community Development:
Preparing to respond, leading to resilience

2019 Curriculum, Section 1



Rural
LISC
*We believe in
rural America*

WELCOME!

This curriculum was born from late night, early morning and weekend calls over the past year as Rural LISC partners experienced wildfires, flooding, hurricanes and tornadoes. It came from office visits with staff working to roll out recovery programs, and countless hours working together to answer hard questions about planning in a community where everything was wiped clean.

During the next year, Rural LISC will roll out a section of new curriculum each quarter. Our goal is to help you first evaluate your own preparedness and improve it, but then continue to lead your communities in work that always thinks through a disaster resilient lens. Over the next year, we'll be looking at:

- Determining vulnerability and defining response and recovery roles
- Asset and resource protection: preparing staff and organization for a disaster
- Creative partnerships and resources: how to set up a fund in a disaster; working with private and public funders, bridging the gap
- Disaster case management: when you find yourself managing a disaster program in your community
- Disaster networking: knowing who to call and when beyond your daily partners (and helping set up the network in your community)
- Thinking forward: planning and development with a disaster lens

While this curriculum as it stands right now is designed to meet some of the most pressing needs and questions that have bubbled to the surface during the work of the past year, it is never set in stone. One of the many things that is both a blessing and a curse in disaster recovery is that things are always changing. We are constantly learning better practices, new technology and implementing better practices.

Our promise to you is that while we will roll this out to help all of us be better prepared as larger and more frequent disasters occur, we will keep learning from you and from others in the field. That constant learning allows us to update these materials regularly and continue to offer you something relevant and useful to your organizations and communities.

If you don't know me and don't have my cell phone number yet – you will. Eventually, every community experiences something that forces us to step into places we would have never dreamed of going.

(And you're welcome to call me long before that moment happens – it's what I am here for).

My best to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna R. Hurt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anna R. Hurt
Disaster Recovery Program Officer, Rural LISC

DETERMINING VULNERABILITY

There are many factors that go into knowing what you are vulnerable to: what disasters are most likely to occur? What social factors are present? What about economic factors? Special environmental considerations? The presence of recovery resources? Use this section to outline the vulnerabilities that affect your organization and the area you work in.

Check it out  <http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/geog/hvri/front-page>

The Hazards and Vulnerabilities Research Institute has plenty of mineable data on natural hazards, social and economic vulnerabilities and areas where disasters are likely to be the most costly or deadly and what disasters cause the most damage and why. Of particular interest to those of us in rural communities, the data also tracks crop losses and non-headline grabbing events, such as heat and drought.

Write it out  Write out what your vulnerabilities are

Disasters my community and organization are most likely to experience:

- 1). _____
- 2). _____
- 3). _____

The top social and economic considerations in my service area are:

- 1). _____
- 2). _____
- 3). _____
- 4). _____
- 5). _____

Special factors that could present different concerns (high-value terrorist target, oil spill potential, etc.):

What, if any recovery resources are in my area?

Thinking about what I just summarized, are there particular insurance considerations or re-evaluations to make?

Thinking about what I just summarized, do I feel adequately aware of and plugged into disaster recovery networks in my home state? In the nation?

DEFINING DISASTERS

The Stafford Act outlines the federal disaster declaration and emergency assistance process. There are two types of federal declarations – emergency and major. Both are made by the President of the United States and can be requested by the governor of an affected state (this also includes the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands). In addition, Indian tribal governments recognized by the federal government may also request a declaration directly from the President.

Both emergency and major declarations authorize the President to provide supplemental federal disaster assistance, but the events that trigger one and/or the other will vary and the scope and amount will differ. A pre-disaster emergency authorization may be requested, in order to authorize critical emergency protective measures prior to the impact of the disaster that are beyond the capacity of the state or affected local government.

A final disaster declarations not outlined in the Stafford Act is the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) declaration. This occurs through regulation and the process differs significantly from emergency and major declarations.

But many disasters never receive a federal disaster declaration. Especially in rural communities, a flood or small tornado may occur and not meet the thresholds for to receive a federal declaration, but will still be incredibly damaging to that area and significantly impact the people who live there.

For example, several times in rural areas of Illinois, flooding and tornadoes caused extensive damage and in 2017, even fatalities, but did not initially receive a federal declaration.

This is because declarations are based on a formula that takes into account the estimated cost of the assistance, localized impacts, insurance coverage, hazard mitigation, recent multiple disasters, other assistance programs, economic factors and other similar considerations.

What are some other ways we can define or screen a disaster?

A situation or event that overwhelms local capacity, necessitating a request to the national community for external assistance; an unforeseen and often sudden event that causes great damage, destruction and human suffering.

Some disaster indicators to consider:

- Significant loss of life, injury or displacement
- Significant impact on a community's livelihoods and capacity to respond
- Significant impact on vulnerable populations

Having a definition is important, because it provides you a guide for what your organizational trigger point is – when you will respond and how.

Other considerations:

- Who is your community?
- Who do you want to be to your community?
- What is the scale of incident you will respond to?
- How quickly will you respond?
- At what phases will you respond (immediate relief, mid-term recovery, long-term rebuild or others)?
- What level of information do you need to take action?

Considering the vulnerabilities I have already outlined and some of the questions above, how can I start thinking about disaster definitions in my community?

What are some steps I can take over the next year to outline when and how my organization will respond to a disaster?

DEFINING MY ROLE

Knowing who you want to be in your community following a disaster is important. As you think about the disasters that would likely impact the communities you work in and the programs you have, consider how you would be likely to respond. If you have already responded to a disaster, what parts of response and recovery worked well with your existing programming and why?

What didn't work and why?

What roles did you take on because a disaster happened and what partners came along to help you? If you have not yet responded to a disaster, who do you think you might reach out to as a new partner, or who might you lean more heavily on?

Thinking about resilience, what would that look like in the communities you are working in?

MAPPING THE NEXT YEAR

Next year, we plan to host a day similar to today, except with your lessons from the past year, setting up disaster case management, and tapping into disaster networks. If you are prepared for a disaster as an organization, you will be in the optimal position to lead elected officials, trade organizations and others in your area towards more resilient practices on a multitude of levels.

But before we get to the community development pieces, take a few moments, and think about your immediate actions if a disaster hits the communities you live and work in. Setting aside making sure your family and staff is okay, what are the first steps:

The first three phone calls I would need to make are:

- 1). _____
- 2). _____
- 3). _____

Why these three?

The three partner relationships I would need the most are:

- 1). _____
- 2). _____
- 3). _____

What can I do to feed these relationships during the next year?

The three things I worry about the most when I think about my organization experiencing a direct hit from a catastrophic disaster are:

- 1). _____
- 2). _____
- 3). _____

Who can help with these and how can I address them in the next year?

Next year we will answer similar questions in terms of leading the communities and states we work in. Until then, watch for updates on dates for the next events:

Two online webinars that can be downloaded and reviewed at any time:

- 2019 (fourth quarter): Asset and resource protection
- 2020 (first quarter): Creative partnerships and resources

Two in-person events:

- May 2020: a pre-seminar session to cover disaster case management, disaster networks, and participants' whiteboard session on lessons learned and action items.
- September 2019: Recovery and Innovation Summit in Texas (dates to be announced in July)

NOTES