Community-Based Organization Disaster Response Preparedness Toolkit

March 2021

Overview

Every year, our communities will face disasters, including floods, winter storms, wildfires, earthquakes, or even pandemics. Community based organizations (CBOs) that do not have disaster response as part of their primary mission face new challenges during disasters as they pivot their programs in order to respond to the needs of their communities. An effective pivot requires organizations to think about things they would need to do at the organizational, program, and individual level. Specifically, this toolkit addresses things to consider when creating a business plan, pivoting programs, and leading an organization during a disaster response.

This toolkit was developed as part of an AmeriCorps VISTA special project hosted by Mercy Corps Northwest. The VISTA engaged in consultation with several Oregon CBOs and leaders in the nonprofit community in order to outline learning objectives or actions for each section of the toolkit, and identify resources to help CBOs be better prepared in these areas. It is intended to complement the many resources that emergency management at the city, county, and state level offer to help organizations be better prepared for disasters. The primary audience is leaders at small to medium-size CBOs that do not have disaster response as part of their mission, but are interested in learning how to be better prepared to continue serving their communities in times of disaster. The toolkit is designed with Oregon CBOs in mind, although many resources are applicable to CBOs outside the state.

Each of the three sections of the toolkit has an overview of the section's importance, and the learning objectives and actions for that section. This is followed by a chart with learning objectives or actions that will help CBOs improve their readiness to respond to a disaster. Each learning objective or action has an associated resource that CBOs can consult. For all resources *except* the Coordinated Consulting Business Continuity Planning Template, there is an estimated amount of the time to review. CBOs should use the toolkit as a menu of options where they can choose preparedness learning objectives and actions that are most relevant to their context. You can learn more about the different parts of the toolkit in this 18-minute webinar. We hope that this resource helps CBOs feel more confident in their preparedness to respond to disasters!

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1. Organizational Level: Creating a business continuity plan

Overview: If CBOs want to pivot their programs to respond to their community's new needs during disasters, they first need to ensure that they can continue to carry out essential functions that keep their organization functioning. A business continuity plan (BCP) is a process to establish well-defined and consistent procedures and strategies to be utilized during any type of business disruption. It is a good first step when thinking about how CBOs can be prepared at an organizational level to support an emergency response. The primary steps for creating a BCP are understanding risks and how these risks affect your essential functions, identifying key team members, identifying IT and communications systems, understanding the components of an IT disaster recovery plan, identifying essential records, creating an incident action plan, and deciding how you will test and update the BCP. You may also want to consider cross-training team members. If your organization tests your BCP during an emergency or other type of disruption, you will want to revise the plan as necessary.

Part 1 of the toolkit is a bit different from the other sections because we have one key resource, a Business Continuity Plan Template and Guidance from Coordinated Consulting, which we recommend you use as your primary resource. Additional resources are listed when applicable if you want to explore any of these topics in greater depth.

Topic	Learning Objective or Action	Relevant Pages of Coordinated Consulting BCP Template	Additional Resources	Time to review	Resource type
1.1 Basics of Business Continuity Planning	Understand why your organization should consider creating a BCP	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 3-4			
1.2 Risk Management	Understand the risks your organization faces and how this affects your essential functions	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 4-10			
Hazards and Vulnerability	- Identify hazards - Calculate the probability and impact of possible hazards	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 4-6, Appendix A (Page 24-25)	Public Alerts, Portland Hazards map, check your local/county Emergency Management alerts if outside the Portland Metro region	15-30 minutes	Interactive map

Insurance	Explore the insurance options your organization has and ensure policies cover hazards prioritized in the hazards and vulnerability assessment	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 6-8	"Risk Management & Regulation", Nonprofit Association of Oregon	10 minutes	Guidance
Business Impact	Identify and prioritize essential functions for your organization	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 8-10, Appendix B (Page 26)			
1.3 Continuity Personnel and Teams	Identify team members for the Business Continuity Planning Team, Essential Function Leads and Backups, and Leadership Team	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 10-14, and the BCP Contacts Toolkit (Excel worksheet that accompanies the Coordinated Consulting Template)			
1.4 Communications and IT Systems	- Identify the communications and IT systems associated with your essential functions - Identify your audiences and how you will communicate with them	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 15-17			
Technology and communications	- Identify your organization's critical IT and communication systems to associated with your essential functions and the communication systems used to communicate with your audiences. - Learn the purpose of a crisis communications plan, who will need to be included, and what type of information will need to be communicated.	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 15-16	"Communications During COVID-19 and Other Disasters", TechSoup	15 minutes	Guidance

Internal communications	- Develop messaging that will be used if the Business Continuity Plan is activated - Have a plan for how to communicate with your team members.	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 16-17	"Colorado Crisis Communications Planning", Colorado Nonprofit Association, Phone Tree Template on page 5	8 pages	Template
External communications	- Develop strategies for external communications if the Business Continuity Plan is activated. - Learn how to help manage communications during a crisis, including developing key messages, media releases, and notifications.	Coordinated Consulting Template, Page 17	"Colorado Crisis Communications Planning",Colorado Nonprofit Association, pages 6-10	5 pages	Guidance document and checklists
1.5 IT Disaster Recovery	Understand the components of an IT disaster recovery plan	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 17-18			
			"Data Backup Options", US-CERT	6 pages	Document
			"Four things you need to know to protect against cyber threats", NTEN	10 minutes	Article
			"Three pillars of data protection for nonprofits", NTEN	10 minutes	Article

1.6 Essential Records	List record names, type, and location needed for essential functions	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 18-19			
1.7 Alternate Operations	Create an Incident Action Plan	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 19-21, Appendix C (Page 27)			
1.8 Plan Testing, Updates, and Location	Decide how you will test and update the Business Continuity Plan, and where it will be stored	Coordinated Consulting Template, Pages 21-23			
1.9 Cross-train Key Individuals	Learn best practices for planning for the impact of emergencies on staff		"Back Up Strategies for Key Personnel", American Red Cross	1 page	Guidance document

2. Program Level: Pivoting programs

Overview: During a disaster, CBOs may choose to modify existing programs, or move into new programming. In order to do this, it is important to consider who you want to serve and what their needs are. You will also need to think about whether you plan to use volunteers, and how you will manage donations (monetary and in-kind) and grants. Finally, you will need to think about how you coordinate with other nonprofits, coordination groups, and government. An effective response involves multiple actors, and you will want to understand how to work with all of them.

This section does not cover technical guidance for programs, such as how to run a shelter, operate a feeding program, or distribute goods. The best place to learn more about technical guidance for running disaster programs is the Sphere Handbook. This includes minimum humanitarian standards in water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH), food security and nutrition, shelter, and health. Keep in mind however that you will also need to check with local authorities about guidance during the response. Oregon Emergency Management has a list of recommended courses for emergency service providers that you may also consider.

Topic	Learning Objective or Action	Resources	Time to review	Resource type
2.1 Identify key needs of clients post disaster	Learn how to create and conduct a needs assessment			
		"Needs Assessments", Disaster Ready	30 minutes	Online Course
		"Key Informant and Direct Observation Tips", ACAPS	2 pages	Document
2.2 Volunteer Management	Learn tips for managing spontaneous volunteers			
	Learn the fundamentals of spontaneous volunteer management and running a Volunteer Reception Center.	"Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster", CNCS Americorps: "Spontaneous Volunteer Management" (pages 15-23), "Virtual Management" (pages 35-36), "Volunteer Reception Centers Templates and Resources" (pages 37-54)	1 hour	Document with templates
	Become familiar with Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities	"Points of Consensus for Volunteer Management", National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster	3 pages	Document
	Learn about the importance of consistent messaging to manage spontaneous volunteers.	"Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster", CNCS Americorps: "Public Messaging", page 13	1 page	Guidance document

2.3 Donations and Grants Management	Learn about managing increase in donations (gifts in kind) or funds (grants)			
	Learn how to develop a plan and public messaging to best manage donations.	"Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster", CNCS Americorps: "Donations Management", pages 29-31	3 pages	Guidance document
	Create a Gift Acceptance Policy to avoid donations that do not benefit or fit the organization's mission	"Gift Acceptance Policies", Council of Nonprofits	15 minutes	Guidance and samples
	Learn how to effectively manage an increase in funds.	Search for Grant Management Resources on the Nonprofit Association of Oregon site		
2.4 Coordination	Understand how you will partner and coordinate with other entities involved in disaster response, and what you do prior to an emergency to establish relationships with them			
Strategic partnerships	Brainstorm strategic partnerships with other organizations to best support your clients after a disaster.	Search for Partnership Resources on the Nonprofit Association of Oregon site		
Coordinating bodies	Learn about the coordination groups for organizations active in disaster, and how you can become connected with these groups prior to a disaster.	"What is a COAD?", Oregon Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, "Long Term Recovery Groups", ORVOAD, "About Oregon VOAD" , ORVOAD	15 minutes	Website
	Nonprofit coordination	Nonprofit Association of Oregon		
	Philanthropic organizations coordination	Grantmakers of Oregon and SW Washington		
Government	Identify which Emergency Support Functions (ESF) your organization would support in a disaster	"Oregon State Emergency Support Function Quicksheets", Oregon Office of Emergency Management	20 minutes	Powerpoint

3. Individual Level: Leading an organization

Overview: The leadership of a CBO, as well as others in positions of leadership throughout the organization, can help a response be effective. The below soft skills are not an exhaustive list of the skills necessary for effective leadership in emergencies, but they will help your organization lay the groundwork for a successful response. First, leaders need to be attentive to the well-being of their teams and promote self-care. This can start even before a disaster, when leaders should encourage all of their team members to be prepared at home for emergencies, by doing simple things like signing up for Public Alerts, making an emergency communications plan with their families, and assembling some basic supplies. Leaders also need to be able to communicate with their board of directors about proposed changes, navigate ambiguity, and engage in continual learning, both during the response and afterward. Finally, centering and promoting equity and inclusion during emergency response and recovery is crucial. This is important to consider both within the organization and as part of the response itself.

Topic	Learning Objective or Action	Additional Resources	Time to review	Resource type
3.1 Supporting wellness and self-care of staff	Learn tips on how to support the physical and mental health and wellness of staff and volunteers			
	Learn how to build personal and organizational resilience to the impact of stress on workers and managers who are responding to disasters	"Wellness and Resilience for Frontline Workers and Managers", Kaya	2 hours	Online Course
	Identify three different coping styles to respond to stress and learn self-care tips for each	"Optimizing Your Self-Care Based on Your Coping Style", Disaster Ready	5 minutes	Video
3.2 Navigating and communicating with board of directors	Learn best practices for working with boards of directors to approve changes in your organization's programs in response to a disaster			
		"Crisis Communications: 4 Things Your Board Needs to Know",	2 pages	Document

		BoardSource		
		"What Nonprofit Boards Should Be Doing Right Now to Address the COVID-19 Situation", BoardSource	15 minutes	Article
3.3 Leading in Ambiguity	Learn tips for how to lead an organization's staff and volunteers during changes in programming during a disaster			
		"NAO's Planning During Change: A Toolkit for Nonprofits", Nonprofit Association of Oregon	Varies	Toolkit
		"Making Sense of Uncertainty: Nonprofit Scenario Planning During A Crisis", Bridgespan	12 minutes	Guidance, toolkit
3.4 Learning from responses	Understand the importance of conducting a post-response review in order to learn and improve	"Why After Action Reviews Are Essential For Nonprofits", Nonprofit Leadership Center	8 minutes	Guidance
3.5 Applying an equity and inclusion lens to response	Reflect on how to advance equity at your organization during times of crisis, and how have a culturally sensitive approach in your response			
		"Crises as a Catalyst", ProInspire, DisasterReady	18 minutes	Video
		"NAO Equity & Inclusion Lens Guide", Nonprofit Association of Oregon	30 pages	Guidance

		"Cultural Considerations," Multnomah County Dept. of County Human Services https://youtu.be/PF0GmGaRVz4 *Note that even though this is about cultural considerations in the context of a Disaster Resource Center, these lessons are still applicable in other contexts		
			12 minutes	Video