



Guideline 4: Economic Recovery Communication

Communicating good quality information during the economic recovery process of a disaster can have a profound effect on the resilience and recovery of individuals, business and the community.

Traditional channels of communication are often compromised following a major disaster due to the disruption of telecommunications and transportation systems as well as the chaos environment caused by the disaster itself. Businesses struggle with getting in touch with their employees, their vendors, and their customers – as well as their local government, economic development organization or chamber. Businesses don't always know who to trust or where they can get accurate information. Rumors and wrong information spread quickly in this type of environment, which can greatly impede the recovery of businesses and industry or may result in them deciding to permanently move away from your impacted community or region. No one organization (e.g. Chamber of Commerce) can represent the diverse make up of the business community. Therefore, representatives from different business sectors must have a seat at the table with the community decision-makers who are making critical choices regarding economic response and recovery.

Context

Readily available, good quality information means that individuals and businesses who need support after a disaster know where to get help. Communication can literally bring people together (e.g. through public meetings, virtually, etc.) and help affected individuals, businesses or a community get back on their feet more quickly. The information provided in this section is relevant to:

- Anyone responsible for communicating information pre-, during and post-disaster
- The economic recovery stage of a disaster but ideally should be read before a disaster to be better prepared post-disaster
- All types of disasters, as people generally need the same kind of information,

regardless of the size or scale of the disaster

Definitions

Communication is the act of exchanging information.

Information is the actual message being sent or received.

Recovery refers to those programs that go beyond immediate relief to assist affected individuals and business to rebuild and to strengthen their capacity to cope with future disasters.

Roles and Responsibilities

The first section in this guidebook provides the information necessary to create a Local Economic Recovery Committee. The established committee developed during the pre-disaster planning stage is activated after a disaster to visibly lead the economic recovery effort and support the local community and authorities. The Local Economic Recovery Committee will form a communication working group to lead the delivery of communication activities related to economic recovery. If an Economic Recovery Manager is in place, this position may be appointed to be the public face of the economic recovery operation, providing guidance to the Local Economic Recovery Committee, local government and the economic development organization. Where an Economic Recovery Manager is not appointed the Local Economic Recovery Chair will appoint an appropriate representative as communications lead. Typically, this will be a local government or economic development organization representative.



Additional information on roles and responsibilities are in the Templates Section.

Communicating with the Business Community

The key role of the Local Economic Recovery Committee and the Economic Recovery Manager is to address the following urgent communication needs of business and industry following a major incident. Listening to businesses to understand their needs to:

- Help connect businesses with available resources and service providers
- Understand the need to work with all local partners to persuade decision-makers at the local, provincial and federal level of any needed additional resources to meet local business needs
- Quickly disseminate relevant information to businesses regarding available resources, and connect them to service providers who can help with cleanup, financing, business counsel and rebuilding efforts

Communication with the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is typically structured consistent with the recommended practice from the British Columbia Emergency Management System (BCEMS)¹ and the BC Emergency Program Act and Regulations, and functions as the central location for coordinating and carrying out the emergency planning, training, and response and recovery efforts of the local jurisdiction. The EOC, through an established EOC Emergency Management Team, helps to ensure the continuity of government operations in the event of a crisis. In a case where the EOC is fully activated by a disaster, it will include the co-location of representatives of various municipal departments, emergency responders, provincial and federal agencies, and non-profit and faith-based organizations.

Economic development organizations should make sure they have a senior staff member serve at the local area's EOC to facilitate communication and dispel rumors and misinformation among the business community. When the Local Economic Recovery Committee is formed or activated, there

should be representation on the EOC – in many cases, this will be the same individual or the Economic Recovery Manager.

Communication regarding local business damages and what they need to recover is an important function that the Local Economic Recovery Committee representative can play at the EOC. This representative can learn about available federal and provincial resources that may be available to local businesses and help facilitate this communication in the days and weeks following a disaster. This position of business and industry representation at the EOC should be established well before a disaster. Following a disaster, the chaotic environment may cause an invitation to the EOC to be lost within the list of pressing priorities. It is important to establish those connects beforehand when possible.

Media

A disaster will almost always attract media attention because it is of public interest. In economic recovery, media liaison will involve:

- Responding to a media inquiry, or
- Pitching a story to the media

The media needs to meet tight news deadlines, so it is recommended that the person responsible for media liaison is ready with holding statements (a document answering anticipated media inquiry questions) and media releases. General tips for engaging with the media include:

- Be prepared
- Have rules in place about who can, and who can't speak to the media
- Be helpful and develop good working relationships with the media
- Have facts and figures ready in relation to the economic recovery effort



A media release template is provided in the Templates Section at the end of this guideline.

Communication Challenges

Physical Challenges

Communication channels which you would normally rely on may not be available after a disaster. There can be physical communication barriers, including:

- Loss of electricity and internet
- Geographic spread population
- High media interest
- No radio towers
- Disruption to mail

This requires creative thinking, for example:

- If mail has been disrupted, can flyers be distributed at key distribution points or public meetings?
- If people do not have access to the internet on their home computers, can they access updates via their phones (are your platforms mobile compatible?)



Additional information on communication channels are in the Templates Section.

Health and Wellness Challenges

A disaster can impact a person's ability to absorb, understand and remember information, as well as their psychological wellbeing. Even economic recovery communication requires care and sensitivity. It also helps to only send relevant, clear and targeted information.

Target Audiences

In the post-disaster environment, there are many and varied audience types. Identifying these specific audiences and working out how they are best communicated with, is critical. The primary target audience for economic recovery is the business community. The economic recovery communication may consist of other audience member groups including:

- affected individuals
- the wider community impacted by the disaster
- community leaders and government agencies

- emergency services personnel

The Local Economic Recovery Committee will clearly identify the audience types to target pre, during and post-disaster.

How to Communicate

Before communicating out information, ask yourself three questions:

1. Is the information relevant?
 - a. Ensure the information is appropriate and applicable to the situation, for example, where to get help
 - b. Limit key messages to three or four in each piece of communication
 - c. Only say what is necessary
2. Is the information clear?
 - a. Ensure the information is plain and obvious
 - b. Be as succinct as possible
3. Is the information targeted?
 - a. Use simple, easy to understand language
 - b. Tailor your information to each audience
 - c. Address each specific concern or issue
 - d. Understand your audience's point of view

Principles of Economic Recovery Information

The following are some of the principles to follow when disseminating economic recovery information through to your businesses and community:

- **Business information not public relations:** The aim of public relations is generally to promote something or someone. The aim of business information is to channel information to the relevant audiences. The purpose of

communicating in economic recovery should be to help the businesses community, not to promote a person or organization.

- **Respect:** When individuals and businesses are displaced or affected by a disaster, it is easy to only see their vulnerability. Be mindful when writing your communications that you are sensitive and respectful to how information may affect individuals.
- **The right to know:** The individual impacted by the disasters have the right to know about the economic recovery process and where to get help. It is important to remember that those impacted may be workforce or the business owners themselves.
- **Acknowledge the impact:** Individuals and businesses affected by a disaster have potentially experienced a life shaping event. Their experience should be validated by allowing them to tell their story.
- **Ask businesses and the community how best to communicate with them:** Working with businesses and the community and asking them how they would like to be communicated with will increase the effectiveness of your communication and increase their participation in the economic recovery effort.
- **Repeat information:** Remembering detailed information can be difficult during and after a disaster. Individuals and businesses will be looking for information to assist their specific need at the time. What may have been irrelevant for someone on one day may be exactly what they're looking for on the next day. Repeating your message periodically throughout the economic recovery process helps to mitigate these issues. An effective feedback mechanism is also important to ensure you are aware of what the business needs and know when to repeat information. This is an

important role of those involved in the Economic Recovery Centre.

- **Remember the “unaffected”:** When distributing information, be mindful of not concentrating solely on those directly affected. Those businesses indirectly affected may also experience stress and you should take care not to alienate this part of your target audience. This is particularly important when only a portion of a community is directly impacted by an event.
- **No spin:** For those recovering from a disaster, there is a specific need for direct communication, free from rhetoric or any type of marketing or public relations message. Keeping out this type of information will allow you to connect with your audience in a way that suits them. When communicating with business it is important to focus on the individual and the business impacts and not in marketing the services you are providing.

Communications Strategy

Before sending out any information, prepare a communication strategy. For smaller scale events, it may be unnecessary to develop a comprehensive communication strategy but there may still be a need to provide some kind of communication, even a one pager, to outline your activities and timing. The process of developing this strategy will lead you to clarify your objectives, conduct a communication needs analysis, define your key messages and plan your activities:

- **Set objectives:** the objective(s) should always include raising or maintain the profile of the economic recovery effort.
- **Define target audiences:** post-disaster, there are many and varied audience types. Identifying these specific audiences and working out how they are best communicated with, is critical. Target audience member groups can include affected businesses and individuals, the wider community impacted by the disaster, community leaders, the media and the general public as well as

emergency services personnel and government agencies.

- **Identify stakeholders:** a stakeholder is anyone who has a legitimate interest in the economic recovery. They are defined as anyone who may affect, be affected by, or perceive themselves to be affected by a disaster and the economic recovery.
- **Analyze communication needs:** Conducting a communication needs analysis is a crucial part of the communication strategy. This analysis will enable you to understand the communication needs of each audience, and how to make your information inclusive and accessible to everyone. This information will help ensure that the economic recovery effort meets their needs, which then enhances community capacity and resilience.



A communication needs analysis template is provided in the Templates Section at the end of this guideline.

- **Clarify exclusions:** Define what will not be included in your communication's focus and what may be part of another organization's responsibility. Remember that economic recovery communications should focus on economic issues, not issues covered by the EOC.
- **Describe issues:** Identify any issues that need to be addressed through

communication. An issue is a present problem which needs attention.

- **Write key messages:** Define your core messaging that you want your audience(s) to hear and remember. They should be consistent throughout the communication process.
- **Select channels:** Identify your communication channels and why. They need to meet the needs of your audience(s).



The Templates Section provides suggested communication channels and their pros and cons.

- **Anticipate risks:** Identify any risks that should be addressed. A risk is a potential future event that may impact on the economic recovery effort.
- **Describe evaluation method:** Define how you will evaluate your communication activities to ensure they are meeting objectives.
- **Schedule communication activities:** Identify what, when and who for your communication activities.
- **Allocate budget:** Identify communication activities and associated costs.



A communication strategy template is provided in the Templates Section at the end of this guideline.

Economic Recovery Communication Templates

- [Communication Roles and Responsibilities](#)
- [Media Release](#)
- [Communication Strategy](#)
- [Communication Needs Analysis](#)
- [Communication Channels](#)

Economic Recovery Communication – Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Communication Responsibilities
Local Government / Economic Development Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign someone from local government to be part of the Local Economic Recovery Committee • Ensure the local government website and social media channels are up to date in relation to the disaster and economic recovery effort • Support economic recovery communication which may include writing newsletters and media releases, coordinating public meetings, etc. • Send communication materials through existing or newly created distribution channels • Media liaison • Engage the community and businesses in the economic recovery process
Local Economic Recovery Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint a designated communication position and an alternate – this will be the Economic Recovery Manager unless the position is not created • Work with the Economic Recovery Manager to determine the community's communication needs, e.g. what materials are needed, distribution channels • Guide decisions about what resources need to be allocated to communications • Develop and maintain a communication strategy
Economic Recovery Manager (if appointed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media appearances and interviews • Engage the community and businesses in the economic recovery process • Ensure the economic recovery website and social media channels are up to date in relation to the disaster and recovery effort • Work with the Local Economic Recovery Committee to determine the community's communication needs, e.g. what materials are needed, distribution channels • Develop and maintain a communication strategy • Engage the community in the economic recovery process
Local Government agencies involved in recovery following an emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the information intended for release is consistent with any messages being generated by the Emergency Operations Centre. • Specifically, in relation to supporting council (if needed), and the Local Economic Recovery Committee: provide expert media and communication advice

Economic Recovery Communication – Media Release

For Release

DATE and TIME

HEADLINE

The headline should summarise the main points of the release, but not be too long. It should be bolded.

LEAD

Ensure your first paragraph includes the who, what, when, where, why and how.

BODY

The paragraph under the lead should expand on the lead and be the point where you start telling the story. It is important to prioritise messages from the most important to the least important. Use short sentences, short paragraphs and active language.

Always write in the third person.

Use quotes to make your writing more interesting but remember all opinions must be attributed to a particular person or the organization.

The media is unable to use newsworthy assertions unless sourced, and journalists will sometimes call to check on the quotes.

END

The last paragraph is the least important and can include background information about you and your services or summarise the essential elements of the media release.

Always finish the media release with -ends- so the journalist knows it is finished.

CONTACT

Make sure you include the following contact information.

For further media information contact:

Contact name

Email

Phone number

About us

This is a paragraph or two about the event or the organization distributing the media release. It can also be the subject of the media release and provide a quick overview.

Economic Recovery Communication Strategy

<insert project name>

<insert date>

1. Introduction

Describe the disaster and the economic recovery effort, analyze the situation and explain why strategic communication is required.

2. Objectives

The objectives of communication depend on the stage of economic recovery that the community has reached. However, the objectives should always include raising or maintaining the profile of the economic recovery effort and assisting the community towards recovery.

List three to five communication objectives. Each objective must be measurable and will be referenced in Section 11 Evaluation. Examples:

- I. Ensure affected individuals and businesses know where to get help.*
- II. Increase knowledge and understanding of the economic recovery effort.*
- III. Facilitate two-way communication and feedback.*

3. Target audiences

Your audience is who you are communicating with. Categorize your audiences into primary and secondary audiences. Primary would include those with whom you need to actively communicate and who you may require to take action. Secondary audiences are those who you potentially need to keep informed.

Primary

<Insert>

Secondary

<Insert>

4. Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those who have a stake in the economic recovery operation. They may not necessarily be a target audience, but they have a legitimate interest in helping the community get back on its feet.

5. Communication needs analysis

Conduct a communication needs analysis using the template provided. Address the requirements of each audience by considering the 'who, what, when, where, why and how' of your communication approach.

6. Exclusions

Define what is out of scope for the communication representative.

7. Issues

Describe any issues that will need to be addressed through communication. An issue is a present problem which needs attention. An issue is different to a risk in that it has already happened.

- *Are there disgruntled stakeholders who require consultation and engagement?*

- Has there been negative media coverage which needs to be mitigated?

8. Key messages

Key messages are the core messages that you want your audience(s) to hear and remember. They should be used consistently, and some may be used to anticipate and address concerns.

- List up to seven key messages.
-
-

9. Channels

Describe your channels and why you have chosen them. Channel selection should meet the needs of your audience(s) and facilitate two-way communication. Consider who should send communication via these channels.

Channel	Why
Economic Recovery Newsletter	Affected community has lost power and internet. Newsletters can be handed out at key distribution points.

10. Communication risk analysis

Describe any risks that need to be addressed through communication. A risk is a potential future event that may impact on the economic recovery effort. The risks listed here should be communication risks.

Channel	Why
Unclear communication contributes to anxiety	Using plain English and communicating face to face as much as possible to address concerns on the spot.

11. Evaluation

Evaluation of communication activities should occur to ensure this strategy is meeting its objectives to:

- *List the communication objectives from Section 2 Objectives:
Describe how you will evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy, for example, positive anecdotal feedback from the community apparent in survey results / focus groups.*

12. Communication schedule

The analysis conducted so far should now enable you to develop the communication schedule, also known as a communication plan, action plan or implementation plan. Activities should be built around the economic recovery effort and what the community needs at the time. Choose the most appropriate method and channel, keeping in mind that face to face is the most effective way to communicate. Consider the objective(s), timeliness, and frequency of your message.

For example, your schedule should identify:

- **Activity:** Recovery newsletter
- **Objective:** What objective does the newsletter accomplish?
- **Target audience:** Affective businesses and general community
- **Communication channel:** Electronic newsletter distributed through business database
- **Timeline:** Identify the date
- **Responsible:** Identify individual and agency
- **Status:** In process, needs attention, completed
- **Action required or comments:** Identify what needs to be done to complete activity

13. Budget

Itemize communication activities and associated costs.

Economic Recovery Communication Needs Analysis

Complete the left side of the table for each stakeholder group or audience identified

Audience	State who you are speaking to <i>e.g. agricultural businesses</i>
Description	Describe the audience <i>e.g. primary producers experiencing loss of property, livestock, equipment, etc.</i>
Desired response (if any)	Describe how you would like this audience to respond <i>e.g. feel supported and aware of available programs</i>
Communication need	Describe the communication requirements of this audience <i>e.g. where to get information on available programs and other economic recovery efforts</i>
Content	Describe the information that this audience will need <i>e.g. government programs, financial support, insurance support</i>
Channel	List the communication channels recommended <i>e.g. economic recovery newsletter, public meetings, hotline</i>
Frequency	Identify the frequency of communication <i>e.g. weekly newsletter, 24/7 hotline</i>
Comments	Provide any other commentary <i>e.g. are there communication challenges, or other particulars to note about this audience?</i>

Economic Recovery Communication Channels

Channel	Pro	Con
Face to face	Most influential channel	Situation can become unstable if the person you are talking to gets distressed
Word of mouth	Effective and free	Message can be distorted
Community meetings	Immediate feedback	Can be disrupted audience member(s) becomes aggressive
Print	Good channel when there is no electricity, phone or internet	Time delay
Email	Mass distribution	Excludes those who cannot access emails. Emails may go to Junk folder.
Noticeboards	Good channel when there is no electricity, phone or internet	Requires the audience to know they need to come to the noticeboard
Posters	Good channel when there is no electricity, phone or internet	Limited information can be included
Local newspapers	Existing distribution network	May not be able to control message
Radio	Good channel where there is low literacy	No way to track who has heard the message
SMS	Mass distribution	Requires phone numbers
Websites	Accessible to anyone with a computer or smart device	Limited to those with computers and computer knowledge
Social media	Accessible to anyone with a computer or smart device	Limited to those with phone/computers and phone/computer knowledge
Video	Tells a story effectively	Time consuming and may be too costly