

A key role for economic developers is to help facilitate effective communication between the public and private sectors.

Economic recovery is a critical area of focus for recovery as many community leaders have suggested that getting the local economy operational helps to spur community recovery. Without jobs and income, few residents are going to remain in the affected area. Local businesses need to open their doors as quickly as possible, local workers need access to those facilities, and all of the public services, infrastructure and utilities that help support business activity need to be operational to facilitate the movement of people, goods and services. Local government, utilities, and public safety personnel need to partner with local businesses and their intermediaries to make all of this happen in an expedited manner.

DISASTER PREPARATION MEASURES – BUILDING CAPACITY FOR RECOVERY

All communities are vulnerable to some form of disaster or emergency situation and therefore all communities should prepare to protect their local economies from the effects of a disaster. It is critical for economic development organizations to develop their own capacity to respond to, and recover from, a disaster. The local government will put emergency management plans into action after a crisis that are likely to have a direct impact on business recovery, such as community re-entry, access to property, cleanup activity, etc. Therefore, the business community should be aware of these emergency management response plans in advance of a major incident.

Also, small businesses, which provide critical business services for the local community, are unlikely to have business continuity plans in place to ensure continued operations after a disaster. There is a great need for education on business continuity planning and what steps to take to limit the effects from potential hazards. **Economic development organizations have a key role to play in connecting small businesses with these resources** and encouraging them to be properly insured for even the smallest of disasters. The organization should also evaluate local business assistance programs to determine which will need to be expanded in the event of a major catastrophe to help businesses and their recovery.





IDENTIFY CRITICAL BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

Economic development organizations are likely to be operating at reduced capacity following a disaster. Any number of factors could affect operations, such as displaced staff, damaged facilities, reduced operational funds, utility outages, etc. Your organization needs to respond to the immense post-disaster economic recovery needs in the community regardless of your situation. In order to do this economic development organizations need to understand the critical business operations they rely on internally in order to be useful in assisting the community.

Identifying critical business functions is integral in resuming operations following a disaster. Typically, the critical business functions are those functions that:

- Are most sensitive to downtime
- Fulfill legal or financial obligations to maintain cash flow
- Have a key role in maintain your business' market share and reputation, and/or
- Safeguard an irreplaceable asset

As part of the economic development organization's business continuity plan, there should be a plan for at least one backup office location – preferably two backup office locations – to use in case of an emergency. This ensures that if the first alternative location is also impacted, a second location is available.

A plan needs to be developed to arrange for a remote data backup of your organization's computer network. Your organization should seek to backup all vital records that include employee data, payroll, financial records, strategic plans, customer or client lists, vendor lists, building plans/blueprints, the lease, insurance records and other valuable documents that contribute to the organizations bottom line.

For example, your organization's key functions may be its Business Retention and Expansion program. If the BRE database is only stored at the office, the information may be inaccessible or even lost permanently depending on the damage to the facility. Having a backup will allow you access no matter where you are.