

# INTRODUCTION

In disaster-impacted communities, economic development organizations often lead economic recovery efforts by helping local businesses respond to impacts on their employees, their facilities, and their customer and supply networks. All too often, economic recovery becomes a piecemeal reaction, rather than a planned response, when disaster strikes. The key is to take steps ahead of time to ensure your organization can stay in touch with local businesses after any type of major incident and to set up a plan of action for disaster response and recovery.

This toolkit is designed to get your communities started in the pre-planning process for economic recovery. Communities that have a plan in place prior to a disaster are able to start on the road to recovery immediately and have a better chance of economic recovery. This toolkit significantly condenses information provided by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) in their *Leadership in Times of Crisis*. For additional details on any of the information provided within this toolkit it is recommended the reader access the original publication at [www.restoreyoureconomy.org](http://www.restoreyoureconomy.org). Other information, including resources, templates and best practices can be found at [https://www.bceda.ca/disaster\\_preparation\\_and\\_recov.php](https://www.bceda.ca/disaster_preparation_and_recov.php)

## THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Economic development organizations are uniquely positioned in the community to facilitate economic recovery initiatives after a disaster. The community may look to your organization to lead the charge for local economic recovery whether your organization plans for this role or not. The role of your organization can change significantly in the event of a disaster. The activities and services provided by each organization depend on the unique needs of each community and need to be addressed as soon as possible.

For example, economic developers need to understand the strengths, weaknesses and comparative advantages of their local economy and local business climate in their normal day to day activities. After a disaster, economic developers can take this information and determine the vulnerabilities and risks to critical industries and businesses within the community.





## HOW THE ROLES OF EDOS ARE IMPACTED BY DISASTER

	Normal Roles	Roles in a Disaster (Above Normal Roles)
Analyst/ Educator	Understands strengths, weaknesses and comparative advantages of local economy and local business climate. Provides quantitative and qualitative information to decision makers.	Before a Disaster Seeks to understand vulnerabilities and risks to critical industries and businesses within the community.
	Keeps public officials and the general public adequately informed on costs and benefits of economic development initiatives.	After a Disaster Develops and distributes a disaster business recovery guide and assesses physical damage and business interruption impacts to industries and businesses. Facilitates the communication of accurate response and recovery information between local businesses and local government and communicates dual messages: “We are open for business” and “We need help and resources” to appropriate audiences.
Visionary/ Catalyst	Visionary leader who peers over the economic horizon to see what partnerships (both public and private) can be formed to stimulate working relationships in the future.	Before a Disaster Establishes an Economic Recovery Group to identify immediate and long term recovery resources and strategies.
	Engages key stakeholders in visioning process to identify goals, strategies and resources for economic development. Provides incentives to leverage the investment or involvement of different public and private actors. Invokes enthusiasm and excitement for catalyst projects that can change the community’s future.	After a Disaster Envisions how the community can build back to be stronger and more resilient. Creates a strategic plan for economic recovery embraced by community. Connects public/private resources for building back better.
Gap Filler	Provides assistance where the private sector cannot or will not meet community and business needs. Leverages financing to facilitate enterprise development: assists existing businesses with expansion and works to attract new businesses.	After a Disaster Conducts concerted BRE outreach to reconnect with businesses and identify at-risk companies. Assists with short and long-term financing and business counseling, particularly for small and at-risk businesses and develops programs to support long-term recovery.
Connector /Advocate	Serves as key liaison between public, private sectors and the community on economic development initiatives and works with chamber of commerce representatives to create concise message. Speaks out for the well being of the community while protecting the interests of business.	Before a Disaster Seeks funding opportunities and garners input and support for recovery initiatives. Advocates mitigation and preparedness efforts among businesses for the possible next disaster.
	Coordinates activities, communication and resources between different actors to facilitate business partnerships.	After a Disaster Addresses impacts/shortcomings of community’s emergency management plan from a business perspective. Communicates local economic priorities and needs for policy changes to local state and federal government.

Much of the work that economic developers do on a daily basis will go into high gear after a disaster strikes. The following is a summary of short-term and long-term strategies that have been identified by economic recovery stakeholders and disaster recovery teams.

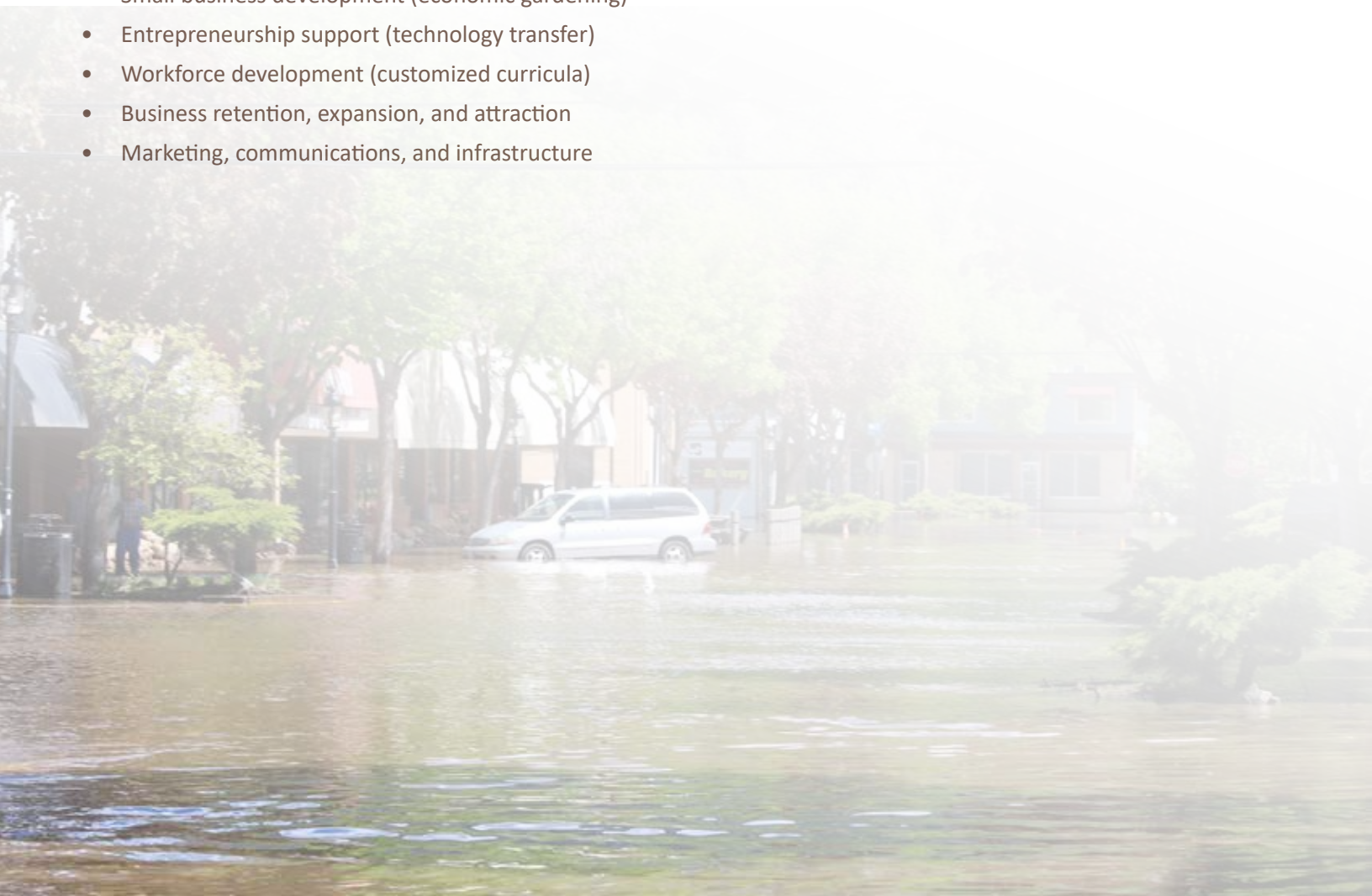
### Short-term Strategies

- Marketing and communication (addressing brand damage)
- Economic development capacity/coordinated response (managing communications infrastructure)
- Small business assistance/access to capital (continuity plans)
- Business retention (performing outreach campaigns)
- Economic impact assessment and analysis
- Workforce development (connecting displaced workers)

### Long-term Strategies

Long-term strategies will need sustained support from multiple community stakeholders. Economic development organizations should clearly define its role in long-term economic recovery initiatives from the start of the recovery process. A summary of long-term recovery strategies that should be considered post-disaster includes:

- Economic diversification (value-added industries)
- Economic development capacity/strategic planning (re-evaluating vision and mission)
- Small business development (economic gardening)
- Entrepreneurship support (technology transfer)
- Workforce development (customized curricula)
- Business retention, expansion, and attraction
- Marketing, communications, and infrastructure







## RESPONSIBILITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Depending on the severity and magnitude of the disaster, the recovery process is likely to take months and years to bring the community back to some sense of normality. While provincial and federal government agencies can bring significant resources to bear in a crisis, local government has the most knowledge of local assets and public management systems, as well as relationships with the impacted businesses and residents.

**Local residents and businesses look to local government to lead the immediate response efforts.**

Local residents and businesses look to their local governmental leaders to lead the immediate response efforts as well as to support long-term recovery initiatives, particularly if they have trusted relationships with them. Community and business leaders are also the most invested in the long-term concern of the affected area.

Local government is responsible for providing the first level of response in emergency management. Local government assesses the local situation and activates an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) following a major incident. The EOC serves as the primary location where key decision makers gather information about the incident in order to manage the entire disaster response, including the facilitation of field operations for emergency service and disaster personnel. If the magnitude of the disaster exceeds the resources of the local community, the local government may request assistance from their provincial or territorial government.

## ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPER

Economic development organizations may be a function of the local government or may have public officials on their board of directors. In some cases, they are incorporated as a non-profit agency or society. Regardless of their structure, they serve as an intermediary between local government leadership and the private sector.

A key role for economic developers in the response and recovery stages is to help facilitate effective communication between the public and private sectors. Communication on such important subjects as availability of power, access to transportation networks and facilities, temporary facility space for displaced businesses, etc. is a critical activity in the initial days and weeks after a disaster. In recent disasters, communities are **making sure that an economic development representative sits at the EOC** in order to help facilitate this critical communication. The economic developer may also choose to form an Economic Recovery Team as a focal point for information sharing between emergency management personnel, corporate leaders, and local business owners. These economic recovery teams not only serve a purpose of aggregating information on damage assessment on businesses and the local economy, but also help to develop long-term strategies for economic recovery. They also may be involved in helping to establish a business recovery center to serve impacted local businesses.