STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR DISASTER RECOVERY

Disaster recovery planning and preparedness is no longer strictly for communities that regularly experience earthquakes or hurricanes. Whether the potential disasters are natural or manmade, communities must plan for disaster recovery in order to mitigate the impact that such a disaster could have on local businesses and residents. Economic development organizations are uniquely positioned in the community to facilitate a strategic planning process for economic recovery - both before and after a disaster. Through their established connections with local businesses, they can coordinate involvement and leverage resources from the business community and are likely to take a leadership role in facilitating job recovery.

PRE-DISASTER – ECONOMIC PREPAREDNESS PLAN

A pre-disaster economic preparedness plan prepares a community for disaster situations with a focus on the business community and the local economy. The plan defines roles and lays out action steps that economic recovery stakeholders can take in the face of a disaster. **Having a plan in place before a disaster enables a community to respond more quickly** and efficiently in order to help jumpstart the recovery process and limit the disaster's negative impacts. *BCEDA has developed an Economic Recovery and Resiliency Workshop that provides the steps required to develop an Economic Preparedness Plan.*

The economic preparedness plan should work in conjunction with a larger, comprehensive community-planning framework led by the local government for a disaster situation. The plan should coordinate with issues such as land use, infrastructure, and housing. In addition, it should also complement the community's emergency management plan. The following are suggested actions steps for the community to consider when starting a planning process for economic resiliency.

Step 1: Designate the economic development organization to facilitate the planning process. The economic development organization will:

- Bring together wide-ranging support from all stakeholders, particularly the local business community
- Help align the resources needed to get the planning process started
- Serve as an effective liaison and facilitator

Step 2: Identify all economic recovery stakeholders and hold kickoff meeting. When identifying and inviting various stakeholders, keep in mind:

- Representatives from the public, private, and non-profit sectors as well as elected officials involved in local economic issues
- Regional and provincial representatives should also be invited and encouraged to participate as necessary
- Representation from industries that are economic drivers in the community will be important

Step 3: Strategically evaluate how a disaster could affect the local economy. Specific actions here include:

- Identify the community's economic assets
- Perform an economic vulnerability analysis
- Conduct scenario planning for community redevelopment

Step 4: Develop action strategies and steps. Based on different scenarios and highlighted vulnerabilities in the community, an action plan with strategies, resources, responsible agencies, and suggested timelines should be developed. Amendments to existing disaster recovery and economic development plans may also be suggested for improved disaster preparedness. Both short- and long-term action strategies should be developed as part of the action plan.

Step 5: Develop a communications plan and compile contact information. A communications strategy will enable local and regional economic development organizations to remain in contact with their constituents, their peer organizations, and other groups that are critical to the community's economic recovery. One the simplest, and yet important, action steps is developing several contact lists that include local business owners, agencies playing a role in short-term recovery efforts, and key stakeholders throughout the region and state.

Step 6: Develop a list of possible funding sources. Potential funding sources for disaster recovery and redevelopment should be identified, including local, provincial, and federal sources. Although a variety of resources are available for humanitarian relief and housing, resources for business recovery can sometimes be scarce. It will be necessary for economic development organizations to creatively utilize available resources and leverage public and private funds.

Step 7: Follow up with the plan. Take the following steps to ensure that the economic preparedness plan is adopted by the community and that collaborations remain active:

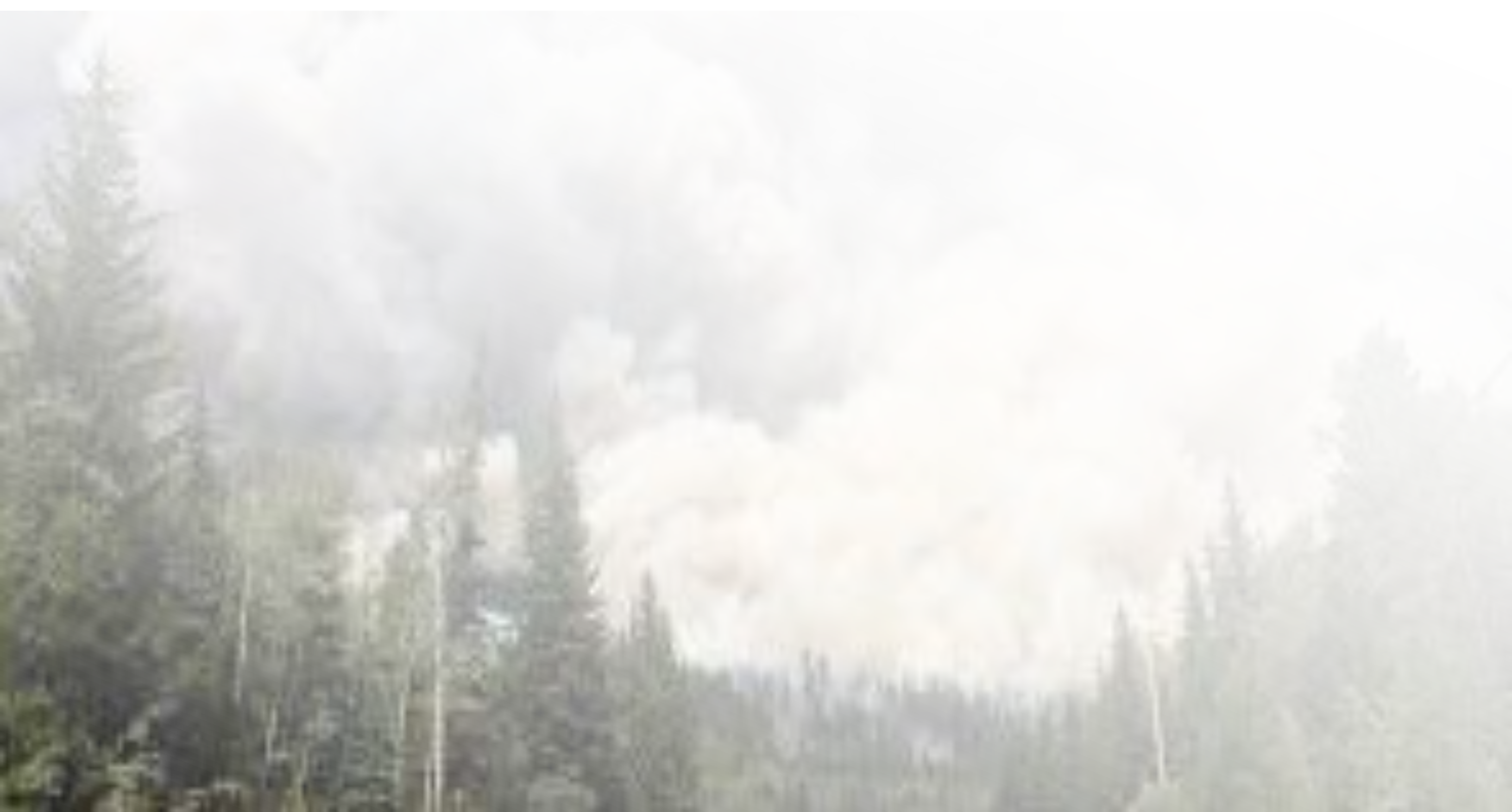
- Integrate the plan with other relevant plans
- Monitor, evaluate, and update the plan

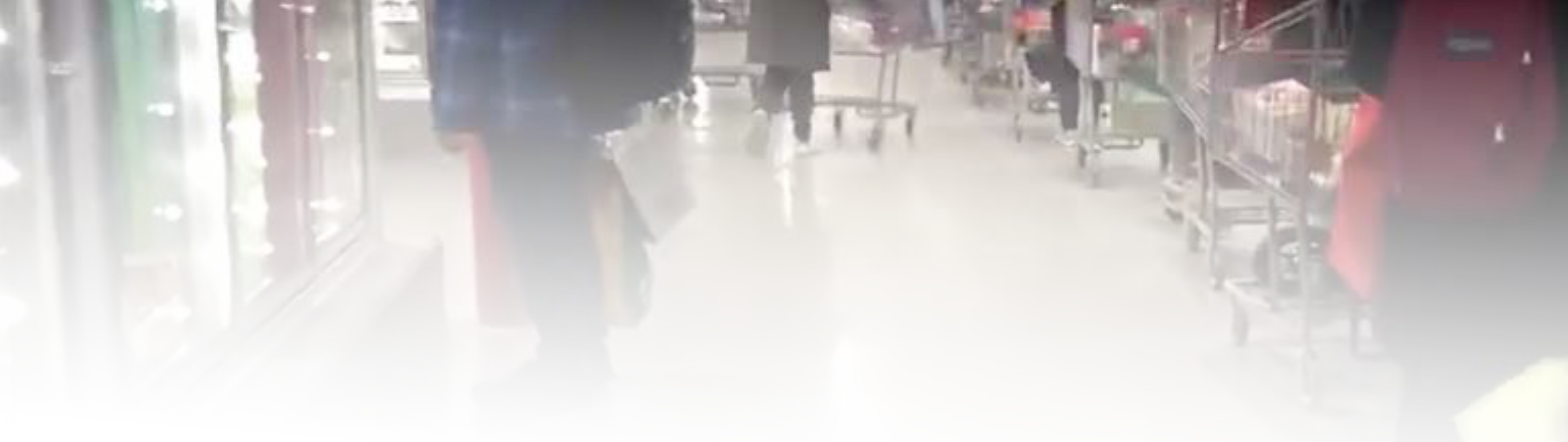
POST-DISASTER – ECONOMIC PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Even if your community has engaged in pre-disaster planning, communities invariably face chaos after a disaster. A post-disaster strategic plan should be developed to guide the economic recovery process, this should be completed along with the implementation/review of an existing Economic Preparedness Plan. The community has an opportunity to re-assess their economic objectives in light of disaster risks and other vulnerabilities. They can establish bold new strategies and action steps to make progress toward long-term recovery and emerge a more resilient community to future disruptions. Starting the process for long-range planning and economic recovery within three to six months following the disaster is recommended in order to take advantage of the urgency surrounding rebuilding efforts and the existing momentum within the community. The following are suggested actions steps for the community to consider when starting the post-disaster planning process for economic resiliency.

Step 1: Conduct a post-disaster economic impact study. The community should perform an independent economic impact assessment immediately after a major disaster, even thought the province may perform its own damage assessments. The study provides intelligence for local decision-makers and supports any request for further provincial funding for rebuilding/recovery. The study should measure the following economic impacts:

- Tax revenue loss (sales, property, employment)
- Job loss
- Loss of wages
- Business closures and interruption (loss of productivity)
- Damage to infrastructure
- Damage to property (commercial, industrial, residential)
- Damage to natural resources (that have an impact on local industries)





Step 2: Identify a lead economic development organization to initiate a post-disaster economy recovery planning process. This process should begin within three to six months following a disaster and include:

- Identifying key economic stakeholders and hold a kickoff meeting
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of all economic recovery stakeholders
- Establish working groups to gather relevant data and information
- Produce a complete economic analysis

Step 3: Create a plan with action strategies. Intelligence gathered through the economic analysis will serve as the basis for the development of the community's long-term economic recovery plan. Specific action strategies and tactics should be developed to provide direction on economic recovery priorities.

While the strategic plan should be updated every five years to reflect progress and adjust strategies, the action plan which outlines these tactics for the next one to two years should be regularly updated every year.