

## FINAL REPORT

DATE: July 15, 2022  
TO: Disaster Recovery Council  
FROM: Paul Brewster, Senior Planner, TRPC  
Casey Mauck, Assistant Planner, TRPC  
SUBJECT: **2022 Disaster Recovery Council Work Program and Recommendations for Building Community Resiliency and Establishing Disaster Recovery Capacity**

Thurston County communities are vulnerable to a variety of disasters and local leaders recognize the need to prepare for not only disaster response, but also disaster recovery. While disaster response focuses on addressing the most urgent and immediate post-disaster community needs such as food, water, power, and shelter – recovery is the long-term process of returning to a certain degree of normalcy. The length of recovery varies depending on the magnitude of the incident and can take several months to several years.

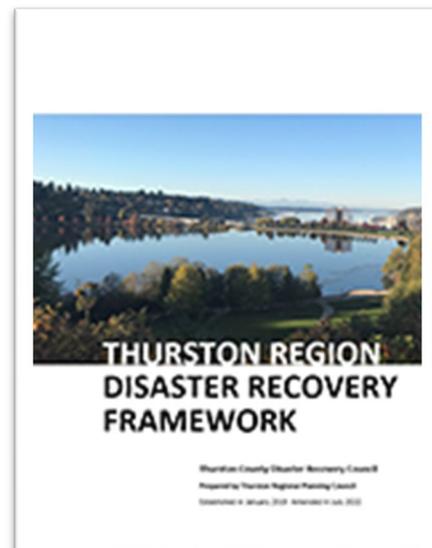
This memorandum documents information on the establishment of the Disaster Recovery Council, their planning activities, outcomes, recommendations, and funding sources for continued pre-disaster recovery planning and building community resilience.

### Background

Over 80 participants from Thurston County including elected representatives, staff from multiple jurisdictions, private industry representatives, and other stakeholders participated in a Federal

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) sponsored Integrated Emergency Management Course (IEMC) at Ocean Shores in February 2019. Participants were led through a four-day table-top exercise to test recovery operations, prioritization, and decision making in a post disaster earthquake scenario. The exercise provided a unique opportunity for participants to build collaboration among jurisdictions, strengthen relationships, and validate existing emergency plans. Participants focused on the restoration of the economy, housing, schools, and health services.

The exercise utilized a draft Thurston Region Disaster Recovery Framework. The purpose of the framework is to guide communities in Thurston County through a joint, focused, systematic, timely, and effective recovery from a



disaster. It addresses strategic recovery activities and allocation of incoming resources for disasters where normal recovery activities and operations become overtaxed, or where there is a need for regional coordination of recovery planning and operations. Developing a consensus-based multi-jurisdictional recovery framework will establish policies and processes to coordinate decision making and enable recovery managers to operate in a unified and collaborative manner.



Elected representatives who participated in the exercise expressed an urgent need to continue interjurisdictional coordination on pre-disaster recovery planning activities. An interlocal cooperative agreement was drafted by the Emergency Management Council of Thurston County to establish a Disaster Recovery Council (DRC) to oversee and advise communities on pre-disaster recovery planning.

In January 2022, TCEM contracted with TRPC to facilitate the DRC and staff their work program. TCEM staff also provided staff assistance throughout the project. The DRC met monthly from January to July 2022. Six communities including Bucoda, Olympia, Rainier, Tenino, Thurston County, Tumwater, and Yelm approved the Interlocal Agreement (appended to the DRC Charter). The City of Lacey, while not a signatory to the agreement, agreed in principle to the agreement's purpose and participated as a regular member through the DRC's approved charter.

The DRC interlocal agreement identified multiple objectives:

1. Establish the Disaster Recovery Council bylaws, charter, participation, and meeting schedule
2. Create a work plan to establish the Recovery Manager's Office (RMO) and Recovery Task Force (RTF)
3. Define the purpose, any necessary agreements, a pre-disaster meeting schedule, and staffing needs for the RMO and RTF
4. Evaluate opportunities and develop recommendations for establishing and operationalizing the RMO and RTF
5. Update the draft Thurston Region Disaster Recovery Framework with focused Recovery Support Functions (RSFs) and a governance structure
6. Identify next steps for pre-disaster recovery planning

## DRC Activities

The DRC recognized that with limited time and budget, the agreement's objectives required prioritization. Members agreed to focus on five tasks:

1. Develop and approve a DRC Charter
2. Expand the draft Thurston Region Disaster Recovery Framework to add three additional Recovery Support Functions (RSFs)

3. Prepare and conduct a disaster recovery exercise for Emergency Management Executive Seminar participants
4. Update the draft Thurston Region Disaster Recovery Framework
5. Identify recommendations for the DRC and Thurston County communities to continue pre-disaster recovery planning

## Outcomes

### DRC Charter

The DRC approved a Charter on February 18, 2022. The purpose of the charter is to: (1) Provide a project overview of the draft Thurston Region Disaster Recovery Framework; (2) Explain the purpose and responsibilities of the Disaster Recovery Council (DRC); and (3) Provide guidance to Disaster Recovery Council members on membership, meeting norms such as communication, decision-making, and scheduling. The DRC agreed to an established meeting schedule and convened seven times from January through July 2022.

To support the DRC members' facilitation and project communication, TRPC established a webpage (<https://www.trpc.org/1098/Disaster-Recovery-Planning>). Project documents, agendas, and meeting materials were regularly posted to the webpage and DRC members received notifications when materials became available. Meetings notes were prepared and distributed to members following each meeting.

### Recovery Support Functions

Essential community sectors and resources that are critical to the stability, vitality, and long-term recovery of a community are formalized through the establishment of Recovery Support Functions (RSFs). An RSF is an assembly of subject matter experts, practitioners, and stakeholders who are involved in the administration, operation, and delivery of key community services and functions. RSFs are responsible for coordinating with partners and constituents to identify resources and opportunities, coordinate recovery implementation efforts, and to advise policy makers to inform the identification of recovery priorities and decision-making.

The DRC directed staff to develop three new Recovery Support Functions (RSFs), consistent with the Washington State Restoration Framework:

1. Cultural and Historic Resources
2. Natural Resources
3. Infrastructure and Utilities

Project staff coordinated with a variety of local agencies to identify potential representatives who could advise the DRC and project staff on the development of the new RSFs. Staff initiated contact by email and invited participants to respond to an online questionnaire about their organization's emergency preparedness, their vulnerable constituents, their familiarity with recovery, their ability to identify recovery priorities, and to share their knowledge on recovery resources and critical partners. Staff used the results of the questionnaire to prepare draft RSF documents.

All stakeholders were invited to participate in an online focus group meeting for the RSF they were associated with. Staff facilitated a discussion about the effectiveness of the draft RSFs and sought input

on their contents. The final draft RSFs were shared with both the DRC and the RSF stakeholders for their review. The RSF documents are appended to the updated draft Thurston Region Disaster Recovery Framework.

### Emergency Management Executive Seminar Recovery Exercise

To promote policy maker and executive staff awareness on the region's long-term recovery planning activities and the role of the DRC, the DRC arranged to brief community leaders at the June 6 regional Emergency Management Executive Seminar. The seminar was the first in-person gathering for the event since 2019. Project staff coordinated with the Emergency Management Council to schedule a combined 90-minute recovery briefing and activity.

Staff developed an in-person small group table-top exercise titled the "Thornton County Recovery Challenge!" The purpose of the activity was to provide a fun and engaging activity for attendees to interact with their peers and learn about the DRC's work and the benefits of pre-disaster recovery planning.

Approximately 60 meeting attendees from multiple jurisdictions divided into six groups. Half the groups had assigned roles that aligned with the National Disaster Recovery Framework governance structure and staff positions. The other groups (control groups) were assigned general roles, but lacked the structures and roles afforded by the other groups' recovery framework.



Every group received the same scenario with map of the affected area, population, critical facilities, and the transportation network. Each group also received a playbook or gameboard with a list of transportation network disruptions, and estimated repair costs, and a deck of gamecards. With a limited amount of federal emergency recovery funding, participants were challenged to prioritize project needs to restore system functionality.

Groups were tasked to achieve four objectives to complete the exercise: (1) Approve their roles and their recovery governance process; (2) Identify their transportation recovery criteria; (3) Approve a funded project list; and (4) Approve a public communications strategy. Various injects were introduced to interrupt a group's progress. These included both supportive guidance to advance the objectives and opposition from community groups to distract their focus.

The meeting and the activity were a success. All six groups completed the activity's objectives within the allotted time. The activity was closed with a debriefing from the groups to report on their successes, the resources they needed to improve their ability to make informed decisions, and their views on the importance of a pre-disaster recovery plan to guide recovery roles and responsibilities.

## Draft Thurston Region Disaster Recovery Framework Update

The Thurston Region Disaster Recovery Framework was prepared by Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) in partnership with the Emergency Management Council of Thurston County to support the 2019 IEMC. An After-Action Review was performed on the final day of the exercise to capture successes and opportunities for improvement for the exercise. An Improvement Plan was produced to document the results of the After-Action Review. Project staff incorporated the recommendations from the Improvement Plan. In addition, the new RSFs were appended to the document and the existing RSFs were revised to be consistent with the format and contents of the amended RSFs.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations for enhanced disaster recovery capacity are a result of the Disaster Recovery Council's discussions, feedback from the Recovery Support Function focus group meetings, and the After-Action Review of the 2019 IEMC. The recommendations are grouped into three categories: (1) Public engagement; (2) Recovery structures; and (3) Ongoing coordination.

### 1. Public Engagement

- a. **Build publics' knowledge of recovery and how it differs from response.** Disaster recovery is a new concept to many local leaders and is often confused with response. Local staff, leaders, and residents can benefit from understanding what recovery is and why it's important. Recovery often takes a backseat to response in planning processes, as communities cannot function without first addressing response and restoring basic needs. Though recovery may seem of lesser importance, it is just as essential as response and takes considerably more time and effort. Building local knowledge will require a champion to lead the effort – a role that could be taken on by the Recovery Task Force or a Local Disaster Recovery Manager if these entities are established prior to a disaster.

### 2. Building out the Recovery Structure

- a. **Identify the desired membership of the Recovery Task Force.** The Recovery Task Force (RTF) is a critical policy making component of the recovery governance structure that fosters regional coordination. The RTF should include membership from the county, cities, towns, special purpose districts, and tribal governments. Past these essential members, the RTF may be more successful by involving representatives from media, volunteer organizations, school districts, and more. One recommendation from the After-Action Review is to limit representation of the cities and towns with populations less than 5,000 to one person who would then coordinate information sharing between the task force and the smaller communities.
- b. **Establish a clear process to select the Local Disaster Recovery Manager.** During the IEMC, participants found it challenging to appoint a LDRM without any established process for selection. This is a unique role that requires a variety of skills, and ideally, significant local knowledge. Many participants looked to Thurston County Emergency Management, which may pose challenges as Emergency Managers will be focused on response after a disaster. Adding a job description, short list of roles that may fit well as the LDRM, and a recruiting process to address key positions in a disaster recovery framework is critical.

- c. **Identify the interlocal agreements, memorandums of understanding, and other agreements that must be in place to support regional recovery.** Working through recovery regionally will require sharing resources and funds for regional recovery staff or other common resources. Some of these agreements may be between cities and the county, while other agreements could be between different entities within one sector such as school districts to share buses. Identifying and drafting these agreements prior to a disaster can bring communities one step closer to efficient recovery after an incident.

### 3. Ongoing Coordination

- a. **Establish and regularly convene the Recovery Task Force and Recovery Support Function Subcommittees.** During and after a disaster, it will be extremely difficult to identify representatives who should serve on the RTF and RSF subcommittees. Travel may be difficult, technology may be unreliable, and people may be dealing with personal losses and trauma. Building relationships and identifying the network of individuals who should be involved should occur prior to a disaster so that individuals can get acquainted with disaster recovery and build relationships. Convening these groups on an annual basis may be appropriate as more frequent meetings could be costly and difficult to prepare for and manage. During the RSF focus group meetings, the stakeholders stated they are interested in attending annual or biannual meetings to foster this need.
- b. **Establish and maintain a list of organizations in the community that can provide recovery assistance along with their potential resources and capabilities.** After a disaster, many organizations and individuals often step up and offer a variety of resources to aid recovery. One way to streamline this process is to conduct outreach prior to a disaster and keep a list of the many organizations in the region and the goods and services they may be able to provide. Resources needed for recovery vary from physical goods such as wheelchairs and mobility devices to services such as transportation, counseling, or economic development assistance. Recovery Support Function Subcommittees could serve as forums to create and maintain these lists, as the groups are made up of subject matter experts who are familiar with private, non-profit, and public partners in their own sectors. These lists should be reviewed and updated annually.
- c. **Build relationships with the labor force and industries that may be needed for infrastructure recovery.** A concern voiced by several members involved in shaping the Infrastructure and Utilities RSF, was that after a large disaster, the Thurston region will be competing for resources and contractors with the larger Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland metropolitan areas to repair or replace damaged infrastructure. Establishing relationships with local and regional contractors and suppliers prior to a disaster may position Thurston County communities to secure materials and professional services that will be necessary to restore the functionality of vital infrastructure.
- d. **Train together.** In team sports, players regularly practice to strengthen their individual and cooperative skills to outperform their opponents on the field. Veteran players can mentor rookies. Recovery is a whole community team activity. Community leaders frequently change with elections and managers are replaced with retirements.

Communities should seek opportunities to build and sustain relationships and gain familiarity with disaster recovery principles and operations. Local agencies should seek training for employees to become familiar with the National Disaster Recovery Framework and the Incident Command System. Local agencies should coordinate with partners to conduct annual one- or half-day table-top exercises on disaster recovery to assess recovery capabilities in all RSF sectors: Health, Housing, Jobs and Economy, Schools, Natural Resources, Cultural and Historic Resources, and Infrastructure and Utilities. In addition, communities should try to conduct a countywide Integrated Emergency Management Course on Disaster Recovery every five years to prepare for major to catastrophic disruptions.

## Funding Sources for Community Resilience and Disaster Recovery Planning

The DRC’s 2022 work program was funded by a \$45,000 Homeland Security grant. The Region’s Homeland Security grant funding program should be evaluated for future planning activities. Table 1 presents variety of grant programs that may support strategic recovery planning for supporting businesses, incorporating hazard mitigation strategies to reduce risks from future disasters, and improve the economic resilience of the whole community.

Table 1: Resilience and Recovery Funding Sources

Agency Program & Name	Program Type & Funding Source	Phase Available	Program Information
Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration	Grant Annual Supplemental	Intermediate Long-Term	EDA EAA program grants and cooperative agreements are designed to leverage existing regional assets and support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches to advance economic prosperity in distressed communities. EDA's EAA program can support strategy (planning) grants to assist impacted regions with market studies, feasibility studies, supply chain mapping, and related projects to support manufacturing capacity and supply chain resiliency. Additional eligible activities include construction, non-construction, planning, technical assistance, and revolving loan fund projects under EDA’s EAA programs.
<a href="https://www.eda.gov/funding-opportunities/">https://www.eda.gov/funding-opportunities/</a>			
U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Business Development Grants	Grant Annual	Long-Term	This program is designed to provide technical assistance and training for small rural businesses. Projects must benefit rural areas of 50,000 or fewer.
<a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/rural-business-development-grants">https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/rural-business-development-grants</a>			
Federal Emergency Management Agency	Grant Annual	Long-Term	All applicants must submit all sub-applications to FEMA within 12 months of the date of presidential major disaster declaration. Upon written request and justification from the applicant, FEMA may extend the application submission timeline in 30- to 90-day increments, not to exceed 180 days.
<a href="https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation">https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation</a>			
Housing and Urban Development: Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery	Grant Supplemental	Long-Term	HUD provides flexible grants to help local governments, states and tribes to recover from Presidentially declared disasters, especially in low- and moderate-income areas, subject to the availability of supplemental appropriations. Eligible activities may include acquisition, financing, rehabilitation, reconstruction, or construction of housing, as well as housing counselling and other activities. This particular activity may be eligible as part of an eligible rehabilitation activity (repairs alone are generally not eligible). This funding can be used as cost share for other federal programs, including FEMA programs.
<a href="https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/cdbg-dr">https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/cdbg-dr</a>			