## CENTRAL FLORIDA FOUNDATION

## CRISIS TO COMMUNITY: COORDINATING THE CARE

Coordinated Disaster Response Central Florida







WELLS FARGO

United Way of Central Florida

Complicated crises of violence and natural disasters uniquely stretched Central Florida's resources and leadership in dynamic ways. The Coordinated Disaster Response (CDR) Project sought to understand the response and recovery efforts. The CDR Project cultivated robust preparation and intervention strategies for philanthropic, social, and governmental sectors to cooperate surrounding future emergencies. As the United States sees an increase in weather-based disasters, investments in time and resources must be made towards mitigation and preparation efforts, network-building, and collaborative strategy.

# CENTRAL FLORIDA

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#### **Stories of Two Major Crises in Central Florida**

#### **Pulse Nightclub Shooting**

On June 12, 2016, at approximately 2:00 A.M., the Orlando Police Department was alerted to gun fire that would shake the heart of a global community. The tragedy at Pulse Nightclub left 49 dead, at least 68 wounded, and 182 traumatized witnesses to the massacre—most of whom were lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and/or other sexual orientation and gender minority [LGBTQ+] people of color. Hundreds of survivors, family members, and friends were impacted with medical concerns, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), soaring hospital bills, loss of income, financial instability, food insecurity, and homelessness due to the death of a primary provider. Countless others were indirectly affected by secondary trauma and other residual factors deriving from such a complex incident implicating local, national, and global communities.

The complexity of the tragedy was exacerbated by its national notoriety as a terrorist attack. FBI investigators were not permitted to share information with local service-providers. This generated more confusion for victims who believed the FBI was going to connect them to services. When victims and survivors were connected with service providers, they had to relive the traumatic event again as they had to share their information several different times.

Providing holistic care in an extremely complicated system of disparities proved to be an enormous challenge. Countless caring individuals and groups attempted to volunteer, provide in-kind goods, and donate cash to mitigate the pain (physical and mental) caused by this act of violence. While in many cases this would be appreciated and necessary, at the time, there were no groups in Central Florida prepared to handle the level of compassion that came into the region. Fortunately, the City of Orlando and Orange County government, along with several other local and state government agencies and community organizations, were able to set up a crisis center at Camping World Stadium for those directly impacted by the tragedy. When volunteers showed up, however, they would often be turned away because there was no process to vet, train, and coordinate volunteers. The situation was delicate and the need highly-specialized. For example, while thousands of mental health counselors offered to assist, the specific need for many survivors who were directly impacted was for culturally competent, Spanish-speaking counselors specially trained in trauma-informed care.

Managing charitable contributions was a separate problem entirely. As of June 16, four days after the shooting, GoFundMe had reached 300 accounts. As the outpouring of generosity continued, the sporadic and unhindered creation of fundraisers created concerns over illegitimacy and mismanagement—causing a greater challenge in raising and handling funds effectively. When the City of Orlando opened The OneOrlando Fund as a victim's compensation fund to centralize monetary donation collection, its transparency helped to attract larger corporate donations, such as from Walt Disney World Resort and Universal Orlando Resort at \$1 million each. Payouts to families and individuals directly affected by the tragedy tallied more than \$30 million before the OneOrlando Fund closed. The Central Florida Foundation then opened the Better Together Fund as a way to meet the additional and ongoing needs of the survivors, their families, and the community after the Pulse Tragedy. Our Fund, an LBGTQ+ fund located in South Florida, also opened a fund to support the needs of Pulse Survivors with a specific focus on the needs of the LGBTQ+ Community.

Community leaders, nonprofit organizations (NPOs), and government officials often had relationships prior to the disaster; emergency management professionals did an exemplary job coordinating throughout the immediate response. However, there were no preexisting plans or infrastructure for cooperation within Orange County's philanthropic and social sectors. With time came coordination. The Edyth Bush Institute for Philanthropy & Nonprofit Leadership (EBI) coordinated major grant makers in the region, leading to philanthropic cooperation and better fund management. On July 11, 2016, The Orlando United Assistance Center (OUAC)—established by The City of Orlando, Orange County Government, and Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW)—bridged affected people with available resources in Central Florida. Connections evolved into collaborations, but at the cost of time, resources, and impact.

#### **2017 Natural Disasters and Central Florida**

2017 brought a wave of natural disasters which severely strained federal resources, caused a record-breaking \$306.2 billion in damage across the country (the previous record-holder was \$214.8 billion in 2005), and direly weakened the public interest and compassion necessary to rebuild. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, in addition to other weather events (including forest fires), displaced nearly 1.7 million people throughout the United States. While national attention was directed to Texas during the greatest national disaster since Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Irma barreled through Florida where Orange County sustained over \$51.67 million in damage to 3,000 properties. Approximately 50,000 people moved to Florida following Hurricane Maria, with just shy of 3,500 students enrolling in Orange County Public Schools.

While the government responded to the immediate community needs in Central Florida, NPOs attempted to return to their missions as soon as possible. A lack of proper preparation slowed the return to "business as usual." Many NPOs with insufficient



insurance coverage and reserve funds solicited emergency donations and bridge grants. For some organizations, power and internet were out for a week, leaving many professionals across the social sector incapable of serving the people who rely on their services. To connect operational deficits with assets [Wi-Fi accessibility, co-working space, payroll costs for performing artists, etc.] between NPOs, at least three entities distributed surveys to community agencies. Survey length and repetition tied with scarce time and ever-changing priorities resulted in poor response rates. Not only did the organizations needing assistance not get the valuable resources needed to serve the community, but many grant-makers were unable to reliably vet which organizations were taking leadership roles. At times, philanthropy dollars were invested without the experience and knowledge to give strategically, making it a greater challenge to serve the community with essential finances.

As Central Florida reeled from a substantial disaster, Hurricane Maria left many citizens of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands scrambling to find stability on the mainland. A natural disaster in Florida is no surprise, but few expected Central Florida to be one of the largest hubs for evacuees from the Caribbean. No one anticipated such a considerable exodus would directly follow an emergency at home-especially one involving linguistic and cultural barriers. Locating a leader in this unique crisis was difficult. HFUW eventually assembled regional leaders to open a one-stop welcome center at the Orlando International Airport for arrivals under the directive of then Florida Governor Rick Scott. Unclear division of responsibility over this massive migration— FEMA, Puerto Rico, Florida, or municipal government— provoked further difficulty in managing the care and resources for evacuees. As people flocked from the islands, families needed housing, jobs, education, medical care; all the dynamics of community. Abrazo Boricua (Spanish for "Puerto Rican Hug") was created with the idea to convene the agencies specifically supporting Puerto Rican evacuees, but this still left U.S. Virgin Islanders without a centralized system of support. Crisis management requires strategic cooperation. Unfortunately, countless NPOs and funders worked without a reliable infrastructure to convene and coordinate passions, data, resources, and capability.

#### **The Coordinated Disaster Response Project**

In the fall of 2018, a subgroup of the Central Florida Donors Forum—based out of the Edyth Bush Institute for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership—met to discuss the landscape of philanthropic and nonprofit disaster relief efforts within Central Florida. Representatives from the Central Florida Foundation, Orlando Health Foundation (OHF), Wells Fargo, and the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation (EBCF) asked Dylan McCain Allen, Disaster Relief Coordinator with A Gift For Teaching, to lead the initiative. A Gift For Teaching had recently developed its Disaster and Homelessness Relief initiative by building diverse partnerships with leaders on crisis intervention across the region, making them well-equipped to explore and convene existing community support systems.

The objective of the Coordinated Disaster Response (CDR) Project was to have a community-driven philanthropic response to natural and manmade disasters in Florida's Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties. The CDR Project invited more than 95 community organizations to strategic collaboration. While each organization will maintain their own plan and response, the final product from this work will provide a framework and recommendations about the different roles funders can play, as well as suggested interactions with nonprofits and government in the event of a disaster.



#### **Stage 1: Mapping Responders and Compiling Resources**

In the months following the 2017 hurricanes, various forums were planned throughout the Central Florida region to convene agencies supporting families who made the exodus from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as those rebuilding after Hurricane Irma. TD Bank, The FDIC, The Federal Reserve, The National Treasury, Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation, Delivering Good, and several others planned multiple gatherings all seeking to develop a community coordination plan for future crises that was situated in strategy and collective impact. Organize Florida built resiliency for 16 of the most asset-scarce communities in the tri-county region with neighborhood resiliency forums, resident assessment and asset-mapping, team-building through practical role-playing scenarios, and financial capital necessary to prepare each community based on the opinion of its residents. The Offices of Emergency Management (OEM) and Long-Term Recovery Groups (LTRG) of each county (including City of Orlando's OEM) are always actively engaged in the five mission areas: prevention, preparation/protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.

Dozens of NPOs were created with the sole purpose to respond to certain regional crises, yet some of these organizations worked independently from and in many cases in competition with existing support systems. Unifying entities such as the OneOrlando Alliance and Abrazo Boricua attempted to compile these organizations, yet their collaborations at times operated in silos without connection to the OEMs and LTRGs. Osceola County and Seminole County's LTRG were amply built to facilitate efficient and effective service cooperative missions, as well as to host volunteer reception centers [VRC] to coordinate groups of volunteers following catastrophes. Unfortunately, Orange County did not have a LTRG until after the 2017 hurricanes, which explains much of the lack of coordination of the philanthropic and social sectors following the disasters [except for the agencies already tied closely with the City of Orlando and Orange County OEMs].

Fortunately, Central Florida's social sector enjoys a culture of collaboration amongst its leaders. CFF and EBI are known as the go-to institutions for research and leadership in

Central Florida's social sector, and they connected local agencies to State and Federal resources. For example, FEMA's Ready.gov prepares families and businesses for just about anything. The Center for Disaster Philanthropy maintains a simple Disaster Philanthropy Playbook to support grant-making foundations in preparing and responding to crises with financial assets effectively. Consulting agencies, informational articles, best practices from municipalities across the globe, and technological resources are available. The CDR Project identified the need for these tools to be streamlined in a centralized location, resulting in a webpage on the Central Florida Foundation website.

#### Stage 2: Convening Community Dialogue

**The CDR Task Force** guided the CDR Project, as well as the creation of several focus groups to help determine local needs and ensure dialogues were both productive, actionable, and representative of Central Florida's diverse population. The Task Force convened the leadership of CFF, the City of Orlando, the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, Heart of Florida United Way, Organize Florida, and United Arts of Central Florida to steer the information-gathering and decision-making of the CDR Project.

The Community Assessment Focus Group unified the surveys used by several major regional entities designed to understand NPO needs after a disaster (such as insufficient insurance coverage or reserve funds), as well as connected assets between agencies (such as co-working space with Wi-Fi).

The Coordinated Crisis Intervention Focus Group convened NPOs and local government infrastructure to update each other on plans for immediate response and long-term recovery to both natural and man-made disasters. Financial, functional, and communications assets and gaps were identified at every stage of emergency management to provide the optimal capability for effective intervention strategies. **The Disaster Technology Focus Group** discussed opportunities and coordination efforts surrounding the development of a region-wide public resiliency website, a shared portal for asset management (both funds and volunteers), and a database of resources (strategies and fundable organizations) for funders, NPOs, and municipal government agencies. Information gathered in this focus group informed humanitarian philanthropy, including a recommendation to finance preventative, preparatory, and mitigating measures, as well as collaborative efforts.

The Philanthropic Strategy Focus Group strategized about disaster-related philanthropic giving and connected resources to the Central Florida Donors Forum sub-group; local, state, and national government; federal regulators; and major funders of disaster response. Dialogue included the possible creation of a shared portal for fundraising and asset disbursement. The portal could also house a database of regional service-providers, education for funders on best practices for disaster philanthropy, and development of philanthropic approaches that have the greatest impact on regional needs following the immediate aftermath and long-term recovery of local crises.

#### Stage 3: Bringing Everyone into One Room: The CDR Summit

On March 29, 2019, approximately 100 community leaders attended the CDR Summit, including nonprofits, funders, local government, and business leaders. Topics included capacity-building workshops, descriptions of regional cooperatives involved in disaster relief, and actionable next steps for regional leaders. Workshops taught attendees about the creation and refinement of business continuity plans [BCP], inclusive leadership for a diverse community, crisis leadership and team care, and best practices for philanthropy and volunteer management in an emergency. Attendees expressed interest in an annual, regional, joint LTRG event, as well as increased participation with OEMs and LTRGs to prepare for future crises together.

#### **Outcomes in Disaster Resiliency Coordination**

#### **Plan for Philanthropic and Volunteer Aid**

Philanthropic response to disaster requires pre-established collaborative networks, accountability and transparency in financial management, strategic goals and thoughtful process for fund development and disbursement, and an expertise-driven vetting process for recipient organizations. It is strongly recommended that foundations— whether family, community, or corporate—become an active member of the LTRGs which serve their service area(s) and meet with LTRG and OEM leadership annually at minimum to discuss any changes to emergency planning, regional circumstances, technological capabilities, and contact details.

Osceola County and Seminole County each maintain VRCs capable of managing group and individual volunteers, as well as in-kind donations. City of Orlando and Orange County are in the process of setting up VRCs. For jurisdictions with an established VRC, this is the best place for placement, training, and coordination of volunteers—whether civic, faith-based, corporate, or independent. If there is no VRC in place, then groups wanting to volunteer should reach out to LTRG or call 2-1-1, which in Central Florida is operated by HFUW. HFUW also operates a VRC to coordinate volunteers (they do not accept in-kind donations).

In the event of a disaster, CFF will activate its Focus Fund that will centralize monetary donations. EBI will use contact information from its member database and CFF's Nonprofit Search to distribute a unified survey to NPOs with the intention to share data with OEMs, funders, and relevant community leaders. The Central Florida Donors Forum of EBI will facilitate a conference call with regional grant-makers and relevant emergency management officials as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so. CFF will follow up and work with NPOs to make grants quickly and transparently.

#### Intervention Framework: Before, During, and After a Disaster

Directives from local, state, and federal emergency management officials take precedence over all other preparation, intervention, and recovery activities.

Central Florida NPOs and LTRGs are asked to annually update their profiles in CFF's Nonprofit Search. This tool can be shared by CFF to assist OEM and funders in connecting with agencies involved in various stages of disaster relief. Nonprofit Search enables users to identify disaster services nonprofits that have a published profile. CFF generally requires its grant applicants maintain an updated (or "Reviewed") status in Nonprofit Search. Nonprofits should be mindful of this as future initiated Focus Funds may carry this requirement. Since keeping a Reviewed status takes time scarcely available following a crisis, it is imperative that NPOs annually update all key information, especially contacts. CFF offers ongoing assistance and training on Nonprofit Search.

During the response and recover stages, EBI will send a critical needs assessment to contacts in Nonprofit Search. Every leader and connector in the region, especially funders, should assist with assessment distribution by sharing widely with their contact lists and ensuring timely completion. After analysis, EBI will share results with the Central Florida Donors Forum and OEMs. EBI will attempt to connect nonprofits missing mission-critical assets (warehousing, co-working facilities, technology, etc.) with organizations willing and able to assist, as identified by the critical needs assessment.

All stakeholders should adapt to local needs as they arise and consider how their volunteer, donation drives and campaigns, and fund disbursement can systemically rehabilitate the affected community. Stakeholders should support anchor institutions, critical community services [healthcare, food, shelter, trauma services, economic redevelopment, personal care items, etc.], and grassroots agencies that understand the diverse needs in their locally defined geographic areas.

Ongoing participation in the LTRG of an NPO's area of service will be vital in understanding the ever-changing landscape of crisis intervention. Proactive

relationship-building with funders, OEMs, and other NPOs will make the difference in a successful strategy for community leadership and support when a crisis happens. In a crisis, there is no time to build new relationships and properly establish partnerships. Connections with LTRG, OEM, and VRC can also help NPO offset the burden associated with a flood of volunteer requests and unnecessary in-kind donations often seen in a crisis. Funders and local government agencies involved in disaster services and community rehabilitation should engage with LTRG at least annually. All organizations should plan their intervention framework by leveraging local assets and relationships, and seeking collaborative regional strategy over individual organization intervention. Central Florida LTRGs include: RISE Orange County, Osceola REDI, and Seminole HEART.

#### A Website for Resources, Strategies, and Partner Coordination

A permanent, centralized location for the findings of the CDR Project was deemed a necessity. CFF has created a webpage, available at cffound.org, that lists relevant resources for NPO and funders; instructions and plans to guide collective impact strategies; EBI's needs assessment for NPO; and connects community leaders to cohesive groups such as local OEM, LTRG, VRC, etc.





#### **Recommendations**

#### **Take Steps Now Before Something Happens**

Invest in parametric insurance for hurricane events. Parametric Insurance is trigger based and pays out according to event intensity at a defined location vs. traditional insurance which is indemnity based. Parametric Insurance is paid out based on agreed upon measures including the trigger (named storm at a certain wind speed, for example) and payout. If the hurricane event occurs and meets or exceeds the pre-defined wind speed trigger, the insurance will pay out based on a payout table. Within 12 months, the insurance certifies that covered losses meet or exceed the payout received.

Make a robust Business Continuity Plan (BCP). All organizational leaders should be aware of and regularly update, test, and refine their BCP. If their organization does not have a formal plan, they should initiate the creation of an organizational resiliency plan with activities which integrate, at minimum: personnel management, critical operational assets and protection of property, business systems and process development, financial planning, leadership succession, and public relations. Third-party reviewers could help think of components you have not.

Emergencies can happen to anyone at any time, such as: systemic disasters (natural and man-made), significant changes in governmental policy (taxes, tariffs, regulations, etc.), and internal catastrophes (building damage, loss of life of employee or leadership, public relations incident, etc.). A BCP's internal component (handling of staff and assets) and

external component (communications and client service model) should be reviewed and tested by staff and a third party at least once a year. A BCP should consider employees' family preparedness as the human factor that is arguably the most important variable in an emergency. Management should feel confident in answering all critical operational questions pertaining to:

- non-electronic payroll processing;
- · alternate workspace due to facility damage, loss of electricity, and/or internet services;
- maintenance of institutional data and files, and what to do if there is a data failure;
- measures to handle delays in supply delivery;
- insurance verification and financial security;
- succession procedures and team communications systems;
- organization and community specific hazards; and more.

The BCP should be integrated into employee on-boarding and actively refreshed with staff to ensure compliance with planned policy, as well as appropriate skill-strengthening with appropriate staff and leadership. Resources to construct/refine a BCP can be found at Ready.gov, local OEMs, and a local chapter of The Association of Continuity Professionals.

#### Prevent civil unrest and identity-based violence with a culture of care and connection.

Central Florida benefits from a very diverse community which perpetuates compassionate understanding between cultural, ideological, and other identity-based communities. The Valencia College Peace and Justice Institute and the Divided Communities Project (regionally led by The City of Sanford) prevent and mitigate violence resulting from escalated community tensions. A culture of peaceful confrontation is difficult to achieve and requires leadership at every level of society. Outlets to express frustrations and learning opportunities to refine communication and intervention strategies should be handled by trained facilitators, though everyone can encourage healthy and constructive approaches to change and conflict. Employ empathy and human-centered design to engage strife with meaningful dialogue, centering care for people and prosperity for all as a uniting purpose. Ultimately, everyone should be mindful of how everyday actions and communications affect community wellbeing and peace. Tirelessly encourage constructive dialogue before it results in violence. If violence occurs, seek to stop it immediately. Be present and supportive for affected parties and communities. Focus efforts on healing, reconciliation, and constructive solutions that factor in the needs and experiences of all involved.

Build relationships now; there is no time for networking in a crisis. Funders and NPOs engaged in disaster services should meet the OEM staff of their jurisdiction, join the local LTRG(s), and facilitate connections with regional support institutions for the social sector (such as universities, professional associations, and the like). Community foundations or a local United Way, for example, could compile lists of funding bodies willing to finance disaster services and coordinate collective grant-making strategies. OEMs often maintain lists of NPOs working in their jurisdiction, though maintaining updated contact details is a challenge. OEMs, NPOs, and LTRGs should work together to identify a forum or methodology to keep organizational program and contact information up to date. Networks of funders, NPOs, and service-providing agencies could contemplate pre-emptive group contracts with contractors specializing in debris and tree removal, roof repair, or other areas of expertise to build greater buying power and save financial resources across the social sector when a disaster hits.

Central Florida benefits greatly from a culture of connection. Other regions may cultivate this through a mix of strong professional networking associations, close cross-sector relationships, encouragement for collaboration by community leaders and funders, and plenty of opportunities for organizational staff and management to exchange news and best practices. Unifying forces—such as universities, collective impact structures, nonprofit education and advocacy organizations, professional associations, identity-based support clusters, impact- or region-specific workgroups, and other similar institutions—create a go-to space for sector coordination and resource-sharing. These forces should uphold an active commitment to lead should their shared region face a major crisis.

Decide if you will volunteer before a tragedy happens. Volunteer groups [faith-based, community-based, and company-affiliated] should convey a commitment to help in times of crisis to their local OEM[s] before they happen—for example, a few months prior to hurricane season. This increases the likelihood the OEM will train, equip, deploy, and, in specific circumstances, even provide insurance coverage for volunteers. Otherwise, these groups will need to work through a VRC after an incident, which is often flooded by support, delaying volunteer deployment. Additionally, establish clear internal guidelines or procedures with management and insurance providers to manage technical skill utilization of staff. For example, if a law firm would like to provide pro bono legal assistance or a hospital wishes to provide no-cost health care to those affected, then these organizations should establish specific policies and parameters. Local OEMs and LTRGs can help coordinate this resource for the greater community.

Prevent, mitigate, and prepare; these are the cheapest forms of intervention. Local government, economic development agencies, funders engaged in housing and business, advocates of environmental justice, and so many more fields are deeply connected to disaster services than a general population might assume. Every dollar invested in prevention, preparation, and mitigation can save up to \$18 in intervention costs, depending on the circumstance. This can mean investing in storm-resistant infrastructure and construction projects-including residential, commercial, and public projects. Technology that monitors and redirects flooding has shown success. Other technologies such as Geospiza, One Concern, EverBridge, and RADAR employ powerful data analytics, the internet of things, artificial intelligence, and/or cross-sector assessment platforms to empower local and state governments with enhanced decision-making tools and reiterative communications. For the private and independent sectors, this might look like reinforcing facilities to withstand damage, endowing reserve funds, investing in resilient capital improvements (such as battery packs for computers and servers or generators), and learning about [even financing] team readiness. More than 40% of small businesses never reopen their doors after a disaster, so now is the time to strengthen our economies and communities.

#### **Intervene Quickly and Effectively**

**Give funds and materials strategically.** Once a crisis hits, major funders (corporate, governmental, and private foundations) should set up a meeting (through the Donors Forum in Central Florida) as quickly as possible to discuss the scenario, the resources available to intervene, a central location for in-kind good acceptance (if not already established by the local OEM and LTRG), and decide on the go-to fundraising apparatus for the affected area (Focus Fund at Central Florida Foundation or United Way Disaster Fund). Decide how the community will know about the fundraising and in-kind good acceptance processes—venturing through service-provider relationships, community leadership networks, media partnerships, and official communications channels to get a consistent message across to the public. Determine who will manage the donations and whether additional support (volunteer, professional, financial, technological, etc.) will be required. Rather than provide funds directly to individuals, consider disbursing financial resources directly to payees (contractors, landlords, service providers, etc.). If direct payments are more feasible, consider utilizing gift cards to simplify fund transfers.



In Central Florida, in-kind donations and volunteers will be managed by county VRCs or City of Orlando's VRC for Orange County residents and organizations within city limits. A single fund will be established at an institution to manage donations to support relief efforts. Funds will be granted to service-providing agencies using a centralized process. A coherent strategy for fund disbursement should focus on projects and agencies involved in outcomes-based approaches which commit to long-term recovery. Certain funds should be held for the express purpose of prevention, mitigation, and preparation tactics that strengthen community resiliency from future crises (it is very challenging to fundraise for these assets when the public has a "clear skies" mentality). Funding strategy can be informed by a variety of community assessments—especially a unified assessment designed to understand the emerging needs of the community as well as the organizations helping to rebuild.

Volunteer effectively to help without harm. Check the local OEM website and communications outlets to utilize their formal volunteer coordination process, which may or may not involve an established VRC. Always be considerate of risk and liability for volunteers, as well as proper training and equipment. It is critical that volunteers never self-deploy; check with local officials to ensure the volunteer help is needed, the logistics are realistic, the resources for volunteers (including food, lodging, supplies, etc.) are available, and the agency has the capacity to manage groups of volunteers. Consider whether the volunteer labor is:

- **unskilled** [good for supplies distribution, community clean-ups, etc.];
- skilled (for example: medically trained, certified for contractor work, board-certified for legal assistance, forklift operator-certified); and/or
- trained [such as by FEMA, VOAD/COAD, or Community Emergency Response Team [CERT]-trained; good for community needs assessments, search and rescue, volunteer team leadership, etc.].

Individuals and groups without proper training, skills, and/or insurance should never volunteer in an emergency without the guidance of a government official or independent emergency management professional (such as the American Red Cross).

Handle communications with extreme care. When an emergency is announced, trustworthy information is difficult to find. These days, OEMs tend to monitor social media and internet traffic, but misinformation can spread too fast for OEMs to counteract alone. Accept and share communications from local OEMs, LTRGs, FEMA, and other governmental leaders to ensure accuracy. If a media outlet suggests a fact not confirmed by an official source, check for reliability across multiple outlets (at least three) and be sure the original source is trustworthy. When in doubt, check with local OEM professionals to validate questionable information. Help dispel myths and misinformation through internal and external communications.

**Prepare your team for the media.** In most public incidents, there is often a rush by various members of the media to learn changing factors in the community's situation. Train staff to handle questions by the media, know who specific inquiries should be directed to, and understand what legal and public relations implications could be in connection to various communication missteps and even inactions. Prepare executive leadership and/or spokespersons to effectively manage interviews, being mindful that the entire interview could be reduced to a single phrase or brief soundbite.

**Care for your team.** Even the most senior and skilled members of a team can (and will) experience burnout. In all plans and interventions, be sure to empathize with the ever-changing needs of the individuals in a team. Rotate team members for short-term breaks, including on-the-clock breaks as well as off-the-clock breaks. Maintain their physical and emotional needs: provide additional security measures, mental health resources , encouraging leadership, planned flexibility for staff to care for their families, and a culture that encourages self-care. Discourage work during periods of rest and strongly emphasize the importance that staff never distribute their personal contact

information to anyone during a crisis. Instead, provide work or temporary phones as well as other communication tools that allow the team members to detach when they are resting. Deploy, recall, and redeploy team members intermittently to always have an active group and a resting group. Determine who of a team is essential and nonessential to help prioritize staff deployment strategy. Clearly articulate the resources available for staff wellness—including a policy and process for pay, reassuring team members they will receive their wages. Team leads should seek to inspire, secure, and maintain confidence within team members.



#### **Recover for as Long as the Community Needs**

Brace stakeholders for long-term rehabilitation. The greatest impacts of natural disasters are often the economic upheavals. Businesses will close, community members will lose wages (and possibly jobs), transitional housing will generate logistical challenges for impacted families (such as changing their mode of transportation getting to work), and undefined resource availability (including food, water, and medicine/health care) will confuse and worry the public. Cleaning, rebuilding, and rehabilitating could take months or a decade—maybe more. Business and community leaders, media outlets, funders, and service-providers should generate a public understanding of the needs for long-term engagement strategies. Recovery practices should be all-inclusive and underline the necessity of coordination by local LTRGs. Housing, mental health, educational, economic, medical, and nutritional factors are examples of impacts that any sort of emergency can inflict upon a community. Set up a resource center that bridges the community resources directly for the public, knowing when resources can be widely available to any who ask (perhaps in a website format) and when referrals are necessary (such as through case managers); this is why proactive relationship-building is key to holistic community recovery. Funders should engage with LTRGs through the full recovery process and beyond.

Inspire action when hope fades. In many cases, public interest surrounding public emergencies (especially in the form of donations and volunteers) fades as soon as the next big story hits. Engaging public assistance in substantial, effective, and strategic manners is critical in the days following an incident; however, as stated above, the community likely will need long-term partnerships and support. When soliciting, receiving, and rendering help in a crisis, devise a way to keep stakeholders engaged in the long term, such as with ongoing LTRG participation. Invest in spokespersons to communicate with various types of local entities in order to convey urgency in long-term support. Sharing needs assessment data and ongoing stories of intervention across agencies can underscore the lasting effects on the community which require sustained involvement. RISE Orange County has toyed with asking for organizational sponsors of rebuilding projects. Central Florida LTRGs have leveraged shared knowledge to represent progress and barriers thereof to government and community stakeholders. Coordinated efforts leverage greater advocacy power—for example, RISE Orange County successfully petitioned city and county commissions to waive permit fees for qualified reconstruction projects. Collective voices can more powerfully advocate for fair government funding from state emergency management agencies or from FEMA for the crisis at hand.

**Heal using existing relationships.** Leverage the unifying forces in the community: chambers of commerce; public councils, workgroups, and think tanks; professional associations and networking groups; educational institutions and backbone government support agencies (such as funding bodies); community foundations and other local funders of the social

sector (including United Way); faith-based congregations (including denominational umbrella organizations as well as interfaith cooperatives); communitybased organizations and neighborhood associations; and identity-based agencies. Crises of trauma—particularly identitybased violence—necessitate leadership and care stewarded by empowered members within said community. Know when to lead and when to get out of the way, and when to elevate appropriate leaders when the situation calls for a different type of leader(ship).





#### **Conclusion and Pending Projects**

The main takeaway of the CDR Project, if nothing else, is that every organization that strives to lead and serve after a disaster should participate with its local LTRG(s). LTRGs convene interested parties in emergency management, provide ongoing training relevant to a diverse audience, and ensure methodologies are mindful and data driven. The only constant between emergency incidents is complexity. A holistic approach that pervasively supports communities—in the dynamic ways necessary—requires effective collaboration.

Hurricane season runs June 1st through November 30th. A few closing tasks need to be finalized before Central Florida can be considered adaptably resilient. City of Orlando and Orange County Governments must finish the development of their respective VRCs. Every \$1 spent in mitigation and prevention can save between \$6 and \$18 in intervention and recovery, so thoughtful business continuity planning and mitigation efforts benefit funders, NPOs, governments, businesses, and the broader community. CFF and the Central Florida Dopors Forum have formalized a Focus Fund and need to communicate with the appropriate parties how it will function in a crisis, as well as create the application and plan the fund disbursement procedures. EBI and HFUW will pledge to operationalize these plans by sharing them with appropriate leaders and NPOs. In addition, they will commit to collecting and distributing vital data to critical entities after a disaster, utilizing the standardized critical needs assessment for NPOs. HFUW should update partner agencies and 2-1-1 staff on fundraising, in-kind good collection, and volunteer mobilization (think of the VRC) dynamics as details arise so the greater community can access consistent information and assist in an effective and organized manner. Finally, The Central Florida Disaster Resilience Initiative has set up regional disaster resiliency hubs somewhat independently of existing regional infrastructure. It will benefit local communities as well as the regional system of support to involve these hubs with LTRGs.

After the Pulse Nightclub tragedy, Orlando's entire downtown center was alit with rainbows. Countless organizations stepped up to spread rainbow-colored ribbons, thousands promised to adorn symbols of compassion and acceptance on a regular basis, and displays in every form imaginable shared the message, "you matter." Communities of every background cried together, sighed together, and loved together. Watermark, Central Florida's LGBTQ+ news source, though at the time speaking directly to its LGBTQ+ audience after the Pulse tragedy, said it best as to how we all must move forward:

> Our enduring story will not be a tragedy. The world will see our community,

the care we have for each other, and how we draw strength from that love.

Our story will be one of survival, and hope, and PRIDE.

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<sup>22</sup>Consider, when resources available, hiring an emotional support animal or mental health professional specifically to care for the needs of staff.

<sup>23</sup>Central Florida utilizes United Way's management of 2-1-1 call services once the EOC hotlines are disengaged after a specified period following an incident. City of Orlando and OUAC opened a community hotline for the survivors and indirectly-affected community members of the Pulse Nightclub Shooting. Abrazo Boricua offered a central hub of services for Puerto Ricans displaced after Hurricane Maria.

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