

# Oregon COADs

## Community Organizations Active in Disaster

A toolbox for prospective COADs



Oregon  
Voluntary Organizations  
Active in Disaster

COOPERATION | COMMUNICATION | COORDINATION | COLLABORATION



## INTRODUCTION

Every community in Oregon has been impacted by disasters of varying magnitudes. Disaster is defined as any natural or human caused event resulting in damage, loss, hardship or suffering. Disasters can affect individual households, local communities, regions, states, or the entire nation. When a disaster occurs, neighbors and community organizations want to reach out and help, but this is not always easy. During a disaster, organizing a community response may be hindered by the chaotic nature of the event. Communities are better served if a COAD is in place for collaboration, coordination, communication, and cooperation, long before a disaster strikes.

### ESTABLISHED PARTNERS

There are entities within each community whose purpose is to assist those affected by disaster:  
Emergency Responders – Fire and Police, Public Works

Government Partners – FEMA, OEM and Local Emergency Management

Oregon Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (Oregon VOAD)

Organizations with a disaster response mission (American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, etc.)

Although these organizations exist to assist in disaster relief across the nation and state, ultimately, all disasters are local. Grass-roots efforts are the most effective way of addressing local issues. A Community Organization Active in Disasters (COAD) can be formed prior to a disaster, by bringing together community non-profit agencies, area businesses, schools, neighborhoods (geographic, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and demographic), faith-based organizations and other community stakeholders. This collaboration promotes the development of locally tailored preparedness and recovery efforts, thus creating more resilient communities.

### TAKING ACTION

A COAD is a collaborative effort of community stakeholders, each having an equal role in the organization. Their goal is to organize and deploy community resources in an efficient and timely manner, effectively contributing to each phase of a disaster.

The four phases of disaster are:

**Mitigation** – Any activity taken to eliminate or reduce the degree of long term risk to human life, property and the environment from the effects of natural and technological hazards.

**Preparedness** - Any activity taken in advance of an emergency that improves emergency readiness posture and develops or expands operational capabilities.

**Response** - Any action taken immediately before, during or directly after an emergency occurs to save lives, minimize injuries, lesson property and environmental damage and enhance the effectiveness of recovery.

**Recovery** - A short term activity to return vital life support systems to minimum operating standards and/or a long term activity designed to return the affected people and areas to their pre-disaster conditions.

For examples of activities related to these phases, please refer to page 22.



## COMING TOGETHER

A COAD can be initiated by any organization or community stakeholder committed to the ideal of a disaster resilient community. An essential piece of starting a COAD is to ensure that all traditional and nontraditional disaster response agencies and organizations are invited to the table. There are many in the community who may not recognize the importance of their potential contribution and it is vital that the COAD conveners extend an open invitation to all untapped resources.

A COAD can start out relatively small and grow as the community sees fit. The group should determine if the size or coverage area of their COAD is comprised of one or more towns. Based on the number of organizations in an area, it may be more beneficial to develop a regional rather than a local COAD. Individual COADs can determine if they prefer formal or informal organizational structure. Regardless of structure, it is important that every stakeholder commit to the COADs mission by agreeing to a letter of commitment.

## SUCSESSES

After various disasters in Oregon several particularly hard hit communities realized that there was a need for better communication, coordination, collaboration and cooperation and naturally came together. They began to build what we now know as the first COADs and LTRGs (Long Term Recovery Groups) in Oregon. The success of these collaborations resulted in a/an:

- Ability to work productively with emergency management  
Resource for emergency managers
- Voice for concerned individuals in the community
- Resource for facilitating long-term recovery Management of volunteers and donations
- Promotion of emergency education and preparedness
- Coordination among members leading to a reduction of service duplication
- Linkage with State VOAD
- Expediting local response
- Transparency of partner agencies Empowerment of the community

The success of Oregon's existing COADs demonstrates the power that COADs can hold for communities in our state. Individuals and organizations each play a role in preparing their families and community to respond to disaster. COADs can be a vital link in this process. By working together, COADs will create stronger, more resilient communities.



## ABOUT THE TOOLBOX

The purpose of this Community Organizations Active in Disaster's Toolbox is to inform, encourage, and guide the many communities who put their routines on hold in the event of a local, statewide, or national disaster. The likelihood of confusion and ambiguity increases with the scale of a disaster. Research has found that communities themselves are the best sources of innovation and ingenuity, and the stronger the communities, the more resourceful their efforts. (James Jay Carafano and Richard Weitz, "Learning from Disaster: The Role of Federalism and the Importance of Grassroots Response", March 21, 2006)

This toolbox is to serve as a reference, and is in no way the only path for creating a COAD. The tools have shown to be effective in establishing other COADs. However, please feel free to use and/or amend as appropriate for your community.



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## WHAT IS A COAD?

The idea of forming Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) came about because of a void in human services in the areas of immediate response and long-term recovery. In the initial minutes and hours following a disaster, the community relies solely on emergency services to respond, yet many human needs go unmet due to limited resources and overwhelming needs. Known voluntary organizations, traditionally active in a disaster, have to muster people and other resources before they can begin to operate. This can take from a few hours to three or more days. Also, smaller, more localized disasters are better responded to by local resources and local volunteers. Who will fill the gap?

When the fire trucks are back in the garage and federal disaster assistance has run its course, who will help the community with the long-term recovery? Federal disaster assistance, to the surprise of many, is extremely limited. Most disaster assistance comes in the form of low interest loans provided by the U.S. Small Business Administration. However, many people will not qualify for a loan and their assistance awards will fall far short of helping them return to a pre-disaster condition.

So the questions that establish the need are - 1) who will fill the gap between the time of the event and the arrival of traditional voluntary agency relief, and 2) who will help the community with the long-term recovery when the disaster is no longer front-page news? The answer should be apparent - it will be the community affected and probably no one else.

### **What is the difference between a COAD and a State VOAD?**

COADs are not meant to replace or duplicate the State VOAD. Rather the COAD exists primarily to fill the immediate void in response to human needs and continue the long-term recovery when State and National VOAD member organizations pull out. Therefore, COADs should be autonomous operations not dependent upon, or subservient to the Oregon VOAD. Many COADs, due to their make-up and design, would not meet the membership criteria established by NVOAD anyway.

State VOADs will benefit by promoting the development of COADs throughout the state because every community capable of helping itself during and following a disaster becomes less of a burden to the voluntary agency disaster support system. Promoting development of a COAD means creating a desire in the community to organize and then helping them through some of the processes of development. It does not mean helping the community create a miniature version of the state VOAD. And, it does not mean controlling what the COAD does or how it organizes itself.

Oregon VOAD encourages COADs to participate in state VOAD exercises and other pertinent activities. Oregon VOADs also encourages communication and collaboration amongst COADs by connecting them and facilitating conference calls/webinars, or meetings. Doing so gives COADs a forum to share and learn best practices and allows Oregon VOAD member organizations to better understand the capabilities of local communities that may someday have a need for voluntary agency support.



## CORE VALUES

The COAD adheres to the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters core (NVOAD) values. The COAD member working relationship is achieved through the guiding principles of cooperation, coordination, communication, and collaboration of member organizations.

**Cooperation:** No member organization has all the answers for the challenges communities face. Organizations must treat members as partners.

**Communication:** Member organizations will regularly share their capacities, accomplishments, and commitments. COADs must maintain good channels for sharing information, listening carefully to each other, and dealing openly with concern.

**Coordination:** COAD members commit to working together and not competitively toward the goal of effective service to the community. Members seek to match services to need. Through planning and preparation, COADs equip member organizations to behave in a coordinated fashion in time of disaster.

**Collaboration:** COAD members dedicate themselves to working together to achieve specific goals and undertake specific projects during each phase of disaster.



## MISSION STATEMENT EXAMPLES

### Sample 1

The COAD will serve as the foremost organization for the local community in each phase of a disaster; mitigation, preparation, response and recovery.

### Sample 2

The mission of the COAD is to bring together community, government, faith based organizations, business, and volunteers committed to making their community become more prepared, resilient and self-sufficient. Together, members will enhance the community's ability to mitigate, prepare, respond and recover from disasters thus ensuring that human needs compromised in a disaster situation are evaluated and addressed. This will be achieved through cooperation, coordination, communication, and collaboration of member organizations.

### Sample 3

The mission of the COAD is to coordinate planning and preparedness efforts in advance of a disaster. The COAD is not designed for operational management and is not itself a service delivery organization. Instead, its members operate independently to provide disaster relief and recovery services, and do so cooperatively through the Oregon VOAD. The COAD is committed to the idea that the best time to prepare, train and become acquainted with one another is prior to the actual disaster response.

### Sample 4

The mission of the COAD is to strengthen area-wide disaster coordination in (name area that is covered) by sharing information, simplifying resident access to services, and jointly resolving cases with disaster –caused recovery needs.

### Sample 5

The mission of the COAD is to unite leaders and volunteers from the community, government, faith organizations, and businesses to help communities mitigate, prepare, respond to and recover from disasters and ensure human needs that are comprised in a disaster situation are evaluated and addressed. This will be achieved through cooperation, coordination, communication and collaboration of member organizations.

### Sample 6

The mission of the COAD is to aid in Oregon's recovery plans by developing and implementing a holistic approach to disaster recovery, maximizing public and private resources to facilitate an efficient and effective integrated system addressing human services, housing, infrastructure, community and economic development issues.

### Sample 7

To organize a collaborative response to the needs of community disaster survivors.

### Sample 8

To provide a means for community stakeholders to make a positive contribution to the disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts of their community through collaboration, communication, coordination, and cooperation.



## What organizations form a COAD?

In times of disaster, everyone has something they can contribute to the community. Be it tangible goods, services, manpower, or time, everyone can help. If logic prevails, a COAD would then consist of people, organizations, and businesses in a community, who are IMMEDIATELY available, in close proximity to, and/or who want to contribute to the response and or recovery of that community. Community in this case means the people, organizations, businesses, etc. in the immediate vicinity: People who can provide IMMEDIATE assistance because they are already there. If one has to travel any distance to provide help, then they are not part of the "community" as described here. You may notice that the words "voluntary agencies" has not been used in describing a COAD. This is not to say that voluntary agencies residing in the "community" cannot participate in a COAD, rather it means that voluntary agencies do not have to be present to have a COAD. Ideally, a COAD would embrace every person, organization, and business in a community that has something to offer. Remember, the purpose of the COAD is to fill the void when voluntary agencies that have state-wide or regional resources have not yet mobilized to respond and to continue the long-term recovery when those agencies have left the scene.

### Local Government and Emergency Managers

In short, the relationship between the COAD and emergency management should be simply one of sharing information.

COADs are not another emergency management program to be organized or managed by emergency managers. First, most emergency managers do not have the staff or time to devote to building a COAD. However, most emergency managers would want to know that a COAD exists in their community and would benefit from knowing what capabilities the community has that will free up emergency services that might be needed elsewhere. Likewise, the COAD might like to know what emergency services will actually do in a disaster so they can best plan what services they need to provide to the community.

A community leader (formal or informal) who has the connections and marketing skills to bring people together and organize them to perform a function/service should undertake development of a COAD. The emergency manager along with Oregon VOAD could be instrumental in identifying that leader and helping them to get started.

Emergency managers along with local government officials carry a great deal of responsibility when their community is facing a disaster. The response to disasters is managed by skilled players in conjunction with well-developed emergency plans. As a member of a COAD, local officials are uniquely positioned to share their plans, expectations, and vision for managing emergencies. This creates a community that is better educated and informed on disaster issues, and more likely to respond in ways that help rather than hinder emergency operations. A COAD also creates a unique opportunity for officials to be made aware of the great number of resources available in their community. Local officials may be unfamiliar with all of the organizations and agencies willing to help a community in times of need. A COAD promotes the development of these relationships, and an opportunity for all sectors to work together in a productive way.



### **Non-profit Organizations**

The mission and vision of many non-profit organizations will align strongly with the goals and objectives of a COAD. In times of disaster communities find themselves in great need, and non-profits are uniquely positioned to provide for many of these. When non-profits operate with a clear understanding of the capabilities of their partner organizations each is able to maximize their benefit to the community. COADs can prove essential in preventing the occurrence of duplication of services, as they promote frequent communication. Over the long term the provision of services can become a fluid process for the both agencies and the client alike.

### **Faith-Based Groups**

Faith groups are often not established to provide direct services to the community, but during disaster times, they are frequently the first groups who step up to help. Faith-based groups are able to provide a variety of resources during a disaster from volunteers, donated goods, shelter space, office support, and a passion to help those in need. By becoming COAD members they are able to determine the most effective way they can contribute to the community, and the variety of outlets that might be available to them. Additionally, the COAD provides an opportunity for faith-based groups to promote their involvement and visibility in the community.

### **Businesses**

Businesses are an integral part to a COAD. Business owners and managers bring valuable assets to the table in helping a community recover, from collaborative networks, financial contributions, employee volunteers, to storage or warehouse space. In most cases whatever a business does for normal operations can be adapted to help the community in some way in a disaster.

As a COAD member, your organization contributes to building a vibrant and healthy community, while simultaneously building your reputation in the place you operate. By creating long lasting goodwill within the community, COAD members are able to improve their relationships with customers and clients. COAD also provides an opportunity for employees to develop leadership and networking abilities, while at the same time promoting loyalty to your organization. Becoming a member of COAD is something that any business can be proud of.



## OBJECTIVES AND RESOURCES

The following objectives serve as guidelines to better define the goals for a Community Organization Active in Disaster. These are some of the most important issues that COADs address, and the baseline for what a COAD can achieve. In no way is this list comprehensive. If a COAD identifies challenges in their community that they can effectively address they should. COADs are encouraged to be creative and address the issues related to mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery that are most important in their community.

### **Objective 1: Structure**

A COAD structure is established. The organization includes all appropriate members and holds regular meetings. The functions and roles that the COAD plays in the community are clear and established.

### **Objective 2: Training and Education**

Members of COAD are informed and trained on emergency management issues. The training needs have been identified and the organization is constantly working to keep its members informed.

### **Objective 3: Ready to Respond**

COAD is ready to respond in an emergency. Each member organization knows the role it plays in an emergency response and is prepared to fill that role. The COAD has worked with local emergency managers to assure that COAD fits into the wider community response plan.

### **Objective 4: Managing Donations and Volunteers**

COAD is prepared to handle donations and volunteers that occur on a local level. They are able to facilitate the most effective allocation of given resources in their community during and after a disaster. When appropriate a COAD can raise funds, hold them as necessary, and distribute them appropriately.

### **Objective 5: Long Term Recovery**

COAD members are familiar with the established procedures of long term recovery and understand their role in the process. They have identified appropriate members of a committee, case managers, and other potentially needed roles and how they relate to the state wide recovery efforts.



## ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 1: STRUCTURE

For any organization to become successful and accomplish its goals, it must have an established and functioning structure. Certain aspects are critical when developing strong community coalitions. The following steps have proved crucial in establishing strong COADs in the state of Oregon.

### Have a dedicated champion and advocate

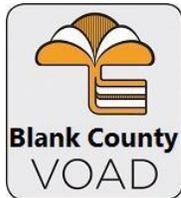
COAD is an idea and a movement that needs a strong local champion and advocate. For any idea to gain ground on the local level, it must be promoted by supporters within the community. These champions must be people who not only believe in the idea of COAD, but also are invested and connected in the community. Without strong champions, it is difficult to mobilize partnerships and for COAD to become a legitimate organization.

### Establish a coverage area

By defining the coverage area of a COAD, the organization creates a defined scope for their activities. The reach of a COAD should be carefully considered to reflect the reach of its member organizations, and the needs of the populations it may serve.

### Establish a name

The COAD may use VOAD branding and name the VOAD by the geographic area. For example:



The community can choose not to use VOAD branding or VOAD in their name. Other COADs name ideas have been to take out the “V” replacing it with the first letter of the county or city, for example: CCCOAD- Clackamas County Community Organizations Active in Disaster.

### **Create a mission statement**

Deciding on a mission statement for the COAD is an important step in clarifying the role and position of the organization within the community. By putting these words on paper it becomes easier for other organizations, groups, and citizens to understand why and how a COAD works, and the benefits it holds for the community.

### **Reach out to all potential members**

As COAD is meant to be a collaborative community organization, the more members who join the better. Every organization, agency or business, can contribute something to a COAD, it just needs to be identified. These contributions may be obvious, or might require more imagination, but every organization has assets, skills, or services that can serve the community in disaster situations. Outreach should find persuasive ways to describe these contributions, while at the same time explaining the positive effects for potential members. Recruiting members is critical in the earlier organizing phases of COAD, but is an activity that should be ongoing for the group.

### **Define and determine COAD leadership**

COAD needs a dedicated leader and champion to advocate for the creation of a COAD, but the ongoing management of the organization need not be done alone by these initial instigators. Once a group of regular and committed members has become a part of the COAD, these members should determine what type of leadership structure would best fit their group. Suggestions for this structure can be found in this Toolbox on page 29, as well as the National VOAD document “Design for Success.”

### **Create a positive working relationship with emergency managers**

Emergency Management officials should be involved and active in their COAD. It is imperative that COAD leadership have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Emergency Managers so that they may work in a positive and collaborative way that will not hinder established means of preparing and responding to emergencies. Having relationships with Emergency Managers will also allow COAD members to keep officials better informed of the capabilities of non-government organizations in their community.

### **Develop and promote the position of the VOAD within the community**

The COAD should work on promoting themselves not solely with its members but also with the community and public at large. Promoting COAD locally gives the public a sense that the public, private, and business sectors of the community are working together in their interest, which boost the reputation of all involved. This public awareness will prompt the involvement of an increasing number of members, and allow more opportunities for the COAD to be involved in activities in all four phases of disaster.

### **Maintain Communication**

It is vital that members of the COAD are in constant and ongoing communication. This is the most important role of COAD; to keep members informed on the capabilities, involvement, and activities of other members. Maintaining communication can be done in a variety of ways. Initially it may be necessary for the COAD to hold frequent regularly meetings. As the group becomes better established, these meeting may become more infrequent, occurring on a bi-monthly, quarterly, or semi-annual basis. Regardless of the time tables for regularly scheduled meetings, it is imperative that the COAD convenes after an incident or disaster occurs. This debrief is critical in highlighting how the



COAD worked effectively and understanding how its activities and contributions can be improved. A newsletter, blog, website, conference call/webinar, and e-mail list are other tools that may be valuable in keeping COAD members informed between meetings and disasters.

In conjunction with good communication, the COAD can develop a database or resource manual listing members their contact information and assets.

### **Develop a Concept Paper**

Although, not many are willing to document the planning process, without it you have little more than an idea that lives in someone's mind - an idea that is personality driven, and an idea that is not clearly viewed by all. As time evolves, that idea will take on a shape and personality that no longer represents the original intent. So, start by putting text to paper.

#### *Needs Analysis*

While, one can assume that there is a need in most communities, unless you can quantify the need, you will likely have a hard time selling the concept of organizing a COAD. Putting together a needs analysis is never easy. First, you have to find out who in your community is supplying what service(s) and then determine what needs are not being met. This could be the initial action item for a newly congregated group giving thought to organizing a COAD.

#### *Concept Paper*

Developing a concept paper (policy and procedures manual) is simply a matter of writing down your vision. It is a starting point from which a more detailed plan may later be written. And, it provides something in writing that will keep you focused on the original concept. The concept paper should address the findings of the needs analysis, and then layout in broad general terms what you are planning to do, how you are going to do it, when you are going to do it, how you will staff and man it, and finally how you will maintain it over time.

Once written, the concept paper will give you a realistic look at what you are about to do. It will help you decide whether you have what you will need to make it work. And, most importantly, it will help you decide if this is really something you want to do. Some of the items that you will need to address in your concept paper, and then in more detail in your plan, are marketing, training, standard operating procedures, tracking systems, budget, implementation procedures, communication, and maintenance, all of which are addressed in the following paragraphs.

#### *Training*

Is training needed? Who is going to provide it, where and when? While there may not be a need for formal training, you will need to consider how you will continue to bring new members of the COAD up to speed with those who have been there from the start. If you fail to do this, you will find that you will need to spend much of your meeting time educating the new members.

Members of the COAD can also publicize any available trainings to other members encouraging cross training and deeper understanding of what each organization is capable of.



### *Standard Operating Guides (SOG's)*

SOGs are written directions on how to carry out certain functions. SOGs could be developed to address meetings, training, operational procedures, distribution sites, volunteer reception centers or just about anything where you will want to have some level of consistency in operations or service delivery. They could also address how the COAD plans to interface with VOAD member organizations following a disaster.

### *Tracking System*

Determining what type of tracking and reporting system to use will be a challenge. You could start with a database consisting of COAD members and what service/resource they will offer up in the initial response and/or long-term recovery. If you are going to organize teams, an additional database, or an addition to the existing one, could address team composition and function. Still another tracking system, and perhaps one of the most important, is a case processing database where you can track the progress of individual requests for assistance.

### *Budget*

Where will you get money to operate? Who will manage the funds? Who has the authority? What can the money be used for? You will need funds for advertising, letters, mailings, printing of meeting notes, etc. Will you need to buy equipment, pay for meeting locations? Will you need to create a tax-free entity? Will you need to apply for grants? Answers to these questions and others will help you establish the budget part of your plan.

Many COADs start with another 501(c)3 acting as their fiscal agent until such time official 501(c)3 status is desired and attained. Many COADs have found ways to operate without needing an extensive budget through donations of time and resources of its member organizations. The VOAD may decide that member organizations will pay annual dues.

### *Implementation*

How will you start out, what will you do first? Will you embrace the whole community at one time, or will you do it segment by segment? Perhaps you might bring all the church groups together first, then invite the business community, then the social/fraternal organizations, etc., etc. In what period will you do what step? What will be the best approach in starting a successful program?

There is no perfect way to start up a COAD, as each community is different approaches to start-up will and should be different. A common way to start up is by identifying several interested organization leaders and initiating a start-up meeting where the COAD vision is explained. Often after this meeting attendees reach out to the community and another meeting is called and the structure begins to take shape based on member motivation and community needs.

### *Communication*

How will you share information with members/organizations, emergency management, state VOAD and the community at large? How will you do this in normal times, and how will this differ during disaster scenarios?



### *Maintenance*

The major downfall of most programs is the failure to consider how to maintain the interest and involvement of the membership in the long-term. This is especially true of a COAD in a community that rarely has disasters. There are countless activities that can be used to maintain interest and draw in new members, but you will need to capture some of them in your plan even before you start up. Actually, you should give thought to how you will do this in your concept paper. Here are a few ideas for “blue sky” engagement:

- disaster and preparedness fairs
- Development of Committee's – each committee may be responsible for developing SOG's of how they will operate in a disaster, coordinating with other committees and the overall Local Emergency Operation Plan. Possible Committees:
  - Donations Committee
  - Volunteer Committee
  - Preparedness Committee
  - Communications Committee
  - Emotional/Spiritual Care Committee
  - Long Term Recovery Committee
  - Public Outreach Committee
- Planning and Participation in exercises
- Refresher training courses
- Disaster preparedness classes
- CERT training

If you can work it out with the local emergency management organization, you may even be able to register COAD members as emergency workers with a requirement for annual refresher training.

## ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 2: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Educating and training locals on disaster issues is important to preparing communities to deal effectively with disaster situations.

### **Educate on Existing Disaster Plans**

The COAD should be in close communication with emergency management officials so that they have a clear understanding of how disaster and emergency response occurs locally. COAD contributions to these plans should occur in a way that will aid and support rather than hinder any established plans. By educating themselves and understanding the existing structure, COADs can determine the most beneficial role that their organization and members can play.

### **Local, State, and Federal Training Opportunities**

Arrays of training opportunities are available in the realm of emergency and disaster preparedness. At a local level, organizations such as the Red Cross frequently give classes and trainings on such things as CPR, first aid, and preparedness. Investigate your community to see what other types of trainings are offered locally. In Oregon, OEM (Oregon Office of Emergency Management) offers a number of resources and ideas for individuals to prepare for disaster. This information can be found at:

[http://www.oregon.gov/OMD/OEM/Pages/plans\\_train/plans\\_training.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/OMD/OEM/Pages/plans_train/plans_training.aspx). FEMA is a resource for an extensive number of free on-line classes. Topics for these sessions range from: citizen preparedness, household hazards, and the Incident Command System. A listing of these course offerings can be found at: <http://training.fema.gov/IS/>.

### **Identify Education Gaps in your community**

COADs may be able to identify topics that have been problematic for their particular communities, and come up with ways to educate the public. If your county or town has had a recurring problem with flooding, a COAD could host information and training sessions to discuss flood prevention methods for property owners or develop literature or resource guides to hand out to survivors. Information sessions on flood, renters, and homeowners insurance may also prove valuable to community members. The better informed people are, the more prepared they are to deal with disasters.



## **ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 3: READY TO RESPOND**

COADs should have plans in place to respond to disasters. Disasters can be chaotic and stressful situations, but with proper planning response efforts can be effective and efficient.

### **Understand Where COAD fits in**

The COAD should be familiar with the plans and procedures local officials have in place for disaster response. The COAD should work with emergency managers and first responders to determine how COAD members can best fit in to their existing plans. By working productively with these key players, the COAD ensures that they effectively help the disaster response efforts.

### **Determine what role COAD members play**

Members of the COAD should determine what their capabilities are for responding in disaster situations. These roles and activities should be based on the individual strengths and weakness of each member group, as well as considering the capabilities of the COAD as a whole. Working together, COAD members can work to fill roles that complement one another rather than working against or alongside. A strong response of the COAD can occur with all members working together.

### **Make a Plan**

Decide how to activate your COAD during times of disaster. The COAD should formulate plans that may work for different types of disaster situations. Response of the COAD facing a flood may differ from that of a fire or winter storm. These issues should be carefully considered to develop a comprehensive plan that allows all COAD members to make a positive contribution to disaster response activities.



## **ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 4: MANAGING DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS**

The management of donations and volunteers during the initial response and immediately following an emergency can be an intimidating task to undertake. With thoughtful planning, communities can maximize the utility they receive from donations and volunteers.

### **Identify specific needs and making specific requests**

Managing both donations and volunteers can be a much more fluid undertaking if the specific needs from a disaster situation are identified. By determining the needs of survivors, responders, and the community at large, you can in turn make more specific and useful request. For well publicized disasters, there is often a great outpouring of support from people who want to help. By identifying needs and in turn making specific request the COAD can help facilitate the donation of useful items that will prove the greatest benefit. The COAD should be instrumental in developing a method for identifying needs, making request, and accepting donations. By having such a plan in place prior to a disaster, donations can be handled in a productive manner. These principles can be applied in a similar manner to the principles of recruiting/directing volunteers. If a request for volunteers is made, it should identify specific skill sets that are in greatest need.

### **Dealing with unsolicited donations**

Despite even the most specific request and efforts, it can be assumed that a COAD and its members may be forced to deal with a great amount of unsolicited donations. This may include items that are either not useful in the particular situation, or items that are unfit for distribution and must be disposed. This necessitates two plans: one for storing or donating items to organizations that will be able to use these items at a later time, and a second plan for unusable goods. Important issues to keep in mind might include: staffing a distribution site, determining where/how to relocate unused donations, and a facility for discarding/recycling unusable donations.

### **Efficient distribution**

If specific needs have been identified, and specific requests have been filled, the next challenge is efficiently distributing goods to those who need them. Challenges for distribution may vary depending on the particular disaster that is being faced. Consider some of the disasters your community is most likely to face when developing this plan. Things to consider may include: vehicles to transport items, getting donations to displaced families and individuals, and equitably distributing donations that are received.

### **Volunteer Management**

The most effective way to use volunteers is to utilize those that have been trained and credential prior to a disaster. Organizations that use these types of volunteers should work to recruit and ready as many individuals as possible before a disaster event. Similarly, organizations should develop procedures for these volunteers to be notified, registered, and cared for during the disaster.

The greater challenge during disasters is effectively handling the possible influx of unaffiliated spontaneous volunteers who show up at a disaster scene or incident. These individuals may have felt compelled to lend a hand and are very willing to assist in any way possible. However



without prior training and guidance a hoard of spontaneous volunteers can be a disaster unto themselves.

A best practice for managing unaffiliated volunteers is a volunteer reception center. A COAD can work together with local government to plan, implement, and exercise standing up and operating a volunteer reception center. An excellent resource for unaffiliated volunteer management is: “Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster: The Synergy and Structure of Good Intentions.” Oregon Emergency Management Agency’s Volunteer Agency Liaison can also be a useful tool in planning for managing volunteers and donations.

- [Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster: The Synergy and Structure of Good Intentions](#)
- [Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in a Disaster Training Participant Manual](#)
- [Ready To Respond \(Hands On Network setting up a VRC\)](#)

## ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 5: LONG TERM RECOVERY

National VOAD has developed a manual to handle long term recovery from major disasters. This manual fosters the formation of an organizational structure to respond to families and individuals affected by disasters called a Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) or Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG).

- [Long Term Recovery Guide](#)

### **Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) out of a COAD**

As recovery progresses the need for a long term recovery committee should be assessed. This committee if it is not already can be formed from interested and capable members of the COAD. This committee may operate autonomously with shared members from the COAD or operate as a committee of the COAD. The values and resources that a COAD already should possess are invaluable for a LTRC.

### **Familiarize the COAD with the plan**

Spend time at a meeting to educate and inform COAD members on the basic outline of the NVOAD/CWS manuals. The COAD will be more effective at implementing long term recovery if they understand how and why it works.

### **Case Management**

In state and federally declared disasters, the organizations facilitating case management may be determined by state level authorities. In disasters that are undeclared, communities may still want to implement aspects of the emergency operations plan locally. If this occurs, it will be imperative that a local organization be identified to handle the responsibilities of case management. Determining and aiding this organization should be priority of the COAD.

Case management is the backbone of long term recovery and essential to the process, as such it is important for case managers to be trained specifically in *Disaster Case Management*. In Oregon the United Methodist Church, as well as Catholic Charities can provide Disaster Case Management Training.

### **Identify potential members of the steering and allocations committee**

The long term recovery manual has a clearly delineated procedure for equitably distributing limited monetary and in-kind donations. Often, needs of disaster victims may outweigh the available resources. Often a large part of long term recovery is rebuilding. For a rebuilding operation selecting a building manager and volunteer coordinator may be good positions to fill.

The steering and allocations committee work with case managers to assure that these resources are distributed in a fair and equitable way that will do the most good for all victims. Again, the COAD may work to identify and educate potential committee members so that the recovery process can be activated as soon as possible following a disaster.



## PHASES OF DISASTER

COAD strengthens area-wide disaster coordination by sharing programs, policies, information, joint planning and training. Therefore, COADs have the opportunity to be involved in all four phases of emergency management:

**Mitigation:** Any activity taken to eliminate or reduce the degree of long term risk to human life, property and the environment from the effects of natural and man-made hazards. Mitigation activities that might involve COADs are as follows:

1. Involvement in local emergency planning.
2. Participation in special community awareness mitigation events.
3. Monitoring and encouraging mitigation efforts in the community.
4. Hazard Risk Analysis.

**Preparedness:** Any activity taken in advance of an emergency that improves emergency readiness posture and develops or expands operational capabilities. Preparedness activities that might involve COADs include:

1. Emergency education, orientation and training tailored to the interest and needs of agencies and individuals involved in the COAD.
2. Participation in local disaster planning efforts and developing plans for COAD agencies.
3. Creating a resource guide of agencies and services that may support disaster operations.
4. Interaction and collaboration with emergency management agencies.
5. Promote the development of personal preparedness kits with local businesses, schools, and older adult groups.
6. Encourage volunteer affiliation and training before a disaster.
7. Work with local businesses and nonprofits to establish contingency and continuity plans.

**Response:** Any action taken immediately before, during or directly after an emergency occurs to save lives, minimize injuries, lessen property and environmental damage and enhance the effectiveness of recovery. Response activities that might involve COADs are as follows:

1. Donations management, including the collection, sorting, and distributing of goods.
2. Supporting volunteers and volunteer management especially emergent volunteers.
3. Providing support and human services to primary disaster response organizations.
4. Identifying areas where member organizations can best assist in response.

**Recovery:** A short term activity to return vital life support systems to minimum operating standards and/or a long term activity designed to return the affected people and areas to their pre-disaster conditions. Recovery activities that might involve COADs are as follows:

1. Engage the long-term steering committee, which will work as a liaison with the state wide long term recovery committee.
2. Support ongoing recovery operations with human services, referrals and resources.
3. Support ongoing donations and volunteer management.
4. Advocate for disaster victims.
5. Coordinate trainings for advocates and caseworkers.
6. Publicize the needs and activities of long-term recovery to maintain community engagement.



**Long Term Recovery:** The Long Term Recovery Committee is fully engaged. This work will return survivors to pre-disaster conditions on a case by case basis. Possible long term activities follow:

1. Case Management.
2. Matching unmet needs with resources available through the COAD.
3. Rebuilding or repairing homes of uninsured or underinsured survivors.
4. Managing volunteers for rebuilding efforts.
5. Advocating for asset replacement for uninsured or underinsured survivors.

This does not constitute an exhaustive list of involvement for COADs. A COAD and its members are encouraged to be flexible in addressing issues that meet the specific needs of their community.

## RELATIONSHIPS

COAD works in conjunction with a variety of organizations during all phases of a disaster. The relationship of COAD to each of these groups will vary depending on the membership and resources they are able to support. The following descriptions serve as examples of how COAD can relate to partner organizations, but are not meant to limit those relationships.

### **COAD relationship to Oregon VOAD**

A COAD should have a close working relationship with Oregon VOAD. In many ways, Oregon VOAD will serve as the parent organization to the COADs throughout the state of Oregon. As members of Oregon VOAD, COADs are tied to a communication network and have more opportunities for collaboration. They have a means of staying abreast of happenings of other COADs throughout the state, and for sharing best practices.

### **COAD relationship to Governmental Organizations**

COADs work best when they have good relationships with government disaster response organizations. A COAD should seek the expertise of both state and local emergency management agencies for understanding the structures that exist for response, and how they might best contribute to this system. Government organizations at all levels can be resources for training opportunities. FEMA, for example, has an extensive education program that is available to the public. Additionally, a COAD should invite representatives of such agencies to be partners of their organization. If positive relationships are in place, chances are that when a disaster happens, government and volunteer groups will be able to work together more effectively.

### **COAD relationship to management of Volunteers and Donations**

The management of volunteers and donations following a devastating event is often referred to as the “disaster within the disaster”. When an emergency occurs, there is frequently an outpouring of support where people want to do everything in their means to help. The power of this generosity and altruism can be missed if effective structures do not exist to handle this support.

If COADs establish a method for accepting, sorting, and categorizing donations they are able to get these goods to victims quickly and efficiently, thus lessening the impact of the disaster on the community. Spontaneous volunteers can become a fantastic resource for an affected community, but without the proper mechanism for using them, they may stand by idly, or worse, contribute in ways that are detrimental. Through communication and collaboration of COAD members, plans for harnessing their good will and energy can greatly reduce the effects of a disaster.



## LETTER OF COMMITMENT (sample)

This memorandum of understanding contains the key guidelines to assuring members conform with decisions that are ethical and in accordance to known legal requirements.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Participating organization) \_\_\_\_\_ is committed to the highest ethical standard and realizes our success depends on the ethical conduct of everyone affiliated with (COAD name).

We are not designed for operation management, and the COAD itself is not a service delivery organization. COAD member organizations, agencies, and businesses may provide services during a disaster and do so under their own direction.

We are not intended to be a competing agency, but an umbrella organization of existing agencies. Each member organization maintains its own identity and independence yet works closely with other agencies to improve services and eliminate unnecessary duplication.

We promote coordination among member organizations to facilitate access to available resources and services.

We are committed to the idea that the best time to prepare, train, and become acquainted with one another is prior to an actual event.

We agree to communicate honestly and openly and avoid misrepresentation while exhibiting respect and fairness toward all with whom we come in contact. We promote a working environment where honesty, open communications and minority opinions are valued.

We will value, champion, and embrace diversity in all aspects of our activities; respecting others without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, handicap, national origin or ancestry.

We will ensure that all confidential, privileged, or nonpublic information is not inappropriately disclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Representative's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Representative's Signature



## MEMBERSHIP RESOURCES (sample)

Organization Name:

Web Site:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Is your organization willing to contribute to relief efforts in areas outside your COAD?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, it is ok to share our information.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, please keep this only for COAD purposes.

Is your agency willing to share your Membership Resources information with other organizations providing disaster assistance? (i.e. Church groups, Oregon VOAD, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, it is ok to share our information.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, please keep this only for COAD purposes.

Please mark/describe any applicable area in which your organization could provide assistance.

**Service/Resources**

**Non-Disaster**

**Disaster**

Disaster Education

Sheltering

Food

Clothing

Volunteers

Client Advocacy

Mental Health

Physical Health

Animal Care

Legal Counseling

Real Estate

Temporary/Permanent Housing

Skilled Labor

Building Supplies

Transportation

Waste Management

Warehouse/Storage

Goods Distribution

Spiritual Care

Financial Counseling

Casework Management

Child Care

Other:



## Brainstorm potential partner organizations

### Government Partners (Local EMA, elected officials, public works)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Vital Community Organizations (Water, Electric, Food, Shelter):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Commercial Organizations (Businesses-food, retail, hotel, services, rental)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Industrial Organizations (Manufacturing, Warehouse, Assembly)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Health Focused Organizations (Hospitals, Doctors, Clinics, Volunteer groups)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Special Needs Organizations (disability, senior, children, AIDS)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Community Service Groups (Lions, Elk, American Legion)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Faith-Based Organizations (Churches, Synagogues, Temples)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Transportation (airport, transit, road clearing)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Schools (Public K-12, Technical, College)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Other (Farmers, humane societies, community specific organizations)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



## **SAMPLE VOAD POSITION DESCRIPTIONS**

### **Committee Facilitator/Chair/President**

#### **Position Description:**

The COAD Facilitator presides at meetings, acts as a spokesperson and representative, delegates tasks and provides general leadership. If requested, the Committee Facilitator could be the official representative of the COAD in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

#### **Key Responsibilities:**

1. Convene all official COAD meetings.
2. Lead the development and nurture effective working relationships between COAD member agencies and statewide organizations.
3. Lead the development and implementation of COAD Bylaws.
4. Lead the development and implementation of COAD Goals and Objectives.
5. Guide development of the COAD Disaster Plan.
6. Represent and act as a liaison to the Oregon VOAD.
7. Represent COAD in the Local EOC, if requested.
8. Serve as COAD liaison to Local Emergency Management Agency.
9. Serve as COAD liaison to the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison.
10. Delegate many of these roles to co-facilitator or committee chairs.

#### **Qualifications:**

1. Strong written and oral communication skills.
2. Strong facilitative leadership and problem-solving skills.
3. Experience in disaster response and recovery.
4. Strong commitment to volunteerism.
5. Ability to effectively network with government, voluntary agency, and community-based organization representatives.
6. Ability to work effectively and productively with diverse communities.
7. Availability to provide COAD leadership during disasters.



## Committee Co-Facilitator/Vice Chair

### Position Description:

The COAD Vice/Co-Facilitator acts on behalf of the Facilitator/Lead person in his/her absence, and monitors relationships with member organizations for adherence to COADs principles of membership.

### Key Responsibilities:

1. In the absence of the Facilitator, will convene all official COAD meetings.
2. Assist in the development of and adherence to COAD Bylaws.
3. In the absence of the Facilitator, initiate the COAD Disaster Plan.
4. In the absence of the Facilitator, represent COAD in the Local Emergency Operations Center (EOC), as requested.
5. In the absence of the Facilitator, serve as the official liaison to Local Emergency Management Agency.
6. In the absence of the Facilitator, serve as the official liaison to the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison.

### Qualifications:

1. Strong written and oral communication skills.
2. Strong leadership and problem-solving skills.
3. Experience in disaster response and recovery.
4. Strong commitment to volunteerism.
5. Ability to effectively network with government, voluntary agency, and community-based organization representatives.
6. Ability to work effectively and productively with diverse communities.
7. Available to assist the COAD Facilitator, as needed, during disasters.

## Secretary-Treasurer

### **Position Description:**

The COAD Secretary-Treasurer maintains organizational records, correspondence, committee minutes, and financial records.

### **Key Responsibilities:**

1. Records and files COAD Committee minutes and correspondence. Distributes COAD Committee minutes to the membership in a timely manner.
2. Maintains financial records for COAD, and provides quarterly accounting of these funds to the full committee.
3. Maintains a current COAD Committee mailing list and emergency notification list.

### **Qualifications:**

1. Strong written and oral communication skills.
2. Working knowledge of bookkeeping standard practices.
3. Strong commitment to volunteerism.
4. Ability to work effectively and productively with diverse communities.
5. Previous experience as a secretary or treasurer.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

### NATIONWIDE RESOURCES

National VOAD – [www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org)

Escambia County, FL BRACE – [www.bereadyalliance.org](http://www.bereadyalliance.org)

Santa Rosa County, FL SAFER – <http://data2.santarosa.fl.gov/COAD/>

National Response Framework, Resource Center – [www.fema.gov/NRF](http://www.fema.gov/NRF)

Design For Success - <http://www.nvoad.org/articles/design.php>

Citizen Corps – <https://www.citizencorps.gov/index.shtm>

AmeriCorps – [www.AmeriCorps.gov](http://www.AmeriCorps.gov)

SeniorCorps – [www.seniorcorps.gov](http://www.seniorcorps.gov)

### LOCAL RESOURCES

Oregon Office of Emergency Management – [www.oregon.gov/OMD/OEM](http://www.oregon.gov/OMD/OEM)

Oregon VOAD – [www.orvoad.org](http://www.orvoad.org)

American Red Cross – [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) (enter zip code for link to local chapter)

Salvation Army – [www.use.salvationarmy.org](http://www.use.salvationarmy.org) (enter zip code for link to local chapter)

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*This document is used by permission of Georgia VOAD. Some changes to the original document have been made to reflect Oregon VOADs relationship with COADs within the state.*

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