

Laurie Johnson Consulting

Urban Planning • Risk Management • Disaster Recovery

Developing a National Disaster Recovery Framework

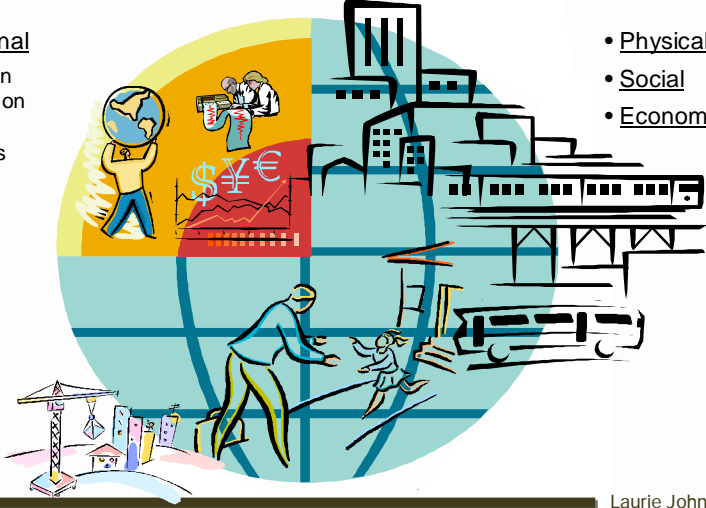
Congressional Hazards Caucus Alliance Briefing

March 10, 2009

This presentation aims to integrate some theory and lessons from practice into a set of policy recommendations for constructing a more integrated, coordinated National Disaster Recovery Framework.

Disaster recovery encompasses the physical, social, economic and institutional elements of modern urban settings.

- Institutional
Information
Coordination
Planning
Resources



- Physical
- Social
- Economic

Laurie Johnson AICP

It happens as decisions are made, and resulting actions taken, by individuals, businesses, and institutions directly and indirectly impacted.

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“We will REBUILD bigger and better than ever.”

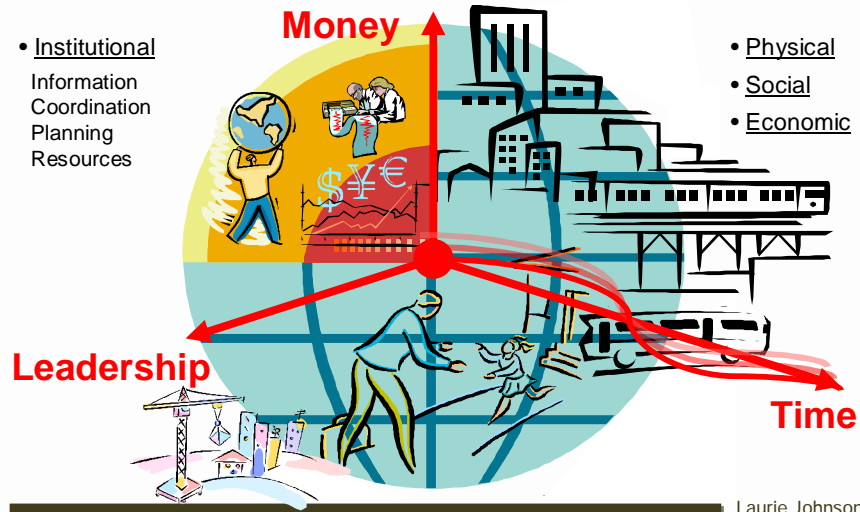


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The decision-actions range from ‘do nothing’ to ‘large-scale redevelopment and change.’ And they don’t all happen at the same time – varying by geography, sector, and scale.

Recovery management – and the role of government - is about influencing these “decision-actions” with vision, resources, and in compressed timeframes.

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Local governments have the primary responsibility for disaster response and recovery. State and national agencies are to provide support as requested.

(FEMA, 2005. *Disaster Assistance: A Guide to Recovery Programs*)

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But, in actuality, especially in major or catastrophic disasters, state and national agencies, including Congress, have much more than a supportive role.

U.S. programmatic approach to recovery, evolved over time, with a mix of “clients” and “distribution channels”

	Stafford Act Programs			Federal Programs					Other					
	FEMA-IA	FEMA-PA	FEMA-HMGP	FEMA-Community Disaster Loans	FEMA-NFIP	HUD-CDBG grants	HUD-housing vouchers	SBA loans	EDA grants	DOT grants	State assistance	Local gov't assistance	Private Insurance	Non-profit assistance
* - Direct recipient ↓ - Indirect recipient														
State governments	*	*	*			* ↓				*				
Local governments				*		* ↓			*		*		*	
Business/Residents	↓		↓		*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*

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Our system has evolved over time, mostly in response to disasters. It involves a mix of agencies and other resource providers, with an equally complex mix of clients and distribution channels. Execution of this system, especially in major disaster, becomes overly fixated on delivery and management of federal (mostly) and state programs from a “top-down” perspective.

Guiding principles to manage complexities of recovery and help reduce disaster-related costs and repetitive losses.

- n *Vision*: “Common goals about reconstruction” reached quickly
- n *Robustness*: “Ability to learn quickly, keep options open, and respond flexibly”
- n *Sustainability*: “Desirable state or set of conditions that persists over time.” Concept increasingly part of U.S. urban planning policy.
- n *Resilience*: “Decentralized and adaptive capacity to effectively manage the recovery process” as well as an “ability to minimize social disruption and reduce the effects of disasters”

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To manage the complexities of recovery and help reduce disaster-related costs and repetitive losses, many researchers and practitioners have proposed that we need some guiding principles for recovery. They include:

Having vision, or common goals about the recovery, that are reached quickly.

Having more robust systems – that are flexible and able to learn and adapt easily in the complex post-disaster environment

Promoting sustainability to ensure that our investments persist with long-term value

And, aiming for resilience – which would provide both robustness and a durability/sustainability for future disasters.

Developing a National Recovery Framework – Concepts to Consider

- n Defining and aligning roles of government - agencies and resources – to enhance coordination and maximize influence on recovery “decision-actions”
- n Take a more holistic view – not programmatic view - of losses, resources, gaps, plans, and desired outcomes

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It is time to rethink the system and develop a national recovery framework – a sister so to speak to our National Response Framework. This system should aim to define and align the roles of all levels of government – the key agencies, programs and resources involved – to do 2 things: enhance coordination and maximize our ability to leverage resources – both personnel and money – to influence recovery “decision-actions”.

To do this, we must take a more holistic view – focusing on physical as well as social, economic losses, the resources that are available from the private sector –insurance and elsewhere – identifying gaps, and making plans that articulate our desired outcomes

Developing a National Recovery Framework – Elements to Consider

- n National Recovery Strategy
- n Stafford Act
- n Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000
- n National Response Framework
- n National Incident Management System (NIMS)

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We already have many important building blocks in place to construct this framework. I will speak briefly to how these 5 key pieces might be modified and used.

Developing a National Recovery Framework – Actions to Consider

n National Recovery Strategy

- Articulates federal, state, and local government roles in disaster recovery management
- Integrates theory to take a more holistic view of recovery management across all urban elements (i.e. physical, economic, social, and institutional) with both restoration and resilience principles
- Post-disaster resource delivery model to influence “decision-actions” and meet the complex needs and compressed timeframes of recovery

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First, we must complete the National Recovery Strategy - defined by the Post-Katrina Reform Act. It should articulate the roles of all levels of government in disaster recovery management. Local governments CAN have primary responsibility for response and recovery even in catastrophic disaster. They are the interface between government and citizens (regulating land use, permit building construction, and providing the most direct services), with many of the most important tools, authorities, and/or responsibilities necessary to positively and directly influence recovery decision-actions. What they typically lack is capacity, resources, and experience to manage recovery. They should be viewed as both a partner and a major “client” of disaster recovery policy and programs. The role of states and the federal government should be to help craft a “common recovery vision,” build capacity, and provide resources and experience to help local governments effectively influence recovery “decision-actions” to achieve this vision as efficiently as possible. The strategy also needs to take a more holistic view of recovery management with both restoration and resilience principles as guides. We need resource delivery models that understand the clients, are attractive and capable of influencing recovery decision-actions, yet also flexible enough to meet the complex needs and compressed timeframes of recovery.

Developing a National Recovery Framework – Actions to Consider

n Stafford Act

- Objective and explicit criteria for declaring “major disasters” and “catastrophic incidents”
- Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) process utilizing information and modeling technologies
- Comprehensive loss and resource assessment (i.e. physical, social, economic, and institutional)
- State and local government planning grants to complete loss and resource assessment and develop recovery vision and plans
- “Federal-state-local” post-disaster recovery management partnering agreements
- Public assistance block grants under major/catastrophic disasters
- Legal framework for states and local governments to form recovery authorities and plans in advance of disasters

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The Stafford Act – our disaster “enabling” legislation so to speak – has many core elements that could be strengthened. There should be more objective and explicit criteria for declaring “major disaster” and particularly to distinguish “catastrophic incidents” and when a different approach to long-term recovery may be needed.

The preliminary damage assessment process could be enhanced to better utilize information and modeling technologies to provide a more comprehensive picture of damage and losses soon after a disaster. But, we shouldn’t stop with the PDA. A process for developing a more comprehensive and refined loss assessment – that also considers private resources available and understand the gaps – needs to follow the PDA process – preferably to be completed in the first few months of a major disaster. We need provisions to provide state and local governments with funds to complete this loss and resource assessment and also develop a common recovery vision and plans to address the need. We should consider formalizing a process for ‘federal, state and local’ partnering agreements – articulating roles, resources, and a shared vision of the desired outcomes for recovery management. And, we need a legal framework for states and local governments to form recovery authorities and plan in advance of disasters.

Developing a National Recovery Framework – Actions to Consider

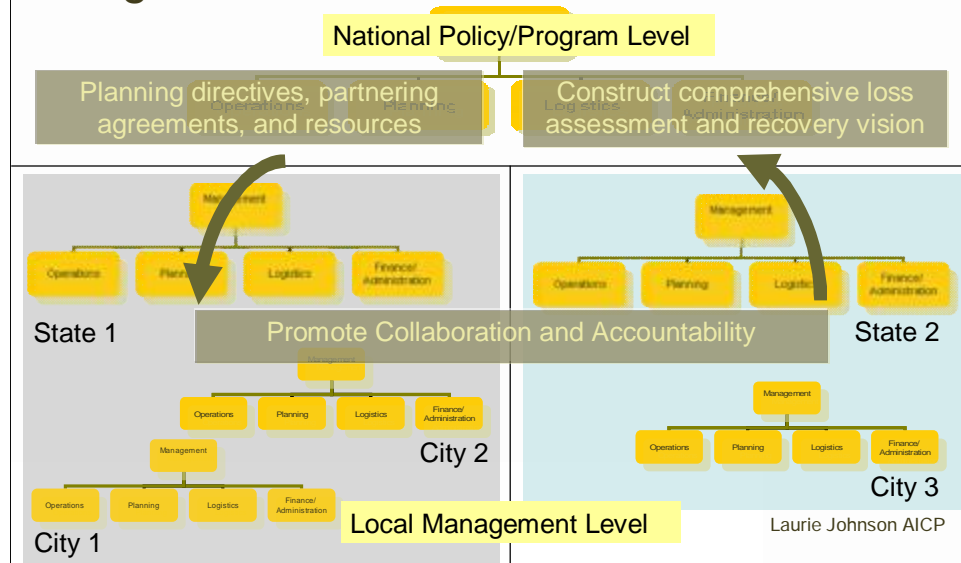
- n Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000
 - Encourage pre-disaster recovery planning as well as state and local hazard mitigation planning
 - Better linkages between recovery, mitigation, and local and state general plans
- n National Response Framework
 - Emergency Support Function (ESF)-14 – Long-term community recovery to support state and local governments to complete loss and resource assessment and develop recovery vision and plans
- n National Incident Management System
 - Incident Command System (ICS)-based management principles to construct one, virtual recovery organization
 - Multi-agency, multi-level governmental coordination
 - Comprehensive loss and resource assessment
 - Shared recovery vision and plans

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DMA 2000 has institutionalized pre-disaster mitigation planning at all levels of government could be expanded to include pre-disaster recovery planning, and to link recovery and mitigation with state and local general plans.

The Long-term community recovery function of the National Response Framework can be the bridge – the transition facilitator – from response to recovery – working with state and local governments to complete loss and resource assessments and develop a common recovery vision and comprehensive recovery plans. And the principles of our National Incident Management System can be extended into recovery – to help improve coordination, and to ensure that we construct more comprehensive understanding of the losses and resources available for recovery as well as a common vision of the desired outcomes of our governmental intervention.

Illustration - One Virtual Recovery Organization



Here's a visual illustration of what we might strive for with a national recovery framework – I call it the one virtual recovery organization. At the national level, we should be providing planning directives, resources and partnering agreements with impacted state and local governments. But in doing so, we should require that our state and local governments construct more comprehensive loss assessments, a performance-based recovery vision and plans post-disaster. And, we should be looking to create a system that unifies vision, while decentralizing operations, promoting collaboration and accountability.

Thank You

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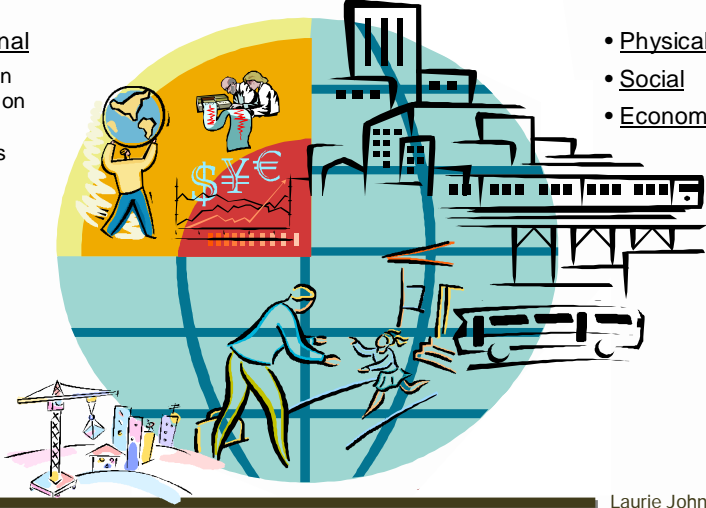
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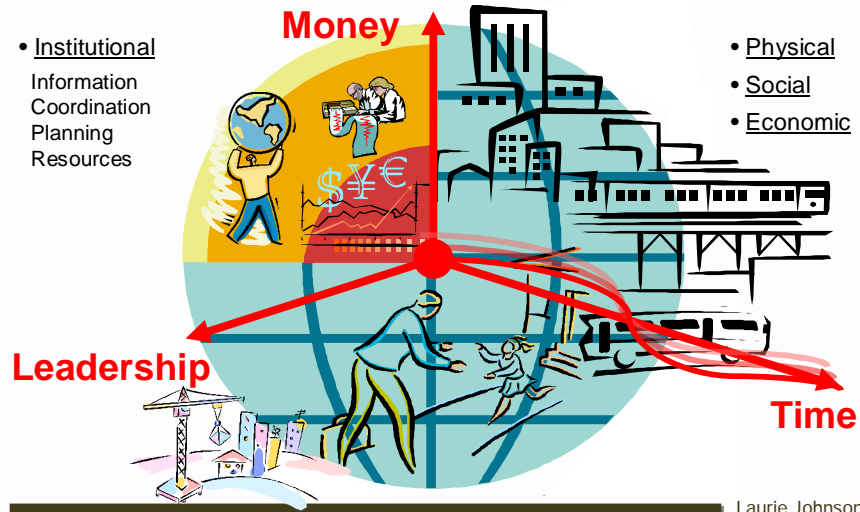


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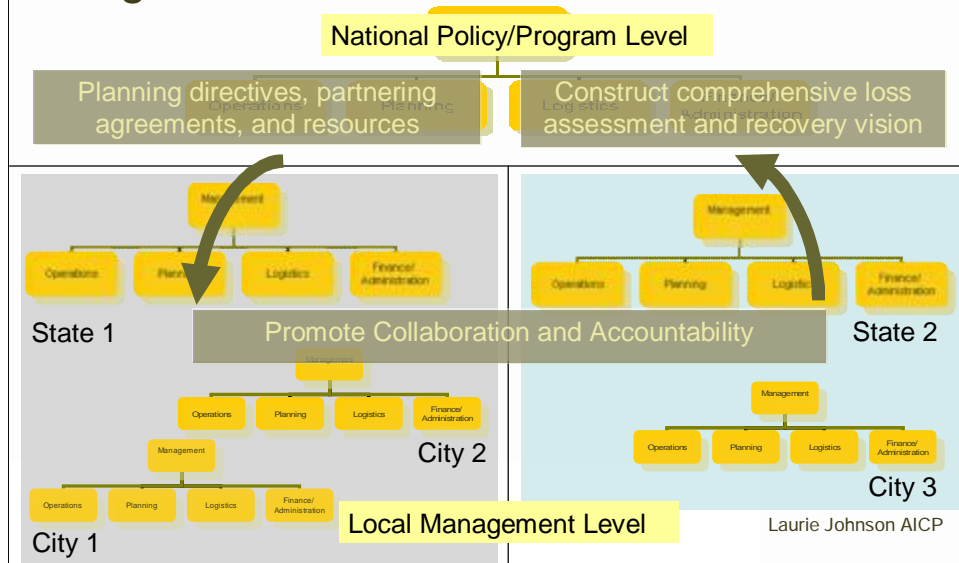
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