



OVERVIEW

When disaster strikes, as a State Service Commission, your organization is uniquely positioned to deliver critical support through your network of commissioners, AmeriCorps programs, Volunteer Centers, and other partners. Below are talking points to educate and engage your Commissioners in improving disaster resilience in your state.

TALKING POINTS

Disaster Service and Commissions Background

- Commissions that are a state agency or a department within a state agency are well-positioned to lead disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts due to their close network of local government, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations.
- The 2014 America's Service Commissions Landscape survey found that twenty-five State Service Commissions are included in their state's emergency operations plans and have some or full responsibility for disaster response and recovery functions. These formal agreements with state emergency management allow for greater national service engagement in communities before, during, and after disaster.
- The most common roles for Commissions in disaster work are volunteer and donations management, call center administration, public messaging, and community disaster preparedness education.



Roles that Result in Return on Investment

- Commissions, through their networks, can support data collection to comply with federal cost-share requirements resulting in a decreased funding owed by communities on Public Assistance Mission Assignments.
- Some Commissions can receive donations and many act as the receiver for Governor's Donation funds.
- Commissions may support in-kind donations by connecting private sector entities to partner organizations. For example:
 - Volunteer Florida: After flooding in Pensacola, FL in 2014, more than 39,000 volunteers contributed over 1,100 hours of service valued at over \$910,000.
 - Following the Joplin tornado in 2011, AmeriCorps members who had been trained and deployed to previous disasters, documented more than 75,000 volunteers who provided over 520,000 hours of service to over 2,200 households, saving the city \$17.7 million in matching costs for recovery.

Increasing Disaster Resilience Through National Service

- AmeriCorps State, Volunteer Generation Fund, and other national service programs can be leveraged to support full, part-time, or episodic support for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, based on the program's requirements.
 - AmeriCorps State Grantees
 - Many Commissions have successfully worked with AmeriCorps State Disaster Response Teams.
 - These teams are AmeriCorps state and national members from one or multiple programs that are trained and often partnered with Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster member organizations.
 - Volunteer Generation Fund: Many Commissions have successfully leveraged their Volunteer Generation Fund grantees to manage either a physical Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) or as a virtual VRC.
 - Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)
 - Some Commissions serve as the coordinating office for their state's CERT programs, providing training to community members to act as first responders when professional first responders have yet to arrive on site.
 - CERT teams are also widely utilized to create, manage, and support community preparedness events and may be called into service during a disaster response.



ENGAGEMENT TIPS

- Invite state emergency management or state VOAD leaders to speak to your commissioners during a meeting or retreat about the gaps they have experienced in delivering support to communities after disaster.
- Invite commissioners to disaster trainings and exercises or hold a table top exercise and include board members.
- Create a commission disaster committee to focus on developing strategic goals.
- Keep commissioners up to date with disaster developments and operations.
- During disaster operations, invite commissioners to visit the VRC or donations management site to gain a first-hand understanding of the value of these services.

Discuss the value of private sector donations for disaster response and recovery and request support in leveraging those resources.
- Consider recruiting emergency management and disaster service organization staff to serve on the commission.
- Invite another commission engaged in disaster work to present to your board (in-person or virtually) to discuss how their commission engages in disaster recovery/response.