

Task Force on Faith-Based Disaster Response

State of Texas

December 2020

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Executive Summary

“The indispensable and transforming work of faith-based and other charitable service groups must be encouraged. Government cannot be replaced by charities, but it can and should welcome them as partners. We must heed the growing consensus across America that successful government social programs work in fruitful partnership with community-serving and faith-based organizations.”

- President George W. Bush

The Task Force on Faith-Based Disaster Response, which is comprised of representatives of faith-based organizations active in disaster response appointed by the Chief of the Texas Division of Emergency Management, was established to study the participation of faith-based organizations in disaster response. The duties of the Task Force, as outlined in Sec. 418.258 of the bill, are as follows: (1) Develop and implement a plan for improving data collection regarding faith-based organizations that participate in disaster response; (2) Develop best practices for communicating, cooperating, and collaborating with faith-based organizations to strengthen disaster response in this state; (3) Identify and address inefficiencies in disaster response provided by the state and faith-based organizations; and (4) Identify and address gaps in state services that could be provided by faith-based organizations.

In order to ascertain how faith-based organizations currently integrate into emergency management systems and identify recommendations for improvement in alignment with the duties of the Task Force, a survey was distributed to the faith-based member organizations of Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and members of Texas Impact, which is the entity that authored the “Time and Treasure: Faith-Based Investment in Hurricane Harvey Response” report that helped to inform H.B. 3616.

When a disaster strikes, faith communities respond. From local congregations to global institutions, organizations grounded in all the major faith traditions participate in disaster response and recovery efforts within Texas. In order to foster increased collaboration between the faith community and emergency management, the following recommendations are being made:

- 1. Partner with faith-based and nonprofit organizations to develop a comprehensive data management system.** A legislative appropriation to support the study, development and implementation of a comprehensive data management system in partnership with key stakeholders (to include Texas Division of Emergency Management, Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, OneStar Foundation, The Salvation Army, American Red Cross) is recommended.

2. Promote, build, and engage with, disaster resiliency networks.

Emergency management officials should work in collaboration with key partners (to include Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, OneStar Foundation, and Texas Division of Emergency Management) to promote, build and engage with disaster resiliency networks (Long-Term Recovery Groups, Community Organizations Active in Disaster, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster).

3. Ensure faith-based and nonprofit input on emergency management policies that affect faith-based and nonprofit organizations.

Emergency managers, elected officials, and policymakers should consult with faith-based and nonprofit organizations during all phases of disaster in order to get the fullest, clearest picture of issues facing disaster-impacted communities and opportunities for improvements.

4. Amend Administrative Leave Legislation. This Task Force is recommending that [Texas Government Code Chapter 661, Section 661.907](#) be modified in order to expand the use of emergency leave for salaried employees to include additional nonprofit and faith-based organizations.

5. Ensure disaster-related procurement, contract and grant opportunities are disseminated to faith-based and nonprofit partners. State and local governmental agencies, to include emergency managers, should ensure that faith-based and nonprofit partners are included when disseminating disaster-related solicitation and grant opportunities.

6. Streamline and simplify the process for private non-profit organizations to apply for reimbursement under [Emergency Protective Measures \(Category B\)](#). The state should make it easier for private nonprofit organizations to apply for reimbursement of eligible expenses, to include pre-registration of key private nonprofit stakeholders in the Public Assistance portal.

7. Further Study. It is the opinion of this Task Force that further study is required in order to more robustly engage stakeholders, to include local faith-based organizations.

Goal

The goal of this study is to understand the response of the faith – based agencies at times of a disaster with particular emphasis on communication and approaches to their response.

Authority

Include authority for project (legislation or pieces of legislation or other authorities)

If authority is legislation, enter authors/sponsors/co-sponsors below as shown for example.

Authors: [Representative Geanie Morrison](#) (District 30)
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Co-sponsor: [Senator Carol Alvarado](#)
 District 6

For more information:

Texas Legislature Online (Link to legislation on TLO)

<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=HB6>

Stakeholders

Members are identified in the chart below.

Agent	Summary
Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM)	The Texas Division of Emergency Management is charged with carrying out a comprehensive all-hazard emergency management program for the state and for assisting cities, counties, and state agencies in planning and implementing their emergency management programs.
Texas Impact (Ex-officio)	Texas Impact advocates for freedom, justice, and economic opportunity for all people, consistent with the values of mainstream faith communities.
OneStar Foundation (Ex-officio)	OneStar Foundation was created through Executive Order RP-30 to support the State of Texas by strengthening the nonprofit sector, encouraging civic engagement through service and volunteerism, promoting innovative strategies to address local issues and facilitating public-private partnerships to expand the reach of the sector. OneStar Foundation is the Governor-appointed State Service Commission and also home to Texas' Faith-Based and Community Initiative.
Catholic Charities-Ft Worth	The Catholic Charities ministry supports disaster response efforts with direct aid, home repair, home rebuilding, health services and other programs that enable long-term disaster recovery
Convoy of Hope	Convoy of Hope is a faith-based, nonprofit organization with a driving passion to feed the world through children's feeding initiatives, community outreaches, and disaster response.
Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response	Offers financial assistance for basic needs in the short term and case management and spiritual care over the longer term to individuals and families, and we work continually to ensure we are ready to meet the needs of our communities if and when disaster strikes.
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	A network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.
Southern Baptist Convention	To prepare, equip, train, and mobilize churches and volunteers to fulfill the Great Commission by meeting real needs and

	sharing the hope of Jesus Christ with those whose lives have been or will be affected by disasters.
<u>Texas Baptist Men</u>	Texas Baptist Men empowers Christians just like you to take on the biggest challenges around the globe, changing the world one radical act of service and compassion at a time. Since 1967, TBM volunteers have delivered help, hope and healing to millions of hurting people and raising up the next generation to do likewise. As a result of its service, TBM has helped start and train disaster relief groups in all 50 states, giving birth to the nation's third-largest disaster relief network in the nation.
<u>The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</u>	The Church provides relief in situations of civil unrest, famine, and natural disasters by providing short-term resources such as food, water, shelter, clothing, medical supplies, and hygiene kits. This response is accomplished under the direction of local leadership, often in conjunction with local and international relief organizations. Members help by distributing supplies and participating in cleanup.
<u>The Salvation Army</u>	The Salvation Army has responded to numerous natural disasters, transportation accidents, civil unrest situations and terrorist attacks. By providing beverages, meals, and emotional and spiritual care to first responders and survivors, The Salvation Army strives to bring hope and healing to people who find themselves in the midst of extremely difficult situations.
<u>United Methodist Committee on Relief</u>	Provides disaster survivors not only temporary relief, but also long-term education, training, and support. While UMCOR cooperates with other aid organizations, the most important partners in the work of recovery are those being served.

Background, Discussion and Recommendations

BACKGROUND

It has been reported that faith-based organizations spent more than \$200 million and provided more than 500,000 hours of manpower in efforts to aid in the response to and recovery from Hurricane Harvey. However, it has been suggested that emergency management systems sometime struggle with knowing exactly how to best integrate these organizations in disaster response efforts. H.B. No. 3616 established a task force on faith-based programs that provide assistance during a disaster in order to study and find solutions to this issue.

The Task Force on Faith-Based Disaster Response, which is comprised of representatives of faith-based organizations active in disaster response appointed by the Chief of the Texas Division of Emergency Management, was established to study the participation of faith-based organizations in disaster response. The duties of the Task Force, as outlined in Sec. 418.258 of the bill, are as follows: (1) Develop and implement a plan for improving data collection regarding faith-based organizations that participate in disaster response; (2) Develop best practices for communicating, cooperating, and collaborating with faith-based organizations to strengthen disaster response in this state; (3) Identify and address inefficiencies in disaster response provided by the state and faith-based organizations; and (4) Identify and address gaps in state services that could be provided by faith-based organizations.

On October 29, 2019, Chief Nim Kidd called together an initial meeting of the members of the Task Force at the State Operations Center. During this meeting, the membership selected both a presiding officer and assistant presiding officer for the purpose of calling and conducting meetings. The Task Force recommended that a survey be drafted and disseminated in order to: (1) ascertain how faith-based organizations currently integrate into emergency management systems; and (2) identify recommendations for improvement in alignment with the duties of the Task Force.

The survey was distributed to the faith-based member organizations of Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and members of Texas Impact, which is the entity that authored the "Time and Treasure: Faith-Based Investment in Hurricane Harvey Response" report that helped to inform H.B. No 3616.

The recommendations contained within this report are informed by both quantitative (e.g. the results of the survey) and qualitative analysis.

DISCUSSION

Faith – Based disaster response teams are critical to the recovery from any disaster in Texas. Faith-based groups generally deploy after the initial impact of a disaster but will be on site through Long-Term Recovery. Each group supplies operational and heavy support services, faith – based groups offer services ranging from service development, information and referral, and on the ground activities like cutting down damaged trees, opening up roads, and helping to muck and gut homes that have been inundated with mud. Faith-Based groups are also critical for feeding first responders, volunteers, and survivors. In other instances, Faith-Based groups supply force enhancement when needs overwhelm formal service capacity.

Faith-based groups are understood to be those non-profit organizations that emanate from religious organizations. They reflect organizations that mitigate and alleviate the impact of disasters, provide a forum promoting cooperation, communication, coordination and collaboration; and foster more effective delivery of services to communities affected by disaster (<https://www.nvoad.org/our-members>). It should be noted that they are only one part of the total number of non-profit groups who are equally important at times of Disaster recovery. Faith-based groups can be founded by local religious or spiritual communities, regional or national bodies of faith traditions from the entire spectrum of faith world traditions and communities. Two waves of e-mailed invitations were sent out for this survey. This process has been interrupted by the statewide COVID 19 response but was reengaged in May with phone calls to remind potential respondents to contribute to the survey. Both mailing lists contained faith-based groups as well as volunteer groups. Forty responses have been collected from these groups, of which nine had to be removed as they were not faith-based groups leaving a sample size of 31 agencies. While this sample reflects a smaller percentage of all possible faith-based agencies at times of disaster nationwide, it does reflect a useful sample of those in Texas.

Disaster responders reflect a mixed group of publicly funded agencies and non-profit/faith-based groups. Historically, public and private agencies reflecting a mixed track record for collaboration. While both seek to support one another, often the organizational systems, motivations and resources are very different. The better responding entities can understand one another, the better coordinated these groups can be in response to the needs of each community.

At the request of the Task Force on Disaster Response, a survey was developed in January of 2020 to begin to answer the four points in HB 3616. This survey was e-mailed out from late January to late February when this project ground to a halt due to the Covid-19 outbreak. It was restarted in June with phone calls to faith-based groups who had not responded. The survey was sent out from two separate mailing lists, Texas Impact and Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters and Texas Impact. It is uncertain at this time how many agencies received this invitation. Thirty-one organizations responded with usable data for

this survey. Three appear to have started the survey, but did not supply any data, so they were eliminated from this data set. From the VOAD mailing list 26 organizations responded, 8 did not.

Research Design & Data

The purpose of this survey was

- to begin to identify issues for the Task Force to address by offering data for discussion.
- to offer opportunity to voice input from organizations who do not have a representative on the Task Force.

This survey only begins to address the concerns of the task force but offers a beginning.

Key findings of the initial survey

The first question simply asked the name of the organization responding to the survey. Thirty-one agencies responded to the study.

- Faith-Based Disaster response agencies are formed by a range of different organizations within the various world faith traditions. To understand each group's organizational structure we first asked what type of organization each respondent was reflecting.
 - Nine of the responding groups noted that they are a part of a national faith tradition and thus decisions for operations are made outside of the local community.
 - Eleven suggested that while they are connected to a national religious body, operational decisions are made locally.
 - Only 1 group stated that it is local without national religious body connections.
- The next question asked with whom each group coordinates their activities.
 - 17 groups coordinate with TDEM
 - 30 groups with Texas VOAD
 - 29 groups with local emergency management
 - 17 with a local ministerial alliance
 - 10 chose "other", which included watching the weather to be sure that the dangerous storm or event has passed and establishing local contacts.
- One important concern in a disaster reflects the need to communicate with other organizations.
 - 3 use WebEOC -TDEM
 - 5 work with the local EOC
 - 27 communicate through the VOAD representative in the EOC/SOC
 - 14 submit situational awareness reports, it should be noted that it is not clear from this where they submit them to.
 - 13 use social Media, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

- 30 attend the VOAD conference calls designed to help coordinate VOAD agencies.
- To follow up in the communication methods, we asked how the groups obtain situational awareness.
 - 13 groups said that when they become aware of an event, they seek media sources and consult within their organization. Once it is determined that they should respond, they develop their team and go.
 - 16 groups said that they base their response on media sources, then they contact emergency management to see if their group is needed, prior to determining their response
 - 28 groups, said that when they hear about an event, they contact local groups to the event as they plan our response.
- The next communication questions asked, “Who do you contact when preparing to respond to an event?”
 - 10 groups said “my congregation”
 - 13 groups said TDEM
 - 28 said Texas VOAD Conference Calls
 - 20 stated My Local COAD/VOAD
 - 27 said Local community-based organizations (Mayor’s office, Local Emergency Management, etc.)
 - 13 said Local Ministerial Alliance
 - Others responses included National VOAD connections and through mid-councils, which are regional rather than local.
- We asked if the groups felt “Do you feel that you have good situational awareness?” 25 (80.6%) of respondents said that they felt they have good situational awareness, 5 (16.1%) felt that they did not. Comments included feeling that sometimes information was slow coming down from state or local municipalities, and one group also noted that while their group was focused on the needs of children, there seems to be a lack of focus on this group, particularly children with special needs by the public agencies.
- The next question asked groups to identify which types of interventions at times of disaster that they provide. The following Chart reflects the type of services provided by respondents:

Type of Service	# of agencies who provide this service	Percent
Cleanup	12	38.7%
Disaster Assessment	13	41.9%
Functional Needs	7	22.6%
Evacuation	2	6.5%
Logistics	6	19.4%
Sheltering	8	25.8%
Canvassing	7	22.6%
Incident Communication	3	9.7%
Data Collection	3	9.7%
Disaster Case Management	11	35.5%
Disaster Child Care	1	3.2%
Donation Management	11	35.5%
Food Preparation	4	12.9%
Food for Emergency Workers	5	16.1%
Food Distribution/Mobile	4	12.9%
Food Distribution POD	6	19.4%
Food Distribution/Soup Kitchen	3	9.7%
Logistics	5	16.1%
Mental Health	10	32.3%
Accepts Cash Donations	14	45.2%
Accepts Material Donations	12	38.7%
Warehouse Operations	10	32.3%
Reunification	1	3.2%
Spiritual and Emotional Care	25	80.6%
Interpersonal/Translation	4	12.9%
Transportation	1	3.2%
Volunteer Coordination	11	35.5%
Volunteer Feeding	5	16.1%
Volunteer Housing	9	29.0%
Transportation for Volunteers	1	3.2%
Personal Protective Equipment for Volunteers	10	32.3%
Supplies & Equipment for Volunteers	10	32.3%
Accepts Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers	7	22.6%
Set up Multiple-Agency Resource Centers (MARC's)	4	12.9%

Mold Remediation	8	25.8%
Mucking & Gutting	16	51.6%
Supplies-equipment (i.e. clean - up kits)	17	54.8%
Long term recovery repairs in the community	16	51.6%
Rebuild	16	51.6%
Long Term recovery supplied and materials	18	58.1%
Unmet Needs Table	14	45.2%
Training	13	41.9%

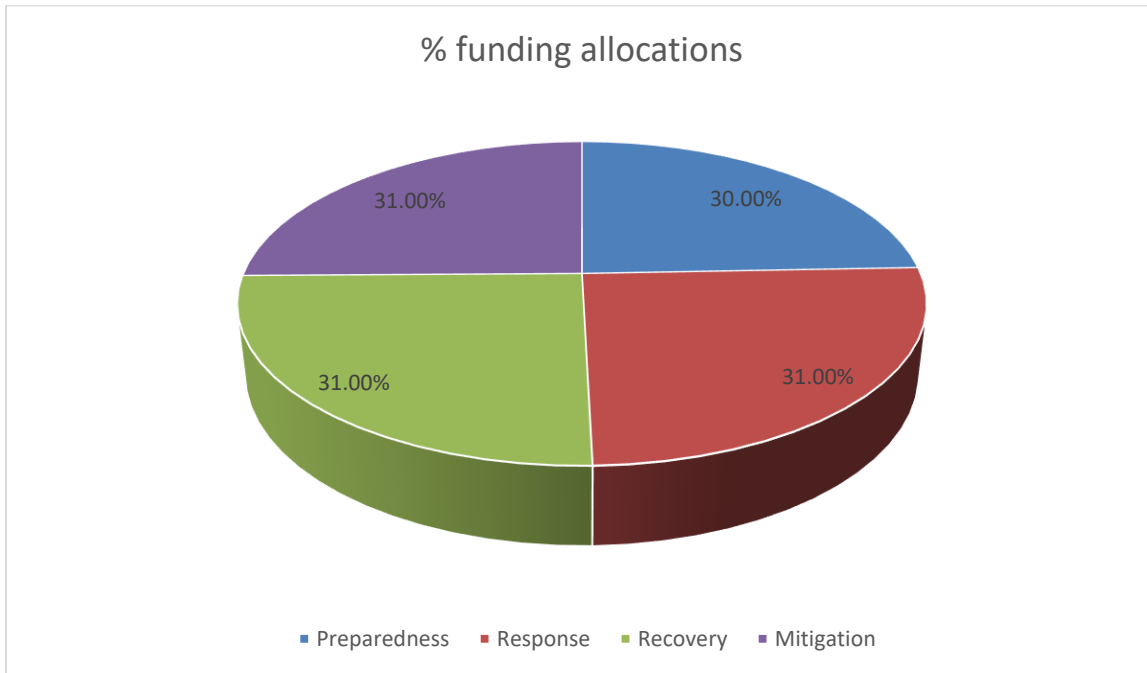
The next questions reflect the ways faith-based groups identify who they should be helping:

- How does your faith-based organization identify which survivors to assist during an initial Response?
 - 18 said, Multi-Agency Resource Centers
 - 14 said, we conduct our own disaster casework
 - 17 said, we work with disaster case management providers
 - 20 said, we work with our local long-term recovery group
 - Other responses include, working with VOAD, Long Term Recovery, City Council, Local Churches, and local agencies.
- How does your faith-based organization identify which survivors to assist during recovery?
 - 15 said, Multi-Agency Resource Centers
 - 17 said, we conduct our own disaster casework
 - 17 said, we work with disaster case management providers
 - 22 said, we work with our local long-term recovery group
 - 13 reflected specific approaches including: VOAD, group determines its own criteria, long-term recovery, community guidance, partnering with another VOAD Group, reflect the invitation to serve, local officials, Disaster case management, FEMA, DCM, local churches, local agencies.

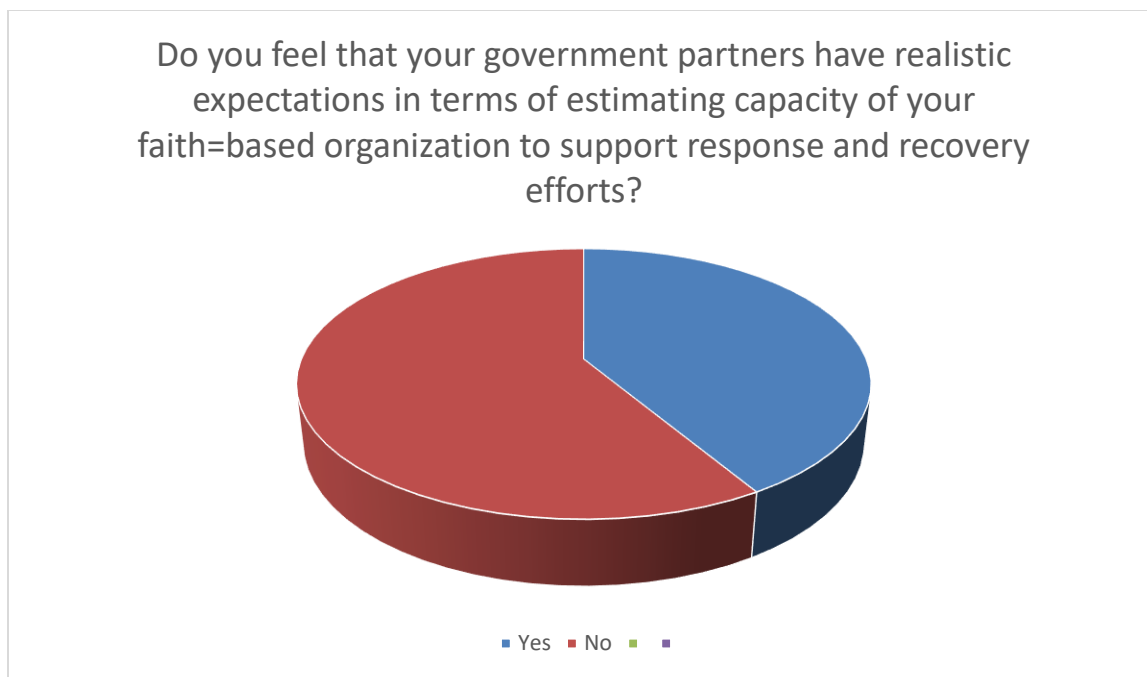
- Does your organization have enough volunteers to provide your services during both response and long-term recovery?
 - 17 said, yes for both
 - 5 said, yes for response
 - 3 said, yes for recovery
 - 4, said no for both
 - 1 said, no, for response
- During times of non-catastrophic (Non-Harvey) type disaster events, does your faith-based organization raise enough funding to adequately meet unmet survivor need?
 - 11 (35%) said yes
 - 18 (58.1%) said no
- Generally, where does the funding come from to support your group's response?
 - 19 said, congregational offerings
 - 16 said, our National/International denominations group
 - 24 said, Individuals
 - 9 said, local business donations
 - 5 said, local civic groups
 - 13 said, Foundations (Community foundations, family foundations, etc.
 - 0 said, State of Texas
 - 11 noted sources like, During Harvey supported by Red Cross, local trade groups, Other National Faith-Based Groups, fund raising

activities by local chapters, Corporate donors, write grants, FEMA DCM programs, National Corporations.

- Generally, what percentage of the funding that your faith-based organization raises is allocated for the following:



- Do you feel that your governmental partners have realistic expectations in terms of estimating capacity of your faith-based organization to support response and recovery efforts?
 - Said yes 14
 - Said no 20
 - Said unsure 1



Discussion of the Data

The first step in improving data collection communication is to understand the current elements of this communication. In this sample of faith-based we find three types of organizations. Nine are organized by national religious bodies, 11 are grounded in national religious bodies, but the disaster programs are run locally. Finally, one organization not tethered to a national religious body, but rather made up of local congregations. This factor makes a difference in terms of how decisions for deployment, funding, and situational awareness are conducted. For a national religious body, news media and FEMA reports are generally the first documents that make the agency aware of local needs, where for a local group, more local sources would be involved. Funding is also different as national religious groups draw on national funding sources more readily than local sources, where local groups are more likely to fund their programs locally. Thus, 9 groups reflect top down resources, where more locally based groups will be more likely to work local up in their strategies. It should be noted that non-profit, but not faith-based groups are unknown in this analysis.

This is then reflected in the questions regarding both coordination and communication. The sample size is small in this study and efforts to statistically correlate these data did not show significance. However, trends in this study suggest that in the areas of coordination and communication, a wide range of

approaches are employed. Respondents overwhelmingly turn to the Texas VOAD for both coordination and communication. The daily conference calls have become critical for both functions. Where 30 of 31 groups turn to TX VOAD, only 17 turn to TDEM. Local emergency management is also an important source with 29 of 31 groups turning to emergency management, however, the second source reflects 17 who turn to the local ministerial alliance or local congregations within their own denomination. Each of these four options would be appropriate for faith-based groups to communicate with, but further exploration would be needed to either change this pattern or become better informed as to how these options are employed.

From the communication and coordination patterns come situational awareness strategy. The dominant method of situational awareness reflects 28 of 31 groups attempting to communicate with local groups, per the above. This question asked to select all that apply, so it should be noted that a second strategy suggests that 16 groups base their response on media sources, and 13 employ media as well as local sources for their situational awareness. When asked to refine the communication questions, 28 join the TX VOAD Coordination calls, 27 say they contact local community-based organizations, 20 the local VOAD/COAD (where they exist), 13 employ dialogue with a local ministerial alliance, and 13 contact TDEM. It should be noted that groups with strong denominational top down organizations often start by contacting local congregations from their own denomination and then turn to ministerial alliances and public sources. This conclusion is more anecdotal than statistical, so further study on this topic would be appropriate. The net effect of which ever pattern is employed, is that 25 of 31 groups feel that they have good situational awareness.

At the point of supporting community recovery, the question of how entities select persons to help suggests that 20 of 31 contact the local Long-Term Recovery group and 18 of 31 turn to the Multi-agency resource center. Still others conduct their own case management or turn to a local designated case management organization. This pattern is not largely changed between the initial response to the recovery phases. Particularly, organizations that are organized top down find reliance on local response groups to be key. Locally focused groups are more likely to use their own local resources to manage case selection.

The two critical resources for disaster response are volunteers and money. When asked if the 31 responding groups have adequate resources, 17 groups suggested that they have adequate volunteers for both response and recovery and only 11 of 31 suggested that they had adequate funding. Volunteer organizations cannot respond without at least a minimum of both volunteers and funding; thus, both can be limiting factors in determining response. This is especially critical during this time of Pandemic as there is a real concern that there will be a shortage of volunteers to respond to any incident that may transpire during the 2020-2021 hurricane season.

It should be noted that both top down and local up organizations struggle with funding for disaster operations. Those rooted in a national denominational

organization tend to be able to use congregational offerings and their national resources for funding. Community up groups will also employ congregations as their resource but will turn to congregations in or around the impact community for support. Beyond these religious resources, faith-based groups employ a creative variety of options, including Local businesses and civic groups. It should be noted that since faith-based groups are often able to distribute contributions, local businesses often give in-kind items or money to the faith-based groups to channel their donations to the local disaster.

Finally, the study explored relationships with governmental partners. The question focused on whether faith-based groups felt that they are understood by the governmental partners. Twelve of 31 felt that they were understood but 17 said no (2 responses are missing). Further understanding of these numbers is necessary, but on the surface, a lot of work on the formal/informal organizational communication is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Texas emergency managers, elected officials, policymakers, and disaster survivors all benefit from a strong non-profit sector and play a part in helping to ensure that these organizations are integrated into emergency management systems. To ensure faith-based and nonprofit organizations have the capacity, resources, and flexibility to best support Texas communities impacted by disaster, leaders at all levels should increase engagement with the sector during all phases of disaster.

1. Partner with faith-based and nonprofit organizations to develop a comprehensive data management system. A legislative appropriation to support the study, development and implementation of a comprehensive data management system in partnership with key stakeholders (to include Texas Division of Emergency Management, Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, OneStar Foundation, The Salvation Army, American Red Cross) is recommended.

- a. *Task Force Duty:* Develop and implement a plan for improving data collection regarding faith-based organizations that participate in disaster response.
- b. *Rationale:* As identified by the Commission to Rebuild Texas and referenced in numerous bills passed during the 86th legislative session, there is a recognized statewide need for a robust data collection and management system that can be utilized by mission-driven organizations to more effectively and efficiently support disaster impacted communities. Such a system could be made available to local and statewide governmental and non-governmental organizations to support post-disaster volunteer management, in-kind donations management, disaster casework, disaster case management, and/or mass care.
- c. *Considerations:*
 - i. *Organizational Constraints.* Many faith-based and nonprofit organizations lack the financial, infrastructural, and/or

administrative capacity to collect and/or share data during times of disaster.

- ii. *Volunteer Training.* Faith-based and nonprofit organizations oftentimes rely on volunteers to support data collection and reporting activities, each of whom requires training.
- iii. *Ease of Use.* It is imperative that the user experience design and user interface design be done in close consultation with faith-based and nonprofit partners.
- iv. *Interoperability with Existing Systems.* Organizations with existing internal data management systems utilize these systems to: a) support the case for fundraising, b) solicit in-kind donations and other resource support, c) keep senior leadership informed, d) make tactical deployment decisions, d) convey to survivor's how they can access assistance, and much more. As such, any proposed system needs to allow for interoperability with existing internal organizational systems.
- v. *Return on Investment (ROI).* For many faith-based and nonprofit organizations, the strategic rationale for expending donated resources in order to share data with external partners during times of disaster is unclear.
 1. Being able to support increased data collection and reporting will entail increased administrative costs, such as personnel, training and infrastructure. To help offset these additional costs, any proposed system should provide an avenue of documentation for reimbursable costs.
 2. Being able to track and report impact is critically important to faith-based and nonprofit organizations. However, faith-based and nonprofit organizations who do share data with emergency management officials oftentimes do not know how that data is being utilized to support response and recovery efforts. As such, any proposed system should strongly encourages emergency management officials to share how the information provided to them by nonprofit

and faith-based organizations was utilized, and the impact that it had.

3. Many faith-based and nonprofit organizations, particularly those who are not disaster-focused, do not know how to request access to information from emergency management officials during disaster response and recovery. As such, any proposed system should allow emergency management officials to share pertinent situational awareness information with faith-based and nonprofit organizations.

- vi. *Protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII)*. Faith-based and nonprofit organizations provide casework, case management, and wrap-around services to the most vulnerable members of society, including during times of disaster. As such, any proposed system needs to allow for data sharing permissions that create a firewall between non-governmental and governmental partners as it pertains to data that contains PII.

- d. *Examples*: [National VOAD Disaster Agency Response Technology \(DART\)](#) ; [Help Colorado Now](#) ; [HelpNJNow](#)

2. Promote, build and engage disaster resiliency networks.

Emergency management officials should work in collaboration with key partners (to include Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, OneStar Foundation, and Texas Division of Emergency Management) to promote, build, and engage with, disaster resiliency networks (Long-Term Recovery Groups, Community Organizations Active in Disaster, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster).

- a. *Task Force Duty*: Develop best practices for communicating, cooperating, and collaborating with faith-based organizations to strengthen disaster response in Texas.
- b. *Rationale*: The most effective and efficient way of fostering increased cooperation, communication, coordination, and collaboration between faith-based and nonprofit organizations and emergency management systems is through the development of,

and engagement with disaster resiliency networks. Communities throughout the nation, including Texas, have been embracing and implementing these network structures (see below) for decades.

- i. *Long-Term Recovery Group*. The money, people-power and materials needed to help a community recover from a disaster. It is a collaborative network of individuals, businesses, faith-based and nonprofit organizations, philanthropic funders, and other recovery partners. LTRGs work in collaboration with local government.
 - ii. *Community Organizations Active in Disaster*. Coalition of local organizations that are committed to building and strengthening the capacity of their local community to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against, the impact of disaster.
 - iii. *Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster*. Coalition of voluntary organizations that respond to disaster as a part of their overall mission. VOAD provides a forum that promotes cooperation, communication, coordination and collaboration and fosters more effective delivery of services to communities impacted by disaster.
- c. *Examples*: [Texas VOAD](#) , [Central Texas VOAD](#), [Orange County Disaster Rebuild](#), [Hardin County Strong](#)

3. Ensure faith-based and nonprofit input on emergency management policies that affect faith-based and nonprofit organizations.

Emergency managers, elected officials, and policymakers should consult with faith-based and nonprofit organizations during all phases of disaster in order to get the fullest, clearest picture of issues facing disaster-impacted communities and opportunities for improvements.

- a. *Task Force Duty*: Identify and address inefficiencies in disaster response provided by the state and faith-based organizations.
- b. *Task Force Duty*: Identify and address gaps in state services that could be provided by faith-based organizations.

- c. *Example:* [Texas VOAD Membership on Texas Emergency Management Council](#)

4. Amend Administrative Leave Legislation. This Task Force is recommending that [Texas Government Code Chapter 661, Section 661.907](#) be modified in order to expand the use of administrative leave for salaried employees to include additional nonprofit and faith-based organizations.

- a. *Task Force Duty:* Identify and address inefficiencies in disaster response provided by the state and faith-based organizations.
- b. *Rationale:* Faith-based and nonprofit organizations rely on the power of volunteerism in order to provide essential response and recovery support to disaster-impacted communities. [Unfortunately, Texas ranks 37th in terms of volunteerism](#), the result of which oftentimes mean that faith-based and nonprofit organizations lack the volunteers necessary to support Texas communities, particularly during the long-term recovery phase.
- c. *Example:* [Florida Disaster Volunteer Leave Act](#)

5. Ensure disaster-related procurement, contract and grant opportunities are disseminated to faith-based and nonprofit partners. State and local governmental agencies, to include emergency managers, should ensure that faith-based and nonprofit partners are included when disseminating disaster-related solicitation and grant opportunities.

- a. *Task Force Duty:* Identify and address inefficiencies in disaster response provided by the state and faith-based organizations.
- b. *Rationale:* Despite potential eligibility, faith-based and nonprofit organizations are oftentimes not considered when state and local officials are sharing procurement, contract, and/or grant opportunities. Failure to consider these critically important organizations is detrimental to both the taxpayer and disaster survivor. As nonprofit and faith-based organizations are able to leverage in-kind resources in a way that government is simply unable to, there is the potential for cost-savings. Furthermore, faith-based and nonprofit organizations are already embedded

within all Texas communities and therefore tend to have pre-existing relationships with key stakeholders, to include disaster survivors.

6. Streamline and simplify the process for private non-profit organizations to apply for reimbursement under [Emergency Protective Measures \(Category B\)](#). The state should make it easier for private nonprofit organizations to apply for reimbursement of eligible expenses, to include pre-registration of key private nonprofit stakeholders in the Public Assistance portal.

- a. *Task Force Duty*: Identify and address inefficiencies in disaster response provided by the state and faith-based organizations.
- b. *Rationale*: The practice of allowing private non-profit organizations (PNP's) to seek reimbursement of eligible expenses is permissible under current FEMA regulations, however it requires the state to apply on behalf of the PNP entities.
- c. *Example*: [State of Florida](#)

7. Further Study. It is the opinion of this Task Force that further study is required in order to more robustly engage stakeholders, to include local faith-based organizations.

Rationale: The Task Force faced a number of challenges in completing its work in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic created significant stressors for faith-based organizations, resulting in low survey participation. Local faith communities were unable to meet in person, while at the same time facing new demands from their own members and members of the wider community. Nor was COVID-19 the only stressor for faith communities: Texas saw several severe weather incidents in 2020 that demanded the resources of faith-based organizations. Even under ideal conditions, a comprehensive assessment of faith-based capacities and challenges would require a multi-pronged approach. Faith communities and faith-based organizations come in all shapes and sizes; a longer time frame and more diverse stakeholder group would allow for a more diverse and granular approach to data-gathering.

For More Information

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