



*Newport, TN, disaster aftermath of Hurricane Helene*

East Tennessee Development District

# Disaster Recovery Framework

First Edition - December 2025



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## Introduction

**Disasters are a matter of when they will happen, not if.** Communities across the United States are facing disasters they never imagined could occur. Therefore, a disaster recovery game plan is now essential for every community to have in order to stand a better chance of recovering from any catastrophe.

### Purpose

**The East Tennessee Development District Disaster Recovery Framework serves as a strategic road map to guide post-disaster short-term and long-term recovery efforts,** coordination, and implementation across East Tennessee. This document provides a scalable and adaptive structure that communities, counties, and non-profit organizations can use to streamline disaster recovery efforts.

**The purpose of this framework is to outline the roles, responsibilities, and coordinated actions** necessary to support the timely recovery of communities while strengthening regional resilience after a disaster. It also integrates performance metrics, interagency coordination protocols, and mechanisms for community engagement throughout the recovery process.

This document is intended to complement—not replace—local emergency operations plans, hazard mitigation plans, or statewide recovery protocols. Every county in Tennessee is required to have a Hazard Mitigation Plan and Basic Emergency Operations Plan in every community’s Emergency Management Agency or Department.

### How to use this Document

**This document is designed to be both a strategic example guide and an operational reference** for use before, during, and after a disaster. Each section of the framework builds upon recovery concepts and provides actionable tools, checklists, and planning considerations.

### Audience

The primary audience for this framework includes:

- **Local and County Government Officials** - mayors, emergency managers, planners, and department heads
- **State Agency Partners** - supporting technical assistance, funding, and regulatory guidance
- **Nonprofit and Faith-Based Organizations** - involved in recovery services, case management, and volunteer coordination
- **Private Sector and Philanthropic Entities** - contributing resources, leadership, and additional funding
- **Academic Institutions** - supporting research, technical analysis, and public policy education

## ETDD Audience

This document is designed and created with a focus on the East Tennessee Development District (ETDD) jurisdiction. ETDD is a government agency established by Federal and State statutes to serve municipal and county governments in the mid-east region of Tennessee. ETDD provides planning and development services to sixteen counties and fifty-six municipalities and also acts as a forum for local governments to address common planning-related issues.



### Serving Counties

- Knox County
- Blount County
- Sevier County
- Cocke County
- Jefferson County
- Anderson County
- Union County
- Grainger County
- Roane County
- Loudon County
- Monroe County
- Morgan County
- Scott County
- Campbell County
- Claiborne County
- Hamblen County

## Conclusion

The East Tennessee Development District Disaster Recovery Framework is both a response to recent catastrophic events and a proactive blueprint for future resilience. It affirms the importance of coordinated governance, community engagement, and cross-sector partnerships in driving fair and sustainable recovery for every community.

As East Tennessee continues to face climate-driven risks and complex emergencies, this framework provides the foundation necessary to protect communities, livelihoods, and the long-term vitality of the region.

## Disaster Recovery Overview

This framework is aligned with the National Disaster Recovery Framework ([National Disaster Recovery Framework 2024 Third Edition](#) NDRF, 2024), the Tennessee Emergency Management Plan ([2024 Tennessee Emergency Management Plan](#) TEMP, 2024), and the Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) and Basic Emergency Operation Plans (BEOP) from various East Tennessee county Emergency Management Agencies.

**Disaster recovery is a complex, multifaceted process** that begins immediately after a disaster strikes and continues long after emergency response operations have concluded. This process involves rebuilding infrastructure, restoring public services, supporting economic revitalization, addressing housing and health needs, and ultimately assisting individuals and communities in returning to or improving their pre-disaster conditions.

**While state and federal agencies provide critical support, it is local governments and communities that serve as the frontline leaders in the recovery process.**

*Figure: Recovery Continuum - National Disaster Recovery Framework*



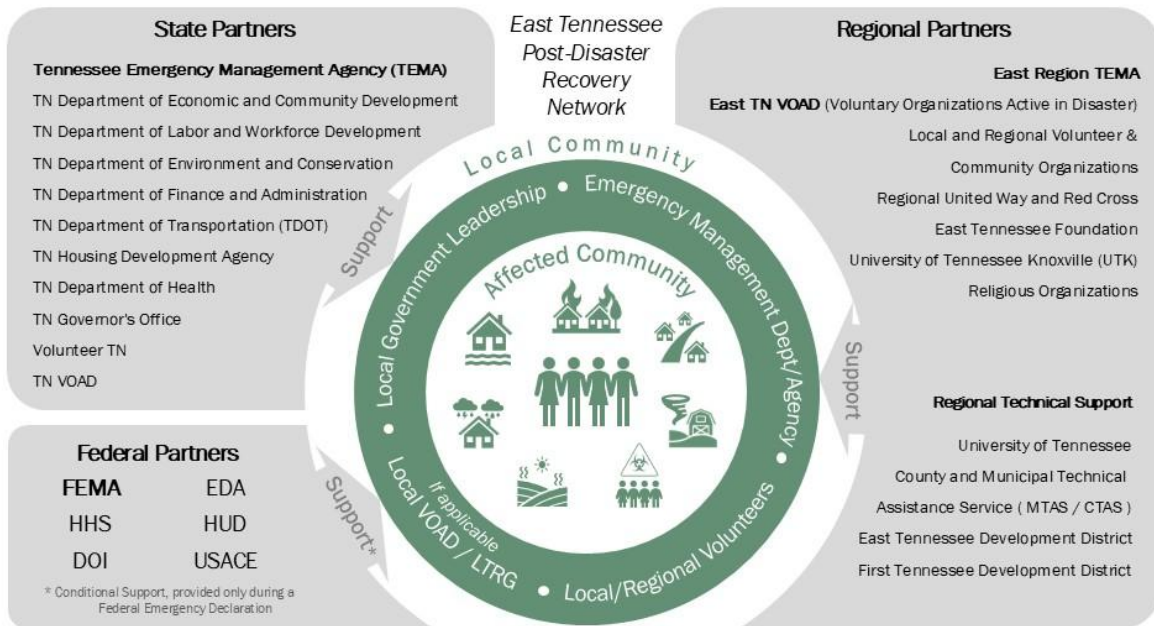
*FEMA, National Disaster Recovery Framework*

**Recovery** does not occur in a straight line; it **starts during the emergency response phase** and evolves as conditions stabilize and community needs change. To achieve successful outcomes, early planning, clear communication, and a commitment to transparent decision-making are essential. Local governments and local communities that incorporate resilience-building strategies—such as hazard mitigation, climate adaptation, and infrastructure modernization—into their recovery efforts are better equipped to reduce vulnerability to future events.

**Local officials must collaborate with all agencies, local and regional partners, and the community to assess impacts, prioritize needs, and define long-term recovery goals.** While assistance from higher levels of government is essential, the success of recovery ultimately depends on local capacity, community involvement, and a clear strategic vision.

In all disasters, the local community takes the lead in recovery efforts. They are responsible for coordinating the restoration of public services, accessing state and federal aid, and overseeing the long-term recovery of the affected community. Through coordination of all partners, a full recovery and improved resiliency are possible.

Figure. Representation of the East Tennessee Post-Disaster Recovery Network



Measuring recovery progress through reliable data collection and outcome tracking is crucial. Communities need to establish indicators that assess housing recovery, economic revitalization, public health, environmental conservation, and infrastructure restoration. These metrics enable decision-makers to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, identify gaps in services, and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders and funding agencies.

Keys to Recovery and Resiliency Progress

- **Housing Recovery Indicators:** Number of housing units repaired, reconstructed, or newly constructed; timeline to restore livable homes for every member of the community.
- **Economic Recovery Metrics:** Business reopening rates, employment trends, loan distribution, and commercial property rehabilitation.
- **Public Infrastructure Status:** Percentage of damaged infrastructure restored, State and Federal public project progress, and utility companies' service reliability.
- **Health and Human Services:** Mental health service uptake, displaced populations assisted, and social service caseloads.
- **Local Ecology:** Farmland recovery, waterway health, ecological restoration, protected lands status, and environmental cleanup progress.

In summary, disaster recovery is a collaborative effort led by the local community, emphasizing timely coordination and sustained commitment. By focusing on fairness, resilience, and shared responsibility, communities can not only rebuild what was lost but also emerge stronger and better prepared for the future.

## Disaster Declarations

**Recovery varies for each disaster, but the resources provided depend on the declaration made, which significantly impacts the process.** Disaster declarations are formal mechanisms through which local governments recognize the need for additional assistance due to a major emergency or disaster. Each type of declaration triggers different forms of aid and access to long-term recovery resources, ranging from technical support and emergency funding to comprehensive housing and infrastructure programs.

*Table: Disaster Declarations and Recovery Resources Summary*

Declaration Type	Issued By	Key Long-Term Recovery Resources
Local Disaster Declaration	Mayor / County Executive	Local mutual aid, initial damage assessments
State Disaster Declaration	Mayor / County Executive / Governor	State agency deployment, coordination via TEMA
Federal Emergency Declaration	President (via FEMA)	Limited PA, technical support, emergency response
Federal Major Disaster Declaration	President	EDA, HHS, IA, PA, HMGP, RSFs, HUD, SBA, DRCs
USDA Agricultural Disaster	USDA Secretary	FSA loans, ECP, technical farm recovery
SBA Administrative Disaster	SBA Administrator	SBA loans, EIDLs, recovery assistance for businesses
Public Health Emergency	HHS Secretary	Medical system recovery, NDMS, public health support

Some major impacts on the level of disaster declaration can affect local government funding and structures. Examples may include changes in funding approvals and shifts in leadership.

## Goals for Long-Term Recovery

### Setting Goals for Long-Term Recovery

**Establishing clear and actionable goals is essential** for successful long-term disaster recovery. These goals serve as important benchmarks for communities and local governments as they work together to rebuild stronger, safer, and restored communities following a disaster.

In the context of regional and local recovery planning, **setting goals provides direction**, prioritizes limited resources, and aligns stakeholders around shared outcomes that extend well beyond the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

**Long-term recovery goals are essential for defining what success looks like** for a community after a disaster. Unlike emergency response, which is reactive and time-sensitive, the recovery process is prolonged and strategic.

These goals express a community's vision for the future—addressing not only the conditions that existed before the disaster but also correcting long-standing vulnerabilities and promoting greater resilience. By setting these goals, communities create a framework for measuring progress, mobilizing investments, and ensuring accountability over time.

### Measuring Recovery Progress

**Data-driven recovery is necessary and crucial for funding, accountability, and ongoing improvement.** The following are examples of performance metrics, monitoring protocols, and goals to measure during recovery progress across key sectors:

- **Housing Recovery Indicators:** Number of housing units repaired, reconstructed, or newly constructed; timeline to restore livable homes for every member of the community.
- **Economic Recovery Metrics:** Business reopening rates, employment trends, loan distribution, and commercial property rehabilitation.
- **Public Infrastructure Status:** Percentage of damaged infrastructure restored, State and Federal public project progress, and utility companies' service reliability.
- **Health and Human Services:** Mental health service uptake, displaced populations assisted, and social service caseloads.
- **Local Ecology:** Farmland recovery, waterway health, ecological restoration, protected lands status, and environmental cleanup progress.

**Data monitoring is the responsibility of local governments and all partners.** Data collection will be coordinated through local departments, state agencies, and partner organizations. Understanding the status of the community and tracking progress toward goals is essential. Additionally, this data is important for securing funding for long-term recovery efforts.

## Using Partners for Data Monitoring

**Local governments and communities are urged to connect with as many partners,** government agencies, and partner organizations as possible to understand the disaster's impact and severity and to achieve their recovery goals.

Below is an example list of agencies and partner organizations capable of assisting with data collection, measurement, and analysis for post-disaster recovery indicators across the core domains of housing, economic, infrastructure, human services, and local ecology.

---

### Housing Recovery Indicators Example

*Indicators: Number of housing units repaired, reconstructed, or newly constructed; timeline to restore livable homes for every member of the community.*

- **Local Building Assessors and Codes Departments (*Municipal and County*)**
    - Building assessors can determine the extent of damage to all buildings after the disaster. Planning/code departments can issue permits and conduct inspections for rebuilt or repaired structures.
  - **LTRG or County's VOAD (or ET VOAD)**
    - Can report on case management services, home repairs, unmet needs, and assistance provided through non-profits and partners.
  - **Local Utilities (Gas, Electric, Water Authorities)**
    - Can monitor and provide utility service restoration times for local residents.
  - **Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA)**
    - Could provide regional housing availability post-disaster, administer recovery housing funds, and maintain housing assistance data.
  - **Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC)**
    - Could monitor restoration of drinking water, wastewater, and environmental systems tied to housing.
  - **Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance – Division of Fire Prevention**
    - Could track building code compliance and occupancy certifications.
  - **Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS)**
    - Could collect data on temporary shelter and emergency housing placements through assistance programs.
-

### Economic Recovery Metrics Example

*Indicators: Business reopening rates, employment trends, loan distribution, and commercial property rehabilitation.*

- **Local Chambers of Commerce**
    - Can provide qualitative and quantitative data on business reopening rates and operations status.
  - **Development Districts / Planning District Commissions**
    - Could coordinate data for regional economic trends and recovery project tracking.
  - **Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD)**
    - Could monitor business impacts, reopening statistics, and incentive-driven recovery support.
  - **Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD)**
    - Could report on unemployment rates, job placements, and labor market disruptions.
  - **Tennessee Department of Revenue (DOR)**
    - Could provide business tax data, license renewals, and financial activity insights.
  - **Tennessee Small Business Development Centers (TSBDC)**
    - Could collect information on small business counseling and loan referrals post-disaster.
  - **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) *(in coordination with FEMA)***
    - Could track disaster loan applications, approvals, and disbursements to businesses and property owners.
- 

*Note: It is recommended that a Community Recovery Dashboard be developed to track recovery outcomes and inform the public on local resources, with regular updates provided.*

### Public Infrastructure Status Example

*Indicators: Percentage of damaged infrastructure restored, State and Federal public project progress, and utility companies' service reliability.*

- **Local Public Works and Utility Departments**
    - Can submit status updates on infrastructure repair and service restoration at the local level.
  - **Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT)**
    - Can manage and report on the status of state and federal roads, bridges, and transit infrastructure.
  - **Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA)**
    - Can administer and track state and federal assistance projects, including infrastructure restoration, and debris removal services in major thoroughfares.
  - **Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC)**
    - Could track the status of public water systems, wastewater treatment, and environmental assets.
  - **Tennessee Department of General Services**
    - Could monitor the restoration of state-owned buildings and properties.
  - **Tennessee Regulatory Authority / Tennessee Public Utility Commission (TPUC)**
    - Could oversee power and utility grid reliability, restoration timelines, and service standards.
  - **Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) (Federal Partner)**
    - Could provide status on regional electric grid performance and infrastructure reliability in TVA-serviced areas.
-

## Health and Human Services Indicators Example

*Indicators: Mental health service uptake, displaced populations assisted, and social service caseloads.*

- **LTRG or County's VOAD (or ET VOAD)**
    - Can report on human services case management services, unmet needs, and assistance provided through non-profits and partners.
  - **Local Health Departments and Hospitals**
    - Could provide service data on displaced or disaster-affected individuals seeking medical or mental health support.
  - **American Red Cross – Tennessee Region (NGO Partner)**
    - Tracks numbers served through shelters, case management, and family reunification services.
  - **Tennessee Department of Health (TDH)**
    - Could collect data on public health trends, healthcare facility capacity, and mental health services utilization.
  - **Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD)**
    - Could monitor services provided to older adults, especially vulnerable populations affected by disaster.
  - **Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS)**
    - Could track behavioral health services usage and provide post-disaster crisis counseling data.
  - **Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS)**
    - Could report on SNAP, TANF, and other safety net program caseloads and assistance for displaced individuals.
-

## Local Ecology and Environmental Recovery

*Indicators: Farmland recovery, waterway health, ecological restoration, protected lands status, and environmental cleanup progress.*

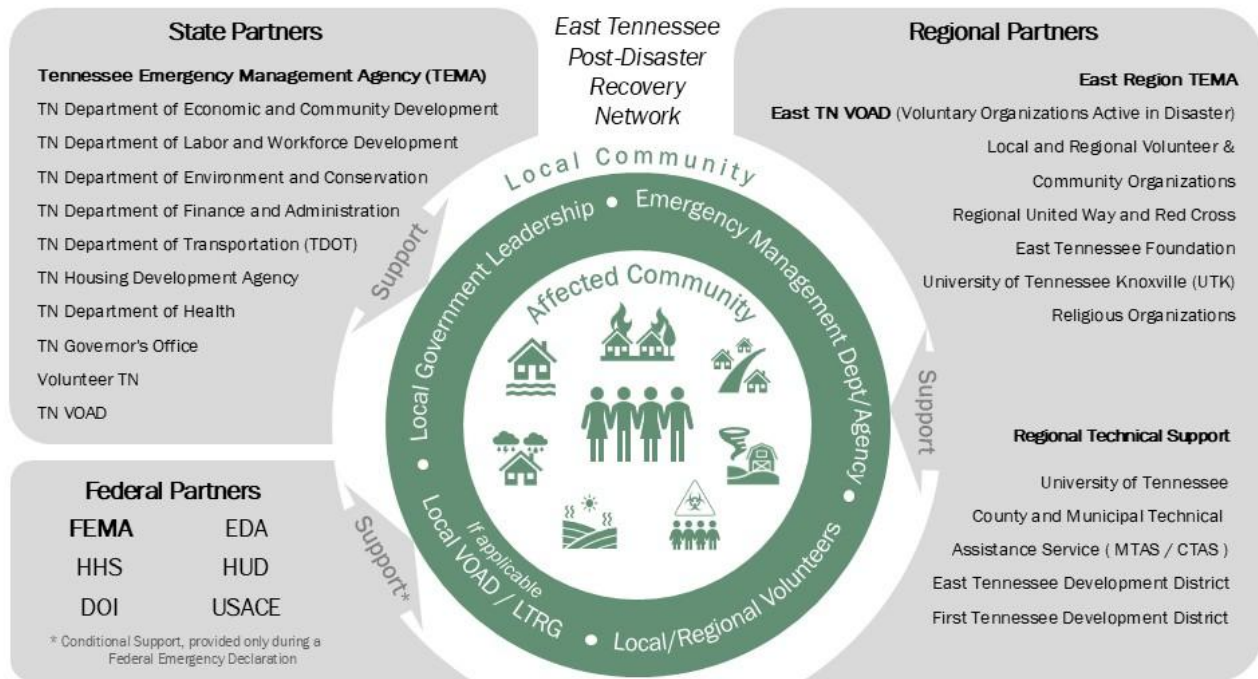
- **Local Parks and Public Works Departments**
    - Could assess damages to local parks and public lands, stabilize stream banks, and coordinate environmental clean-up of the local environment and parks.
  - **Local and Regional Universities & Colleges** (e.g., UT Institute of Agriculture)
    - Can conduct environmental and data monitoring and research on recovery conditions; could provide technical assessments and modeling.
  - **Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts**
    - Can provide local-level technical assistance and collect field-level data on land and water conservation outcomes.
  - **Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC)**
    - Could monitor surface and groundwater quality, state park restoration, wetland and riparian ecosystem health, and hazardous materials management.
  - **Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA)**
    - Could lead farmland recovery tracking, soil and crop health monitoring, and land rehabilitation through conservation programs.
  - **Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)**
    - Could assess damage to surface water and forest habitats and species recovery efforts; manage fish and wildlife habitats on state lands.
  - **Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)** (*Federal Partner*)
    - Could monitor and manage river systems, hydropower facilities, reservoir health, and erosion impacts.
  - **U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS)**
    - Could provide technical and financial assistance to farmers for conservation practices, erosion control, and farmland rehabilitation.
  - **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**
    - Could lead hazardous site remediation, water system restoration, and air quality monitoring following environmental emergencies.
  - **U.S. Department of the Interior & U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**
    - Could support ecosystem recovery on federally protected lands and endangered species restoration.
  - **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)**
    - Could assist with waterway cleanup, floodplain restoration, and infrastructure repairs that affect local ecological systems during major disasters.
-

## Tennessee Disaster Recovery Network

The Tennessee Disaster Recovery Network is a representation of a flexible and ongoing partnership between the local community and all supporting partners, established through continuous cooperation, collaboration, coordination, and communication.

The figure below illustrates the current existing post-disaster recovery support network for local communities across East Tennessee. All partners share the same goal of assisting affected communities after a disaster. It is the community's responsibility to reach out and collaborate with all partners to achieve the goal of recovery and strengthen the community's resiliency.

Figure. Representation of the East Tennessee Post-Disaster Recovery Network



### The Four Cs of Disaster Recovery - VOAD

The Four Cs are essential principles that guide effective leadership during disaster recovery.

- **Collaboration** involves building strategic partnerships across sectors, including government, nonprofits, businesses, and the public.
- **Cooperation** refers to the willingness of different entities to support each other's roles and responsibilities. It requires flexibility, shared resources, and commitment.
- **Coordination** is the organized management of people, resources, and activities to avoid duplication and ensure alignment. Through structured planning and integrated efforts.
- **Communication** is the continuous exchange of timely, accurate, and transparent information among all recovery partners and the public.

## Local Community Disaster Recovery

**Disaster recovery is established through proactive planning, integrated emergency management systems, and a whole community approach.** Every county in Tennessee has an established Basic Emergency Operations Plan and possibly a Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is developed and maintained by every county's Emergency Management Agency or Department.

In East Tennessee, very few communities have pre- or post-disaster plans in place. However, resources are available for local communities that want to plan, as shown in the resource below.

- [Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning Guide for Local Governments \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Local Elected and Appointed Officials Quick Reference Guide, Pre and Post Disaster \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Planning Guides | FEMA.gov](#)
- Local governments can reach out to their region's TEMA office or their Development District for these documents and other disaster planning support documents.



### After A Disaster Checklist (FEMA) – For Elected Officials

After a disaster, members of the community expect their local government and their senior officials to maintain an active role in the delivery of recovery resources and services, and to provide innovative and efficient leadership. Each senior official's recovery tasks should include:

- Convene key stakeholders to establish a vision, strategy, and plan for the recovery process and for the future of the community.
- Work with the emergency management agency to convene and maintain a recovery task force and a recovery organization structure.
- Work collaboratively with all groups of people affected by the disaster to promote accessible outreach to their communities and address issues relevant to them.
- Lead the recovery process and appoint a recovery manager if needed.
- Establish a recovery office to effectively manage long-term regulatory, fiscal, infrastructure, community development, and human services recovery functions.
- Continue to assess unmet needs through close coordination with jurisdictional agencies and non-governmental (NGO) partners with significant long-term recovery support roles.
- Optimize the benefits of state/federal programs along with private sector and NGO contributions.
- Understand disaster declaration and assistance processes and what funding may be available to assist during recovery.
- Identify opportunities to rebuild the community better and mitigate the impacts of future incidents.
- Ensure codes, regulations, and finances are properly managed during the recovery process.
- Communicate coordinated information to the public and media (both traditional and social media) to generate confidence in the process, secure buy-in for recovery priorities, and establish accountability. Include American Sign Language, captioning, and non-English language interpretation as needed.
- Work with emergency management, other jurisdictional agencies, and NGO partners as appropriate to conduct public meetings to determine unmet needs and identify current or future actions related to the disaster.
- Ask questions; the recovery process and programs can be complex.
- Support the community through the recovery. The process may take multiple years.

[Local Elected and Appointed Officials Quick Reference Guide, Pre and Post Disaster \(FEMA\)](#)

## TN VOAD and East TN VOAD

### TN VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)

The Tennessee Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (TN VOAD) is a statewide coalition of nonprofits, faith-based groups, community organizations, and charitable partners that work together to support disaster preparedness, response, and long-term recovery across Tennessee. Its importance lies in its ability to coordinate efforts among diverse organizations, reduce duplication of services, and ensure that assistance reaches survivors efficiently and equitably.

TN VOAD helps connect local communities with resources such as volunteers, donations, housing repair support, unmet needs funding, case management, and emotional and spiritual care. By collaborating with county EMAs, TEMA, FEMA, Long-Term Recovery Groups, and local VOAD chapters, TN VOAD strengthens disaster recovery capacity at every level and ensures that vulnerable households and underserved populations receive sustained support long after the initial emergency response has ended.

### East Tennessee VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)

East TN VOAD is the regional coalition of nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations that work together to support disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts across East Tennessee. It is part of the State and National VOAD network, which brings together voluntary organizations across the United States to enhance collaboration and help establish a Local VOAD group or LTRGs during disasters.

Serving Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, and Union counties.

Figure. East Tennessee VOAD Service Area



*~ How do Communities Access VOAD Support*

- Local communities can reach out to East TN VOAD or any TN VOAD member for communication and regional support.

**Resources That Can Be Requested Through VOAD**

**[About Us | Tennessee VOAD](#)**

- Advocacy
- Animal Assistance/Shelter/Care
- Blankets
- Case Management
- Chain Sawing
- Childcare/Counseling
- Clean-up
- Communications
- Community Outreach
- Community Unmet Needs Assessment
- Construction Estimating
- Coordination of Services
- Counseling
- Credit Counseling
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
- Damage Assessment
- Debris Removal
- Distribution of Goods
- Disaster Health Services
- Disaster Welfare Inquiry
- Donations Management
- Elder Care
- Emergency Financial Assistance
- Emergency Repairs
- Emergency Supplies
- Emotional/Spiritual Care
- Equipment
- Financial Services
- Fiscal Agent Long Term Recovery
- Funeral Services
- Gutting
- Information
- Listening/Referral
- Long Term Recovery
- Mass Care
- Mass Feeding (Fixed)
- Mass Feeding (Mobile)
- Mass Sheltering
- Mental Health Crisis Counseling
- Mitigation Guidance
- Muck out
- Organizational Capacity Planning
- Organizational Mentoring
- Power/Pressure Washing
- Preparedness & Planning
- Rebuilding
- Sandbagging
- Sanitization
- Search and Rescue
- Short-term Econ Development
- Shower/Laundry
- Support for Responders
- Technical Assistance
- Therapy Animals
- Translation Services
- Transportation
- Volunteer Services/Coordination
- Volunteer Reception
- Warehousing

## Local VOAD and LTRG

### What is a Local VOAD?

A **Local VOAD** is a coalition made up of voluntary, nonprofit, faith-based, and community members that organize preparedness and response efforts at the community level. It may include the local emergency management department and community leaders, and its primary focus is on collaboration among member organizations and partners during any type of disaster.

#### Main Functions

- Communication and coordination among agencies
- Volunteer and donations management
- Response support (sheltering, feeding, debris cleanup, supplies)
- Preparedness exercises and planning
- Connection to regional and state VOADs
- May assist in launching an LTRG after a disaster

### What is a Long-Term Recovery Group?

**Long-Term Recovery Groups (LTRGs)** are locally organized coalitions that coordinate resources, services, and support for individuals and families with unmet needs after a specific disaster. These groups play a crucial role in community-based recovery and are especially important once initial emergency relief efforts have ended.

**LTRGs operate in the private realm of communities and provide targeted support** that is typically not covered by local, state, or federal governments.

#### Main Functions

- Disaster case management
- Housing repair and rebuilding coordination
- Financial assistance for unmet needs
- Volunteer labor organization for rebuilding
- Donations management specific to survivors
- Unmet Needs Committees/Allocation Teams
- Outreach to vulnerable populations
- Closing gaps not filled by FEMA, insurance, or SBA
  - LTRGs are usually temporary and close when recovery is complete.

The following document provides a summary of the [Long-Term Recovery Guide, National VOAD 2023](#), by the Long-Term Recovery Group Committee. Additional details and information are available within the Guide.

*Key Differences at a Glance*

*Table. The differences between LTRGs and Local VOAD*

<b>Feature</b>	<b>LTRG (Long-Term Recovery Group)</b>	<b>Local VOAD</b>
<b>Primary Purpose</b>	Coordinate long-term recovery for individuals and families with unmet needs in a specific disaster	Coordinate disaster response and preparedness among local nonprofits, churches, & volunteer groups
<b>Activation Timing</b>	Formed <b>after a disaster</b> , once response ends and recovery begins	Exists <b>before, during, and after</b> disasters (year-round group)
<b>Focus</b>	Survivor case management, housing repair, unmet needs funding, rebuilding	Planning, communication, and collaboration for disaster relief and preparedness
<b>Duration</b>	Temporary – active until recovery is complete	Standing coalition – operates continually
<b>Leadership</b>	Led by nonprofits, community partners, EMA reps, or faith-based leaders	Led by nonprofits, community partners, EMA reps, or faith-based leaders
<b>Partnership Role</b>	Works closely with VOADs, EMAs, and donors to serve survivors	Supports and may help form or fund LTRGs
<b>Scope of Work</b>	Individual and household recovery	Organizational coordination and resource sharing

## Why Local VOADs and LTRGs Are Needed

**Disasters often overwhelm local systems and disproportionately impact vulnerable communities.** While federal and state resources provide essential aid, many survivors still face long-term recovery challenges, such as repairing homes, replacing essential belongings, or accessing services. Local VOADs and LTRGs ensure that recovery assistance reaches those who fall through the gaps by organizing local, nonprofit, faith-based, and philanthropic efforts around a shared mission of helping survivors recover.

## Benefits of Local VOADs and LTRGs

Local VOADs and LTRGs provide numerous benefits to disaster-affected communities:

- **Efficient use of resources** by avoiding duplication of efforts among agencies
- **Unified voice and strategy** for local recovery leadership
- **Increased community trust and engagement** through coordinated outreach
- **Support for holistic case management** that matches survivor needs with available resources

## Possible Challenges

While a Local VOAD/LTRG are essential, they also face challenges such as:

- **Limited administrative capacity or funding** for operations and staffing
- **Volunteer fatigue or inconsistent participation** over time
- **Difficulty maintaining coordination** among diverse partners with different priorities
- **Navigating legal, financial, and organizational complexities** during formation and operation

~ *How do Communities Make a Local VOAD or LTRG*

➤ **Organization and Formation**

A Local VOAD and LTRG formation should begin early in the recovery process, ideally during blue skies before disasters or the transition from response to recovery after a disaster. The local organization should include representatives from local governments, VOAD members, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and community leaders. A facilitator or convening organization (such as East Regional TEMA, TN VOAD, or local non-profits) plays a key role in bringing the group together.

The following document provides a summary of the [Long-Term Recovery Guide, National VOAD 2023](#). Additional details and information are available within the Guide.

Leadership team or executive committee

- **Case management unit** to coordinate services for individuals with unmet needs
- **Unmet Needs Table** to match cases with available financial and in-kind resources
- **Communications and volunteer management teams**
- **Fiscal agent or 501(c)(3) sponsor** to manage funding and donations

➤ **Forms and Documentation Needed for LTRGs**

LTRGs typically require a set of foundational documents and tools to function effectively:

- **Articles of incorporation or fiscal sponsorship agreement** (if not a 501(c)(3))
- **Bylaws** outlining governance, membership, and decision-making procedures
- **Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)** with partner organizations
- **Confidentiality agreements** for case managers and volunteers
- **Unmet needs request forms, intake forms, and case files** for case management
- **Financial tracking tools and donation management forms**

➤ **Conclusion**

Local VOADs and LTRGs serve as the backbone of community-led recovery, enabling effective coordination among public, private, and nonprofit actors. While they face operational challenges, their role in filling recovery gaps and supporting long-term well-being makes them a vital part of a resilient recovery framework.

The State of Tennessee encourages the formation of Local VOADs and local LTRGs when feasible, particularly in disaster-prone areas and in rural or low-capacity counties, to maximize efficiency and resource use.

*Examples of East Tennessee LTRGs*



**Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group**  
Created 2025 during the Hurricane Helen Disaster.



**Mountain Tough**  
Created 2016 during the Sevier County wildfires.

## Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

**NGOs bring specialized capabilities to disaster recovery, including shelter services, food assistance, health outreach, legal aid, and case management.** Organizations such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Way, and local VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) members provide both immediate relief and sustained long-term support. Their community networks, local knowledge, and ability to rapidly deploy volunteers make them essential to recovery coordination.

**NGOs play a critical role in disaster recovery, particularly in filling service gaps and reaching vulnerable populations.** Faith-based organizations, community development corporations, food banks, and housing nonprofits offer case management, direct assistance, volunteer coordination, and advocacy services.

Key responsibilities include:

- Organizing volunteer work teams for home repair and clean-up
- Operating donation and distribution centers
- Providing multilingual and accessible outreach to underserved populations
- Participating in long-term recovery group leadership and decision-making

### Major Leading NGOs in East Tennessee

United Way East TN Highlands

American Red Cross



*~ How do Communities Access NGOs Support*

- The local community can coordinate with ET VOAD or TEMA to start communications and request support from NGOs. Or you may directly contact them.

## Governmental & Regional Organizations

**Governmental organizations support disaster recovery by offering specialized assistance**, such as expertise, planning, policy development, grant application help, and integrating resilience into redevelopment plans. They ensure that recovery efforts follow regulations, land use policies, economic goals, and long-term community development strategies.

### East Tennessee Development District (ETDD)

Regional government bodies are especially beneficial in Tennessee, where **small municipalities and rural counties might lack the staffing, technical ability, or administrative resources to handle long-term recovery on their own**. A regional partner in East Tennessee is the East Tennessee Development District (ETDD) and First Tennessee Development District (FTDD), which offers communities planning assistance, grant writing support, coordination services, and long-term recovery guidance.

The **East Tennessee Development District serves as a multi-county regional convener** and supports local governments with disaster recovery planning, hazard mitigation efforts, infrastructure project assistance, and economic recovery initiatives. ETDD assists counties in applying for state and federal funding, navigating Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) programs, and integrating resilience into housing, transportation, and land use plans.

In regions like East Tennessee, **development districts such as ETDD and FTDD are vital partners**, offering technical expertise, staffing capacity, and intergovernmental coordination that enable sustained recovery. Without their participation, smaller and less-resourced jurisdictions would find it hard to access federal aid, rebuild infrastructure, and restore housing and services quickly and resiliently.

### Other Governmental Agencies

The following partners and agencies have programs and staff that can provide technical assistance for long-term disaster recovery.

- University of Tennessee County and Municipality Technical Assistance Service (MTAS/CTAS)
- University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK)
- East Tennessee State University (ETSU)
- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)

*~ How do Communities Access Regional Support*

- Local elected officials can reach out to their Development District and request help with disaster planning and grant efforts.
- Local elected officials can reach out to TEMA and request help from specialty support provided by the UTK and ETSU.

## Tennessee Emergency Management Agency

The **Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA)** is the lead state agency responsible for coordinating emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts across the State of Tennessee. It operates under the authority of Tennessee Code Annotated § 58-2-104, which formally created the agency. TEMA's primary mission is to ensure the safety and resilience of Tennessee communities before, during, and after disasters—whether natural, technological, or human-caused.

*“Local governments are the primary entities for addressing disaster recovery needs. The state shall be prepared to provide recovery support services when requested by local governments.”*

*- TEMA quoted from the Tennessee Emergency Management Plan*

### TEMA Responsibilities

The **Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA)** functions as an optional emergency support system for short and long-term disaster recovery, as outlined in the [2024 Tennessee Emergency Management Plan \(TEMP\) ESF-15 section](#). In this capacity, TEMA provides coordinated State recovery support to assist local governments and disaster survivors. The agency's roles include both short-term and long-term recovery operations, involving collaboration with state and local agencies, federal entities, non-governmental organizations, and private sector partners.

### TEMA Short-Term Recovery Responsibilities

Short-term recovery involves stabilizing disaster-affected communities and restoring critical lifelines and public services. TEMA's responsibilities include:

- **Coordinating Damage Assessments:** TEMA assists local governments with conducting Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) to determine eligibility for state or federal disaster declarations.
- **Resource Coordination:** The agency manages the deployment of state assets to meet immediate recovery needs, including debris removal, temporary shelters, emergency utilities, and transportation services.
- **Emergency Operations Center (SEOC):** TEMA leads recovery coordination through the SEOC, ensuring a unified response with Emergency Support Functions and interagency partners.
- **Establishing Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs):** In collaboration with FEMA, TEMA helps operate DRCs to provide public access to recovery assistance and information.

### *Long-Term Recovery Responsibilities*

Long-term recovery focuses on rebuilding infrastructure, restoring housing, reviving local economies, and enhancing community resilience. TEMA's key roles include:

- **Federal Program Administration:** TEMA manages federal recovery funding streams such as FEMA's **Public Assistance (PA)** and **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**, guiding local jurisdictions through application, compliance, and implementation processes.
- **Agency Coordination:** Coordinate the development of multi-agency Recovery Task Forces to collaborate on and address significant recovery needs from disaster events when necessary.
- **Governor's Office Liaison:** TEMA coordinates formal disaster declaration requests and agreements between the Governor's Office and FEMA, including the appointment of state recovery officials under the FEMA-State Agreement.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** TEMA engages a broad range of public and private partners—state agencies, nonprofits, VOADs, development districts, and academic institutions—to deliver sector-specific recovery assistance.

*~ How do Communities Access State Support*

- Local elected officials or the Emergency Management Agency contact the East Region TEMA office to request support and coordination with any Tennessee Agency.

TEMA Supporting Agencies and Organizations

TEMA is supported by an extensive network of Tennessee state agencies, regional partners, and non-governmental organizations to fulfill its recovery mission.

These include:

- TN Department of Agriculture
- TN Department of Children's Services
- TN Attorney General's Office
- TN Department of Economic and Community Development
- TN Department of Environment and Conservation
- TN Department of Finance and Administration
- TN Department of Financial Institutions
- TN Department of General Services
- TN Department of Health
- TN Department of Human Services
- TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- TN Department of Revenue
- TN Department of Tourist Development
- TN Department of Transportation (TDOT)
- TN Department of Treasury
- TN Department Veteran Services
- TN Governor's Office
- TN Housing Development Agency (THDA)
- TN Public Utility Commission
- TN Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)
- University of Tennessee - Institute of Public Service
- Volunteer TN
- TN Development Districts
- Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD)

These partners provide sector-specific expertise, operational support, and long-term assistance in areas such as housing, infrastructure, economic recovery, public health, and environmental restoration.

## Federal Roles and Responsibilities

The [National Disaster Recovery Framework 2024 \(NDRF\)](#) provides a comprehensive structure for how the federal government supports state, tribal, territorial, and local governments in post-disaster recovery. As outlined in pages 6–17 of the 2024 NDRF, the federal role is not to direct recovery, but to **support and empower local leadership** by providing technical assistance, funding, coordination, and planning capacity.

This federal support becomes especially critical in large-scale disasters, such as hurricanes, wildfires, and earthquakes, that overwhelm local and state capabilities. For Tennessee local governments, whether municipalities, counties, or regional entities, understanding these federal roles is essential to navigating assistance channels and building partnerships that accelerate long-term recovery.

### Core Principles of Federal Recovery Support

- **Locally Led, Federally Supported:** Local governments define recovery priorities; the federal role is to provide the tools and assistance to help communities meet their goals.
- **Whole-Community Approach:** Federal agencies collaborate not only with governments, but also with NGOs, faith-based organizations, businesses, and academia.
- **Fairness and Resilience:** Recovery support is grounded in promoting fair outcomes and reducing long-term risk to future disasters.

### Federal/FEMA Roles

#### Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO)

- Appointed by the President after a major disaster declaration under the Stafford Act.
- Responsible for coordinating federal response and short-term recovery efforts.
- Works with the State Coordinating Officer (SCO) and local emergency management agencies.
- Tennessee local governments typically interact with the FCO through the Joint Field Office (JFO) and Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs).

#### Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator (FDRC)

- Deployed by FEMA to lead long-term recovery operations.
- Works alongside the State Disaster Recovery Coordinator (SDRC) (appointed by TEMA) and regional stakeholders.
- Responsible for developing and implementing a Federal Recovery Support Strategy aligned with local needs.
- Tennessee communities can engage with the FDRC during recovery planning workshops and when seeking federal interagency coordination.

Recovery Support Functions (RSFs)

The NDRF organizes federal recovery assistance into six Recovery Support Functions (RSFs), each focused on a critical sector and led by a designated federal agency. These RSFs deploy specialists to support communities in need of sector-specific recovery planning and funding.

<b>RSF</b>	<b>Federal Lead Agency</b>	<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Key Resources for Tennessee Communities</b>
<b><i>Community Assistance</i></b>	FEMA	Planning, governance, leadership, public engagement	Technical planning assistance, resilience toolkits, community engagement support
<b><i>Economic Recovery</i></b>	U.S. Department of Commerce (EDA)	Business continuity, workforce, and economic development	EDA disaster grants, business recovery technical assistance, workforce programs
<b><i>Health &amp; Social Services</i></b>	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	Public health, behavioral health, social services	Behavioral health teams, health infrastructure support, case management
<b><i>Housing</i></b>	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	Temporary and permanent housing recovery	CDBG-DR funding, housing technical assistance, policy waivers
<b><i>Infrastructure Systems</i></b>	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Energy, water, transportation, communications	Engineering assessments, public works restoration, and infrastructure resilience
<b><i>Natural &amp; Cultural Resources</i></b>	U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)	Environmental, historical, and cultural assets	National Environmental Policy Act compliance support, restoration funding, and conservation planning

Each RSF includes **primary and supporting agencies**, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Small Business Administration (SBA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Department of Agriculture (USDA), all of which contribute resources or expertise during recovery.

*~ How do Communities Access Federal Support*

- **Disaster Declarations:**  
Recovery support is **activated through a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration**. TEMA coordinates with local governments to submit damage assessments and formal requests. Once declared, FEMA and other federal agencies are authorized to provide direct assistance.
  
- **Joint Field Office (JFO) and Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs):**  
Local officials can engage with federal representatives at JFOs or participate in DRC operations, where interagency coordination and casework are managed.
  
- **Recovery Planning Engagement:**  
Through FEMA's Community Planning and Capacity Building Recovery Support Functions (RSF), Tennessee communities can access:
  - Recovery planning toolkits
  - Community engagement facilitation
  - Pre-disaster recovery plan reviews and workshops
  - Long-term capacity building and training programs
  
- **Federal Grant Programs:**  
Local governments are eligible to apply for:
  - **FEMA Public Assistance (PA):** For public infrastructure repair
  - **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP):** For mitigation investments
  - **HUD CDBG-DR:** For long-term housing and infrastructure rebuilding (administered by the state or large cities)
  - **EDA Disaster Recovery Grants:** For restoring commercial districts, job creation, and economic planning
  
- **Technical Assistance and Subject-Matter Expertise:**  
RSF agencies deploy advisors who assist local governments with project scoping, compliance (e.g., environmental reviews), and grant administration. These experts help small or under-resourced jurisdictions navigate complex requirements.
  
- **Collaboration with TEMA and Regional Partners:**  
TEMA plays a crucial liaison role, guiding local officials to appropriate federal resources. Tennessee's development districts, regional planning commissions, and VOAD partners also assist in connecting communities with RSF support and technical expertise.

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East Region TEMA  
All Local Emergency Management Agencies in East Tennessee  
Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group  
First Tennessee Development District  
Tennessee Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)  
East Tennessee VOAD  
United Way Highlands  
Red Cross  
University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK)  
Climate and Community Resilience Department  
EMA Department  
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

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### ***Living Document Disclaimer***

The East Tennessee Development District Disaster Recovery Framework is intended to be a living document that will be updated and expanded as needed to meet the changing needs of the region.

### ***AI Policy Disclaimer***

Parts of this document were edited with assistance from Grammarly AI to enhance tone and clarity. All information and contents of this document were researched and created by ETDD staff.