

Georgia Community VOADs

Community

Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

A toolbox for prospective Community VOADs



Georgia
Voluntary Organizations
Active in Disaster

COOPERATION | COMMUNICATION | COORDINATION | COLLABORATION



GEMA



INTRODUCTION

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

ESTABLISHED PARTNERS

There are entities within each community whose purpose is to assist those affected by disaster:

- Emergency Responders – Fire and Police, Public Works
- Government Partners – FEMA, GEMA, and Local Emergency Management
- Georgia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (Georgia VOAD)
- Organizations with a disaster response mission (American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, etc.)

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

TAKING ACTION

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

The four phases of disaster are:

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

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

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

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

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



COMING TOGETHER

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

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

SUCCESSSES

After various disasters in Georgia several particularly hard hit communities realized that there was a need for better communication, coordination, collaboration and cooperation and naturally came together. They began to build what we now know as the first Community VOADs in Georgia. The success of these collaborations resulted in a/an:

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

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



ABOUT THE TOOLBOX

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

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



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WHAT IS A Community VOAD?

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

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

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

What is the difference between a Community VOAD and a State VOAD?

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

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

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



CORE VALUES

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

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

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

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

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



MISSION STATEMENT EXAMPLES

Sample 1

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

Sample 2

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

Sample 3

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

Sample 4

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

Sample 5

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

Sample 6

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

Sample 7

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

Sample 8

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



What organizations form a Community VOAD?

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

Local Government and Emergency Managers

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

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

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

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



Non-profit Organizations

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

Faith-Based Groups

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

Businesses

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

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



OBJECTIVES AND RESOURCES

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

Objective 1: Structure

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

Objective 2: Training and Education

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

Objective 3: Ready to Respond

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

Objective 4: Managing Donations and Volunteers

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

Objective 5: Long Term Recovery

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



ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 1: STRUCTURE

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

Have a dedicated champion and advocate

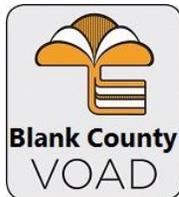
Community VOAD is an idea and a movement that needs a strong local champion and advocate. For any idea to gain ground on the local level, it must be promoted by supporters within the community. These champions must be people who not only believe in the idea of Community VOAD, but also are invested and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

Establish a coverage area

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

Establish a name

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



The community can choose not to use VOAD branding or VOAD in their name. Other community VOADs name ideas have been to take out the “V” replacing it with the first letter of the county or city, for example: CCOAD- Chatham County Organizations Active in Disaster, COAD-Catoosa Organizations Active in Disaster, and DOAD-Dade Organizations Active in Disaster. Other names may appeal more to the actual work being done such as: West Georgia Disaster Relief or Sumter Disaster Recovery.

Create a mission statement

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

Reach out to all potential members

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

Define and determine Community VOAD leadership

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

Create a positive working relationship with emergency managers

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

Develop and promote the position of the VOAD within the community

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

Maintain Communication

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



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

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

Develop a Concept Paper

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

Needs Analysis

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

Concept Paper

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

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

Training

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

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



Standard Operating Guides (SOG's)

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

Tracking System

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

Budget

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

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

Implementation

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

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

Communication

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



Maintenance

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

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

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

ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 2: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

Educate on Existing Disaster Plans

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

Local, State, and Federal Training Opportunities

Arrays of training opportunities are available in the realm of emergency and disaster preparedness. At a local level, organizations such as the Red Cross frequently give classes and trainings on such things as CPR, first aid, and preparedness. Investigate your community to see what other types of trainings are offered locally. In Georgia, GEMA offers a number of resources and ideas for individuals to prepare for disaster. This information can be found at: <https://training.gema.ga.gov/TRS/>. FEMA is a resource for an extensive number of free on-line classes. Topics for these sessions range from: citizen preparedness, household hazards, and the Incident Command System. A listing of these course offerings can be found at: <http://training.fema.gov/IS/>.

Identify Education Gaps in your community

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

ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 3: READY TO RESPOND

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

Understand Where Community VOAD fits in

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

Determine what role Community VOAD members play

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

Make a Plan

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



ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 4: MANAGING DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS

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

Identify specific needs and making specific requests

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

Dealing with unsolicited donations

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

Efficient distribution

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

Volunteer Management

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

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



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

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

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

ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE 5: LONG TERM RECOVERY

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

- [Long Term Recovery Guide](#)

Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) out of a Community VOAD

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

Familiarize the Community VOAD with the plan

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

Case Management

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

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

Identify potential members of the steering and allocations committee

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

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



PHASES OF DISASTER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



RELATIONSHIPS

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

Community VOAD relationship to Georgia VOAD

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

Community VOAD relationship to Governmental Organizations

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

Community VOAD relationship to management of Volunteers and Donations

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

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



LETTER OF COMMITMENT (sample)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Organization's Name

Representative's Printed Name

Date

Representative's Signature



MEMBERSHIP RESOURCES (sample)

Organization Name:

Web Site:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

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

_____ Yes, it is ok to share our information.

_____ No, please keep this only for Community VOAD purposes.

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

_____ Yes, it is ok to share our information.

_____ No, please keep this only for Community VOAD purposes.

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

Service/Resources

Non-Disaster

Disaster

Disaster Education

Sheltering

Food

Clothing

Volunteers

Client Advocacy

Mental Health

Physical Health

Animal Care

Legal Counseling

Real Estate

Temporary/Permanent Housing

Skilled Labor

Building Supplies

Transportation

Waste Management

Warehouse/Storage

Goods Distribution

Spiritual Care

Financial Counseling

Casework Management

Child Care

Other:



Brainstorm potential partner organizations

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

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Industrial Organizations (Manufacturing, Warehouse, Assembly)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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

1. _____
2. _____



3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Community Service Groups (Lions, Elk, American Legion)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Faith-Based Organizations (Churches, Synagogues, Temples)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Transportation (airport, transit, road clearing)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Schools (Public K-12, Technical, College)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Other (Farmers, humane societies, community specific organizations)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



SAMPLE VOAD POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Committee Facilitator/Chair/President

Position Description:

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

Key Responsibilities:

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

Qualifications:

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



Committee Co-Facilitator/Vice Chair

Position Description:

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

Key Responsibilities:

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

Qualifications:

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

Secretary-Treasurer

Position Description:

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

Key Responsibilities:

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

Qualifications:

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

ONLINE RESOURCES

NATIONWIDE RESOURCES

National VOAD – www.nvoad.org

Escambia County, FL BRACE – www.bereadyalliance.org

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

National Response Framework, Resource Center – www.fema.gov/NRF

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

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

AmeriCorps – www.AmeriCorps.gov

SeniorCorps – www.seniorcorps.gov

LOCAL RESOURCES

Georgia Emergency Management Agency – www.gema.ga.gov

Georgia VOAD – www.gavoad.us

American Red Cross – www.redcross.org (enter zip code for link to local chapter)

Georgia Baptist Convention – <http://www.gabaptist.org/>

United Methodist – <http://www.ngdisasterresponse.org/index.htm>

Salvation Army – www.use.salvationarmy.org (enter zip code for link to local chapter)

United Way of Metro Atlanta – <http://www.unitedwayatlanta.org/Pages/Home.aspx>

Catholic Charities – <http://www.catholiccharitiesatlanta.org/>

Georgia 211 - <http://211online.unitedwayatlanta.org/>

