

Community Recovery Toolkit



Purpose

This Community Recovery Toolkit provides guidance and tools to support communities impacted by emergencies to establish and shape their community recovery processes.

The toolkit provides practical advice on:

- The process for recovery and approaches that a community may adopt in preparing for recovery planning.
- Tools and templates to support each step of the community recovery process.

The toolkit is not intended to be prescriptive—rather it has been developed as a guide and planning resource for use by communities as needed.

Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) will continue to update this toolkit to ensure it reflects best practice approaches that meet community needs.

The Community Recovery Toolkit builds on lessons and insights from previous disaster recovery experiences, including content from the *EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit for Local Government, Book 7* (2014), the *DHHS Community-led Recovery Workbook* (2011) and the *Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook* (2018).

Audience

This document is intended to support community members impacted by an emergency to define and lead a community recovery process, with support from government agencies and others. A key secondary audience is local councils, who have a day-to-day role in supporting communities on the ground.

This toolkit can be read alongside the *Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) Recovery Framework*, which outlines ERV's approach to community recovery, particularly in ensuring that all levels of government work together to support communities to recover. Although the Recovery Framework is a BRV document, and BRV has transitioned to ERV, it can still be used to guide community recovery.

Accessibility

This document is available to download at erv.vic.gov.au. Contact connect@erv.vic.gov.au if you require other accessible formats.

Acknowledgment of Country

Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) proudly acknowledges the First Peoples of Victoria and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Contents

1. What is community recovery?	4
2. How is community recovery supported?	5
3. What is ERV's role in community recovery?	6
Ensuring community recovery is front and centre of recovery activities	7
Principles	8
4. What are the steps to recovery?	9
Steps to recovery	10
Developing a community recovery plan	11
Step 1: Establish a community recovery approach	12
Community recovery is a choice	13
How can ERV and local council assist?	14
How to activate an existing organisation or group as a CRG	15
How do we form a purpose-built CRG?	15
How will we can for Expressions of Interest	16
What is our purpose and how will our CRG operate?	17
Structure and frequency of meetings	17
Terms of Reference	18
Incorporated Associations	18
Method of voting	19
CRG Chair voting ballot template	19
Step 2: Set community recovery priorities	20
Five things to consider when preparing for community recovery	20
Various engagement methods to help identify recovery priorities	21
Reflecting diverse community voices and views	23
Community recovery plan - example template	24
Step 3: Identify delivery needs	25
Linking the community recovery plan to the broader recovery efforts	25
Identifying partnerships to deliver priorities	25
Step 4: Deliver recovery activities	26
Ongoing checklists	26
Step 5: Check in on progress	27
Step 6: Plan and Prepare	28
Evaluating the effectiveness of the overall recovery effort	28
Example evaluation framework	29
Succession and transition of a CRG	30
Succession and transition planning	30
5. Resources	31

1

What is community recovery?

Community recovery is often described as a journey rather than a destination. People affected by emergencies will often experience high and low emotional states throughout the recovery process.

Fluctuating moods, energy and ability to take control of their circumstances influence their understanding of the recovery tasks and their capacity to plan and undertake what is required. Morale and energy rise as they start to resume a self-reliant and independent life and dip as anxiety and stress are retriggered by practical setbacks and lingering grief.

The image below depicts the four-phase pathway to recovery that many people might travel – reacting to the emergency, coming to terms with what’s occurred, restoration of some of life’s normalities and re-establishment of life post the event.

People will not necessarily move through these stages at the same pace. For many, the process will be a challenging, uncertain and frustrating one that is neither reliable nor quick. For some recovery might take several years – or might never be fully attained. For these reasons, community recovery needs to be flexible, responsive and long-term.

When thinking about community recovery, it is useful to consider three distinct types of communities:

- communities of place (e.g. townships, regions)
- communities of interest (e.g. small business, tourism, primary industry, religion, cultural groups, recreational pursuits), and
- communities of impact (people who have been affected by an emergency but may not live in the same place or share any other characteristics).



Source: EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit for Local Government, Book 1



2

How is community recovery supported?

Emergency management in Victoria positions local government as the lead agency responsible for recovery at the local level. In events where complexity and scale require regional or state coordination through ERV, local government still plays a leading role at this local level, working collaboratively with partners and delivering community facing services.

Local governments and their partners, including potentially ERV, can support communities to develop their own recovery governance and planning processes, where these communities decide to undertake these activities. This may include the establishment of dedicated community recovery groups (CRGs), or the use of existing community groups to support the community's recovery journey.

CRGs reflect the diversity of the community they represent. They have a broad range of potential roles. This includes giving a voice to the broad views and aspirations of the community, acting as a conduit between communities and local and state government, and identifying the community's recovery priorities.

The specific role and optional forms of CRGs is dealt with in greater detail in section 4 of this toolkit.

For more information on the Victorian structures that support emergency management and disaster recovery visit:

mav.asn.au

erv.vic.gov.au

emv.vic.gov.au



3

What is ERV's role in community recovery?

When a significant emergency occurs in an area, it is the people who make up that community who are the hardest hit. From the roof over their heads, to access to essential medical services, to the schools their children attend, to their jobs – the basic functions of everyday life can be severely impacted.

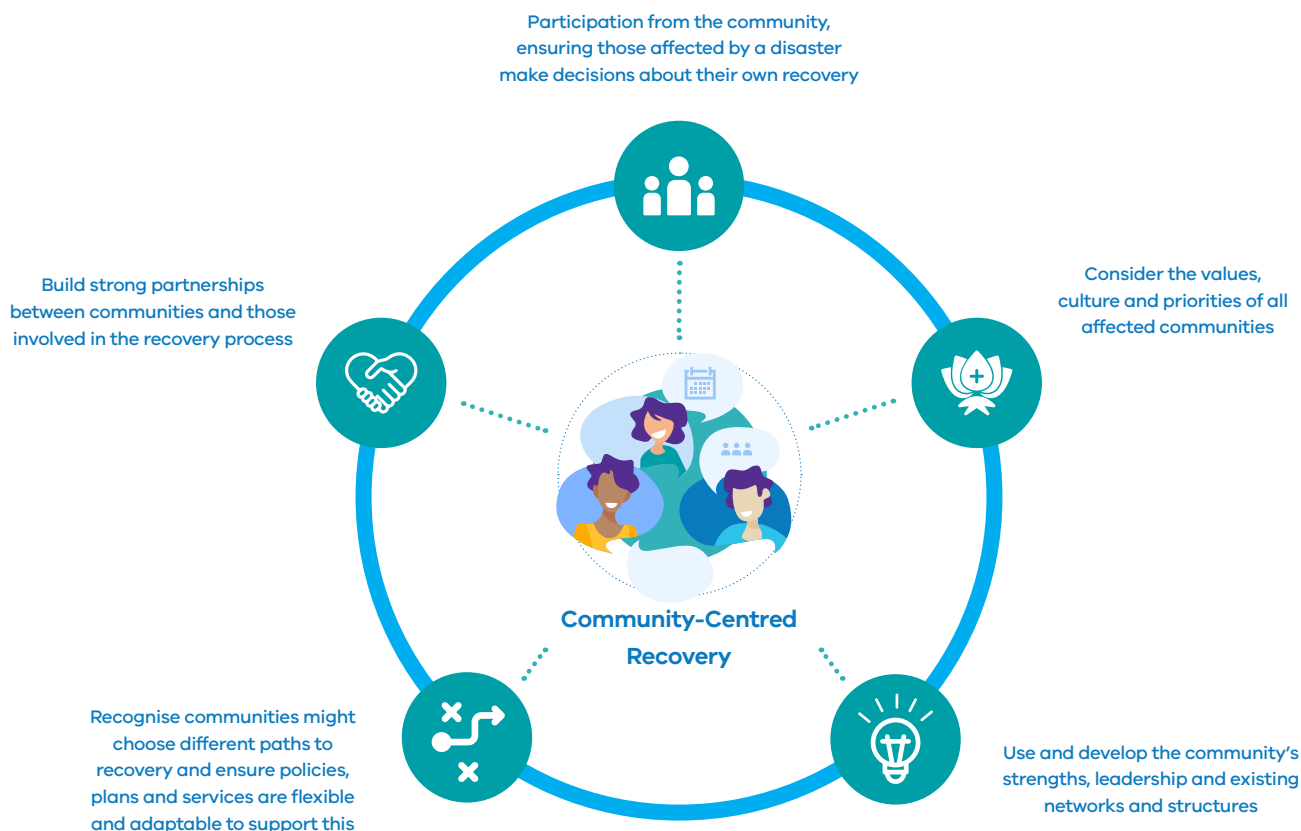
It is important to support an approach to community recovery that gives communities greater opportunity to be involved in decisions and processes that contribute to reshaping and rebuilding their lives in ways that work for them. This approach also allows for greater social cohesion and the possibility that through rallying together in times of crises communities can emerge stronger, and more connected, community-minded and resilient.

Community recovery is open-ended and not pre-determined, which means ideas are considered and agreed collectively by the community, and activities and priorities are adapted and refined as required.

ERV recognises that councils are best placed to understand the unique context of their communities and provide for their needs. Our role is to support councils in leading local recovery efforts, and to bring together government agencies, organisations and the philanthropic sector to meet the emerging and long-term recovery needs of communities.

Ensuring community recovery is front and centre of recovery activities

ERV has adapted the Victorian Government's approach to ensure community recovery is front and centre of recovery activities, as outlined below.



Local councils, Australian Government agencies, non-government organisations and charities all have important roles in giving life to the principle of community recovery, and ERV works collaboratively with each.

Recovery is not exclusive to the geography of an impacted area. In some cases, an emergency may cause significant displacement of people and subsequent movement of people across the state. This means the people who need support may not be located in the specific region of the emergency.

Principles

ERV's recovery principles underpin its approach to community recovery. These principles support flexible, locally-driven and locally delivered action and can be applied to deal with complex issues and support needs as required.

The National Principles for Disaster Recovery, provide six of the eight guiding principles for the Framework positioning individuals and communities at the centre of recovery.

ERV has included two additional principles in the Recovery Framework – strengthening communities and inclusiveness – informed by the Queensland Betterment Program and the National Disaster Recovery Framework principles adopted by the United States.

ERV also recognises that successful recovery relies on government enabling self-determination to support effective and culturally appropriate responses for Victorian Aboriginal communities affected by bushfires or other disasters. ERV will work with Aboriginal communities to ensure its recovery activities are underpinned by self-determination.

The principles are:



Understand the context

Successful recovery is based on understanding the community context—the unique history, values and dynamics of a community.



Recognise complexity

Successful recovery responds to the complex and dynamic nature of disasters and the community.



Communicate effectively

Successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners.



Recognise and build capacity

Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience.



Strengthen communities

Successful recovery should leave communities stronger by reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience.



Use community-led approaches

Successful recovery is community centred, responsive and flexible, and it relies on community engagement to support them to move forward.



Ensure an inclusive approach

Successful recovery recognises that communities are made of many groups and ensures that actions, both intentional and unintentional, do not exclude groups of people.



Coordinate all activities

Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.



4

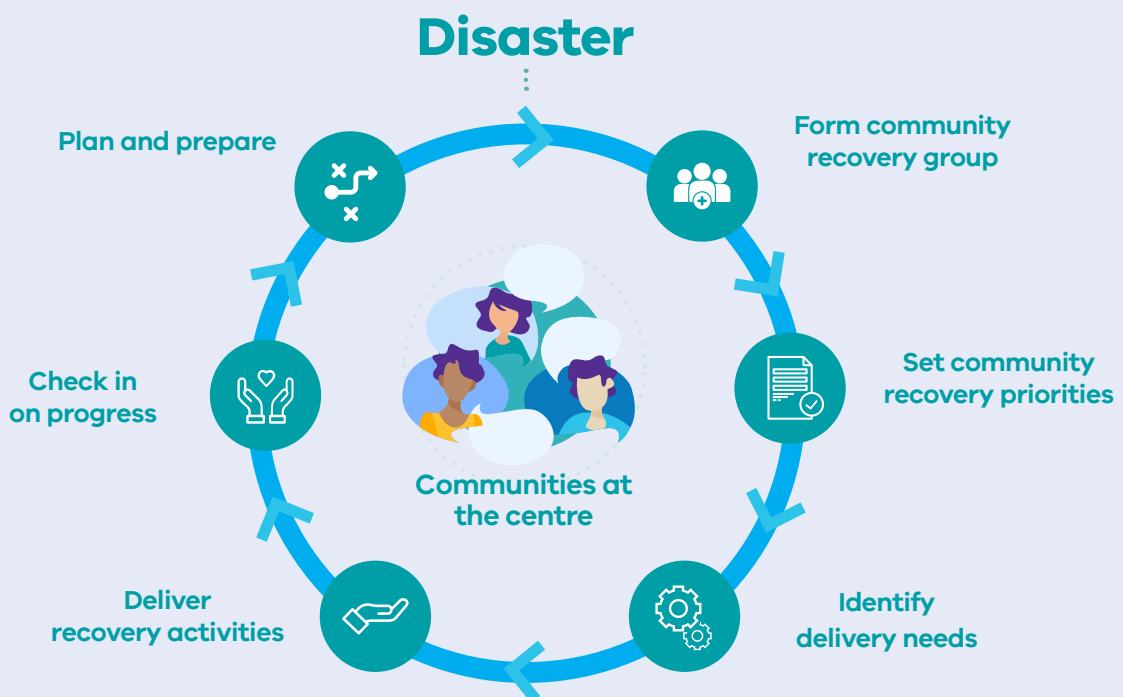
What are the steps to recovery?

A successful recovery journey means communities identify their own needs, make decisions about their recovery priorities and influence community planning. This ensures that the recovery process is matched to local community needs.

The below diagram illustrates useful steps towards recovery and towards greater resilience.

Depending on your community's unique context and preferences, these steps may not be completed in order, and some steps may not be undertaken at all. They are provided as a guide only, to be tailored to meet your community's needs.

The remainder of this toolkit is structured around these steps, with guidance, templates and tools suggested for each step. Regular communication with communities should form part of every step.



Steps to recovery



Step 1: Form community recovery group

If the effects of an emergency are widespread or serious, communities may choose to establish a community recovery group (CRG) to lead the recovery planning process for the community. This may be an existing community group or network, or a brand new group.

With the support of local government and potentially ERV, this group would undertake the remaining steps.



Step 2: Set community recovery priorities

When a community is ready, they should engage with local community members and relevant interest groups to consider the impacts of the disaster, the broader context of challenges, and opportunities for the community in helping to identify their recovery priorities.

It is useful for the community to develop a shared vision for the future of the community to help guide priorities. These could be expressed as a community recovery plan.

Engagement approaches and activities should be tailored to community characteristics and preferences and appropriate to the nature and impact of an emergency. It is important to ensure all community values, cultures and perspectives are considered through this process.



Step 3: Identify delivery needs

After identifying recovery priorities, communities may wish to identify the actions and resources needed to deliver on the priorities. This may include community resources, access to grants, volunteers or philanthropic donations.



Step 4: Deliver recovery activities

It's important that communities own the delivery of their own recovery activities. This means that they should have a key role in coordinating, managing and driving implementation of their community recovery plan.



Step 5: Check in on progress

Regularly checking in on progress towards achieving recovery priorities will be important. This will make sure activities are on track, and risks are identified early and communicated back to the community.



Step 6: Plan and prepare

Any lessons learned from the emergency, or recovery process, should be captured to help improve any existing emergency plans for the community. Documenting these lessons and reviewing existing plans will make sure communities are more resilient and prepared for future disasters.

Developing a community recovery plan

Start with developing a vision for your community. Map out your context and the unique history, values and dynamics of your community. There is no right or wrong way to write a community plan, however, the plan should capture your community's short, medium, and longer-term recovery goals and priorities.

It will be helpful for community recovery plans to build on existing community plans, with a focus on any goals or priorities that have changed or emerged following the recent disaster.

Depending on your community and the nature, scale and impact of the disaster, your community recovery plan can cover recovery priorities across ERV's five lines of recovery and align with ERV's Recovery Principles.

A community recovery plan is your community's plan. There is no requirement from the Victorian Government for communities to produce a plan, or for these plans to follow a particular format or contain specific content.

What is the purpose of a community recovery plan?

A community recovery plan can capture the recovery goals and priorities of the community. This may include actions or activities that require community resources, access to grants or volunteers, and initiatives that could be supported by philanthropic organisations or donors.

You can include as much or as little information as is relevant to your community, and be as ambitious or pragmatic as your community wishes to be.

Emergency Recovery Victoria's lines of recovery

Emergencies can upturn all aspects of everyday life – from the trees and wildlife that surround us, to utilities, homes, agricultural and public buildings, to social enjoyment and economic activity.

To ensure a holistic approach to recovery, five lines of recovery have been identified to help prioritise and plan:

- People and wellbeing
- Aboriginal culture and healing
- Environment and biodiversity
- Business and economy
- Buildings and infrastructure

Step 1: Establish a community recovery approach

How do we choose a community recovery approach that works for us?

Choosing an approach to recovery that suits your community will depend on the impact of the emergency and the existing networks and organisations in the community.

It will be useful to get together and ask questions, such as:

What was the impact?

Is it widespread or serious (consider primary as well as secondary impacts), or is the impact limited to only a small number of individuals or one clearly defined cohort of the community?

How are our families, friends, neighbours and others in the community faring?

How would we prefer to approach recovery, for example:

- Informally—responding to issues as they emerge, or more
- Formally—making plans for our short, medium and long term recovery?

What is our previous experience of planning together as a community?

If a formal approach is preferred, is there an organisation in our community that can lead recovery, for example, the local hall or recreation reserve committee?

If not, is there a group or network that can drive a wider conversation on how we approach recovery and establish a formal group, for example, a local service delivery network?

Is your community interested and able to come together to meet regularly to shape and drive the recovery process? Would it need support from local council or ERV?

Are there other nearby communities that share similar recovery priorities to your community that you could work together with?

TIP

These questions will take time to answer. Members of the community will need time to deal with their own circumstances and potential grief before considering broader issues. Investing in opportunities that will assist the healing process will be critical to getting organised about recovery.

Community recovery is a choice

All communities are different, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to community recovery. Depending on the nature, scale and impact of an emergency and the community's unique characteristics, community recovery might involve informal or formal approaches.

Informal approaches

Informal approaches can be a fast and effective way to identify individual and/or community recovery needs and priorities. Sometimes, a light-touch approach may be appropriate where the scale and impact of the emergency is small or contained. Examples of informal recovery activities include talking through recovery priorities 'over a cup of tea' with other community members, the local council or ERV, or participating in small community hall meetings.

If your community decides on an informal approach, ERV will work in partnership with local council to ensure that your community's recovery needs and priorities are captured and considered through its planning processes.

Formal approaches

Formal recovery approaches can build on existing community structures or networks to aid recovery. They can support existing groups within the community and empower them to support recovery efforts. Examples of this kind of approach include an existing community group taking on the role of recovery or holding facilitated workshops to bring different views together.

Alternatively, formal approaches can involve setting up a new organisation. This might be especially appropriate for communities with significant and/or complex recovery priorities. Structure, membership and involvement can be tailored to the needs of the community. Examples of this kind of approach include establishing an incorporated association or seeking to establish a special committee of council.

Different community approaches offer different levels of participation and influence. The following table* sets out the features of some of these options. Relevant groups or organisations might already exist in the community or might need to be purpose-built.

Category	Description	Authority	Influence
Informal	Participation through consultation platforms or events.	Valued perspectives	Participation is open to all but relies on local council (and potentially ERV) to create opportunities for community input into recovery decision making.
Advisory group	Representative networks and advisory mechanisms (for example, Council Advisory Group).	Valued expertise Accountable to Council	Clear advisory role with a mix of expertise. Meets regularly to ensure community input into recovery decision making.
Committee or sub-committee	Formal governance structure with open and transparent nomination process and clear terms of Reference (for example, as special committee of council).	Valued expertise Accountable to council and community	Clear decision-making role with balanced skills mix. Meets regularly to shape community engagement processes, consider community needs and priorities and assist in recovery decision making.
Incorporated Association	A membership based organisation with a constitution including stated objectives and managed by a committee elected by the membership	A separate legal entity (can hold assets and manage finances; can sue and be sued). Accountable to members and Consumer Affairs Victoria.	Meets regularly to shape community engagement processes, consider community needs and priorities and make recovery decisions. Advocates for recovery projects. May manage projects.

*Table adapted from the Regional Development Company, Succession Planning Leadership Forum for Black Saturday CRCs (2010)

How can ERV and local council assist?

ERV and local councils understand that all communities are different, as are the impacts of disasters. Consequently, ERV and your local council will work in partnership to support communities in shaping their own recovery processes and CRG models. For example, convening an initial interest meeting to scope out community interest for a CRG.

Where there are multiple existing or emerging groups across a municipality

ERV and council can support communities to establish a coordinated community group to become the CRG and support the community's recovery journey. This might involve facilitating meetings between groups or running an expression of interest (EOI) process coordinated by the local council and/or ERV.

Where there is one obvious existing community group

ERV and council can support the group to evolve membership or Terms of Reference to become the CRG and lead an inclusive and holistic community recovery process.

Where there is no obvious existing community group

ERV and council can support community consideration of whether a purpose-built CRG is appropriate and:

- If so, support establishment of a new organisation when the community is ready, with a committee selected through an open and transparent process. This may include support for convening an initial interest meeting, providing guidance on governance model options, supporting an open and transparent EOI process, suggesting an independent chair or providing assistance with drafting Terms of Reference.
- If not, support exploration of other CRGs the community could contribute to, or identifying alternate less formal processes for identifying community recovery priorities.

How to activate an existing organisation or group as a CRG

Where a CRG is created from an existing organisation or groups it will be useful to ask questions such as:

- Does the recovery role fit with the organisation's existing governance and structures? Does the organisation's purpose need updating?
- If the recovery group is a collaboration between existing organisations, are partners clear on their roles? Is there a need for a Memorandum of Understanding or similar?
- Does the organisation or collaboration reflect the broad range of values, cultures and perspectives within your community, including diversity of place (e.g. townships), interests (e.g. small business), age, gender, culture, and population groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, in particular Traditional Owners. If not, how will this be addressed, (e.g. recruiting new members or through targeted community consultation)?
- Does the organisation or collaboration have the skills and time necessary to lead and coordinate community recovery activities? If not, how will this be addressed, for example, co-opting expertise into the organisation or contracting experts?

How do we form a purpose-built CRG?

A purpose-built CRG is likely to be an advisory or decision-making committee of council or an independent incorporated organisation.

While the details to establish these different models will vary, each will need to answer the questions:

- How will we select community leaders to represent us?
- What is our purpose and how will our CRG operate?

TIP

You do not need to name your group the 'Your community Recovery Committee' to be considered a CRG. Existing groups will already have names and many communities prefer terms like renewal or restoration when creating new groups.

For groups that form an incorporated association, the members of Committee of Management are the office bearers of the association. It is the association that is the CRG.

There are a number of independent facilitators, community psychologists and community mentors with experience from previous disaster events available to support communities through this process.

ERV and local council can assist communities to identify suitable people and engage their services.



How will we call for Expressions of Interest?

- Expressions of Interest (EOI) can be called for when establishing a new CRG. The EOI should be accompanied by information that sets out the purpose of the CRG, what knowledge, experience or skills would be useful to the CRG and the selection process.
- The EOI process should be communicated broadly and promoted so that all members of the community are aware of the process and have the opportunity to nominate.
- The EOI process should allow sufficient time for community members to consider their interest in nominating and completing their Expression of Interest (as a general rule, four weeks should be sufficient)
- The selection process should be transparent and conducted by people with credibility for the community. Alternatively, the community can be invited to vote directly for committee members from among the nominees.
- The committee will need to elect a chair following induction. The chair will ideally have an active role or leadership within the community, and is able to commit the time and effort required.

TIP

Encourage people with the credibility, skills and commitment to join their CRG. Pay attention to including representatives of particular interest groups or population groups (for example, youth, culturally diverse groups, small businesses).

Match the skills and interests of people with CRG roles. For example, some people thrive on 'big picture' topics, while others will be more task oriented.

Below is a template that can be used to call for expressions of interest for membership of a CRG. This example includes a call for expressions of interest in the role of chair. An alternative approach is that appointed members are invited to nominate for the position of chair following their induction into the work of the CRG. ERV and local council can assist with the EOI and selection processes or voting processes to elect a Chair and members.

We are calling for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for community members wishing to be involved in the [Name] Community Recovery Committee to help shape our community's recovery planning. If you are interested in becoming a chair or committee member, or would like to nominate someone for Committee Chair or Committee Member, please complete the form below. Return the completed form by email or post. [Insert details]. The EOI process will close on [XX/XX/2020].

NAME:

ADDRESS:

OCCUPATION:

EMAIL:

MOBILE:

I'm interested in the following positions on the committee: [chair/member]

My relevant skills and experience includes:

This expression of interest is seconded by:

NAME:

DATE:

What is our purpose and how will our CRG operate?

Once established the CRG will face a number of tasks. These can include:

- coming to a shared understanding of the recovery context and their role
- getting to know each other as a group
- clarifying the role of ERV, local council and other stakeholders
- determining how they will operate as a CRG—what are the rules regarding how decisions are made?
How are conflicts of interest dealt with? How do we manage privacy and confidentiality?
- determining how and when they will identify priorities and plan for the future
- determining how they will engage and communicate with the broader community.

There can be a lot of pressure at this time to ‘just get on with it’ but establishing sound structures and relationships at the beginning will help in making the CRG more effective over time.

TIP

Consider adopting a ‘first 100 days strategy’ that sets out the tasks your CRG regard as critical.

Structure and frequency of meetings

Members should agree on an agenda that provides a clear structure for meetings. The following template can be used.

#	Focus	Led by
1	Welcome and introductions	As agreed
2	Community profile and impact Opportunity for discussion of the bushfire-affected community and the impact assessment	Council
3	Overview of recovery arrangements Opportunity for ERV and Council to provide an overview of recovery arrangements at the municipal, regional and state levels and outline their partnership approach	ERV/Council
4	Recovery activities What, if any, recovery activities are underway in the community?	All
5	First 100 Days strategy Consider the content of a draft First 100 days strategy and prioritise and reshape to suit members Table Terms of Reference - for endorsement at the next meeting	Facilitator
6	Next steps Confirm date/time of next meeting and discuss schedule of meetings.	Facilitator

TIP

Discuss with your council or ERV about supports that may be useful to help the committee work smoothly. This can include providing a facilitator, supporting secretariat functions such as minutes taking at meetings, and providing administrative support such as coordinating invitations and meeting rooms.

Terms of Reference

Once established, the CRG should consider developing a Terms of Reference to set the purpose, roles and responsibilities and governance arrangements for the CRG. The following template can be used:

[NAME] COMMUNITY RECOVERY GROUP: Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Community Recovery Group will coordinate the community-led recovery process to support the recovery efforts of those impacted by the disaster affecting our community.

2. Functions

The Community Recovery Group will:

- Identify community needs, including the needs of specific groups, and make recommendations to our relevant council and recovery agencies on actions, activities and plans to support recovery
- Develop a community recovery plan
- Monitor, communicate and review local recovery activities
- Liaise, consult, co-ordinate and negotiate, where appropriate, on behalf of the community with recovery agencies, government departments, recovery providers and the council in order to implement recovery programs and initiatives
- Advocate, where appropriate, in conjunction with the community, including vulnerable groups and communities of interest (e.g. youth, small business, tourism)
- Conduct an evaluation of recovery operations at a point in time agreed by the committee as an informal or formal debrief, as required.

3. Membership

Group members will determine the chair and subsequent membership of the group. Secretariat support will be provided by [Name, Council, ERV, or by other].

4. Frequency of meetings

The Community Recovery Group will meet [frequency] either face-to-face or via teleconference.

Incorporated Associations

The purpose, objectives and operations of incorporated associations are set out in the association's rules.

Every incorporated association must have rules. The rules:

- are a written document (often called a constitution)
- guide how your association operates
- are a contract between the association and its members
- set out your association's purposes
- list the rights and responsibilities of members and office holders.

In developing its constitution, your association can use the model rules, or create its own rules. In the absence of its own rules, the relevant provisions of the model rules will be deemed to apply. For more on establishing an incorporated association and the model rules, visit Consumer Affairs Victoria. Among the things the constitution will set out are:

- association membership
- election of office bearers
- general meeting processes, including voting.

TIP

Incorporated associations are generally established by an inaugural committee of people who are committed to the purpose. In the case of CRGs, this committee is commonly those who have been identified through the EOI process and elected to the role. Pursue incorporation as the association once the inaugural committee has come together and completed induction.

Methods of Voting

How you choose to conduct your vote will depend on the size of your community and CRG, and the nature and impact of the motion you wish to pass. This table describes the two most common methods for voting:

Method	Conduct	Counting	Comments
Show of hands	Chair requests those voting in favour of the motion to raise a hand. The procedure is repeated for those voting against the motion.	Usually, the chair counts the hands and states whether or not the motion has passed. The result is recorded in the minutes.	Voting by show of hands might be difficult when there are a large number of people voting. It might also exclude those who could not attend the meeting but want to participate.
Voting by ballot	Council can help CRGs prepare a ballot paper to distribute at a meeting, in the mail or online. It will have instructions to members (e.g. timeframes to vote, placing a number 1 against their first preference).	Council can help check that the ballot papers have been collected and help to count votes. Council can inform the chair of the result. The chair will then announce the result at a meeting or electronically.	Voting by ballot might be preferred where there are large numbers within the community, and for communities that are geographically dispersed. Ballot papers can also be completed anonymously, which means voters are less likely to feel pressured to vote a certain way.

CRG Chair voting ballot template

If you wish to vote by ballot, below is a template that can be used to vote for the chair of a CRG.

This template uses the 'First Past The Post' system of voting. Under this system, the voter casts a single vote for the candidate of their choice. The candidate who receives the most votes is elected as chair of the CRG.

'First Past The Post' is an easy voting method for communities, as voters only need to choose their first preference.

CRG Chair Voting Ballot

INSTRUCTIONS: Mark X in the box next to the candidate of your choice. Only mark one box.

NAME

NAME

NAME

TIP

For incorporated associations, issues such as voting and appointment of office bearers will be included in their constitution. Other forms of CRGs can add these rules about how they operate to their terms of reference.



Step 2: Set community recovery priorities

When your community is ready, the CRG, supported by local council, ERV and others as needed, should engage with local community members and relevant interest groups to identify recovery priorities and the outcomes the community wants to achieve. It is important to ensure all community values, cultures and perspectives are considered through this process.

This section provides guidance on setting community recovery priorities, including:

- reflecting diverse community voices and views
- various engagement methods to help identify recovery priorities
- developing a community recovery plan

Five things to consider when preparing for community recovery:

1. Identify your community's diverse values, cultures and perspectives. How will you consider them as part of this process?
2. Identify any community planning work done prior to the disaster that you can build on as part of your recovery planning - you don't need to start from scratch. The emergency may have disrupted the original plan but it may also have opened up opportunities.
3. Consider short, medium and long term-priorities, not just immediate needs.
4. Remember: recovery priorities need to be your community's priorities, not government priorities.
5. Identify the support or guidance your CRG needs from local government, ERV or others. Consider community mentors, community psychologists, facilitators to help relieve administrative burden.

Various engagement methods to help identify recovery priorities

Finding the right engagement approach for the right purpose is crucial to effective engagement. Your CRG will probably need to use a range of engagement methods to take all voices into account when identifying recovery needs and priorities.

For very small communities it might be appropriate to use less formal engagement methods such as gathering input door-to-door, whereas for larger communities a more involved approach may be more appropriate. Below are some engagement options your CRG may wish to consider.

Method	Benefits or Limitations
Public meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows the views of individuals and community groups to be expressed.• Good platform for simple, consistent information and key messages to large numbers from a community.• Not a strong forum for dialogue.• Meeting facilitation skills needed to channel energy productively.• Might be scope to break up into smaller discussion groups or provide information-feedback booths.
Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Useful with relatively homogeneous groups. Suited to smaller interest and population groups.• Good for generating and canvassing ideas rather than decisions. Allows for creative thinking, if well facilitated.
Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can produce structured exploration of issues, options and ideas and future vision, direction and actions.• Larger groups and broader agenda possible.• Format can include smaller groupwork fed back to the whole group. Needs skilled facilitation.
Roundtables and forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A joint planning/decision making forum between council and key stakeholders with expertise about a specific issue.• Helps to establish a collaborative process from the outset. Suited to dealing with topics with technical content.• Can prepare informed recommendations for broader community consideration.• Challenges in achieving representation.
Hard copy surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can provide opportunities to reach mixed audiences where they live and in opportunistic locations.• Can be combined with face to face support, for example, interviewers.• If face to face interpretation is not possible what is requested must be very clear and brief –preferably pre-tested.• Good for gathering ideas and canvassing options. Requires intensive support and interpretation.



Method	Benefits or Limitations
Electronic surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can provide opportunities to reach specific audiences where they live. Can work well for both small and large interest and population groups, provided communications and stakeholder engagement strategies are tailored and delivered appropriately• Face to face interpretation is not possible so what is requested must be very clear and brief.• Good for gathering ideas and canvassing options.• Excludes groups of the communities who do not participate online.
Vision surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can provide opportunities for input from people who are more visually orientated.• Suited to broad invitation, particularly engaging children.• Suited to dealing with a specific built or natural environment matters with cultural or heritage implications.• Useful to feedback visual depictions of options.
Onsite engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can produce structured exploration of issues, options and ideas and future vision, direction and actions.• Larger groups and broader agenda possible.• Format can include smaller groupwork fed back to the whole group. Needs skilled facilitation.
Roundtables and forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This could include walking a roadside with the community and horticulture expert to consider roadside vegetation management/ clearing options.• Expertise is on hand to explain and discuss technical aspects.• Suited to dealing with a specific built or natural environment matters with cultural or heritage implications.



Reflecting diverse community voices and views

It is important that all community values, cultures and perspectives are considered in the recovery planning process.

Reflecting diverse community views means engaging and listening to as many voices as possible, including people from different localities, people of various ages, gender and population groups (e.g. youth, CALD communities) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly Traditional Owners.

Communities of interest may also emerge depending on the nature and scale of the impact and these voices need to be heard as well. Communities of interest can include tourism operators, primary industries, farming communities and others.

Some members of affected communities may face barriers to inclusion in consultation, for example they may be socially isolated, have low literacy or have a disability that prevents attendance or limits participation at meetings.

To ensure that your recovery plan has considered all views and voices in your community, your CRG should consider using a range of engagement methods.

Some of these might involve using a combination of online and face-to-face meetings, holding meetings on neutral grounds, at different times, or using an independent facilitator to surface insights from diverse community groups.

The following questions can help to ensure specific groups and communities of interest are included in the recovery planning process:

1. What specific groups can be identified for our community (consider maximising inclusion and diversity)?
2. How can we engage with the identified groups? How can we ensure they are part of our community's recovery planning process?
3. What stakeholders can assist with engaging these specific groups in the recovery planning process?

Community recovery plan - example template

Our Community's Recovery Vision

Line of Recovery: e.g. People and Wellbeing

GOAL	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINES	RESOURCES	MEASURES
What changes are required to address need?	What projects and initiatives will achieve goals?	Who is responsible for the project?	What are the timeframes?	What is the estimated cost or resourcing required? How will it be funded?	What information will indicate progress of actions?
Example: To ensure those affected by the disaster are provided with opportunities to reconnect with their communities.	Example: Produce a Recovery Concert.	Example: Community Arts supported by council's Community Arts Officer.	Example: Scheduled within six months.	Example: \$15,000 grant.	Example: Participation rates in events.
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

Step 3: Identify delivery needs

Linking the community recovery plan to the broader recovery efforts

It is important that your CRG's community recovery plan is validated by the community and key stakeholders. This ensures broad ownership and underpins the CRG's advocacy role on behalf of the community.

You can provide your community recovery plan to your local council and ERV to help them understand your priorities. It is important to stress that community recovery plans are only one input into Victorian Government decision-making.

Local councils and ERV can also provide information about potential funding and grant opportunities or details about service providers.

TIP

Include ERV, local council and key stakeholders where appropriate in early planning discussions and deliberations. This allows a stronger insight for them into the priorities that the CRG will ultimately put forward in its plans.

Reserve the right to meet as community members only, where there are concerns that a mixed meeting might stifle open discussion.

Identifying partnerships to deliver priorities

Effective partnerships are critical to delivering community recovery priorities. CRGs will need to establish linkages and relationships with organisations and groups that operate within the broader emergency recovery system.

By building effective partnerships, a CRG is better positioned to improve the capability and capacity of the group to deliver outcomes for their community. The figure below details an example of possible linkages between the CRG and key stakeholders.

Your CRG may wish to map and maintain a register of agencies, community organisations and other groups that your CRG currently engage with that may help in your recovery process



Step 4: Deliver recovery activities

It is important to continue communicating and engaging with your communities throughout the delivery and implementation process. The community recovery process is an iterative and long-term process. Refer to the tables on page 16 of this document for a range of engagement methods and online tools to support community engagement.

- Maintain clear and regular communication with the community, councils and key stakeholders.
- Provide as much forward advice of community engagement deadlines and avoid being rushed to make decisions.
- Try to stage community engagement with options that mean if people miss an initial deadline, they are not excluded from the whole process.
- Lobby government agencies and advocate for the community for realistic timeframes that match the ability of the community and your CRG to make decisions and meet deadlines.
- Work with neighbouring communities and CRGs to share knowledge and learning from your recovery journeys.

Ongoing checklist

The following checklist can be a guide for CRGs as your communities work on implementing the goals and priorities outlined in your community recovery plan.

- Conduct regular CRG meetings to provide status update of key activities, risks and issues.
- Communicate planned actions to your communities, recovery management teams and key stakeholders.
- Conduct review of short and medium-term activities.
 - » Are priority needs being met?
 - » Were any priorities missed in immediate and short-term assessment or have new ones emerged?
- Continue the needs assessment process to inform planning, support and service provision.
- Advocate on behalf of affected communities to government and authorities for support.
- Continue to engage and empower affected communities and interest groups.
- Keep pace with the evolving recovery situation and adapt the community recovery plan in accordance with evolving or changing community needs and priorities.

Step 5: Check in on progress

Throughout the recovery process, CRGs should regularly check in on progress of recovery activities, and seek feedback from both CRG members, the community and external stakeholders on:

- **What is working well**—what actions and achievements were made individually or collectively that positively contributed to the recovery process?
- **Areas for improvement**—how can we improve to better support recovery activities?
- **Ongoing issues**—what issues will require ongoing work or attention?

By working through these questions with your CRG, together you will develop a shared understanding about your journey to date. It will also help bring to mind the many achievements to be recognised and celebrated.

A Progress Report (see below) can be used to help check in on your progress.

Focus	Answer
What is working well What actions and achievements were made individually or collectively that positively contributed to the recovery process?	(e.g. Community BBQ was a great opportunity to have a chat and check in on community members)
Areas for improvement How can we improve to better support our recovery activities?	(e.g. Strengthen communication from CRC back into the community through social media, flyers)
Ongoing issues What issues will require ongoing work or attention?	(e.g. Ongoing discussions with government agencies to re-open tourist sites)

Step 6: Plan and prepare

Any lessons learned from the disaster, or recovery process, should be captured and help to improve any existing emergency plans for the community. Documenting these lessons and reviewing existing plans will make sure communities are more resilient and prepared for future disasters.

The following pages provide guidance for CRGs to ensure they plan and prepare for future disasters, including evaluating the effectiveness of the overall recovery effort, and the succession and transition of a CRG.

TIP

Disaster recovery reviews or evaluations provide an opportunity to capture the experiences of community members, distil the lessons and use them to improve emergency recovery in the future. Find creative and engaging ways to involve the community in disaster recovery review or evaluation processes.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the overall recovery effort

An evaluation of recovery operations can be helpful for CRGs and communities in understanding the effectiveness of recovery actions and the outcomes achieved for individuals and communities.

This is often referred to as an outcome evaluation. Outcome evaluation considers the results of combined activity over a defined timeframe and answers the question: **To what extent have recovery goals been achieved?**

Some things to consider when conducting an evaluation include:

1. Engage with stakeholders: there are a number of stakeholders potentially interested in the progress of the disaster recovery and the findings of any recovery evaluation. Use the evaluation planning process to engage with and involve them.
2. Bring in evaluation experts: you might want to consider conducting the evaluation internally or engaging an external evaluator. This will be influenced by a range of factors, such as the availability of internal expertise and the nature and scale of the recovery activities.

Lessons learned and recommendations should be identified to support other communities impacted by future disasters and should be included as part of the evaluation process.

The following page provides an example evaluation template. Note that the evaluation can be used to evaluate a single action or set of actions in more detail.

Example evaluation framework

Purpose of the evaluation:

GOAL	MEASURES	INFORMATION	RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME
(e.g. To ensure those affected by the disaster are provided with opportunities to reconnect with their communities.)	(e.g. Number of events; participation levels in community events; community perceptions of community connectedness.)	(e.g. Schedule of events; records of attendance; survey of community perceptions.)	(e.g. Community Development Officer.)	(e.g. Progress Report due December 2020; Final Report due June 2021.)
1.				

COMMUNICATION

(e.g. All stakeholders will be advised of intention to undertake the evaluation. Key stakeholders will be invited onto an Evaluation Reference Group. A presentation of key findings will be delivered to a senior executive group. A copy of the final report will be available to all stakeholders.)

RESOURCES

(e.g. The evaluation will be conducted internally, led by the Community Development Officer. \$10,000 will be budgeted for the evaluation process.)

From: Benefits and limitations of community engagement methods, EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit, Book 8

Succession and transition of a CRG

The future of CRGs is largely in the hands of the CRG members, as well as critical stakeholders such as local council. A CRG will need to commence planning for the succession/transition of the activities being undertaken by the committee at an agreed point in time.

The timing of the succession and transition planning will be up to the circumstances of your CRG. CRGs may want to consider the following:

- declining/limited demand for recovery services and supports
- agreed tenure (length of time) of the CRG, if any
- completion or near completion of all actions as detailed in the community recovery plan
- recognition that additional recovery activities have been completed.

TIP

A CRG plays a critical role in the transition process as the group is best able to establish priorities and provide information and advice on the community's emergency planning and preparedness.

Local council will also play a key role in the succession and transition of recovery to community planning and preparedness. CRGs should engage local council as a key partner in the succession/transition planning phase.

Succession and transition planning

When the time is right for your CRG, workshop within your CRG the best way to meet your community's ongoing needs into future emergency planning and preparedness.

Some questions you may want to ask include:

- What has the CRG achieved to date?
- What roles has the CRG had that are different to, or add value to, other groups in the community?
- Does the CRG need to continue to transition out of recovery?
- Is it timely for the CRG to transition out of community recovery?
- If the CRG no longer existed, what are the likely gaps? How would these gaps be filled?
- How can the local council support the transition and ongoing needs for community planning and preparedness?

5

Resources

Council is often the best initial source of information on community recovery and community planning. Some additional resources are listed below.

Bushfire Disaster Recovery Engagement Consultants

Organisations within the engagement community that are offering services pro bono to organisations needing assistance with engagement in disaster response and recovery.

iap2.org.au/bushfire-disaster/engagement-consultants/

EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit for Local Government

This toolkit provides a range of tools, resources and literature to help local councils and communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/disaster-recovery-toolkit-for-local-government

EMV Resilient Recovery Strategy

The EMV Resilient Recovery Strategy identifies strategic actions that promote a shared responsibility approach to emergency management and the importance of recovery planning.

emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/resilient-recovery-strategy

Community Recovery Handbook, Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience

Provides detailed and comprehensive guidance. Part 3 of the handbook, 'Planning for Recovery' is likely to be most relevant in the early stages of recovery.

knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-2-community-recovery/

Preparing for emergencies: A reference guide for organisations in the Health and Community Services Sectors

A guide to help health and community services organisations prepare for emergencies.

providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management

Victorian Public Engagement Framework

Principles and tips for engaging the public in a Victorian context.

www.vic.gov.au/public-engagement-framework-2021-2025

Emergency Recovery Victoria and National Emergency Management Agency websites

erv.vic.gov.au

nema.gov.au

Red Cross Community-led Resilience for Emergencies

A guide and toolkit for communities in building community resilience.

redcross.org.au



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