



Underserved, Under Threat, Understood? Including Unique Community Voices in Disaster Planning

49th Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop

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Abstract

Our objective is to fearlessly explore the impacts of disaster on underserved and/or overlooked populations, often communities rich in diversity. We need members of these communities to inform disaster planning regarding their unique needs – cultural, religious, and informational. Recognizing that planning teams must be representative of their communities, including every demographic and access and functional needs consideration, we will investigate how best to ensure this representation.

Below, we present an examination of the integrated spaces of disaster planning, how to turn underrepresentation into unified representation, and offer strategies regarding how we can enhance inclusive disaster planning practices. We consider resources, capacity, and trends for inclusive disaster planning and explore creative approaches to outreach efforts. We will examine how communities' voices and stories help us to better prepare to meet the whole community's needs and communicate effectively about risks and resources. Each story is unique and each voice telling it can provide useful insight.

Problem Statement

Disaster planning is often macro-level and generalized, lacking consideration for very specialized needs. There is room to improve considerations for unique needs related to access and function, information, culture, religion, and more.

Where Are The Gaps?

- Awareness
- Knowledge
- Resource coordination
- Planning

Considerations

How can we ensure all the needs of all community members are met following a disaster?

- Access and functional needs
- Cultural and religious needs
 - Clothing distribution
 - Food
 - Gender-separated sleeping space
 - Prayer space
- Dietary and medical needs
 - Foods appropriate for specific dietary requirements
 - » Gluten-free, etc.
 - Refrigeration for insulin, etc.
- Age-related needs
 - Assistive devices for older shelter occupants
 - Day care/play area for children
- Pets and livestock
 - Care of pets and livestock following an event
 - Evacuation challenges
- Transportation
 - Accessible transport
 - Availability of local mass transport resources (e.g. buses, trains)
 - Evacuation
 - Transportation to and from shelters

Case Examples

Religious considerations

- Lori Peek's research, October 2020
 - Survey of 139 Muslims in Florida revealed issues of:
 - » Hesitancy to evacuate to shelters
 - Ability to observe religious requirements
 - Cleanliness
 - Privacy
 - Safety
 - Anti-Muslim sentiments continue post 9/11
 - » Impacting their sense of security and belonging

Undocumented populations

- California Wildfires, October 2007
 - Undocumented evacuees were turned over to Border Patrol, sparking families to leave their shelter for fear of being arrested

Understanding of the community's unique needs

- American Samoa Earthquake and Tsunami, 2009
 - Tents brought from FEMA couldn't withstand the high winds, nor were they spacious enough to accommodate larger individuals
 - Distribution of goods is usually overseen by a local leader who determines who needs assistance, hindering the mission of getting assistance to everyone who needs it
 - » Red Cross teamed with the National Guard to lend credibility and trust to their distribution efforts

How to Move to Unified Representation and Inclusive Disaster Planning Practices



LEARN

Familiarize Yourself with Your Community

- Research its history and its stories
- Demographics and where pockets of diverse populations (enclaves) are located
- What makes it unique?
- Read After Action Reports (AARs) from previous incidents
- Town Hall Meetings
 - Hearing stories from the residents themselves will give you incredible insight into how they are impacted when their needs aren't met
 - Ensure a "safe space" for honest and candid sharing. It is essential that community members feel heard and validated to build trust



NETWORK ENTHUSIASTICALLY

Build Your Local Contacts

- Attend a variety of community events as often as you can.
- Get to know all the leaders in your community (trusted agents) well before a disaster. Go to their events – and invite them to yours
 - Neighborhood leaders
 - Faith leaders
 - Businesses
 - Non-profits



ASK QUESTIONS

Seek Answers and Listen with an Open Mind

- Have conversations with representatives of underserved populations to learn what their unique needs may be, then plan accordingly



EXPLORE

Find and Connect with:

- Individual, Family, and Community Preparedness Activities
 - Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)
 - Personal preparedness sessions to empower individuals by ensuring their own resilience
- Media
 - Including social media
 - Ethnically-programmed services/channels offer multiple languages
- Veterinarians, Local SPCA, Farmers Associations, American Association of Equine Practitioners/Foundation for the Horse
 - These groups can assist with planning for pet evacuation and pet reunification
 - Remember to address evacuation and/or care for horses and livestock
- Engage with Private Sector Partners
 - Offer Continuity of Operations Planning for small and minority-owned businesses
 - Invite private sector partners to donate resources
 - » To include volunteer resources from their pool of employees

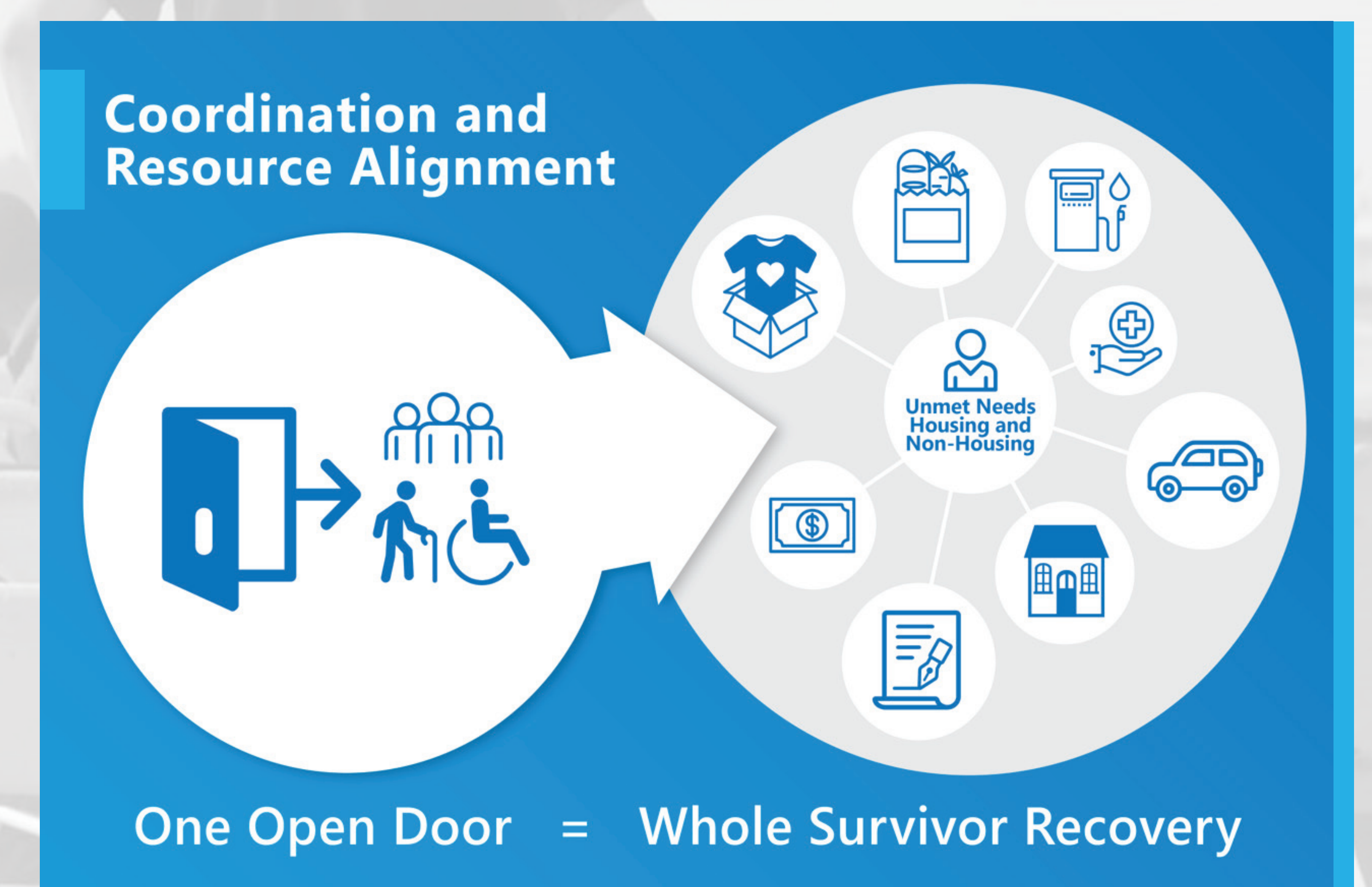


GROW YOUR NETWORK AND RELY ON THEM!

Seek Out New Partnerships and Nurture Existing Ones

- Remember you're not in this alone
 - Empower leaders in underserved communities to take on planning for their needs and locate the necessary resources
 - Bringing in partners from these communities is a great force multiplier, especially if you have no or few staff to support planning efforts
- Depend on agencies/groups/organizations/associations who work with every segment of the population within your community
 - Such as Department on Disabilities, Area Agencies on Aging, Daycare Providers, Office of Faith-Based Initiatives
 - They'll have experience and institutional knowledge that will be invaluable to all-inclusive planning
 - They can help connect you with individuals in your community who would love to work with you
- Take advantage of the myriad resources available out there

These efforts can lead to **One Open Door** for the survivor to get help.



Resources

- Tip Sheets: Sheltering and Mass Care of Religious Minorities in a Disaster
<https://crcc.usc.edu/report/tip-sheets-sheltering-and-mass-care-of-religious-minorities-in-a-disaster/>
- Five Elements of Cultural Competency
<https://aspr.hhs.gov/at-risk/Pages/linguistic-facts.aspx>
- Guide to Cultural Awareness for Disaster Volunteers
<https://www.apa.org/topics/disasters-response/cultural-awareness-guide.pdf>
- Engaging Faith-based and Community Organizations: Planning Considerations for Emergency Managers
<https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/engaging-faith-based-and-community-organizations.pdf>
- References & Acknowledgements
Non-Traditional Shelter Case Studies – American Red Cross (December 21, 2011)
<https://www.nationalmasscarestrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/full-case-studies-final-29dec2011.pdf>
- Keeping the Faith: Shelter Preparedness, Mass Care, and Muslim Americans - Natural Hazards Center (Lori Peek, October 1, 2020)
<https://hazards.colorado.edu/news/research-counts/keeping-the-faith-shelter-preparedness-mass-care-and-muslim-americans>