

10 Steps toward Long-Term Recovery

Once the initial “Lights and Sirens’ phase of your disaster response is done you will probably need to move into the Long-Term Recovery phase. This is a longer process that may take several years to complete. The goal of Long-Term Recovery is to get your community back to “Normal”. Here are a few things to consider as you start down that road.

1. **After the first week or two many of the services designed for the initial response will cease and the organizations providing those services may leave your community.** Some services will still be needed, and there will be a need for different services, but at this point the community will need to be more involved in coordinating the recovery.
2. **A Whole Community Long-Term Recovery Team will need to be formed if there is significant clean-up and rebuilding to be done in your community.** This team will need to include people and organizations from many sectors across the community. The Initiative Foundation and/or other organizations such as Lutheran Disaster Response can help you set up this team. See the Long Term Recovery handbook in the resources section for more details.
3. **You will need many partners to successfully rebuild.** Continue to stay connected with county, state and federal agencies, your political representatives, the business community and non-governmental agencies.
4. **There will be many people willing to come and volunteer to help your community. You will need to be prepared to recruit, organize, house, supply and feed these volunteers.** There are Minnesota Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (MNVOAD) related organizations that will help with your longer term rebuilding/recovery efforts, including helping to manage volunteers. See MNVOAD under Resources for more information.
5. **At this point you will need case managers and an organization that has experience with managing social programs.** In many cases the same organization that helped with your initial recovery by taking calls and coordinating help can continue to assist with this. However, they may not have the capacity on their own to provide the services longer term without financial support from the community. This is a valid use for some of the funds you have raised for recovery (See Long Term Recovery Resources for sample forms and best practices).
6. **You will need to continue to raise funds during this phase. By now the initial response of funds and the media attention will be over, but you will need to continue to work with the media** and tell the story of your needs as it relates to rebuilding people’s lives. You will want to be looking beyond individual donations at this point to larger organizations as well.
7. **Donations of building materials and other supplies may be wanted at this point. You will need to have a dedicated space and a system to receive, store and distribute these materials.** This is another area that MNVOAD organizations may be able to assist you.

8. **Though physical needs are the most visible, pay attention to the Spiritual/Emotional needs of your community.** Community members and care givers will both need spiritual and emotional support. Just as in grieving any loss there is a predictable cycle of grieving and recovery (See Resources).
9. **Communication will continue to be important during this phase, both to the community and to those from outside who would like to help.** Good information, the use of social media and regular meetings of the community to give updates and to listen to what people's needs are will be crucial.
10. **Don't rush into just rebuilding your community the way it was before.** Take the time to engage your community in conversations about how they want to rebuild and how you can build back as a stronger and better community. There are resources and organizations that can help you do this. Contact the Initiative Foundation about the Thriving Communities Initiative (TCI) program and other Minnesota organizations such as the Minnesota Design Team that can assist you (See resources).