SUBJECT   Recovery Planning Update: Post-Disaster Household & Needs Assessment Data Collection Project

ISSUE SUMMARY

Providing an update to the Electoral Areas Committee on disaster recovery planning progress.

BACKGROUND

In spring of 2025, Protective Services established the Capital Regional District's (CRD) foundational recovery document, Recovery Operations. Required by law, these operations provide the CRD with an understanding of how to functionalize recovery in the event of a disaster. Recovery operations are an integral part of the recovery management toolkit and are driven by the equally important components of data collection and community engagement. Protective Services has started development of a Post Disaster Household & Needs Assessment (PDHNA) process to begin addressing those components.

PDHNA processes are essential for guiding recovery planning and ensuring equitable resource delivery. They provide a comprehensive understanding of the community's needs, including physical damage, economic losses, social impacts and other recovery needs. Needs and household assessments allow a community to identify urgent needs, to allow more elaborate assessment of long-term recovery and risk reduction strategies. There are multiple assessments that can and should be conducted, at varying levels of detail.

The use of assessments and surveys to collect data from impacted communities and individuals is an established post-disaster practice in BC. Learning from lessons in past years where communities' recovery was significantly delayed due to lack of data, causing further financial, psychological and physical distress, Protective Services is seeking to pre-establish the process.

Working with both the Privacy, and Technology and Digital Transformation (TDT) divisions of the CRD, this initiative is already undergoing a privacy impact assessment and has executive support for the secure storage requirements.

The Corporate Communications & Engagement division has been engaged and will work with Protective Services to develop and implement an engagement plan, which will be focused on the development and implementation of this process. If operationalized, subsequent communication plans would need to be developed.

The project is expected to span one year and includes five key stages: development, engagement with interested parties and affected people and groups, implementation, testing and feedback. Members of the Protective Services team will be reaching out to key interested parties, such as emergency management leads, elected officials, infrastructure owners and community groups, in the electoral areas to help inform the process.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities
Board Priority
> **3c** *Increase resilience, community and adaptation planning to address climate related risks and disasters.*

Corporate Plan
> **9a-2** *Develop plans and implement actions consistent with regulatory requirements for local government and regional emergency management, including new Emergency and Disaster Management Act requirements.*
> **16g-2** *Enhance public notification processes for emergencies.*
> **16g-3** *Review and modernize fire and emergency management programs.*

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies
Aligns with the Corporate Emergency Plan, Recovery Operations, Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan, Dam Emergency Plans, Electoral Area emergency plans, and Emergency Support Services plans.

The ability to collect accurate and timely data after a disaster to inform recovery planning has direct correlation to the implications below. BC's recovery model is inadvertently built on case presentation without a secure provincial or federal funder. This forces communities to present data, and options for recovery, asking provincial ministries for financial support through existing budget, cabinet submission and grants. Projects with more accurate data, which provide the best return on investment, are likely to be selected. Communities that are unsuccessful in data collection and case presentation find themselves in an extended recovery period, often causing secondary impacts.

Climate Implications
By law, recovery plans must be developed with climate considerations. Informed by post disaster needs assessments, all recovery plans must demonstrate meaningful elements of mitigation and adaptation.

Environmental Implications
By collecting accurate and timely information, a strong and resilient environmental recovery plan can be presented, funded and actioned.

The increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, driven by climate change, also leads to more debris, creating a feedback loop that worsens the problem. If unable to collect data after an event, environmental recovery will be delayed.

Poor allocation of donated resources, or a misunderstanding of the need, can result in donation management programs becoming refuse locations with unusable donated materials creating additional debris to manage.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Implications
As the process for data collection is created, it's important to ensure EDI implications are considered, including: using clear, plain inclusive language; communicating key messages in languages other than English, if/when needed; using diverse representation in images and symbols; and identifying ways to reach specific populations who may be at risk of not otherwise receiving communication materials.

As data is collected, consideration of how diversity factors in the demographics within the populations the recovery plan(s) seek to reach or serve can inform plan and program design, outreach and delivery.

As services are delivered under Recovery plans, data collection will ensure the delivery of services takes into consideration the needs of diverse individuals and groups and that front-line service workers have received EDI training, so they are better able to respond to emerging needs.

Financial Implications
By collecting timely and accurate information, the CRD can prepare and present a recovery plan in whichever sector(s) are required, seeking a funding source.

Implementation Costs: Emergency Services staff are working with TDT staff to clarify the financial implications related to secure storage. We expect the financial implications will become clear following TDT's next Information Technology Advisory Committee meeting on October 17, 2025. The remainder of project development and implementation costs are embedded in the Recovery and Resilience Coordinators portfolio for the 2025-2026 work years.

Operational Costs: Assessment costs may be reimbursable through Emergency Management and Climate Readiness. In past practice, communities have received reimbursement for, or the Province has directly funded, non-government agencies to come in and fill this data collection role.

Depending on design, and required operation, the costs could be significant. If required to operationalize surveys manually in a catastrophic event, such as an earthquake, the bare root costs for administration hours only are expected to exceed $250K (Appendix A). These costs do not factor in any required training, travel, or special equipment, and were created using the CRD's J01 wage range of $24.11-$26.06.

The majority of costs can be mitigated by developing a process that can be administered predominantly in digital format and leveraging existing systems. The PDHNA process aligns and can leverage the existing disaster evacuee registration tool, providing the CRD with preliminary data and connection to those impacted.

Intergovernmental Implications
Legally, the CRD must possess an ability to collect data to communicate impacts and plans to partners, such as provincial, municipal and federal governments. These plans are used to secure funding from those entities and to communicate intention.

If unsuccessful in data collection, there is significant intergovernmental reputational risk. After an event, those who are impacted expect and anticipate hearing from their government. If there is not an avenue to provide this data at the CRD level, community members will provide it to other non-government agencies, or governments, which historically have not shared that data back with communities, hampering the community recovery process. The other common result is informal data sharing on public messaging sites, forums, social media and newscasts to get needs met. This is often paired with what the community is "not" doing to meet the needs.

This work is new; the methodology can be shared with other local authorities for their use.

If a joint recovery effort is required, the CRD would be prepared to operate with partners at the highest levels of national or international government, and non-government organizations.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications
The Regional Growth Strategy is designed to promote social, economic and environmental sustainability within the capital region, covering three of the seven disaster recovery sectors (see Appendix B). Should a disaster event necessitating recovery happen, the CRD will be required to develop a recovery plan that considers the pre-existing goals of the community and the after-disaster capacity and context. The recovery plans are designed to transition the community back to its goals while capitalizing on the changing nature of disasters, lending themselves to sustainable development when executed well.

Service Delivery Implications
PDHNA supports service delivery by enabling the CRD to gain a detailed understanding of service impacts and necessary adjustments, backed by data that validates both the changes and any proposed recovery plans.

Social Implications
Greater public awareness of the post-disaster process and effective coordination of recovery operation will enhance and prioritize recovery for CRD residents.

The CRD is the first regional district to pre-plan its post-disaster data collection process. Local Authorities who are able to execute a PDHNA process effectively set a positive example for other local authorities that have no established process, gaining the confidence of impacted residents and funding providers.

CONCLUSION

The Post Disaster Household & Needs Assessment process is a validated tool for effective disaster recovery, providing situational awareness to inform recovery planning, access funding and position the CRD as a leader. By establishing the process in advance of an event, the CRD is mitigating significant financial burden, secondary impacts to residents and services, and opportunities for negative perception while improving the effectiveness of recovery efforts in the community.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Estimates for Manual Assessment Team Creation – Post-Disaster Household & Needs Assessment Process
Appendix B: BC Disaster Recovery Sectors