

LONG TERM RECOVERY IN NORTHEAST LOUISIANA

Presentation by Jan Wawrzyniak, of United Way Northeast LA, to the
LIC Fall Board of Directors Meeting, September 23, 2019

What is a Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG)?

At some point, with or without federal dollars, the people who live and work in the local community work together and figure out how to put back together the community after all “the company” goes home. “Every disaster starts and ends local.”

LTRG is the partnership of local partners who work together to help the most vulnerable achieve a level of pre-disaster stability, a new normal.

LTRG is often known as the Unmet Needs Round Table

LTRG is made up of representatives of community organizations and even businesses who have resources to help. The LTRG is the organization that figures out how to make the most out of those resources available to help as many as possible recover from a disaster.

It can be an incorporated nonprofit or a less loosely organized body with a fiscal agent.

It can have multiple subcommittees or be one group that handles all functions.

It requires some established principles and policies of operation.

Funders may pool money into one fund or keep separately but bring to “the table”.

National VOAD offers a “Long Term Recovery Guide” helpful when forming a LTRG. The manual includes information on the structure and operations of a LTRG including sample forms and policies. Website reference: nvoad.org

Northeast Louisiana LTRG Experiences for 2 most recent disasters: April 25, 2019 Tornado & 2016 Flooding

Differences in the 2 events:

- Disaster and LTRG geographic scope
2016 Flood: 11/12 NELA parishes were federally declared disasters. LTRG was for entire region. LTRG name: Northeast Louisiana Long Term Recovery Group
2019 Tornado: 3 parishes were federally declared disasters. LTRG is for Lincoln Parish only. Impact of disaster mainly occurred in 1 city in 1 parish. LTRG name: Ruston Strong, Ruston/Lincoln Recovery Group.

- Level and amount of assistance to help – government and nonprofit; offers of help
2016 Flood: FEMA Individual and Public Assistance available; many national nonprofits came to help for a few months – Samaritan’s Purse, 7th Day Adventists, Convoy of Hope and others. Local Recovery Fund: nearly \$300,000 for LTRG including other grants.
2019 Tornado: FEMA Public Assistance available, but not Individual Assistance; few nonprofits outside of local came to help. Local Recovery Fund: nearly \$60,000 for LTRG use came from Community Foundation donations and United Way Tornado Recovery Fund .

Amount of local funding for individuals through TRG was greater per household for 2016 event. Over 200 families helped. For 2019 LTRG, Ruston Strong anticipates 50 households being helped with less funding available to help per household.

- Number of people needing help:
2016 Flood: over 10,000 households in one parish;
2019 Tornado: less than 1,000 houses and businesses impacted.
- LTRG administration:
2016 Flood group had a steering/executive committee with officers including 2 co-chairs.
2019 Tornado group does not have steering committee and had a facilitator.
- Group membership:
2016 Flood group involved FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaisons in addition to disaster response non-profits. Membership were more mainstream nonprofits known for disaster work.
2019 Tornado group involves a private for-profit business who raised funds through t-shirt sales in addition to nonprofits. Membership includes representatives from local faith organizations not affiliated with national disaster response services. Episcopal Diocese more involved that in flood recovery group.
- Case management process:
2016 Flood – FEMA Disaster Case Management Program available contracting with 3 case management agencies using paid case managers working full-time: Easter Seals, ICNA Relief and St. Vincent DePaul Society;
2019 Tornado – unpaid volunteers from local nonprofit, Louisiana Methodist Children’s Home, Family Counseling Center, who also have full-time jobs in addition to disaster duties. Volunteers provide assessments for LTRG rather than the full component of case management services.

- Donated goods:
 - 2016 Flood – a donated goods warehouse stood up for 6 weeks managed by a national non-profit, Adventist Community Services and a paid staff, with a variety of items for distribution, some from national partnerships.
 - 2019 Tornado – City of Ruston offers to manage donated building supplies from local businesses.

- Duration of LTRG:
 - 2016 Flood LTRG was in operation for 1 ½ years.
 - 2019 Tornado LTRG – been in operation for 2-3 months and expected to end within 6 months.

Similarities in the LTRG's

1. United Way served as the administrative backbone of support for both groups and also as fiscal agent.

Administrative support included:

- Inviting groups to table to initially talk about LTRG unmet needs; Facilitating and organizational meetings; Creating documents to be used; Guiding formation of policies.
 - Scheduling and communicating meetings, hosting meetings, keeping minutes, serving as liaison between case managers and the LTRG, tracking expenses, copying, handling funding requests, reporting to Board.
2. United Way NELA 211 provided needs assessment information for both events.
 3. LTRG began organizing about a month after disaster onset.
 4. LTRG functioned as one unmet needs committee rather than multiple committees and was “loosely” organized, not formally incorporated.
 5. Assistance provided through both LTRG's to meet similar needs – construction and non-construction needs - utility, rent/mortgage assistance, clothing, furniture/appliances & household goods.

When is LTRG work over?

LTRG efforts for 2016 flood ended when all resources for recovery assistance were depleted. LTRG effort for 2019 tornado will also end when the last of the available recovery money is spent.