

Funding Priorities for the Suncoast Disaster Recovery Fund

Case Management

Navigating individual and family needs after a hurricane is a complex process. Trained case managers are key to assessing needs caused by and related to the hurricane, developing a goal-oriented plan including the steps necessary for recovery, organizing, and coordinating resources that match the client's needs, monitoring progress, and, when necessary, advocating on behalf of the client.

Children & Youth Services/Education

Young children and youth that were vulnerable before the hurricane become more vulnerable after the storm has passed. Education achievement gaps widen, especially for students living low income. Some areas in our region face both high social vulnerability and low community resilience making the road to recovery steep. Support for schools, early childcare centers and youth serving organizations will play a critical role in helping our children and students reach the necessary academic milestones required to ensure that they are ready for kindergarten, reading on grade level and on track to graduate from high school.

Home Repair and Housing Needs

Countless homes were destroyed while many suffered significant home damage. The number of uninhabitable homes and lack of available temporary housing displaced many residents, some now homeless. Many homes remain in disarray because people face a myriad of challenges including expensive home repairs, limited availability of temporary shelter, loss of essential home furnishings (mattresses and essential belongings), the financial burden of carrying the cost of a mortgage and a rental property, and/or an unaffordable deductible. As a result, residents are leaving the region or essentially homeless now forced to sleep in their cars or tents. Ensuring that people have a safe place to live remains a pressing need for our community.

Legal Services

Many of the challenges residents face require legal strategies and practices. On average, less than half of those who apply to FEMA receive assistance. It's critical that people appeal these denials as the FEMA funding formula has a direct impact on the Community Block Grant funding that follows. Most people lack the expertise to complete this process on their own. Legal aid can assist with appeals as well as landlord/tenant controversies when home repairs are ignored, or rent is required for uninhabitable properties. Assistance for navigating complex issues will help people secure stable housing.

Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG) and COAD support

LTRGs are cooperative bodies made up of representatives from faith-based, nonprofit, government, business and other organizations working within a community to assist individuals and families as they recover from a disaster.

These groups exist in Charlotte, Sarasota, and DeSoto Counties and aim to provide coordinated service to enable everyone in the community to recover. Each county will decide on its priorities as it is unlikely there will be sufficient funds to assist everyone in need of support. A fiscal agent is selected and applies for funding support in a variety of areas including unmet needs. The unmet needs will be presented once all other areas have been addressed and often requires funding beyond the funds received by the LTRG. Determine how our funds can compliment their other funding will be important.

Mental and Behavioral Health

According to SAMHSA, trauma from a disaster can have lasting adverse effects on an individual's mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being which can manifest well after the event. Often the issues don't appear right away, and they can affect people for years. Studies demonstrate that survivors of natural disasters face increased risk of developing anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Already an area of great need in our community, support to ensure residents have an integrated response for intervention and trauma informed care is essential.