This document describes the role of the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison (VAL), defines related terms, and provides information on how the VAL can support the goals of the Community Planning and Capacity Building (CPCB) Recovery Support Function (RSF) prior to and following a disaster. The relationship between the VALs and the CPCB team is key to successfully supporting States, communities, organizations, and individuals throughout the recovery process. Our missions, and the missions of our stakeholders, are complementary: individuals do not recover without the community, and the community does not recover without individuals.

The Role of the VAL

The VAL builds relationships among Federal, State, and tribal governments and voluntary, faith-based and community-based organizations by reporting to and from FEMA and other government agencies on programs of organizations active during disasters, providing information and guidance to voluntary organizations, assisting States in strengthening State Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs), and supporting the development of Long Term Recovery Groups (LTRGs).

The VAL mission is “to ensure survivors and their communities benefit from a coordinated, comprehensive emergency management effort integrating diverse stakeholders including voluntary, faith-based, and community-based organizations”.

Related Terms

Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)
A VOAD is a coalition of organizations that play a role in disaster preparedness, response, or recovery (“VOAD” may also refer to a member organization of such a coalition). VOADs are formed at the local, state, and national level bringing together stakeholders interested in building better prepared and more resilient communities.

VOADs themselves do not provide services directly to survivors, but rather serve as a forum in which individual organizations can communicate, coordinate, collaborate, and cooperate to effectively meet disaster caused needs and reduce duplication of services and other inefficiencies that occur during times of disaster.

Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG)
An LTRG is an organized, cooperative body consisting of representatives from voluntary, faith-based, and community-based organizations, government agencies, the private sector, schools, foundations, and others who work together within a community to assist individuals and households recovering from a disaster. The goals of the LTRG are to utilize all available resources to address unmet needs, avoid duplication of benefits and services, and help the community adjust to its “new normal”.

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What is the role of the VAL in pre-disaster planning and preparedness?

- Support the development of State and local VOADs
- Provide planning guidance among emergency management, voluntary agencies, and the private sector
- Support voluntary organization integration into “ESF-6” functions of mass care, emergency assistance, housing, and human services
- Facilitate trainings, conferences, and exercises
- Provide support to Citizen Corps Councils

What role does the VAL play post-disaster?

- Conduct analysis of impact and unmet needs of individuals and households for program planning and advocacy
- Facilitate access to the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN) for multi-agency case records
- Provide resources and support for long-term recovery group formation and function
- Provide guidance on disaster case management and coordination
- Support states with the management of unsolicited donated goods and unaffiliated spontaneous volunteers
- Support connections between involved nonprofit organizations and federal agencies providing resources or assistance to support the recovery of individuals to maximize impact
- Facilitate access and support for voluntary organizations to provide trainings
- Provide travel assistance for specialized skills and expertise required to support individual recovery efforts

How can the VAL support the goals of CPCB?

- Support and participate in the development of CPCB Mission Scoping Assessments (MSAs)
- Provide MSA information and reports to VOADs and LTRGs
- Identify and connect to organizations that can support community planning and capacity building
- Provide CPCB Coordinators access to VOAD and LTRG meetings
- Accompany CPCB Coordinators to meetings with Federal partners to present a unified approach

How can the VAL and CPCB Coordinator partner to support the mission of the CPCB RSF?

- Exchange information daily on operational activities and priorities
- Participate jointly in the development of MSAs and other needs assessments
- Collaborate to maximize the participation of voluntary organizations in CPCB activities
- Pool expertise to facilitate voluntary organizations’ ability to navigate Federal assistance programs
- Share information on interagency initiatives that can enhance the CPCB objectives
- Review and develop training materials that incorporate CPCB priorities for delivery to VAL constituents (e.g. voluntary organizations, State VALs and Volunteer/Donations Coordinators, and VAL field staff)