



Organize a Disaster Resource Directory Project

Overview

One of the greatest lessons from Hurricane Katrina is recognition of the need to rely on local resources for an indefinite period of time until outside help can arrive. Preparing for events such as an influenza pandemic paints a similar picture—outside resources may be very limited because our entire nation could be affected. Whatever the disaster, local resources are essential and having a shared directory will save precious time when a disaster strikes and get people the help they need when they need it.

Suggested Age Group

- Adults, Teens

Suggested Skill Level

- Moderate

Materials Needed

Access to the following:

- Phone
- Computer
- Microsoft Office

Project Instructions

1. Recruit Project Leaders and Partners

- Contact your friends, family and coworkers and ask who would be interested in helping plan and implement such a project. You can also ask schoolteachers, community leaders, local businesses, government, faith-based and non-profit organizations to lend their support and ideas. Also, don't forget to check with your local HandsOn Action Centers to see if they can support your efforts as well. These partners may have materials and resources you can use for your project. It is good to inform them of your project and make sure it aligns with a need. You may find out that a resource directory already exists and in that case your role can be to better educate the community about its existence.



- Select the link to find your local HandsOn Action Center.
[://www.handsonnetwork.org/actioncenters/maps](http://www.handsonnetwork.org/actioncenters/maps)

2. Define a Project Plan and a Timeline

- As you continue to establish your project, ask yourself the following questions to create a coherent plan:
 - When will you begin and end the project?
 - What are your milestones in between?
 - What are all the tasks that must be completed along the way?
 - How will you measure success?
 - What resources are already available in the community to use?
 - Where can I find volunteers who would be excited about such a project?
 - What type of reflection activity can I lead volunteers through before, during and after the project?
 - How will I recognize the other volunteers?
- Use the HandsOn templates and tools to help you develop your plan and timeline. <http://www.handsonnetwork.org/volunteers/gethandson/toolkits>

3. Promote!

- You may want to print flyers, publish information in print and online newspapers, send emails, and use social media to mobilize your networks. Use whatever methods you can to get out the word and engage people in the effort.

4. Implement Your Project

Develop a list of resources that should be found in a directory.

- It is important to think about what resources are needed during times of disaster. Consider resources needed not only for humans but for animals as well. On what kinds of resources would you depend in a disaster? Are there some you might call on frequently, others you may never? What organizations would you need to communicate with in order to make sure local needs are met? Needs could include but are not limited to: food, housing, physical health, behavioral health, employment, education, family strength, financial, legal, and animal care. How far do you want to



extend your list geographically? Only you can determine how wide you want your inventory to go.

- Consider including at least some of the categories listed below:
 - Emergency management agencies (county and city)
 - Police and fire (county and city)
 - Hospitals and clinics
 - Key relief agencies (American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, etc.)
 - Information and referral/2-1-1 providers
 - Agencies likely to need volunteers (could be a separate list)
 - Organized groups willing to volunteer for disasters
 - HandsOn Action Center staff and volunteers (may be separate list)
 - Key faith-based organizations and/or interfaith groups
 - Colleges and universities
 - Major employers in your community
 - Funders
 - Vendors/suppliers
 - Animal shelters or animal relief agencies

- Identify the information that you should capture in your directory. The following is a list of basic items you will want to include:
 - Category/type of resource (e.g., police, fire, volunteer group)
 - Name of organization
 - Contact name
 - Address
 - 24-hour phone numbers
 - Fax number
 - Email addresses
 - Website URL
 - Brief description of role/function/services provided
 - Emergency contact
 - Does the organization have a disaster plan? If so, describe.
 - Would the organization be able to continue to provide these services in the event of a disaster?



- Identify an appropriate place to store your directory. Use a database to create your list. Print it out and distribute copies to any and all community service organization in your area. Ask individuals to place copies in their Disaster Kits and other appropriate locations.

Checklist

- Explore whether your local [HandsOn Action Center](#) or emergency management organization already has some of these resources in a database—don't reinvent the wheel!
- Determine what types of agencies/organizations/companies/individuals you want to include in your disaster resource directory.
- Design your database format.
- Pull contact and other information from various sources and enter data. Remember to add information from key contacts you make in your disaster response planning process.
- Proof and print final version.
- Copy the file onto a flash drive or CD and place in a safe space.
- Schedule periodic updates.

5. Reflect

- After your volunteer project, it is important to reflect on the experience and think about the impact of the project on the community as well as what you learned about yourself and others. Here are some suggested activities:
 - Tell your family and friends about something you learned and how you will continue to help others.
 - Blog, draw a picture, write a poem, submit a letter to the editor.
 - Write about your experience on your Facebook account, or Twitter feed.
 - If you are working with a group of volunteers on this project, lead a group discussion with questions such as:
 - Why did you volunteer today?



- What did you learn about emergency preparedness and community collaboration?
- What is the one thing that you will remember most about this service activity?
- How can you continue to make a difference in our community?

6. Recognize

- Everyone likes to be recognized for his or her hard work and achievements, especially volunteers. Show your volunteers how much you appreciate them and they are more likely to fully participate and return in following years. The following are some suggestions on how you can recognize your volunteers.
 - Verbally recognize your volunteers' efforts, but also send a personalized note thanking them.
 - Plan to recognize your volunteers at your next special event.
 - Provide your team with a camera to take before and after pictures. Post the pictures in a visible, public area.
 - Recognize volunteer efforts through the media. Submit a press release and photo or write a letter to the local newspaper.
 - Have a celebration recognizing the accomplishments of the volunteers.
 - Give each volunteer a small token of your appreciation.

Resources

- VolunteerSpot
<http://www.volunteerspot.com/>
- Service Leader Toolkit
<http://www.handsonnetwork.org/volunteers/gethandson/toolkits>
- HandsOn Action Centers
<http://www.handsonnetwork.org/actioncenters/map>