FEMA
National Advisory Council

December 16, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: Craig Fugate
Administrator

FROM: G. Kemble Bennett, Ph.D., P.E.
Chairman
National Advisory Council

SUBJECT: National Disaster Recovery Framework: Initial Input

On Monday, December 14, 2009, the National Advisory Council met in public teleconference to be briefed on the status of the Agency's work on National Disaster Recovery Framework and to provide initial feedback on the questions that have been put to a wide range of stakeholders. Specifically, the council discussed and provided their thoughts and input on four questions.

This memorandum is not an endorsement of the process or any of the public documents provided to date, but reflects the council's the overall conversation and thoughts for the Administrator's consideration. The council looks forward to reviewing and commenting on the draft framework document, currently scheduled for public release on February 1, 2010.

1. **How would you define successful disaster recovery?**
   - Do you base recovery on what it might look like from the citizen's perspective? Would this be too difficult or subjective to measure? What can actually be measured?
   - The return of commerce and populations to a city/area.
   - Base it on the critical elements or functions required in a community to keep it functioning on a daily basis. Determine levels of recovery (such as):
     - Short-term – restoration of electricity, cleanup
     - Mid-term – repairing and opening structures such as businesses, schools, government facilities; provision of same level of service prior to event
     - Long-term – tax base restored, population returns home in event of an evacuation.
   - What would a city council look at to define a viable community? Tax base?
   - It is possible that a community may never be the same post-disaster, and a definition should include this potentiality. Consider using "New Normal" versus "Returning to Normal".
   - Sharing information is essential to disaster recovery and federal, state, tribal and local governments must work together to collect and share the information needed to drive the recovery operation. This includes data by neighborhood, village, town and community district including area of impact, physical damage, status of critical infrastructure/key assets, status of essential services, security, community health, occupational safety and

psychological impacts. This data should be collected and shared across all agencies to track needs and monitor progress.

- Case management is a major part of successful disaster recovery.
- Additional thoughts provided after the teleconference:
    - Deliver/provision of water (ice), shelter and food in that order for short-term survival
    - Care and Reception Center operations and Community/Special Needs Shelter establishment
    - Initial reconstitution of public safety: EMS, Fire/Rescue, Technical Rescue/Special Operations, Law Enforcement
    - Initial reconstitution of healthcare: acute and sub-acute; outpatient and transfer to inpatient facilities
    - Initial restoration of utilities: electrical power, water, waste disposal
    - Initial restoration of electronic communication: radio, television, internet, telephone (cellular & landline)
    - Initial restoration of transportation with priority debris displacement
    - Initial restoration of public health functions, preventive medicine and vector control
    - Initial structural assessment for occupancy/re-occupancy

2. **What are the appropriate State, local and Tribal roles in leading disaster recovery efforts?**
    - Each level of government needs their own role and responsibility defined so that they all own the problem.
    - The FEMA Regions must have a key coordination role.
    - Local government needs to understand their roles. The Federal government must give greater recognition of the leadership value of local government. Focus must be less Beltway-centric for what is a local decision. The Federal government should consider investing extra funding in post-disaster public assistance efforts; there has been tension between Federal funders and the local government employees who implement projects.
    - There is disconnect between local emergency management and FEMA; locals deal directly with the State and the State deals directly with FEMA. When the recovery process sets in, the State bows out. The local officials need to feel they are also a partner with FEMA.
    - There is a lack of information that describes FEMA's current leadership role.
    - The Federal government's responsibility is to bring Federal resources to the table all at once.
    - The private sector must have a role.
    - The Federal role should also be one of fostering relationships between State and local governments with NGO's and the private sector; serve as an honest broker to bring all parties to the table and provide opportunity to build relationships, particularly during planning stages.

3. **How can Federal, State, and local disaster planning and recovery processes and programs be best coordinated?**
   - When applying for public assistance, local jurisdictions find they must deal with several Federal agencies as a part of their process – they see a need for a one-stop shop or a more coordinated process (this issue was also raised during in the council's August 24, 2009 recommendations regarding multi-agency coordination issues in recovery).
   - Federal, state and local disaster planning must focus on the National Disaster Recovery Framework itself. Some members agree with the purpose statement [Source: Strengthening Disaster Recovery for the Nation, accessed at http://disasterrecoveryworkinggroup.gov/purpose-statement.cfm] of the Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group that the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) must "...provide operational guidance..[that] includes defining roles and responsibilities, detailing recovery management and operational coordination, articulating communications strategies and establishing measurements for success". Preparedness for us means operational planning that includes all players - the Federal, State, Tribal and local authorities - along with their tasks, responsibilities, milestones and metrics. Operational planning for us means development and implementation of detailed plan documents. Such plan documents must include the following essential components:
     - *Recovery Operations (RO) Plan* - A comprehensive RO plan would describe how we work together on a common set of objectives and shared goals in a National Incident Management System (NIMS) structure with all players (Federal, State, tribal, and local governments, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations) working seamlessly to recover from incidents regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity.
       - Structure -The RO Plan would describe a NIMS-compliant ICS structure with Federal, state and local personnel working together in one operations section, one planning section, one logistics section and one admin/ finance section. The RO Plan would eliminate separate command posts that are often miles from each other and from the affected area and that communicate through "liaisons" that provide little communication bandwidth.
       - Process - NIMS requires that a single set of objectives be developed for the incident and all organizations work collectively to achieve those objectives. The RO Plan would describe a NIMS-compliant incident action planning process that aligns all players in shared recovery objectives and to a shared end state. Under the RO Plan a Unified Operations Section would coordinate recovery activities and a unified planning section would track and assess progress.
       - Information - The RO Plan would describe the procedures for development and maintenance of a Common Operating Picture. The RO plan would eliminate separate incident objectives and situation reports.
       - Decision-making - The RO Plan would include a decision-making playbook with timelines that guide executive decision-makers through the tasks needed to activate and implement the numerous operations that constitute disaster recovery.

- *Disaster Assistance Service Center (DASC) Plan* to expedite service delivery including emergency cash assistance, food stamps, disaster housing assistance, crisis counseling, small business counseling and disaster mitigation. The DASC Plan would contain facility configurations, organizational structures and detailed procedures for opening and operating individual DASC facilities and for managing a system of multiple DASC facilities.
- *Disaster Case Management (DCM) Plan* to coordinate long-term service provision to affected individuals, families and businesses. The DCM Plan would include procedures to enhance and sustain coordination among stakeholders involved in service delivery as well as key metrics to assess and evaluate outcomes.
- *Information Management (IM) Plan* to collect and disseminate the information needed to drive the recovery. The IM Plan would contain procedures for effective information management including the data that will be collected (by neighborhood, village, town, community district, etc) including area of impact, physical damage, status of critical infrastructure/ key assets, status of essential services, security, community health, occupational safety and psychological impacts. The IM Plan would describe how that information will be collected and shared across all agencies to track needs and monitor progress.

- Training and Exercises - Following development and promulgation of the NDRF we recommend a robust and ongoing program of training and exercises to support a nationwide rollout and implementation

4. What else would you like FEMA to know?

- The council would like to know the Agency's thoughts and answers to these questions as well, and feels that understanding the Agency's viewpoint will better inform their input.
  - The council wants FEMA to provide the operational guidance to recovery and to know how FEMA sees this part.
  - Additionally, it was asked whether the reorganization would affect the recovery framework. The council felt it may also inform their input and eventual recommendations as well.
- Some council members want to see one plan, one framework, one operations guide, one logistics guide, etc., while other members feel that one system does not work well with multiple jurisdictions and would propose an umbrella unified command with multiple systems. There was some discomfort with adhering to a process that defined success; while process is important, one may still fail while adhering to process.
- All the key players need to be in the same room to achieve consensus on recovery, which may mean different things across the country.
- Recovery must be an open system with many partners (NGO's, the private sector), it is not just a government response.
- Recovery cadre personnel are often not knowledgeable about tribal culture and relationships, causing greater harm than good.
- FEMA needs to update the antiquated application process and insufficient inspection process.