

# Economic Recovery Support Function

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**Release Date: March 1, 2018**

When some think about Florida's economy, mouse ears come to mind.

While tourism certainly plays a large role, Florida's dynamic and diverse economy is also driven by robust agriculture and aquaculture sectors that employ thousands, along with a broad variety of small businesses,. The Economic RSF places the expertise of the federal government at the service of local, county and the state government to rebuild businesses, generate employment opportunities and rebuild a foundation for sustainable economic growth and resilience. The federal government has significant, but not infinite, resources. There are some recovery projects that the federal government cannot fund, due to budgetary or legal constraints. The Economic RSF, coordinated by the Department of Commerce through the [Economic Development Administration](#) (EDA) works with businesses, voluntary organizations and philanthropic foundations to provide technical assistance, grants, and loans that maximize recovery opportunities and attract long-term sustainable economic development in Florida.

Recognizing the need for people with expertise in recovery issues, the Economic RSF, through a grant from the EDA, funded several local disaster recovery manager positions. The managers assist with the design and implementation of short-term recovery strategies, help evaluate offers of post-disaster assistance, secure additional recovery resources, and facilitate decision-making to increase long-term resiliency. These professionals were made available at no cost to the participating communities.

EDA partnered with the International Economic Development Council to create a guide to free disaster recovery products and services. [Restore Your Economy](#) has guides, toolkits, and webinars for communities to rebuild and improve their economies after a disaster.

## Support for Small Businesses

In the days after Hurricane Irma, Gov. Scott activated the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan program to support small businesses impacted by



Hurricane Irma. Since then, FEMA, the [Small Business Administration](#) (SBA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have fanned out across the state, providing counseling, technical advice, and loans. As of Jan. 12, 2018, the SBA has provided more than \$144 million in loans to small businesses in Florida.

As Irma's recovery continues, developing disaster preparedness and business continuity plans are among the most important actions small business owners can take. Members of the Economic RSF are supporting the state of Florida's efforts to help businesses develop continuity and resiliency plans by contributing skilled advice and other resources so that a higher percentage of Florida businesses have at least a basic emergency response plan. Economic RSF staff are working with the private sector, nonprofit organizations and local communities to educate business owners- including sole proprietors like doctors, real estate agents, and taxi drivers- prepare for a disaster by adopting business resiliency practices.

The RSF has teamed up with the [Florida Small Business Development Center Network](#)—a statewide partnership of higher education, economic development organizations and chambers of commerce dedicated to the economic prosperity of Florida—to help small businesses diversify their market areas and product lines, so they are less vulnerable to future storms.

### Support for Agriculture and Aquaculture

Florida produces ornamental fish, mollusks, alligators, aquatic plants, live rock and coral, and a diversity of food fish, among other products. Aquaculture farms depend heavily on electricity to run oxygenation and water circulation systems. Even short periods of time without electrical power may result in heavy losses, particularly when fish and shellfish are in larval or juvenile stages.

Through USDA FSA, FDACS, and partners, the Economic RSF is working closely with agribusiness owners, aquaculture producers, and farmers to support the restoration of Florida's agriculture and aquaculture. Technical advice on mitigation practices specific to the needs of those communities is being developed to better prepare for future disaster events.

### Support for Tourism



With over 112 million tourists visiting the state in 2016, the tourism sector is the largest economic engine for the state, employing a workforce of 1.4 million. Florida's economy is heavily reliant on tourism and the sales tax revenue it generates; therefore, efforts to ensure continuity of tourism activities are paramount. A partnership involving Enterprise Florida and VISIT FLORIDA is working on preparedness and business continuity planning for tourism-related industries.

## Resources for workers

No sector of Florida's economy will thrive without a stable workforce. The Economic RSF has brought in the U.S. Department of Labor to support the efforts of local workforce boards serving the most affected communities to adapt their funding plans to address the rising demands employers have for workers in occupations impacted by Irma. Federal agencies are partnering with the state of Florida to connect Florida's displaced and dislocated workers, especially those in the most impacted counties, with the resources to re-establish gainful employment over the next 24 to 36 months.

Safe, affordable housing is a critical issue for both residents and businesses. A community cannot survive if its teachers, first responders, and other workers cannot find affordable housing. A continually more resilient Florida requires resilient, affordable housing for workers who support the tourism and agriculture/aquaculture industries.

Learn more about federal support for workforce housing in the Housing RSF section.

