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RESILIENT FUTURES: Transitioning to a Recovery-Based Economy

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PRESENTERS



MATTHEW ERCHULL SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR

Nearly 20 years of senior government experience, specializing in disaster response, recovery, and public policy. A former government official in Texas and New York, with an additional decade of experience in the private sector supporting community development and recovery after numerous high-profile disaster events. Joined Witt O'Brien's in 2019 and is responsible for leading the firm's Government Advisory Services & Emergency Management & Disaster Recovery Services business units.

Directly supported community response, recovery or redevelopment for the following high-profile events:

- Hurricane Katrina ~\$170 billion (2005)
- Hurricane Ike ~\$30 billion (2008)
- Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill ~ \$17 billion (2010)
- Tornado – Joplin, Missouri ~\$2.8 billion (2011)
- Flooding – Minot, North Dakota ~\$1.4 billion (2011)
- Superstorm Sandy ~ \$70 billion (2012)
- Tornado – Moore, Oklahoma ~ \$2 billion (2013)
- Hurricanes Irma and Maria ~\$65 billion / \$90 billion (2017)
- Hurricane Harvey ~\$125 billion (2017)
- Camp Fire, California ~ \$25 billion (2018)
- COVID-19 Pandemic ~\$10 trillion (2020-22)
- Hurricane Ian ~\$100 billion (2022)
- Hurricane Idalia ~\$30 billion (2023)

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ZABRINA MINOR-GREGG, MBA PMP DIRECTOR

With over 16 years of experience in grants management, public policy, and community development, Zabrina has dedicated her career to supporting housing programs, crisis management, and public relations for local governments and nonprofits. As a Director in Witt O'Brien's Grants and Policy team, she provides expert leadership on federal compliance for community-centric ARPA, IIJA/BIL and localized capacity builder programs. – including supporting NCLM's BIL focused technical assistance programs.

- Managed over 800 million in COVID awards for various clients
- Supported NCLM's grant writing research and pursuance program Supporting Communities in applying for over 38 million in grant awards in North Carolina
- Former Executive Director of Community Housing Partnership (NGO)
- Former Deputy Director of TN-based Housing Authority
- Certified HUD Housing Counselor
- Project Management Professional

AGENDA

- WHAT IS A “RECOVERY-BASED ECONOMY?”
- ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAYBOOK
- INNOVATIVE RECOVERY SOLUTIONS
- WHAT’S NEXT?
- Q & A
- CONCLUSION

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CREATE A “RECOVERY-BASED ECONOMY?”

UNDERSTANDING CHANGING CONDITIONS TO DRIVE ECONOMIC STABILITY

REBUILDING LOCAL BUSINESSES AND JOBS:

A recovery-based economy focuses on restoring local businesses by providing grants, loans, and incentives to reopen and hire workers, creating immediate economic activity and long-term stability.

INFRASTRUCTURE RESTORATION:

Critical infrastructure like roads, utilities, and communication networks are rebuilt and improved to support business operations and attract new investments. But they also represent significant influx of net new spending in your community

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND RESILIENCE:

Post-disaster recovery often involves diversifying the local economy by encouraging the development of new industries and strengthening supply chains to reduce vulnerability to future disruptions.

RECOVERY CONTINUUM

WHERE ARE WE NOW, AND WHERE ARE WE GOING > SHORT TERM, INTERMEDIATE, LONG-TERM PLANNING

In the aftermath of a disaster, local governments must guide their communities through various phases of recovery to ensure long-term economic resilience. This continuum highlights the critical stages—short-term, intermediate, and long-term recovery—focusing on both immediate stabilization and rebuilding for sustainable growth. The goal is not just to recover from the disaster but to rebuild in a way that strengthens the local economy, diversifies revenue streams, and enhances overall resilience to future shocks. Each phase requires targeted actions to restore infrastructure, promote economic revitalization, and secure long-term fiscal health.

0-120 DAYS

SHORT TERM RECOVERY

- Damage assessment and immediate restoration of essential services
- Accessing immediate federal aid (FEMA Public Assistance, SBA Loans)
- Implementing emergency economic relief programs
- Mobilizing financial reserves to address immediate budget shortfalls
- Communication with businesses and residents on recovery efforts

3-12 MONTHS

INTERMEDIATE RECOVERY

- Infrastructure repair through federal grants (e.g., EDA, HUD, FHWA)
- Small business recovery support through SBA and EDA grants
- Workforce development and job creation initiatives
- Reestablishing key tax revenue sources and promoting economic diversification
- Implementing disaster-resilient building codes and zoning.

1-5 YEARS

LONG-TERM RECOVERY

- Full restoration of housing and critical infrastructure
- Launching long-term economic revitalization projects (e.g., Opportunity Zones, climate adaptation)
- Maintaining financial reserves for future disruptions
- Long-term workforce and industry diversification planning
- Implementing policies for climate change mitigation and sustainability

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ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAYBOOK

RECOVERY PLAYBOOK – FIRST 120 DAYS

SHORT TERM RECOVERY – WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING NOW

Right now, you're in the thick of it. Less than 30 days after the disaster, the pressure is relentless. Emergency services are stretched thin, infrastructure is damaged, and businesses are struggling to survive. You're making rapid assessments and figuring out how to keep the economy from collapsing while making sure basic services are restored. It's overwhelming—but take heart.

- These first few weeks are about stabilizing the immediate damage and laying the groundwork for recovery.
- Federal aid, like *FEMA Public Assistance* offer the promise of rebuilt infrastructure but they will take time to materialize. You need to think in the TEMPORARY. How do you get services back on line temporarily while you work with federal partners on permanent solutions.
- By repurposing available funding, like *ARPA* or *CDBG* allocations, you can address urgent needs—whether it's fast-tracking road repairs or getting local businesses back online.
- Progress will be slow at first, but even small steps, like reopening a handful of businesses or restoring basic utilities, will make a difference. The groundwork you're laying now is the foundation that will keep your community moving forward.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOCUSED ON ECONOMY

INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

Business Infrastructure Needs:

Survey businesses to assess infrastructure damage, operational challenges, and prioritize sectors critical to the economy.

Utility and Road Access: Identify and expedite repairs to utilities and transportation routes critical for reopening businesses.

WORKFORCE AND SECTOR RECOVERY

Workforce Re-engagement: Assess workforce availability and develop strategies to help displaced workers return to their jobs.

Sector-Based Prioritization: Identify the hardest-hit sectors and prioritize recovery efforts for key economic drivers.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH TO BUSINESSES

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK CHANNELS

Business Recovery Task Force:

Establish a task force including key local stakeholders to coordinate business recovery efforts and feedback collection.

Centralized Communication

Platforms: Create digital portals and hotlines to disseminate information about recovery resources and grants to local businesses.

ENGAGEMENT AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Surveys and Outreach: Regularly survey businesses to assess ongoing recovery needs and challenges.

Town Halls and Focus Groups:

Organize regular meetings to update businesses on recovery progress and gather input on their immediate and long-term needs.

ACCESS AVAILABLE FEDERAL RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES

FEDERAL LOAN PROGRAMS

SBA Disaster Loans: Assist local businesses in applying for *SBA Disaster Loans* for working capital and operational recovery.

FEMA Public Assistance: Apply for *FEMA Public Assistance* to repair infrastructure essential for business operations.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY GRANTS

EDA Disaster Recovery Grants: Utilize *EDA Disaster Recovery Grants* to support business recovery initiatives and stimulate the local economy.

Business Incentives: Work with state-level grants and incentives to fill gaps and provide further support to impacted businesses.

QUICK WINS TO GET BUSINESSES OPERATIONAL

FUNDING REALLOCATION

Non-Disaster CDBG Funds:

Repurpose *Non-Disaster CDBG* funds to provide immediate support for small business repairs, grants, and operational recovery.

Leverage ARPA Funds:

Use remaining *ARPA* funds to support business digitization, e-commerce transformation, and retraining initiatives for displaced workers.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PERMITTING FAST-TRACKING

Utility and Broadband Restoration:

Prioritize restoring utilities, internet, and other essential services to business districts to accelerate reopening.

Streamlined Permitting:

Fast-track permits for temporary business operations and relocations to help businesses get back online quickly.

CASH FLOW AND REVENUE STABILIZATION FOR MUNICIPALITIES

PRESERVE MUNICIPAL REVENUE STREAMS

Avoid Permitting Fee Waivers:

Maintain permitting fees to preserve revenue but offer deferred payment plans or extended deadlines to ease the burden on businesses.

Utilize Existing Reserves: Deploy municipal reserves strategically for essential services and emergency projects while preserving long-term financial health.

PARTNER WITH RECOVERY CONTRACTORS

Incentivize Recovery Contractors:

Attract major home repair and reconstruction contractors to set up local operations through temporary tax relief, reduced rent, or streamlined permitting, ensuring quicker recovery efforts and economic activity.

Incentivize Major Retailers: Offer tax incentives or reduced temporary rent to major retailers willing to establish recovery-focused operations (e.g., supply chain support, temporary workforce hubs) within the municipality.

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INNOVATIVE RECOVERY STRATEGIES

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TEMPORARY FOOD TRUCK/BOOTH PARKS

Set up a **designated area where food trucks can serve disaster recovery workers, residents, and volunteers**. This helps support local food businesses, creates job opportunities, and stimulates the economy.

- **LOCATION:** Choose an easily accessible area near major recovery sites, shelters, or where workers and volunteers are concentrated. Consider land the municipality owns or operates.
- **REVENUE-GENERATING EVENTS:** Host small events in this space (live music, farmers markets, community nights, etc.) to draw more people to the area.
- **INCENTIVES FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES:** Offer reduced licensing fees, rent, or tax incentives to local food vendors who participate.
- **LOCAL HIRING:** Prioritize local workers for these businesses, ensuring that displaced residents or those whose businesses were impacted get opportunities in the recovery.

POP-UPS: MOBILE MARKETS

- **MOBILE FARMERS MARKETS:** Create mobile farmer's markets or pop-up shops for essential goods, crafts, and services. These temporary setups provide local businesses a way to operate even if their physical stores are damaged, while also providing much-needed goods for residents.
- **MOBILE FOOD BANKS AND DISCOUNT GROCERY POP-UPS:** Set up temporary mobile food banks in collaboration with local farms or regional food suppliers to ensure access to essential goods. Work with grocery stores or wholesalers to establish temporary, low-cost grocery shops in high-traffic areas for both workers and displaced residents, stimulating commerce and making basic supplies accessible.
- **CONVENIENCE STORES AND MOBILE PHARMACIES:** Establish mobile convenience stores and pharmacies where workers and displaced residents can access basic goods and medications.
- Create a program with **gift cards/rewards programs** that can be used **exclusively at local businesses**, ensuring that money stays within the local economy.

RECOVERY RESOURCE CENTER WITH VENDOR BOOTHS

- Establish a **centralized area for disaster recovery operations.**
- **LOCAL ACCESS TO NEEDED GOODS:** Support partnerships with the business community to bring in building materials and make them locally accessible.
- **BUSINESS INCUBATION:** Use this as an opportunity to offer reduced-cost booths or kiosks to local entrepreneurs who may want to **launch or restart their businesses.**
- **SERVICES AND HOSPITALITY:** Incorporate service-based businesses such as mobile barbershops, repair services, or even temporary wellness centers.

BUSINESS ZONES

- **TEMPORARY BUSINESS ZONES:** Designate vacant lots or cleared land for temporary business districts, where local businesses can operate from trailers or modular units. This gives business owners a way to stay open while permanent structures are rebuilt.
- **TEMPORARY TAX RELIEF:** Offer tax abatements or relief for businesses that participate, incentivizing rapid reopening.
- **SHORT-TERM FLEXIBLE ZONING:** Temporarily relax zoning restrictions to allow businesses to set up in non-traditional spaces (parks, parking lots, etc.) until permanent infrastructure is restored.

TEMPORARY HOUSING

Consider the Use of Modular Manufactured Housing

- Prefabricated housing can be quickly assembled and deployed

Incentivize the Creation of Temporary Housing

- Offer tax breaks or incentives for property owners who provide temporary housing options
- Create Expedited Permitting Processes

Utilization of Existing Buildings and Infrastructure:

- Determine where buildings exist that are vacant and

Consider creating spaces in the short term to solve the immediate need, while planning for the long term uses in high tourist areas

- **Examples:**
 - **A tiny home village**
 - **RV parks**

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WHAT'S NEXT?

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RECOVERY PLAYBOOK – 3-12 MONTHS OUT

INTERMEDIATE RECOVERY – WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING IN 3-4 MONTHS

In the coming months, things will start to stabilize, though it won't feel easy. You'll be shifting from crisis management to rebuilding the local economy. Temporary infrastructure repairs, from utility restoration to road reconstruction, will be underway, allowing businesses to resume operations.

- Attracting major retailers and recovery contractors to set up in your area can provide the economic boost you need to help your community regain some normalcy.
- You'll begin to secure more substantial federal recovery funds, like *EDA Disaster Recovery Grants*, which will enable larger-scale projects to get off the ground.
- Workforce support becomes a key priority now—helping displaced workers find jobs and launching retraining initiatives will stabilize families and put your community on the path to sustainable recovery.
- While the road will still be long, progress will feel more visible. The focus will shift from survival to rebuilding, and your community will start to see tangible signs that recovery is not just possible, but underway.

RECOVERY PLAYBOOK – 3-12 MONTHS OUT

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS:

Develop collaboration with state and federal agencies to identify long-term recovery funding, such as *USDA Rural Development Programs* for rural infrastructure and business revitalization.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION:

Launch initiatives to support local business recovery and diversify the economy by using *EDA CARES Act Grants* to build resilience in key sectors.

TARGETED INVESTMENTS:

Use federal and state funds to repair infrastructure, focusing on projects that can attract new investments and support job creation (e.g., applying for *EDA Public Works Grants*).

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:

Tap into *Department of Labor's Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grants* to retrain displaced workers and strengthen the local labor force.

RECOVERY PLAYBOOK – 1-5 YEAR PLAN

LONG TERM RECOVERY – WHAT OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO SEE OVER NEXT 5 YEARS

As you look toward the next several years, this is where long-term transformation happens. By now, most of the immediate challenges have been addressed, and you're focusing on building resilience.

- Your infrastructure should be moving towards federal funds obligation so that design and rebuild can happen. It will be not just repaired but improved, incorporating disaster-resistant designs and sustainability measures.
- Attracting new industries can be critical—this is the time to diversify your local economy to prevent future disruptions. You'll be working on major projects—housing, transportation, and business development—that will create new opportunities for your community.
- Financially, you'll be in a more secure position, with stronger reserves and more stable revenue streams. The goal now is to create a future where your community is not just recovering from this disaster, but thriving.
- You're building the capacity to handle whatever comes next, with a more robust, prepared, and economically resilient foundation.

RECOVERY PLAYBOOK – 1-5 YEAR PLAN

BUILD BUDGET RESILIENCE:

Establish policies for maintaining a sustainable reserve fund that can be accessed in future crises, supported by economic stabilization initiatives funded through *EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance* grants.

SUSTAIN ECONOMIC GROWTH:

Focus on strategic initiatives like *Opportunity Zones* to attract private investment into vulnerable communities, encouraging long-term development.

INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNIZATION:

Continue rebuilding critical infrastructure with funding from the *Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Emergency Relief Program* and *HUD CDBG-DR* programs, ensuring investments support economic resilience.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION:

Leverage *FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)* program to reduce long-term risks by investing in infrastructure projects that protect against future natural disasters.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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