# RDCO Wildfire Recovery Plan September 2021

**Version 1.0**

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## Introduction

On August 15, 2021, the White Rock Lake wildfire aggressively consumed properties and destroyed or damaged homes and some or all of their respective outbuildings. The Regional District Central Okanagan (RDCO), as the local government authority of jurisdiction has obligations under the Emergency Program Act of BC to develop a recovery plan for its impacted residents. This document outlines the initial recovery objectives but recognizes that new ones may evolve as response activities continue and eventually wind down.

Recovery is not well defined by the British Columbia Emergency Management System (BCEMS). While guidelines are provided that can assist, there is no real mandate regarding how in-depth recovery must be for any given community that experiences some sort of disaster. Therefore, an organization must look at the level of service that they want to provide to residents and mirror recovery efforts after those programs. In much the same way that an organization may undertake supportive housing, accessible transit, and other social programs, an organization must determine what they will provide in the event of an emergency as far as recovery.

An effective recovery program reduces the impacts to residents, businesses, and industry, and minimizes the impacts to local government.  It is important to return life to normal as quickly as possible.  It is imperative that the RDCO undertake recovery operations as soon as an emergency event starts and continues with those operations until residents have been assisted as much as possible.

This recovery plan aligns with guidance provided in the Emergency Management BC (EMBC) document *Interim Disaster Recovery Framework (2019).* The basic business flow identifies the general approach that the RDCO will utilize to meet its obligations.

# Basic Business Flow for Recovery Management
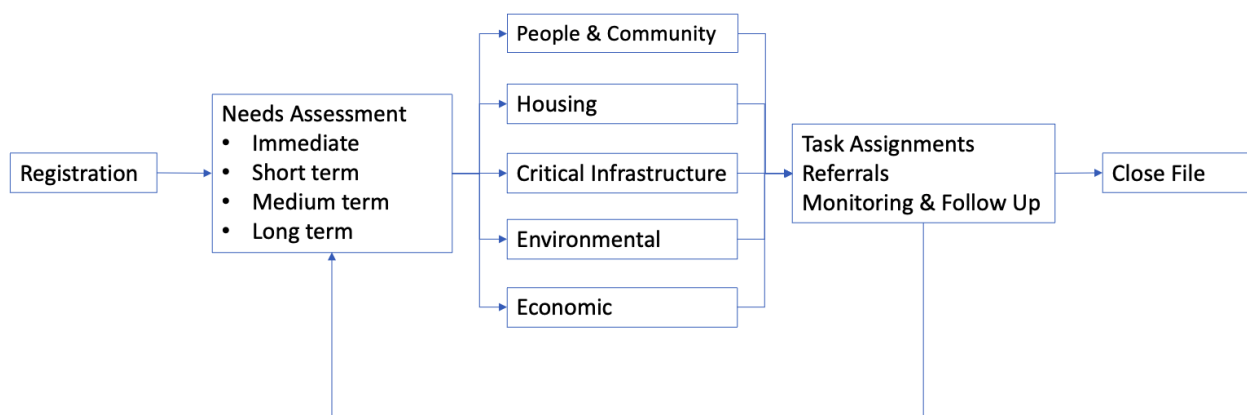
# Linkages

## RDCO Emergency Plan

The RDCO emergency program is a regional program, with partner municipalities and First Nations within the RDCO being signatories to the regional emergency plan. This RDCO recovery plan is linked directly to the *Regional District of Central Okanagan Emergency Plan (2020)* which is an integral part of RDCO Emergency Management documentation.  This recovery plan is intended for use as a stand-alone plan to provide recovery guidance to RDCO staff and contractors as required.

## Emergency Program Act

The Emergency Program Act of British Columbia, Section 6(2) indicates "*a local authority must prepare or cause to be prepared local emergency plans respecting preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies and disasters*." This recovery plan complies with this requirement.

**Linkages to Other Phases of Emergency Management**

The recovery phase is linked to other phases of emergency management.  There is an obvious link to the response phase, and the recovery phase should start early in response, and continue through the end of response.

There is also a tendency to link the mitigation and preparedness phases to the recovery phase. Often, mitigation is included in the concepts of building back better.  While all phases of emergency management are important, it is critical to remember that the recovery team has a purpose of primarily supporting recovery.  Mitigative works that benefit the local community are desirable but can increase the workload of the recovery team. As well, if these phases are not adequately explained to the public, elected officials and others, there can be confusion among as to what disaster recovery entails, and what is better left to overall local authority governance.

Care must be taken to provide additional resources over and above the recovery team if local governments wish to undertake build back better initiatives, increase services, advance planning, or undertake mitigation projects. This will ensure that the recovery team is able to expedite the recovery process.

## Relevant Documents for Recovery

There are several documents available from EMBC and other sources that can be useful. The Recovery Management team should make themselves familiar with these documents.

**BCEMS**

The British Columbia Emergency Management System (BCEMS) is a comprehensive framework that provides a structure for a standardized approach to developing, coordinating, and implementing emergency management programs across the province of BC. The BCEMS goals are useful in recovery management for guiding recovery managers, team participants and other involved personnel in their decision making.  They are:

1.  provide for the safety and health of all responders
2.  save lives
3.  reduce suffering
4.  protect public health
5.  protect government infrastructure
6.  protect property
7.  protect the environment
8.  reduce economic and social losses

The BCEMS document can be found here:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/embc/bcems/bcems_guide.pdf


**BC Interim Disaster Recovery Framework**

As a result of significantly impactful wildfires in 2017 and 2018, and other natural disasters, the province of British Columbia has created the *Interim Disaster Recovery Framework (2019)* that assists communities and guides government in recovery from major disasters.  The current BC Emergency Program Act is heavily weighted towards response objectives and does not consider recovery objectives in any meaningful way. Accordingly, there can be challenges when sourcing support from the Province of BC.  It is understood that recovery considerations are being addressed in the current revision of the Emergency Program Act, but to date they are not fully available to the RDCO for recovery to this event.

It can be found here:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/local-government/provincial_disaster_recovery_framework.pdf


**Recovery Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations**

The *Recovery Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations (2019)* provided by Emergency Management British Columbia is a useful tool in the early stages of recovery operations. Extensive recovery operations will find that the information contained within this toolkit is quickly achieved and further solutions will be required.  This document be reviewed early in recovery operations. However, it should not be considered as the sole guiding documentation regarding community disaster recovery.

It can be found here:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/local-government/disaster_recovery_guide.pdf


### Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Forms and Templates

Throughout the process of recovery, recovery managers and other recovery staff will routinely find themselves using emergency operation center forms and templates to communicate with and seek support approval from Emergency Management BC. There are three main forms that can be used in the recovery program:

- the Expense Authorization Form (EAF) is used to request confirmation from EMBC that costs for an eligible activity can be reimbursed back to RDCO. The EAF applies to costs associated with services or resources that the RDCO can source and pay for
- the Resource Request is used to request services or resources through EMBC. In this case, EMBC will source and pay for the resource
- the Situation Report (SitRep) is used as a daily summary of previous day's activities within the recovery program. It is used by EMBC and supporting agencies to inform their support planning

Links to these forms and templates can be found at:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/local-emergency-programs/local-gov-operations


### Financial Assistance for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs

Throughout the response and recovery phases of a disaster, the local authority will need to undertake a variety of tasks and will need to seek approvals from EMBC for financial reimbursement for costs associated with eligible activities. Current EMBC policy reimburses local authority response costs at 100% and recovery costs at 80%. Costs associated with any non-eligible activities will be borne by the local authority. The *Financial Assistance for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs: A Guide for BC Local Authorities and First Nations (2008)* clarifies what are typical eligible costs, and the process for seeking approval and reimbursement for these expenditures.

This reimbursement process can be challenging at times in that staff within EMBC provincially do not currently have any tools that allow them to interpret eligibility on response and recovery activities consistently, so the onus is often on the local authority to make a case for cost eligibility. When costs are denied at the EMBC regional office level, there may be an opportunity to appeal those decisions to EMBC at the Victoria headquarters level.

It can be found here:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/local-government/financial_assistance_guide.pdf

# Strategic Objectives

A tool called Management by Objectives (MBO) has been used to identify the strategic objectives for this recovery project. The simple MBO approach is:
- Identify your objective (what needs to be done)
- Set your strategy to achieve that objective (how is it going to be done)
- Define the tactics (who is going to do it)

The 8 BCEMS goals were used as a guide for prioritization and relevance.

The MBO filter was run through each of the recovery sectors:
- Housing
- People & Communities
- Critical Infrastructure
- Economy
- Environment

From that, a set of initial short, medium and long-term objectives were identified. Anticipate more objectives to be identified by such activities as needs assessments, damage assessments, and economic and environmental impact assessments are completed. Accordingly, the objectives of the recovery will need to be modified or refined over time.

In general, the recovery team should strive to meet the following seven objectives as they proceed through the recovery process.

1. Protect Public Safety
- Maintain emergency access across all land uses
- Reduce risk exposure of households, transportation routes and sensitive land uses
- Ensure all response, recovery, and long-term planning work supports the BC Emergency Management System priorities

2. Foster and Improve Health and Wellness and Support Housing Recovery
- Reduce immediate suffering
- Seek immediate, medium and long-term housing recovery
- Support household and community resilience

3. Deliver Permanent Solutions
- Develop, seek funding for and implement hazard protection and adaptation solutions including engineering, green infrastructure and land use bylaws and policies to improve climate resilience
- Seek to optimize financial, social, and environmental sustainability in solutions

4. Facilitate Economic Revitalization
- Seek opportunities to advance recovery as investment in community resilience and development
- Foster the environment for economic diversification and new opportunities
- Create opportunities for higher levels of support for economic and agricultural recovery


5. Facilitate Environmental Resilience & Adaptation
- Mitigate and manage environmental challenges caused by disasters
- Advance ecosystem restoration and the protection of natural assets and ecosystem health
- Seek opportunities for improving climate resilience at the ecosystem level


6. Engage Community and Stakeholders
- Create opportunities for participation of stakeholders and public in supporting decision making through consultation and community engagement
- Ensure affected individuals and stakeholders are involved in decisions affecting their future
- Use consistent, open, and clear communication tools and approaches
- Continue and strengthen collaboration among local and senior governments


7. Ensure Equitable, Fair and Reasonable Decisions
- Support affected individuals with a case management approach that connects them with existing mandates and services wherever possible
- Ensure fiscal accountability and responsibility and develop efficient solutions
- Advocate for clarity of senior government decision making process, with recognition of local needs

## Short Term Objectives

These initial short-term objectives were initiated during the response phase, and are primarily focused on:
- establishing worker and public safety for re-entry and beyond
- establishing scope and scale of impacts on residents and facilitating longer term supports
- establishing scope and scale of impacts on local economy, critical infrastructure and the environment, and identifying recovery needs
- meeting the immediate needs of residents as the transition from response to recovery takes place
- identifying and reducing hazards

Short term recovery objectives identified to date are:

| Section | Objective | Strategy | Tactic |
|---------|-----------|----------|--------|
| People & Community | Mental health & wellness | Establish trauma support through existing services | Internal or Contracted Case workers, needs assessments & referral process |
| People & Community | Recovery team wellness | Provide Disaster Psychosocial support as required | Resource request through EMBC as required |
| People & Community | Public communications & info sharing | Use website & social media | RDCO PIO to establish methods & messages |
| People & Community | Public 1-800 number & email | Establish dedicated number for core hours | RDCO staff to monitor calls & emails |
| Housing | Needs Assessment | Evacuee & impacted resident interviews | Urban Matters or another qualified consultant |
| Housing | Needs support & referrals | 3 case workers | Internal or Contracted Case workers |
| Housing | Housing rebuild policy developed | ID policies to expedite services & focus on Sendai "Build Back Better" | RDCO Environmental Planner |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Economic Recovery | Determine scope & scale of impacts | Conduct impact assessment study | BC Economic Development Agency – Dale Wheeldon |
| Critical Infrastructure | Determine site safety | Assess threats to workers & general public on CI & Parks | Geotech, danger tree assessors |
| Critical Infrastructure | Determine scope & scale of damage | RDCO assets including waste transfer station Utility owners | Have RDCO staff assess RDCO assets Have utility owners asses their assets Have qualified professionals assess where warranted |
| Environment | Fire Impact Assessments for site safety – workers & public re-entry | Danger tree assessments Slope stability assessments | Contracted Qualified Professionals |
| Environment | Fire Impact Assessments for spring freshet | Soil & slope stability assessments | Contracted Qualified Professionals |
| Environment | Fire Impact Assessments for spring freshet | Debris flow assessments | Contracted Qualified Professionals |
| Environment | Fire Impact Assessments for spring freshet | Bridge & culvert assessments | Owners - MOTI, FLNRORD |
| Environment | Fire Impact Assessments for long term slope stability | Soil & slope stability assessments | FLNRORD |
| Environment | Debris Impact Assessments | ID debris volume, type & location | Contractors |
| Environment | Debris Management Plan | ID recycling & sorting needs, landfill use planning & removal | Contractors & RDCO staff |

## Medium Term Objectives

Medium term objectives typically start to appear as needs assessments are completed and re-entry has occurred. These are still to be determined but anticipate challenges around:
- conflicts with homeowners if they have had a rapid damage assessment rating of "Restricted Use" or "Unsafe"; this can cause confusion when some residents don't know what to do about it
  - Guidance recommends using an impartial third party – such as a retired building inspector or contractor to help residents with guidance through the decision-making process
- facilitating the rebuilding process
- reduced landfill life from fire debris – the recovery team must work closely with the solid waste branch of local government to coordinate debris management
- potential water quality issues for domestic sources
- land use zoning conflicts
- legacy, illegal construction (unpermitted) or "grandfathered" properties; some may not have been known to RDCO prior
- requests for reduced tax rates for periods of time when structures weren't rebuilt; potential for higher assessments in the future with new buildings creating additional economic hardship for some
- ensuring that environmental contamination is remediated
- ensuring that there is support for home based and small business within the impacted area
- ensuring that those who are struggling with loss and the heaviness of the rebuilding / recovery process are adequately supported with mental health support services.
- critical infrastructure repairs

Other considerations may be establishing practices to facilitate:
- land use & zoning changes for community planning
- work to neighbourhoods that can reasonably be done now under "80% Recovery Dollars" that otherwise might need to be done in the future at full cost to the RDCO
- Sendai Framework "Build Back Better" objectives such as FireSmart communities, net zero and environmentally friendly construction etc.

## Long Term Objectives

If done effectively in the early stages of response and recovery planning, any long-term objectives will have been managed and mitigated by other organizations:

- People & Community – existing social support programs offered through external agencies (Such as Social Development and Social Innovations)
- Housing – insurance companies, NGO's, philanthropy organizations (such as Samaritan's Purse and Mennonite Disaster Services who can assist with the remediation and rebuilding process)
- Economic Recovery – regional economic development organization(s)
- Critical Infrastructure – owners and operators
- Environment – provincial government ministries, land-owners
- In general, better community awareness about risk and risk reduction, adoption of resilience tactics (such as evacuation plans and FireSmart initiatives)

The RDCO generally will want to ensure that any long-term objectives that relate to restoring services that support a more resilient community through disaster risk reduction are identified and implemented to the extent possible. This has implications for economic recovery and accommodation of future demands due to population growth.

# Recovery Team Structure

This is a general model that can be applied to manage any recovery. It is based on the Incident Command System (ICS) methodology, which is universal throughout emergency management internationally. Each box is a function, and not necessarily an individual person. Where it makes sense, and as activities stabilize and/or start to wind down, one person may be accountable for one or more functions.

# Simple Recovery Organization Model
# Based on Incident Command System
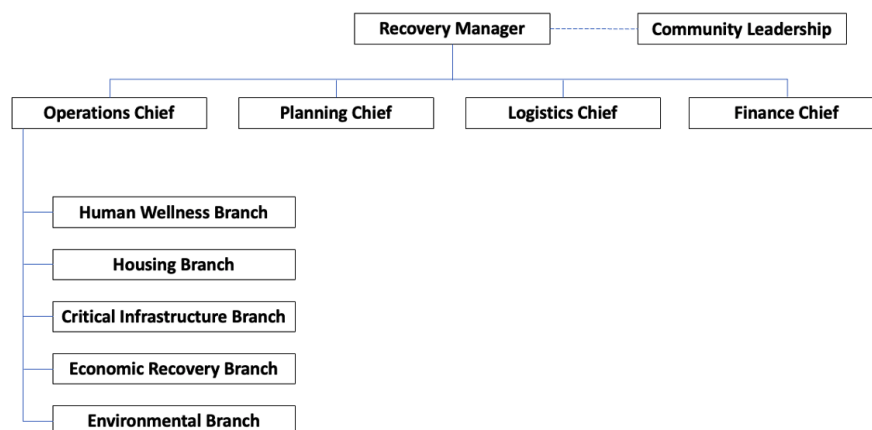
The recovery team also needs a means of receiving guidance from, and reporting to, elected officials and the executive within the RDCO. The use of a "policy group" concept can facilitate this transfer of guidance and information.

**Policy Group**

The policy group is composed of elected officials representing areas that have been affected by the disaster. The policy group works directly with the recovery manager / recovery team or with the chief administrative officer(s) from the affected communities.

The policy group can have an extensive, important, and positive impact on recovery operations. The policy group also plays an important role in collecting information and feedback from affected residents and relaying that to the recovery team.

The policy group should be made up of elected officials from each affected local government group, including both municipal councillors and regional district directors. Board chairs and mayors are welcome to be part of the group but are not necessarily the leaders of the group. It is important to note that this group is an advisory group and not necessarily a decision-making group, although their feedback and input is important for recovery team success.

## Communications

Factual and timely communications is important at several levels:
- impacted residents and businesses
- supporting and assisting agencies
- impacted residents and the general public
- internal staff

The RDCO Public Information Officer coordinates all communications activities for this event and has an internal communications plan in place in accordance with existing RDCO protocols. No information is released through any of the official platforms until it has been approved by the Recovery Manager and CAO. The communications approach for this particular event includes:
- public notifications about events and support options on the RDCO website; other agencies may link to this from their websites
- public notifications about events and support options through RDCO social media sites Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn
  - o typically, any government social media activities consider the RDCO sites to be factual and will only link or rebroadcast, they will not develop their own unique messaging if they are not the lead agency
  - o other NGO supporting agencies may link to RDCO social media sites and/or post their own information on their sites

- traditional media (print, radio & TV) will be engaged through the RDCO Public Information Officer
- regular town hall meetings in a face-to-face environment are typically an effective way of distributing event information and identifying needs or issues from public responses. However, given the current COVID restrictions, these are being held virtually using online meeting platforms.
- in some cases, it may make sense to do mail out campaigns and/or door-to-door campaigns to distribute information.

A case worker model is in place and the impacted residents will be assigned a single point of contact. This provides a primary conduit for two-way communications. The case worker will facilitate any information demand needs from their client.

# Recovery Sectors

## Housing

In the EMBC disaster recovery literature, Housing is considered part of the People and Communities sector.  However, the RDCO experience in the early stages has been that Housing requires its own sector until such time as:
- all needs assessments are completed
- case workers are in place and impacted residents have been assigned
- roles and responsibilities of homeowners, insurance companies, and/or other support agencies is fully identified
- referrals to supporting organizations are made

Each local authority is required by the Emergency Program Act to have an Emergency Support Services (ESS) program. EMBC provides provincial oversight, guidance, and emergency financial support for interim housing as is legislated through the provincial Disaster and Financial Assistance Regulation. This is managed by the local authority ESS program. This housing support is typically short term until impacted residents have had a chance to engage their insurance companies, at which point they become responsible for the housing support. Where there is no insurance, other support may be available from non-government organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse, the Mennonite Disaster Services, or others. In some cases, there may be local community programs and/or faith-based and service organizations that can also assist.

The RDCO is overseeing housing needs assessments through its case worker model until such time as the impacted resident(s) have engaged their insurance companies and/or support from other agencies is in place.

## RDCO Specific Tasks for Housing

- post Disaster Building Assessment – confirming results of the Rapid Damage Assessment
- Housing plan to facilitate support for residents who were uninsured / underinsured
- means of facilitating the rebuilding process:
  - insurance advocacy
  - rebuilding, repair guidance


## People & Communities

This sector considers human wellness impacts on the physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being of the population, and is primarily concerned with, but not limited to, health and safety, mental health, community psychosocial, emotional, cultural, and spiritual well-being, vulnerable populations, and cultural aspects.

There are existing social and community programs in place that already support these needs on a daily basis, so the primary role of the RDCO in this recovery event is to identify those needs and facilitate referral through its case workers on to those agencies as appropriate.

There are strong linkages to housing and economic recovery within this sector, which makes the role of the case workers particularly critical. Staff from within each of these three sectors also form up an "Unmet Needs Committee" that is in place to ensure that no one falls through the cracks.

### RDCO Specific Tasks for People and Communities

Within the RDCO the Case Workers (Victim Services equivalent) will lead this sector. Financial support for interim staff to backfill the program and maintain existing daily workload will be required.

This team will:
- ensure that residents have access to mental health support
- ensure that residents have access to regular health care systems


## Critical Infrastructure

This sector considers impacts on private and public owned physical infrastructure. This sector primarily concerns residential and commercial buildings, utilities, and infrastructure planning. The recovery of infrastructure heavily influences the recovery of the community and should be considered a priority to support response and recovery activities. The restoration of essential infrastructure also supports the recovery of the wider local economy and can assist in stimulating growth post-event by restabilizing business operations and services.

The repair and recovery of large publicly owned infrastructure such as provincial roads, power or energy utilities, and telecommunications is a direct responsibility of its owner. The RDCO only has formal responsibility for utilities and assets it owns and/or operates.

The critical infrastructure impacts within the RDCO scope of responsibility have been assessed. An initial assessment of the Killiney Beach water distribution system identified:

- significant leaks beyond anything pre-existing
- damage to exterior of some pumphouse structures

An engineering firm has provided a cost estimate to conduct a post-event damage assessment to identify:

- scope and scale of any damages or impacts caused by response activities
- cost estimates of repairs to get water delivery system operational to support fire suppression and protection

These assessments are being treated as response activities. An expense authorization form to cover these costs has been submitted to EMBC for approval. They may indicate a longer term recovery activity required, but that will be determined after they are done.

### RDCO Specific Tasks for Infrastructure Recovery

- Coordinate with critical infrastructure operators any repairs / changes / improvements to service
- Communicate / facilitate the flow of information from CI operators to residents who require the information (i.e., the reconnection process for electricity service to a recently repaired home)

### Economy

This sector considers direct and indirect impacts on the local economy. Within the scope of impacts of this wildfire in the RDCO, this sector primarily concerns small home based and/or local business, tourism and cultural livelihood, agriculture, and the broader economy.

The RDCO has no legal obligation related to economic recovery but may have some obligation within the mandates of existing regional economic development programs and/or existing contractual agreements.  In some cases, it may make sense to advocate on behalf of the collective of impacted residents and businesses.

An economic impact assessment is required to determine scope and scale, and to what extent the RDCO needs to be involved. This requires EMBC funding support for external consultants and an expense authorization form to be submitted. Once the scope and scale of impact is fully understood, there will likely be need identified for a regional economic development organization to assume the lead on this activity.

### RDCO Specific Tasks for Economic Recovery
- Undertake an economic impact assessment for the affected area.
- Assign an economic recovery coordinator to support affected businesses 1 on 1.

### Environment

This sector considers impacts on the environment and steps needed to re-establish a healthy state while mitigating long-term impacts. This sector primarily concerns land degradation and contamination, biodiversity and ecosystem impacts, cultural land use, and natural resource damage/loss. Public safety can be at risk when soil and/or land stability is compromised. Impacts can affect the local economy in terms of diminished resource extraction, recreational use and tourism.

The RDCO has no legal obligation for environmental impacts not caused by its own activities. However, within the realm of public safety the RDCO needs to ensure that assessments are done on the area watersheds and land base to so that the scope and scale of potential impacts is understood. Specific areas of interest include:
- hydrophobic soils caused by removal of vegetation by the fire which could lead to landslides and/or debris flows
- impacts on any sources of water supply to RDCO systems

Impacts during the rebuilding process are also of interest to the RDCO, and efforts will be made to undertake consolidated environmental assessment of areas along the water front to better mitigate environmental impacts during rebuilding.

### RDCO Specific Tasks for Environmental Recovery

- ensure safe and efficient removal of wildfire debris
- ensure acceptable remediation of any contaminated sites
- ensure any threats to community and infrastructure are identified and appropriate agencies engaged for mitigation
- identify barriers or recommendation actions to incorporate into rebuilding efforts

## Unmet Needs

An Unmet Needs Committee is an important component of any disaster recovery process. It seeks to find solutions for people's needs when there are no other options. It is composed of representatives from:
- existing community and government based social support agencies
- Interior Health Authority
- NGO's who specialize in disaster support
- RDCO leadership, including the Area Director, and recovery organization leadership

The Unmet Needs Committee should meet frequently as needs require, especially in the early stages. This can be daily, every other day, weekly, or whatever is appropriate. Anticipate this frequency of meetings and participation from some agencies to lessen over time.

At some point, either all impacted residents will have been connected to someone or some organization that can meet their needs, or there will be no suitable solution for their situation. When these conditions are met, the Unmet Needs Committee can be disbanded.

## Donations Management

In general, cash donations to respected humanitarian or social support organizations are preferred, and the public should be directed to these existing donation management systems. Secondary considerations can be needed items such as food and water. This can and often is done through a non-government organization or local society, but it can also be facilitated through the RDCO if so desired.

The management of non-financial donated materials can be incredibly challenging for local authorities. The volume can be overwhelming to receive, organize, distribute and/or eventually dispose of. The RDCO should seek to direct donated materials to agencies who can disperse those resources, and not take on direct responsibility for it.

## Volunteer Management

If there are large numbers of convergent volunteers who wish to assist both in the response and recovery phases of a disaster, the Emergency Operations Centre Director or recovery manager should activate a volunteer management coordinator. This individual will direct these volunteer resources to agencies and organizations who can benefit.

Unless the volunteer management coordinator is already part of an existing organization where criminal record checks have been completed, the RDCO should have a criminal record check completed on that person prior to engagement. For liability purposes, in no cases should any youth under the age of 16 be engaged as volunteers.

Care should be taken by the RDCO to ensure that any volunteers being directed by RDCO staff have the proper training, personal protective equipment, and oversight to ensure that they are safe and that their activities reflect the goals of the response and recovery.

## Support From Other Agencies & Organizations

There are many opportunities to partner during recovery with other agencies, organizations, and non-profits. Some provincial government agencies can offer financial and technical support related to response and recovery activities, both to local authorities and impacted residents and businesses. Many non-government organizations can offer support in various forms directly

to impacted residents. This is most often in the form of financial programs, social programs, and assistance to clean and/or repair their housing.

The RDCO is leveraging these relationships to the extent possible. To date the following organizations have been engaged:

- Emergency Management BC
- Canadian Red Cross
- Samaritan's Purse

## Assessing the Effectiveness of Recovery

To ensure accountability and the effectiveness of the recovery program, and that support services are being delivered to the impacted residents, some basic performance measures can be put in place if desired. This is a conversation for the Recovery Manager to have with the RDCO CAO.

Common performance measures can generally consider practices related to:

- Evacuation orders and alerts
- State of local emergency declaration and utilization
- Restoration of essential services
- Public re-entry
- Hazard & threat mitigation
- Property rebuilds
- Referral to and support from other organizations

### Evacuation Orders and Alerts

The lifting of evacuation orders and alerts should be a top priority for the RDCO when the threat has subsided.  Rapid damage assessments and on-the-ground reports will assist in meeting this milestone, as well as information supplied by provincial agencies such as the River Forecast Centre or BC Wildfire Service, and subject matter experts such as hydrologists and geotechnical engineers.

The lifting of evacuation alerts and orders should be shared widely through multiple communication methods.  All parts of the recovery team should be advised of reaching these milestones.  For properties where the lifting of evacuation orders is not possible, an issues manager should be delegated to keep working on resolution of those files until they are brought to some for of resolution. For example, a home at risk of land subsidence will require additional support, but efforts must be made to close the file on behalf of the RDCO and the affected residents.

**States of Local Emergency**

The state of local emergency should be cancelled as soon as is possible. However, where some homes remain at risk and the evacuation order is required for those specific properties, a state of local emergency specific to those properties in question should be created and should remain in effect.

The lifting of a state of local emergency should be advertised widely, as it has wide ranging impacts on the community, from vehicle registrations to insurance availability.

**Re-Entry Phase**

The re-entry to evacuated neighbourhoods must be coordinated carefully.   Neighbourhoods must be assessed for any hazards that the public should be aware of, including contamination, utility safety, road hazards and structural issues with buildings.

The significant re-entry of residents back into affected areas should be recognized as a major milestone, as it signals significant changes to the types of recovery support that will be required.

**Rebuild Phase**

The completion of the rebuild phase will not happen as a singular event, but rather, over a period of time where most residents will have returned to their homes, restoration and repair will be largely complete, and the needs of the community will switch largely to unmet needs and other forms of assistance.

The completion of the rebuild phase should be recognized and the recovery team may wish to recognize the return of some sense of normalcy with some form of community recognition such as an event to recognize the resilience of the community and the support of the volunteers and NGOs.

# Recovery Finance

A RDCO staff member is leading the recovery finance section. The primary role for this person is to ensure prudent financial practices related to expenditures, procurement, and cost tracking for role up into the recovery reimbursement process as enabled through the Emergency Program Act and EMBC. The Recovery Finance Section Chief utilizes existing RDCO financial systems and practices.

Given the size and complexity of the event, substantial additional workload has been placed on a limited staff. Accordingly, additional staff will be required to backfill to maintain the daily financial operations of the RDCO.
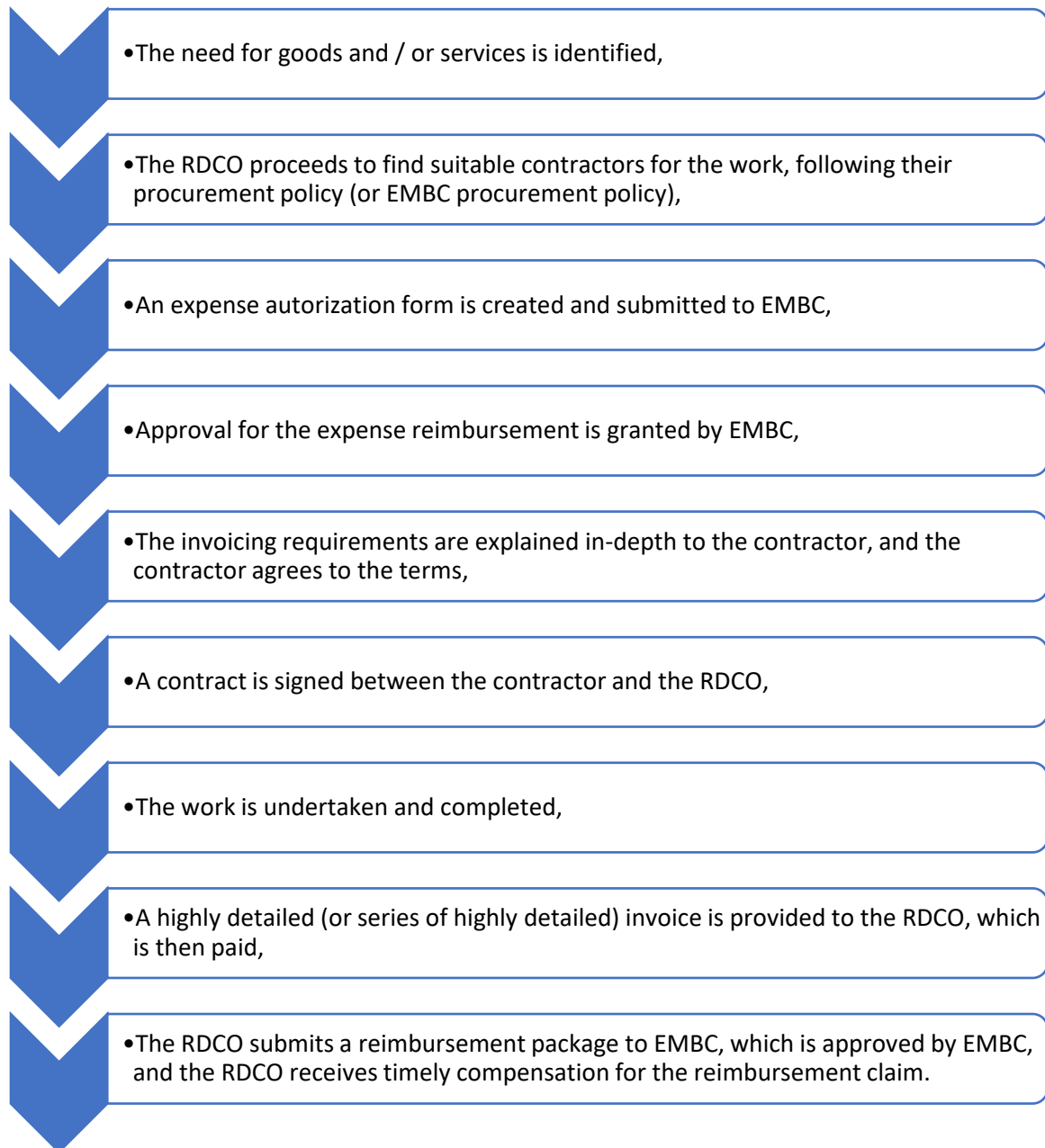
The *Recovery Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations (2019)* provided by Emergency Management British Columbia identifies the requirements for cost recovery submissions and provides examples of what it may consider eligible as response and/or recovery costs. The onus will be on the recovery team to identify what costs are eligible under which scheme, and submit through the EMBC expense authorization form process.

All recovery cost reimbursement submissions should be backed up by:

- Approved expense authorizations forms (including whether the expense will be compensated at 80% or 100%)
- Any RFPs or RFQs
- Quotes from contractors or service providers
- Contracts, agreements, and purchase orders
- Supplier invoices
- Staff time sheets and ledger reports demonstrating that any approved overtime has been paid out directly
- Any supporting documentation that demonstrates payment such as proof of cleared cheques or electronic funds transfer, ledger reports from the RDCO financial accounting system etc.

Recovery reimbursement requests can be submitted once approved costs have been paid. There is no requirement to wait until recovery activities are complete to submit a reimbursement package.  Best practices include weekly, bi-weekly or monthly submissions.

The expense authorization / contract / project process should look like this:

- The need for goods and / or services is identified,

- The RDCO proceeds to find suitable contractors for the work, following their procurement policy (or EMBC procurement policy),

- An expense autorization form is created and submitted to EMBC,

- Approval for the expense reimbursement is granted by EMBC,

- The invoicing requirements are explained in-depth to the contractor, and the contractor agrees to the terms,

- A contract is signed between the contractor and the RDCO,

- The work is undertaken and completed,

- A highly detailed (or series of highly detailed) invoice is provided to the RDCO, which is then paid,

- The RDCO submits a reimbursement package to EMBC, which is approved by EMBC, and the RDCO receives timely compensation for the reimbursement claim.

## Funding Sources

Finding funding for recovery activities can be challenging. Generally, the Emergency Program Act will cover any extraordinary costs associated with the response activities. Basically, this should mean anything that is not a regular course of business for the RDCO. The Act is largely built around response objectives and there is some disagreement of who bears the responsibility for the funding of recovery (at the provincial level). The *Financial Assistance for*

*Emergency Response and Recovery Costs: A Guide for BC Local Authorities and First Nations (2008)* clarifies what are typical costs considered eligible for response and recovery, and the process for seeking approval and reimbursement for these expenditures.

At this time, all funding requests to the provincial government must be made to the local Emergency Management BC office (in Kamloops) using an expense authorization form. As there is no budget line item for recovery in the provincial budget, effort must be made to have recovery activities mirror response activity language. Where funding is not supported by EMBC, external sources such as non-government organizations may have some capacity. It is a challenge to identify all potential sources and secure funding.

The Emergency Program Act, Compensation and Disaster Financial Assistance Regulation (DFA) can make some financial assistance available to residents and small businesses but only for events that are not insurable. Because wildfire is an insurable event, the DFA program will not apply.

Some non-government organizations, such as the Canadian Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse and/or Mennonite Disaster Services may have programs that support personal and/or housing needs. There may also be opportunities within local faith based and/or service clubs. The Recovery Manager will need to explore these and other options.


## Recovery Staffing Support Requirements

The RDCO does not have enough surge capacity nor specific disaster recovery management expertise within its current staffing. Where possible and appropriate, RDCO staff will be assigned tasks within this recovery project. However, additional support will be required in terms of temporary backfill to help RDCO maintain its ongoing daily workload commitments, and contracted subject matter experts to provide specific services that don't exist within the RDCO. The RDCO is taking guidance from established and experienced municipal disaster recovery experts and these requirements are based on their recommendations. The RDCO is committed to utilizing the additional support staff only to the extent and period that they are required. The following positions have been requested through the EAF process from EMBC:

- **Recovery Consultants** – approved by EMBC $12,000
- **Recovery Manager** – Part time, approved by EMBC, $80,000
- **Debris Management Coordinator** –as required, declined by EMBC = $25,000
- **Finance Support** - 1 position x 12 months @ $45.38/hr = $82,600
- **Public Information Officer** - 1 position x 12 months @ $40.40/hr = $73,500
- **Communications Clerical Support** – 1 position x 12 months @ $60,938
- **Case Workers** - 3 positions x 12 months x $38.25/hr = $209,000
- **RDCO Environmental Planner** - 1 position x 12 months @ $42.67/hr = $77,600
- **Planning / GIS Coordinator** - 1 position x 12 months x $42.67/hr = $77,600
- **Recovery Team Administration Support** - 1 position x 12 months @ $30.37/hr = $55,200

- **Economic Recovery Coordinator** - 1 position x 12 months @ $42.47 = $77,600
- **Human Wellness Coordinator** - 1 position x 12 months @ $45.38 = $82,600
- **Insurance Advisor & Advocate** - ½ position x 12 @ $45.38 = $41,300
- **Building Inspector** – 2 positions x 12 months @$42.67 = $155,300

All rates are based on the RDCO Collective Agreement for equivalent positions. An additional 27% funding has been requested, in addition to base wages, to fund reasonable benefits (CPP, EI, Benefits, Pensionable Expenses).

## Additional Support Costs

The RDCO recognizes that there will be additional costs in operating a recovery organization. Specifically,
- Stationary & office supplies
- Advertising
- Technology

Also, the RDCO has investigated the use of a recovery management information system under a software as a service subscription model for the interim. Lightship Works is an automated system that significantly reduces staff time costs that otherwise would be manual processes, and forces accountability for tasks assigned. The RDCO believes there is a cost savings to be had. An expense authorization form has been submitted to EMBC for approval to engage on a one-year subscription, which was declined. Ongoing data management needs may result in a resubmission of this EAF to EMBC, if required.