

7 LEARNINGS

Disasters and disruptions provide an opportunity to learn and share experiences of what works well and what needs to be addressed to strengthen organisational capacity and capability to support community disaster resilience.

7.1 Disaster resilience

Disaster resilience is defined as the capacity of communities to prepare for, absorb and recover from natural hazard events, and the capacities of communities to learn, adapt and transform towards resilience.²⁰⁵ This Framework embraces the concept of “bouncing forward” after disasters; communities do not only return to their pre-disaster states, but instead grow, become closer and become **more resilient** for the next disaster. Learning is a key step in bouncing forward after disasters.

7.2 Data collection

Operational data collection throughout the preparedness, response and recovery phases is essential for advocacy at the state and federal levels through FCAWA and FCA, and to justify funding requests to DFES and DoC. Financial counsellors should track how they are engaging with their clients and the broader community across all three phases of disaster management.

Trackable data includes:

- the type of engagement: whether it's casework, community education, etc.
- the number of people engaged with
- the time spent on disaster management activities
- the type of support given
- evidence of outcomes achieved. This could be through case notes or testimonials.

7.3 Outcome measurement and evaluation

Alongside the tracking of outputs (activities conducted by financial counsellors around disaster management), the outcomes achieved are critical to capture. Measuring outcomes helps organisations and the sector understand the impact that the service is having. Outcomes can relate to changes in circumstances, behaviour, attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and skills as a result of the support received. Evidence of outcomes can be captured through case notes or testimonials, for example.

7.4 Identifying and addressing systemic issues

Service delivery insights collected across all phases of disaster management provides important learning and research opportunities to²⁰⁶:

- Identify and understand systemic issues and vulnerabilities
- Identify gaps in service delivery

²⁰⁵ <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-apr-2017-the-australian-natural-disaster-resilience-index/>

²⁰⁶ <https://www.naturalhazards.com.au/research/learn-about-our-research-themes/learning-disasters>

- Understand the behaviour of communities, private sector players and government entities across all tiers and knowledge before, during and after a disaster
- Explore the effectiveness of responses
- Test and trial new approaches and disaster preparedness plans

Issues that have emerged through data collection should be communicated to FCAWA so that they and FCA can address these at the state and federal levels to strengthen community and organisational disaster resilience. Systemic advocacy involves working for long-term social change to make sure legislation, policies and practices support the rights and interests of vulnerable groups.

7.5 Communicating and sharing learnings

Resilience is closely associated with good communication and learning dissemination, whereby mutual understanding, fostered by two-way communication, delivers both needed resources to communities, and intelligence regarding community needs to relevant agencies.²⁰⁷ Financial counsellors can play a key role by sharing disaster resilience learnings with the broader community, helping to convey a sense of hope that recovery is possible. Community organisations and disaster preparedness initiatives can help financial counsellors distribute their findings within the community reach more vulnerable groups, such as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities. Utilising community networks in sharing learnings has the added benefit of strengthening the ties of organisations and initiatives with the community, further adding to disaster resilience.

For more information on learnings management and sharing, see:

- [The importance of knowledge management for community organisations](#)²⁰⁸
- [Sharing an impact story that packs a punch](#)²⁰⁹

7.6 Building the financial counselling sector's capacity and capability

The financial counselling sector has a strong role to play in supporting communities to become better prepared for disasters. Through its activities, the sector can help to increase understandings of disaster risk among community members and organisations. Financial counsellors can be part of broader efforts to build resilience by fostering connections and strong partnerships that lead to improved collaboration and coordination of disaster preparedness and response efforts. Strengthening the capability and capacity of financial counsellors around disaster preparedness, response and recovery will help to bolster this and create a culture of continuous learning, collaboration and sharing, help to make a more disaster resilient WA.

²⁰⁷ <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-jan-2012-the-resilient-community-and-communication-practice/>

²⁰⁸ <https://communityimpacthub.wa.gov.au/learn-from-others/insights/101-the-importance-of-knowledge-management-for-community-organisations/>

²⁰⁹ <https://communityimpacthub.wa.gov.au/learn-from-others/insights/101-sharing-an-impact-story-that-packs-a-punch/>