

Disaster Response

Connect, Collaborate, Consider, Communicate

Field experts have learned a great deal about disasters in the past few decades, changing the ways grantmakers and others engage in disaster work.

Both individual donors and small-staffed foundations are well positioned to respond effectively to disasters. Why? Among other reasons, they are flexible to leverage funds. Individuals can make quick use of their discretion in selecting a variety of charitable vehicles, and foundations with few or no staff can combine their flexibility with the public presence and permanence of an institution.

In either case, to be most effective in responding to a disaster, plan ahead, get sound legal advice, and consider the strategies outlined here. It is likely that disasters will increase in the future, making disaster relief a major issue and concern around the globe.



Terms

- **Disaster management**—This holistic response to disaster includes all phases of the response.
- **Relief**—This first phase of a disaster is intense but over quickly, usually within a few days. Survivors may immediately need rescue, food, shelter, or clothing to pull through.
- **Recovery**—The focus of this second disaster phase, which may last several months, is on setting up infrastructure to sustain the survivors.
- **Reconstruction**—This third phase lasts months or even years. Physical infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and hospitals, needs to be rebuilt, and human infrastructure needs funding for skilled providers.
- **Preparedness**—Preparing for disaster can minimize its impact. When making these grants, you might fund long-term community and economic development programs.
- **Prevention**—Some experts believe that disasters are the result of social, political, and economic factors, and that disasters can be prevented. To fund prevention, you might grant for conflict resolution, refugee assistance, or research on root causes of disasters.

For Your Consideration

Experts and experience have shown that the most effective grantmaking in response to a disaster follow the “**Four Cs**”:

Connect with a good source of information about the disaster. Local organizations are already at the scene, know best what is needed, and understand the complex political, social, and cultural context.

You might call on:

- The local regional association of grantmakers
- Local charities (or U.S.-based international aid groups)
- Governmental agencies working in the area

Collaborate with others. Do not act in isolation from other donors. Connect with:

- Peers in your community, including other foundations, like-minded individuals, and giving circles
- Local or international charitable organizations, such as churches or activist groups
- Larger grantmaking foundations or regional associations of grantmakers
- Government agencies

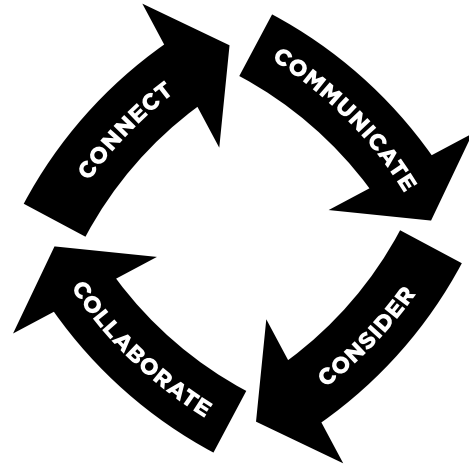
Consider the impact of your donations on the big picture and your vision for full recovery from the disaster. Think about what is needed in the short term and long term, which may include:

- Food, clothing, housing, and emergency medical treatment
- Counseling and family communication and reconnection
- Rebuilding schools, hospitals, roads
- Strengthening the capacity of local charities

Communicate and follow through by:

- Considering the ongoing needs of the recipient organization and community affected by the disaster
- Communicating the results of your work to friends, family, and community members
- Self-reflecting and evaluating the successes and missteps during the process

Exponent Philanthropy recommends following the “**Four Cs**” as principles to guide effective disaster response:



**QUESTIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS
OF SMALL-STAFFED *FOUNDATIONS***

Legally, it is easier to give to traditional U.S.-based charities in times of disaster. If you are making grants to traditional U.S.-based charities (including international intermediaries based in the United States), you should verify their tax-exempt status as you would with any other grant you make. Get sound legal advice before giving directly to individuals or other types of organizations, such as governments, businesses, or internationally based groups.

**ACTION ITEMS FOR
SMALL-STAFFED *FOUNDATIONS***

Take time to craft strategic policies in advance of a disaster; this approach can make it much easier for your foundation to know when and how to respond when a disaster strikes. The process can be as simple as having a conversation with your board or as formal as developing a written disaster relief plan that considers your mission, what you will fund, potential grant recipients, and likely partners. Such planning ensures confidence that you are in agreement about your actions should a disaster arise and improve the impact and effectiveness of your grantmaking.

**QUESTIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL
ADVISORS OF *INDIVIDUAL DONORS***

Legally, it is easier to give to traditional U.S.-based charities in times of disaster. If you are making cash donations to U.S.-based organizations (including international intermediaries based in the United States), you should verify their tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status and evaluate their track record of success in implementing disaster relief. Get sound legal advice from your financial advisor before giving directly to individuals or other types of organizations, such as governments, businesses, or internationally based groups. Explore all available options that would support your philanthropic efforts.

**ACTION ITEMS FOR
*INDIVIDUAL DONORS***

When disaster strikes, it is natural to feel compelled to immediately donate your resources in the most readily available avenue. But your donation is more likely to have greater impact if you plan ahead and give strategically. Take time to determine what kind of programs you want to support, your values, and priority areas you would like to influence during the disaster. Next, define the scope of your desired level of involvement. Whether you give directly through cash, a giving circle, or a donor advised fund, crafting an action plan in advance of a disaster makes it easier to respond when a disaster strikes.

Resources at www.exponentphilanthropy.org

Educational Programs Seminars, webinars, and conference calls.

Tools & Resources Articles, samples, and more.

Connections Peers and professionals with answers you need.

DISCLAIMER: Exponent Philanthropy cannot be held liable for the information provided in this tear sheet. We strongly encourage you to consult your attorney to ensure compliance with federal and state laws.