

Working Together in An Emergency

Social Sector Activation Guide



United Way
British Columbia

UNITED

for response & recovery

We recognize the communities in which we work

At United Way BC, we dedicate ourselves to fostering understanding, respect, and an acknowledgment of the rich histories of the lands and waterways we traverse. Our mission guides us across vast and diverse territories, each with its unique tapestry of languages, governance systems, traditions, and cultural heritage. The relationship with these lands and waterways has been stewarded by Indigenous communities since time immemorial, long before the establishment of contemporary boundaries, and we humbly recognize that many of these territories remain unceded.

We also acknowledge that the following list of Nations is a work in progress, a testament to our ongoing process of improving our learning and understanding. Our commitment is to honor the cultural distinctiveness of each community as we continue to pursue improved and lasting partnerships built on the foundations of respect, humility, and open dialogue.

There are 203 First Nations, 34 distinct languages, seven language families, and two isolated language families in the areas United Way BC serves, each with their own unique traditions, cultures, and history.

Respectful, reciprocal relationships with these communities and Indigenous Peoples means honouring and supporting Indigenous values and self-determination.

Humility, open dialogue, and continuous learning mark steps on the journey we embark on together to help heal the past and build better presents and futures. United we are building stronger, more equitable communities through education, economic mobility, and health resources.



Scan the QR Code

*to view the communities in
which we work*





Acknowledgement of Original Work

About the original guide

The original guide was created in response to the atmospheric river floods in November 2021. As a primary host community, Kamloops, located within the unceded Secwépemc Territory, was called upon to receive evacuees from surrounding areas. It was quickly identified that there were gaps when it came to hosting and helping the evacuees.

Acknowledging evacuees' intersectional vulnerabilities and increased needs, and in anticipation of future events, Emily Pletsch, Food Security and Emergency Response Coordinator with Kamloops Food Policy Council, with support from United Way developed a strategy to help support and guide host communities. After a year of community engagement and input, a guide was developed to provide a step-by-step process for how the social sector can effectively work alongside Emergency Support Services (ESS) during an activation to a large scale climate-related event.

The principal question that steers this work is: **To improve collaboration between non-profit agencies, Indigenous organizations, and government (municipal, provincial and federal), what systems or practices need to be in place, in order to enhance the collective community response during an emergency? (i.e., What is needed to provide localized, wrap-around services for evacuees and for those returning home?)**

Why the guide

Climate disasters have an increasing impact on communities in British Columbia. When communities are evacuated, they often relocate to nearby locations known as "Host Communities". When a host community is "activated," local Emergency Support Services (ESS) step in to provide immediate basic needs for evacuees. These critical services, such as food and shelter are essential for meeting one's immediate, basic life-supporting needs; however, for some, there may be unmet needs in that moment that may also require support.

As we know, humans are complex and may arrive in a host community with varying social, cultural, physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional needs. Social sectors, inclusive of charities, health authorities, frontline and outreach services to name a few, exist in communities to provide enhanced intersectional support for all demographics. This guide serves to create a structure for the social sector in host communities to provide holistic wrap-around support for evacuees alongside ESS.




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About the Guide

This Social Sector Activation Guide is a step-by-step guide that provides structure for a coordinated social response during an emergency. The goal of this work is to enhance local social sector coordination, increase service availability, and establish equitable emergency response practices within host communities.

“(C)oordination is of critical importance because it prevents confusion and conflict, reduces duplication and harmful gaps and supports the efficient use of scarce resources. In short, it can truly save lives. Therefore, coordination is not a goal. Instead, it is a process of collaboration to improve the quality and accountability of a humanitarian response.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Handbook for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Coordination, IASC, Geneva, 2022.

Who the guide is for

When communities are evacuated during an emergency, they often relocate to nearby locations known as “Host Communities”. This guide is for host communities and provides recommendations on how a local network of organizations in the social sector can organize themselves before and during an emergency event. When a host community is “activated,” local Emergency Support Services (ESS) step in to provide immediate basic needs for evacuees.

This guide is to be used by local ESS, community emergency response representatives, and social sector organizations that play a key role in emergency response in host communities. In this guide, the “Social Sector” encompasses community organizations and/or charities, Indigenous organizations, governments, local business and institutions working towards the health, safety, and welfare of all beings.

Objectives

The Social Sector Activation Guide is designed to:

- offer pre-event planning guidance for the social sector;
- create a structure for the social sector to respond alongside ESS during activation; and,
- improve equitable response practices and increase safety and service availability for evacuees during and post ESS.

What to expect in the guide

This guide includes information on the foundations of an equitable and socially focused emergency response, step-by-step recommendations for organizing the social sector before and during an event, a Social Response Task Force contact list template, a provincial resource guide, communication tips, a local resource guide template and information on the rationale and process behind the guide.

How to use this guide

You can adapt this guide to meet localized emergency response when developing a framework for your community. Distinct communities pre-plan and respond differently depending on the type of event, services available, and capacity at the time.

Step 1: An Impactful Approach

Build regional relationships & partnerships



Equitable emergency response approach

- Understand the desires & needs of different populations
- Build respectful relationships with communities
- Build relationships before an emergency
- Increase ability to respond in a holistic way
- Create an equitable & trauma-informed approach
- Foster cultural safety
- Connect with people coming from a different place culturally, emotionally, socially, physically, economically, spiritually, and mentally

Identify roles & responsibilities locally

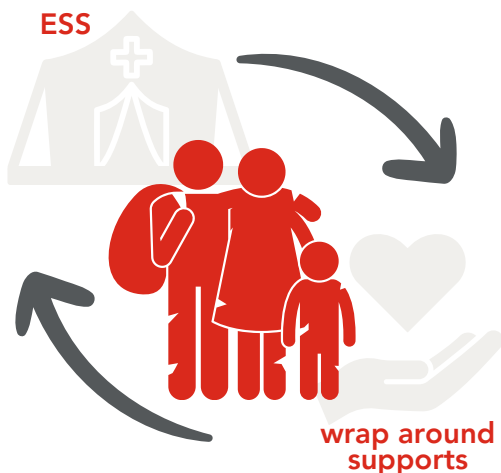


Establish a local social response task force

Step 2: Before an Event

- Establish a local Social Response Task Force
- Identify roles & responsibilities
- Create a Social Response Task Force contact list
- Identify local Social Sector Convener(s)
- Identify Ways to Support Disproportionate Impacts
- Identify funding opportunities
- Establish an external & internal communication strategy
- Learn about resources

Coordinated social sector response



Step 3: Upon Activation

- Implement Social Sector Resource Centre plan
- Contact identified Social Sector Convener(s)
- Connect with Community Navigator(s) from the evacuate community
- Host meeting with the Social Response Task Force
- Refer to Social Response Task Force contact list
- Assess funding needs and current capacity
- Activate external and internal communication strategy
- Apply for funding opportunities

Step One: An Impactful Approach

The impact is in the approach. Host communities can take many steps before an emergency to lay the groundwork to respond in a holistic way. Emergency response can be transformed to meet unique needs by establishing a foundation for this work rooted in relationality, safety, and equity.

* Relationships

Building respectful relationships with communities throughout the region is essential to this work. Community-based approaches can be taken to support evacuees in an emergency when hosts understand the desires and needs of arriving communities. Relationally we connect to those we know and trust. In building these relationships before an emergency, hosts can respond in an appropriate and holistic way.

Questions for reflection:

- Do you have relationships with communities that may be evacuated to your local community?
- Is the relationship reciprocal and based on mutual respect?
- Are you connected with other host communities that may require support or supplies when activated?

* Cultural Safety

A host community is a place of refuge for evacuees, fostering cultural safety is vital for creating spaces where all people feel respected and safe. This kind of work is a self-reflective and life-long process.

Indigenous people are disproportionately impacted by climate disasters. The history of colonization and its impacts on Indigenous communities is essential to know and understand within emergency response to take steps toward cultural safety. The concept of cultural safety asks: *“How safe did the service recipient experience an encounter in terms of being respected and assisted in having their cultural location, values, and preferences taken into account?”* (Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnership [ECDIP], 2022)

Questions for reflection:

- Are front line workers and volunteers fostering cultural safety?
- Do evacuees have access to their cultural means and practices?
- Do you have a foundational understanding of the history and impacts of colonization in Canada?
- What is the definition of “Emergency Response”? Does it include ‘cultural emergencies’?

“*Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic conditioned biases, and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a life-long learner when it comes to understanding another’s experience.*”

First Nations Health Authority

* Equity

Each person affected by these disasters will be coming from a different place socially, culturally, emotionally, physically, economically, mentally, and spiritually. An equitable approach to emergency response recognizes disproportionate impacts and works to meet the unique needs and intersections of every person.

Questions for reflection:

- Does your emergency response approach include voices and decision making by people disproportionately impacted?
- Does your local response include personnel and organizations that can meet and support complex needs?

* Trauma-Informed

A trauma-informed approach is critical during an emergency, as it is rooted in safety. This practice approach encompasses how to support those who may have previously experienced trauma and or are currently in a traumatic situation. Six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach include:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment, voice, and choice
- Cultural, historical, and gender issues

Questions for reflection:

- Are front line workers and volunteers trained in trauma-informed practice?
- How can your local response be more trauma-informed?
- How can physical spaces such as reception centres and gathering spaces be trauma-informed?

“Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level.”

Centre for Preparedness and Response



Step Two: Before an Event

This section provides recommendations for steps the social sector and local ESS representatives can take before an event to get the social sector more prepared for activation. **It is important to recognize it is not appropriate to ask local agencies what they can offer during an event.** Having this conversation prior and allowing time for local partners to identify what their capacity will be ensures respectful and clear communication, as well as an understanding of roles and responsibilities during a crisis. These are recommended steps that can be adapted and modified to distinct communities, each host community will have its own unique response.

1 Establish a Local Social Response Task Force

This is a group of representatives that will commit to coming together during activation. Indigenous community engagement and consultation should be an early step in the establishment of the task force, and when activating. Depending on the host community size and services available, representatives can include:

- Members from other communities in the region
- Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR)
- Emergency Support Services
- First Nations' Emergency Services Society
- Municipal Government
- Chief and Council
- Regional District
- Friendship Centre
- Delegated Indigenous Agency
- BC Housing
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- United Way British Columbia
- Health Authority (Emergency Support and Mental Health)
- First Nations Health Authority
- Provincial Health Services Authority (Disaster Psychosocial Support)
- Indigenous Organizations
- Housing Organizations
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Organizations
- Faith Based Organizations
- Senior Services
- Disability Services
- Food Bank
- Animal Protection Organizations
- Accommodation Organizations
- Local Community Services (mental health, emergency shelter, food security, substance use, family services, language and cultural support, child care providers etc)

2 Meet with the Social Response Task Force

This will help identify roles and responsibilities. Clearly outline roles and what each organization can provide during an emergency.

- Prior to “disaster season”, host a roundtable meeting where each organization can share what they see as their role in emergency response. It is recommended to give organizations advanced notice they will be asked to publicly identify their role in localized emergency response. This is what will form the content of the social response task force contact list
- Also recommended are annual reviews of localized content including practice scenarios or trainings to allow everyone to know the process and ensure clarity around roles and responsibilities before an event.

3 Create a Social Response Task Force Contact List

The contact list should include organizational roles in an emergency. (See Appendix A)

It is recommended that the contact list be reviewed and updated bi-annually, having an up-to-date contact list is key for an effective response.

4 Identify Local Social Sector Convener(s)

A Social Sector “Convener” is a local representative that will call upon the Social Response Task Force when evacuees are arriving to the host community. The Social Sector Convener is the communication person between local ESS, Community Navigator(s) from evacuated communities, and the Social Response Task Force. It is recommended the Social Sector Convener has knowledge of ESS procedures and local reception sites.

Prior to an event, it is recommended that the Social Sector Convener works closely with local ESS and builds relationships with surrounding communities.

If possible, it is recommended the Social Sector Convener include this role within their work or organizational portfolio to assume responsibility and availability during an event.

5 Identify Ways to Support Disproportionate Impacts

Climate-related events deepen inequity, consider the ways community members face systemic barriers and what supports can be provided to make services more equitable. Consider the unique cultural and historical needs of Indigenous communities.

- What could individuals be facing when arriving to the host community? (ie. physical disability, mental health challenges, substance use, language barriers, cultural needs, low income etc) Are members of your local Social Response Task Force able to support these community members? How can services be adjusted for greater accessibility?

6 Identify Funding Opportunities

It is recommended that local ESS and the Social Convener work closely with their regional EMCR representative before an event to learn about funding opportunities that may be available during an event to support the social sector response. (See Appendix B for past funding examples).

7 Establish an External and Internal Community Strategy

- How will your host community get information to evacuees?
- Does your community or municipality have a designated communications person?
- Where will this information be available online and in person?
- For external communication, United Way BC Helpline Services offers live call, text, and webchat services that empower people by providing information about local programs and supports. Learn more: <https://bc.211.ca/>
- How will your local Social Response Task Force communicate internally during activation?



Step Three: Upon Activation

This section provides recommendations for steps the social sector and local ESS representatives can take during activation to have a more coordinated social response. Each community response will be dependent upon the level of activation. The emergency management representative for an impacted community should identify the social sector convener to implement next steps upon activation.

1 Contact the Social Sector Convener

Contact the Social Sector Convener and share information on the evacuated community. Information shared may include: where the reception centre will be located, where evacuees are arriving from, when they are arriving and any available information on the communities population and needs (responsibility of local ESS).

- The Social Sector Convener should try to receive as much information as they can about the evacuees, this may include being in attendance at initial response meeting with EMCR, members of the evacuated community and local ESS.

2 Contact the Local Social Response Task Force

Contact the local Social Response Task force and share the location of the reception centre and any available information on evacuees (responsibility of Social Sector Convener).

- The Social Response Task Force will be contacted via email to meet with the group as soon as possible. **Recommended subject line "Emergency Response Meeting Call - Social Response Task Force"**

3 Host Meeting with the Social Response Task Force

Host a meeting with the Social Response Task Force and local Emergency Support Services/Emergency Management representative.





4 Local Social Response Task Force Organizes Themselves Alongside ESS

Local Social Response Task Force organizes themselves alongside ESS and coordinates their response depending on needs and services available, initial tasks include:

- Connect with Community Navigator(s) (or other representatives) from the evacuated communities to better understand the population and their needs.
 - During activation, it is the responsibility of local ESS, the Social Sector Convener and/or other identified organization(s) to communicate with the evacuated community and respond in a collaborative way that best meets the evacuees needs.
- Refer to Social Response Task Force contact list for roles of different social actors and services available. (see to Appendix A).
- Assess funding needs and current capacity of organizations to respond.
 - What additional support or capacity may the social sector need to respond? What funding is available? Can the local government apply on behalf of the social sector? Can the evacuated communities apply for funding to support the response in the host community?
- Activate internal communication strategy among the Social Response Task Force.
 - This may include an internal group chat or online group and scheduled meetings times etc.
- Activate external communication channel to share up-to-date resources with evacuees. (see Appendix C & Appendix D).
- Apply for funding opportunities if applicable. (see Appendix B) Work closely with local ESS and EMCR to access funding opportunities to support the social sector response within the host community.

Appendix A:

Social Response Task Force Template

Organization	Contact	Position	Email	Phone	Secondary Contact	Role & Services in ER
United Way BC	First Name, Last Name	Position	email@ uwbc.ca	111.222.33 33	email2@ uwbc.ca	Kamloops Social Sector Convener, Call for response and recovery fund, Support response coordination, BC211, iVolunteer
City of Kamloops	First Name, Last Name	Position	email@ kamloops.ca	111.222.33 33	email2@ kamloops.ca	ESS team hosts the reception centre and offers short term, basic, life-sustaining supports to evacuees while they are ordered from their homes during an emergency which may include lodging, food, clothing and incidentals etc, Establish plan for resource centre location, Contact Social Sector Convener upon activation
Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc	First Name, Last Name	Position	name@ ttes.ca	111.222.33 33	email2@ ttes.ca	Provide ESS services during evacuation events, Hosting evacuees with RV's and Tenting at Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, Hosting livestock at nearby ranch
Mount Paul Community Food Centre	First Name, Last Name	Position	name@ cfc.ca	111.222.33 33	email2@ cfc.ca	Space (gathering, donation, coordination), Two kitchens, Garden space, Meals, food hampers, Volunteers

Appendix B: Resources & Recommendations

Information on Emergencies & Evacuations in BC

Emergency Info BC:

<https://www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca/>

BC Fire Service:

- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/wildfire-situation>
- BC Wildfire Service Mobile App
- BC Wildfire X: @BCGovFireInfo

First Nations' Emergency Services Society - Emergency Updates and Information

- <https://www.fness-eoc.ca/>

Regional District, Municipality or Community

- X
 - Webpage
-

Funding Opportunities (based on past examples, please check for current opportunities)

- Emergency Management Financial Supports: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/local-emergency-programs/financial>
 - United Way BC: <https://uwbc.ca/>
 - Canadian Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.ca/>
 - The Salvation Army: <https://salvationarmy.ca/>
 - Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements: www.publicsafety.gc.ca
-

Building Emergency Response Capacity

- Emergency Management Resources- Community Preparedness: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/local-emergency-programs>
- First Nations' Emergency Services Society - Preparing for an Emergency: <https://www.fness-eoc.ca/get-prepared>
- iVolunteer: <https://www.ivolunteer.ca/>
- Health Emergency Management BC - Mental Health and Wellness Recovery Toolkit: <http://www.phsa.ca/health-emergency-management-bc-site/Documents/Mental%20Health%20and%20Wellness%20Toolkit%20July%202021.pdf>
- Canadian Centre for Safer Communities, Toolkit for Equitable Emergency Management: <https://ccfsc-cccs.ca/what-we-are-working-on/>

Indigenous Resources

Crisis & Support

- KUU-US (Indigenous) Crisis Line: 1-800-588-8717
 - Métis Crisis Line: 1-888-638-4722
 - Phone Counseling (Indigenous) - Hope for Wellness: 1-855-242-3310
 - National Indian Residential School Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419
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First Nations Healthy Authority

- <https://www.fnha.ca/>
 - FNHA Virtual Doctor of the Day: 1-855-344-3800
 - Medical Office Assistants are available seven days per week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 - <https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/virtual-doctor-of-the-day>
-

Cultural Safety

- Principles of Cultural Safety: <https://ecdip.org/cultural-safety/>
- Cultural Safety in Emergency Support Services: <http://haznet.ca/cultural-safety-emergency-support-services/>

Health & Wellness Resources

- BC211: <https://bc211.ca/>
- Healthline
 - Call 8-1-1
 - <https://www.811healthline.ca/>
- Crisis and Support Numbers
 - Interior Crisis Line Network: 1-888-353-2273
 - Suicide Crisis Line: 1-800-784-2433
 - Provincial Mental Health Supports: 310-6789 (no area code)
- Canadian Mental Health Association: <https://bc.cmha.ca/> , <https://bcdisasterstress.ca/>
- IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-force-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-emergency-settings/iasc-guidelines-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-emergency-settings-2007>
- MHPSS International Movement Hub: <https://mhpsshub.org/>

Appendix C: Communications

Each host community will have a different communications plan depending on the evacuee's needs and the resources available. It is highly recommended to have centralized communication and appointed personnel during activation to ensure the right information is getting to evacuees. Some helpful communications strategies can include:

- Hiring a communication personnel that works with both ESS and the Social Response Task Force
- Adding new and up to-date resources to BC211
- Up-to-date local resource guide (print and available on the web)
- Online social media groups
- Webpage or live feed on local ESS website

Questions for reflection:

- Are evacuees getting the information they need?
- Can the social sector get information to evacuees?
- Do evacuees know about local resources and supplies available?
- Are changes to resources being updated regularly?
- Who is responsible for updating and sharing information?
- Are any other languages needed?

See our [Resources & Recommendations Appendix](#) for more information.



Appendix D: Local Resource Guide Template

Emergency Support Services (Case Management) and First Nations Emergency Support

- Emergency Support Services (ESS Registration Location)
- First Nations' Emergency Services Society
- Emergency Information
- BC Red Cross
- Salvation Army

Local Community Services

- BC211
- Family Supports and Services
- Indigenous Organizations
- Social Service Agencies (Localized needs-based services)
- Animal Agencies

Food Security

- Food Bank
- Community Meal List/ Calendar
- Food Security Organizations

Mental Health & Wellness Supports

- Regional Health Authority
- First Nations Health Authority
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Local Mental Health and Wellness Services

Crisis Line 24/7 Phone Support

- Interior Crisis Line Network: 1-888-353-2273
- KUU-US (Indigenous) Crisis Line: 1-800-588-8717
- Métis Crisis Line: 1-888-638-4722
- Phone Counseling (Indigenous): Hope for Wellness 1-855-242-3310
- Suicide Crisis Line: 1-800-784-2433
- Provincial Mental Health Supports: 310-6789 (no area code)

Emergency Shelters

- Local Shelters
- Transition Houses
- Safe Houses



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