

Health & Social Services Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

12:30 PM – 2:00 PM | JUNE 13, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 3:00 PM on June 13, 2023, Troy Churchill, Branch Lead, convened the Health & Social Services Branch meeting with the following members present:

- Troy Churchill, Branch Lead
- Dawn Belamarich
- Maria Espinoza
- Dana Begley
- Tom Felke
- Stefanie Ink-Edwards
- Jeannine Joy
- Jorge M Quinonez
- Julie Ferguson
- Angela Katz
- David Brown

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Jon Romine, Collaboratory
- Ilani Fernandes, Hagerty Consulting
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Jon Romine, Branch facilitator, provided a review of the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and Branches. Mr. Romine reviewed the timeline for the RTF, emphasizing the move to Phase Two of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (the Plan).

He noted that the purpose of the meeting was to:

- Review Workshop sessions and key outcomes;
- Review and validate potential Initiatives; and
- Discuss what Initiatives require a Technical Brief.

Recovery Task Force (RTF) Updates

Mr. Romine reviewed the work of the Recovery Task Force from the previous month, including discussions around Neighborhood Master Plans, Community Engagement, and the submissions of projects through the Project Intake Form.

Workshop Feedback

Mr. Romine provided an overview of the Recovery Task Force Workshops and Initiatives that were identified in those sessions. He summarized each session and thanked Branch members for attending and participating in the Workshops.

Initiatives Feedback

Mr. Romine provided a review of the Priority, Initiative, and Project form data so the Branch members could synthesize the solutions.

Mr. Quinonez started the discussion on the importance of mobile health. He asked about the staffing needs and stated that the units would serve in both emergencies and longer-term health needs. He stated that during Hurricane Ian, there was an inability to communicate with partners, such as the United Way. He stated that mental health issues are in short supply and there are not enough services. Florida is one of the lowest in the nation for funding services for mental health.

Members discussed the importance of having resilience hubs and mobile health units during gray and blue-sky days. Members suggested that the Branch build out Initiatives to operationalize the services that can be available during a crisis, including transportation.

Members suggested having a hardened facility that was centrally located that could serve as a nonprofit hub similar to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The Members also discussed the local 2-1-1 hotline and the barriers of transporting community members in need of services.

Members suggested having an Initiative centered around building and tracking information for nonprofits and service providers to better understand services and gaps, including asset

mapping. They suggested having a hardened facility that could be used during blue-sky days for community members to access health and social services.

Members also discussed the need for a culture and paradigm shift to reduce the stigma of mental health resources. This could include a strong community approach to embed counselors and resources for easier accessibility through partnerships.

Members highlighted the importance of sheltering special populations during emergencies and stated that hardening critical infrastructure for existing healthcare facilities has been a challenge. It was suggested that identifying sister facilities and having an agreement in place can ensure that hospitals are not overwhelmed by post disasters. This could also include hardening senior centers and other facilities that can be used year-round.

Members expressed the need to improve the planning process of transporting vulnerable populations to and from shelters. This includes educating the public to empower them to go to a shelter. It was stated that families with children with special needs would not choose to utilize a shelter after having a bad experience.

Mr. Romine confirmed that the plan would include a communication strategy for implementing the Initiatives discussed.

Branch Technical Briefs

Mr. Romine explained the development of Technical Briefs, Branch Action Plans, and Initiatives for the development of the Plan. He reminded the Branch Members that the Initiative form is open until July 1, 2023.

Questions and Next Steps

The next Branch meeting is scheduled for July 11, 2023, from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM.

Public Comment

There was no request for comment.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Romine thanked the members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 4:18 PM.