

Lee County Recovery Task Force Community Resilience Workshop

Session 2 – Meeting Minutes

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM | JUNE 8, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | ARTS AND CULTURE

Call to Order

On June 8, 2023, the Workshop facilitators, Tessa LeSage and Lee Mayfield, convened the Community Resilience Workshop: Arts and Culture at 11:05 AM with the following panelists present:

- Roger Mercado
- Celeste Fournier
- Sharmaine Lopez

The following Branch members were present

- Dan O'Berski
- Maria Espinoza
- Marco Villalobos
- Jennifer Hagen
- Dr. Mike Martin
- Troy Churchill
- Therese Everly
- Janel Trull
- Lee Ford
- Angela Katz
- Laura Siebenmorgen
- Trish Lassiter
- Sandy Stillwell Youngquist
- Frank Bonafilia
- Chris Simoneau

Workshop Topic Discussion

The facilitators asked how arts and culture institutions can become a more formal part of the effort to reliably provide services during disaster response and recovery. The panelists suggested the following:

- Assessing the staff or resource needs for the response and recovery, following a disaster; and
- Identifying what each organization brings to the table to figure out where they fit in the overall program.

The facilitators then asked what the role could be, from a mitigation perspective, to take care of the resources key to the community. The panelists suggested the following:

- A more formalized plan from the get-go;
- Identifying ways to tap into the arts community and assets that must be repurposed after a disaster; and
- Looking to the arts community as a service option for a physical space for post-disasters.

Ms. LeSage stated that if synergies are made regularly, it does not have to feel catastrophic. She asked how to invest in non-profits. Mr. Mercado stated that funding is an important component; the County wants to be program-outcome based. Therefore, it would take looking at partnerships and leveraging them. He suggested a universal application for community centers and non-profits.

Ms. Wardein asked if there was a pathway to rethinking staffing as an asset under circumstances. Mr. Mercado highlighted the need to assess the capacities of non-profits after Hurricane Ian, especially strong structures in place that can be tapped into following a disaster.

Mr. Ford asked about the role faith-based organizations can play. Ms. Fournier said there is a collection of faith-based organizations in the Emergency Management Department.

Ms. Everly asked what is needed for non-profits. Mr. Mercado and Ms. Espinoza emphasized a stabilized funding for arts and cultural organizations.

Ms. Hagen stated that the Yacht Center was a hub for Cape Coral but might soon be demolished. She expressed the need to recognize the value and heart of the communities, and the impact, resources, and ability for the community to show up in spaces that were not there before. She then asked how to assess the value and history of a town that was built around a building that was meant for bringing people together. Ms. LeSage followed

up by asking if there were actions the County region should take to cultural institutions and their assets, and who would be involved with this decision. The panelists and members suggested the following:

- An annual check or test of needs prior to a hurricane;
- Creating a tailored plan that can be revisited to get stakeholders to talk through scenarios;
- Identifying funding for small organizations;
- Working with the community to identify where resources are available;
- Creating an inventory of outreached organizations;
- Asset mapping of the community;
- Having mandatory emergency management plans submitted alongside applications; and
- Looking at organizations and institutions (such as United Way and FGCU) for data.

Ms. LeSage asked how to build efficiencies. The Branch Members and facilitators suggested the following:

- Identify communities and networks already in place (such as Costar);
- Looking at other functions and entities that function during disasters;
- Encouraging arts and culture to help bring a sense of normalcy to the area;
- Working with non-profits and other organizations to get buy-in and filling in any gaps; and
- Offering non-profits (such as SalusCare) a seat at the table for such conversations.

Mr. Mayfield said it will take more than one person to oversee the connection of all non-government organizations (NGOs). He suggested an exercise of mapping inventory to figure out who the stakeholders are.

Dr. Martin and Ms. Hagen suggested utilizing universities to cross-pollinate and to start the conversation between the workforce and academics.

Mr. Churchill asked if there were requirements in place for non-healthcare facilities. Ms. Fournier stated that there were none, unless they were federally, or state regulated. She said each organization should make a planning effort to incorporate a continuity of operations plan. This would include a breakdown of how to provide services the community is expecting, including healthcare and payment for staff. She stated that mitigation planning can help show potential weaknesses.

Mr. Churchill asked if there are resources or funding for hardening or assessing facilities, and how they can be tapped.

Mr. Mercado stated that this would come out of emergency management. Ms. Fournier stated that the logistics in emergency management accounts for a regional and state-wide inventory. Mr. Mayfield suggested that collaboration be improved upon. Mr. Mercado stated that some of the organization occurs organically, while some things are structured. The EOC can promote the information as it receives it.

Ms. Espinoza suggested having one centralized place for resources. Mr. O'Berski suggested the idea of investing the resources to identify what people can donate or give.

Mr. Villalobo stated that one of the biggest obstacles has been communication. He suggested having hubs to let the community know beforehand of resources. Mr. Mercado stated that the County is working with stakeholders on a broadband program.

Ms. Trull expressed that her organization was not communicated with directly but was utilized as a space for people to be housed after the Hurricane.

Next Steps and Questions

There were no next steps or further questions discussed.

Public Comment

Betsy Haesemeyer stated that unless there is an incentive, an emergency plan will not happen. She stated that training is critical, if staff are available, and the importance of knowing one's role during an emergency.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Ms. LeSage and Mr. Mayfield thanked all members and panelists for their participation. The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 PM on June 8, 2023.