Introduction

Economic resilience and recovery go hand in hand because recovery is not linear; it’s a process, and while you are in response or recovery mode for one economic disruption, you may be planning to mitigate the impacts of another. Given California’s severe weather and ever-present risk of earthquakes, fires, floods, and other potential economic disruptions, state and local government leaders have to include risk assessment, preparedness, mitigation, resilience, response, and recovery as part of their regular work. In particular, economic developers and their networks are charged with reducing economic risk by becoming first responders for our local businesses before, during, and after a disaster or a downturn — making them an experienced resource to assist with risk assessment, resilience planning, and recovery.

Why Communities Invest in Economic Development

With this in mind, the U.S. Economic Development Administration provided funding to the California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED) to create the Economic Development Recovery and Resiliency Playbook, a guide for jurisdictions to help ensure a more resilient community in the face of economic disruption — regardless of the cause.

Economic development is the creation of wealth from which community benefits are realized. It is more than a jobs program, it’s an investment in growing your economy and enhancing the prosperity and quality of life for all residents.

Scan below to learn more and read the Economic Development Recovery and Resiliency Playbook:
Economic development efforts must be intentional, strategic, and focused on your community’s unique needs. Goal setting is critical to an economic development strategy so everyone participating in the process has the same vision of what success looks like, along with the metrics to benchmark progress. Goals create a baseline for measurement, allow the community to progress toward recovery, and help define what resiliency looks like. Economic development goal setting should be an ongoing, measurable process that is constantly evaluated.

Including underserved communities is critical to the strategic planning process and to creating economic resiliency. Establish and foster strong partnerships with all community members and stakeholders. Their help is essential in determining important goals that are relevant to the entire community. Agencies and organizations that have built trust with local underserved residents can act as liaisons to ensure representation and equity.

### Be Strategic: Clearly Define Your Economic Goals, Before and After a Disaster

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### 8 Considerations for Goal Setting

1. **Assessing Geographic Assets and Vulnerabilities**
   - A community’s geographic assets can present both benefits and vulnerabilities for increasing economic resiliency and improving community recovery from economic disruptions. Each community’s unique characteristics should be factored into disaster planning because they play an important role in the community’s ability to recover from disaster-related economic losses. Benefits may include a community’s unique features that contribute to its economy and attract tourism, such as recreation areas, agricultural products, historic sites, and special events. Vulnerabilities may include the community’s ability to access services and resources, its ability to coordinate with other neighboring jurisdictions and stakeholders, and the climate-driven impacts unique to the community.

2. **Understanding Your Economic Base Through Cluster Analysis, Business Size, and Supply Chains**
   - Data points are an essential foundation that inform economic development strategies, policies, implementation actions, and other responses. Useful data include employment forecasts, cluster analysis, supply chain data, and more. Data can potentially show how economic disruptions might disproportionately affect industry sectors with greater concentrations of small businesses or diverse racial/ethnic ownership patterns. Analyzing the characteristics of business ownership and size can offer a useful baseline for assessing inclusion and equity. Economic base data, cluster analysis, supply chain information, business development information, and other locally derived data each provide a different part of the big picture. The resiliency perspective examines how a community can better leverage its locational advantages or safeguards against economic downturns or impacts on individual businesses or industry sectors. Having a broad understanding of the economic base provides context for a recovery process as well as to points where the impacts from economic events can have indirect effects in other areas of the economy. Understanding how the different parts of the economic base work together also helps to identify areas of strength in the economy that can assist in the recovery process.

3. **Examine Infrastructure Systems, for Resilient Communities**
   - Planning and strategizing requires understanding your community’s infrastructure needs, the connection between economic development and infrastructure, status of current infrastructure, ongoing potential deficiencies, and needed improvements.
   - Structural infrastructure includes roads, bridges, the electrical power grid, water, and wastewater treatment. Because successful businesses require adequate infrastructure services, a community’s infrastructure status is critical; however, both structural and social infrastructure must be in place to improve a community’s economic wellness. Key social infrastructure systems include broadband services that can deliver internet access for all residents; adequate, safe, and affordable housing; equitable access to transportation services, child care and pre-school education; and access to health care services.

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5. **Engaging Businesses Before, During, and After Disruption**
   - While an economic development strategy, planning, and outreach are the foundations of economic resilience and recovery, the work of implementation requires directly engaging with businesses. Mid- to large-sized businesses typically have more resources and can pivot faster and more easily when faced with an economic disruption; therefore, economic developers and state and local governments focus on assisting the more vulnerable small businesses.

### Conclusion

 Economic developers are at the center of economic recovery and resiliency. As the boots-on-the-ground professionals charged with assisting businesses, they can inform policy makers and local leaders on what is needed to create an environment where employers can thrive. Economic development helps increase revenue to a jurisdiction, so it can provide the services, amenities, and quality of life that residents desire. The Playbook uses these concepts to provide tools, tactics, case studies, and resources for communities responding to or preparing for an economic disruption.

In addition, the Playbook shares how to recognize and embrace your community’s diversity in the ongoing implementation of economic development. Your residents, workforce, and businesses make your community unique. This uniqueness, along with values and culture, will help define what your community needs in recovery and in ongoing resilience planning.

Although we cannot always predict or avoid economic disruptions, being strategic and planning for resiliency will better prepare your community to meet future challenges caused by economic disruptions and will position it for a faster recovery.