# Evaluating disaster recovery programs

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In 2012, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed recommendations to improve the methods and the evaluation of payments made for disaster recovery efforts.

The *Review of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Relief and Recovery Payments*, prepared by the National Emergency Management Committee, made several recommendations to improve the effectiveness, transparency and targeting of relief and recovery payments. All recommendations were endorsed by COAG, including three that provide national consistency in the assessment of recovery needs and the evaluation of recovery effort, being:

- an agreed national definition of a 'severe event'
- a framework for a nationally consistent measure to collect and record data on the severity of an event
- a measure to assess the effectiveness of disaster recovery programs.

Progress on these recommendations has resulted in two national measures; the National Impact Assessment Framework and the National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

## The National Impact Assessment Framework (NIAF)

The NIAF was established to enable a national consensus on the severity of severe events. It provides high-level guidance to ensure consistency in impact assessments that are conducted in the immediate aftermath of an event. The National Impact Assessment Model (NIAM), which records impact data, is a component of the NIAF.

The NIAF provides:

- an overview of when to use the NIAM
- possible characteristics of a 'severe' event
- how the NIAM uses impact data to generate an event severity output
- guidance regarding the type of qualitative contextual information that could be included
- an overview of elements to consider when embedding NIAM into jurisdictional arrangements.

The NIAM is used to assess the severity of an event and its impact. Events are categorised as 'insignificant', 'minor', 'moderate', 'severe' or 'catastrophic'. The model uses quantitative data and qualitative data to produce an impact assessment. Jurisdictions can enter impact data by local government area against 50 impact indicators, which are aggregated into four established recovery domains (social, built, economic and environmental).

In the long term, the data from the NIAF will assist in understanding the impact on communities and the landscape of disasters and how communities can recover from disaster events.

## The National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (NM&E)

Effective evaluation of recovery programs is critical to identifying approaches and programs that lead to better recovery outcomes. The newly developed NM&E Framework is a recent initiative that will provide information and evidence that can used to build our understanding of the effectiveness of disaster recovery initiatives and to use that information to improve the effectiveness of the investment of money and resources in both mitigation and recovery.

The NM&E Framework is described in more detail in the following article. Essentially it:

- provides a common definition of 'disaster recovery'
- supports monitoring and evaluation plans for recovery interventions
- articulates nationally developed, uniform, high-level recovery outcomes
- provides a suite of indicators to monitor and measure the effectiveness of recovery interventions.

The NM&E is being trialled following current disaster events, and learnings will be used to refine the framework. All jurisdictions will be involved in workshops to discuss the capabilities needed to use the framework.

The NIAF and the NM&E are being used to improve the understanding of the types or recovery interventions that create resilient and sustainable communities in Australia.

*Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs 2011* is at www.knowledge.aidr. org.au/media/1779/a-monitoring-and-evaluation-framework-for-disaster-recovery-programs.pdf