

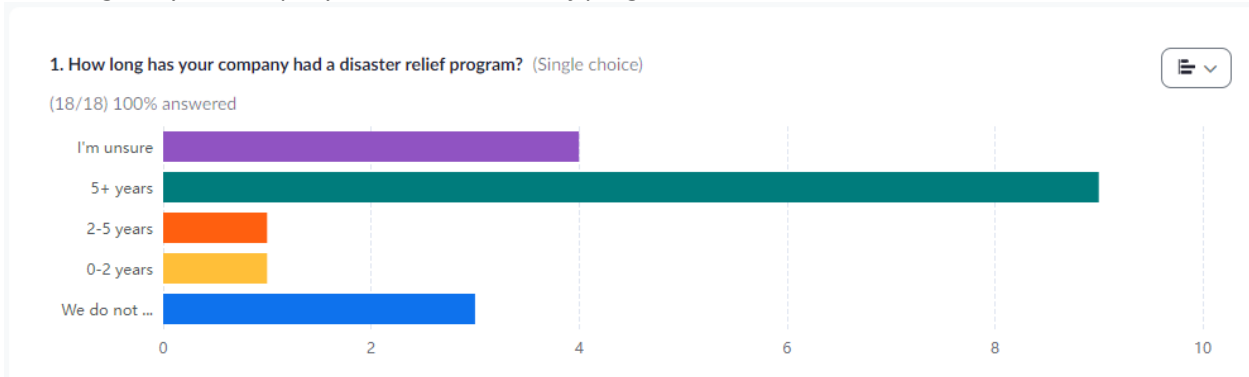
Member Meetup: Disaster Relief/Resilience Strategies

August 28, 2024

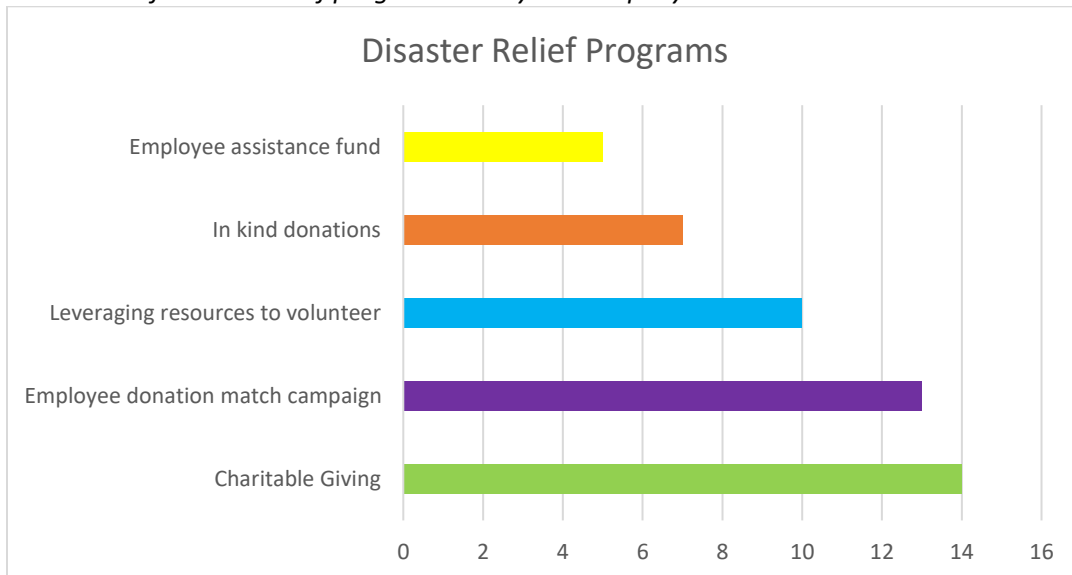
Polls:

The meeting began with a brief poll to gauge participants' experience levels with disaster relief initiatives. The results revealed a mix of seasoned professionals and those new to the field, providing a balanced foundation for a discussion where diverse insights could be shared.

How long has your company had a disaster relief program?



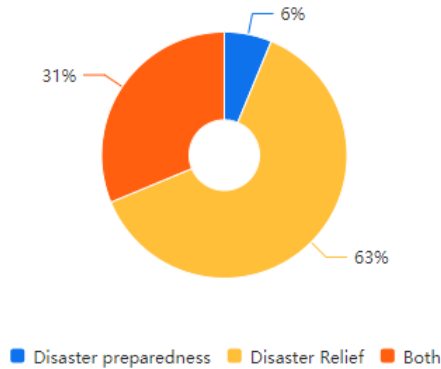
What kind of disaster relief programs does your company run?



Does your company work on disaster preparedness, disaster relief, or both?

3. Does your company work on disaster preparedness, disaster relief, or both? (Single choice)

(16/18) 89% answered



How do you decide which non-profit partners to work with? (Short answer responses)

- **Historical context**
- **Military affiliation/support**
- **Local Community Organizations**
 - POC-run Local Community Groups
- **Reputation**
- **Tax implications**
- **Global reach**
- **Effectiveness** of using funds and **Visibility** into where funding will be directed
- **Research/recommendations**
- **Employee's choice** of nonprofit

Background Information:

The August 2024 Member Meetup focused on corporate strategies for disaster relief, highlighting various approaches to the different stages of disaster management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

One organization discussed its focus on the response phase of disaster relief, which was influenced by its urban environment and its role within a larger network of companies. Their disaster relief framework has evolved over the past few years, moving from a basic philanthropic approach to a more comprehensive strategy that includes both community and employee support.

Another organization presented a broader approach, addressing multiple stages of disaster relief, with a strong emphasis on ensuring continuity of care and improving health outcomes. This organization prioritizes flexibility and responsiveness, relying on a global network of trusted partners and emphasizing local capacity-building as a key component of its strategy.

Analysis:

The importance of these disaster relief strategies lies in their ability to address both immediate and long-term needs within affected communities. Companies that decide to focus on the response phase are positioned to make the most of their resources, ensuring that their efforts are targeted where they can have the greatest impact. Building resilience within communities is another effective strategy for those working in disaster relief. By addressing preparedness and recovery, this strategy allows companies to help build lasting positive impacts in the communities they serve. Focusing on local capacity-building is particularly crucial as this helps communities become more self-reliant and better equipped to handle future disasters.

Challenges, Solutions, and Strategies:

One of the main challenges addressed in this Member Meetup was the ability to balance available resources with broader organizational priorities. All companies who engage in disaster relief are faced with the decision of when and where to focus their efforts, and this is of further significance in densely populated or economically diverse areas. Developing clear guidelines for disaster response can help with the decision-making process, ensuring that the company is focused on the right situations to step in, both from a financial and operational standpoint.

Another challenge lies in maintaining flexibility while ensuring that efforts are effective and culturally appropriate. One strategy for navigating this is to use pre-established funding mechanisms that allow for rapid response to less-publicized disasters or to fill gaps in ongoing efforts. Additionally, it remains essential to work closely with local partners, who know the community best, to help inform decision-making. By working with these partners, companies can help build long-term capacity while ensuring their efforts remain impactful and sustainable.

Actionable Steps:

1. **Assess and Define Focus Areas:** Identify which phase(s) of disaster relief—mitigation, preparedness, response, or recovery—your organization is best equipped to address based on your resources and strategic objectives.
 - a. Create a list of criteria for when to respond, for example:
 - i. A certain number of colleagues are affected
 - ii. Is the disaster of significant magnitude or extraordinary that it warrants response?
 - iii. Are business operations hindered?
 - iv. What is the impact in local communities?
2. **Build and Maintain Trusted Partnerships:** Build a diverse network of trusted partners with expertise in various regions to ensure flexibility and effectiveness in your response efforts.
 - a. It's important to plan ahead with potential partners. Onboarding vendors and getting them established in payroll can be time consuming, so having a list of pre-registered vendors can be beneficial in the event of a disaster.
 - b. On company shared their list of trusted partners:
 - i. Direct Relief, Red Cross, The Salvation Army, International Medical Corps, Heart to Heart International, Outreach Aid to the Americas, Team Rubicon, ASPCA, Water Mission, World Central Kitchen.
3. **Localize Efforts Where Possible:** Focus on building local capacity to ensure communities are better prepared to respond to disasters independently, thereby enhancing resilience and supporting long-term recovery.
 - a. Consider funding your existing partners who have access to local organizations with boots on the ground. This helps in the response and recovery phase of disaster relief.
 - b. Build a network of local responders in a certain geographic area who can respond locally or mobilize to assist others in the region.
4. **Communicate and Document Decisions:** Transparency in decision-making processes is key to managing expectations and ensuring alignment within the organization. Sharing the rationale behind disaster relief efforts with employees and stakeholders can foster stronger commitment and support.
 - a. Adding more criteria to your decision-making process can restrict your flexibility. Instead, consider communicating your disaster relief efforts through the company intranet. Be prepared to justify your relief efforts when questioned such as writing articles and posting them online.

Further Resources:

[Blog | Community Resilience, Disaster Relief & Disaster Resilience](#)

Community resilience is a broad and multi-faceted concept. It focuses on how communities can withstand and positively adapt to changes caused by major trends or events. Climate change, economic downturns, urbanization, pandemics: these are all factors that can stress a community—exacerbating income gaps, compromising healthcare access, accelerating pollution, just to name a few examples. Natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, and wildfires are also growing risk factors. So, when it comes to community resilience, *disaster* resilience is one key piece of the larger, overall pie.

[Magazine Article | Helping Communities Prepare for and Respond to Crisis](#)

This article explores the immediate and long-term community needs to help populations rebound from a traumatic event or natural disaster, as well as best practices for developing disaster relief and preparedness strategies.

[Webinar | Fostering Community Resilience](#)

Natural disasters are on the rise in the communities in which many employees and suppliers live and work. Many companies support community recovery following a disaster, but more companies are beginning to address disaster relief before the disaster strikes through community resiliency programming.

[Issue Brief | Disaster Preparedness, Relief, and Recovery](#)

Helping communities rebound from a traumatic event or natural disaster requires multilevel and cross-sector effort. There are immediate needs to be met—such as trauma support, and, in the case of extreme weather events, food, water, and shelter—as well as long-term needs to support development. In order to quickly and efficiently deploy corporate resources, corporate citizenship professionals must partner internally and externally to make the best possible use of all available resources, from corporate giving and volunteering to security, logistics, and supply chain management.