

Thank you very much, good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to share some experiences about engaging Latinos in emergency management. In my presentation I will first talk about a couple of resources available that facilitate this engagement. And, will end the presentation with the model to show the effectiveness of partnerships and resources to facilitate engagement is the voluntary agency liaison. The voluntary agency liaison or the VAL is the person between stakeholders and emergency management. At the federal level, there are Spanish-speaking VALs in most of it not all Spanish-speaking regions the particular from the Caribbean area division at region 2. These VALs are willing to play to Latino Communities when needed. They play key roles during each mission area. During the prevention of preparedness the voluntary agencies and capacity building, identify active disaster relief agencies, their assistance and resources and serves as a facilitator to enhance the relationship between emergency management agencies, private, nonprofit community and the private sector.

---

During the response, the VAL identifies and assists in the coordination of services of local, state, territorial, tribal, national, private, nonprofit, and international agencies and organizations responding to the disaster. It serves as an information conduit for internal and external partners. This includes governing partners at all levels as well as private voluntary organizations. It also provides guidance to the community for managing unsolicited donated goods and unaffiliated volunteers and supports coordination of mass care and emergency assistance.

---

During recovery, assist in the information of long-term recovery groups and strategies. Assist in identifying, quantifying and validating recovery needs, assist in identifying disaster unmet needs and help avoid duplication of benefits. And during mitigation phase, it promotes awareness of disasters and locations and provides advice for implementation of the mitigation strategies among other actions.

---

Not every state has a state VAL but as I mentioned earlier, there are FEMA regional VALs in HP merit region in Hawaii and Puerto Rico. FEMA regional VALs are supported by headquarter unit located in Washington DC, but also provides program support for field operations and the management of unsolicited donated goods and unaffiliated volunteers.

---

Another important resource for this engagement is the voluntary organizations active in disaster or VOAD. There is a VOAD in every state and territory. VOAD is the primary resource used by voluntary organizations, emergency management and business partners to exchange and share information, to network and coordinate activities with each other before, during and after a disaster. This results in less duplication and better interagency cooperation. The national organization produces reference materials for planning execution for organizations, disaster release -- with the operations the more information is available in the VOAD website.

---

In the last few slides I would present the Puerto Rico model of engagement. Puerto Rico has 78 counties or municipalities which the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico divided in 11 zones represented by different colors on the map. The Puerto Rico state emergency management agency has its own directors in charge of the emergency management processes in each zone. Each zone has an average of seven municipalities. This is also a local emergency management director in each municipality.

---

Puerto Rico has a state VOAD that supports the establishment of long-term recovery groups and 70 of the 77 municipalities. Long-term recovery groups or LTRG for short, or GRALPs, its Spanish acronym-- is a grassroots organization to identify, provide management support to disaster related unmet need of affected families. Most of the VOAD and long-term recovery group member agencies decided to remain active throughout the year and collaborate in all mission areas. The VOAD share has as an emergency operations center. Accordingly, long-term recovery group coordinators have a seat at the respective municipality emergency operations centers. To facilitate effective communication and coordination, it was decided to follow the ICS structure which at the same time, the state emergency management organization, explained earlier.

---

As a result, there is a volunteer, long-term recovery group coordinator for every zone and a long-term recovery group general coordinator for the Island. This facilitated the strengthening of formal partnerships between voluntary agency leadership and governmental officials at all levels and has fostered coalition building and interagency collaboration in each long-term recovery group coordinator with their corresponding local emergency director, strong bonding. There is long-term recovery group coordinator for each zone, which works in effective partnership with their corresponding Puerto Rico emergency management agencies. And there is a long-term recovery group general coordinator who works in partnership with the state VOAD chairman and the Puerto Rico emergency management agency's operations officer.

---

Currently, the long-term recovery groups are developing three pilot projects of community mapping. These pilot groups are in the process of conducting an in-depth area assessment to identify vulnerabilities and strengthen their respective municipalities, implement strategic plans and develop applicable courses of action for the next disaster relief operation. Upon completing the pilot project, lessons learned would be applied to other long-term recovery groups in the Island. Another project is the community recovery group, CRG, which is the neighborhood or ward organizations, working together to facilitate effectiveness in communication, cooperation, coordination and collaboration among them. CRGs Are the smaller of the long-term jurisdiction enabled leadership, assets and resources are identified to develop a self-sustaining community. This completes my portion, of this agenda. I would now be followed by Mr. Freddy Zelaya and Mr. Steven Pollio to present other examples. Thank you.