

UTILITY RECOVERY

FINANCIAL SERVICES

MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

FUNDING ALTERNATIVES

GRANTS MANAGEMENT

RECOVERY LEADERSHIP

RESOURCE LEVERAGING

UTILITY RECOVERY

FINANCIAL SERVICES

HELPING CLIENTS REBUILD FUTURES



disaster recovery solutions



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Meridian Community Services Group, Inc. and Government Services Group, Inc. have assembled a team of renowned disaster recovery experts with true experience at ground zero. Our team includes local managers, funding consultants, utility professionals and financial management experts.

Combined, we offer state and local government clients a wide array of on-demand services in their time of greatest need.

Our unique experience makes GSG a perfect partner for communities in the midst of disaster recovery.

We bring a transformational perspective to the community recovery process.

Read on to find out more about how we can help you rebuild the future.





OUR DISASTER RECOVERY PHILOSOPHY

After Hurricane Andrew destroyed 80,000 homes in south Florida, numerous experts across the country, including local, state and federal officials attended a strategy session coordinated by Dr. Ralph G. Lewis, a member of our consulting team. The issues this group identified over 13 years ago are still relevant today:

Emergency events and disasters generate extraordinary conditions among individuals and the social systems they affect.

Emergency events and disasters place unique burdens—some new, others expanded—on existing decision makers and service delivery systems.

Because they have the potential for significant negative consequence, emergency events generate a sense of urgency and a concern for action.

The negative consequences of emergency events may be mitigated or exacerbated by the decisions that are made about them and the manner in which decisions are implemented.

Communities tend to ignore issues related to disaster recovery and redevelopment.

When we consider disaster recovery, we tend to focus on restoration as opposed to renewal (transformation) of the affected areas and communities.

Disaster recovery events tend to ignore the human dimensions (the social fabric of the community), and to focus on factors such as the built environment and economic development.

Lessons learned from many natural disasters such as Hurricanes Hugo, Andrew and the infamous four-hurricane season that Florida experienced in 2004 gave the team of experts unique experience to provide assistance to state and local governments recently impacted by natural disasters. We can help by developing both immediate and long-range responses to the recovery of these areas.

DISASTER RECOVERY RESOURCE COORDINATION



Most state and local government resources are stretched to their limits even before disasters occur.

During a recovery effort, the challenge of providing normal day-to-day local government in these communities

is overwhelming, not just in terms of ability to respond, but in terms of ability to plan and make decisions for the future.

The Disaster Recovery Services team brings together some of the nation's leading experts in resource management. Post-disaster challenges include infrastructure rebuilding, fiscal management, long-range financial planning and community outreach.

PROJECT EXAMPLES

Our team members were involved in the following post-disaster efforts that demonstrate our skills applicable to recovery and redevelopment efforts.

>> **Creation and implementation of the Coordinated Hurricane Andrew Recovery Team (Project CHART)**, a multi-jurisdictional effort charged with developing long-term recovery plans for the area of Miami-Dade County affected by Hurricane Andrew.

>> **Development of emergency farm worker housing.** This project was a short-term response to the need for farm worker housing immediately after Hurricane Andrew. We coordinated the acquisition and development of 60 acres of land and acquisition and installation of 500 mobile homes in less than 90 days.

>> **Construction management of hazard mitigation program.** We managed a FEMA-funded program that ensured new county construction contained hazard mitigation building components.

>> **Advice for real estate appraisers working with sudden market changes related to catastrophic events.** Our



team developed written guidance to real estate appraisers nationwide on how to apply uniform standards for professional appraisal practices in specific situations.

>> **Development of quality assurance plan.** We developed a methodology and quality assurance plan with strategic internal management controls to oversee contractors that maintain, inspect, market and sell HUD single-family homes.

>> **Operation rebuild.** Team members developed a housing rehabilitation program utilizing federal and state funding after hurricanes that included managing volunteer contractors, processing grant applications, monitoring expenditures and meeting reporting requirements.

>> **Local project management for a Miami-Urban area security initiative (UASI).** A multi-year \$50 million Homeland Security Project that involves working with the Office for Domestic Preparedness, Florida Department of Emergency Management, Region 7 of the State Domestic Security Task Force, Miami-Dade, Broward, Monroe and Palm Beach counties, the respective municipal jurisdictions and public safety agencies within to provide planning, training, equipment and exercise for domestic security.

>> **Process management for FEMA reimbursements.** Members of the team are experienced in reviewing and processing of post-hurricane reimbursements, including Miami-Dade County reimbursements for Hurricanes Andrew (1992), Charlie (2004) and Ivan (2004). We were responsible for reimbursement requests for all services with specific instances with fire and rescue personnel costs and repair in addressing over 100+ facilities. These efforts remain in place today for Hurricane Charlie and other storms encountered in 2004 by Florida communities.

>> **Building code compliance review and implementation.** We assisted local staff responsible for the review and revisions of the South Florida building code.

FISCAL RECOVERY



Marshaling resources to ensure the continuity of services post-disaster is one of the most immediate challenges facing state and local governments.

Our Disaster Recovery Services team consists of numerous experts that provide direct assistance and support in all aspects of the ongoing responsibility for the financial management and administration of state and local government. This area of expertise is segregated into two sections.

GRANTS MANAGEMENT

We provide all the necessary services to communities to ensure that grant planning and administration service needs are met within the time frame allowable for application preparation and program administration. Our track record with communities assures our understanding of the scope of services—and we get the job done.

Every community must focus on critical infrastructure rebuilding and recovery efforts during a time of crisis. As funding becomes more and more scarce, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive strategy so that clients are awarded the maximum allowable grant and low-interest loan dollars available. Creating a team of experts that can maximize the recovery for all allowable costs under disaster declarations is a cornerstone of our success.

Our team introduced to the industry the concept of strategic grant planning through leveraging. We give our clients the greatest possible access to grant/loan dollars and then leverage those programs against one another to maximize the benefit and minimize the burden to the client. Through creative leveraging, multi-sourcing and strategic planning, our clients receive millions of dollars in grant and loan funding to address critical needs in all areas of disaster recovery.



Specifically, team members were involved in the following post-disaster efforts.

>> Prepared the grant reimbursement programs for Charlotte County, Florida in 2004 and 2005. This includes CDBG Disaster Recovery Application, CDBG Emergency Set-Aside, Home Again Program and FEMA PA Assistance. Our project team currently works with Charlotte County to administer the county's CDBG Emergency Set-Aside and Home Again programs for housing rehabilitation and replacement. In addition, our staff is developing an additional joint application with Charlotte County and the City of Punta Gorda. The services provided included PA worksheet development and coordination with state and federal funding agencies to ensure that all programs and construction are done in strict conformance with the federal guidelines.

>> We currently manage a \$7.5 million CDBG Disaster Recovery Program in Monroe County, Florida. Coordinated through the City of Key West, we provide all services necessary to rehabilitate both single-family and multi-family storm-damaged units. Our staff is responsible for all aspects of the program including program compliance, financial tracking, recipient coordination, construction oversight, etc.

>> Over \$30 million recovered to date for DeSoto County for FEMA PA assistance, the Home Again Program, CDBG Disaster Recovery application and CDBG Emergency Set-Aside. In addition, we helped DeSoto County research and obtain additional funds to address all disaster related needs, which is included in PA worksheet development, coordination of state and federal funding agencies, funding research, application, development, program administration, construction inspection and construction management.

>> City of Punta Gorda, Florida. The county seat of Charlotte County was one of the hardest hit communities in Florida in 2004. We assisted the City of Punta Gorda in its Home Again Program, FEMA PA assistance and CDBG Disaster Recovery applications.

>> FEMA training. We worked on behalf of the Florida Department of Community Affairs and the Florida

Institute of Government to conduct a series of training workshops for local governments on disaster recovery protocol and prepared manuals the communities used to maximize their federal disaster recovery grants.

FINANCIAL SERVICES



Our team of consultants provide the grants management expertise necessary for fiscal recovery. We can provide actual onsite accounting and budgeting support on an interim or long-term basis.

We currently provide financial management, budgeting and accounting support to numerous local governments in the southeast. This includes the actual preparation and maintenance of all accounting information, budget preparation and monthly financial reports.

As part of these services, we provide all capital improvement program planning, budgeting and accounting. This is a critical component to any recovery after a natural disaster. Even though hundreds of millions—if not billions—of recovery dollars flow into affected communities, every federal dollar has extensive “strings attached.” Experience has taught us that the time spent collecting FEMA recovery dollars is usually overshadowed by the time spent making sure those funds are spent in strict compliance with federal requirements.

Members of our consulting team were in Charleston, South Carolina for over four years following Hurricane Hugo. We spent the first year making sure the community maximized its available federal dollars. Over the remaining years, we made sure the community was not required to return any of these dollars as a result of post-disaster audits.

Our clients not only meet or exceed all state and federal reporting requirements, but they are recognized nationally for excellence in accounting and financial reporting.

Our project team currently provides contract accounting



and financial support services to a multi-jurisdictional statewide water authority serving 26 different facilities and a population of over 100,000. This includes preparation of a five-year capital improvement program and a five-year operating budget each year. As a result, clients meet the long-range financial plans, minimize rate increases and maximize service delivery.

We provide detailed financial analysis for \$500 million of bond issues and have developed over 500 major capital improvement programs.

HOUSING RECOVERY



In recent years, Floridians have experienced series of hurricanes that devastated many parts of the state. Thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed or damaged, and storm effects left a lingering footprint on cities and counties statewide. In some communities, wind and rain pummeled historic downtowns and erased a century of progress. Turn-of-the-century brick warehouses and stores were smashed—and with them the economic livelihood of local proprietors, their employees and the community at large.

The storms hit housing stock especially hard, from mobile homes and condominiums to single-family residences. Thousand of rental units, both public and private, were left uninhabitable. No type of housing was unaffected. Those hardest hit were renters whose homes were destroyed, uninsured homeowners, and underinsured homeowners. Local infrastructure was damaged as well. From the obvious, like brush and debris accumulation, to the not-so-obvious, such as sand filling in drainage pipes, damage was widespread.

In response to the disasters, communities across the state received substantial Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocations for housing and infrastructure recovery. While Florida's cities and counties welcomed the generous CDBG assistance, many were concerned about the administrative requirements of the program. Hiring and training large numbers of additional staff to implement a short-term disaster recovery program is not the best option for local governments, and existing local staff can be overwhelmed in the wake of disasters. That's where our team can help.

We are experts in the design and delivery of housing rehabilitation programs and project solutions. We have built a reputation across Florida in implementing hous-



INFRASTRUCTURE RECOVERY



ing rehabilitation programs utilizing programs such as HOME, SHIP, and CDBG. We have also worked extensively with disaster programs across Florida, meeting stringent timetables while working with elderly and disabled homeowners. Every staff member that works in the field has years of programmatic and construction management experience and is able to meet the needs of state and local government and its citizens while maintaining compliance with regulations at every level. We offer a full-service consulting group that works within the framework of state and local government to enhance the delivery of disaster recovery and housing services. The Meridian/GSG Team offers:

>> A full-service approach that gives our staff the capability to assist through all phases of a disaster recovery program, including project development, program administration, construction management, document control and regulatory compliance.

>> An established method of managing disaster recovery programs, especially housing.

>> A full housing staff, including inspectors, program assistants, construction professionals, financial experts, and administrators.

>> A proven track record that includes the rehabilitation or replacement thousands of single-family and multi-family units.

>> A staff accustomed to working within the parameters of the state and federal programs.

>> A team that includes former staff from the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Most of the communities affected by a natural disaster find the task of managing multiple projects challenging, both at the government and the community levels. Our consulting team is made up of professionals with over 75

years of experience in managing multiple capital projects. Our project management team consists of certified construction managers and professional engineers who work with local governments, engineers and contractors to ensure that:

>> Proper accounting for all contracts are maintained,

>> Engineers that are retained by the local government are managed in a professional and timely manner,

>> All projects are completed on time and within budget, and

>> As construction moves forward, projects are done in accordance with the contract.

We have extensive expertise in the organization, structure and procurement of engineers and contractors to accomplish all of the capital improvement projects necessary to rebuild communities.



COMMUNICATION SERVICES



Communities facing recovery from natural disasters must deal with many conflicting issues—many of which they've never dealt with before.

From emergency information to vital community services, local and state governments

must disseminate their messages quickly and accurately even in the midst of emotional upheaval.

Cultural and social networks, the social fabric that is shredded during a time of crisis, is one of the most important elements to repair in the community. We understand this need and have experience in dealing with the human side of the recovery effort. Our team of communication consultants are well-versed to address the full spectrum of needs facing recovering communities, including:

- >> Crisis communication
- >> Community networking/rebuilding
- >> Transformational visioning
- >> Social marketing
- >> Public relations

We can help local governments get vital messages out to a public in need and in search of leadership and control during a time of crisis.



LEADERSHIP

LISA BLAIR is the President and owner of Meridian Community Services Group. With her extensive experience with state and federal funding programs, she directs and coordinates the company's grant research, grant writing, grant management, grant support coordination, and all other grant services. Ms. Blair has expert knowledge and abilities in grant research, grant writing, grant planning and development, and grants administration. She has successfully written and managed over \$50 million in community-based grant projects. She has extensive knowledge of procurement, environmental and management guidelines, which are crucial to a successful grant project.

ROBERT SHEETS, the CEO of Government Services Group, has project management experience in directing disaster recovery teams for Hurricanes Hugo, Andrew, Charlie and Ivan. Florida's late Governor Lawton Chiles hired Mr. Sheets and his disaster recovery team to review and evaluate the state agencies' preparedness and ability to respond to the fiscal recovery after Hurricane Andrew. As a result of this analysis, Florida became one of the most recognized governments in the nation in its ability to coordinate and actively maximize and leverage federal dollars.

The team's experience also was utilized after the event to make sure that the dollars received under the presidential declaration for Hurricane Andrew were fully realized. In addition, the project team worked with the communities for a number of years to ensure that the dollars spent were done so in strict compliance with all of the federal regulations, which minimized audit exceptions.

MERRETT STIERHEIM is the team leader for our Disaster Recovery Services. He is responsible for helping state and local governments utilize the expertise of individuals with extensive experience in helping communities rebuild and recover after a natural disaster.

Merrett Stierheim is formerly the County Executive of Miami-Dade County, City Manager of Miami and recently retired as the Superintendent of Schools for Miami-Dade County. In addition to Mr. Stierheim's extensive executive director experience, he is nationally recognized as one of the top leaders in local government.



GRANTS MANAGEMENT

RECOVERY MANAGEMENT

FISCAL RECOVERY

INFRASTRUCTURE
RECOVERY

COMMUNICATION
SERVICES

The partnership of Meridian and GSG brings a full-service staff experienced in all aspects of federal funding and disaster recovery. Our professionals offer the advantage of full-service combined with a proven track record of service.

**Call us at 888-877-1908 or
866-896-4747**

www.MeridianCommunitySolutions.com or
www.govserv.com



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