

## Summary: Post-Sandy Funder Briefing--Series II

**Funder Briefing:** #3

**Date:** September 23, 2013

**Topic:** Long Term Recovery Issues and Strategies

**Speakers:** **Joseph Della Fave**, Executive Director - Ironbound Community Corporation;  
**Wesley Moore**, Chair - Middlesex County Long Term Recovery Group;  
**Linda Gyimoty**, Executive Director - United Way & Ocean County Long Term Recovery Group

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### **HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **Essex Long Term Recovery Group (formerly Ironbound LTRG) – Joseph Della Fave**

- Unanticipated surge of both the Passaic River (a [Superfund](#) site) and Newark Bay sent water into the mixed industrial/residential Ironbound Neighborhood of Newark, decimating housing projects (350 units) and over 100 family homes, also drowning one worker on site.
- Newark's Ironbound Neighborhood is a vulnerable community because of existing environmental impacts including the state's biggest incinerator, a Superfund site with the largest concentration of dioxin in the country, and a large low-income and undocumented population
- No emergency preparedness or LTRG existed prior to storm. The [Ironbound Community Corporation](#) (ICC), along with a few other partners, started the Ironbound LTRG in response to the damage, with a focus on Newark. The group just became Essex County LTRG and will now also provide county-wide services. [Newark Salvation Army](#) is fiscal sponsor for Essex LTRG.
- Because Newark was not a focus in the media, getting [CDBG-DR](#), [Blue Acres](#) and [Hurricane Sandy NJ Relief Fund](#) has been challenging
- Immediately after the storm ICC provided hot lunches and dinners in the projects for 200+ families for 2 weeks, then began recovery work
- We are the only recovery group that has dealt with this kind of industrial environmental impact
- 700+ FEMA applications from Ironbound alone
- Undocumented people in our community have not sought federal support
  - Emergency food, replace clothes & furniture, rental assistance, mortgage assistance, medical care, not being sought by undocumented people, many of whom were without power for months afterward because they were afraid to contact the government for help
  - FEMA, as a subgroup of Homeland Security has the HS logo on it and scared many people away from applying.
- ICC / Essex LTRG helped to provide new boilers, rehabilitation to houses, still need to rebuild some
- Continue to case manage 50 families or so and try to restore stabilization to community
- The ICC had pushed for current 12-acre waterfront park that is adjacent to neighborhood, which acted as a significant buffer and mitigated damage to the businesses across from it. Impervious surfaces caused huge damage in other areas.
- Mitigation, resiliency and planning measures need to be put into effect. The Essex LTRG is working with city and others on new possibilities for designing and building, along with new zoning possibilities, how to

transition people who have lived there for generations out of that neighborhood to protect them for the future

### **Middlesex County Long Term Recovery Group – Wesley Moore**

- Middlesex County currently has 20,000 FEMA applicants
- The Middlesex LTRG started in April 2013 - director, associate direct, 2 case managers, 2 resource specialists, construction coordinator
- Any unmet needs less than \$5000 are approved by director; anything above that requires a meeting of the LTRG Unmet Needs Committee.
- Middlesex LTRG works with financial assistance partners to see what they can give to help individuals. If a gap still exists, then our LTRG commits its money to cover the gap. CDBG-DR in Middlesex - now that this money will be available, LTRG will be able to focus its resources more about rebuilding.
- Initially, most unmet needs included household items, bedding furniture and clothing, and rental, mortgage and utility assistance. Now unmet needs are in construction areas and therefore requests are now in excess of \$15,000-\$25,000. To date those requests have been met.
- Developed “Resource List” of licensed and insured contractors with disclosure to give to clients
- Challenges with reaching undocumented - less than 25 undocumented people have been assisted so far, even after trying to simplify the application process.
- Senior population is now coming to seek assistance - they didn’t think government was going to help them, so they didn’t try to seek assistance earlier.

### Challenges:

- No one thought of funding preventative items, but we received requests for sump pumps, generators, tree removal, etc. [NJ VOAD](#) agreed we should consider these items and we encourage partners to consider that, as well.
- Blue Acres buyouts program: in Sayreville 129 homes are slated for buyout, Woodbridge and South River also under consideration by Blue Acres.
  - We are seeing a number of families who originally placed their names on the buyout list are now seeking assistance from the Middlesex LTRG. In order to provide them with any money toward property development/repairs we would require them to remove themselves from buyout list. Currently 10-15 families have come off the Blue Acres list in order to receive assistance from us. Emergency unmet needs can still be requested (food, clothing, etc.) if they remain on the Blue Acres list.
- Mental health - We refer clients for outpatient therapy

### **Ocean County Long Term Recovery Group (OC LTRG) – Linda Gyimoty**

- 60,000 Ocean County households applying to FEMA for support
- Currently, United Way is the fiscal agent for OC LTRG
- It’s surprising how long it's taking for some of the cases to come to the table - some of the lag in cases coming in were about pride - after so many months pride isn’t as much of a barrier now.
- We hold monthly community meetings, bi-weekly steering committee meetings, 140 volunteers, 90+ agencies still involved
- Currently in process of incubating a separate organization solely dedicated to the recovery
- Funding has come from the [Robin Hood Foundation](#), [Hurricane Sandy NJ Relief Fund](#) - brought in about \$2.9 million initially, and we have been able to mobilize new dollars through an [American Red Cross](#) grant.
- Still in relief stage - doing a lot of the case management. Originally planned for 4 staff, but quickly realized we needed more case managers because of sheer volume

- Undocumented communities
  - undocumented populations will seek services from agencies they know - usually culturally specific ones instead of government representatives
  - Encourage undocumented people to come see us with the case managers from the agencies the undocumented ARE speaking to. We've also offered to send an LTRG case manager out to them - not a lot a movement yet on this but we hope there will be more.
  - Only one member of a family needs to be documented to access FEMA services
- Reaching and assisting the senior population in Ocean County (1 in 5 is 65+): as much as 40% of population affected by storm fall into this demographic. Electronic communications are not as effective - radio is proving more effective, newspaper, etc. Looking to hire more case managers with expertise in working with seniors
- If homes have not been fixed and raised, or have been abandoned, those structures can become an issue for structures that HAVE met the new rebuilding requirements when a future storm strikes.

**What we've learned:**

- Substantial assistance required documentation for insurance claims and government assistance, but release of government funds is slower than anyone anticipated
- People need assistance right upfront to learn how to gain access to the federal dollars - funding from private dollars to help make that happen has a great impact
  - By not having an LTRG right away, assistance could be delivered quickly because they could cut through the bureaucracy
- Cost of elevating homes: people feel like they have to wait for the appeal process, so it stretches the issue for a lot longer
- Mayors are concerned about blight issues, particularly with second homes that owners are not dealing with and often that did not have enough insurance to cover repair costs.

**FOLLOW UP**

- Some of the money coming into the human services advisory council is going to traditional emergency service organizations that aren't part of Sandy recovery.

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Beginning on the first Monday after Hurricane Sandy struck New Jersey, The Council of New Jersey Grantmakers began hosting weekly conference calls for grantmakers in-state and nationwide, facilitated by CNJG President Nina Stack, to discuss their response to Sandy and strategies facing NJ as a result of the storm. Each conference call briefing offered expert guest speakers who represented government agencies (FEMA, HUD, HHS, etc.), national philanthropic leaders, expert psychologists with experience in PTSD, planners and community redevelopment leaders, and representatives from NJ's Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, among others. The twenty-five audio files and written summaries are available at:

<http://cnjg.org/hurricane-sandy>