

EDEN COAD Pilot Project Summary

The Community Development Program Area Work Group (PAWG) of EDEN collaborated over the past year on a multi-state pilot project to develop Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COADS) through Extension Offices at the “local” level. Project participants from Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, and Washington State, with guidance from Indiana COAD facilitators, worked to develop local COAD groups that best meet the needs of their area.

The overall objective of the Pilot Project was to develop guidance for Extension Educators that might be interested in or called upon to assist with the development of these local groups. The guidance documents attempt to capture the wide array of COAD Structures, sizes, and memberships. While the overall mission of the COAD’s might be closely aligned, each pilot group was encouraged to develop and structure the group in a way that makes the most sense for their resources, history, and existing disaster plans. Funded through the support from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture the Project group met once at the beginning of the project, and once at the end of the project. Numerous teleconferences were also scheduled throughout the project to assist groups who may need guidance or had questions. Project Group members included Extension Educators/Agents, Local Emergency Management Directors, Voluntary Agency Representatives, and State Agency Staff.

Each participating pilot state selected the community/county/region for their pilot project, based upon either an existing relationship or defined need. These areas varied greatly by geographic size, population base and existing emergency management plans. The common thread among the areas was the presence of extension staff willing to coordinate the effort. From a single county (Henderson County, IL) to a six county/two state region (Eastern Washington/Western Idaho), the Extension presence was the unifying factor.

In January of 2015, pilot project participants met in Quincy, IL to discuss the project concept, procedures and goals. Facilitated by EDEN CED PAWG Co-Chairs, Bev Maltsberger (MO) and Carrie McKillip (IL), the group reviewed existing guidance manuals from both Indiana and Missouri; discussed each potential annex; and heard from each participating State Emergency Management Agency Voluntary Agency Liaison.

The workshop also included members of State VOAD’s (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters) such as American Red Cross and Catholic Charities. Maltsberger and McKillip also discussed the resources available to the COAD’s through both EDEN and Extension in General. They also discussed the validity of Extension to rural populations, since Extension is generally a well-respected partner in rural communities.

As the group returned to their communities to implement the project, the processes began to diverge based upon the staff level leading the project in the state, the existing relationships, and size of the geographic region. Regular phone calls were scheduled to keep the project rolling, and to provide a forum for questions, concerns or comments. As the summer approached and extension geared up for fairs, the calls were reduced, and a final meeting was scheduled for August 25, 2015 in St. Joseph, MO.

The final meeting reviewed the progress of each participating COAD area on a set of standard questions, resulting in the table below: