



Business Roundtable  
Partnership for Disaster Response

# Rebuilding Our Communities

Helping Companies Set Priorities to Aid Long-Term Recovery







# FannieMae

*Volunteerism is an opportunity for employees to contribute to the community in which they work*

The housing crisis in the Gulf following the devastating hurricanes of 2005 resonated strongly with the employees of Fannie Mae because of the mortgage finance company's housing mission. The company created an integrated, cross divisional team to coordinate its corporate response. But employees demanded an opportunity to make more personal contributions to the relief effort.

Immediately after the hurricanes, Fannie Mae offered employees a special one-week paid leave, in addition to the company's existing volunteer policy, so they could help out in the Gulf region. More than 220 employees devoted a total of 8,250 hours to help stricken neighborhoods. To date, Fannie Mae has organized a series of 12 one-week projects throughout New Orleans and Mississippi.

Employees stocked local food banks, offered tutoring and companionship to schoolchildren, and pitched in to help residents repair 42 homes and six community gardens. Employees returned from volunteering with moving stories of the resilience of local residents. Many employees said they felt a new and closer connection to the Fannie Mae housing mission.

Fannie Mae employees also participated in a year-long Adopt-A-Family program, providing gifts of time, money, and household goods for 16 families that had evacuated (24 adults and 24 children) and were relocated to the Washington, D.C. area where the company has its headquarters.

At the request of employees, Fannie Mae is continuing the volunteer effort in 2007. Projects include replacing the roofs on public housing units in Long Beach, Mississippi and wielding hammers and shovels during a one-day marathon to build six playgrounds in New Orleans in partnership with KaBOOM!, a national nonprofit organization that builds play spaces for children.

## Communicating Your Commitment

Communicating a company's commitment to recovery – both internally and externally – is vital. Your company's activities can serve as an important example of how the business community is taking action to support and rebuild its local community and can spur other companies to become involved as well.

Communication can also help improve a company's reputation and image within the affected community and beyond as well as help build employee pride. Ask the following questions when developing a strategic communications plan:

### **Internal Communications:**

- \* *How should your company communicate the goals and objectives of your recovery efforts to employees?*
- \* *What communications channels (email, intranet, newsletters, and bulletin boards) will your company use to inform employees about its efforts?*

- \* *How often will the company update employees on the project's progress to sustain interest?*
- \* *How will your company direct employees who want to volunteer and contribute to the recovery effort?*
- \* *How can your company engage the CEO and other senior leaders to demonstrate your commitment to rebuilding a community (e.g. meeting the mayor, joining a rebuilding task force, attending ribbon cutting ceremonies)?*

### **External Communications:**

- \* *What are the key messages about recovery and local commitment that your company wants to communicate?*
- \* *How will your company work with local and national media to communicate these messages?*
- \* *What are the milestones in your company's rebuilding project that will attract media attention (e.g. groundbreaking, ribbon cutting, opening day)?*
- \* *What communications channels (e.g. news bulletins, press releases, brochures, web site) will you use to get messages out to the community and business leaders, government officials, grantees, and the community-at-large?*
- \* *How will you sustain the communications outreach?*
- \* *Who will serve as the company spokesperson?*
- \* *How will your company incorporate its partners into the communications plan?*
- \* *How should your company engage its CEO and other senior leaders to communicate your efforts?*

## Involving Your Employees

Employee volunteerism can bring myriad benefits to people who are in need of help, to companies, and to employees themselves. There is a broad range of expertise that employees may have that could be extremely useful once the crisis passes. When deciding how to integrate employees into the recovery effort, your company should consider the following questions:

- \* *What is the most effective and rewarding way to engage employees in recovery efforts?*
- \* *When is the best time to encourage employees to volunteer after a disaster to ensure that they will be well utilized (six months, one year, two years)?*
- \* *What are the skills and expertise the community needs to expedite its recovery?*

- \* *Does your company have employees who live in the affected community?*
- \* *What are these employees' roles in the community and how can the company support them?*
- \* *How can the company's commitment to recovery become an opportunity to promote teamwork and boost company morale?*
- \* *Should your company consider developing a formal employee volunteer program to support its corporate commitment or link to an existing organization?*
- \* *What incentives can your company provide to employees to encourage volunteer assistance (e.g. paid time off)?*

