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The South Carolina Office of Resilience Opens its Doors

Sometimes, in order to make significant and needed progress a **holistic change in the way you operate is required.**

That is what South Carolina did when they realized the need for substantial change after a pattern of chronic flooding events.



In 2020, the **South Carolina Office of Resilience (SCOR)** officially began operation, based on a recommendation by the South Carolina Floodwater Commission, Governor Henry McMaster, and the S.C. General Assembly.

The initial goal of SCOR was protecting the population and building-up resilience and mitigation efforts of South Carolina communities. While the Office does not solely focus on flooding hazards, it is flood-centric in planning and focus because that is the biggest disaster threat to local governments.

The massive task of coordinating and executing the state’s resilience and mitigation portfolio was daunting, and SCOR counts on relevant stakeholders and partner agencies to ensure the ability to address all capability gaps. **There is currently an advisory committee for the office comprised of key state agencies, non-profits, the private sector, universities, and other interested parties.** This advisory council is open to any relevant stakeholders, with the belief that more information sharing leads to better resilience efforts. Currently, there are well over 60 participants providing information and briefings to the Office and the advisory council. Being given the coordination piece of the state resilience plan, SCOR focuses on finding ways to include all involved parties in mitigation efforts to ensure the most robust input – something that can get hectic without proper coordination. With SCOR being a new office, and ongoing mitigation and resilience projects, one of SCOR’s main responsibilities is keeping track of those projects, monitoring their progress, and facilitating success throughout the recovery process.

SCOR supports a variety of projects. Currently, the office aids in planning and conducting studies for local jurisdictions needing assistance; helping residents understand why they are victims of chronic flooding; and those actions necessary to mitigate future impacts. Additionally, the Office is conducting home buy-out programs for chronic flooding areas. So far, SCOR has repaired or replaced over 3,000 homes in disaster-impacted areas and currently has 47 ongoing mitigation projects.

Physical projects are not the only responsibility of SCOR, which was also **tasked with developing and implementing the state’s new resilience plan.** Because of a delay in initial funding for the office, SCOR did not begin their work on the resilience plan until September 2021. Once underway, their focus was on data collection and identifying vulnerabilities – looking beyond the floodplain maps that FEMA provides and utilizing data sets from the First Street Foundation, a non-profit aimed at defining past, present, and future flood risks. SCOR realized what future risks were posed against their current gaps in resilience and examined state systems and long- and short-term actions responses that would remedy these future threats. The goal of this resilience plan was a long-term focus on mitigation and resilience, rather than a focus on short-term responses and stop-gap solutions. We all know that resilience is built from the local level up, and SCOR is aware of this and looking for federal funding opportunities to help assist local jurisdictions address their critical needs and incorporate resilience into their local plans as required by statute.

To achieve these projects, SCOR needs funding assistance. The Office received funding from HUD Disaster Recovery and Mitigation grants. SCOR can utilize mitigation funds for stand-alone projects and can provide the local match for grant funding from FEMA – both are vital to the success of the Office’s resilience and mitigation missions. From the state legislature, SCOR was appropriated \$44 million for a reserve account and additional infrastructure projects. The legislature also appropriated \$6 million for a revolving loan fund targeted for buyouts. While this funding is important, it will quickly evaporate should another big hurricane result in massive flooding again.

Having a dedicated Office of Resilience at the state level has benefits that far outweigh the efforts to undergo such a task. **Ben Duncan, South Carolina’s Chief Resilience Officer has this to offer, “A comprehensive approach to a strategic statewide resilience plan along with funding to enact and deploy plan elements will provide practical and implementable solutions for the entire state of South Carolina, and will make a positive impact on our state.”**

Nobody is gonna hit as hard as life, but it ain’t how hard you can hit. It’s how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward. It’s how much you can take, and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done.

–Rocky Balboa

If you would like more information or have a state practice you’d like to highlight as part of this ongoing series, please contact [Jamie Logan](#)

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