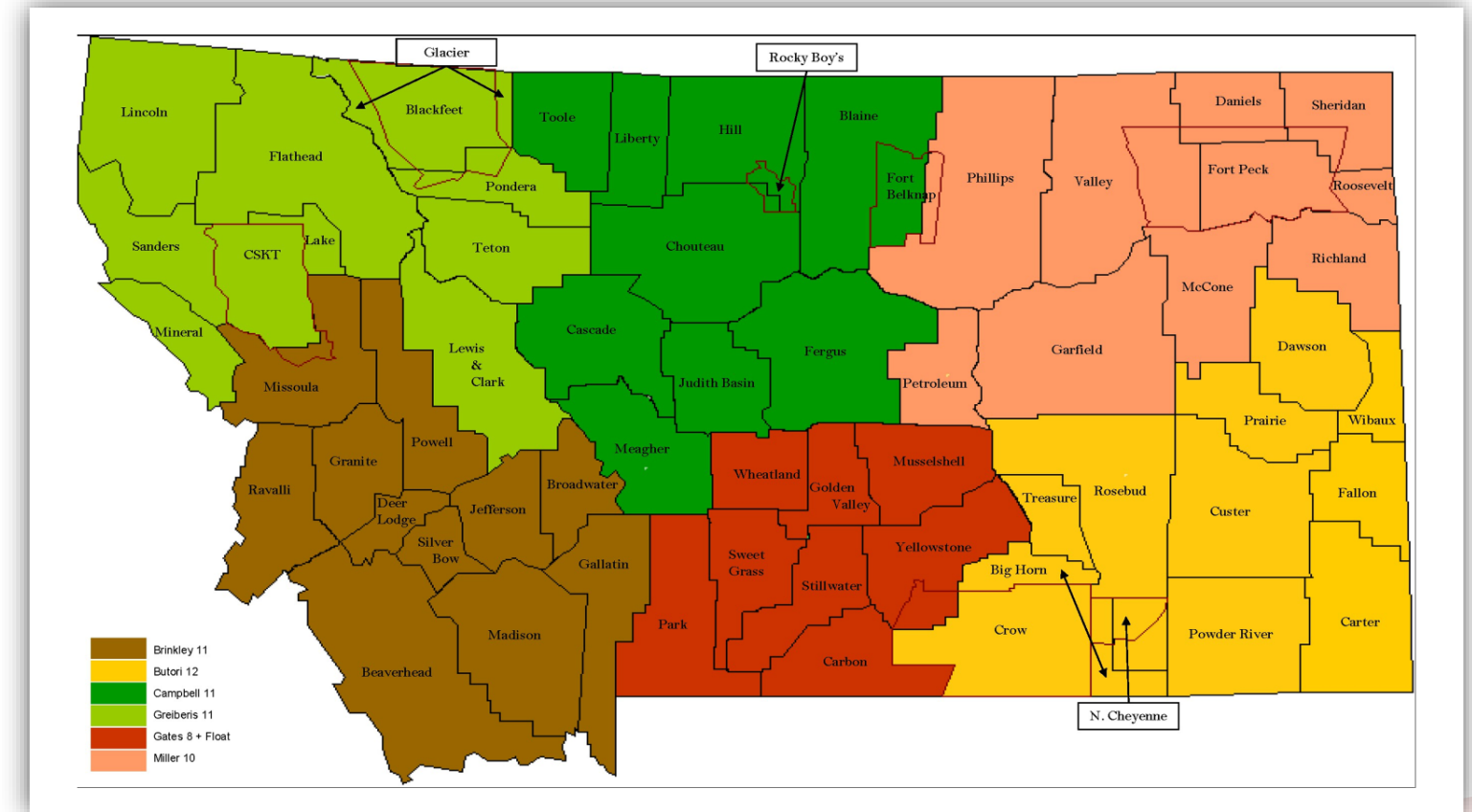




# MONTANA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT MODERNIZATION PROJECT

**Delila Bruno, MT DES Administrator**





# Overview

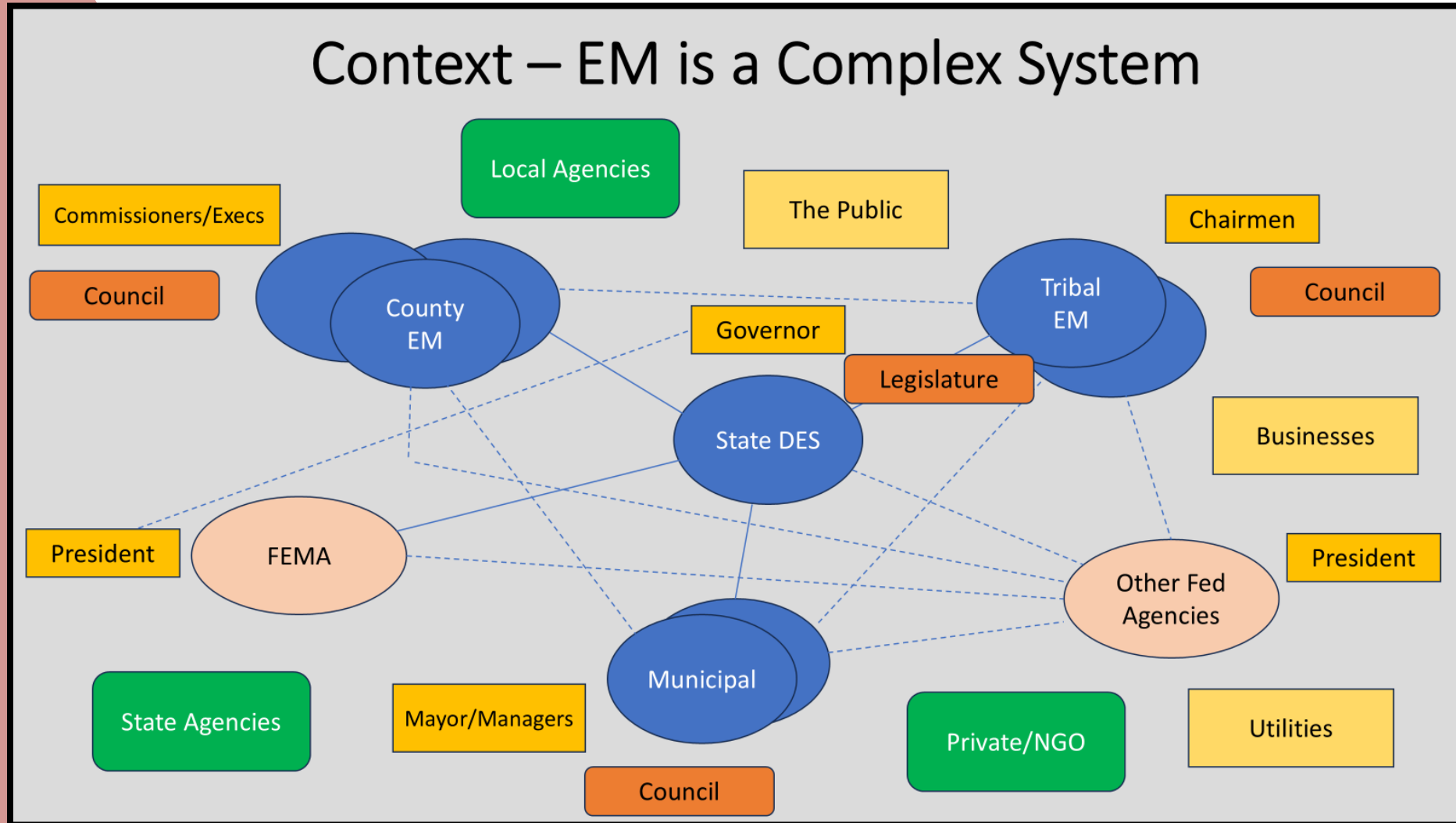
**Why did we engage in this project?**

**How did we approach the problem and opportunities?**

**What did we discover?**

**What are our next steps?**

# Why now?



Increasing hazard and threat context is adding more complexity

Changing federal policy is decreasing preparedness resources while increasing disaster assistance thresholds

The EM system in Montana was designed in a different era

Challenges present opportunities

# Listening Sessions and Data Collection

## Local and State Partner Engagement

- 14 Facilitated Listening Sessions with local, state agency, and DES staff (25+ hours, 130+ participants)
- Briefing and facilitated discussions with the Montana Association of Counties
- Briefing and facilitated discussions with the Montana League of Cities and Towns


## Additional Data Collection

- Local and state agency questionnaires/worksheets
- Montana Emergency Management Association
- Reviews of statutes, plans, processes, strategic priorities, and other references

# Emerging Themes and Findings

- Policy and Strategic
- Statewide Operational
- Tactical and Administrative

2/26/26, 10:22 AM How County Leaders Are Shaping a New Disaster Resilience Playbook




**RESILIENCE**

## How County Leaders Are Shaping a New Disaster Resilience Playbook

Local leaders lay out practical steps to stabilize funding and streamline assistance before the next crisis hits.

Feb. 3, 2026 • Mathew Sanders, Pew Charitable Trusts



(Adobe Stock)

Storms, wildfires, and extreme heat **are hitting communities harder** than ever, even as the federal posture toward disaster funding and engagement is **in flux**. To learn more about how these forces are affecting decision-making on the ground, The Pew Charitable Trusts and the National Association of Counties (NACo) in October 2025 had a discussion with county leaders from throughout the country.

<https://www.governing.com/resilience/how-county-leaders-are-shaping-a-new-disaster-resilience-playbook> 1/8

Similar findings and themes from PEW Charitable Trusts research





# Policy/Strategic Themes and Findings

★ **EM mission expanded** while resources declined

**Many counties operate** with one EM position (part-time/dual-hatted)

★ **EMPG/HSGP** are program lifelines for staffing, planning, training, equipment

**Shifting grant rules** force constant local adaptation

**State disaster fund:** clarify governance, usage, and decision-making

★ **Mitigation and resilience** are key long-term needs

**Resiliency Fund:** stabilize with clear criteria and eligible uses

**10-3 MCA:** update for current roles and expectations

★ **Mutual aid:** support all-hazard mutual aid and address reimbursement gaps

**Statewide coordination:** confirm SECC role and agency participation



# Statewide Operational Themes and Findings

Participants emphasized **consistent procedures, common expectations, and clear points of contact**

## Coordination & Operations

- ★ • Build all-hazards mutual aid beyond fire/law enforcement – exercise it.
- ★ • Standardize resource requests and reimbursement
  - Exercise regularly to validate procedures
  - Improve resource tracking and visibility
  - Create simple shared common operating picture

## Capacity Building & Support

- ★ • Define realistic baseline for county EM programs
  - Align training/exercises for practical skills
  - Explore state recovery platform
- ★ • Strengthen state agency ESF readiness
- ★ • Make mitigation support easily accessible



# Tactical & Administrative Themes and Findings

## Support Needs

- ★ • Practical tools for small and rural jurisdictions
  - Shared knowledge hub with guidance and templates
- ★ • Regional training and peer mentoring opportunities
  - Standardized adaptable templates and job aids
- ★ • Single alert and warning system with IPAWS integration

## Next Steps

**Continue additional listening sessions and data collection**

**Form workgroups** around certain findings and opportunities

**Refine findings into recommendations** for policy, legislative, fiscal, operational, and administrative change

**Continue robust outreach and collaboration with partners**



## Early Emerging Recommendations

- Dedicated State Funding for Local EM
- Permanent Disaster Resiliency Fund
- Minimum Local Program Requirements
- State Agency EM Leads
- Clarify DES Administrative Authority of State Disaster Appropriation
- Elevate DES Structure
- State Disaster Recovery Program
- Professional Standards for EM
- Rename DES to Include "Emergency Management"
- Resource Mobilization & Common Operating Picture
- Statewide Alert and Warning Platform
- Intrastate Mutual Aid Framework

## Change Management Lessons Learned (so far...)

Engage your Governor's support early.

Include as many as you can. Even though you will never include all who want to be included.

Communicate as early as possible. Even though it will never be early enough.

Surround yourself with people you trust. Not all feedback is easy to hear, but that's often what's most valuable.

There is never enough time.



# Questions?