



 Preparedness

 Response

 Recovery

 Mitigation

Comprehensive Emergency Management Support

Ramsey County, MN Emergency Management and Homeland Security (EMHS)



Prime Contractor:
Tidal Basin



Project Dates:
July 2016 – Current



Contract Value:
\$189K

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Project Overview

In 2016, Ramsey County hired Tidal Basin to provide comprehensive emergency management services including planning, mitigation, response, and recovery services on an on-call/as-needed basis. In 2019, the County received Public Assistance (PA) funds from FEMA for severe winter storms causing wind and flooding related disasters. In 2020, the state of Minnesota received a major disaster declaration for the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, Ramsey County received FEMA Individual Assistance (IA) and Public Assistance (PA) federal funding. At that time, our preparedness and recovery teams were engaged to support several COVID-related preparedness and recovery activities.

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Case Study

Comprehensive Emergency Management Support
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Challenge

Home of the state capitol, St. Paul, Ramsey County is affected by multiple hazards, including flooding, hail, drought, extreme cold and heat, wildfires, winter storms, tornadoes and sinkholes. The County has experienced a significant increase in “mega rain” events, leading to damaging floods. The spring of 2023 saw the worst flood season since 2001. In April 2023, the County declared a local emergency due to flooding caused by the Mississippi River.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck the nation, each state was given a major disaster declaration, including Minnesota. Due to constrained resources, Ramsey County needed additional support and expertise to perform disaster preparedness and recovery services to optimize the available funds, enabling them to provide assistance and support to their residents.

Solutions

Emergency Management Support Services, 2016-2020

Ramsey County hired Tidal Basin to provide comprehensive emergency management services on an on-call/as-needed basis. Services included the following:

- General emergency planning, mitigation, response and recovery services
- Crisis communications/emergency alert and notification
- Disaster planning/management
- Continuation of operations/disaster recovery planning
- Pandemic planning/management
- Evacuation planning/management
- Hazard mitigation planning
- Disaster response support
- Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) support
- Strategic planning
- Long-term post-disaster community recovery support

COVID-19 Disaster Cost Recovery Services, 2020

Tidal Basin provided disaster cost recovery support services and expertise to assist Ramsey County with capturing all COVID-related costs to get proper reimbursement from the available federal funding sources.

Tidal Basin worked with the County upon contract activation to analyze local and Private Non-Profit (PNP) needs and capacities. We designed a path forward on how to educate all stakeholders on the federal funding requirements and developed a grant management strategy to maximize federal funding opportunities for everyone affected. Our team performed intake of the County's assessed damages to complete the Damage Inventory (DI) and upload to the Grants Portal. Caution was taken to include the structure of the County's property insurance, potential environmental and historic preservation concerns, and eligibility issues in the DI.

COVID-19 After-Action Report / Improvement Plan (AAR/IP), 2021

Tidal Basin supported the County with the development of a comprehensive COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) based on the first 18 months of the County's non-stop response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project's goal was to develop an AAR/IP that identified both strengths and areas for improvement and to provide the County with recommendations to support the remainder of the response and recovery, as well as future infectious disease emergencies.

We gathered and reviewed relevant data based on focus areas to determine trends, challenges, and best practices specific to the County's pandemic preparedness and response efforts.



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Solutions

In addition to assessing the function of the Incident Management Team and efforts to assure continuity of government/continuity of operations, our team also:

- Assessed the impact on the provision of services to the residents during the pandemic
- Assessed community impacts from the multiple crises that occurred during the pandemic
- Developed an equity impact assessment to determine the real and perceived disparities in how the pandemic and the County's response affected various communities throughout

As a follow-up to the review, Tidal Basin held a series of interviews with County stakeholders and engaged community leaders with focus group sessions to gather feedback and understanding of community impact. We analyzed all data and, based on that analysis, developed a final document that included a timeline, observations and analysis, strengths, and areas for improvement.

During our Ramsey AAR interviews and data collection, we paid particular attention to Ramsey County's efforts to advance racial and health equity and effective community engagement as an integral component of COVID-19 response. With the murder of George Floyd occurring in the neighboring county, it was imperative to understand the efforts the County took to engage, gain trust, and ensure that disproportionately impacted populations and neighborhoods were provided the same opportunities throughout the pandemic.

Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), 2022

Once the U.S. entered the endemic stage of the historic COVID-19 outbreak and began to transition to strategies for managing the disease, many organizations recognized the

need to assess their response to the pandemic and update their emergency plans accordingly. In 2022, Ramsey County enlisted Tidal Basin to assist with the development of a revision to their county-wide Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and annexes, including the addition of two new functional annexes and 12 new job aids. These updates reflect lessons learned during the pandemic and recommendations from the County's COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan (AAR/IP). Ramsey County was already familiar with Tidal Basin's experience in disaster response and risk reduction expertise as well as the wide-ranging skills, expertise, work ethic, and integrity of our team due to our work on the County's AAR/IP, which was completed in May 2022, and our assistance in coordinating funding from FEMA Public Assistance, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

To prepare for this update, the Tidal Basin team reviewed the County's 2017 county-wide EOP, the COVID-19 AAR/IP, and other emergency management doctrine, guidance, policies, and procedures that had been resources as we developed the AAR/IP. We formulated a crosswalk and gap analysis that complied with the State of Minnesota crosswalk requirements (MNWALK), assessing the existing EOP and annexes against the Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101 v3, National Planning Frameworks, the National Incident Management System (NIMS), Incident Command System (ICS), the State EOP, Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA Titles II, III, and IV, and the EMHS's Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA).

The resulting survivor-centric plan encompasses community resilience principles and community lifeline principles and maintains the current Common Response Doctrine.

Resilience Delivered

Tidal Basin successfully supported all Ramsey County's emergency management needs and objectives, leaving the County in a more resilient position than before. 2020 saw the introduction of a public health emergency of international concern as COVID-19 swept the globe. Ramsey County, along with many other counties and cities throughout the country, met the pandemic and all its uncertainty head-on.

During the AAR/IP project, Tidal Basin captured lessons learned, including assessing real and perceived gaps in diversity and equity in the County's emergency response and provided recommendations for improvement, leading toward enhanced resilience for the County.

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Resilience Delivered

For the COVID-related Disaster Cost Recovery contract, Tidal Basin delivered the following results:

- Developed a clear plan of action in developing, distributing, and educating departments and local agencies on current, event specific, application, and funding requirements
- Developed and maintained a grant management and recovery strategy that included hazard mitigation
- Formulated and validated Project Worksheets (PWs) and other funding applications that were fully coordinated with insurance claim settlements before seeking additional funding
- Developed and organized the Damage Inventory (DI) in the most advantageous manner for eventual development of PWs
- Developed PWs that complied with FEMA's eligibility requirements and maximized opportunities for reimbursement for hazard mitigation, codes and standards, environmental compliance, and other opportunities under FEMA's various pilot programs and policy updates
- Developed a central repository for all Requests for Information from federal, state, local sources to ensure proper tracking and coordination
- Developed and entered damage descriptions and dimensions, scopes of work, hazard mitigation proposals, and cost estimates directly into Grants Portal

For the AAR/IP contract, Tidal Basin delivered the following results:

- Developed a timeline of events to help shape the AAR
- Conducted stakeholder interviews
- Developed an Equity Impact Assessment
- Conducted focus group sessions
- Analyzed all open-source service delivery documents the County produced during the response
- Prepared a service delivery impacts analysis report
- Prepared interview results and analysis
- Completed and finalized the AAR/IP
- Facilitated an after-action conference

For the EOP contract, Tidal Basin delivered the following results:

- Created a Crosswalk/Gap Analysis assessing the existing plan, other emergency management plans, policies and procedures, doctrine, and AARs to industry standards
- Facilitated a planning meeting to engage with stakeholders, create the vision, and discuss the major components for updating the EOP
- Conducted a meeting to review the drafts of the EOP and its annexes
- Delivered the final EOP, annexes (including two new functional annexes) and 12 new job aids