

**Answers to CBJ Finance Committee Questions**  
**United Way of Southeast Alaska**  
**April 22, 2025**

We consider both questions related. The message we want to share is that no one entity can respond to disasters. It takes many groups working together including the City and Borough of Juneau, United Way, Red Cross, faith-based communities, community-based organizations, the National Guard, civic organizations, etc. Volunteer Organizations Assisting in Disaster (VOAD) brings a structure focused on cooperation, communication, coordination and collaboration to prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate disasters. However, what is needed to sustain a VOAD over time is a dedicated staff position to coordinate VOAD activities.

**How does this request overlap with what Red Cross would be doing in this area?**

The American Red Cross and VOAD share a common goal: providing aid to individuals and communities affected by disasters. Both organizations are active in disaster relief, but their roles and responsibilities differ. The American Red Cross focus is on providing direct assistance like shelter, food and emotional support; although the American Red Cross is member of local, state and national VOADs, it is not a coordinating body. VOAD on the other hand, is a convening and coordinating body, fostering communication and collaboration between various organizations, including the Red Cross.

**Is this something that United Way is organizing in other locations?**

United Way is a global community action network that mobilizes local partners for a comprehensive response to community issues, focusing on community resilience and recovery; one of United Way Worldwide focuses is ***United for Recovery***. VOAD is a national network that promotes cooperation and coordination among voluntary organizations to deliver services more effectively to disaster-affected communities. United Way is a member and key player in VOAD at the national, state and local levels. United Way Worldwide recently partnered with the National VOAD to host a National Disaster Recovery Conference that reinforced this kind of leadership in long-term disaster recovery. Here are some ways United Way's leadership shows up:

Beyond disaster response, United Way helps communities prepare for future crises. Initiatives like United Way of Missoula County's Wildfire Ready Missoula help residents mitigate wildfire risks before disaster strikes. In Kentucky, United Way is leveraging 211, the 24-7 hotline that connects people to local resources to address housing and immediate post-disaster needs. The United Way of Greater Houston and the Greater Houston Community Foundation formed the Greater Houston Disaster Alliance in 2023 to ensure the region has the networks and systems in place to accelerate recovery efforts. The United Way of Dodge City established a community VOAD in early 2017 after a series of spring wildfires. The local VOAD started out with a few members but has grown since its inception. Closer to home, United Way of Mat-Su has participated in and chaired the local VOAD for many years.

United Way is a natural host for VOAD. Strategies used are similar to those used by local VOADs: convene, connect, collaborate and pass-through funding. Its focus is on 1) addressing unmet needs; 2) determining underlying causes of issues and problems; and 3) creating lasting systems change. Disaster preparation and response is United Way of Southeast Alaska's top priority.