Managing Offers of Assistance

Manual

Queensland Government

Updated: November 2024

Document Approval and Control

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Document	Version	Amendment	Approved by	Date
Managing Offers of Assistance Manual	V.2	Refer to Amendment Schedule	Deputy Commissioner – Disaster & Emergency Management	11/24

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1 Purpose

The Offers of Assistance Manual combines the Queensland Policy for Offers of Assistance and the previous offers of assistance manual with the aim of providing clear guidance for stakeholders on the management of offers of assistance.

History has demonstrated that following disaster events, the broader community may make offers of assistance to affected people and communities. These "offers of assistance" can provide significant support to the people and communities affected by a disaster event.

2 What are Offers of Assistance?

"Offers of assistance" includes offers and donations of any of the following intended to assist disaster affected communities to respond and recover:

- Money – including financial donations which may be offered spontaneously in response to an appeal

- Goods and services – which may include unsolicited or solicited goods and services offered by individuals, businesses, non-government organisations (NGOs), or corporate entities

- Volunteers – individuals, groups or organisations that offer to assist a disaster affected community for the common good and without financial gain

- Corporate donations – could be financial, volunteer hours and goods and services.

3 Responsibilities for managing offers of assistance

'Relevant entities' including:

- district and local disaster management groups

- State agencies and

- non-government organisations contracted to deliver offers of assistance services

- have a role in managing offers of assistance collaboratively and collectively to:

- manage financial donations

- direct offers of volunteering and the donation of goods and services through appropriate channels

- ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place for the registration, referral, training and health and safety of volunteers and community groups

- facilitate activities that assist in the coordination of offers of goods and services

- provide consistent and accurate messages to the public

- continuously improve all of the above, through the conduct of post-activity reviews, and by encouraging and taking into account feedback from other stakeholders.

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4 Principles for managing offers of assistance

Effective and efficient management of offers of assistance is underpinned by the following principles:

- the needs of affected people and local communities including: social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts, will always be the highest priority

- management of all offers of assistance will be carried out with integrity and accountability

- all dealings with affected people and local communities will be courteous, helpful and ethical

- all offers of assistance will be managed in a timely and effective manner

- relevant entities will ensure the coordinated and integrated management of offers of assistance

- activities will be scalable and in line with the size, location and duration of the disaster

- relevant entities, non-government organisations, businesses and communities should share values and responsibilities in rebuilding communities and promoting resilience

- clear, accurate and consistent messages will be communicated to the community at all times on offers that are needed or not needed by affected people and communities at any given time.

5 Planning for managing offers of assistance

Managing offers of assistance can be a challenging process. At the State level, there is a contractual arrangement in place with GIVIT for the management of offers of assistance. GIVIT is a national not-for-profit organisation that operates an online platform to connect disaster-affected people and communities with donated goods and services, and locally bought items wherever possible to support local retailers. GIVIT partners with State and local governments to manage offers of assistance, however local government disaster management groups (LDMGs) may choose to partner with other entities, particularly in areas such as rural and remote Queensland where local arrangements may be more suitable.

In relation to volunteers, Volunteering Queensland through Emergency Volunteering for Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW) is the identified pathway for the management of spontaneous volunteers.

The following table provides a summary of key considerations when planning to manage financial, volunteer, goods and services and corporate offers of assistance.

6 Process for managing offers of assistance

Every disaster event is unique and presents its own challenges, however, the offers of assistance process is generally comprised of five stages:

- receipt

- acceptance

- matching

- distribution

- use

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Each stage requires key decisions, considerations and actions which must be undertaken when managing offers of assistance. The process for managing offers of assistance is detailed in Appendix A – Planning for managing offers of assistance.

7   Communication strategies for managing offers of assistance

Communication designed to assist with managing offers of assistance needs to be reliable and consistent to meet the needs of the affected community, keep the general public informed and engaged, and support disaster management activities and operations.

Messaging should ideally be delivered throughout all phases of the event:

- prior to the event, to ensure the community is as prepared as possible and aware of arrangements for offers of assistance that may be put in place.
- during the event, to reassure the community and reinforce requirements as the event progresses.
- following the event, to ensure the community feels their efforts have been noted and valued and potentially to cease the flow of assistance if it is no longer required.

7.1   Media Releases or Talking Points

The following scripts can be used as the basis for media releases and/or talking points for interviews and public announcements[1]. As each event is unique in nature, these scripts may not be appropriate in some cases. Before using the below messaging, please contact the relevant agencies to determine event specific requirements.

Pre-event messaging – suggested text

"Disasters generate public sympathy and offers of assistance to those affected.

The public may try to help by making donations, however the items donated may not be suitable and can create extra work for authorities, distract from recovery efforts and undermine community resilience.

Dealing with unsolicited donated goods takes time and focus away from the very important work that needs to be done with disaster affected people.

Large quantities of donated goods in a disaster affected location can depress sales by local businesses and delay recovery of the local economy.

In addition, donated goods can impose a sense of obligation on survivors who may be struggling to deal with what has happened. This sense of obligation is difficult to reconcile when the goods are unneeded or of poor quality.

However, public care and support is very important to disaster affected people. It helps them feel more positive and confident about the task that lies ahead.

The most effective way we can all help is by contributing money. Donating money is always the best option as it is more flexible, provides choice, promotes self-directed recovery and more accurately targets need. It also stimulates local economies, leading to a quicker recovery for the community.

During a disaster, authorities quickly assess what is needed and targeted appeals may be launched for particular items. We can all help significantly by waiting for those appeals and only offering good quality items that are requested."

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[1] National Guidelines for Managing Donated Goods
https://www.recovery.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/994185/national-guidelines-for-managing-donated-goods.pdf

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During the event messaging – suggested text

"If you want to help [affected community], donating money is the best option.

This allows the people affected by this disaster to make choices about what is best for them to help their recovery. This also puts money back into the local economy which assists early recovery for the whole community. Donations can be made at [details].

We really appreciate your support—but at this stage we do not require donations of second-hand clothing and other goods.

Authorities are assessing the needs of those affected. If specific items are required, a targeted appeal will be announced.

If you have goods you wish to donate, please consider turning your goods into cash instead. For example, have a garage sale, boot sale, a fun auction among friends or sell items on online. Then you can donate the money raised to the recovery effort.

Your support and encouragement are very important to the people who have been affected by this disaster."

After the event messaging – suggested text

"Thank you for your support to help [affected community]. The response has been overwhelming and we received many items which have helped to meet the needs of those affected. Appeals for specific items worked well and much of what was donated has been of great value to the affected community.

We still have a large quantity of items left over, which will be recycled wherever possible. Some items may be sold, and the proceeds donated to the recovery program."

7.2   Scripts for recovery personnel responding to public enquiries

These scripts can be used as the basis for responding to phone calls and other public enquiries about how people can help. They may also form the basis of media releases and/or talking points for interviews and public announcements.

This is important to recognise people's concern and acknowledge the importance of their help, while directing their assistance, so it can be most useful.

Response to people wanting to help – suggested text:

"Thank you for thinking of the people who have been impacted by the [disaster].

Your interest and kindness are very much appreciated by [affected community] and really makes a difference to the recovery of those who have been affected.

The best way you can help is by donating money. This will allow us to more precisely meet the needs of the people who have been affected.

Or you may be interested in approaching one of the charitable organisations to offer your time as a volunteer or get involved in fundraising.

If you have goods that you wanted to donate, consider selling these and donating the money instead."

Response to people wanting to donate goods – suggested text:

"Thank you for thinking of the people who have been impacted by the [disaster].

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> *Your interest and kindness are very much appreciated and public support makes a big difference to community recovery.*
>
> *However, there is no need for donated goods now, and unfortunately, we have no storage space to keep items in case they might be needed down the track.*
>
> *If we identify any particular needs we may launch a targeted appeal for specific items, so please watch out for that.*
>
> *If you have goods that you wanted to donate, consider selling these and donating the money instead."*

Response to people delivering their own donations or donations they have collected – suggested text:

> *"Thank you for thinking of the people who have been impacted by the [disaster].*
>
> *Unfortunately, there is no need for these items at present and we do not have the storage space to hold them in case of future need.*
>
> *If we identify any particular needs we may launch a targeted appeal for specific items, so please watch out for that.*
>
> *Your interest and kindness are very much appreciated and public support makes a big difference to community recovery. You may still be able to help. Have you thought about trying to sell these items and then donate the money to the disaster appeal?"*

8 Further Information

Contact your local Emergency Management Coordinator or District Disaster Management Group Executive Officer.

9 Related Links

The following links have been provided in the manual:

- GIVIT
- Emergency Volunteering for Community Response to Extreme Weather

Appendix A – Planning for managing offers of assistance

Offer Type	Planning Considerations
Financial	• how are financial donations going to be managed, either within a government agency or disaster management group or outsourced? • are there any resource capacity and capability gaps to prevent the appropriate management of financial donations and how can they be overcome? • have standard operating procedures been developed for the management and distribution of financial donations (record keeping, receipts, communication, winding up funds, service level agreement requirements if outsourcing)? • is there planned consistent public messaging to ensure appropriate channels are used to make financial donations? • how will lessons management processes inform the management of financial donations?
Volunteers	• how will spontaneous volunteers be managed? • how will spontaneous volunteers be made aware of disaster management arrangements? • how will spontaneous volunteers be insured? • who is the local organisation that can manage spontaneous volunteers and is there a memorandum of understanding in place? • how will spontaneous volunteers be appropriately inducted into the community? • who will be responsible for briefing spontaneous volunteers? • what is the communication strategy for spontaneous volunteers? • what level of screening is required for spontaneous volunteers? • how will lessons management processes inform the management of spontaneous volunteers?

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Goods and Services	• what will be the potential economic impact on local business recovery if the offer is accepted? • what are the administrative, logistical and cost requirements for managing and coordinating the offer? • what will be the quality requirements imposed on offered goods to restrict the volume of unsuitable items? • what are the risks associated with offers of partial services (for example the offers of the use of machinery with an expectation that operational costs such as fuel will be paid)? • how are donations of goods and services are going to be managed, either internally within a government agency or disaster management group or outsourced to a nominated service delivery entity? • what are the resource capacity and capability gaps that need to be addressed to ensure appropriate (legal, economic, ethical) management of donations of goods and services? • what are the mechanisms and processes to pledge, vet and match offers of assistance including contingency strategies if disaster management group, government agency or NGO capabilities are exhausted by the volume of donations? • have standard operating procedures for the management of offers of goods and services such as receipt, delivery, storage and disposal of unused or unwanted goods been developed? • who will monitor the administration, quality and distribution of offers of goods and services (internally or outsourced) to ensure they are done in a timely and equitable manner? • what is the communication strategy for the donation of goods and services? • how will lessons management processes inform the management of donated goods and services?
Corporate Donations	• how are corporate donations going to be managed? • what are the resource capacity and capability gaps that need to be addressed to ensure appropriate (legal, economic, ethical) management of corporate donations? • what are the mechanisms and processes for vetting and referring corporate offers? • What are the necessary resources for managing and coordinating corporate offers (internally or outsourced)? • have standard operating procedures for managing and coordinating corporate donations such as information sharing and storing and managing data been developed? • who will monitor the administration, distribution, and referral of corporate donations (internally or outsourced)? • what is the communication strategy for corporate donations? • how will lessons management processes inform the management of corporate donations?

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Appendix B: Stages of Offers of Assistance Management

Stage	Criteria	Considerations
Receipt	o Identify who will be undertake the task of receiving offers within the affected area, agency, or group. o Ensure that those receiving offers of assistance are familiar with the approved offers of assistance arrangements.	o Offers of assistance can be requested from numerous sources and may be received by several different agencies or disaster management groups.

Acceptance	o Before accepting an offer:
	  o determine if the offer will meet the needs of the affected community
	  o validate that the offer is genuine
	  o ensure the offer meets any necessary legislative or Australian standard requirements to enable its use
	  o if the offer relates to goods such as clothing or appliances assess the quality
	  o record and confirm all relevant details about the offer such as location
	  o of offer, time and date the offer is available
	  o if offer is accepted, communicate that to the source.
	o Determine who should manage the offer - local or district level or outsourced.
		o The person accepting the offer must understand and confirm any costs associated with the offer (for example receiving written confirmation that an invoice will not be issued post event under any circumstances).

Matching	o Identify those in the community with the greatest need, in consultation with community groups, leaders and Non Government Organisations(NGOs). o Ensure the offers address the need and any limitations. o Depending on the size and scale of the need, determine who should coordinate the offer - local or district or outsourced.	o Matching offers with community needs is a complex process. o Needs of individuals and communities may not be understood until they know when or if they are able to return to their homes and communities. This may not be for days or even weeks following an event. o When possible, link broader community recovery activities with the matching process to avoid duplication of effort and stress on those who require support. o Disaster management groups may become aware of community need, through lead and recovery partner organisations, community groups and leaders, multi-agency outreach teams, public hotlines, social media and/or requests for assistance.
Distribution	Financial donations: o May be distributed through: vouchers issued for local businesses, incentive grants, or Electronic Funds Transfer. o Should be managed through a pre-established and auditable financial management system.	o Offers need to be distributed to the community or individual in need, in a coordinated and inclusive manner. o It is crucial that offers of assistance are integrated in such a way that those receiving the support have a say in how it will assist them.

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12	Volunteers: ○ Require local planning, understanding of community needs and triaging those in most need, supervision and coordination to induct, deploy and debrief volunteers to the disaster affected areas. ○ Require effective volunteer management and engagement prior to being deployed to the community or individuals in need, to support cost effective and safe work practices. It is advisable this responsibility is outsourced to a nominated service delivery entity or NGO to manage the offers from volunteers. ○ May use virtual volunteer management to register and track offers to help through volunteering and corporate volunteering offers. ○ Spontaneous volunteers should be partnered with experienced volunteers where possible. Goods: ○ May require storage in virtual warehouses/ warehouses prior to distribution to the community or individuals in need, to support cost effective and safe work practices. ○ Should be set up for distribution at appropriate distribution points. ○ May use virtual warehousing to register and track offers of goods and corporate offers.	○ Virtual warehousing is increasingly being used and provides an online matching service connecting those who have registered offers, with the charities that accept their offers. ○ Volunteering management experts support service to organisations and volunteers including training. Advice is also offered on national standards and community involvement, consultancy, and advice.
Use	○ Once the offer has been received, assess the use to ensure that the need has been met. ○ In some circumstances, particularly when spontaneous (unsolicited) offers are presented they may not be matched or used.	○ Ongoing monitoring of offers to ensure need is met. ○ Assess the potential need for more offers. ○ If offers are not used they may be re-purposed, redirected or declined and must be recorded appropriately.