



AGRICULTURE DISASTER RECOVERY CENTERS

A Guide for Understanding and Coordinating
Agriculture Needs after Disasters



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY

EXTENSION SERVICE





Defining Disaster Recovery Centers and Agriculture Disaster Recovery Centers

What is a disaster recovery center?

A disaster recovery center (DRC) is a readily accessible facility or mobile office where affected citizens may go for information about local, state, and federal disaster assistance programs, or for answers to questions following disasters. It is typically a one-stop shop for individual assistance.

What is an agriculture disaster recovery center?

An agriculture DRC is a readily accessible facility where those with specific producer and landowner questions can obtain information about disaster assistance programs. They also can find answers to questions concerning specific agriculture-related needs.



Facts About Agriculture

Agriculture in a county can be very diverse or uniquely similar depending on geographic locations.

Agriculture is a thriving, \$7 billion industry in Mississippi. It includes such things as livestock, poultry, catfish, horticulture, row crops, and timber.

Agricultural producers, growers, lenders, and insurance associations cast a wide net of support for those involved in food production systems. These organizations include, but are not limited to, the Mississippi Civil Defense Emergency Management Association, Mississippi Poultry Association, Mississippi Cattlemen's Association, Mississippi Forestry Association, Mississippi Nursery and Landscape Association, Mississippi Fruit and Vegetable Association, Mississippi Delta Council, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, and Catfish Farmers of America.

The Mississippi State University Extension Service has specialists and agents who provide technical assistance and education for individuals before and after disasters.

State agencies can offer a wide variety of support in disaster preparedness/readiness planning and recovery assistance. Agriculture disaster recovery agencies include but are not limited to the MSU Extension Service, Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Mississippi Board of Animal Health, Mississippi Agriculture Commission, Mississippi Development Authority, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, and Mississippi Emergency Management Agency.

MSU Extension Service personnel maintain professional working relationships with state agencies, associations, and organizations to better serve their clients after disasters.



Setting Up an Agriculture Disaster Recovery Center

Timing

Timing can mean the difference between success and failure for an agriculture DRC. Allow enough time after the disaster for individuals to work through the initial trauma of the incident. About 2 to 3 weeks after the disaster is considered the optimal time for opening the agriculture DRC.

Once the date is set for the agriculture DRC, plan for the time needed for clients to work their way through the initial DRC process. A 4-hour time frame is usually optimal for meeting with agency representatives and starting the assistance process. Additional DRC dates can be set and continued on a week-to-week basis as needed.

Location

Location for the agriculture DRC is important. It needs to be on common ground for all parties and familiar to clients. Examples include the local MSU Extension Service office, an agricenter, or another local multipurpose facility. Provide an adequate amount of space, tables, chairs, and access to electricity and Internet to those providing assistance to clients.



Public Relations

Once the date has been set for the agriculture DRC by the emergency operations center manager/incident commander, the MSU Extension county coordinator should contact the public information officer in the local emergency operations center. A flyer should be created to send out to the clients, public information officers, and local news media informing them of the date, time, and location of the agriculture DRC. The local emergency operations center can provide assistance with notification to the public and clients, traffic plans, and any assistance needed by federal or state agencies.

If a DRC has been set up by the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Extension county coordinator should coordinate with the DRC to ensure that they are aware of the opening of the agriculture DRC.



Who Should Provide Assistance?



State

It is important to bring in all the subject matter experts who can provide assistance to those clients affected by the disaster. They can include representatives from the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Mississippi Board of Animal Health, MSU Extension Service, Mississippi Forestry Commission, Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, and MSU Department of Forestry.



Federal

Involve the United States Department of Agriculture to provide any assistance that may be available. This would include representatives from the Farm Service Agency and National Resources Conservation Service. USDA participation could also include regional teams, depending on the size of the disaster.

Contact the local emergency operations center to facilitate the involvement of MEMA and FEMA teams to provide individual assistance to those affected, and the small business association for any assistance it may be able to provide.



Associations

Associations for various agriculture-related businesses should be involved based on the support they can provide and the needs of the county.



Evaluation and Monitoring

Entities that could provide assistance may change based on the needs in the area, but keep the focus on how to best serve the clients, and always dispense approved information. Establish a mechanism for monitoring and checking credentials of those seeking to be involved in the response and recovery efforts of the agriculture DRC.



Tips and Tricks

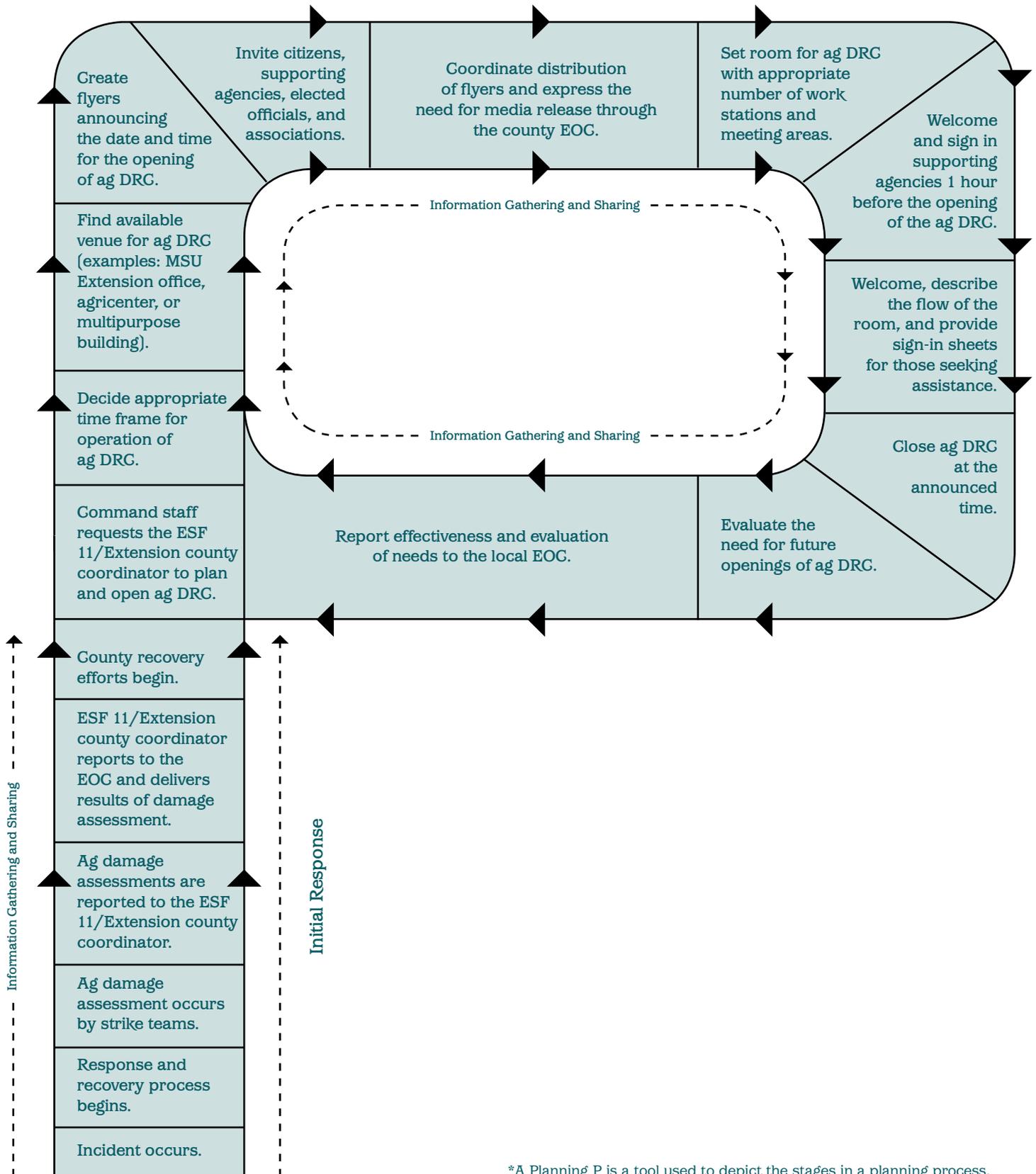
Before the opening of the agriculture DRC, communicate with clients so they will know what to expect and the kind of information they will receive. The key is getting them to buy into coming to the agriculture DRC for assistance. Explain who will be there and the type of assistance that will be available. Coordinating with various state agencies, associations, elected officials, and local authorities is key in getting all the right people involved with the agriculture DRC.

Communication and coordination with the local emergency operations center is paramount in the success of the agriculture DRC. It allows everyone to know the agricultural needs of the community.

Associations can help plan, identify all clients, and provide additional resources for support of the agriculture DRC.

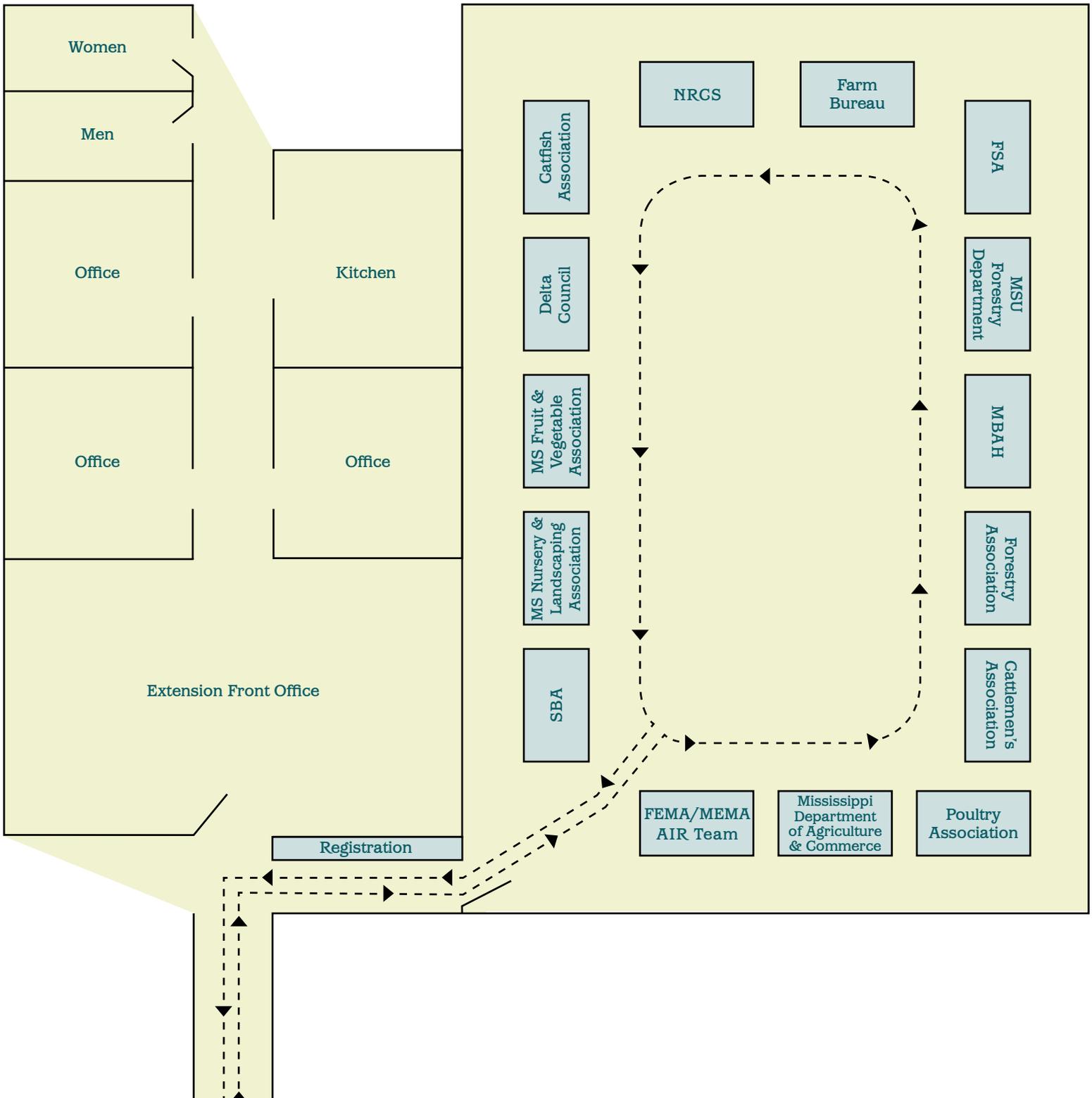


Agriculture Disaster Recovery Center Planning P*



*A Planning P is a tool used to depict the stages in a planning process.

Example of Agriculture Disaster Recovery Center Setup and Flow







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Publication 2885

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. **GARY B. JACKSON**, Director

(500-05-15)