

Delivering recovery

Operational lessons and
recommendations from
the Tāmaki Makaurau
Recovery Office

June 2026





Recovery from the 2023 storms

2023

Weather events



Auckland Anniversary Storms

Ex-Tropical Cyclone | 27 January – 1 February 2023
286 mm rainfall



Cyclone Gabrielle

Severe Tropical Cyclone | 13-14 February 2023
248mm+ rainfall and high winds

Impacts



floods and landslides



4500+ households needed assistance



2000+ roading slips



720 parks and community facilities damaged

Response



Local and national states of emergency declared



7000 rapid building assessments



\$2.47 billion insurance claims



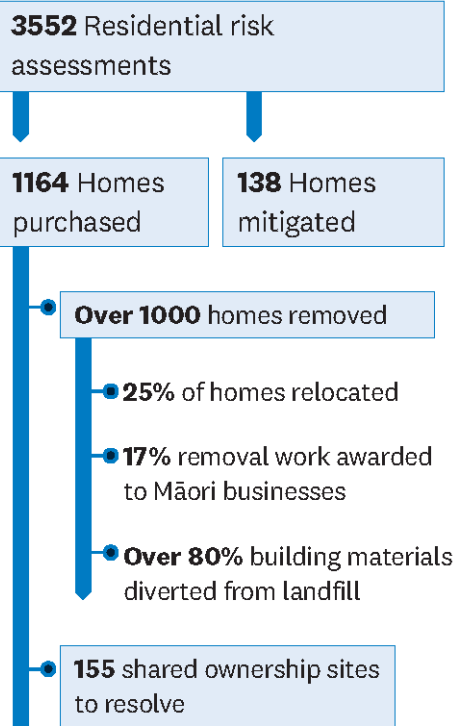
40,000 Civil Defence Payments (\$25.6m)

Recovery activities

People

- 900+ Whānau in temporary accommodation
- \$5.5m Rates relief for uninhabitable homes
- 2000+ Whānau supported by Storm Recovery Navigators
- 14 partner organisations delivering navigation services
- \$8.3m total community grants
- 26 communities and 10 iwi involved in local recovery planning
- 33 resident recovery groups supported
- 4000+ Business support grants

Homes



Infrastructure

- 4 Blue-green / flood resilience projects
- 797 Roothing projects
- 222 Water supply projects
- 1200+ Parks and community facilities projects
- Increased maintenance and hotspot monitoring
- 50+ Intolerable risk to life housing situations mitigated
- 500+ Homes and businesses protected from frequent flood risk

Recovery legacy



More resilient and better connected communities

Permanent removal of risk on 1164 properties

Storm affected land repurposed safely for service use, redevelopment, green space, flood resilience

Flood resilient waterways and communities

More resilient infrastructure

Improved public amenity

Improved recovery preparedness in Auckland Council and delivery partners

Foreword

The severe weather events of 2023 have challenged us to reflect not just on how we respond as a region, but on how well we are prepared to recover.

The Tāmaki Makaurau recovery has been complex, and costly. It has required new approaches, rapid decision-making, and sustained effort across agencies, partners, and communities. It has highlighted the strengths we can build on – dedicated people, strong community networks, and a shared commitment to supporting those most affected.

At the same time, it has exposed clear opportunities to improve. In 2023, three factors emerged as being particularly important for how we delivered support to impacted Aucklanders: clarity for people over what to expect, timely delivery, and trusted relationships with communities. When we achieved these factors, recovery was effective and appropriate. When they were compromised, delivering good support became much harder.

This report identifies a range of operational improvements that Auckland Council can make, to be better prepared for future recoveries.

We cannot afford to approach recovery as a temporary or reactive function. With an increasing climate risk and the prospect of repeated disruptions, being ready to recover is as important as being ready to respond. Recovery must become a core, enduring capability – planned for, resourced, and continuously strengthened.

Delivering Recovery contributes to that shift. It brings together lessons from recent experience and sets out the foundations for a more proactive, coordinated and resilient approach. It asks important questions about how we share responsibility, and how we support communities not just to rebuild, but to thrive.

Most importantly, it reinforces that recovery is ultimately about people. It is about restoring wellbeing, rebuilding lives, and creating safer, more resilient places for the future.

By investing in our recovery capability now – as an integrated part of resilience planning, and before the next event – we can reduce harm, improve outcomes, and ensure we are better prepared for what lies ahead.

Mace Ward

Group Recovery Manager

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Executive summary

Purpose of this report

This report sets out key **operational** lessons from the Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office, which was established by Auckland Council in response to the 2023 North Island Weather Events. It examines the conditions that make delivering a recovery operation (whether a Recovery Office or other equivalent coordinating arrangement) effective.

The Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office delivered support to communities impacted by the storms, and has set the foundations for future recovery preparedness in the Auckland Region.

The primary purpose of the report is to ensure that Auckland Council is well-positioned to respond to future recovery needs after natural disasters and other emergency events. Recommendations focus on recovery preparedness, as it is important that measures are ready before they are needed. Further advice is offered for recovery teams that are actively delivering a recovery effort after an emergency event.

Specifically, the report:

- captures critical operational recovery knowledge and insights from the 2023 experience
- identifies eight conditions that characterise an effective recovery operation
- recommends actions to strengthen recovery preparedness and improve the management of future recovery efforts in Tāmaki Makaurau.

The report recommends prioritising recovery preparedness across Auckland Council and its delivery partners. Specific actions include strengthening capabilities through training, ensuring council systems and processes are recovery-ready systems, and investing in partnerships (see Figure 1).

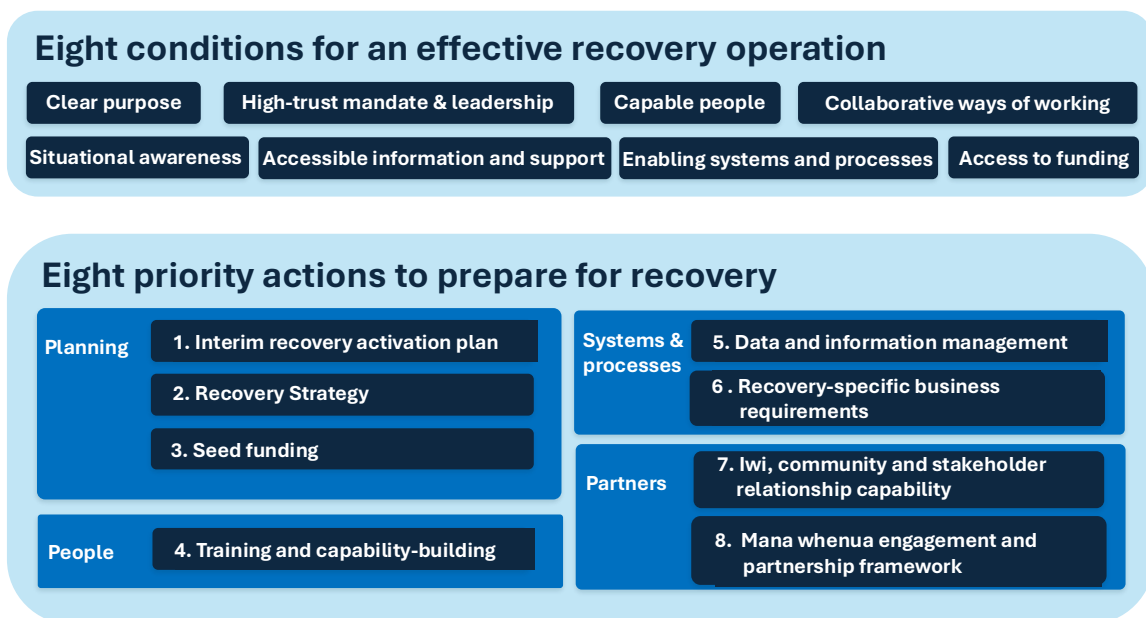


Figure 1. Conditions and priority actions from this report

Overview of recovery observations

The analysis reflects an extensive lessons management process undertaken between January 2025 and May 2026, including interviews, workshops and surveys with Recovery Office teams, delivery partners and wider stakeholders (see Appendix Two for methodology). During this period, hundreds of people worked on the recovery programme from technical assessors and road repair contractors to wellbeing navigators and community partners.

The observations and recommendations in this report are drawn from experiences from January 2023 to May 2026. Some aspects of recovery will continue for years to come – those teams involved will conduct their own ongoing evaluative processes. Many of the recommendations identified in this report are already in development within the relevant Auckland Council teams but have been included to give a full picture of the needs identified through the experiences of the Recovery Office.

Some recurring themes came through the debriefing and lessons management process, about what recovery staff and delivery partners felt worked well in the recovery, and what was hard (see the summary in Table 1).

Table 1. Observations on the 2023 recovery

What worked well for us	What was hard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People went above and beyond business as usual to move quickly, hustle for funding and support, and get things done • Clear internal mandate with direct reporting to the Chief Executive and the Governing Body, both with the authority to make decisions quickly • Access to Auckland Council's depth of in-house skills and capability • Rapid access to technical expertise, leveraging existing procurement arrangements and supplier panels • Working with the Crown secured significantly more funding for recovery • Partnerships with iwi and community organisations connected us to communities and expanded delivery reach • Working proactively with communities in place-based and trauma-informed ways • Being adaptive and responsive to community feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We weren't ready for a large-scale recovery, and had to design and mobilise teams, systems and processes while in an active recovery operation • The scale of what needed to be done was overwhelming • Community needs were high, there was pressure to deliver quality outcomes and delays had material impacts on peoples' lives • Building trust with trauma-affected individuals and communities following the response phase • Staff wellbeing in a high-stress environment • Lack of national direction and rapid funding for recovery • Accurately collecting, organising and sharing data to improve decisions and communications • Coordinating the moving parts within the Recovery Office and with the wider organisation, other agencies and sectors • Transitions from response to recovery, and from recovery back to business as usual • The cost and impact for ratepayers.

Identifying conditions for an effective recovery operation

The findings are framed under eight 'conditions for an effective recovery operation' (see Table 2). For each condition, the report outlines observations from the Recovery Office (both the successes and the gaps) and provides high-level recommendations to inform future recoveries.

Table 2. Eight conditions for an effective recovery operation	
Clear purpose	A clear purpose defines the appropriate scope of recovery operations, manages expectations, clarifies roles and responsibilities of different parties, and supports consistent, defensible decision-making.
High-trust mandate and leadership	A two-way relationship of trust between leaders and implementers, at all levels, empowers teams to act and innovate. Experienced leaders promote trust and assurance.
Capable people	Coordinating a recovery requires a diverse team of people equipped with the experience, disposition and composure to operate confidently, at speed, with imperfect information and where the stakes are high.
Collaborative ways of working	Intentionally working across and beyond the recovery team contributes different perspectives, skillsets and resources to delivery.
Situational awareness	Situational awareness, drawn from a range of sources, informs quality decisions and allows for refinement as intelligence changes.
Accessible information and support	Open and regular contact builds trust and supports impacted people to engage and make informed decisions for their own recovery. Support is responsive to different levels of need.
Enabling systems and processes	Pre-established and effective systems and processes for decision-making, data management, quality assurance, procurement and people management allow rapid action while reducing risks of inefficiencies, errors, or harm.
Access to funding	Recovery generates new and immediate cost pressures. Sufficient and flexible funding is essential to activate and deliver recovery efforts.

Priority actions from this report

As the 2023 Recovery Office closes, the focus for Auckland Council shifts to recovery preparedness. We have identified eight priority actions from this report (see Table 3).

Table 3. Priority actions for recovery preparedness	
PA1	Prepare an interim recovery activation plan to respond to immediate recovery needs in the event of another emergency while permanent recovery capabilities are still being developed. The plan should identify steps to activate critical operational elements, including transition from response to recovery, activation of an event-specific Group Recovery Manager, leadership team and core capability for community engagement, and systems for communications, data management and procurement.
PA2	Agree the process that will be used to ensure that seed funding for recovery is provided quickly and is sufficiently flexible to establish a recovery effort aligned to the nature and scale of the event.
PA3	Prepare an Auckland Recovery Strategy to support recovery preparedness and recovery management. The Strategy needs to identify priorities for action, timelines for implementation, and processes for monitoring and evaluation.
PA4	Develop a recovery-ready workforce through training and recovery capability-building to be applied across council staff, elected members and partners.
PA5	Develop and manage an integrated approach to data and information management including customer relationship management systems.
PA6	Ensure recovery specific business requirements are well-defined and supported by internal business partners. This may involve defining new or amending existing services (including performance levels).
PA7	Invest in iwi, community and stakeholder relationship capability as a core part of the resilience system , including sustaining relationships established through the 2023 recovery and developing pre-event agreements so partners can mobilise across readiness, response, recovery and reduction/adaptation.
PA8	Develop a mana whenua engagement and partnership framework across resilience, readiness, response and recovery, building on mana whenua experiences and lessons from the 2023 recovery, to clarify how the council and mana whenua will work together before, during and after disruption. This should include roles, relationships, decision-making pathways, resourcing, information-sharing, and opportunities for iwi-led planning and delivery.

Next steps

The Recovery Office will close on 30 June 2026, as most of the recovery activity requiring its coordination has concluded. This does not mean that recovery is complete. Some activities have transitioned to other council units and will continue to be delivered as makes sense under normal council business. Impacted communities will continue to progress their own recovery too, with support from the Community and Social Recovery Team.

Recovery preparedness is a continuing focus for the council. A new Recovery Unit has been established within Auckland Emergency Management, tasked with ensuring the council is prepared to coordinate recovery from future emergency events.

Observations and recommendations from this report are being handed over to the Recovery Unit and other relevant council departments. The Recovery Unit will develop a work programme with costings and timeframes for actions identified.

Introduction

The 2023 North Island Weather Events caused widespread damage and disruption, leading to both local and national states of emergency. In Auckland, the scale of impacts prompted the region's first large-scale recovery effort, coordinated through the Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office ('the Recovery Office'). The graphic on the inside front cover provides an overview of the range of activities and their lasting impact. Many of these activities were outside of Auckland Council's usual roles and needed a rapid and innovative approach to implementation.

As the Recovery Office comes to a close, it's important that we take time to evaluate what we have learned and apply these lessons to strengthen future recovery efforts.

Purpose of this report

This report sets out key operational lessons from the Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office ('the Recovery Office'), which was established by Auckland Council in response to the 2023 North Island weather events. It examines the conditions that make delivering a recovery operation (whether a Recovery Office or other equivalent coordinating arrangement) effective.

Specifically, the report:

- captures critical operational recovery knowledge and insights from the 2023 experience
- identifies eight conditions that characterise an effective recovery operation
- recommends actions to strengthen recovery preparedness and improve the management of future recovery efforts in Tāmaki Makaurau.

The findings are framed as eight 'conditions for an effective recovery operation'. For each condition, the report outlines observations from the Recovery Office (both the successes and the gaps) and provides high-level recommendations to inform future recoveries.

The analysis reflects an extensive lessons management process undertaken between January 2025 and May 2026, including interviews, workshops and surveys with Recovery Office teams and wider stakeholders (see Appendix 2 for methodology). The observations and recommendations in this report are drawn from experiences from January 2023 to May 2026. Some aspects of recovery will continue for years to come – the teams involved will conduct their own ongoing evaluative processes.

The primary purpose of this report is to ensure that Auckland Council is well-positioned to meet future recovery needs after natural disasters and other emergency events. The recommendations focus on building recovery preparedness, so that systems and processes are in place before they are needed. The report also provides advice for consideration when in an active recovery operation.

The 2023 events were an important call to action: Auckland Council has already begun implementing many of the improvements identified. Recognising that the council's recovery capability needs to be built and sustained over time, the recommendations in this report will be progressed by the council's new permanent Recovery Unit within Auckland Emergency Management, working in partnership with teams across the wider council group as needed.

Delivering Recovery is one of three final publications from the Recovery Office before its closure in June 2026. *Auckland Together* gives an account of the entire recovery effort – what was decided, how it was delivered, the impact on our people, and what the legacy of the storms will be for Tāmaki Makaurau.

Unlocking Recovery considers the wider strategic challenges of recovery and identifies areas for systematic improvement.

Report limitations

Every recovery will be highly contextual, shaped by events and circumstances at the time. We offer observations from the localised experiences of Tāmaki Makaurau from 2023 to 2026. This context includes the specific impacts of the storms, and also the central government decision to fund recovery activities. The categorisation scheme for affected residential properties, announced by the government on 1 May 2023, and the subsequent co-funding agreement, signed in October 2023, had a profound impact on the nature and scale of operations.

Auckland's recovery efforts centred on three core elements: people, homes, and infrastructure, so this report reflects that focus. Future recovery efforts may prioritise different needs depending on the nature of events.

The observations and recommendations are based on debriefs and reviews with staff, delivery partners, and governance groups. While some community feedback and survey data have been considered, the direct views of impacted whānau and the wider community have not been systematically canvassed in this lessons process. This is something we would recommend as offering further valuable insight into the impacts of the 2023 storms and the effectiveness, costs and benefits of the recovery.

Data in the report provides the best information available as of 10 June 2026, unless otherwise stated. As recovery operations will continue for some time, some financial information will change.

Many of the recommendations identified in this report are already being progressed within Auckland Council teams. They are included here to give a full picture of the needs identified through the experiences of the Recovery Office.

Finally, the observations and recommendations in this report do not necessarily represent Auckland Council policy. They are intended as a contribution to the growing national discussion on emergency management, recovery, resilience, and adaptation.

Context

Defining recovery operations

The scale and nature of recovery will vary for each emergency, but irrespective of this, the community will need support to adapt to any changes to their normal lives.
National Emergency Management Agency, 2020

Under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002, recovery means the coordinated efforts and processes used to bring about the immediate, medium and long-term regeneration of a community following an emergency, with a focus on social, cultural, economic, natural and physical dimensions.

Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups are tasked with planning and carrying out recovery activities, with strategic planning for recovery from hazards and risks included in their Group Plans. In Auckland, this work is led by Auckland Council through the Auckland Emergency Management department.

A Group Recovery Manager is responsible for directing and coordinating the use of personnel, material, information, services and other resources to carry out recovery activities. A Recovery Office may be a helpful way to consolidate recovery arrangements within a dedicated team and location, particularly for a recovery of scale.¹

¹ National Emergency Management Agency, 2020. *Recovery Preparedness and Management Directors Guideline DGL 24/20*

Auckland's first significant recovery

The impacts of the 2023 Auckland Anniversary Weekend storm and Cyclone Gabrielle led Auckland Council to establish its first significant recovery operation. Given the scale of need within communities, a standalone Recovery Office was created to support the Group Recovery Manager, reporting directly to Auckland Council's Chief Executive. The Recovery Office operated from April 2023 to June 2026 – delivering a substantial programme of work supporting thousands of Aucklanders in wide-ranging ways.

The Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office was the link between affected communities, council services and central government agencies, making sure support reached people in a coordinated way. As set out in the Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Plan, this involved:

- providing information, advice and resources for Aucklanders
- delivering programmes and initiatives to support wellbeing and recovery
- making repairs and improvements to key infrastructure
- enabling mana whenua to partner and lead in the recovery
- empowering communities to lead their own recovery.

Recovery governance is complex because it involves many agencies and reporting lines. In Auckland, this is simpler than in other regions because, as a Unitary Authority, only one council needs to work alongside government agencies (see Figure 2).

The recovery leadership team set the overall direction, guided by community needs and the political direction set by the Mayor and councillors. A Political Advisory Group including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor was delegated by the Governing Body to provide oversight on recovery schemes and policies. A Senior Executive Group of key council leaders supported programme delivery. Regular meetings with the government Cyclone Recovery Unit and National Infrastructure Funding and Finance provided oversight of jointly funded activities, and the Auckland Regional Leadership Group, convened by the Regional Public Service Commissioner, supported cross-sector coordination and alignment.

2023 Recovery - Governance

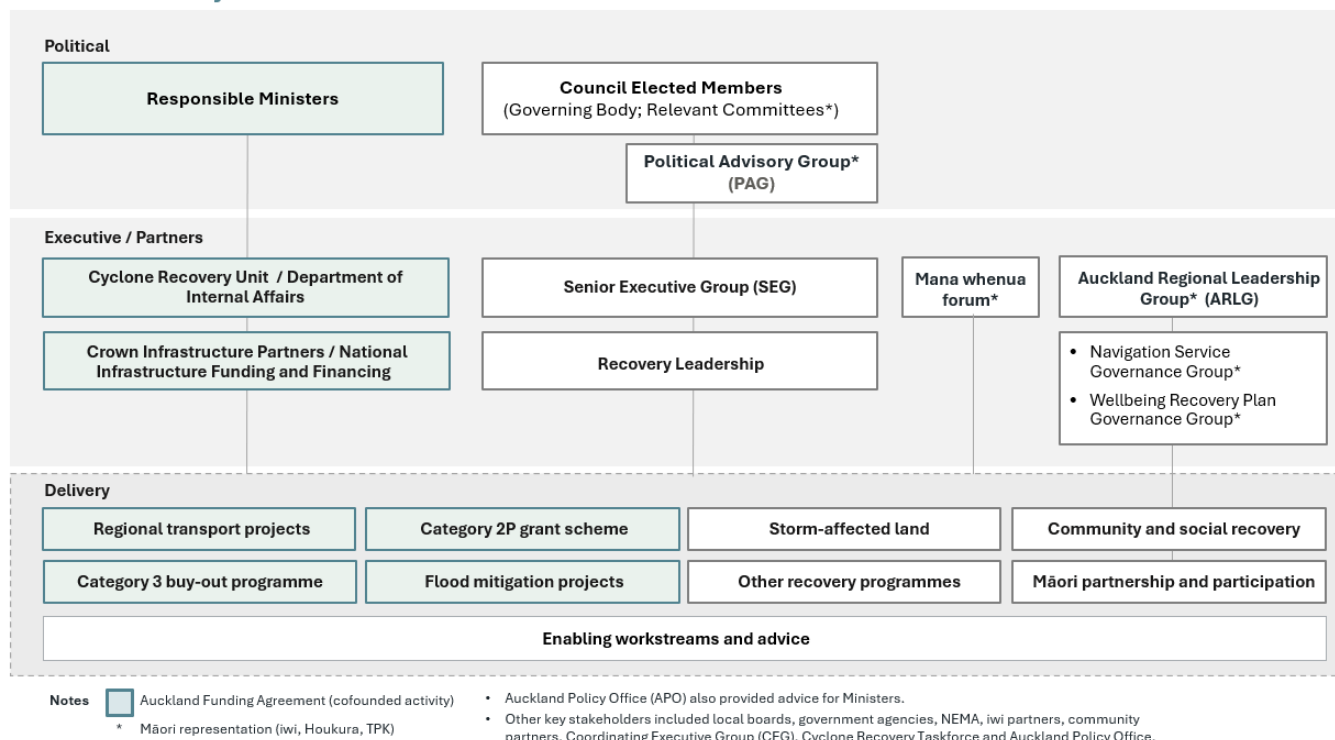


Figure 2. Governance for the 2023 recovery

Supporting recovery is not business as usual

Recovery planning, management and delivery go well beyond the business-as-usual activities of local authorities, and can involve shifting priorities and resources, and collaboration with multiple stakeholders across the social, economic, built and natural environments. ... Local authorities may be unaware of the level of resourcing and coordination required during recovery and the potential consequences this may have on their business-as-usual activities.

National Emergency Management Agency, 2020

Standing up a large-scale recovery effort is a major operational challenge. While *response* to emergencies is rapidly improving across Aotearoa, *recovery* practices, including the process for effective transition from response to recovery, are still developing. Roles and responsibilities are only broadly defined and the burden on councils to coordinate recovery is often underestimated.

Many of the systems that shape recovery, such as housing, insurance, banking and welfare, sit outside council control. This means councils have a responsibility to coordinate recovery, but they do not control many of the factors that influence outcomes for communities.

The scale of need after an event, the nature and duration of support required, and the amount of funding available will all define the functions of a recovery operation.

In 2023, Auckland Council stood up an entirely new office with over 200 people at its peak, alongside hundreds of others delivering recovery activities across the region. In future, recovery operations for smaller events may be able to be managed within the Recovery Unit inside Auckland Emergency Management, calling on other parts of the council group to support activities as needed. Larger events are still likely to require a standalone recovery office or similar coordinating arrangement.

Recovery needs will change over time

After the immediate and short-term demands of emergency response, recovery is a long haul. It requires more collaborative effort with communities to support people to make choices about their own recovery. Activity changes over time, rising and falling as different needs and priorities emerge and are resolved (see Figure 3). Critical phases in a recovery operation include the initial transition from response to recovery, and the exit from recovery back to business as usual. Both transitional phases are challenging.

Planning for recovery from the 2023 events began while response operations were still underway. While there was a high level of collaboration and technical expertise from the outset, the transition from response to recovery was made challenging by a lack of predefined structures and roles, limited programme management, gaps in intelligence regarding impacts and needs and communication issues. We knew that a long-term recovery operation was going to be needed but did not have a full picture of how long it would take or what the coming years would require.

For those impacted by the 2023 storms, the distinction between response and recovery was less important than ensuring continuity of support. The experiences of response carried forward into recovery – challenges during the transition affected trust and perceptions of recovery.



Figure 3. The shape of a recovery

After three and half years, closure of the Recovery Office presents a different set of challenges, especially around maintaining momentum for ongoing work programmes.

Finishing well is a promise. It says, “We didn’t just show up when things were broken – we stayed until they started to heal.” That kind of commitment builds trust, and trust is the foundation of any resilient community – Taj Shaikh, Recovery Navigator

The community has become accustomed to the services that the time-limited Recovery Office has provided and some people would prefer that they stay in place. Not all recovery work has an obvious home within the council’s business as usual functions – we have needed to build capability and capacity to transition programmes out of the Recovery Office (see Next Steps section).

Learning from our experiences – lessons methodology

The Recovery Lessons Management Programme applied the Observations, Insights, Lessons Identified, Lessons Learned (OILL) methodology set out by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience.² OILL provided a structured, replicable framework for extracting and synthesising evidence from participant interviews, debriefs and workshops (Lesson Sessions), distilling large volumes of qualitative data into trusted insights, lessons and recommendations.

The findings from debriefs have been synthesised into a series of publications and products (see Figure 4). All recovery artefacts, archived documents and ownership of the recovery toolkit will be handed over to the newly appointed Head of Recovery within Auckland Emergency Management.

A full description of the Lessons Management Programme is provided at Appendix Two.

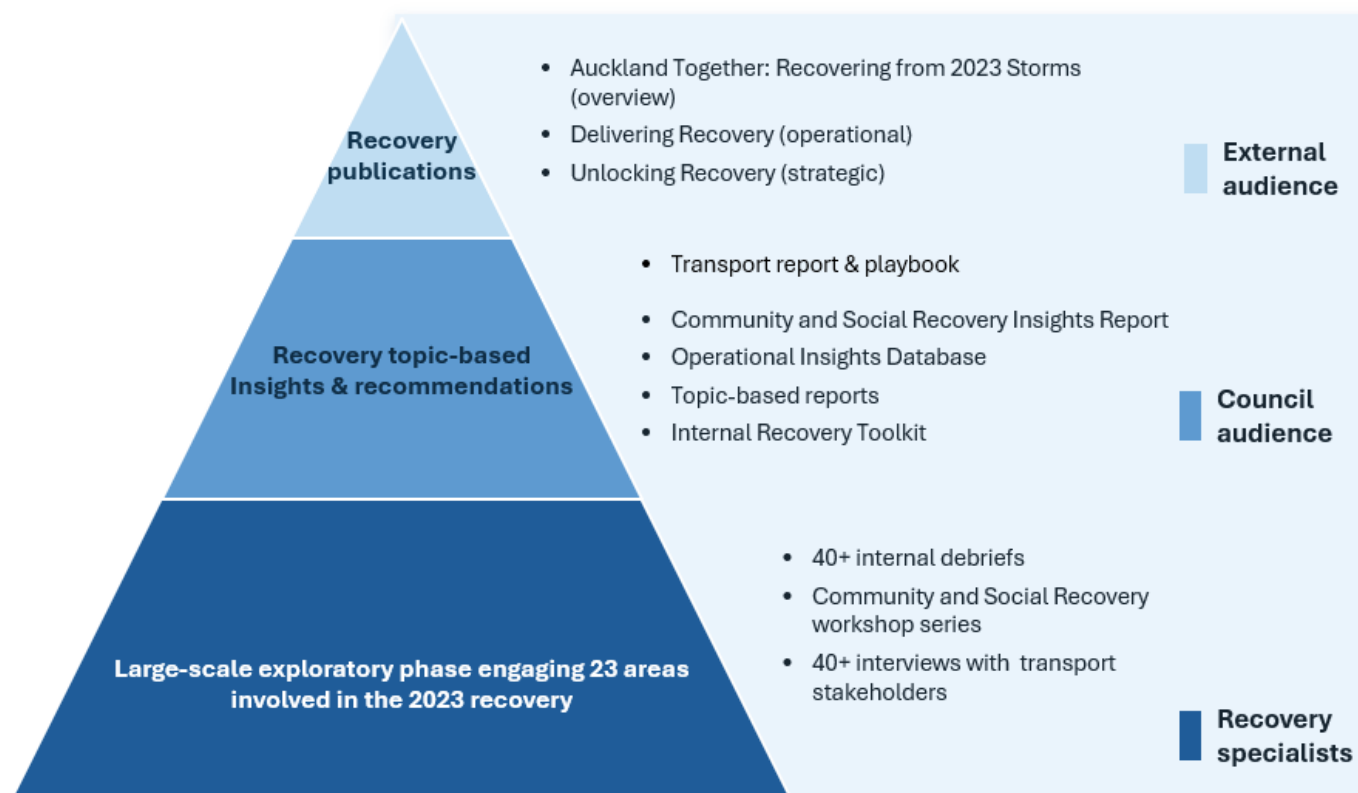


Figure 4. Advice and tools developed for future recoveries

² Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, 2019. *Lessons Management Handbook*.

Observations

Some recurring themes came through the debriefing and lessons management process, about what recovery staff and delivery partners felt worked well in the recovery, and what was hard (see the summary in Table 4).

Table 4. Observations on the 2023 recovery	
What worked well for us	What was hard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People went above and beyond business as usual to move quickly, hustle for funding and support, and get things done • Clear internal mandate with direct reporting to the Chief Executive and the Governing Body, both with the authority to make decisions quickly • Access to Auckland Council's depth of in-house skills and capability • Rapid access to technical expertise, leveraging existing procurement arrangements and supplier panels • Working with the Crown secured significantly more funding for recovery • Partnerships with iwi and community organisations connected us to communities and expanded delivery reach • Working proactively with communities in place-based and trauma-informed ways • Being adaptive and responsive to community feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We weren't ready for a large-scale recovery, and had to design and mobilise teams, systems and processes while in an active recovery operation • The scale of what needed to be done was overwhelming • Community needs were high, when our role was limited and unclear – there was pressure to deliver quality outcomes and delays were having material impacts on peoples' lives • Building trust with trauma-affected individuals and communities following the response phase • Staff wellbeing in a high-stress environment • Lack of national direction and immediate funding for recovery • Accurately collecting, organising and sharing data to improve decisions and communications • Coordinating the moving parts within the Recovery Office and with the wider organisation, other agencies and sectors • Transitions – from response to recovery, and from recovery back to business as usual • The cost and impact for ratepayers.

Creating the conditions for effective recovery operations

The following pages describe eight conditions for effective recovery operations (see Table 5). From our experience in the Recovery Office, these are the cross-cutting factors that underpinned our successes and – when they weren't present – hindered our delivery.

After the storms, people were caught in severe and urgent situations and were seeking rapid relief. They wanted clarity about what support was available, who would provide it, and when it would arrive.

To respond, the Recovery Office needed to make and implement robust decisions, quickly. Operating in a high-pressured and uncertain environment required us to work outside business-as-usual, build whole new teams and processes within weeks rather than months or years, and have a level of confidence that decisions would deliver the intended outcomes.

The eight conditions identified here support good decision-making and capture the factors that both enabled and, in their absence, constrained our approach. They are interdependent, and their achievement is likely to be variable over the course of a recovery operation.

Table 5. Eight conditions for an effective recovery

Clear purpose	A clear purpose defines the appropriate scope of recovery operations, manages expectations, clarifies roles and responsibilities of different parties, and supports consistent, defensible decision-making.
High-trust mandate and leadership	A two-way relationship of trust between leaders and implementers, at all levels, empowers teams to act and innovate. Experienced leaders promote trust and assurance.
Capable people	Coordinating a recovery requires a diverse team of people equipped with the experience, disposition and composure to operate confidently, at speed, with imperfect information and where the stakes are high.
Collaborative ways of working	Intentionally working across and beyond the recovery team contributes different perspectives, skillsets and resources to delivery.
Situational awareness	Situational awareness, drawn from a range of data sources, informs quality decisions and allows for refinement as intelligence changes.
Accessible information and support	Open and regular contact builds trust and supports impacted people to engage and make informed decisions for their own recovery. Support is responsive to different levels of need.
Enabling systems and processes	Pre-established and effective systems and processes for decision-making, data management, quality assurance, procurement and people management allow rapid action while reducing risks of inefficiencies, errors, or harm.
Access to funding	Recovery generates new and immediate cost pressures. Sufficient and flexible funding is essential to activate and deliver recovery efforts.

Assumptions about future recoveries

Some assumptions underpin the recommendations made in this report:

- More frequent and high impact weather events may lead to higher recovery needs in the region
- Impacts will be experienced unevenly across communities, influenced by the nature of the event, the damage sustained, and by individual, whānau and community capacities
- Auckland Council must always maintain a level of recovery preparedness, to ensure that people, systems and processes are ready when needed
- Events will dictate how a specific recovery unfolds: different types and scales of events will demand very different recovery operations, including whether a recovery is significant enough to require a Recovery Office or other coordinating function
- Post event, recovery efforts will rely heavily on the council's existing capabilities and may require proactive reprioritisation of business-as-usual activity
- The nature of any recovery operation will also be shaped by wider social, political, environmental and economic factors in play at the time of the event
- Recovery has a long tail. Scenarios may arise where the region has multiple operations underway at once, and at different stages of recovery
- Recovery must give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by recognising Māori as Treaty partners, supporting rangatiratanga, enabling mana whenua leadership in place-based recovery and adaptation, and resourcing Māori-led responses for whānau and communities
- Auckland Council, as the largest council in New Zealand and as a unitary authority, was well positioned to undertake the 2023 recovery – that capability, capacity, and ability to debt fund capital costs is not likely to exist in other councils, or even potentially in Auckland in the future.

Clear purpose

A clear purpose defines the appropriate scope of recovery operations, manages expectations, clarifies roles and responsibilities of different parties, and supports consistent, defensible decision-making.

Why a clear purpose matters for recovery

A well-defined purpose and scope helps determine what a recovery operation should, and should not, manage. It sets boundaries and expectations with communities and partners, clarifies roles and responsibilities across stakeholders, and supports effective prioritisation of activities. Documenting purpose through policies and procedures ensures policy and operational decisions are consistent and defensible. Regular discussion of purpose helps teams maintain a common approach and see how their work contributes to overall recovery objectives.

What we observed

An emerging sense of purpose as recovery progressed

As Auckland Council's first significant recovery operation, our purpose was not well-defined from the start. This was new territory for the council: community needs and expectations were high, and we had little by way of precedent to rely on. Public consultation in August 2023 made clear that Aucklanders expected the council to support recovery in a holistic but measured way. Feedback made connections between meeting immediate needs like safe housing, business continuity and environmental restoration with longer-term outcomes, including region-wide resilience and risk reduction. Responses also noted that property ownership comes with risks, and that while the council needed to help impacted homeowners, ratepayers should not bear the full cost burden.

Coordinating the recovery of infrastructure and assets aligned closely with the council's business-as-usual functions. In contrast, defining our purpose and role in relation to community and whānau recovery, and relative to other agencies' roles, was much less clear, with limited national guidance.

Over time, an emerging understanding of our scope and purpose helped us to focus on what we could achieve, centring our role on providing information, advice, wellbeing support, and support for mana whenua and community-led recovery activity.

The introduction of the government-defined categorisation framework in May 2023, and plans for government co-funding in June 2023 created a significant shift in our purpose and resulting operations. An entirely new responsibility involving future risk at private properties brought the need for technical risk assessments, removing people from residential living situations of intolerable risk to life, and managing the residual buildings and land.

Strategic planning needed to be nimble and 'just enough'

The Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Plan was prepared as part of our Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM) requirements, to describe the objectives, tasks, measures and resources needed to manage recovery and address community needs. Developing the plan was important to help ensure clear purpose but added significantly to workloads at a time when teams were under pressure to deliver practical actions and when the picture of recovery was still quite uncertain. Looking back, we could have made the plan a simpler and more active document, setting the strategic direction and initial steps, with regularly updates as the programme evolved.

Clear purpose helped to clarify the extent of Recovery Office activities

Clearer purpose and scope helped us to set parameters, manage expectations and set boundaries, respond to unforeseen situations, and ensure operational decisions were consistent. We worked to build shared purpose across recovery teams and were careful to document decisions to build the evidence base to demonstrate how our delivery aligned to our purpose.

Community expectations of what the office and the council should be doing, and how quickly, were often well beyond our mandate. Devastated communities and whānau sought help with a wide range of issues, many of them deeply personal, urgent and financially significant. Responding to these requests quickly and fairly, while making responsible use of public funds, put significant work and emotional load on recovery staff. With time, as decisions accumulated and precedents were established, it became easier to assess requests against agreed purpose and principles

Prioritisation helped to align actions with purpose

With pressure to make progress on many different fronts, we needed to make sure recovery activity was as targeted to our purpose as possible, coordinated across different teams' work programmes, and responsive to those facing the highest need and risk, not just those most visible or able to advocate for themselves. We introduced a structured prioritisation process to identify and escalate cases for wrap-around support and for acceleration in the risk assessment work schedule. This combined frontline insights from navigators and community roles with technical and operational considerations, helping us direct support to people facing extreme hardship or where there were concerns about remaining hazards and risks.

Recommendations for clear purpose in future recovery preparedness

1. As a priority, prepare an **interim recovery activation plan** as an immediate preparedness measure while longer-term capability is developed.
2. Develop a pre-event **recovery strategy** that sets out objectives, guiding principles, indicators, prioritisation processes, and the expected role of the council, mana whenua, communities and other partners in a range of emergency and recovery scenarios, with a modular approach or other flexibility to apply the strategy to meet the specific needs of any given event.
3. Embed **core values** within the recovery strategy including Māori outcomes, climate outcomes, equity outcomes, and recovery-specific needs for psychosocial and cultural wellbeing, social connections and networks, and community-led and place-based approaches.
4. Build **organisational awareness** so that elected members, executive leadership, and staff understand the purpose of recovery operations and their roles in future recoveries.
5. Define **recovery roles and responsibilities** in advance, including mechanisms for coordinated action and decision making across recovery agencies.

Advice for active recovery

- Establish a shared purpose to support aligned decision making and coordinated delivery.
- Legal and policy expertise is critical to get clear policies and principles in place.
- The event-specific Recovery Plan needs to be active and agile to reflect implementation as it evolves.
- Operational flexibility is easier to manage when it links back to a clear purpose and objectives.

High-trust mandate and leadership

A two-way relationship of trust between leaders and implementers, at all levels, empowers teams to act. Experienced leaders promote trust and assurance.

Why a high-trust mandate and leadership matters for recovery

Recovery, by its nature, requires people to operate outside of regular processes, often in conditions of significant uncertainty and time pressure. Decisions must be made and implemented quickly, without the assurance of the normal checks and balances. A high-trust mandate between decision-makers and implementers provides confidence that actions are taken in good faith and aligned with agreed objectives. This shortens decision cycles and enables faster delivery. Leadership with an existing track record and system knowledge matters.

What we observed

Relationships and track-record matter, especially in leadership and decision-making roles

The Recovery Leadership Team's organisational knowledge, regional understanding and established networks provided a credible basis for advice and recommendations. This track record gave executive leaders and elected members confidence to delegate authority and allowed recovery teams to keep moving forward with delivery.

A high-trust mandate enabled the office to be flexible and responsive as recovery needs and issues emerged over time. We reinforced trust when we delivered on our commitments – and undermined it when we couldn't. Regular reporting to elected members through open committees, the Storm Recovery Political Advisory Group and other governance forums ensured that operational activity remained visible, explainable and contestable. Trust with communities also depended on showing up when things had not gone well. In some cases, communities needed opportunities to raise concerns directly, have their frustrations acknowledged, and understand what was being done to resolve issues and rebuild confidence.

Within the Recovery Office, a culture of trust and empowerment depended on:

- **open communication** – being honest about challenges, limitations and the unknowns that could have a material impact on programme delivery
- **support systems for staff** – so staff were empowered to act, with regular progress check-ins and clear guidance when to escalate issues to managers
- **grace and goodwill** – understanding that people were doing the best they could in difficult circumstances and treating missteps as learning opportunities that informed practice improvements.

High-trust mandates extend to community partners

High-trust partnerships with our community and iwi partners developed and deepened over time. They were characterised by funding arrangements that supported shared accountability and devolved decision-making to respond to whānau needs as they emerged, and shared systems to support coordination and visibility. Partners were empowered to act within agreed objectives without waiting for case-by-case approvals. This increased recovery capacity without needing to scale council internal resources at the same rate.

Enabling communities to work with people they trust

The Recovery Office contracted mana whenua and community organisations already embedded in impacted communities and specific population groups to support people in their recovery journeys. Community-embedded convenors and navigators could reach further into communities, drawing on pre-existing relationships, local knowledge, cultural understanding and trust. This enabled more targeted and earlier engagement than the council could achieve alone, particularly with people less likely to access or trust government services. By extending a high-trust mandate to our community partners, we enabled these partners to bring their established relationships, credibility and local knowledge to engage with whānau.

Generally, we observed that where relationships were already established, information flowed more easily, decisions were made faster, and issues were resolved more quickly. Where relationships were not well-established, such as with parts of the insurance sector, building mutual understanding took time. Stronger pre-existing relationships with insurers and other key agencies would have enabled more coordinated responses, streamlined information sharing and clearer pathways for affected households.

Building trust with the Crown in a high-stakes environment

We found that the 'locally led, centrally supported' model of recovery needed a level of trust and flexibility from central government that our overall contractual objectives would still be met, even when aspects of delivery needed to change. Trust in the Crown-council relationship developed progressively over time. Regular meetings created space for understanding of roles and constraints and led to better alignment on priorities. As the council demonstrated the ability to deliver within a complex and evolving recovery environment, dialogue became more open and constructive, and confidence increased.

Recommendations for high-trust mandate and leadership in future recovery preparedness

6. Identify and develop **recovery-specific leadership capability**, comprised of people with strong organisational knowledge, regional understanding and established networks.
7. Proactively build and maintain **strategic relationships** with central government and key recovery stakeholders, including insurers, banks, iwi, community groups and relevant lifelines organisations. Leverage existing Auckland Council relationships where possible.
8. Design **governance arrangements** to achieve fast decisions, including maintaining direct reporting lines to the executive and, in larger scale recoveries, the Governing Body.
9. Ensure **mana whenua are part of recovery governance arrangements** from the outset, with pre-event agreements regarding roles and representation.

Advice for active recovery

- Governance and leadership structures and decision-making pathways need to be appropriate to the scale and needs of the event.
- Political and technical advisory groups can help provide feedback and direction.
- Regular engagement with elected members and responsible Ministers helps build visibility, shared understanding and trust. Opportunities include regular written progress reports, face-to-face briefings, and visits to affected areas.
- Ways of working can build understanding and trust, including proactive information-sharing, structured issue resolution forums, and problem-solving capability.
- Staff need clear guidance on their remit, and when and how to escalate decisions.
- Trust with iwi, communities and recovery partners is achieved through genuine, responsive engagement and partnership.

Capable people

Coordinating a recovery requires a diverse team of people equipped with the experience, disposition and composure to operate confidently, at speed, with imperfect information and where stakes are high.

Why capable people matter for recovery

Effective recovery depends on having the right people, in sufficient numbers, at the right time. The ability to scale capability up and down is essential as recovery needs evolve. Staff with knowledge of council processes are critical to ensuring recovery operations run smoothly. With appropriate onboarding, contingent workers can quickly fill surge requirements. Given the intensity and duration of recovery work, proactive support for team wellbeing is critical to sustaining performance, retaining capability, and looking after the health of staff, elected members and delivery partners.

What we observed

Recovery required diverse specialist capabilities to meet the breadth of recovery demands

We intentionally brought together a wide range of skills and expertise, including community development specialists, engineers, mātauranga Māori experts, communications specialists, wellbeing practitioners, finance and insurance experts, programme managers, public law experts, customer service advisors, property specialists, and others.

Mindset and soft skills mattered as much as experience

Recovery called for people who were able to be flexible, navigate uncertainty, adapt quickly, and make sound judgements under pressure. With a limited pool of experienced recovery practitioners to support a recovery of this scale, our recruitment focused on finding people with transferable skills and experience. Over time this expanded to also assessing candidates' problem-solving, critical thinking, conflict management, resilience and performance in a high-pressure environment.

Staffing requirements fluctuated significantly as recovery progressed

Changing demand, particularly in front-facing roles, was managed through a mix of contingent labour and the rapid activation of technical contracts. Using temporary staff helped handle the workload, but they needed experienced leaders to guide them.

Staff with experience working with council systems and processes helped make recovery activities more effective. Early in the response, the Recovery Office relied too heavily on capable staff who also retained their BAU roles, without formal secondment arrangements or sufficient backfilling of home roles.

Programme management and community development functions were particularly under-resourced in the early stages. By bringing dedicated capability on board, we sped up our delivery and improved community responsiveness. Programme managers were able to identify cross-programme efficiencies. Community development specialists convened local groups, supported participation in decisions, and connected community insights and priorities into recovery planning and delivery.

Surging different capabilities over the course of recovery

Different skillsets were required over the course of the recovery (see Figure 5). The initial surge of engineers to conduct risk assessments was followed by a growing team of property advisors and legal specialists to progress the Category 3 buy-out process. As purchases were completed, the Storm Affected Land team was put in place to manage properties and determine future land uses. The Navigator team was brought to full capacity as soon as funding was secured, then progressively reduced as whānau moved on in their recovery journey. At peak, we had over 200 staff working on recovery.

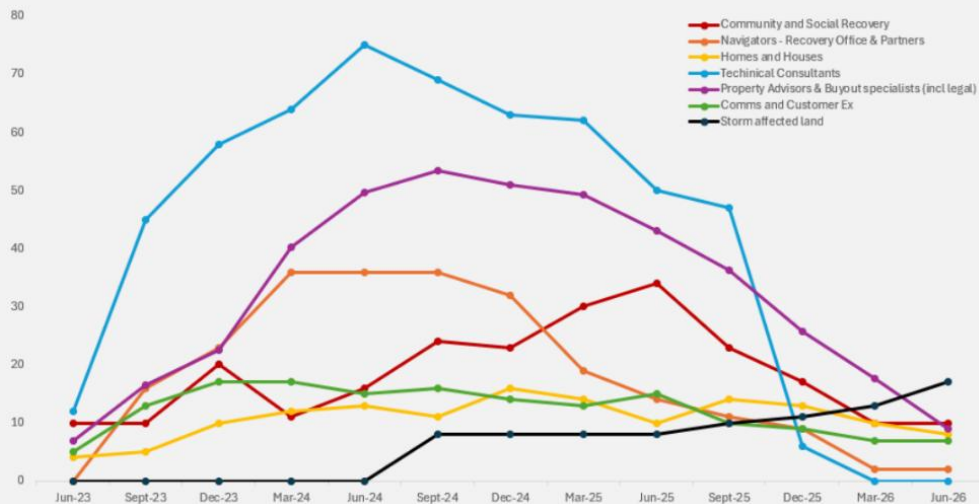


Figure 5. Recovery team capacity over time

Purposeful and challenging work

The work of recovery was often deeply challenging, but also highly motivating. It appeared to attract people with a strong drive to solve problems, make progress, and deliver outcomes. Helping people to be safe and rebuild their lives gave many staff a strong sense of purpose, which sustained them through roles that were, at times, relentless.

Recovery accelerated the emergence of new leaders. The scale, complexity and visibility of the work required staff at all levels to step into decision-making roles, manage ambiguity, and lead collaboratively across disciplines. This benefit extends beyond the council: the 2023 recovery has significantly upskilled organisations' and industries' expertise in working in the recovery environment, including stormwater and geotechnical engineering, property management, and house removals.

Staff on the frontline, including technical assessors, often found themselves listening to traumatising experiences and holding space for people in very emotional and vulnerable positions. Proactive staff wellbeing measures were critical to counter high workloads, repeated exposure to distressing situations, and sustained uncertainty. In future events, wellbeing considerations should be extended to include elected members and contractors who may not have the necessary supports (or even understanding of the impact of recovery work) in their home roles.

Kaimahi Ora Framework

The Kaimahi Ora Framework was developed in recognition of the psychosocial risks of working in recovery, due to high workloads and job demands, frequent change, feelings of responsibility, and holding space for those who have experienced a traumatic event.

The Framework set out to create a culture of wellbeing in the Recovery Office, ensuring that kaimahi were well-equipped to work in recovery, understood what to expect, and felt supported to manage their wellbeing, including at times of heightened stress.

Extensive support was made available through the programme, ranging from tools for people to access independently through to team practices such as regular debriefing and reflection, and professional supervision. The framework and supporting information is available to all Auckland Council staff and has been shared with a number of other council recovery teams.

GOAL	To create a supportive workplace that prioritises kaimahi wellbeing and improves whānau experience within recovery.				
OUTCOMES	Kaimahi are set up for success Kaimahi are well equipped to work in recovery and job demands are managed proactively				
	Kaimahi know what is expected Kaimahi understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from others to do their jobs well and maintain a culture of wellbeing				
	Kaimahi feel supported Kaimahi feel supported to manage their wellbeing, including at times of heightened stress				
WHAT	Maintaining mentally healthy work by managing psychosocial risk				
HOW	Planning & initiation	Professional development	Leadership	Culture	Supports
	What psychosocial risks can be eliminated at the outset?	How do we equip kaimahi to do their job well and prevent harm?	How do we equip leaders to maintain psychologically safe teams?	How do we embed a culture of wellbeing? How do we monitor wellbeing?	How do we ensure access to a spectrum of wellbeing supports?

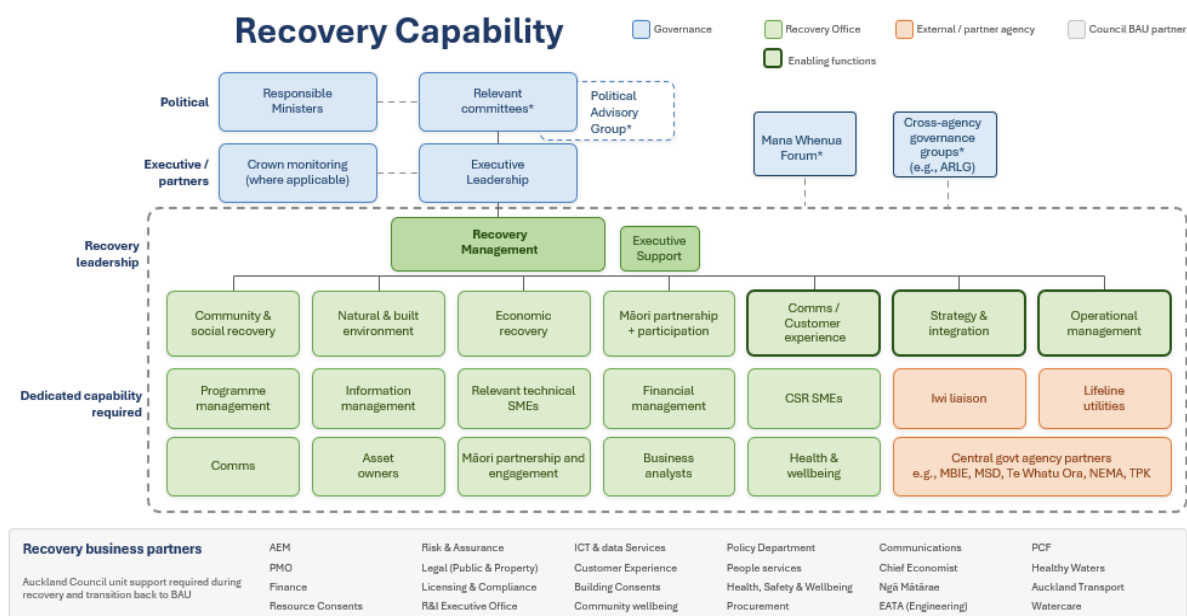
Recommendations for capable people in future recovery preparedness

10. Define **recovery competencies and capability requirements** as part of the pre-event Recovery Strategy, including technical and community development expertise, cultural capability and workforce diversity that reflects Auckland communities³.
11. Establish a **core recovery preparedness team** within Auckland Emergency Management supported by a **recovery-ready workforce** across the council that can be scaled up quickly when needed.
12. Embed **recovery capability and contribution requirements in council business planning** and job descriptions and establish clear processes for activating staff secondments during recovery.
13. Develop a comprehensive **recovery training curriculum** to prepare staff, elected members and delivery partners for recovery work. This should include modules on understanding how disasters affect people and communities, working safely and appropriately in recovery contexts, psychosocial safety, and practical strategies for personal safety, wellbeing and sustainable practice.
14. Ensure contractual arrangements with **key external suppliers** provide for recovery requirements, including participation in pre-event training to maintain recovery-specific skills, and processes for rapid mobilisation of specialist skills and recruitment of contingent workers.
15. Develop screening tools and skills mapping to support **effective recruitment** for recovery roles.
16. Promote recovery roles as **rewarding and valuable opportunities** to build careers and make a difference.
17. Incorporate **wellbeing tools** in pre-event recovery planning as essential to support staff, elected members and delivery partners to do their jobs well and avoid burnout. This should include practical wellbeing strategies, self-care planning and resilience tools, peer support and mentoring, de-escalation training and regular professional supervision and wellbeing check-ins for frontline staff.

³ Appendix Three: Recovery roles

Advice for active recovery

- Right-sizing the office in proportion to the scale of event will ensure adequate staffing and realistic workloads. This includes ensuring implementation of recovery plans is supported by programme management, project management and administrative capability to support specialists to deliver effectively. Figure 6 sets out possible arrangements for recovery capability.
- A smooth transition from response operations to recovery, including transition of key personnel where possible, will make a big difference to the rollout of recovery.
- Business as usual may need to be reprioritised or deferred, and recovery secondments backfilled.
- Event-specific induction pathways help to ensure recovery staff, community and social partners understand their roles, responsibilities, interdependencies with other teams, and recovery-specific ways of working.



* Māori representation (Iwi, Houkura, Te Puni Kōkiri)

Figure 6. Arrangements for recovery capability

Collaborative ways of working

Intentionally working across and beyond the recovery team contributes different perspectives, skillsets and resources to delivery.

Why collaboration matters for recovery

Effective recovery relies on many agencies, disciplines, and communities working together on complex, interdependent issues. No single person or organisation holds all the expertise, authority, or resources required. Collaborative ways of working allow each party to contribute what they do best, bringing together technical, operational, financial, people-centred, and community-led perspectives. Without deliberate coordination, recovery activity can quickly fragment leading to gaps, duplicated effort, inconsistent decisions, and a poor experience for affected communities.

What we observed

Collaboration required dedicated effort across the Recovery Office

In the early stages, formal coordination mechanisms were not in place. We relied heavily on individual relationships and informal connections, resulting in inconsistent alignment, slower decision-making, and missed opportunities to coordinate funding and delivery. Co-location with central government agencies and formal forums went some way to improving coordination, but it still took many months to establish fully functional programmes.

Within the Recovery Office, dedicated internal communications and programme management kaimahi helped to bridge the activities of different teams. Regular office standups and information sharing contributed to the culture of the office and helped to keep people connected, building respect for expertise and active appreciation of others' contributions.

Working together within the recovery office

Each team developed their own collaborative ways of working. For the flood risk assessors, coming from the council and 25 different consultancies, weekly meetings and an 'in-office' day on Tuesdays helped assessors to develop common approaches, resolve challenges, and share the emotional load of working with impacted homeowners. For the Navigation team, collaboration was underpinned by mātauranga Māori with a focus on mana, relational ways of working, and shared reflection, supported by Whakawhiti Kōrero as a suite of reflective conversations. Practicing tikanga provided cultural comfort for kaimahi, with practices of actively acknowledging achievements and transitions, and making space for reflection and processing of challenging situations.

Programme management functions created a single view across workstreams, enabling coordination between previously siloed activities. The establishment of a shared CRM system provided a common data repository to track household interactions, needs and progress, improving visibility across teams and enabling more coordinated support.

Integrated data supported better collaboration

The flood and landslide risk assessment teams developed their programmes independently, scheduling their site assessments and managing information in separate spreadsheets. Properties couldn't be categorised until both flood and landslide assessments were complete, but the priority sites for each team were different. Community and social teams had different priorities again, focusing on the most severely affected people. Introducing a programme manager across both teams improved efficiencies across the categorisation programme. A shared data repository was developed, and we were better able to communicate timeframes to homeowners.

Recovery connected people to services

In time, the recovery office became 'dot-connectors' across a range of other teams and organisations and a go-to contact for flood-affected residents and communities that needed to engage with other teams and organisations. What people were experiencing didn't fit neatly inside a recovery or stormwater or compliance box – they spanned a range of activities within and outside of council. For example, someone might have needed their placard status updated, support with rates relief, guidance through the categorisation process, connection to insurance resolution support, and help to deal with the burden on their wellbeing.

Community partners delivered local-level collaboration

At a community level, in situations where relationships with iwi, community organisations, and local leaders were already in place, engagement was faster, trust was higher, and support could be mobilised more quickly. Place-based roles proved to be an important part of the recovery system. By working alongside communities over time, they connected local knowledge, lived experience and community priorities with technical programmes, policy decisions and recovery investment. This enabled more responsive decision-making, strengthened trust, and supported community-led approaches to recovery and future resilience. Community convenors used diverse methods to connect with local people, working with community groups, iwi, faith communities, holding street meetings and pop-ups, and even knocking on peoples' doors to offer support.

Regular engagement supported Māori participation and partnership

Mana whenua interests and responsibilities span recovery, kaitiakitanga, cultural heritage, whenua and awa restoration, marae preparedness, community wellbeing, risk reduction and adaptation. Effective partnership requires sustained relationships and agreed ways of working before events occur, not only engagement during a crisis.

Feedback from mana whenua Navigation Service partners highlighted the value of a regular cadence of engagement, bringing Māori voices into the governance and development of social recovery programmes. Support that was delivered quickly (e.g. through the Moments that Matter and Recovery Vouchers) and delivered locally by partners who knew their communities was perceived as mana-enhancing. Feedback emphasised the importance of enduring and visible partnerships between mana whenua and the council, rather than transactional or contractual arrangements.

Coordinating recovery research to supports communities and practice

The 2023 recovery generated significant interest from academic institutions, researchers and evaluators. This created opportunities to build evidence and learning, but also challenges for impacted communities and recovery teams. Multiple researchers sought access to affected communities, often at a time when people were still dealing with displacement, loss, uncertainty and recovery fatigue.

Without a coordinated approach, research activity can place additional burden on communities, duplicate effort, raise ethical concerns, and fail to translate into practical improvements for recovery. Recovery teams also need a way to understand what research is underway, provide guidance where appropriate, protect communities from over-research, and ensure findings are returned in ways that are useful for practice, policy and community learning.

Future recovery arrangements should include a clear research coordination function. This does not mean controlling independent research, but it does mean creating better visibility of research activity, setting expectations for ethical and culturally appropriate engagement, supporting alignment with recovery priorities, and ensuring findings are shared back with communities and decision-makers.

Recommendations for collaborative ways of working in future recovery preparedness

18. Plan for the **culture of recovery**, considering how mātauranga Māori could shape ways of working and an inclusive environment for diverse kaimahi and communities.
19. Provide **dedicated resources to support collaborative approaches**, including a space for co-location, shared tools, processes, programme management and governance arrangements that enable collaboration across teams and agencies, including clear roles, decision-making and escalation pathways, and information-sharing mechanisms.
20. Establish **protocols for ongoing collaboration with other sectors** including the Crown, insurers, banks and utilities, ensuring aligned understanding of each other's recovery roles, objectives and processes and providing agreements for data sharing, governance arrangements, and cross-agency working where possible.
21. Develop and **maintain a recovery relationship map and typology** that identifies key partners and stakeholders, clarifies the purpose and owner of each relationship, and sets out how relationships are managed and activated before and during recovery.
22. Incorporate collaborative ways of working in **pre-event recovery training** to build experience with collaborative structures and processes.
23. Protect and grow **established recovery networks** for the future, ensuring future recovery efforts can build on what has been developed through the 2023 recovery.
24. Build enduring **relationships with community and iwi organisations**, with deliberate pre-recovery investment in local capability and flexible relationship-based models, so that partners are ready to step into recovery roles and deliver culturally anchored support after an event, particularly in under-resourced communities.
25. Consider how **diverse groups**, including less visible or vocal communities, will be supported to participate meaningfully in recovery decision-making, with accessible ways that work for them.
26. Establish a **recovery research coordination approach** to provide visibility of research activity, reduce burden on impacted communities, support ethical and culturally appropriate practice, and strengthen the use of research findings in recovery policy and delivery.

Advice for active recovery

- Relationship building is core recovery work, needing time and resources to establish and maintain relationships with organisations, communities and iwi, particularly in the early phases when communities are under significant pressure.
- Collaborative governance models can bring together the council, government agencies, iwi partners, NGOs, and community organisations to align priorities and coordinate activities.
- Recovery leadership group membership that encompasses different recovery functions and specialities helps to form a view across workstreams.
- Integrated programme management is a core recovery capability. Dedicated programme roles, established early, can align workstreams, integrate data, manage interdependences, and provide a clear view of progress, priorities, and impacts on customers and communities.
- Dedicated internal communications capacity actively promotes collaborative culture across teams through regular updates, forums and two-way engagement.
- A place-based lens in areas with a range of recovery needs and activities can support more integrated delivery of programmes such as transport, land remediation, housing, and community recovery. Joint planning of timing, prioritisation, and impacts (e.g., road closures and construction sequencing) reduces disruption, fragmentation and overwhelm for communities.
- Adapt engagement approaches and resourcing to align to evolving recovery needs and different communities.

Situational awareness

Situational awareness, drawn from a range of sources, informs coordinated and equitable decisions and allows for refinements as intelligence changes.

Why situational awareness matters for recovery

Locally grounded knowledge, good data management and analytical capability support efficient operational planning, resource allocation, prioritisation, problem solving, and transparent reporting. Effective situational awareness depends on wide-reaching and robust data collection, and on the ability to analyse, interpret, and translate information into decision-ready intelligence.

What we observed

Managing data was a major challenge

The volume of information coming into the Recovery Office created a 'data flood' that was difficult to manage. Fragmented data sources and systems, inconsistent definitions and small sample sizes reduced confidence in the accuracy and completeness of the information available.

While teams rapidly developed data management workarounds with spreadsheets and SharePoint, these had to be built from scratch and were designed for each individual team's requirements. At times, limited data sharing – firstly from response to recovery, and then across recovery teams – had impacts on the speed of set-up, service provision, categorisation processes, insurance interactions, and communications. Sharing data with other agencies was another significant challenge.

Information was coming from a range of sources and at a range of levels. This included everything from technical evidence collected in property assessments at the individual level, to feedback from communities and affected residents about the impacts and our support.

Opportunities for more efficient data collection

Privacy and other data governance concerns led to hesitancy to share data between teams within the Recovery Office and across other partner organisations and agencies. This led to duplication and inefficiency: impacted people often needed to repeat their story to different recovery agencies. Within the Recovery Office, they might speak to a navigator, a risk assessor, and a property assessor. On top of that, different agencies and council teams were sending people to inspect the same site for rapid building assessment, insurance and EQC assessments. When we needed data to progress risk assessments and property purchases, we relied on homeowners being able to locate and share all the relevant information. Further investigation is needed to develop a model to streamline this, including whether pre-emptive data sharing arrangements could assist, and whether one on-site assessment could be fit for purpose for different agencies' information needs.

Building a shared picture of recovery impacts

A key challenge in the early stages of recovery was the absence of a standard method for assessing impacts across all recovery domains. Assessments were undertaken across a range of recovery areas, but there was no consistent approach for bringing together social, economic, cultural, environmental, infrastructure, property and wellbeing impacts into one regional recovery picture.

This made it harder to understand the relative scale and severity of impacts across places, population groups and recovery domains. It also limited the ability to prioritise effort, identify interdependencies, communicate the overall recovery challenge, and support evidence-based decision-making at pace.

For example, the absence of a regional view of displaced people obscured where housing pressure was most acute across Auckland. Limited visibility of community-level impacts, emerging needs, and uneven patterns of hardship meant some pockets of impact were identified late or risked being missed.

Future recovery arrangements should include a shared recovery impact assessment approach that can be activated early. This should bring together quantitative data, local intelligence, iwi and community insights, service demand, infrastructure impacts, property information and wellbeing indicators. The purpose should not be to create a perfect dataset, but to provide a common operating picture that helps decision-makers understand where impacts are greatest, where effects are compounding, and where recovery effort should be prioritised.

Turning data into intelligence and advice

Situational awareness requires data to be transformed into intelligence and advice. A major challenge for the recovery team, particularly in the depths of operations, was shifting from individual stories and case-level information to form a coherent, macro-level view that could inform prioritisation and resource allocation at a regional level. At times, we were aware of issues that were emerging but had little capacity to respond as quickly as needed.

As the recovery progressed and the CRM was put in place, data capture was increasingly centralised. Dashboards became more reliable and accurate, giving staff access to the same information. More timely information supported decision-makers to respond more quickly and adjust course as new intelligence emerged.

Recovery relied heavily on self-reporting and voluntary participation from residents, alongside information from field reports, technical assessments and partner agencies. As systems matured, we were able to integrate more data. In the case of flood data we included crowdsourced information, social media signals, and radar inputs to strengthen situational awareness and improve the accuracy of property assessments and categorisation decisions.

Approaching property risk assessments on a property-by-property basis was necessary to make accurate categorisation decisions, but required large technical teams to conduct site visits, review models, collate and analyse hazard data – effectively building a very large dataset about the impacts of the 2023 storms on housing. Internal quality assurance processes were critical to ensuring the information and resulting categorisation decision for each property was accurate. Review and dispute processes enabled further investigation when needed, for example when some information was missing from the initial assessment.

Data capture during response

Data on observed rainfall and flooding, gathered from multiple sources during and immediately following the weather events, was a critical input to the property assessments, providing evidence of actual flooding under known rainfall conditions (which sometimes differed markedly from modelled predictions). In addition to the existing hydrometric network and rain radar systems, Auckland Council rapidly organised reporting on flood impacts from staff, contractors, and consultants, stood up a crowdsourcing website, and searched social media to generate a region-wide database of flood observations.

Observational data gathered during recovery has added confidence to council flood and landslide modelling. It is being used to inform longer-term risk reduction and climate adaptation, linking recovery decisions to adaptation and land-use planning, infrastructure investment, and resilience strategies.

Local data proved essential

Local knowledge of impacted communities proved essential to understanding where recovery efforts needed to be targeted, and how best to engage with different groups. Some communities organised effectively, while others were quieter and less visible. Navigators and community convenors actively listened for quieter voices and fed information into the Recovery Office's planning processes to ensure equity considerations were not overlooked.

Staff in place-based roles acted as an interface between technical teams and community context. They helped all staff understand local impacts, sensitivities, timing, trust issues, and community priorities, while supporting residents to navigate complex technical information and system pathways. This improved the relevance and timing of engagement, revealed unmet needs, and reduced the risk of decisions being made without sufficient understanding of local realities.

Further work needed to develop a Māori recovery data framework

The Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Plan proposed the co-development of a Māori recovery data framework and a monitoring and reporting programme to provide visibility of the impacts of recovery activity on Māori. This work was not completed. As a result, the Recovery Office did not have a consistent framework for assessing Māori recovery outcomes or understanding whether programmes were producing equitable and mana-enhancing results. Future recovery planning should agree outcomes, measures, data governance and reporting arrangements with mana whenua and Māori communities before or early in recovery.

Recommendations for situational awareness in future recovery preparedness

27. Define **core data and intelligence requirements** for both response and recovery operations, with minimum essential datasets required to support decision-making including agreed definitions, thresholds for 'good enough' data, and clarity on how information will be gathered and used across response and recovery phases, developing templates where possible. Data needs to address social, economic, built, natural, and wellbeing impacts.
28. Improve processes for capturing, storing, sharing, and actioning **data and intelligence**, particularly in the transition from response to recovery.
29. Develop and maintain a standard recovery impact assessment framework that can be activated early in recovery and used across recovery domains to support prioritisation, planning, investment and reporting (councils, government).
30. Co-develop with mana whenua and Māori communities a **Māori recovery outcomes and data framework** that identifies the information needed to understand impacts on Māori, support appropriate data governance, and enable transparent monitoring and reporting on whether recovery actions are achieving equitable and mana-enhancing outcomes.
31. Establish a **Customer Relationship Management platform and data management systems** for use across response and recovery, integrated with council systems and including geospatial data systems, automated data collection (where appropriate) and timely intelligence dashboards.
32. Formalise pre-event **data-sharing arrangements** with key agencies, partner organisations and the insurance sector, including governance settings, secure and centralised data storage systems, and privacy protocols to enable faster and more coordinated information flows during recovery.
33. Resource dedicated roles and mechanisms to capture **community insights and experience** to inform operational strategy.
34. Plan for **capacity and capability to problem solve** – from analysis to implementation – as information becomes available.

Advice for active recovery

- Resourcing data and intelligence capability from the outset is important, including resourcing for data management, analysis, geospatial data, modelling and visualisation to identify impacted populations, needs, trends and gaps, and horizon scanning to anticipate emerging risks, future impacts, and unmet needs.
- Data integrity, privacy, security and accessibility can be managed by following established council protocols.
- Live dashboards and other reporting allow recovery teams to independently access and apply data as relevant to their role.
- Build a shared understanding of impacts early.
- Community and frontline insights are a valuable data source to inform recovery decisions and actions.

Accessible information and support

Open and regular contact builds trust and supports impacted people to engage and make informed decisions for their own recovery. Support is responsive to different levels of need.

Why accessible information and support matters for recovery

In a recovery environment where uncertainty is high, regular engagement and accurate information helps people understand what is happening and what to expect next. Recovery communications need to ensure messages are accessible for diverse and often-traumatised audiences. Technical information needs to be supported with explanatory material to help people understand the content. Visible leadership, relational continuity, and personal engagement help to build a sense of stability.

What we observed

People looked to the council for information and support

After the 2023 storms, impacted people and communities looked to the council for information and support. Whether it was closed roads, blocked drains or damaged homes and businesses, they wanted to know what help was on the way, and when. It was important that the Recovery Office got clear communications out quickly, using multiple channels to reach diverse audiences.

Communicating difficult messages was a key part of the job. Every message was part of the recovery experience, so we tried to make sure our messaging was human – more empathetic than bureaucratic. The challenge was delivering messages with empathy, while being clear about what we can and can't do and managing expectations.

Trauma-informed communication

A person's capacity to absorb complex information is greatly reduced when they have been impacted by a disaster. Information we shared needed to be clear, free from jargon, and repeated often. We made deliberate efforts to reach everyone who was impacted by the storms, in formats to suit different audience needs. As we gained a better understanding of where flood impacts were greatest, we developed direct campaigns to reach people in these areas, including targeted media, direct letters and door-knocking.

When new information needs emerged, we considered how best to respond from a customer perspective. For example, Homeowner Handbooks provided plain-language step-by-step guides for people to understand the process when they received their property categorisation.

Similarly, when it came to customer enquiries, we did our best to create customer-centric systems that allowed people to get quick answers without needing to repeat their story or jump through bureaucratic hoops. This capability greatly improved once we had our Customer Relationship Management system in place.

Technical information required additional communication. It was essential that the information we were communicating was accurate and able to be understood. With flood and landslide risk assessments, impacted whānau were being asked to rely on our technical teams' expertise as the basis for life-altering decisions. The reports needed to meet professional standards, but this meant they were difficult for laypeople to understand.

We developed explanatory notes, introduced a plain-language summary at the start of reports, and set up a Technical Helpdesk with engineers to explain report findings to homeowners. Review processes, built into the categorisation framework, allowed people to challenge reports and have categorisation decisions independently reviewed.

Sometimes, we didn't get it right. Pressure to include timeframes for property risk assessment before we completely understood the scale of the work meant that we over-promised and under-delivered to our communities. Although risk assessments and categorisations were completed within just over two years of events, and all buy-out offers made within three and a half years, homeowners were understandably distressed when we didn't deliver when we said we would. Delays had financial and other personal costs for impacted people; trust was eroded.

Kanohi ki te kanohi / face to face communication was important

Showing up in person was an important first step to building community confidence, especially in the early stages. Public meetings and webinars offered opportunities for people to ask questions and hear genuine responses from the recovery team. Even where meetings were challenging because information was uncertain, in-person exchanges offered meaningful two-way engagement and gave a human face to the process. Being visible and accountable, even when there were no easy answers, was an important part of maintaining confidence in the recovery process. This included fronting media interviews about challenging issues.

Having well-briefed leaders that could communicate clearly, calmly and empathetically with communities was essential. Elected members played a critical bridging role with communities. The recovery office provided briefings and engagement support, but additional resourcing, particularly for elected members in the hardest-hit areas, is something to consider for future recoveries.

Navigators and community convenors provided trusted support

Navigators and community convenors were trusted intermediaries for those Aucklanders most in need of support. Having a stable point of contact, whether for queries or for more intensive support, provided continuity and upheld the mana of impacted whānau. It took significant behind-the-scenes effort to get the navigator service and community-facing roles funded and operational, with deployment happening several months after recovery began. For future recoveries, having navigator capability ready to deploy early in recovery would considerably increase effectiveness and access to support.

Navigation services walked alongside impacted whānau

Navigators made complex recovery systems easier for affected whānau to understand and access. As a consistent point of contact, they explained processes, connected people to support, followed up issues, and helped households understand what decisions were needed and when. This reduced stress and uncertainty, particularly for people less confident navigating government systems or facing barriers to access. Starting with a strengths-based assessment, the service helped whānau to build an understanding of recovery pathways, their options, and helped make recovery support genuinely reachable. The service was less effective when engagement came late or whānau needed specialist technical advice beyond the scope of the navigator role. This reinforces the need for early activation, clear role definition, and strong links to technical, insurance and regulatory expertise.

Recommendations for accessible information and support in future recovery preparedness

35. Develop an integrated multi-channel strategy for providing **up to date information to impacted Aucklanders**, staff and key stakeholders.
36. Develop **targeted communications strategies for diverse populations**, with mana whenua, Māori communities and other population partners including identifying trusted channels, accessible and culturally appropriate formats, and roles for developing and sharing information with different communities.
37. Establish **self-service platforms** to support staff, stakeholder and customer enquiries.
38. As a matter of priority, establish an effective **Customer Relationship Management system** for those delivering recovery, integrated with business as usual and response systems, with clearly defined business rules ensuring consistency in how customer information is managed to be accurate, up to date and available.
39. Make the **navigation service** a core funded and scalable recovery function, with pre-agreed delivery models (including partner delivery) to enable rapid activation.
40. Plan for **place-based and population-specific roles** to enable locally responsive delivery and genuine community participation in decision-making.

Advice for active recovery

- Visible leaders and key spokespeople for recovery need to be able to communicate effectively and empathetically with communities.
- Mapping the end-to-end customer journey, from readiness and response through to recovery helps to ensure seamless information flows and put impacted people at the centre of recovery processes.
- A single, clearly defined 'front door' for the recovery operation guides people to the right place for support. Without this, people tend to contact multiple council staff members which leads to duplication, missed requests, or incomplete or incorrect information being provided to people.
- Coordinated communication processes and co-location of teams (where possible) helps ensure consistency of messaging.
- Using a variety of voice, digital, face to face and print channels helps to reach diverse audiences, including translated and easy-read formats.
- Use caution when communicating timeframes and other commitments.
- Community and iwi partnership models provide options for personalised and community-based interactions with impacted Aucklanders.
- Information needs should be regularly reviewed, with flexibility to change the approach as things change, and to implement innovative solutions.
- Technical helpdesks and other ways to translate technical information into simple language will improve customer experience – these technical 'bridges' need to be identified early and sufficiently resourced.

Enabling systems and processes

Pre-established and effective systems and processes for decision-making, information management, quality assurance, procurement and people management allow rapid action while reducing risks of inefficiencies, errors or harm.

Why enabling systems and processes matter for recovery

Recovery is administratively intensive, involving high volumes of cases, documentation, communication, and complex decision-making under pressure. Robust and integrated systems and processes enable rapid mobilisation and action at scale, while reducing the risks of inefficiency, inconsistency, and harm to impacted communities. This includes systems and processes in the recovery operation and in the wider council systems that support recruitment, procurement, finance, governance, risk and quality assurance, and health, safety and wellbeing.

What we observed

Adapting business as usual to meet recovery requirements

The 2023 recovery included a range of activities that were not business as usual for Auckland Council. In some cases, existing council systems could be extended, with workarounds to manage the scale and pace of recovery activity. In many cases, significant new systems and processes needed to be built from scratch. Necessary systems included:

- accelerating resource and building consents for impacted property repair
- providing rates relief for uninhabitable dwellings
- developing technical methodologies to define the threshold of “intolerable risk to life” from flooding and landslides
- developing frameworks and operational procedures for flood and landslide risk assessment to implement the technical methodologies
- designing risk assessment reports to communicate the outcomes to property owners
- defining and delivering the categorisation and property support (buy-out and 2P) schemes
- valuing and purchasing Category 3 properties
- building a system to consistently consider reimbursement for Category 3 homeowners where insurance proceeds had already been spent in good faith on property remediation, before receiving their categorisation
- managing and maintaining purchased properties, with significant issues around theft, vandalism, illegal dumping and other antisocial behaviour
- removing Category 3 dwellings
- developing and administering a grant scheme for Category 2P properties, with significant technical support required
- developing and administering a grant scheme to support property owners to restore access to their properties, where damage had occurred in the road reserve
- designing, setting up and managing a dispute resolution process including provision for expert determinations
- setting up a process to consider and issue decisions on special circumstances applications and a process for Chief Executive reviews of special circumstances decisions
- developing processes to provide advice on and to support discretionary decision making under the schemes
- supporting removal of Rapid Building Assessment placards

- updating Land Information Memoranda and property files
- working with other owners in shared ownership arrangements (Category 3 unit title and cross lease properties)
- establishing a partnership-based Navigation Service for impacted whānau, delivered through council and trusted local organisations
- developing and administering community-facing grants, mental wellbeing funding, participatory grant-making and partner funding agreements
- supporting community participation and local recovery planning, including community-led actions and devolved funding pathways
- managing customer enquiries
- managing a high number of requests for official information and responding to reviews by the Ombudsman.

For each new process, we needed to consider the end-to-end customer journey, information requirements, documentation, decision points, allocation of staff and other resources, prioritisation, legal requirements, and potential implementation challenges.

Recovery also required sustained and embedded support from core council functions, including recruitment, procurement, finance, governance, risk and quality assurance, and health, safety and wellbeing. Speed remained a challenge where systems were not designed to prioritise recovery needs. Particular needs, some of which we achieved and some of which could be further improved, included:

- Shorter approval time for governance reporting and decision-making cycles, given how quickly changes were happening in the recovery environment.
- Embedded support from legal, financial and data teams.
- Faster recruitment processes. We were able to utilise an existing recruitment partner to surge contingent staffing and meet capability gaps as needed.
- Faster and more flexible secondment processes, including backfilling of home roles so capability could be drawn from across council quickly as recovery needs changed.
- Streamlined processes to accelerate procurement.
- Using supplier panels where they existed helped to get contracts in place quickly (e.g., house removal).
- Leveraging existing relationships, agreements and contracts with suppliers (e.g., geotechnical and flooding risk assessment)
- Scaled up wellbeing, health and safety support tailored to recovery conditions, recognising that wellbeing needs were more acute for kaimahi working directly with impacted communities than in most other council business.
- More targeted risk and quality assurance processes – essential given the size and complexity of recovery activities – focusing on what was important from a risk perspective rather than simply following prescribed processes that take team members away from delivery.

Where systems were lacking or misaligned with recovery needs, delivery slowed and community distress increased. Affected people were often required to repeat information, experienced delays, or received inconsistent updates as staff worked around system limitations and parallel processes. Acknowledging that the needs of every recovery will be different, ensuring systems and processes are recovery-ready would significantly improve the experience of delivery – for staff and for communities.

Rapid building assessments and placards

By the end of February 2023, Auckland Council had conducted more than 7,200 Rapid Building Assessments and issued 604 red placards, 2,318 yellow placards, and 4,285 white placards. The assessments identified unsafe structures, restricted-access buildings, and those requiring precautionary checks.

Placards were sometimes challenged by homeowners due to perceived inconsistency or lack of clarity; or due to concern that having a note on the LIM may impact the value of the property. For some households, the process to resolve disputed RBAs was costly and difficult to navigate, compounding stress and delaying recovery. The council established a temporary geotechnical service to provide advice for homeowners on the nature of repairs required for placards to be removed.

At the end of April 2026, 107 placards remained in place (15 red and 92 yellow). Around half are in either the Category 3 or Category 2P schemes so will be resolved through those processes.

The 2023 experience highlighted the need for clear communication to homeowners and transparent, clear processes to review and remove placards. MBIE has since developed improved RBA guidance, and the council has work underway to ensure the placard removal process is clearly defined.

Recommendations for enabling systems and processes in future recovery preparedness

41. Continue to use and further develop a pre-event **recovery toolkit** that provides a central, evolving resource of guidance, templates and tools to support effective recovery preparedness and management across Auckland Council.
42. Formally manage the **transition from emergency response to recovery** by:
 - a. ensuring recovery planning begins early and remains closely linked to response activities,
 - b. establishing a clear handover and reset of governance
 - c. maintaining continuity of knowledge and, where appropriate, key personnel.
43. Develop a process to enable **prioritisation** during recovery that addresses equity and maintains efficiency.
44. Define **recovery-specific business requirements** and work with internal business partners to ensure processes and support are ready for rapid deployment. This may involve defining new, or amending, existing services (including performance levels), and includes core functions such as procurement, wellbeing, recruitment and secondment processes
45. Undertake a fit-for-purpose review of **existing provider contracts** to ensure they meet recovery needs, including scalability and service gaps.

Advice for active recovery

- Securing dedicated senior resource from key departments helps activate recovery operations and may be needed for the duration of recovery.
- Quality assurance and continuous improvement processes help to review recovery delivery against agreed purpose and objectives.
- Expert panels and external groups can help make sense of data and confirm recommend approaches.
- Emergency powers, Orders in Council and fast track processes may be available to accelerate delivery; legal advice is required to assist in assessing such options.

Access to funding

Recovery generates new and immediate cost pressures. Sufficient and flexible funding is essential to activate and deliver recovery efforts.

Why access to funding matters for recovery

Funding determines the scope and speed of recovery. Flexible funding arrangements, including seed funding for recovery initiation and provision for funding local delivery partners, are needed to provide for the uncertainties of recovery, and to accelerate long-term resilience and risk reduction where possible. Funding a large recovery is beyond the capacity of a local authority acting alone; the Crown support is necessary.

What we observed

We estimate the total cost to deliver the actions set out in the Tāmaki Makaurau recovery plan will exceed \$2.5 billion by 2034 (see Table 6). Overall, Auckland Council will fund around 56% of the total recovery costs, with 44% coming from Crown and 0.1% from other sources.

Table 6: Estimated cost to deliver the Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Plan

Recovery activity	Cost \$M		Funding \$M		
	Estimated total June 2026	Forecast total June 2034	Crown	Council	External
1. Repairing and strengthening public infrastructure	608.8	984.9	431.0	555.8	0.0
2. Removed intolerable risk at residential properties	1,333.6	1,409.3	655.9	753.4	0.0
3. Supported impacted Aucklanders, communities and businesses	77.9	79.5	54.3	22.5	2.7
4. Safe management and future use of storm-affected land	11.3	76.2	0.0	76.2	0.0
5. Coordinating the recovery	23.6	24.4	0.0	24.4	0.0
Total estimated cost of recovery efforts	2,055.3	2,574.2	1,141.2	1,432.2	2.7
Share of cost			44.3%	55.6%	0.1%

While the cost of recovery is significant, choosing not to invest in repairing infrastructure, reducing risk to life, and supporting people to recover, was not a realistic option for our region.

Fast access to seed funding is critical

In 2023, no established process was in place for funding an unexpected recovery programme, however the council was able to act reasonably quickly after the 2023 storms to provide the seed funding needed to stand up a recovery effort. The Governing Body approved unbudgeted costs of up to \$3 million in March 2023 to stand up a recovery office, prepare a recovery plan and procure the specialist support needed to

assess impacts and inform the recovery programme.⁴ Speed was critical to ensure recovery efforts could get underway quickly and help to restore community confidence.

Co-funding significantly expanded the scope and speed of recovery

At the outset, Auckland’s recovery scope focused on infrastructure repair, flood resilience, and community support. The Recovery Office was expected to be in place for just over one year, until April 2024. As the scale of need became apparent and the scope expanded, so did the need for resourcing and revised budgets.

The Auckland (North Island Weather Events) Funding Agreement, signed by the Crown and the council in October 2023, offered significantly more funding, with \$877 million Crown funding for property buy-outs, community-scale risk reduction projects and transport network repairs (see Table 7). A further \$199 million of NZTA funding enabled the regional transport programme. The cost to the council for the residential programme was balanced with Crown commitments to support public infrastructure recovery which the council would otherwise have needed to fund alone.

Table 7: Co-funding the 2023 recovery

Auckland Funding Agreement	Initial agreement (Oct 2023)			June 2026 ¹			
	\$M	Total	Crown	Council	Total	Crown	Council
Category 3 buyouts		774	387	387	1,252	626	626
Category 2 risk reduction projects		613	380	233	231	143	88
Regional transport projects		110	110		110	110	
Auckland Funding Agreement		1,497	877	620	1,593	879⁵	714
Regional transport projects (NZTA)		280	199	81	280	199	81
Total co-funding package		1,777	1,076	701	1,873	1,078	795

Ultimately, the co-funding package provided for 73 per cent of the total cost of recovery. While co-funding redirected council investment to private residential property, it also enabled significantly more investment in infrastructure repair and resilience and increased the pace of delivery.

Auckland had the scale and financial ability to undertake this co-funded approach to recovery, however cost would be a barrier to other smaller councils, and potentially to Auckland Council in the future, as other fiscal pressures continue.

Additional grant funding of \$6.86 million provided by central government helped to accelerate the delivery of key aspects of the recovery programme by enabling additional resource to be engaged at critical periods.

⁴ Governing Body Resolution GB/2023/35, 23 March 2025.

⁵ June 2026 figures reflect \$1.959 million of additional Category 3 funding confirmed by central government in May 2026 and matched by additional council funding as per the 50/50 cost share set out in the funding agreement. Buyout costs above this level are fully funded by council.

Recovery activities and costs were uncertain – with financial risk was carried by council

It was very difficult to predict the nature and extent of recovery activity that was going to be needed and how much it would cost, particularly for activities that sat outside of the council group's regular mandates and funding arrangements.

Agreements were developed under necessity and signed at the beginning of recovery efforts, when information and forecast costs were highly uncertain. Funding arrangements were built on early assumptions that did not always hold true. This led to higher costs for the council and budgets needed to be revisited several times.

As costs rose, the council had to fund a larger share. The Auckland Funding Agreement between the Crown and council included a good faith provision to renegotiate should Category 3 funding limits be reached, however the new government communicated that it would only accept revisions within the total budget envelope. Because of the different rates of contribution for different projects, shifting \$474M funding from the Category 2 to Category 3 budget line meant that Auckland Council needed to invest a further \$92M to meet its share of Category 3 costs and be able to still access the \$143M Crown funding available in the Category 2 budget line.

Many aspects of recovery directly related to categorisation were not covered by the funding agreement and need to be funded by council. These costs are significant and include running a large recovery office, undertaking risk assessments (\$25.7M), the removal of category 3 properties (\$76M) and the safe management and future use of storm affected land (estimated to be \$76M by June 2034).

Accessing funding for community recovery was challenging

Community wellbeing needs emerged quickly after the storms, with responsibility for supporting these needs sitting across several government agencies. However, limited funding mechanisms, unclear roles, and the absence of agreed activation triggers meant that funding and delivery responsibilities had to be negotiated in real time.

The Recovery Office had to develop funding cases and put delivery arrangements in place when services were already needed. This kept work moving, but created delays, added complexity and blurred the Recovery Office's role across advice, advocacy, coordination and holding funding. Future recoveries would benefit from pre-agreed funding roles, decision rights and activation triggers so community wellbeing services can be rolled out faster and with clearer accountabilities.

Funding agreements between the council and community delivery partners also had to be developed in the context of high community need and pressure to get started. Procurement processes, due diligence and agreement structures slowed early delivery and required significant resource. There was no pre-existing model or simple contracting approach for working with community partners at this scale. Managing multiple contracts across organisations with varying capability also increased complexity and required ongoing support.

Disbursing community grants was similarly slowed down by incompatible funding models and processes between different funders, with different criteria, processes and expectations. This created administrative burden and uncertainty for both the council and providers. Over time, more structured approaches (e.g. mix of targeted and contestable rounds, clearer criteria, and an approval panel) improved delivery.

Total cost to deliver navigation service and community recovery programmes, including provision of community grants is estimated to be \$22.5 million. The government funded \$7.4m of this cost (33%). Funding was sourced from six different grants across three government departments (MSD, DPMC and Te Whatu Ora).

Grant funding enabled flexible community-led responses

Community grants allowed the Recovery Office to support initiatives that empowered people, strengthened connections, and helped communities move forward in ways that made sense for them.

More than 30 organisations were funded to provide community programmes, events and initiatives that supported wellbeing, mental health and local readiness and recovery planning.

Grant funding also enabled communities to mark significant recovery milestones in ways that were meaningful to them, including one-year anniversary events, artwork, memorials and activities that acknowledged the contribution of volunteers. These initiatives provided space for reflection, recognition and collective healing, while strengthening the local relationships that underpin longer-term recovery.

However, establishing individual agreements with more than 30 organisations during recovery was administratively intensive and time-consuming. This work had to be done in parallel with delivery, while community needs were still emerging and timeframes were compressed. Developing draft eligibility and prioritisation criteria in advance and ensuring grant administration systems are fit for purpose for local recovery needs would support faster, more consistent decision-making in future recoveries, while still allowing flexibility for locally led responses.

Limited engagement with the philanthropic sector

The 2023 recovery highlighted an opportunity to engage more effectively with the philanthropic sector. While significant funding was secured for recovery activity, engagement with philanthropic funders was not as strategic or coordinated as it could have been. In future events, funders may be willing to contribute to recovery, resilience and adaptation outcomes, but need clear, credible and investable propositions.

Recovery creates a window where public attention, community need and willingness to act are high. Philanthropic funding can complement public investment by supporting community-led initiatives, innovation, equity-focused responses, local capability-building, evaluation, and activities that may not fit easily within government or council funding settings. However, this requires early coordination, clear priorities, strong evidence of need, and confidence that funding will contribute to meaningful outcomes.

Future recovery arrangements should include a structured approach to philanthropic engagement. This could include identifying priority investment areas, developing a pipeline of investable propositions, coordinating approaches to funders, and ensuring philanthropic funding aligns with community priorities and recovery objectives rather than creating duplication or inequity.

Funding recovery has a long tail

Recovery activities will continue until June 2034. The estimated total cost to council for recovery activities between March 2023 and June 2034 is \$1.43 billion. Recovery costs funded by Auckland Council have been met through a combination of insurance, reprioritisation of existing budgets, increased borrowing, general rates, and expected sale proceeds from the safe divestment of storm-affected land.

The majority of funding will be provided through increased borrowing, which means higher interest costs over the coming years.

Investing earlier could significantly reduce the cost for future recovery efforts

Assessment of some recovery project costs, particularly related to infrastructure suggests that pre-event resilience improvements could be significantly more cost-effective than emergency repairs. This is discussed further in the companion report *Unlocking Recovery*.

Recommendations for access to funding in future recovery preparedness

46. Agree the process that will be used to ensure that **seed funding for recovery** is provided quickly and is sufficiently flexible to establish a recovery effort aligned to the nature and scale of the event.
47. Agree a set of **principles to guide Auckland Council's approach to funding future recoveries**, taking into account roles and responsibilities, engaging with Aucklanders, affordability and sensible long-term investment.
48. Engage with central government to **clarify funding priorities for the council and the Crown**, including investment in advance of recovery to jointly improve the efficacy and costs of future recovery operations.
49. Develop and agree with central government a **business case methodology** that can be used in recovery to assess the feasibility of community infrastructure projects that improve resilience and reduce risk.
50. Develop a list of **prioritised and costed resilience projects** that would help the council respond to any future opportunities for Crown funding.
51. Develop a **philanthropic engagement approach** for future recovery that identifies investable propositions, coordinates engagement with funders, and enables philanthropic funding to support community-led, equity-focused and resilience-building recovery outcomes.
52. Establish **recovery-ready grant management systems and processes** that enable flexible funding pathways for individuals, whānau, iwi and community organisations, while providing visibility of funding decisions, reducing administrative burden, and supporting consistent monitoring, reporting and accountability.
53. Develop **pre-approved, recovery-ready contracting and partnership models** that enable funding agreements with iwi and community organisations to be established quickly, while maintaining appropriate due diligence, accountability and flexibility to respond to emerging needs.

Advice for active recovery

- Immediate seed funding allows recovery capability to be mobilised quickly to assess impacts and needs and begin to design the recovery operation.
- Contingency planning for expected changes in the scope and cost of recovery is critical.
- Financial risks need to be communicated to governance groups regularly and transparently.
- Value for money principles need to be applied to all recovery spend.
- Recovery is an opportunity to deliver improved resilience and align to longer term plans, including adaptation plans.

Priority actions from this report

Looking across the recommendations set out in this report, we have identified eight priority actions (see Table 8). These recommendations will be progressed by the Recovery Unit in Auckland Emergency Management.

Table 8. Priority actions for recovery preparedness	
PA1	Prepare an interim recovery activation plan to respond to immediate recovery needs in the event of another emergency while permanent recovery capabilities are still being developed. The plan should identify steps to activate critical operational elements, including transition from response to recovery, activation of an event-specific Group Recovery Manager, leadership team and core capability for community engagement, and systems for communications, data management and procurement.
PA2	Agree the process that will be used to ensure that seed funding for recovery is provided quickly and is sufficiently flexible to establish a recovery effort aligned to the nature and scale of the event.
PA3	Prepare an Auckland Recovery Strategy to support recovery preparedness and recovery management. The Strategy needs to identify priorities for action, timelines for implementation, and processes for monitoring and evaluation.
PA4	Develop a recovery-ready workforce through training and recovery capability-building to be applied across council staff, elected members and partners.
PA5	Develop and manage an integrated approach to data and information management including customer relationship management systems.
PA6	Ensure recovery specific business requirements are well-defined and supported by internal business partners. This may involve defining new or amending existing services (including performance levels).
PA7	Invest in iwi, community and stakeholder relationship capability as a core part of the resilience system , including sustaining relationships established through the 2023 recovery and developing pre-event agreements so partners can mobilise across readiness, response, recovery and reduction/adaptation.
PA8	Develop a mana whenua engagement and partnership framework across resilience, readiness, response and recovery, building on mana whenua experiences and lessons from the 2023 recovery, to clarify how the council and mana whenua will work together before, during and after disruption. This should include roles, relationships, decision-making pathways, resourcing, information-sharing, and opportunities for iwi-led planning and delivery.

While this report covers recommendations for operational activities that are within council control, many factors that create an environment for a successful recovery are outside of council's immediate control. Our companion report, **Unlocking Recovery**, explores some of the challenges and opportunities in the wider recovery ecosystem.

Next steps

Auckland Council has initiated many system improvements in the three and a half years since the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. The 2023 recovery has improved capacity and capability in a number of areas, including hazard modelling, staff wellbeing and community engagement. A recovery toolkit gathers together templates, tools and guidance for future recovery efforts. We now have a best practice data platform in place, data governance policy, and tools to support data interpretation and communication.

Recovery preparedness is a continuing focus for the council. A new Recovery Unit has been established within Auckland Emergency Management, tasked with ensuring the council is prepared to coordinate recovery from future emergencies events.

Glossary

Adaptation	Long-term changes to systems, infrastructure, or behaviours to reduce vulnerability to future hazards and climate impacts.
AEM	Auckland Emergency Management. The Auckland Council function responsible for coordinating emergency readiness, response, and recovery.
Categorisation	The government-defined system used to assess risk to life from natural hazards and determine appropriate actions for affected properties (e.g. repair, mitigation, or buy-out).
Category 1	An administrative category to describe residential properties for which the risk does not meet the threshold of intolerable risk to life.
Category 2	An administrative category to describe residential properties for which there is a feasible mitigation at either a community (2C) or property (2P) level.
Category 3	An administrative category to describe residential properties eligible for a buy-out under the Scheme Terms.
CDEM	Civil Defence Emergency Management. The national framework for managing emergencies in New Zealand, including reduction, readiness, response, and recovery.
Community-led recovery	An approach where communities are empowered and supported to lead their own recovery decisions and actions.
CRM	Customer Relationship Management system. A system used to manage interactions with individuals and households, including tracking needs, communications, and support provided.
Data governance	The frameworks, policies, and processes that ensure data is managed securely, ethically, and effectively.
Kaimahi	Staff, workers, or employees.
Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge. Refers to all things physical, emotional and spiritual in a Māori context.
Navigation services	Support services that help individuals and whānau understand recovery processes, access support, and make informed decisions.
Place-based approach	A way of working that focuses on the specific needs, strengths, and context of a community or locality.
Programme management	Coordinated management of multiple related projects to achieve strategic objectives.
Recovery	The process of supporting communities to regenerate and adapt following an emergency across social, cultural, economic, natural, and built environments.
Recovery preparedness	Planning and capability-building undertaken before an event to enable effective recovery.
Resilience	The ability of individuals, communities, and systems to withstand, adapt to, and recover from disruptions.
Response	The immediate actions taken during and directly after an emergency to preserve life, protect property, and support affected communities.
Situational awareness	A comprehensive understanding of current conditions, risks, and needs, informed by data and local knowledge.
Storm-affected land (SAL)	Category 3 residential properties assessed purchased by Auckland Council. The Storm Affected Land programme is managing the land and determining appropriate future uses.
Transition	The shift from immediate emergency response into longer-term recovery activities, and from recovery activities back into business as usual.
Wellbeing	In a recovery context, the social, emotional, cultural, and economic health of individuals and communities.

Appendix One. Summary of recommendations

Clear purpose

1. As a priority, prepare an **interim recovery activation plan** as an immediate preparedness measure while longer-term capability is developed.
2. Develop a pre-event **recovery strategy** that sets out objectives, guiding principles, indicators, prioritisation processes, and the expected role of the council, mana whenua, communities and other partners in a range of emergency and recovery scenarios, with a modular approach or other flexibility to apply the strategy to meet the specific needs of any given event.
3. Embed **core values** within the recovery strategy including Māori outcomes, climate outcomes, equity outcomes, and recovery-specific needs for psychosocial and cultural wellbeing, social connections and networks, and community-led and place-based approaches.
4. Build **organisational awareness** so that elected members, executive leadership, and staff understand the purpose of recovery operations and their roles in future recoveries
5. Define **recovery roles and responsibilities** in advance, including mechanisms for coordinated action and decision making across recovery agencies.

High trust mandate and leadership

6. Identify and develop **recovery-specific leadership capability**, comprised of people with strong organisational knowledge, regional understanding and established networks.
7. Proactively build and maintain **strategic relationships** with central government and key recovery stakeholders, including insurers, banks, iwi, community groups and relevant lifelines organisations. Leverage existing Auckland Council relationships where possible.
8. Design **governance arrangements** to achieve fast decisions, including maintaining direct reporting lines to the executive and, in larger scale recoveries, the Governing Body.
9. Ensure **mana whenua are part of recovery governance arrangements** from the outset, with pre-event agreements regarding roles and representation.

Capable people

10. Define **recovery competencies and capability requirements** as part of the pre-event Recovery Strategy, including technical and community development expertise, cultural capability and workforce diversity that reflects Auckland communities.
11. Establish a **core recovery preparedness team** within Auckland Emergency Management supported by a **recovery-ready workforce** across the council that can be scaled up quickly when needed.
12. Embed **recovery capability and contribution requirements in council business planning** and job descriptions and establish clear processes for activating staff secondments during recovery.
13. Develop a comprehensive **recovery training curriculum** to prepare staff, elected members and delivery partners for recovery work. This should include modules on understanding how disasters affect people and communities, working safely and appropriately in recovery contexts, psychosocial safety, and practical strategies for personal safety, wellbeing and sustainable practice.
14. Ensure contractual arrangements with **key external suppliers** provide for recovery requirements, including participation in pre-event training to maintain recovery-specific skills, and processes for rapid mobilisation of specialist skills and recruitment of contingent workers.
15. Develop screening tools and skills mapping to support **effective recruitment** for recovery roles.
16. Promote recovery roles as **rewarding and valuable opportunities** to build careers and make a difference.
17. Incorporate **wellbeing tools** in pre-event recovery planning as essential to support staff, elected members and delivery partners to do their jobs well and avoid burnout. This should include practical wellbeing strategies, self-care planning and resilience tools, peer support and mentoring, de-escalation training and regular professional supervision and wellbeing check-ins for frontline staff.

Collaborative ways of working

18. Plan for the **culture of recovery**, considering how mātauranga Māori could shape ways of working and an inclusive environment for diverse kaimahi and communities.
19. Provide **dedicated resources to support collaborative approaches**, including a space for co-location, shared tools, processes, programme management and governance arrangements that enable collaboration across teams and agencies, including clear roles, decision-making and escalation pathways, and information-sharing mechanisms.
20. Establish **protocols for ongoing collaboration with other sectors** including the Crown, insurers, banks and utilities, ensuring aligned understanding of each other's recovery roles, objectives and processes and providing agreements for data sharing, governance arrangements, and cross-agency working where possible.
21. Develop and **maintain a recovery relationship map and typology** that identifies key partners and stakeholders, clarifies the purpose and owner of each relationship, and sets out how relationships are managed and activated before and during recovery.
22. Incorporate collaborative ways of working in **pre-event recovery training** to build experience with collaborative structures and processes.
23. Protect and grow **established recovery networks** for the future, ensuring future recovery efforts can build on what has been developed through the 2023 recovery.
24. Build enduring **relationships with community and iwi organisations**, with deliberate pre-recovery investment in local capability and flexible relationship-based models, so that partners are ready to step into recovery roles and deliver culturally anchored support after an event, particularly in under-resourced communities.
25. Consider how **diverse groups**, including less visible or vocal communities, will be supported to participate meaningfully in recovery decision-making, with accessible ways that work for them.
26. Establish a **recovery research coordination approach** to provide visibility of research activity, reduce burden on impacted communities, support ethical and culturally appropriate practice, and strengthen the use of research findings in recovery policy and delivery.

Situational awareness

27. Define **core data and intelligence requirements** for both response and recovery operations, with minimum essential datasets required to support decision-making including agreed definitions, thresholds for 'good enough' data, and clarity on how information will be gathered and used across response and recovery phases, developing templates where possible. Data needs to address social, economic, built, natural, and wellbeing impacts.
28. Improve processes for capturing, storing, sharing, and actioning **data and intelligence**, particularly in the transition from response to recovery.
29. Develop and maintain a standard recovery impact assessment framework that can be activated early in recovery and used across recovery domains to support prioritisation, planning, investment and reporting (councils, government).
30. Establish a **regional impact assessment framework** spanning all recovery domains to give decision-makers a consolidated view of need and interdependencies from the outset.
31. Co-develop with mana whenua and Māori communities a **Māori recovery outcomes and data framework** that identifies the information needed to understand impacts on Māori, support appropriate data governance, and enable transparent monitoring and reporting on whether recovery actions are achieving equitable and mana-enhancing outcomes
32. Establish a **Customer Relationship Management platform and data management systems** for use across response and recovery, integrated with council systems and including geospatial data systems, automated data collection (where appropriate) and timely intelligence dashboards.
33. Formalise pre-event **data-sharing arrangements** with key agencies, partner organisations and the insurance sector, including governance settings, secure and centralised data storage systems, and privacy protocols to enable faster and more coordinated information flows during recovery.
34. Resource dedicated roles and mechanisms to capture **community insights and experience** to inform operational strategy.
35. Plan for **capacity and capability to problem solve** – from analysis to implementation – as information becomes available.

Accessible information and support

36. Develop an integrated multi-channel strategy for providing **up to date information to impacted Aucklanders**, staff and key stakeholders.
37. Develop **targeted communications strategies for diverse populations**, with mana whenua, Māori communities and other population partners including identifying trusted channels, accessible and culturally appropriate formats, and roles for developing and sharing information with different communities.
38. Establish **self-service platforms** to support staff, stakeholder and customer enquiries.
39. As a matter of priority, establish an effective **Customer Relationship Management system** for those delivering recovery, integrated with business as usual and response systems, with clearly defined business rules ensuring consistency in how customer information is managed to be accurate, up to date and available.
40. Make the **navigation service** a core funded and scalable recovery function, with pre-agreed delivery models (including partner delivery) to enable rapid activation.
41. Plan for **place-based and population-specific roles** to enable locally responsive delivery and genuine community participation in decision-making.

Enabling systems and processes

42. Continue to use and further develop a pre-event **recovery toolkit** that provides a central, evolving resource of guidance, templates and tools to support effective recovery preparedness and management across Auckland Council.
43. Formally manage the **transition from emergency response to recovery** by:
 - a. ensuring recovery planning begins early and remains closely linked to response activities,
 - b. establishing a clear handover and reset of governance
 - c. maintaining continuity of knowledge and, where appropriate, key personnel.
44. Develop a process to enable **prioritisation** during recovery that addresses equity and maintains efficiency.
45. Define **recovery-specific business requirements** and work with internal business partners to ensure processes and support are ready for rapid deployment. This may involve defining new, or amending, existing services (including performance levels), and includes core functions such as procurement, wellbeing, recruitment and secondment processes
46. Undertake a fit-for-purpose review of **existing provider contracts** to ensure they meet recovery needs, including scalability and service gaps.

Access to funding

47. Agree the process that will be used to ensure that **seed funding for recovery** is provided quickly and is sufficiently flexible to establish a recovery effort aligned to the nature and scale of the event.
48. Agree a set of **principles to guide Auckland Council's approach to funding future recoveries**, taking into account roles and responsibilities, engaging with Aucklanders, affordability and sensible long-term investment.
49. Engage with central government to **clarify funding priorities for the council and the Crown**, including investment in advance of recovery to jointly improve the efficacy and costs of future recovery operations.
50. Develop and agree with central government a **business case methodology** that can be used in recovery to assess the feasibility of community infrastructure projects that improve resilience and reduce risk.
51. Develop a list of **prioritised and costed resilience projects** that would help the council respond to any future opportunities for Crown funding.
52. Develop a **philanthropic engagement approach** for future recovery that identifies investable propositions, coordinates engagement with funders, and enables philanthropic funding to support community-led, equity-focused and resilience-building recovery outcomes.
53. Establish **recovery-ready grant management systems and processes** that enable flexible funding pathways for individuals, whānau, iwi and community organisations, while providing visibility of funding decisions, reducing administrative burden, and supporting consistent monitoring, reporting and accountability.
54. Develop **pre-approved, recovery-ready contracting and partnership models** that enable funding agreements with iwi and community organisations to be established quickly, while maintaining appropriate due diligence, accountability and flexibility to respond to emerging needs.

Appendix Two. Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Lessons Management – Methodology

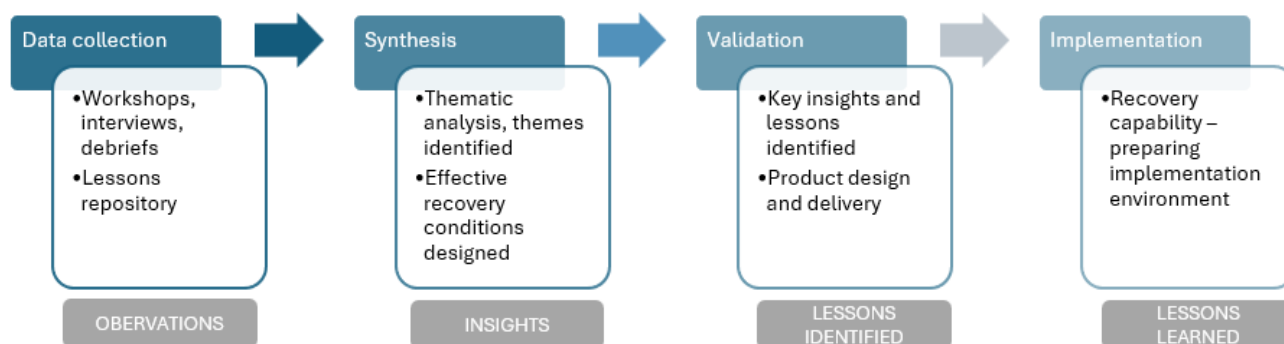
The scope of the Tāmaki Makaurau recovery lessons management programme is limited to the 2023 recovery experience up until May 2026. Some programmes are not yet complete and will undertake further evaluation in future.

The programme broadly applied the Observations, Insights, Lessons Identified, Lessons Learned (OILL) methodology set out in the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) *Lessons Management Handbook* (2019).

OILL provides a structured, replicable framework for extracting and synthesising evidence from participant interviews, debriefs and workshops (Lesson Sessions), distilling large volumes of qualitative data into insights, lessons and recommendations.

Resulting reports are presented as observations and advice from the Group Recovery Manager and not necessarily reflective of council policy.

The AEM Recovery Unit will continue to progress this work after the Recovery Office closes and embed recommendations.



The process

The Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office led an overarching lessons management programme that started in February 2025. The key phases were:

February – April 2025	<p>Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial exploratory phase with internal stakeholders. Findings informed the tailoring of OILL to Council context, designing participant groups and the sequencing of engagement across all recovery areas and key people involved in the 2023 recovery.
May – December 2025	<p>Observations and insights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of workshops and operational debriefs were held across all aspects of the 2023 recovery. Workshops were scheduled to align to delivery timelines, recognising that most programmes were still in the delivery phase. Staff and elected member surveys were conducted and analysed. Interviews were held with key recovery kaimahi and supporting business areas. Dovetail was engaged to facilitate further engagement on lessons for community and social recovery activity. This included internal and external stakeholder interviews, and Whānau Voice survey insights. This approach strengthened the

	<p>evidence base for the lessons work by bringing together operational experience, community perspectives, and national and international evidence on effective recovery practice, particularly in relation to wellbeing, displacement, inequity, trust, and system navigation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations were themed and captured in a lessons repository.
January – April 2026	<p><i>Regional transport programme insights</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auckland Transport engaged Resolve Group to identify transport-specific lessons and recommendations. A structured review methodology adapted from Statistics New Zealand’s lessons learnt process was used. • The review team undertook background document review, site visits, and 44 structured interviews across funding, emergency response, recovery, and long-term advisory functions. From these interviews, 565 individual issues were logged in issues register and analysed through an iterative thematic process, which identified 28 themes across the agreed areas of interest. • Draft findings were then shared with relevant participants for factual validation before finalisation. These outputs then informed the overarching recovery lessons programme outputs.
January – June 2026	<p>Lessons identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis grouped observations into insights, key lessons and draft recommendations. • Topic-based debrief reports were developed and reviewed by business owners. • Draft recovery-wide papers were developed and engagement undertaken. • Final products released: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivering Recovery – a consolidated view of validated insights mapped to lessons identified, recommendations and owners, designed to drive internal operational readiness for future recovery events. This paper has been developed for an internal and recovery network audience. 2. Unlocking Recovery – a position paper examining what recovery from the 2023 required from a cost, community and infrastructure perspective, intended to inform central government, sector partners and the wider public. 3. Auckland Together: Recovering from the 2023 storm – a publication telling the story of what Auckland Council did throughout the recovery, honouring the contribution of kaimahi, partners and communities.
July 2026 onwards	<p>Lessons learned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AEM Recovery Unit will progress the lessons management work to embed recommendations and build recovery capability. • It is recommended that lessons continue to be tracked through to learned status as agreed actions are implemented and embedded, providing a continuous feedback loop within the newly created recovery capability in Auckland Emergency Management. • An internal recovery toolkit has been developed and will continue to be refined and updated by the AEM Recovery Unit and council business owners. The toolkit aims to preserve institutional knowledge by providing a practical resource to help build recovery capability and preparedness across the Auckland Council group. It supports existing guidance including the NEMA Director’s Guideline on recovery preparedness and management and WREMO (Wellington Region Emergency Management Office) practices.

Delivering recovery. Operational lessons and recommendations from the Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office. June 2026.

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