

# **2014 Rebuild Environment: NYC Voluntary Rebuild Capacity Assessment**



**New York City  
Voluntary Organizations  
Active in Disasters**

Conducted by the NYC VOAD Voluntary Organization Needs Assessment Subcommittee:

Darius Alemzadeh (American Red Cross), Michelle Bascome (World Cares Center),  
Peter Cavadini (New York Disaster Interfaith Services), Matthew Cedar (FEMA),  
Edward McQuillan (FEMA), Maureen Medina (World Cares Center/VISTA),  
Lisa Orloff (World Cares Center), Colleen Smallfield (New York Cares),  
and Michelle Thompson (American Red Cross).

**March 10, 2014**

## Introduction

This survey was conducted by the Voluntary Organization Needs Assessment (VONA) Subcommittee of the New York City Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NYC VOAD) Volunteer Management and Construction Committee. The Subcommittee's purpose was *to gain a greater understanding of the capacity of voluntary rebuild organizations in New York City*. The results of this survey highlight the complex environment that rebuild organizations must function within; not the least of which are local laws and public policies that, in and of themselves, are necessary for public safety. These organizations should rightly be celebrated for their many accomplishments during 2013. Nonprofit rebuild organizations and volunteers have led the rebuild effort in NYC by performing all rebuild work in affected communities for storm survivors who could not afford to have the work done privately.

There are misconceptions in the recovery community as to what the nonprofit sector will be able to do to assist clients in rebuilding and repairing their homes. Disaster Case Managers (DCMs) and SuperStorm Sandy survivors may believe that a voluntary organization will fully restore a home which sustained major damage or elevate a home with respect to Base Flood Elevation (BFE). However, without significant new support from the government or philanthropic sector this is unlikely to happen, as large scale rebuild efforts are prohibitively expensive. Instead, many of the rebuild agencies have a strategy to assist homeowners in any way possible which either serves an immediate need or *augments* the various forthcoming government programs – which do have the funding to tackle these challenges.

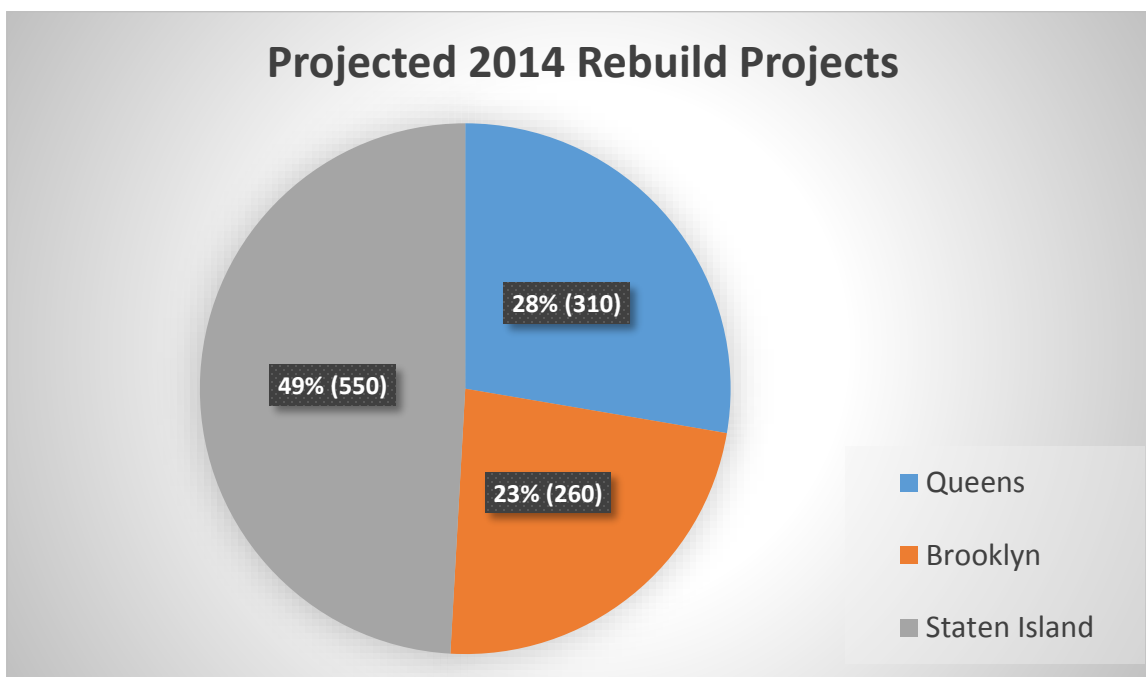
Another misconception is that when city programs including Build it Back and other government rebuild programs end, the nonprofit sector will take over and continue to meet unmet rebuild needs. This will not happen if the current state of the volunteer effort is not strengthened. Build it Back Tier 2 clients are not scheduled to begin rebuilding until 2015. In all probability, the nonprofit rebuilds will either have exhausted funding or possess minimal resources to continue services when Build it Back ends. Even if sufficient funding is made available, there is no guarantee that the volunteer base will remain stable, due to the high cost of volunteering in NYC. According to this survey, funding and skilled volunteers are already the biggest needs for voluntary rebuild organizations, and these resources will become scarcer as the recovery effort progresses.

The findings of this survey provide philanthropic organizations, DCMs, rebuild support agencies, government agencies, and the nonprofit rebuild organizations themselves a wider perspective on what is actually happening in New York City. Understanding the current state of affairs in rebuild is the first step in improving the rebuild sector and thus advancing the recovery for communities affected by SuperStorm Sandy.

## Key Survey Findings

- The 19 voluntary rebuilds in New York City are currently projected to work on a maximum of 1,120 projects in 2014. This represents a maximum of 955 homes repaired.
- Almost half of the volunteer rebuild projects will take place on Staten Island.
- The majority of voluntary rebuild groups are local, not national organizations, by a ratio of more than 2:1.
- Many services, such as electric and plumbing, must be performed by a licensed professional. This results in higher costs to the voluntary organizations due to their inability to use highly skilled volunteers.
- The majority of projects offered by the nonprofit rebuild organizations are non-structural (e.g., painting, flooring, hanging sheetrock, debris removal).
- Almost all respondent organizations identified lack of funding and skilled volunteers as their most pressing needs.
- There is not enough collaboration between DCMs and nonprofit rebuild organizations. Although most organizations utilize DCMs for client intake to some extent, most organizations also take rebuild clients through direct intake as well.
- There is no coordination between the city government and nonprofit rebuild organizations.
- There is no coordination between non-profit rebuild organizations borough-wide or city-wide, other than on Staten Island.

## 2014 Rebuild Projection

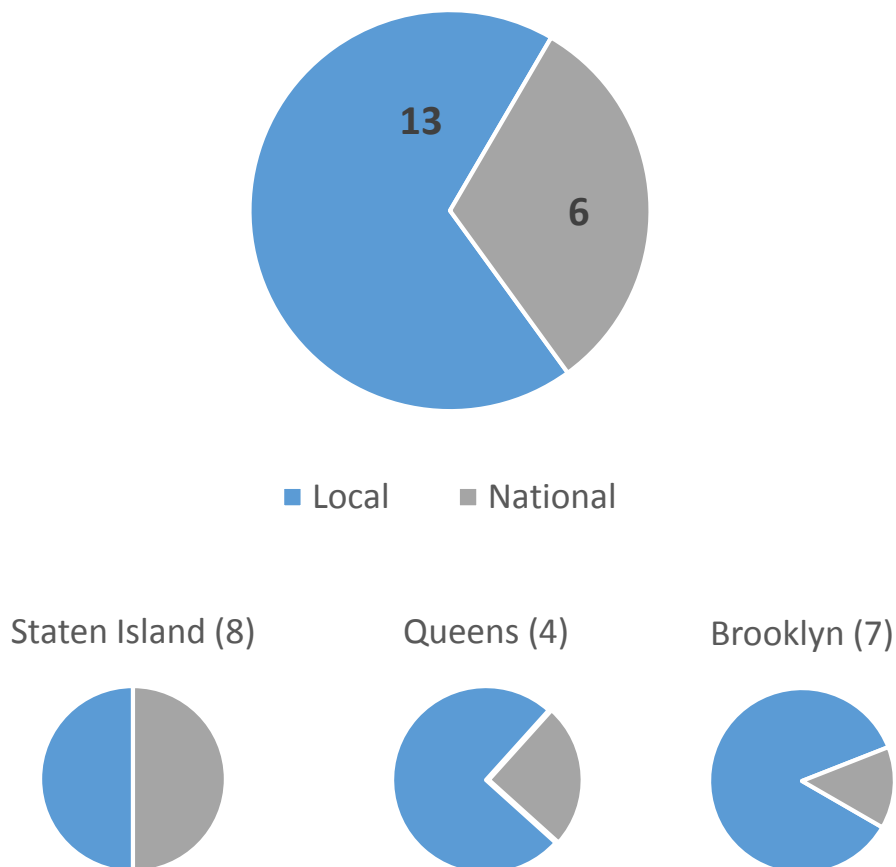


Nearly half of the projected total for the 2014 rebuild season will occur on Staten Island. However this is a measurement of projects, not homes. On Staten Island, a home is often worked on by more than one rebuild organization because many Staten Island rebuild organizations cooperate with one another. This results in the number of homes which will be completely repaired being less than the number of repair projects. A realistic forecast of the number homes to be served on Staten Island is around 385 homes, whereas, the number of projects reported in Queens and Brooklyn will most likely represent the number of houses served by nonprofit rebuild organizations.

As nonprofit rebuild organizations look at the upcoming rebuild season more closely, the number of estimated projects has begun to decline since the beginning of 2014. This is mainly because of budget constraints. It is likely that the amount of rebuild projects will decline in all three boroughs. Without the expanded engagement of volunteers and funders, as well as greater collaboration with DCM organizations, there is almost no chance of the rebuild community reaching its maximum reported projects of 1,120.

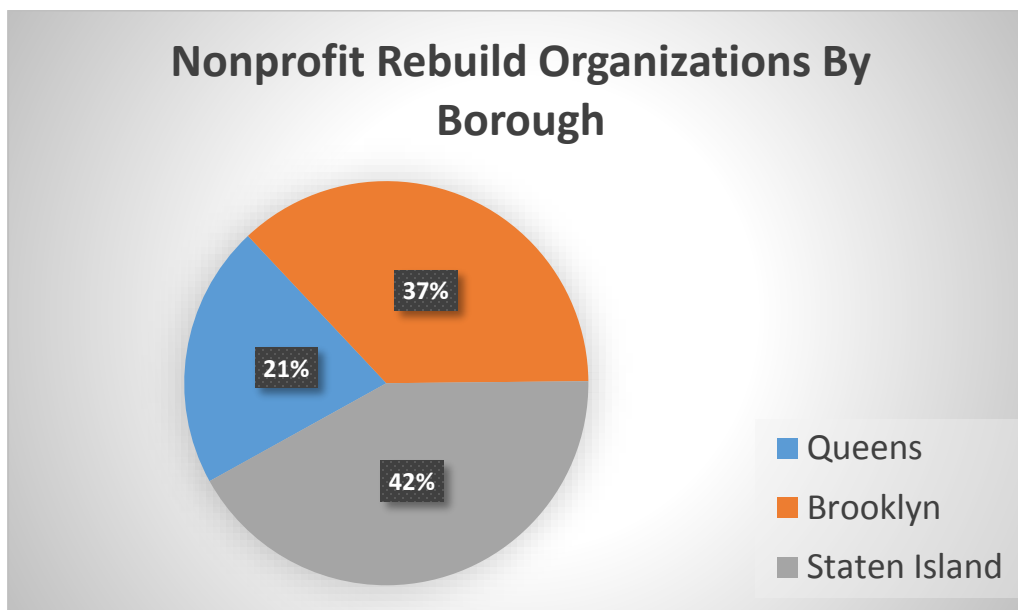
## Where Do Nonprofit Rebuild Organizations Come From?

Local Rebuilds vs. National Rebuilds



Separating local from national rebuild organizations is difficult. Generally speaking, the Subcommittee classified a rebuild as “local” if it operated in New York City before the storm or emerged from a grassroots movement after the storm. “National” organizations are all local members of a NVOAD organizations that have national grants, or which are actively bringing their own volunteers from around the nation, although they may have a structure local to NYC.

## Where Are Nonprofit Rebuild Organizations Working?



For further information on the nonprofit rebuild organizations, please see the Housing Recovery Resource Guide, the compendium document to this survey.

### Staten Island:

Staten Island has the most robust nonprofit rebuild environment of the three heavily affected boroughs. A mix of national and local rebuild organizations endows the borough with local and national knowledge, as well as resources mining capabilities beyond Queens and Brooklyn. A communicative LTRO Construction Committee enhances inter-agency support and organization.

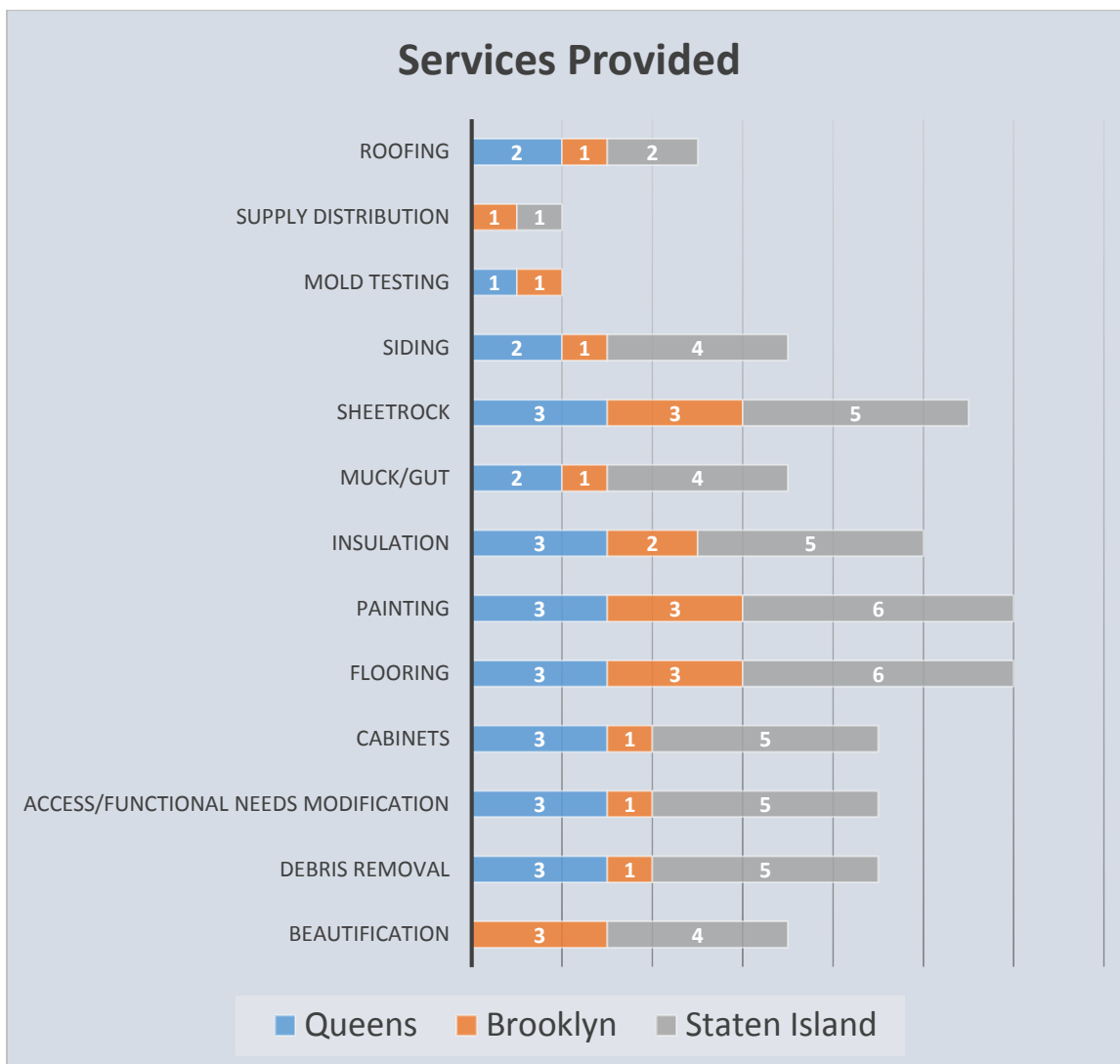
### Brooklyn:

Of the seven rebuild groups active in Brooklyn, only one can be considered a national organization, the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (NYAC) supported by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). The other six rebuild organizations are neighborhood specific and generally do not operate out of the boundaries of their specific communities. This “local first” approach has left some DCMs not knowing which organization is appropriate for their client, though in reality their options are bound by geography. Although Brooklyn has almost the same amount of rebuild organizations as Staten Island, their 2014 rebuild projection is the smallest of the three affected boroughs because the organizations in Brooklyn are mostly small, local operations.

### Queens:

Although Queens has the least number of rebuild organizations, they all have large capacities and are well established within the most heavily affected communities on the Rockaway peninsula. It is not known how thoroughly the other affected communities in Queens are being served by the nonprofit rebuild organizations.

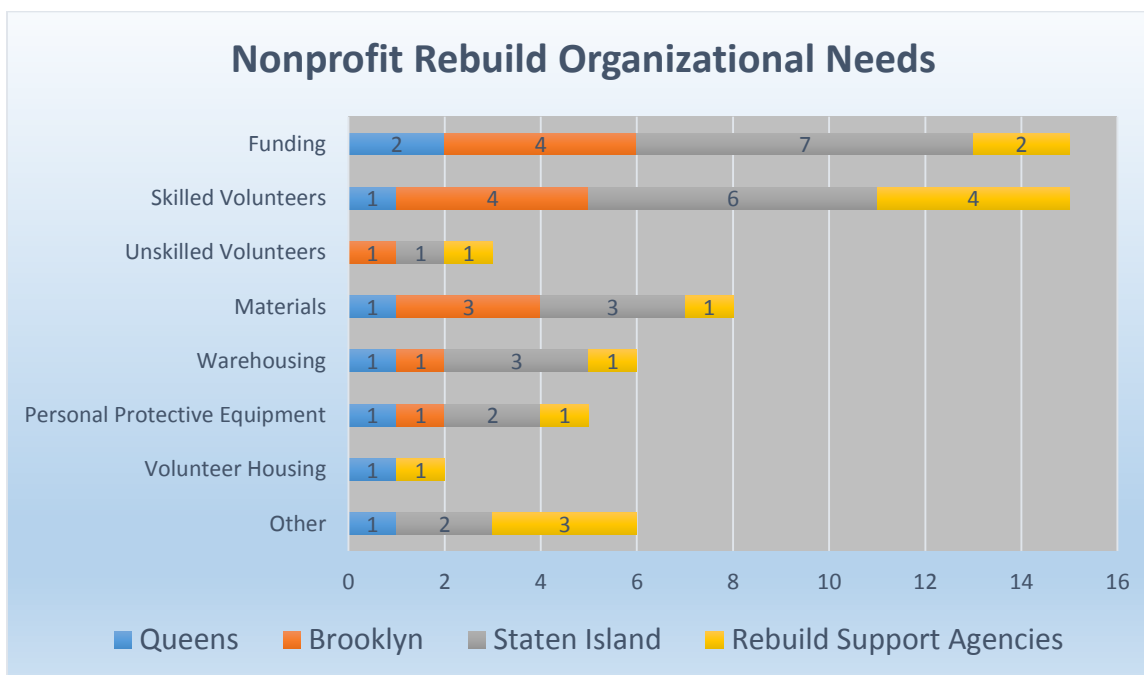
## What Services Do Nonprofit Rebuild Organizations Provide?



Generally speaking, all of the rebuilds provide much the same services as one another, though some do have specializations. It is important to note what services are *not* provided by the nonprofit rebuild organizations. No voluntary rebuild agencies will elevate homes, and no rebuild organization is doing full rebuild projects for destroyed homes. Volunteer rebuild organizations, for the most part, do non-structural reconstruction projects and leave the most costly and complex projects to the private sector and government programs.

The vast majority of voluntary rebuild organizations also coordinate contractors who provide mold testing and removal, plumbing, roofing, and electrical work at no cost to the homeowner.

## What Do Nonprofit Rebuild Organizations Need?



### Funding:

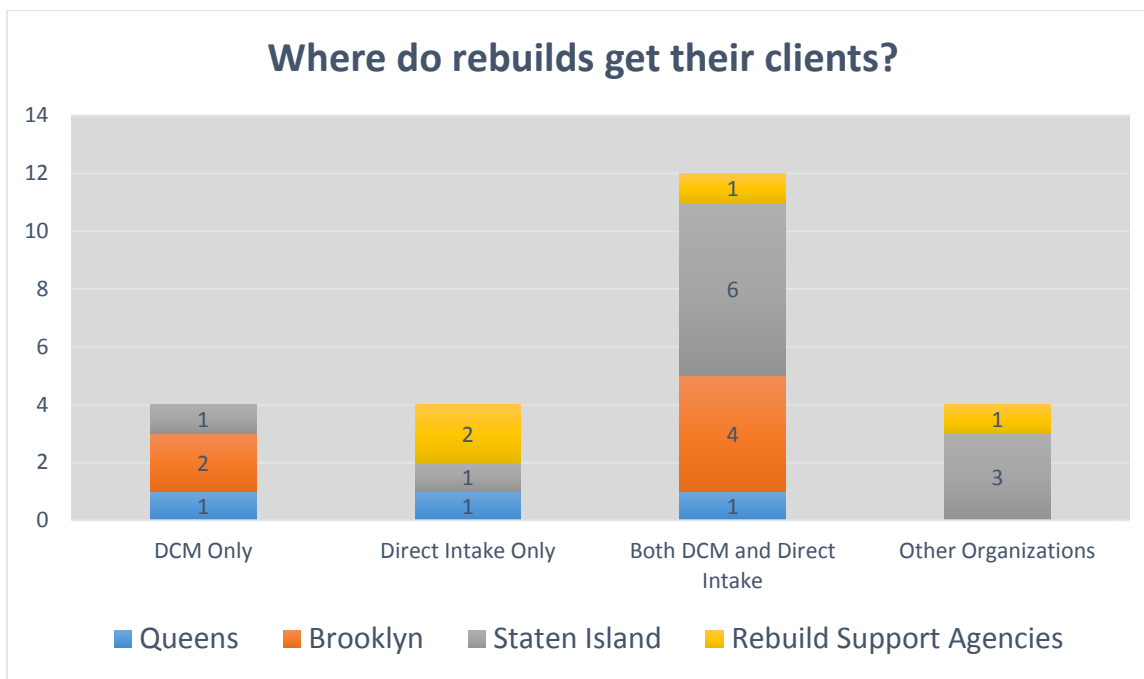
It is imperative that long-term funding be provided to effective nonprofit rebuild organizations so they can maintain, if not bolster, their current capacity. While a few rebuild groups are relatively well funded, others may not last beyond the 2014 summer rebuild season. Without funding to at least maintain services into 2015, many homes may never be repaired. Under-resourced homeowners are currently only being served by nonprofit rebuild organizations. Unless the rebuild organizations can address their funding needs effectively, soon many of these homeowners may be serviced by no one. New funding must take into account that nonprofit rebuild organizations have to hire contractors in order to complete many rebuild projects, resulting in a greater need for funding than many other disaster rebuild efforts.

### Skilled Volunteers:

In most disasters, a skilled volunteer is a volunteer with professional knowledge about their service area. In NYC, a “skilled volunteers” more often refers to a volunteer who simply has some prior construction experience. Because of licensing and permitting issues, non-local skilled professional volunteers are of less utility to the rebuild groups because they cannot legally be used to their full potential. Also, there is a cost associated with bringing volunteers from outside NYC which makes this prohibitive for some groups. A top priority, along with procuring long-term funding, is for rebuild organizations and their volunteer coordination partners to cultivate a base of experience local volunteers to provide low-cost labor to the rebuild effort. Rebuild organizations should utilize nonprofit volunteer and trade programs to access local skilled volunteer groups, as well as create more training opportunities to cultivate a pool of skilled volunteers.



## How Do Nonprofit Rebuild Organizations Find Clients?



National VOAD Points of Consensus suggest that rebuild organizations “Assist clients to repair and rebuild who have gone through a case management process consistent with the National VOAD Disaster Case Management Points of Consensus.”<sup>1</sup> However, it is clear that many of rebuild clients come from a direct intake process implemented by the individual rebuild organization, with 4 of the 19 organizations only serving clients obtained through a direct intake process. Similarly, 4 out of the 19 organizations only take clients who are referred to them through a DCM program.

Most organizations operated with some sort of mixed referral system, taking some cases from DCM and some from a direct intake process. However, the percentage of this mix (DCM vs. direct intake) remains unknown. Informally, the surveyors were inclined to think that it is a 50/50 split. By accepting rebuild clients from DCMs, rebuild organizations can help ensure that their rebuild services are needed, appropriate, and resources are not wasted. There are most certainly survivors in need who have not yet been engaged by the DCM community, making it of the utmost importance that direct intake rebuild clients are referred to a case manager for continued recover services. Including DCMs in the rebuild process is an intrinsic part of giving survivors the best chance for a full recovery.

<sup>1</sup> National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD), *Clean Up, Repair And Rebuild*, October 2013, [http://www.nvoad.org/library/cat\\_view/9-points-of-consensus](http://www.nvoad.org/library/cat_view/9-points-of-consensus)

## Key Recommendations

- The time for rebuild program expansions is now. The longer survivors wait for rebuild services, the less likely they are to recover and achieve sustainability.
- For a successful rebuild effort in Brooklyn and Queens, the nonprofit sector must have more support from national rebuild organizations or greatly enhance the capabilities of existent organizations.
- Rebuild efforts are the most fruitful where organizations cooperate and communicate. No rebuild organization should be working without support or communication from a rebuild committee, the local Long Term Recovery Group, and NYC VOAD.
- The city government rebuild efforts and the voluntary organization rebuilds need to communicate and coordinate with one another on a much greater scale. Build it Back should refer Tier 2 and 3 clients to the voluntary sector so they can be serviced now.
- Local and national organizations should adhere to the NVOAD Points of Consensus.
- Rebuild organizations need to engage funders immediately to ensure their ability to hire contractors and continue services into 2015. In turn, funding organizations should ensure that the strongest rebuild organizations have adequate long-term funding, and prioritize support for voluntary rebuilds that follow NVOAD Points of Consensus.
- Rebuild organizations and rebuild support organizations must build a stable base of local, skilled volunteers and further engage national voluntary rebuild organizations.
- Some rebuild needs are available through rebuild support agencies. Utilize the rebuild support organizations while they are funded and can offer services, such as volunteers, housing, personal protective equipment, and building materials.
- Rebuilds and DCMs must fully engage one another to ensure the sustainable recovery of survivors. Relationships between DCM providers and the rebuild community should be formalized with referral mechanisms.

## Further Questions

- How does the rebuild model which has emerged in NYC differ from past rebuild efforts? Has the standard service model of NVOAD organizations been useful in NYC? What does this mean for urban infrastructure disasters in the future?
- How many survivors of SuperStorm Sandy still need rebuild assistance? Conversely, how many households have already been served by the government, nonprofit, and private sectors?
- How long can the nonprofit rebuild organizations maintain their current services?
- What practical steps can nonprofit rebuild organizations take to more effectively partner with DCM agencies?
- How can the voluntary sector more effectively utilize the local volunteer base? Both skilled and semi-skilled.
- How can the voluntary sector and government agencies begin to work together as partners? What mechanisms and structures need to be worked out so these two rebuild efforts can operate as one?

## Methodology

The NYC Nonprofit Rebuild Assessment survey was conducted over two months in October and November of 2013. The majority of the surveys were done in person, to ensure that respondents gave answers that most accurately represented their work history, capabilities, and needs. After the survey, respondent and administrator had a freeform discussion about the rebuild environment, giving further context to the results of this summary. Out of 37 proposed organizations, the sub-committee classified 19 as true rebuild nonprofits. Out of those 19 organizations there were 3 non-respondents, one in Queens and two in Brooklyn.

Classifications of note: The subcommittee counted Mennonite Disaster Services as two separate organizations, because they have separate, fully functional programs in both Queens and Staten Island. Similarly, the subcommittee counted Lutheran Social Services as two separate organizations, because they propose to have two functional programs in both Staten Island and Queens. Although Lutheran Social Services took part in the survey, many of the survey questions were unanswered because the rebuild program was not yet functional. The subcommittee did not classify Southern Baptist Disaster Relief as a rebuild organization because at the time of the survey they were only serving Staten Island on a short-term basis, although the survey results did take their projected work into account for the total projected Staten Island rebuild projects.



With special thanks to the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaisons.



## New York City VOA D Volunteer Management and Construction Committee

### Housing Recovery Resource Guide

Based on individual reporting, the following voluntary agencies plan to provide more than 1,020 rebuild services in New York City in 2014. The vast majority of organizations are working in only one borough with a breakdown of 260 services in Brooklyn, 550 in Staten Island, and 310 in Queens. A list of agencies providing rebuild support including materials and volunteers follows this list. To add, change, or update information, please email Maureen Medina, World Cares Center VOA D Liaison VISTA at [mmedina@worldcares.org](mailto:mmedina@worldcares.org).

#### Voluntary Agencies Providing Rebuild Services in New York City:

Organization	Primary Services Provided	Primary Service Area Borough	Primary Service Area Neighborhood	Website	Primary Contact	Primary Email	Primary Phone
All Hands Volunteers	Beautification, Debris Removal, Access and Functional Needs Modification, Cabinets, Flooring, Painting, Insulation, Muck/Gut, Sheetrock, Siding	Staten Island		<a href="http://hands.org/">hands.org/</a>	Paul Raddant	<a href="mailto:paulraddant@hands.org">paulraddant@hands.org</a>	(508) 758-8211
Canarsie Coalition	Beautification, Sheetrock, Insulation	Brooklyn	Canarsie	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/CanarsieCoalition">facebook.com/CanarsieCoalition</a>	David Louis	<a href="mailto:canarsierecoverycoalition@gmail.com">canarsierecoverycoalition@gmail.com</a>	(646) 581-0400
Episcopal Diocese of NY Disaster Response	Debris Removal, Insulation, Sheetrock, Flooring, Painting	Staten Island	Midland Beach	<a href="http://relief.episcopalny.org">relief.episcopalny.org</a>	Darrell Hayes	<a href="mailto:episcopal.recoveryteam.si@gmail.com">episcopal.recoveryteam.si@gmail.com</a>	(347) 942-3787
Friends of Rockaway	Debris Removal, Mold Testing, Access/Functional Needs Modification, Boiler Repair, Cabinets, Electric, Flooring, Foundation Work, Insulation, Muck/Gut, Painting, Plumbing, Roofing, Sheetrock, Siding	Queens	Rockaway	<a href="http://friendsofrockaway.org">friendsofrockaway.org</a>	Megan Corley	<a href="mailto:megan@friendsofrockaway.org">megan@friendsofrockaway.org</a>	(347) 625-7419
Gerritsen Beach Long Term Recovery Project	Case Management, Supply Distribution, Construction Coordination	Brooklyn	Gerritsen Beach	<a href="http://gbcare.org">gbcare.org</a>	James Wells	<a href="mailto:jameson.wells@gmail.com">jameson.wells@gmail.com</a>	(646) 294-1736

Organization	Primary Services Provided	Primary Service Area Borough	Primary Service Area Neighborhood	Website	Primary Contact	Primary Email	Primary Phone
Guyon Rescue	Beautification, Warehousing, Donations, Debris Removal, Muck/Gut, Cabinets, Electric, Flooring, Painting, Insulation, Plumbing, Roofing, Sheet Rock, Siding	Staten Island		<a href="http://guyonrescue.org">guyonrescue.org</a>	Derek Tabacco	<a href="mailto:guyonrescue@gmail.com">guyonrescue@gmail.com</a>	(917) 596-2552
Habitat for Humanity NYC	Beautification, Debris Removal, Muck/Gut, Access/Functional Needs Modification, Cabinets, Flooring, Insulation, Sheetrock, Siding, Painting	Staten Island		<a href="http://habitatnyc.org">habitatnyc.org</a>	Joshua Weber, Catherine Kost	<a href="mailto:jweber@habitatnyc.org">jweber@habitatnyc.org</a> <a href="mailto:ckost@habitatnyc.org">ckost@habitatnyc.org</a>	(212) 991-4000
Habitat for Humanity Westchester		Queens	Breezy Point and Rockaway	<a href="http://habitatwc.org">habitatwc.org</a>			
Lutheran Social Services of New York	Case Management, Construction program in progress	Brooklyn, Staten Island		<a href="http://lssny.org">lssny.org</a>	Lev Tobias	<a href="mailto:ltobias@lssny.org">ltobias@lssny.org</a>	(212) 870-1100
Mennonite Disaster Services	Debris Removal, Access/Functional Needs Modification, Cabinets, Flooring, Painting, Insulation, Muck/Gut, Roofing, Sheetrock, Siding	Staten Island		<a href="http://mds.mennonite.net/home">mds.mennonite.net/home</a>	Martin Durkson	<a href="mailto:statenland@mds.mennonite.net">statenland@mds.mennonite.net</a>	(717) 823-8562
Mennonite Disaster Services	Debris Removal, Access/Functional Needs Modification, Cabinets, Flooring, Painting, Insulation, Muck/Gut, Roofing, Sheetrock, Siding	Queens	Far Rockaway	<a href="http://mds.mennonite.net/home">mds.mennonite.net/home</a>	Bruce Weber, Marj Weber	<a href="mailto:nyc@mds.mennonite.net">nyc@mds.mennonite.net</a>	(717) 823-3877

Organization	Primary Services Provided	Primary Service Area Borough	Primary Service Area Neighborhood	Website	Primary Contact	Primary Email	Primary Phone
New York Says Thank You Foundation	Debris Removal, Access/Functional Needs Modification, Cabinets, Flooring, Painting, Insulation, Sheetrock	5 boroughs		<a href="http://newyorksaysthankyou.org">newyorksaysthankyou.org</a>	Jill Adkins	<a href="mailto:jill@newyorksaysthankyou.org">jill@newyorksaysthankyou.org</a>	(402) 415-6109
Rebuilding Together NYC	Beautification, finished carpentry; electrical and plumbing repairs; flooring, complete kitchen and bath modification and/or replacement; roofing; painting; appliance replacement; landscaping/beautification	5 boroughs Sandy focused in Brooklyn	Canarsie, Coney Island, Red Hook	<a href="http://rebuildingtogether.nyc.org">rebuildingtogether.nyc.org</a>	Jennifer Terry	<a href="mailto:jennifer.terry@rebuildingtogether.nyc.org">jennifer.terry@rebuildingtogether.nyc.org</a>	(718) 488-8840
Red Hook Volunteers				<a href="https://www.facebook.com/RedHookVolunteers">facebook.com/RedHookVolunteers</a>	Jovan Burch	<a href="mailto:jovan@redhookcoalition.org">jovan@redhookcoalition.org</a>	
Resurrection Brooklyn	Muck/Gut, Sheetrock, Painting, Sub-Flooring, Mold Removal, Taping and minor framing	Brooklyn	Sheeps-head Bay	<a href="http://resurrectionbrooklyn.org">resurrectionbrooklyn.org</a>	Brian Steadman	<a href="mailto:brian@resurrectionbrooklyn.org">brian@resurrectionbrooklyn.org</a>	(718) 369-7972 x 22
Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation	Supplies, Volunteer management	Staten Island focused with some support to 5 boroughs		<a href="http://Tunnel2towers.org">Tunnel2towers.org</a>	Cassandra Missall	<a href="mailto:cassandra.missall@tunnel2towers.org">cassandra.missall@tunnel2towers.org</a>	(718) 980-4766
New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church/UMCOR	Beautification, Debris Removal, Mold Testing, Access/Functional Needs Modification, Cabinets, Flooring, Painting, Insulation, Sheetrock, Siding	Brooklyn	Canarsie, Sheeps-head Bay, Coney Island	<a href="http://nyac.com">nyac.com</a>	Gillian Prince	<a href="mailto:gillian.prince@nyac-umc.com">gillian.prince@nyac-umc.com</a>	(347) 413-6921
Yellow Boots	Painting, gardening, Access and functional needs, cabinets, flooring, painting, insulation, muck/gut, sheetrock, debris removal, donations, mold certificates, mold testing	Staten Island		<a href="http://yellowboots.org">yellowboots.org</a>	Ross Decker	<a href="mailto:ross@yellowboots.org">ross@yellowboots.org</a>	(347) 766-2435

## Agencies Providing Rebuild Support:

Organization	Primary Services Provided	Primary Service Area Borough	Primary Service Area Neighborhood	Website	Primary Contact	Primary Email	Primary Phone
Adventist Disaster Services	Warehousing, Training	Brooklyn	Coney Island	<a href="http://communityservices.org">communityservices.org</a>	Walter Harris	<a href="mailto:gnycacsdwarehouse@gmail.com">gnycacsdwarehouse@gmail.com</a>	(646) 528-0901
Coney Recovers	Job Training	Brooklyn	Coney Island	<a href="http://coneyrecovers.org/">coneyrecovers.org/</a>	Ruth Morales	<a href="mailto:info@coneyrecovers.org">info@coneyrecovers.org</a>	(718) 594-7895
New York Cares	Volunteers, Volunteer management, Rebuild for Community Organizations	5 boroughs		<a href="http://newyorkcares.org">newyorkcares.org</a>	Colleen Smallfield	<a href="mailto:colleen.smallfield@newyorkcares.org">colleen.smallfield@newyorkcares.org</a>	(212) 402-1129
New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS) & the NYC Sandy Unmet Needs Roundtable	Appliances, Building Supplies, Licensed Contractors (Electric, Heating, Plumbing, Roofing). Free Bids. All items are Discounted, Tax Free with Free Delivery  Homeowners or Renters can access through their DCM. Rebuild orgs can access directly through office, but client must have DCM.	5 boroughs		<a href="http://unmetneedsroundtable.org/">unmetneedsroundtable.org/</a>	Matt O'Connell	<a href="mailto:unmetneeds@nydis.org">unmetneeds@nydis.org</a>	(212) 669-6100
New York State Disaster Case Management Program	Unbiased construction estimates (Clients must be working with a New York State Disaster Case Management Program Agency)	5 boroughs		<a href="http://sandydcm.org">sandydcm.org</a>	Edna Mincey	<a href="mailto:edna.mincey@archny.org">edna.mincey@archny.org</a>	(646) 794-3736
Nontraditional Employment for Women	Skilled and semi-skilled volunteers, Job Training for Entry Level Careers in Construction	5 boroughs		<a href="http://new-nyc.org">new-nyc.org</a>	Evelyn Parr	<a href="mailto:eparr@new-nyc.org">eparr@new-nyc.org</a>	(212) 627-6252
NYC Service	Volunteers, Volunteer management	5 boroughs		<a href="http://nycservice.org">nycservice.org</a>	Stephanie Gillette, Kaitlin Tyler	<a href="mailto:sgillette@cityhall.nyc.gov">sgillette@cityhall.nyc.gov</a> <a href="mailto:kt Tyler@cityhall.nyc.gov">kt Tyler@cityhall.nyc.gov</a>	(212) 788-1401 (212) 442-7128
World Cares Center	Volunteers, Volunteer management, Volunteer training	5 boroughs		<a href="http://worldcares.org">worldcares.org</a>	Michelle Bascome	<a href="mailto:mbascome@worldcares.org">mbascome@worldcares.org</a>	(212) 563-7570