Disaster Resilience and Chief Resilience Officers

A Kentucky Model for Consideration

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Why More States Are Engaging on Disaster Resilience

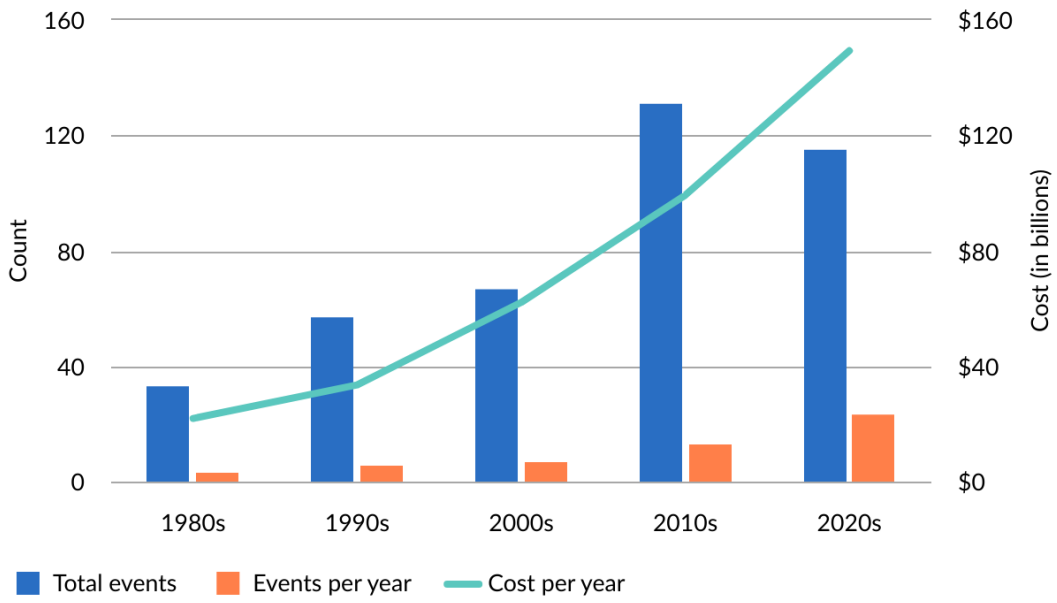
Disasters are becoming more frequent and costly: Large-scale storms, floods, and other hazards are happening more often and causing greater damage—due in part to increased development in vulnerable areas.

Resilience investments pay off: Research shows every $1 spent on mitigation and resilience can return up to $13 in benefits through avoided damages, reduced disruptions, and faster recovery.

Local governments are on the front lines—but need support: Cities and counties often lack the staff, funding, or technical expertise to prepare for complex and recurring disaster risks. State-level coordination is essential.

Major Natural Disasters Are Growing More Frequent and Expensive

Total and annual average billion-dollar events by decade overlaid with cost trend, 1980-2024



Source: National Centers for Environmental Information

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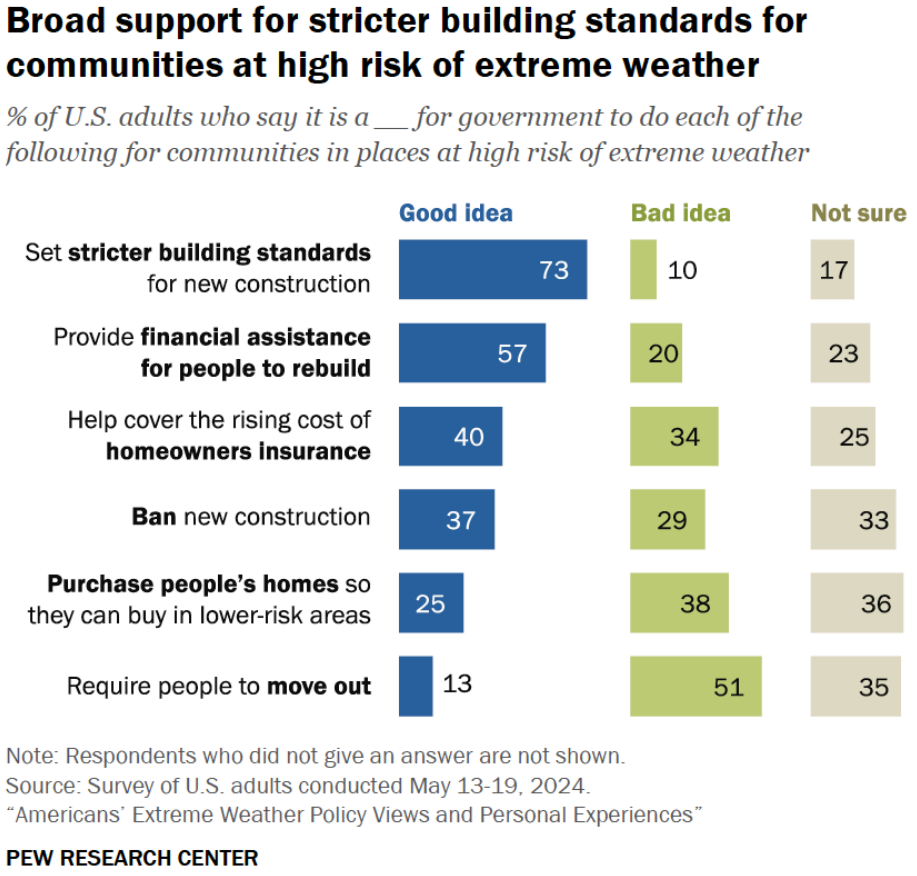
Why More States Are Investing in Disaster Resilience

Infrastructure under strain: Roads, utilities, and drainage systems are critical to daily life and business operations—but many are aging or exposed. Resilience strategies help protect these assets.

Broad public support: Most Americans, regardless of political affiliation, support common-sense measures to protect homes, businesses, and infrastructure from future disasters.



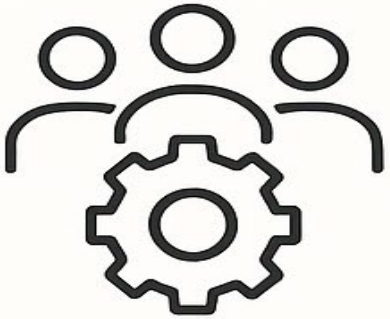
What is a Chief Resilience Officer?

- Senior official focused on pre-disaster planning and long-term risk reduction
- Coordinates across agencies, aligns funding sources, and supports local capacity
- Distinct from—but complementary to—emergency management



Source: FEMA

What Does a CRO Do?



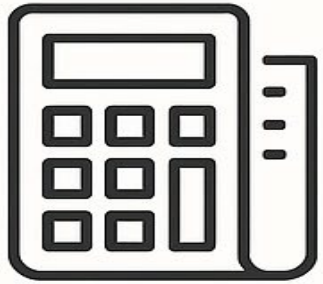
Interagency Coordination

Uniting state agencies under a common resilience strategy, often via formal councils or working groups



Strategic Planning & Risk Assessment

Leading development and implementation of statewide resilience plans, risk and vulnerability assessments



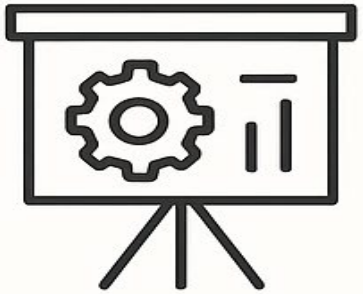
Capital Planning & Budget Input

Reviewing agency capital plans and aligning investments with resilience priorities



Grants & Funding Alignment

Identifying and coordinating federal, state, and private funding streams—often including FEMA, HUD, and DOT programs



Technical Assistance & Capacity Building

Supporting local governments and communities in developing resilience strategies and accessing resources

Three Common Models for Establishing CRO Positions

1. **Executive Order**

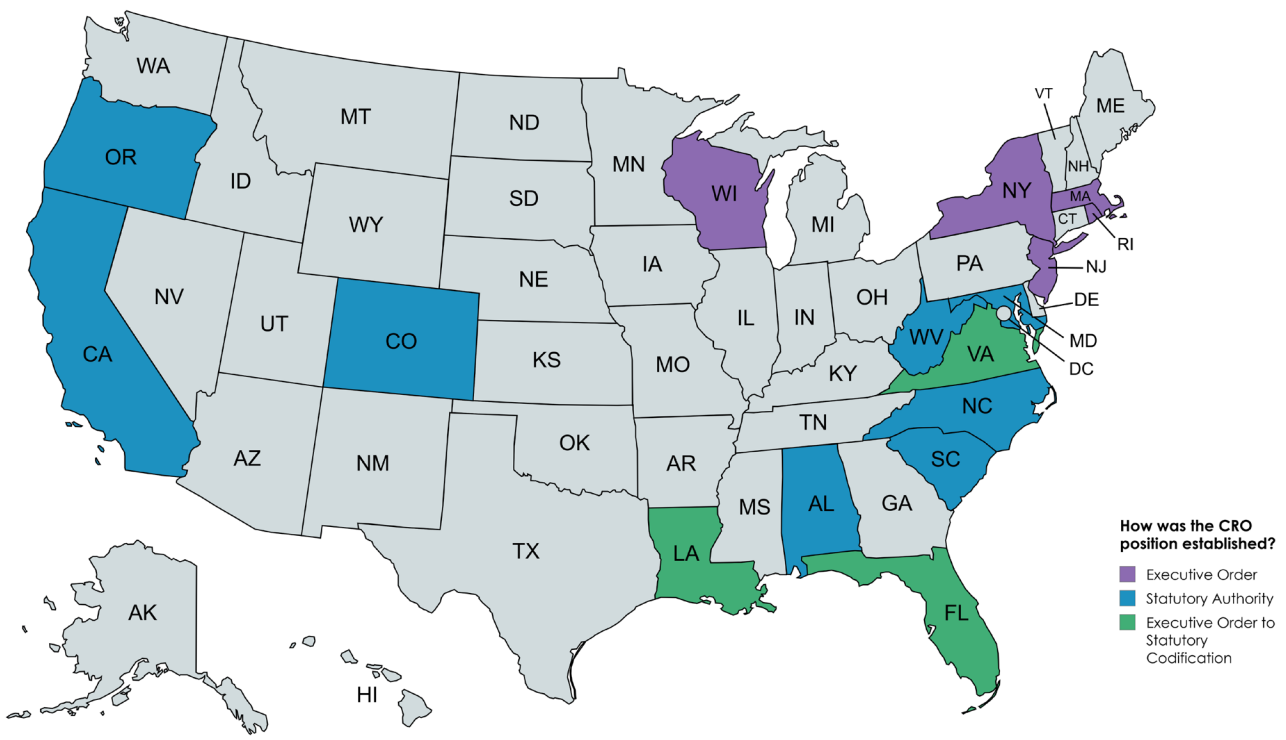
   Quick to implement, vulnerable to political change

2. **Statutory Authority**

   Provides permanence and authority

3. **Executive Order → Statute (Hybrid)**

   Starts fast, builds durability



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Resilience Governance – Examples from the South



South Carolina

- CRO leads the Office of Resilience; cabinet-level authority
- Mandated Strategic Resilience and Risk Reduction Plan



Florida

- CRO position created via 2019 DeSantis EO; Office of Resilience created via 2024 statute
- Focus on flood mitigation and infrastructure



Louisiana

- Evolved from coastal emphasis to statewide focus
- Codified by the legislature in 2023
- Oversees the Interagency Resilience Coordination Team

How Kentucky Compares – Proposed Legislation

	Kentucky - Proposed	Alabama	South Carolina	Florida	Louisiana
Establishment	Statute	Statute	Statute	EO (2019) → Statute (2024)	EO (2020) → Statute (2023)
Council Structure	Yes – statutory Resilience Council	Yes – statutory Resilience Council	No council – Standalone agency	No council – Office within Gov's Office	Interagency Coordination Team + Task Force
CRO Appointment	Senate-confirmed, Governor-appointed	Appointed by Commissioner of Insurance	Cabinet-level appointee	Appointed by Governor	Senate-confirmed, Governor-appointed
Resilience Plan Mandated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Budget/Staff Authority	May appoint or request	Not specified	Dedicated agency with funding	Statutory office, funding aligned	Can coordinate agency budgets

How Kentucky Compares – Proposed Legislation

Establish a **Kentucky Resilience Office**, led by a **highly qualified Chief Resilience Officer** who is directly accountable to the Governor and to a legislative resilience oversight committee.

Create a **Resilience Coordination Council** with representation from relevant state agencies, county and local governments, and other outside experts, to inform the Kentucky Resilience Office and its activities.

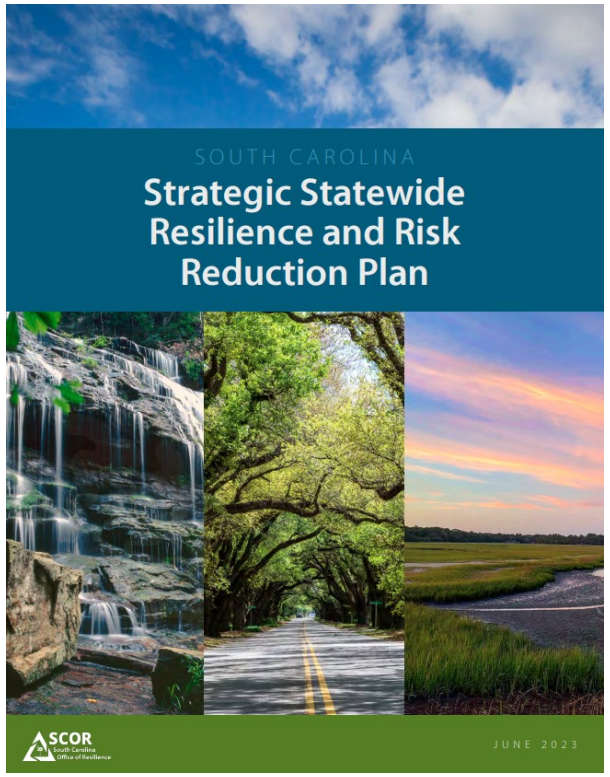
Direct the Resilience Office to develop a **Kentucky Resilience Plan**, a roadmap for long-term disaster risk reduction.

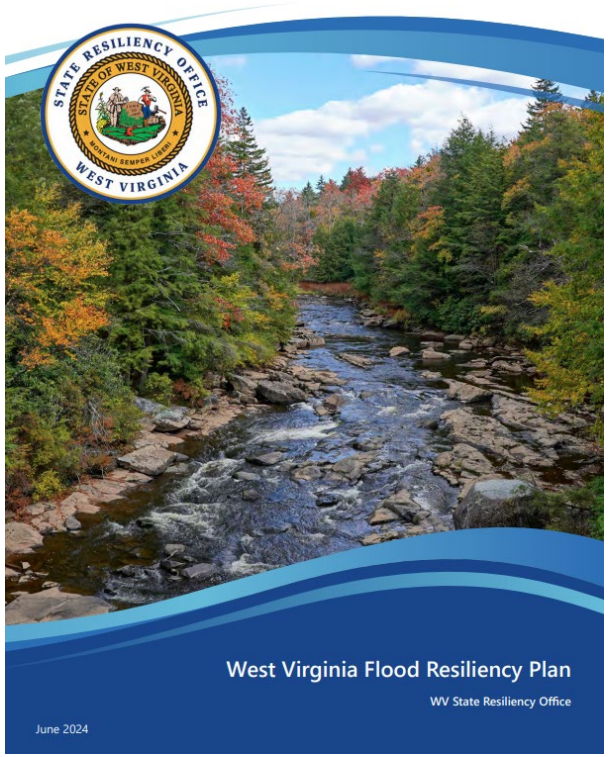
Provide **technical support to assist local communities** in their own resilience planning and project development efforts.

Build a **Kentucky Resilience Fund** to support plan implementation and local capacity-building.

Resilience Planning

A comprehensive statewide resilience plan establishes a shared vision for resilience and leverages the best available models and scientific projections to build a collective understanding of current and future disaster risks.







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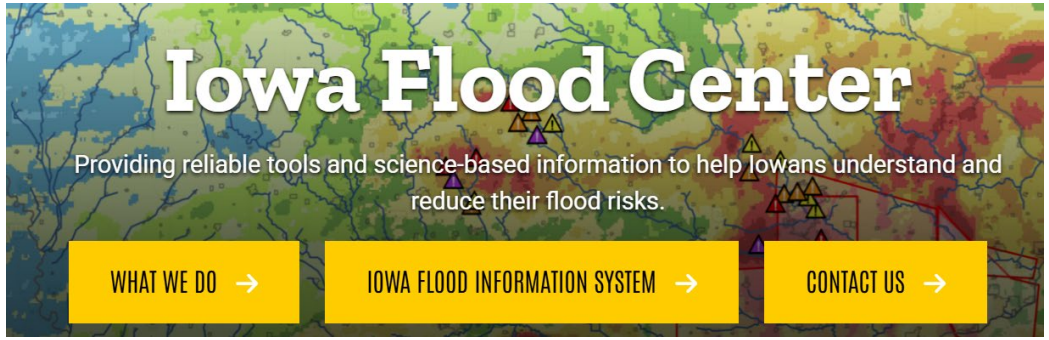
Technical Support for Local Communities

The draft legislation would require the Kentucky Resilience Office **to assist local governments, regional entities, area development districts**, or other eligible partners in their own resilience planning efforts. The office would assist those communities with risk identification, local and regional planning, project development, benefit-cost analysis, engineering and feasibility work, grant applications, matching funds, coordination, procurement, project management, financial management, grant compliance, and other support





Thank you

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