State Chief Resilience Officers

Establishment, Authority & Governance

GEORGETOWN CLIMATE CENTER

About This Report

State Chief Resilience Officers: Establishment, Authority & Governance

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About the Author

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Cover images: (Top) Preparations before Tropical Storm Debby in 2024. Credit: North Carolina Department of Transportation. (Bottom) A firefighter using a drip torch to contain a wildfire in California, 2018. Credit: U.S. Forest Service via Wikimedia Commons.

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Executive Summary

A Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) is a senior government official responsible for coordinating climate resilience efforts across state agencies and jurisdictions, developing comprehensive resilience strategies, and ensuring that state investments and policies mitigate climate-related risks for as many people as possible. Unlike traditional emergency management roles already in place in all 50 states, CROs focus primarily on pre-disaster planning and long-term resilience building rather than immediate disaster response.

The CRO is a new role, driven by a new set of challenges that, whether or not states attribute it formally, are climate-generated and climate-driven. Another key difference is these new positions tend to focus primarily on pre-disaster hazard planning and mitigation rather than post-disaster response. The creation of these positions has accelerated in the past five years, and represents a significant and encouraging trend in addressing climate resilience at the state level.

Ultimately, the ability of any government office to make progress on its mandated purposes depends on the details. The specific powers and authorities it holds, the budgets it commands, where it resides in the structure of the overall state government, and its capacity to access and leverage federal resources can make all the difference.

To help state governments and others better understand the elements that can help (or hinder) a Chief Resilience Officer's effectiveness, the Georgetown Climate Center completed a detailed review of the authorizing statutes, Executive Orders, and regulations associated with 12 states that have established Chief Resilience Officers (or an equivalent position).[1]

Key Findings

1. The effectiveness of these positions depends not just on their explicit powers, but also on their ability to influence policy, coordinate across agencies, and access resources through their host agencies and interagency relationships.
2. While approaches differ, there's a common emphasis on coordination, planning, and leveraging existing government structures to enhance resilience efforts.
3. A CRO's placement within state government is important, and has the potential to significantly affect the officer's ability to access and coordinate federal funding streams and programs.

[1] GCC identified 12 states that had established CRO positions or equivalents as of December 31, 2024: CA, CO, MD, FL, LA, MA, NC, NJ, RI, SC, VA, WV

4. Successful CROs are positioned and empowered to serve as crucial bridges between federal programs and state/local needs, helping to unlock and align funding from multiple sources.

Recommendations to States

- Carefully consider organizational placement to maximize access to and coordination of state and federal resources.
- Give CRO positions explicit authority to coordinate across agencies and levels of government.
- Structure positions to enable strategic alignment of relevant funding sources and programs.
- Provide the CRO with sufficient staff, budget authority, and other resources to do the job, and enough certainty to insulate them from political pressures.

I. Introduction

The enormous financial and human cost of climate-driven impacts in the United States – extreme weather events, flooding, drought, wildfires, and heatwaves – has imposed a mounting burden on state and municipal governments.

However, although the lives and livelihoods of millions of people may be at stake, the governmental authorities, resources, budgets, and responsibilities for these vital functions are often scattered across multiple offices and agencies. As a result, states and cities are rarely as prepared as they should be for disasters that are coming more and more frequently, and when they happen, governmental inefficiencies can slow the arrival of the help people desperately need.

Faced with these formidable challenges, and recognizing an opportunity to improve the situation, a growing number of jurisdictions are establishing a new role – the Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) – to take responsibility for pre-disaster planning and hazard mitigation efforts to help prepare for the inevitable climate disasters of the future.

For the purpose of this report, a Chief Resilience Officer is a senior government official responsible for coordinating climate resilience efforts across state agencies and jurisdictions, developing comprehensive resilience strategies, and ensuring that state investments and policies mitigate climate-related risks for as many people as possible. Unlike traditional emergency management roles, CROs focus primarily on pre-disaster planning and long-term resilience building rather than immediate disaster response.

In this respect, CROs are distinct from Public Safety/Emergency Response heads, which already exist in all 50 U.S. states. The CRO is a new role, driven by a new set of challenges, which, whether or not states acknowledge it in their official statements, are climate-generated and climate-driven. Another key difference is these new positions tend to focus primarily on pre-disaster hazard planning and mitigation rather than post-disaster response.

These positions are also increasingly serving as bridges between federally funded programs and resources and state/local needs, helping to unlock and coordinate funding from sources like FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program, HUD's Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery program (CDBG-DR), and various other federal grant opportunities.

States that have established Chief Resilience Officer roles, or their equivalent, are already ahead of the pack; the creation of these positions represents a significant and encouraging trend in addressing climate resilience at the state level. At the same time, the ability of any government official to make progress on its mandated purposes ultimately depends on the details. The

specific powers and authorities it holds, the budgets it commands, where it resides in the structure of the overall state government, and its capacity to access and leverage federal resources can make all the difference.

To help state governments and others better understand the elements that can help (or hinder) a Chief Resilience Officer's effectiveness, the Georgetown Climate Center completed a detailed review of the authorizing statutes, Executive orders and regulations associated with 12 states that have established Chief Resilience Officers (or an equivalent position).[2] Our review sought to identify trends and potential opportunities to improve impact and success.

It's important to note that all but one of these positions has been created since 2018, so there's a limit to how much we can point to tangible, on the ground outcomes. However, based on examining pertinent laws and executive orders as well as long experience with similar positions in state government, we were able to evaluate each position's strengths and liabilities, and draw insights about what is likely to work and what isn't.

This research leads to four key findings:

1. The effectiveness of these positions depends not just on their explicit powers, but also on their ability to influence policy, coordinate across agencies, and access resources through their host agencies and interagency relationships.
2. While approaches differ, there's a common emphasis on coordination, planning, and leveraging existing government structures to enhance resilience efforts.
3. A CRO's placement within state government is important, and has the potential to significantly affect their ability to access and coordinate federal funding streams and programs.
4. Successful CROs are positioned and empowered to serve as crucial bridges between federal programs and state/local needs, helping to unlock and align funding from multiple sources.

Based on these findings, we recommend that states:

- Carefully consider organizational placement to maximize access to and coordination of state and federal resources.
- Give CRO positions explicit authority to coordinate across agencies and levels of government.

[2] GCC identified 12 states that had established CRO positions or equivalents as of December 31, 2024: CA, CO, MD, FL, LA, MA, NC, NJ, RI, SC, VA, WV

- Structure positions to enable strategic alignment of relevant funding sources and programs.
- Provide the CRO with sufficient staff, budget authority, and other resources to do the job, and enough certainty to insulate them from political pressures.

Why We Wrote This Report

While GCC determined 12 states have established a CRO position or equivalents, if current trends continue, we expect many more states to take steps in that direction in the next few years. Given the potential for a well-conceived CRO to help states prepare for the future, our intent is to help policy-makers learn from what's been done in other states, and point toward best practices that will set their CROs up for success.

This report lays out our research findings and details key factors for policymakers, advocates, and others to consider. We hope this work will serve as a guidebook for people interested in understanding and advocating for CROs and a resource for state governments seeking to create a CRO position where one does not currently exist.

Note on Selection Criteria

This review focuses on states that have explicitly created Chief Resilience Officer positions or their direct equivalents through formal mechanisms (executive orders or statutes). In addition to an independent review, GCC consulted related overviews by the Environmental Defense Fund,[3] National Council of State Legislatures,[4] and the Bipartisan Policy Center.[5] Our analysis builds on these surveys, with a focus on the states that have established high-ranking positions with well-defined jurisdiction over long-range resilience planning. These 12 states were selected because they established clear leadership positions with defined authorities, responsibilities, and accountability structures for advancing statewide resilience efforts. Our analysis examines three distinct approaches to establishing these positions: pure executive order creation (Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Rhode Island), direct statutory establishment (California,

[3] Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Environmental Council of the States (ECOS), and National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), "Instituting Resilience: Recommendations for Governors and Legislators on Establishing and Supporting Chief Resilience Officers, November 3, 3021, https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/documents/InstitutingResilience-FINAL-Web.pdf.

[4] "State Resilience Offices," National Council of State Legislatures, Updated May 02, 2023, https://www.ncsl.org/environment-and-natural-resources/state-resilience-offices.

[5] Erin Barry and Owen Minott, "Chief Resilience Offices Could Enhance Climate Preparedness," Bipartisan Policy Center, August 18, 2022, https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/legislation-enhance-climate-preparedness/.

Colorado, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia), and evolution from executive orders to statutory codification (Florida, Louisiana, and Virginia).

California presents a unique case that merits inclusion despite not having a position explicitly titled "Chief Resilience Officer." California's Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP)[6], housed within the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, fulfills many of the same functions as dedicated CROs in other states. The program has statutory authority to "coordinate regional and local efforts with state climate adaptation strategies," "develop tools and guidance," "promote and coordinate state agency support," and maintain a clearinghouse for climate adaptation information.[7] The program must also work through a technical advisory council and coordinate with multiple state agencies including "the Office of Emergency Services, the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Natural Resources Agency, the Transportation Agency, the State Department of Public Health, and the Department of Food and Agriculture."[8] This comprehensive approach to resilience coordination and leadership makes it functionally equivalent to CRO positions in other states.

In contrast, several states with significant resilience initiatives were not included in this analysis because their approaches differ structurally from the CRO model. For example, Mississippi's Office of Coastal Restoration and Resiliency, while significant, focuses specifically on coastal issues rather than statewide resilience coordination.[9] Delaware's Resilient and Sustainable Communities League (RASCL) represents an important network for resilience planning but operates more as a collaborative initiative than a centralized leadership position. Wyoming's resilience efforts, while noteworthy, are distributed across multiple agencies without a singular coordinating authority. The choice to exclude these and similar programs allows for more direct comparison of formal resilience leadership positions with clear authorities and responsibilities. This focused scope enables meaningful analysis of how different states structure and empower these positions to advance comprehensive resilience objectives.

[6] "Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program," California Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, accessed January 24, 2025, https://lci.ca.gov/climate/icarp/.

[7] Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§ 71354(a)(1-3).

[8] Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§ 71354(a)(3).

[9] Miss. Code Ann. § 49-15-11.

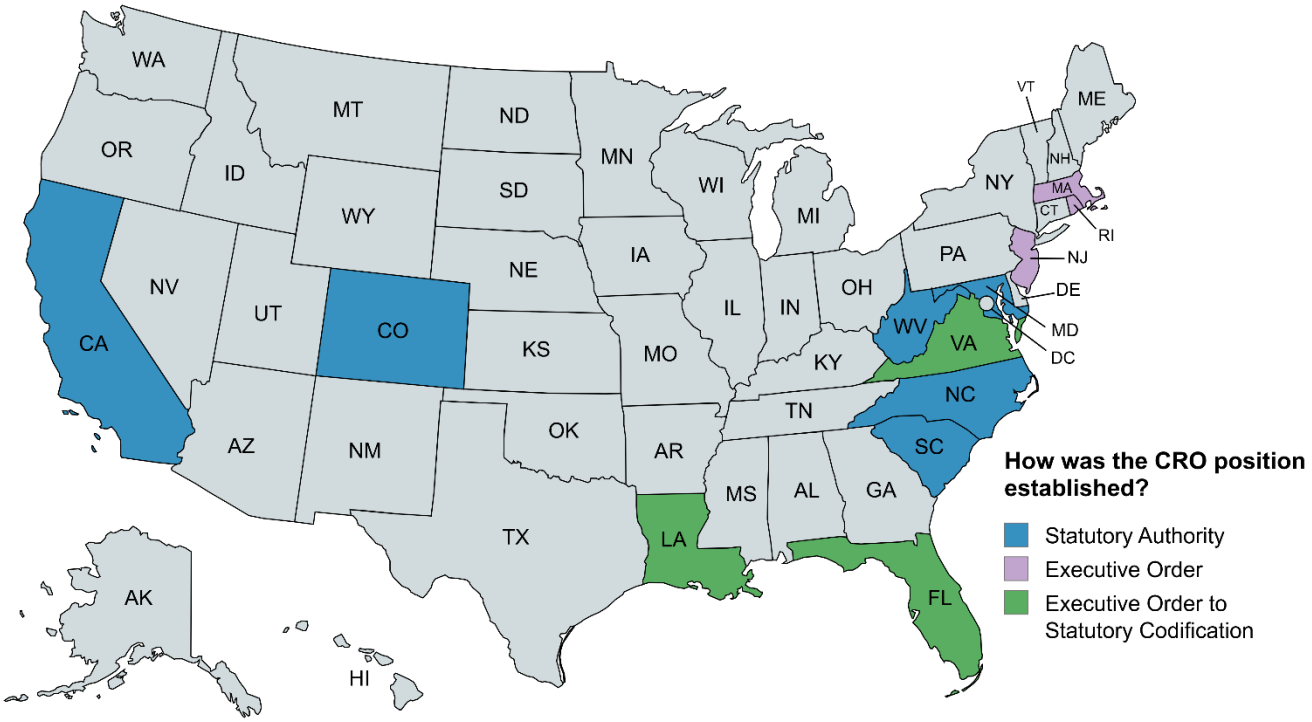
II. Establishment and Authorization

The first rise of Chief Resilience Officers in the United States happened at the city level. In 2013, The Rockefeller Foundation, through its 100 Resilient Cities program,[10] established the role of Chief Resilience Officer (CRO), "a senior leader in city government working to break down silos to build a more resilient city"[11] in each of these cities. Over time, this model has been expanded to states and localities of all sizes.

States have been part of a recent rise in the creation of specific positions or offices focused on resilience and climate adaptation. Among the 12 states analyzed by GCC, only California established a CRO position prior to 2018.

The method of authorizing and conferring explicit duties to these positions has varied, with states using either executive orders or laws, and in some cases, beginning with an executive order before later codifying the position through legislation.

Figure 1: Map of U.S. states with a CRO color-coded by position establishment



[10] "100 Resilient Cities," Rockefeller Foundation, accessed January 24, 2025, https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/100-resilient-cities/.

[11] Jorge Morales-Burnett and Rebecca Marx, "The Rise of the Chief Resilience Officer: Lessons from 100 Resilient Cities," The Urban Institute, September 15, 2022, https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Rise%20of%20CROs%20Brief.pdf.

Executive Orders

Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island

Three of the states we looked at created their CRO positions by executive order. These orders, deriving authority from governors' constitutional or statutory powers, offer the advantage of rapid establishment. They can also be amended or expanded upon at the Governor's choosing rather than requiring a drawn-out legislative process. Thus, they provide flexibility to adapt to emerging challenges. However, this flexibility must be balanced against the potential impermanence of executive orders — future governors could modify or eliminate these positions entirely, potentially disrupting long-term resilience initiatives.

Statutory Authorization

California, Colorado, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia

In six of the states we reviewed, the state legislature passed a law to establish the CRO position. States choosing direct statutory authorization typically create more detailed frameworks for their CRO positions from the outset. These statutes often specify: Organizational placement within state government, Specific duties and authorities; Staffing, budget, and resource allocations; Reporting requirements and oversight mechanisms; and Interagency coordination responsibilities

In addition to specificity, statutorily established positions can be expected to have greater permanence, because the process of passing a law to set up the position also builds support within the legislature for maintaining it, and passing new legislation to repeal the position can be difficult.

Evolution from Executive Order to Statutory Codification

Florida, Louisiana, Virginia

Three of the 12 states reviewed created CRO positions via Executive Order and later enacted legislation to make the position permanent and clarify or expand its duties and responsibilities. The hybrid model of establishing Chief Resilience Officers through executive action followed by legislative codification combines immediate response with long-term stability. Florida exemplifies this: the governor appointed the first CRO in 2019 to address sea level rise impacts, then in 2024 the legislature passed legislation establishing the Statewide Office of Resilience with expanded authorities and duties.

This approach offers two key advantages: executive orders enable rapid implementation, which can be crucial given increasing climate disasters; and subsequent legislation provides durability and resources through broader stakeholder engagement, clearer interagency coordination parameters, stable funding mechanisms, and greater resistance to political changes.

In Louisiana, Democratic Governor John Bel Edwards established the CRO position within the Governor's Office through an Executive Order[12] in 2020, focusing initially on coastal resilience. In 2023, Act 315 significantly expanded the role, requiring Senate confirmation and establishing broader statewide responsibilities.[13] The law created new institutional structures, including the Interagency Resilience Coordination Team and Louisiana Resilience Task Force, giving the CRO formal authority across state government.[14] In 2024, Republican Governor Jeff Landry took office and while he has not made specific statements about the position, a new administration and a change of party control always brings the potential for more changes and delays.

In 2014, Virginia Governor Terry McAullife designated the Secretary of Public Safety as the Commonwealth's first Chief Resilience Officer.[15] In 2018, Governor Ralph Northam signed the first Executive Order regarding a CRO, naming the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources as the Commonwealth's CRO. Virginia's current CRO statute,[16] enacted in 2024, differs notably from the Executive Order that first formalized the position in 2018.[17] The current law establishes direct appointment of the CRO by the governor, rather than by the Secretary of Natural Resources, and expands its powers to include serving as a non-federal sponsor for Army Corps projects. The Interagency Resilience Management Team was formalized, requiring quarterly meetings and designated agency coordinators.

Maryland stands out for its reverse approach to establishing the CRO position – creating it first through 2022 legislation[18] under Republican Governor Hogan, then significantly expanding it via Democratic Governor Moore's 2024 executive order. This bipartisan evolution demonstrates remarkable policy continuity across administrations. The order[19] mandates unprecedented

[12] La. Executive Order JBE 2020-19.

[13] La. Stat. Ann. § 49:220.41.

[14] La. Stat. Ann. §§ 49:220.45-46.

[15] "McAuliffe Names Virginia's First Climate Change Chief," The Virginian-Pilot, Pilot Online, August 8, 2019, https://www.pilotonline.com/2014/12/06/mcauliffe-names-virginias-first-climate-change-chief/?clearUserState=true.

[16] Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-220.5.

[17] Va. Executive Order 24 (2018), Increasing Virginia's Resilience to Sea Level Rise and Natural Hazards.

[18] Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety § 14-1201.

[19] Md. Executive Order 01.01.2024.31(A)(2)(a)(v), Strengthening the State of Maryland's Resilience Strategy.

detailed planning requirements, including comprehensive 2-, 5-, and 10-year resilience plans. These plans must address specific areas: housing vulnerability, critical infrastructure, transportation systems, workforce impacts, and business risks – with particular attention to small, women- and minority-owned enterprises. This detailed framework sets Maryland apart by establishing specific, measurable requirements for resilience planning while ensuring equity remains central to implementation.

As states continue to develop and refine their resilience frameworks, these different approaches – from executive to legislative authority, or vice versa – demonstrate the importance of institutional flexibility in addressing climate challenges.

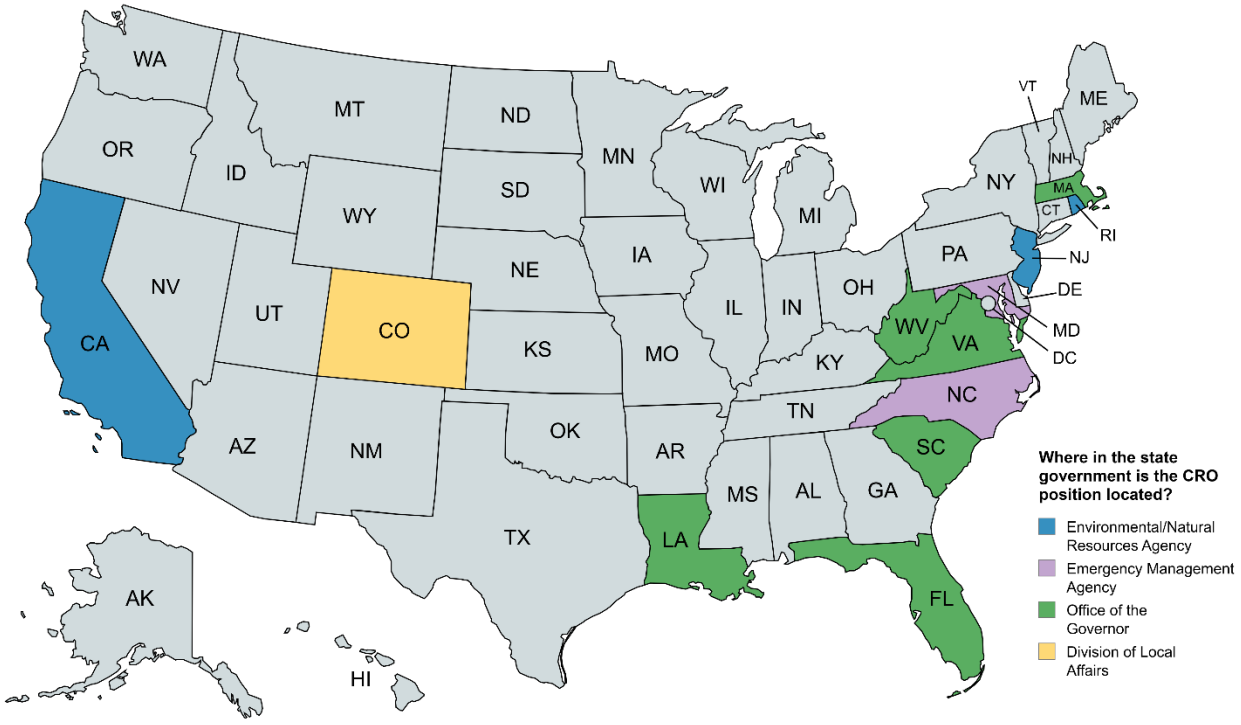
III. Titles and Placement

The variation in how states structure and position their resilience leadership roles reflect states' various priorities and practical considerations Even the name assigned to the position carries practical and political ramifications.

While "Chief Resilience Officer" is the most commonly used title, three states have adopted alternative names that reflect differences in their specific goals. Massachusetts named the position "Climate Chief," emphasizing the position's intended sole as a connector among the commonwealth's various climate-change-related initiatives, including resilience efforts. By contrast, Colorado created a "Director of Resiliency," focusing on the state's desired outcomes (greater community resilience) rather than the environmental causes of the growing risks faced by those communities.

More important than titles, however, is where these positions are placed within the state government. Our analysis shows four different approaches to organizational placement, each with significant implications for accessing state and federal resources and coordinating resilience efforts within a state, explored below.

Figure 2: Map of U.S. states with a CRO color-coded by position in government



1. Environmental/Natural Resources Agency

The environmental department placement, adopted by three[20] states, provides natural advantages for accessing certain federal funding streams, particularly those provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with whom these departments have pre-existing relationships. New Jersey's Chief of Resilience and Adaptation, established in 2019, for instance, has leveraged its position within the state's Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to coordinate multiple federal funding sources, including EPA water infrastructure grants and the Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars. The position's location within the NJDEP can also be helpful in planning for coastal resilience projects that require environmental permits and reviews.

Placement within a state environmental management agency can be particularly attractive for states with significant coastal exposure or natural resource concerns, because these agencies often oversee coastal management programs such as the federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) as well as land conservation programs.

On the other hand, setting the CRO within the environmental agency could limit the position's ability to coordinate across non-environmental agencies (e.g., transportation departments,

[20] California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island

which sometimes have a history of contentious relationships with environmental permitting or enforcement) or access certain emergency management resources (which are usually administered by different agencies.

2. Emergency Management Agency

Emergency Management Agency placement, adopted by Maryland and North Carolina, offers distinct advantages for accessing federal disaster funds and coordinating response capabilities.[21] North Carolina's Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR), positioned within the Department of Public Safety, demonstrates the model's effectiveness through its management of nearly a billion dollars in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding in two grant types, Community Development Block Grant — Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds and Community Development Block Grant — Mitigation (CDBG-MIT).[22] Similarly, Maryland's placement of its CRO within the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) has enabled the integration of resilience planning with the state's hazard mitigation strategy and emergency response frameworks.[23]

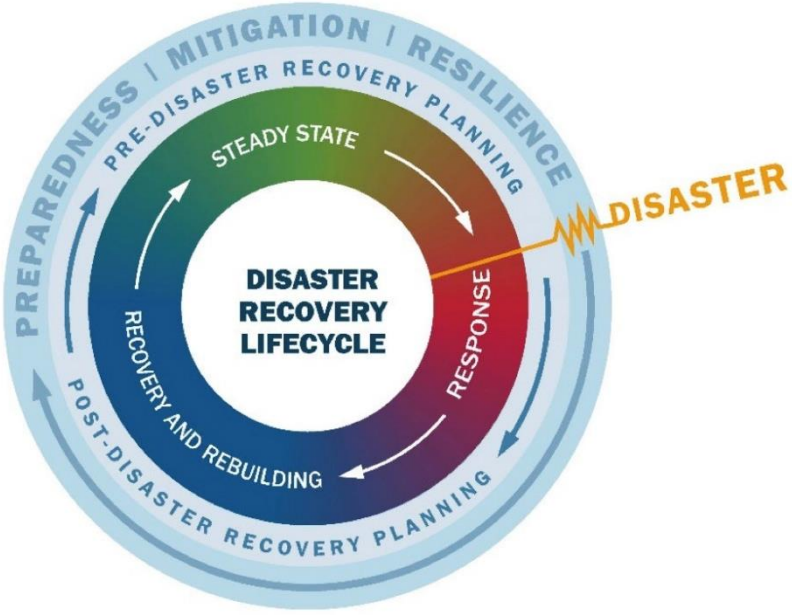
The Emergency Management model also facilitates integration with existing state hazard mitigation plans and FEMA-required planning processes. However, this approach has the potential disadvantage of rooting the CRO in an agency whose mission and culture traditionally center on responding to acute disasters rather than planning holistically for chronic stressors and long-term climate risks.

[21] Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety § 14-1201; N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A.

[22] "North Carolina Office of Recovery & Resilience: About Us," Rebuild NC, accessed on January 27th, 2025, https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/about-us.

[23] Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety § 14-1202(c), (d)(1).

Figure 3: Disaster Recovery Lifecycle



FEMA's National Disaster Recovery Framework (2024)[24] details the Disaster Recovery Lifecycle. CROs focus on the Mitigation and Resilience phases of this cycle.

3. Department of Local Affairs

Colorado's placement is unique among these models, as its Director of Resiliency operates within the Division of Local Government in the Department of Local Affairs.[25] This structure reflects Colorado's emphasis on supporting local communities directly — an approach codified in statute requiring the office to provide technical assistance to local governments for resilience planning and implementation.[26] As an entity within Local Affairs, the office maintains independence while leveraging existing relationships between state and local governments, particularly in areas of land use planning and community development that are critical to long-term resilience efforts.

The office's statutory mandate emphasizes a collaborative, bottom-up approach to resilience planning. Unlike other state models, Colorado requires explicit consultation with local

[24] FN 24: U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, "National Disaster Recovery Framework," FEMA, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, December 10, 2024, https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_national-disaster-recovery-framework-third-edition_2024.pdf.

[25] Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-32-121.

[26] Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-32-122(1)(a)(II).

governments, businesses, agriculture, civic organizations, academia, and community leaders in developing its resiliency programs.[27] This participatory process, combined with the office's responsibility to integrate resilience criteria into existing grant programs,[28] creates a unique framework focused on building local capacity while maintaining coordination with state-level initiatives.

4. Office of the Governor

Six of the 12 state CRO positions we assessed operate within the governor's office structure, though with different reporting relationships.

The variations come primarily in formal authority and confirmation requirements. Louisiana and South Carolina require Senate confirmation of their CROs,[29] Massachusetts grants cabinet-level status to their Climate Chief,[30] and Florida opts for direct gubernatorial appointment without confirmation.[31] These differences reflect state-specific approaches to balancing executive authority with legislative oversight. They also show the even amongst CROs positioned within the Office of a Governor, their reach, authority and power may vary.

Placement within the governor's office enhances the position's authority for interagency coordination and statewide policy implementation. Louisiana's CRO, for example, coordinates directly with department heads on resilience planning and has explicit authority to review agency budgets for resilience initiatives. However, this model can face continuity challenges during administration changes.

The effectiveness often depends on specific authorities granted. States like Louisiana and South Carolina have strengthened their CROs through statutory requirements for agency cooperation and specific coordination duties, while others rely more on executive authority alone. While Virginia’s CRO reports to the Governor via the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources and South Carolina’s CRO is a member of the Governor’s Cabinet by virtue of being an agency head, these positions are themselves part of the governor's office structure, maintaining executive coordination power.[32] This frequent choice of governor's office placement, regardless of the

[27] Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-32-122(3).

[28] Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-32-122(1)(a)(V).

[29] La. Stat. Ann. § 49:220.41(b); S.C. Code Ann. § 48-62-20(C).

[30] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.1(b), Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

[31] Fl. Laws § 14.2031(1).

[32] Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-220.5.; S.C. Code Ann. § 48-62-20(C).

specific reporting structure, suggests states recognize resilience as a cross-cutting challenge requiring high-level executive authority and coordination capabilities.

IV. Scope of Responsibilities

While Chief Resilience Officers share certain core functions across all jurisdictions, the specific scope of their responsibilities varies significantly based on state needs, organizational placement, and authorizing legislation. Analysis of the formal duties and powers assigned to these positions reveals both common threads and important distinctions in how states envision and empower these roles.

This section details five core responsibilities we found across most or all CROs and five additional responsibilities we found in smaller subgroups or individual states.

Core Responsibilities

Analysis of state Chief Resilience Officer positions reveals five core responsibilities that are consistently present across jurisdictions, though their specific implementation varies based on state needs and organizational structure. These fundamental duties form the foundation of how CROs advance resilience initiatives and manage climate-related challenges in their states.

1. Interagency Coordination

States have developed various formal structures to facilitate the coordination work of their CROs, typically through statutory or executive mandates for specific coordination bodies.

Louisiana's model creates two distinct coordination entities: the Interagency Resilience Coordination Team, comprising resilience officers from each state agency, and the Louisiana Resilience Task Force for broader stakeholder engagement. The CRO chairs both bodies, creating a clear line of authority for coordinating resilience efforts.[33] Each state agency must appoint a "resilience coordinator" at the undersecretary level or equivalent, ensuring senior-level engagement in coordination efforts.

Virginia's Interagency Resilience Management Team, chaired by the CRO, offers a comprehensive approach, meeting at least quarterly and including representatives from various departments and agencies ranging from Transportation to Wildlife Resources. The state requires each participating agency to designate a resilience coordinator, creating a network of dedicated points of contact for implementing resilience initiatives.[34]

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[33] La. Stat. Ann. §§ 220.45-46.

[34] Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-220.5(c).

Massachusetts structures its coordination through a Climate Cabinet led by the Climate Chief, with each cabinet secretary required to appoint a Secretariat Climate Officer (SCO). These SCOs are responsible for managing climate guidelines and directives within their respective agencies, creating a clear chain of implementation authority.[35] This approach aims to ensure both high-level policy coordination and practical implementation capacity.

The formality and authority of these coordination mechanisms spans a spectrum: Some states mandate regular meeting schedules (Virginia requires quarterly meetings); others specify detailed reporting requirements (New Jersey's Interagency Council must develop both short- and long-term action plans); several states require formal strategic planning processes involving multiple agencies, and many establish specific workgroups or subcommittees for particular issues.

2. Strategic Planning and Assessment

In addition to coordination, most CROs are specifically tasked with developing comprehensive resilience strategies for their states. The sophistication and scope of these planning mandates vary considerably. South Carolina's statute provides perhaps the most detailed planning requirements, mandating that its CRO develop a Strategic Statewide Resilience and Risk Reduction Plan that must examine "present and potential losses associated with the occurrence of extreme weather events and other natural catastrophes" for each of the state's eight major watersheds.[36] Some states like Virginia require the development and implementation of project based Coastal Resilience Master Plan.

Louisiana has been implementing a coastal master plan for years, long before they created the CRO position. The CRO is now engaged in advancing and coordinating that ongoing effort.

New Jersey requires its CRO to develop both a Scientific Report on Climate Change and a Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy, with specific requirements to address coastal resilience through a dedicated Coastal Resilience Plan.[37] The Scientific Report must be updated every two years to reflect the latest climate science, demonstrating New Jersey's commitment to science-based planning.

Massachusetts takes a particularly comprehensive approach, empowering its Climate Chief to "review the capital plans for all executive offices and agencies and issue advice and

[35] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.1(g), Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

[36] S.C. Code Ann. § 48-62-30(1)(b).

[37] New Jersey Executive Order No. 89(2)(a),(c).

recommendations to the Governor concerning approval of the plans and their implications for the climate before such plans are finalized and adopted."[38] This broad authority to review capital planning is amongst the most powerful tools a CRO can have.

3. Capital Planning and Expenditure Reviews

Capital planning review authority stands out as one of the most powerful tools available to CROs, as it allows them to influence how states invest in resilience and potentially redirect resources toward resilience goals. The variation in how states grant this authority reflects different approaches to empowering their CROs to influence long-term infrastructure and development decisions.

Four[39] states grant their Chief Resilience Officers substantial authority over capital planning and expenditure reviews, though the scope and nature of this authority vary significantly. Massachusetts grants the most comprehensive powers, requiring its Climate Chief to review capital plans for all executive offices and agencies and issue recommendations to the Governor about climate implications before plans are finalized.[40]

Louisiana takes a similarly broad approach, empowering its CRO to coordinate all state departmental budget requests for resilience and risk mitigation programs while also reviewing state agency comments on federally sponsored resilience activities.[41]

West Virginia focuses its CRO's authority more specifically on disaster-related expenditures, with powers to catalog and monitor capital expenditures for flood mitigation and direct expenditures on behalf of the Governor for disaster recovery and resilience.[42]

Virginia takes a different approach, emphasizing its CRO's ability to maximize coordination of funding and enter into agreements with federal partners, including the authority to serve as non-federal sponsor for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects and engage with Department of Defense flood control initiatives.[43]

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[38] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.2(v), Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

[39] LA, MA, VA, WV

[40] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.2(v), Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

[41] La. Stat. Ann. §§ 220.42(a)(3),(b)(2).

[42] W. Va. Code §§ 29-31-3(6),(11).

[43] Va. Code Ann. §§ 2.2-220.5(B)(5)(a-b).

4. Grant Management and Resource Coordination

A critical function of virtually all CRO positions is managing and coordinating federal and state funding streams for resilience projects. States have developed different approaches to empowering their Chief Resilience Officers in grant management and resource coordination, with some taking comprehensive approaches while others focus on specific funding streams.

Maryland and North Carolina represent some of the most expansive models, with Maryland's CRO authorized to coordinate federal programs and administer state mitigation grants while identifying funding across federal, state, and private sources,[44] and North Carolina's office managing significant federal funding streams, including CDBG-DR funds, while also overseeing other programs for financially distressed local governments.[45]

All states emphasize coordination and maximization of resources across government levels. Virginia authorizes its CRO to maximize coordination of federal, state, and private funding while serving as a non-federal sponsor for federal grants.[46] Massachusetts takes a similar approach but adds a municipal focus, with its Climate Chief authorized to apply for and administer federal funds while coordinating funding applications across municipalities.[47] Louisiana and South Carolina blend coordination with direct management: Louisiana's CRO must pursue federal and private funds while coordinating state agency funding requests,[48] while South Carolina's office administers a dedicated Resilience Revolving Fund while providing grants for resilience research.[49]

Other states take more targeted approaches to resource coordination. West Virginia and Colorado emphasize flexibility in funding sources, with West Virginia's CRO authorized to accept and use funds from various government levels and private sources,50 and Colorado's office empowered to seek and expend grants while integrating resilience criteria into existing programs.[51] New Jersey and Rhode Island focus on coordination and tracking: New Jersey's CRO

[44] Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety §§ 14-1203(a)(1)(2),(b)(2)(iii).

[45] N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143B-1040.

[46] Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-220.5(B)(5).

[47] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.2, Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

[48] La. Stat. App. §§ 220.42(a)(4),(b)(2).

[49] S.C. Code Ann. § 48-62-30(4); S.C. Code Ann. § 48-62-320.

[50] W. Va. Code § 29-31-3(20).

[51] Colo. Rev. State. §24-32-122(5).

must compile directories of funding opportunities and coordinate across departments[52], while Rhode Island's CRO must actively track and pursue federal grants.[53] Florida takes a collaborative approach, requiring its CRO to work across agencies to secure funding specifically for flood resilience initiatives.[54]

These flexible approaches reflect different state priorities and institutional structures, with some emphasizing direct management of funds while others focus on coordination and technical assistance.

5. Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

Nine of the 12 CROs[55] reviewed are explicitly tasked with providing technical support to both state agencies and local governments, though the nature and scope of this assistance varies. Colorado's Resiliency Office offers a particularly comprehensive technical assistance mandate, requiring support for local government resilience planning, including resilience frameworks and vulnerability profiles, state agency implementation of resilience policies and procedures, and securing additional resources and investments for resilience solutions.[56]

States have developed a variety approaches to providing technical assistance and building local capacity for resilience, with several establishing comprehensive support frameworks. Colorado's program is particularly detailed, requiring technical assistance for both local governments and state agencies in implementing resilience planning, securing resources, and developing risk-reduction plans.[57] Virginia emphasizes hands-on support, mandating both technical assistance and capacity building for local governments in areas including resilience planning, data collection, and project implementation.[58]

Maryland takes a multi-stakeholder approach, requiring its CRO to work not only with local jurisdictions but also with business leaders to identify best practices while helping access various funding streams.[59] Several states link technical assistance to funding access — Massachusetts's Climate Chief must support municipalities in coordinating federal funding applications, while

[52] New Jersey Executive Order No. 89(2)(f).

[53] R.I. Executive Order 23-07(h), Rhode Island Resilience 2023.

[54] Fl. Laws § 14.2031.

[55] CO, FL, MD, NJ, VA, WV, SC, LA, MA

[56] Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-32-122(1)(a).

[57] Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-32-122(1)(a).

[58] Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-220.5(B)(2).

[59] Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety §§ 14-1202(d)(4-5).

South Carolina provides grants to institutions for resilience research alongside technical planning assistance.[60] Louisiana focuses on integration, requiring technical guidance to help agencies and jurisdictions incorporate resilience goals into future projects and programs.[61]

This range of approaches demonstrates how states are working to build local capacity while recognizing that effective resilience implementation often requires both technical expertise and resource support.

Additional Focus Areas

While core functions remain relatively consistent across states, many CROs have additional responsibilities tailored to state-specific challenges and priorities. We identified five areas of note.

Coastal Resilience

Six[62] of the 12 states, specifically those with significant coastal exposure, task their CROs with specific coastal resilience duties. Louisiana's CRO works under the direction of the Governor's Executive Assistant for Coastal Activities and must collaborate across agencies to assess vulnerability to coastal change, while incorporating projections from the Coastal Master Plan into strategic planning.[63] Florida takes a science-driven approach, requiring its CRO to collaborate with the Florida Flood Hub to incorporate sea level rise projections into state projects and work with water management districts on coastal resilience initiatives.[64]

Other states incorporate coastal concerns into broader resilience efforts. Virginia's CRO must assist with the development and implementation of the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan in accordance with state code.[65] New Jersey requires its CRO to develop a Coastal Resilience Plan as part of the broader Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy, specifically addressing tidal and non-tidal waters, waterfronts, and inland coastal areas.[66] South Carolina requires its CRO to develop recommendations that prioritize nature-based solutions and methods to restore natural

[60] S.C. Code Ann. §§ 48-62-30(3-4).

[61] La. Stat. App. § 220.42(a)(2).

[62] FL, LA, NJ, RI, SC, VA

[63] La. Executive Order JBE 2020-19, La. Stat. App. §220.42.

[64] Fl. Laws §§ 14.2031(2)(e),(g).

[65] Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-220.5(B)(4).

[66] New Jersey Executive Order No. 89(4)(b).

floodplain function.[67] Rhode Island's approach connects coastal resilience to broader climate initiatives, with the CRO's responsibilities explicitly linked to coastal programs and the implementation of the OSCAR (Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience) grant program.[68]

These varying approaches demonstrate how coastal states are increasingly recognizing the need to explicitly address coastal vulnerabilities within their resilience frameworks, though they differ in how they structure and prioritize these responsibilities.

Climate Change Integration

Four[69] states explicitly integrate their Chief Resilience Officers into broader climate change initiatives, with different degrees of formal connection. Massachusetts takes perhaps the most direct approach, creating a "Climate Chief" position within the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience, tasked with comprehensive responsibility for climate innovation, mitigation, adaptation, and resilience policies.[70] Similarly, Michigan houses its resilience function within the Office of Climate and Energy, where it coordinates the state's comprehensive response to climate change across departments. New Jersey establishes a particularly structured approach, requiring its CRO to develop a Scientific Report on Climate Change while leading the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience and developing a comprehensive Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy.[71]

Other states create different types of climate connections through their statutory frameworks. California uses its Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program, which coordinates regional and local efforts with state climate adaptation strategies while emphasizing both climate equity and greenhouse gas reductions.[72] Rhode Island explicitly connects its resilience planning to the state's climate goals, requiring the resilience plan to be included in the state climate plan. The state's CRO must coordinate resilience efforts with decarbonization programs and activities in accordance with the RI Act on Climate.[73] Washington state demonstrates another approach, incorporating resilience within its climate commitment, establishing a coordinated and strategic

[67] S.C. Code Ann. § 48-62-30(1)(d)(iii).

[68] R.I. Executive Order 23-07(f), Rhode Island Resilience 2023.

[69] CA, MA, NJ, RI

[70] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.1, Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

[71] New Jersey Executive Order No. 89.

[72] Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§ 71354.

[73] R.I. Executive Order 23-07(i), Rhode Island Resilience 2023.

statewide approach to climate resilience while building an equitable and inclusive clean energy economy.[74]

These different approaches demonstrate how states are increasingly recognizing the need to connect resilience efforts with broader climate initiatives, though the institutional mechanisms for doing so differ significantly.

Disaster Recovery

Six[75] states position their Chief Resilience Officers with explicit disaster recovery responsibilities, with North Carolina providing perhaps the most comprehensive integration. North Carolina's CRO operates within the Office of Recovery and Resiliency, which executes multi-year recovery projects and administers CDBG-DR funds, while also providing disaster recovery coordination, public information, and program management services.[76] Similarly, West Virginia places significant disaster recovery duties with its CRO, who serves as the primary representative of the Governor in disaster recovery matters and must coordinate long-term disaster recovery efforts in response to disasters as they occur.[77] Maryland also emphasizes recovery, housing its CRO within the Department of Emergency Management where the position must coordinate federal prevention, protection, mitigation, and recovery-focused programs.[78]

Other states take varying approaches to connecting resilience and recovery functions. South Carolina's Office of Resilience must coordinate statewide disaster recovery efforts alongside resilience initiatives, with the CRO overseeing coordination between federal, state, and local stakeholders.[79] Louisiana requires its CRO to coordinate with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness for emergency management and disaster response, while also integrating recovery considerations into broader resilience planning.[80] Colorado takes a more supportive approach, requiring its Resiliency Office to support long-term community recovery efforts and resource navigation after disasters, while focusing primarily on pre-disaster resilience building.[81]

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[74] Wash. Rev. Code § 70A.65.050.

[75] NC, WV, MD, SC, LA, CO

[76] N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143B-1040.

[77] W. Va. Code § 29-31-3(14).

[78] Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety § 14-1203(a)(1).

[79] S.C. Code Ann. § 48-62-20(A).

[80] La. Stat. Ann. § 220.42(a)(5).

[81] Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-32-122(1)(a)(viii).

These institutional approaches demonstrate how states are increasingly recognizing the critical connection between immediate disaster recovery and longer-term resilience building, though they differ in how they combine these functions.

Environmental Justice and Equity Requirements

Maryland is the only state to explicitly require its CRO to address environmental justice and equity concerns in their work. “The Office of Resilience must “prioritize vulnerable communities and ensure that investments are made with a focus on environmental justice.” Maryland's statute also mandates that investments “prioritize vulnerable communities and ensure that investments are made with a focus on environmental justice.”[82]

Massachusetts also requires its Climate Chief to “establish a network of State, regional, and local partnerships to ensure that all communities in the Commonwealth have the opportunity to be heard on energy and climate decisions that affect them.”[83]

Data Collection and Reporting Requirements

Seven[84] states delineate significant data collection and reporting responsibilities for their CROs, though the specific requirements change from state to state. While many states have some form of reporting requirement, the specificity, frequency, and scope of required reporting varies significantly, with some mandating comprehensive regular reporting while others focus on specific types of data collection. Virginia establishes one of the most structured reporting frameworks, requiring biennial reports to the Governor and General Assembly starting July 2025 on resilience status, coordination efforts, and funding distribution, while also mandating the collection and public dissemination of resilience science and planning strategies.[85] West Virginia requires the most frequent reporting, with its CRO mandated to report quarterly to the Joint Legislative Committee on Flooding, while also maintaining a comprehensive catalog of capital expenditures and establishing a centralized website for flood information.[86] New Jersey sets specific scientific reporting requirements, mandating its CRO to develop and update a Scientific

[82] Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety § 14-1203(a)(5).

[83] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.2(i), Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

[84] CO, NJ, RI, VA, WV, LA, SC

[85] Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-220.5(B)(7).

[86] W. Va. Code §§ 29-31-3(5-6),(10).

Report on Climate Change every two years using best available data, while also maintaining a directory of funding programs.[87]

Several states focus on comprehensive planning documents and assessments. South Carolina requires its CRO to identify data gaps affecting flood risk evaluation and develop recommendations based on this analysis, while considering projections for future conditions[88]. Rhode Island mandates biennial reports to multiple entities including the Governor and legislative leadership on the State of Resilience.[89] Colorado takes a metrics-based approach, requiring its Resiliency Office to develop specific metrics and targets to measure both short and long-term success of resilience efforts.[90] Louisiana structures its reporting through regular meetings, requiring the Interagency Resilience Coordination Team, chaired by the CRO, to meet at least quarterly and oversee development of a statewide resilience report.[91]

Other states establish more targeted or specialized reporting requirements. Florida requires its CRO to work with the Florida Flood Hub to improve data product usability for state and local governments.[92] Massachusetts focuses on tracking implementation progress of climate initiatives across executive agencies.[93] Maryland's requirements emphasize data collection related to flood risk assessment tools.[94] North Carolina's reporting focuses on grant and program management metrics related to disaster recovery funds.[95]

This range of approaches reflects different state priorities and information needs, with some emphasizing scientific analysis, others focusing on program performance metrics, and still others prioritizing regular updates to legislative or executive leadership.

[87] New Jersey Executive Order No. 89(2).

[88] S.C. Code Ann. § 48-62-30(1).

[89] R.I. Executive Order 23-07(j), *Rhode Island Resilience 2023*.

[90] Colo. Rev. State. § 24-32-122(1)(a)(vii).

[91] La. Stat. Ann. § 49:220.45.

[92] Fl. Laws §§ 14.2031(2)(e),(g).

[93] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.1(e), Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

[94] Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety § 14-1203(a)(3).

[95] N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143B-1040.

Evolution of CRO Responsibilities

The scope of CRO responsibilities reflects both the growing complexity of climate-related challenges and states' evolving understanding of how to address them effectively. While CRO positions may have initially focused on either disaster recovery or environmental protection, the trend is toward more comprehensive positions that integrate planning, coordination and implementation.

This evolution is particularly evident in states that have modified their CRO positions over time. Florida's transition from an executive order to statutory authorization in 2024 significantly expanded the CRO's responsibilities beyond initial coastal resilience duties to include comprehensive flood resilience and coordination across all levels of government.[96] Similarly, Louisiana's 2023 statutory codification of its CRO position added explicit powers for coordinating state agency budgets and reconciling federal funding streams, reflecting growing recognition of the position's crucial role in resource allocation.[97]

The expanding scope of CRO responsibilities also highlights an important tension: while these positions require broad authority to be effective, they must also integrate with existing state agencies and authorities. Success depends not just on formal responsibilities, but on the powers and resources available to execute them — a subject explored in detail in the following section.

V. Powers and Resources

A CRO's ability to implement programs and effectively reduce risks from flooding, wildfire, heat and drought depends heavily on the formal powers and financial and staff resources their positions command. Analysis of state authorizing documents reveals significant variation in how states empower these positions, with authority deriving from three main sources: direct statutory powers, delegated executive authority, and access to financial and staffing resources through their host agencies.

Direct Powers

The most comprehensive powers typically come through statutory authorization as detailed in section two. West Virginia grants its State Resiliency Officer extensive explicit powers, including authority to contract directly with federal, state, and private entities, accept and distribute federal and state funds, hire necessary staff, and execute cooperative agreements between

[96] Fl. Laws § 14.2031.

[97] La. Stat. Ann. §§ 49:220.42(a)(3),(b)(2).

agencies.[98] Similarly, Virginia empowers its CRO to serve as a non-federal sponsor for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects and enter into agreements with the Department of Defense for flood control initiatives.[99] This explicit authority to engage directly with federal agencies enhances the position's ability to access and coordinate federal resources.

Agency-Derived Powers

The placement of CRO positions within state government significantly shapes their practical authority and access to resources. CROs housed within environmental departments, such as in New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection, can benefit from the significant regulatory and permitting authorities of such agencies. These positions can leverage existing environmental programs within these Environmental Agencies, particularly those related to coastal management and water resources. New Jersey's CRO, for instance, can work within the agency to coordinate, harmonize or direct the projects established programs like Blue Acres and the Coastal Management Program to implement resilience initiatives.[100]

CROs positioned within emergency management departments, as in North Carolina and Maryland, gain direct access to disaster recovery funding streams and emergency response mechanisms. North Carolina's Office of Recovery and Resiliency, situated within the Department of Public Safety, has explicit authority to administer CDBG-DR funds and maintains dedicated staff for disaster recovery coordination, public information, citizen outreach, and financial compliance.[101]

Perhaps the broadest authority comes with placement in governors' offices, as seen in Louisiana, Massachusetts, and West Virginia. Louisiana's CRO, positioned within the Office of the Governor, has the reach to coordinate all state departmental budget requests for resilience programs, provide official state recommendations to the legislature and Congress, and represent the state's resilience policy at all governmental levels.[102]

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[98] W. Va. Code § 29-31-3(18).

[99] Va. Code Ann. §§ 2.2-220.5(B)(5)(a-b).

[100] "Bureau of Climate Resilience Planning," Climate and Flood Resilience Program, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, accessed January 24, 2025, https://www.nj.gov/dep/bcrp/.

[101] N.C. Gen. Stat. §143B-1040(a).

[102] La. Stat. Ann. §§ 49:220.42(b)(2),(6),(8).

Staffing and Budget Authority

States have chosen a variety of approaches to funding and staffing CRO positions and offices. Some states explicitly address CRO compensation in their authorizing legislation. Louisiana's statute specifies that "the chief resilience officer shall be paid a salary fixed by the governor."[103] while Maryland establishes that its CRO is "in the executive service of the State Personnel Management System and is entitled to the salary provided in the State budget."[104] More comprehensive staffing provisions appear in states that establish entire resilience offices. North Carolina's model provides for a dedicated Resilience Team under CRO leadership. The office maintains specific positions for disaster recovery coordination, public information, citizen outreach, and financial compliance. CRO's who are given dedicated staff and the resources to pay for them are at an advantage compared to those CRO's who need to borrow staff resources from other departments and agencies.

The CRO's scope of budgetary authority varies significantly based on both organizational placement and authorizing legislation. CROs positioned within governors' offices often have broader fiscal coordination powers. Louisiana's CRO exemplifies this approach, holding explicit authority to coordinate all state departmental budget requests for programs and projects pertaining to resilience and risk mitigation.[105] This high-level placement enables budget oversight across multiple agencies. In contrast, CROs housed within environmental or emergency management departments typically operate within existing budget structures but may have specific authorities for resilience-related funds. North Carolina's Office of Recovery and Resiliency maintains independent authority to administer grant programs for local governments, manage emergency funds for disaster-affected areas, and control CDBG-DR funds, even in cases where another agency is the designated grantee.[106]

Resource Mobilization and Administration

States have taken alternative approaches to granting their CROs authority to seek and manage additional funding. Colorado's Resiliency Office can seek, accept, and expend gifts, grants, or donations from private or public sources.[107] West Virginia has granted its office particularly broad

[103] La. Stat. App. § 49:220.41(b).

[104] Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety § 14-1202(b).

[105] La. Stat. Ann. § 49:220.42(b)(2).

[106] N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143B-1040.

[107] Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-32-122(5).

authority to accept funds from multiple sources, execute cooperative agreements, and maintain dedicated construction and replacement funds.[108]

The extent of administrative support varies based on organizational placement and statutory authority. States with independent resilience offices typically provide more comprehensive administrative support structures. West Virginia authorizes a dedicated human resources division, while North Carolina maintains specialized units for finance, compliance, and program management. CROs placed within existing departments often leverage established administrative frameworks while maintaining independent authority for their specific missions.

Long-term Funding Sustainability

States have adopted different approaches to ensuring sustainable funding for their resilience efforts. South Carolina created a dedicated South Carolina Resilience Revolving Fund, with the CRO playing a key role in its governance through the SC Office of Resilience.[109] This structured funding mechanism provides a stable foundation for ongoing resilience projects and programs.

West Virginia has established two distinct funding streams: the Disaster Recovery Trust Fund and the Flood Resiliency Trust Fund.[110] This dual-fund approach separates immediate disaster response resources from longer-term resilience investments, providing the CRO with flexible but dedicated funding sources for different aspects of the role.

It's also worth noting that a few states (e.g., Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund) have mandatory or automatic funding sources for hazard mitigation programs that CRO's are engaged in, whereas most rely on discretionary funds that are dependent upon appropriation from the U.S. Congress or General Assembly. Mandatory or dedicated funding is more reliable because it insulates the hazard mitigation initiatives somewhat from the political and practical uncertainties of annual appropriations.

Resource Sharing Requirements

States have developed various mechanisms for sharing resources across agencies to support resilience efforts, such as program funding, staff, coordination authority, agency relationships, technical expertise. Virginia's statute requires that "all agencies of the Commonwealth shall assist

[108] W. Va. Code §§ 29-31-3(17),(19-20).

[109] S.C. Code Ann. § 48-62-320.

[110] W. Va. Code § 29-31-8; W. Va. Code § 29-31-12.

the Chief Resilience Officer in the discharge of his duties upon request."[111] This broad mandate for cooperation extends beyond simple coordination to include practical resource sharing.

Massachusetts takes a more structured approach through its Climate Cabinet, requiring each cabinet secretary to dedicate resources to climate resilience efforts through appointed Secretariat Climate Officers.[112] This creates a network of embedded resources the Climate Chief can access across state governments. As noted above, those CRO's with dedicated staff of their own may be at an advantage.

Evolution of Powers and Resources

The evolution of these positions over time suggests an emerging consensus about essential resources. States that have transitioned from executive orders to statutory authorization, such as Florida, Louisiana, and Virginia, have typically expanded both the powers and resources available to their CROs. This pattern indicates that practical experience leads states to recognize the need for more robust support structures and clearer resource authorities.

The most comprehensive CRO authorizations provide both "hard" resources (funding, staff, administrative support) and "soft" resources (coordination authority, agency relationships, technical expertise). They also combine adequate direct resources with the authority and mechanisms to leverage additional capabilities across state government.

As states continue to develop and refine these positions, careful attention to resource alignment — matching available powers and resources to specific responsibilities while ensuring appropriate support for core functions — is equally as important as expanding budgets or authorities.

VI. Key Similarities and Differences

Despite the varied approaches states have taken in establishing resilience leadership positions, clear patterns emerge in how these roles are structured and empowered. Understanding these commonalities and differences is crucial for states considering establishing or modifying such positions, particularly as they seek to maximize federal funding opportunities and build effective coordination mechanisms.

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[111] Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-220.5(A).

[112] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.4, Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

Similarities

Cross-agency coordination stands out as perhaps the most consistent element across all CRO positions. This universal focus on coordination reflects the inherently complex and interconnected nature of climate resilience work. Virginia's CRO exemplifies this approach, chairing an interagency working group that brings together 15 state agencies[113] to align their resilience efforts. Similarly, Massachusetts's Climate Chief is required to "Convene and engage all cabinet secretaries and relevant agency and authority heads in the design, development, and funding of integrated climate policies."[114] These coordination mechanisms have the potential to be valuable when pursuing federal funding opportunities that require multi-agency collaboration.

Strategic planning is another common thread across states, although the scope and focus of these planning efforts are considerably different from state to state. Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan, represents perhaps the most comprehensive approach to planning. Initiated in 2005 after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the plan has been revised every five years since, integrating coastal protection, ecosystem restoration, and community resilience into a single framework. When the state's Chief Resilience Officer position was created in 2023, the CRO was directed to "[c]oordinate and focus federal involvement in Louisiana with respect to resilience and risk mitigation" and "[a]ssist with the state's planning efforts including the Coastal Master Plan, the State Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the Statewide Watershed Management Plan, to ensure the incorporation and alignment of the state's resilience goals and objectives into a unified, proactive, pre-disaster approach to adaptation and long-term resilience."[115]

New Jersey has taken a similarly comprehensive approach with its Climate Change Resilience Strategy (released in October 2021), while Colorado has focused more specifically on watershed resilience through its Climate Resilience Framework, first developed in 2015 in response to 2012 wildfires and 2013 flooding events and revised in 2020. These planning processes can be crucial tools for identifying and prioritizing projects for federal funding.

Grant Management and provision of grant-related technical assistance also appears consistently across CRO positions, though the specific mechanisms vary by state. Some CROs directly control significant federal and state funding streams, while others play advisory roles. North Carolina's

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[113] "Resilience Coordination Working Group," Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, accessed January 24, 2025, https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dam-safety-and-floodplains/resilience-coordination-working-group; "Resilience Coordination Working Group Roster," Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, accessed January 24, 2025, https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dam-safety-and-floodplains/document/RCWG-List.pdf.

[114] Massachusetts Executive Order 604 Sec.2(ii), Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor.

[115] La. Stat. Ann. §§ 49:220.42(b)(5),(b)(7).

approach is particularly instructive; their Office of Recovery and Resiliency directly manages federal disaster recovery funds while also providing technical assistance to help local governments access additional federal funding sources themselves. This dual role has helped the state maximize its use of federal resources while building local capacity to pursue and win federal grants directly.

Differences

There are also significant differences in how states have structured and empowered these positions. The level of statutory authority granted to CROs varies considerably, with some positions holding explicit power to direct other agencies' activities while others rely more on tacit authority, informal influence, and voluntary coordination. Louisiana's CRO, for instance, has statutory authority to direct coastal resilience activities across state agencies, while other states' positions function more as coordinators and facilitators. At the other end of the spectrum, the Colorado resiliency office is created in the Division of Local Government within the Department of Local Affairs. It is a Type 2 entity (24-1-105), meaning that the statutory authority, powers, duties, and functions, including the functions of budgeting, purchasing, and planning, are under the direction and supervision of the head of the principal department.

Topical scope represents another key area of variation. Coastal states like Louisiana and Florida naturally emphasize sea level rise and storm surge in their resilience efforts (and in the portfolio granted to their CROs), while western states like Colorado and California focus more on drought and wildfire risks. Some states have opted for comprehensive approaches addressing multiple climate impacts, while others maintain narrower focus on specific hazards or recovery efforts. These differences in scope often reflect both the physical geography of each state and its particular political context.

Access to resources and staff may vary significantly based on organizational placement and statutory authority. CROs positioned within governors' offices often have broader coordination authority but smaller dedicated staff, while those housed within environmental departments typically have access to more technical expertise but may face challenges coordinating across other domains. Those based in emergency management departments often have clearer access to federal disaster funds but may struggle to advance longer-term resilience initiatives.

These variations in authority, scope, and resources can be expected to significantly impact how effectively CROs can advance resilience initiatives and access federal funding. Understanding these differences will be important for any state seeking to establish a new CRO position or to modify an existing one to maximize its effectiveness. The most robust examples tend to combine statutory authority, strong coordination mechanisms, and strategic placement within state governments to enable both immediate disaster response and longer-term resilience planning.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Our intent with this report was to inform the thinking of state policymakers who are considering establishing a CRO position in their state, as well as those evaluating whether the existing position in their state is set up for success. Most states have yet to establish a CRO position, but if current trends continue, we expect many of those to be considering taking steps in that direction in the next few years. Given the potential for a well-conceived CRO to help states prepare for the future, our intent is to help policymakers learn from what's been done in other states, and point toward best practices that will set their CROs up for success.

Our basis for evaluating a CRO's success is how much climate risk they reduce and how many people they protect or make resilient. The more a CRO is able to bring environmental and emergency management programs together, create cross-agency and whole of government coordination and spend resources carefully in a holistic manner, the more they will be successful and effective.

As we have laid out, there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach that will work in every state. The requirements and specific powers of a CRO role will always reflect the peculiarities of that state's particular geography, history, politics, and government structure. Nevertheless, the different state approaches we assessed fall generally into three overarching resource models:

- **Centralized Resource Model -** States like North Carolina and West Virginia establish dedicated offices with their own staff, budget, and administrative support. This approach provides clear lines of authority and dedicated staffing and financial resources but requires significant initial investment.
- **Networked Resource Model -** States including Virginia and Massachusetts create systems for accessing resources across multiple agencies. This approach leverages existing capabilities but depends heavily on strong coordination authority and institutional relationships.
- **Hybrid Resource Model -** States such as Louisiana and Florida combine dedicated staff with broad authority to access departmental resources. This model provides core capacity while maintaining flexibility to scale efforts as needed.

These three approaches provide a starting point for policymakers and stakeholders interested in designing a CRO position for their own state. However, as we have described in each section of this report, it is the details that can make the difference between an effective chief resilience officer and one whose effectiveness is limited. In that spirit, we encourage policymakers to consider the following recommendations as they consider their own state's special requirements:

Recommendation 1:
Consider organizational placement to maximize access to and coordination of state and federal resources.

A CRO's placement within state government is important, and has the potential to significantly affect their ability to access and coordinate federal funding streams and programs. Each of the common options — within a governor's office, environmental agency, disaster response agency, or in a stand-alone department — carries pros and cons that should be weighed in the context of the state's immediate and longer-term priorities.

Recommendation 2:
Give CRO positions explicit authority to coordinate across agencies and levels of government.

The effectiveness of these positions depends not just on their explicit powers, but also on their ability to influence policy, coordinate across agencies, and access resources through their host agencies and interagency relationships. By being explicit about the authority vested in their CRO, state policymakers send strong signals to government and community members about their priorities and the seriousness with which they are taking the climate resilience challenge.

Recommendation 3:
Structure positions to enable strategic alignment of relevant funding sources and programs.

The crosscutting nature of master planning and resilience strategies means that no single agency or department of government can do it alone. Similarly, no state or locality will be able to address all its climate risks without the help of grants and other resources from the federal government. Successful CROs will be positioned and empowered to have the authority to manage the funds and programs needed to advance their work, and to serve as a bridge between federal resources and state/local needs. This enables the CRO to help unlock and align funding from multiple sources and to deliver resources to the communities and projects that need them most.

Recommendation 4:
Provide the CRO with sufficient staff, budget authority, and other resources to do the job, and enough certainty to insulate them from political pressures.

Given the growing urgency of the climate-driven risks facing communities in every corner of the country, a well-resourced, effective CRO has the potential to save lives and keep climate events from becoming climate catastrophes. That potential can only be realized, though, if the CRO has the tools, resources, and people to plan and implement smart resilience initiatives. By a similar token, a CRO that is unduly worried about their job security or preoccupied with political games will be unable to focus 100 percent of their attention to the urgent challenges they are tasked with addressing.

As more and more states move to establish new Chief Resilience Officer positions, or to expand the portfolios of existing officials to play the CRO role, we hope that these recommendations will be helpful.

The Georgetown Climate Center serves as a resource to state, local, and federal government policymakers working to address the causes and impacts of climate change. Policymakers, researchers, and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the authors of this paper with questions, feedback, and suggestions for further research related to climate change adaptation and resilience.

Appendix

State	Title	Established/Latest EO or most recent law	Authorizing Mechanism(s)	Placement
CA	Director of Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation	2015	Statute	Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) within The Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
CO	Director of the Colorado Resiliency Office	2022	Statute	Colorado Resiliency Office within the Division of Local Government
FL	CRO	2019 2024	Executive Action Statute	The Statewide Office of Resilience within the Office of the Governor
MD	CRO	2023 2024	Statute EO	Office of Resilience within the Department of Emergency Management
MA	Climate Chief	2023	EO	Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience within the Office of the Governor
LA	CRO	2020 2023	EO Statute	Office of the Governor

NC	CRO	2018	Statute	The Office of Recovery and Resiliency within the Department of Public Safety
NJ	CRO	2019	EO	Climate and Flood Resilience Program within the Department of Environmental Protection
RI	CRO	2023	EO	Department of Environmental Management
SC	CRO	2020	Statute	South Carolina Office of Resilience Cabinet Member
VA	CRO	2018 2022	EO Statute	Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources within the Office of the Governor
WV	State Resilience Officer	2021	Statute	State Resiliency Office within the Office of the Governor