



## Fostering Dialogue to Support Community Resilience

### What is resilience?

Many *different* things to many different people! For many, **resilience captures that positive sense of persisting and thriving in the face of adversity and unknowns.** But don't assume it. Ask!

### Why resilience?

Resilience offers the potential of a unified approach to addressing environmental and social vulnerabilities as communities prepare for the impacts of climate change. Despite the urgent need for progress, however, that potential can go unrealized. One reason is the disagreements over what resilience means and what its specific goals are.

That is why this Resilience Road Marker offers recommendations on how to foster productive conversations and partnerships around building community resilience.

### Navigating the discourse

People approach resilience from different perspectives, and with different goals in mind, which can result in very different and potentially conflicting policies and actions.

Consider how resilience might be used by different individuals. One may think about resilience as an **outcome** and focus on maintaining a particular situation, such as a viable economic sector, or on improving a situation, such as the health of a community during both normal and extreme conditions. Another may think of resilience as a **process** and be most concerned with how the community works together to anticipate and respond to shocks and longer-term stresses and changes. Yet another may use resilience to describe a **system property** and be most concerned about maintaining some key function, such as a road or levee.

### Improving the resilience dialogue

Finding common ground is difficult but important when communicating about resilience. Here are four ideas to get started:

- **Explore Your Own Thinking**
- **Acknowledge Differences & Complementarities**
- **Find Shared Values & Goals**
- **Build Partnerships & Continue the Dialogue**

### SPEAKING OF RESILIENCE...

Different notions of resilience represent diverse perspectives and implications for implementation and engagement:

*"We need to have all the voices of our community at the table and address a diversity of threats facing local environments, housing and equity to create a **resilient future** for us all."*



This expresses resilience as an **OUTCOME**. Here, people express a concern about what kind of community is achievable or desirable.

*"We need a strategy that coordinates every department's actions to make the city more **resilient to a storm.**"*



This expresses resilience as a **PROCESS**. Here, the main concern is with making decisions and implementing actions that help to reduce the underlying vulnerability and become better prepared for future risks.

*"We need **resilient buildings and infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather conditions and flooding, or can easily be repaired if they get damaged.**"*



This expresses resilience as a **SYSTEM PROPERTY**. In this view, some may ask whether the system is stable and look for ways to improve functioning in normal and extreme conditions.

## EXPLORE YOUR OWN THINKING ABOUT RESILIENCE

This crucial first step can be harder than it sounds! Ask yourself the 5W's of resilience: For **Whom**, **What**, **Where**, **When**, & **Why** are you building greater resilience?

Are you thinking about resilience as a **system property**, a **process**, or an **outcome**?



“To us here in Baltimore City, resilience is the ability of the community to anticipate, accommodate and positively adapt to or thrive amid changing climate conditions or hazard events and enhance quality of life, reliable systems, economic vitality and conservation of resources for present and future generations. In defining it this way, the city is committed to improving essential infrastructure and buildings, addressing histories of injustice, giving people more of a voice, protecting people and property, and preserving and restoring natural systems.”

**Kristin Baja, City of Baltimore**

## ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCES & COMPLEMENTARITIES

Chances are you won't have the same vision of resilience as everyone else, so work to foster a conversation that brings to the surface legitimate differences in perspective. Listen for whether people talk of resilience as a system property, as a process, or as outcomes—and what kind of outcomes (e.g., keeping the status quo vs. adopting a new community vision). This will help organize the dialogue.



“From our perspective, resilience is about systems change. It's about an intentional transition, led by frontline communities, from systems and practices that extract and dominate to systems that are regenerative and cooperative. To avert the progression of climate change and to adapt to the impacts of climate change that are already underway, community led solutions are critical to advancing the resilient systems, structures, policies, practices we need.”

**Jacqui Patterson, NAACP**

## FIND SHARED VALUES AND GOALS

Move towards a consensus on core principles and common goals. This could include a focus on improving adaptability to a changing economy and environment, improving social justice, or collective learning and action.



“The State of Colorado is committed to building resilience, and it takes everyone—government, non-profits, the private sector, individuals—to get there. Building a culture of resilience requires a lot of conversation, coordination and trust. To get there we can unite around what matters to us—safe and thriving communities, our high quality of life, water, our natural environment, and the endless recreational opportunities that we enjoy. From these shared values, we can see how each of us has a crucial contribution to make.”

**Ian Hyde, State of Colorado**

## BUILD LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS TO SUSTAIN DIALOGUE

Climate change and other disruptions are resistant to easy one-off solutions. Diverse partnerships around resilience are an opportunity to learn how others are working toward common goals and collaborate in achieving those goals. A long-term ongoing learning process can help.



“Helping low-income communities become more resilient is one of our most fundamental imperatives as a society that is beginning to confront the realities of a changing climate. What we do to help those most vulnerable reflects who we are. We provide practical support, like basic capacity, training, tools and resources, while also helping to develop healthy and sustainable housing that is affordable. Based on that foundation, we can further help communities to thrive by ensuring access to quality food, transportation for employment and recreation, and investing in quality community assets like schools and health care facilities.”

**Tom Osdoba, Enterprise Community Partners**



For more information, visit [www.agci.org/resilience](http://www.agci.org/resilience)

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