Building Resilience to Natural Disasters

Collaboration Guide

Practical Guidance for Queenslanders

Queensland
Government

Image: (left) Storm, Central Queensland, (right) Flinders Highway damage following the 2019 Monsoon Trough.

Interpreter

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Queensland Reconstruction Authority
PO Box 15428
City East QLD 4002
Phone (07) 3008 7200
info@qra.qld.gov.au
www.qra.qld.gov.au

About this guide

Building resilience to natural disasters – practical guidance for Queenslanders.

Collaboration, partnerships and learning through knowledge sharing are fundamental to the disaster management tenet of shared responsibility.

This document provides guidance on how to establish collaborative groups across stakeholders to advance locally-led resilience. It draws on some theory, and links activities to Queensland's disaster resilience policy framework.

It reflects 'on the ground' experiences in designing and preparing Queensland's pilot regional resilience strategies in partnership with local stakeholders under *Resilient Queensland: Delivering the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2018–2021*.

This guide is drafted with a resilience to natural disaster lens, however the principles and actions can be applied to build resilience in any network.

Audience for this guide

The intended audiences for this guideline are:
- the community - progress and neighbourhood associations, service clubs, sporting and social groups, industry bodies, charitable organisations, and environmental groups
- local government authorities
- local disaster management groups
- district disaster management groups
- emergency and disaster management stakeholders and professionals
- state and federal government agencies
- experts across the range of natural disasters, hazards and risk management
- non-government organisations who have a role in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Contents

Image: Mary Regional Resilience Strategy workshop, Fraser Coast.

Part 1: What is collaboration and why do we need it?

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide practical assistance for greater collaboration. Closer bonds enhance preparedness and long-term resilience, bolster a sense of unity, expedite recovery and facilitate smoother disaster management.

Collaboration in its purest form underpins current emergency management policy in Queensland and is fundamental to success in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Active collaboration ensures shared responsibility in natural disaster management is achieved.

Everyone in the community has a role to play, however, we have learned that despite collaboration being critical, it's easier said than done. People's experiences in reaching out range from not knowing how to start, to feeling vulnerable, uncertain and lacking empowerment.

Local knowledge is fundamental to continuous improvement in resilience and the greatest benefactors of good collaboration are those affected the most by natural disasters – the people of our communities.

local government

non-government stakeholders

partner government agencies

disaster and risk experts

district disaster management

community

lead government agencies

local disaster management

In the last decade, repeated and severe flooding, cyclones, drought, bushfires and storms have impacted the properties and livelihoods of communities in Queensland.

These events are increasing in intensity and frequency, at a faster rate than response and recovery groups have experienced before. Queensland must change the narrative around natural disaster. It is no longer suitable to think of these as isolated events after which 'someone' will repair and replenish. A resilient future hinges on awareness, preparedness, and shared responsibility across the community.

Locally-led innovative and collective solutions to common problems provides efficient and effective responses to local issues. Sometimes, common problems are addressed by multiple stakeholders, each with a narrow agenda, often achieving only part of the optimum solution. Collaboration ensures efficient use of resources, funding, shared knowledge and understanding to realise effective solutions for greater resilience.

This guide will outline the lessons learned on new thinking and practice to create a more resilient Queensland. The guide provides benefits of collaborative learnings with an easy toolkit for implementation in community, non-government, local government or social and environmental groups.

The guide includes some background to current policy and theory in Part 1, case studies, tools and 'how to' assistance in Part 2.

"Resilience is a system or community's ability to
rapidly accommodate and recover from the impacts of hazards,
restore essential structures and desired functionality,
and adapt to new circumstances."

Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience, 2017

Policy connections

Queensland's policy for a more resilient state is found in the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience and its implementation document Resilient Queensland.

The definition of resilience is built on the premise that:
- to achieve resilience there must be an appropriately informed and risk-aware community
- the community has the capacity to adapt
- there are healthy levels of community connectedness, trust and cooperation as the three primary ingredients.

All ingredients depend on people. These ingredients are reflected in this collaboration guide—principles of share, learn and innovate.

The thread of collaboration runs through all Queensland disaster management and resilience policy and guidance documents. Recovery plans similarly advocate for a community-led response as the most effective option, recognising deep community knowledge, local priorities and creating fit-for-location solutions.

The Disaster Management Guide describes a system that is 'characterised by strong relationships and collaboration'. The State Disaster Management Plan reiterates the principles in leadership, public safety, partnership and performance.

Quenslanders are disaster resilient when...

we understand our risk

we work together to better manage disaster risk

we seek new opportunities to reduce disaster risk

we continually improve how we prepare, respond and recover from disasters

Image: (top) Mary Regional Resilience Strategy workshop, Fraser Coast.

Collaboration and policy connections

The policy framework stresses the need to share and learn at every level because collaboration is a win-win for everybody. The traditional policy practice of draft-and-issue with implementation in a forced procedural manner is no longer effective and does not consider local circumstances. The collaborative model is based on the premise that no single entity, person, organisation or agency has complete knowledge and only through collaboration are the best and most efficient responses achieved.

Collaboration is essential for all three resilience policy principles of connectedness, trust and cooperation as it facilitates information sharing for better understanding of risk and enhanced awareness; it builds capacity through a strong social fabric; and creates meaningful connections that all contribute to community resilience.

These ingredients are enabled in the implementation of Resilient Queensland through the fundamental principles of shared responsibility, an integrated risk-based approach, evidence-based decision-making, and continued learning.

The foundation principles of resilience policy in Queensland are entirely about people, their communities and their ability to work together for a resilient future. The strategy specifically tasks communities and individuals with building healthy levels of connectedness.

> Collaboration is
> a win-win for
> everybody

Lessons learned

The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience was release in 2017, and since then the learnings have been swift and confronting. In recent years, repeated and severe flooding, intense tropical cyclones, rapid rising of flood waters, powerful and damaging summer storms, broad scale and crippling drought along with fatal wildfires have impacted the lives, livelihoods and property of many Queensland communities.

It is clear that a new collaboration approach is required. Locally-led, regionally-coordinated, and state-facilitated responses are needed. Policy today strives to build a resilient society through stronger community networks and greater ability to adapt. This objective involves supporting people to understand their risks, learn from the past and our indigenous elders, build personal and community networks, make better informed decisions, anticipate events and orient themselves towards resilience.

Using collaborative methodologies described in this guide will ensure a more resilient Queensland. This puts Queensland at the forefront of collaborative policy implementation.

Resilient societies

A resilient society recognises and lives comfortably with the prospect of natural disasters as a part of life. To do that, the community must first attain a level of understanding and empowerment to drive their own local solutions to common problems.

A resilient society shares responsibility. To accomplish this, it works together and helps those in need including the environment in which they live, work and play. Resilient societies identify, create and work hard to maintain and build strong relationships, which will stand us in good stead during times of recovery. A resilient society participates in decision making.

Quotes about collaboration in action

"Whilst substantial challenges remain in fully assessing disaster risk there is a deeper understanding, that disaster risk management requires many partners working cooperatively and sharing information."

Queensland Emergency Response
Framework Factsheet

"Recognising the commitment of stakeholders and the need for collaboration across all levels of government, community, industry, commerce, government owned corporations, private and volunteer organisations, and local communities in all aspects of disaster."

District Disaster Management Plan,
Mackay Isaac Whitsunday

"Effectively collaborate and share responsibilities for disaster management across all levels of government, industry and communities."

Local Disaster Management Plan,
Townsville

Resilience is everybody's business

Through research and practice, a number of strengths, weaknesses and gaps have been identified in how we think and act in natural disasters. There is a degree of 'learned helplessness' through the recovery practices to date and a lack of personal or household responsibility for natural disaster preparedness. Higher levels of personal resilience are found in remoter communities; however, they tend to be more isolated from information and warning. An increasing reliance on governments for prevention, preparation, response and recovery is not a sustainable future.

Best practice is cooperative, pro-active and informed, viewed with a risk management lens. Investment in soft infrastructure, in community networks and improving household and community preparedness, represents a more sustainable and appropriate approach.

The resilience journey so far has highlighted that collaboration across boundaries, disciplines and industries to stand together to build resilience, sharing local knowledge for the benefit of a catchment-wide community reaps greater rewards than spending after the event. Harnessing the capability of on-the- ground networks of people — formal and informal undertaking committed action for collective benefit builds strong connected and resilient communities which realise the vision of a community able to withstand natural disasters and bounce back together.

This cycle of community empowerment is a useful and innovative tool in other facets of community-based planning, such as for informing planning scheme development, coastal hazard adaptation, social planning, and corporate planning by local governments.

Collaboration benefits

Collaboration between parties reaps rewards that directly benefit the collaborators. Many hands make light work: that's all it is.

Managing people, projects, purpose, agendas or outcomes across agencies, government, interest or community groups and organisations, each with its own priorities, values, process and communication approaches is impossible as a responsibility for any single agent. Add to the mix natural disaster management responsibilities of community safety and the stakes are raised even higher.

The simple benefits of open collaboration include:
- improved service coordination across disaster management
- enhanced knowledge and appreciation of roles and responsibilities
- greater awareness and understanding of risk and exposure
- greater flexibility to respond to changing, emerging or complex situations
- greater flexibility in operational environments
- exposure to up-to-date information, new ideas and strategic thinking
- greater opportunity for innovation and improvement with more ideas circulating
- improved de-brief, feedback and continuous improvement loops
- better policy development
- stronger relationships and connectedness
- embedding open channels of communications in extreme disasters.

Opportunities lost

Conversely, an isolated or siloed approach can result in:
- a lack of vital information sharing across agencies and services
- duplicated work, process or policy development across stakeholders
- poorly coordinated activities across agencies
- waste of resources or inefficient use of assets including funding
- lost opportunity for new resources and funding
- lack of clear accountability
- inconsistency in policy delivery across stakeholder groups
- decision making with incomplete knowledge
- poor communication across groups and agencies.

In all cases the greatest beneficiary of strengthened community and stakeholder networks is undeniably those affected most by natural disasters — the people in our community.

Reinforcing the importance of collaboration is paramount for success and the advantages of self-initiated partnerships cannot be understated.

Collaboration theory

Collaboration is working collectively towards a common goal using open and honest communication across traditional channels. Strict hierarchical models are set aside for the purposes of information exchange and open dialogue.

Figure one is the traditional hierarchical 'chain of command' where there are formal levels and channels and information passes in a pre-determined order up or down the chain. Communication across the structure is limited. Each actor has a narrow or vertical focus and does not consider horizontal actors. It is characterised by a steep chain of command.

Figure two is similar: communication is vertically oriented in a simple hierarchy and a large number of people are directed by only one source with a wide span of control and a single point of authority.

These chains of command are essential in many ways and their purpose is to organise components into common divisions or disciplines to achieve specific things. A structure collects, or sorts based on remuneration, task, skill, and authority, unity in direction, spatial distribution, equity or tenure.

The collaborative difference
Inclusive and integrated communications are problematic in a traditional hierarchical structure but are essential to effective leadership and good governance.

Structure is about control whereas collaboration is about sharing. Collaboration focuses on the shared issue and a shared solution without structural barriers. A flatter and open communication style means that all voices are heard and are equal. This builds capacity and resilience in advancing the common goal.

Figure three shows the flat communication model that open collaboration works towards. Collaboration does not remove the need for structure in organisations.
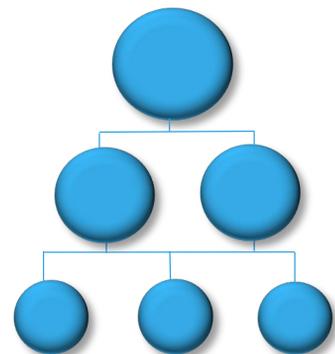

Figure 1: Traditional hierarchical chain of command
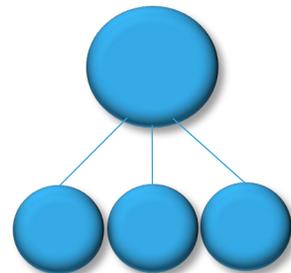
Figure 2: Traditional hierarchical structure with a wider span of command
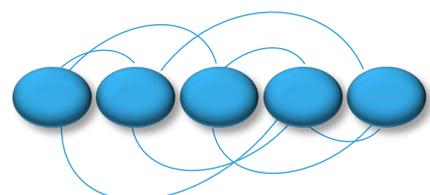

Figure 3: A flat communication model where all voices are equal

Theory to practice in disaster management

Look back at the definition of resilience: "Resilience is a system" are the first four words. This indicates that resilience activities have no discernible finish and many interdependencies. The cycle of stakeholder collaboration attempts to show this concept. Starting at the top with champions, this is the tangible result from the Queensland Disaster Management Act – the creation of the groups, units, agencies and partnerships given purpose and direction through legislation.

The connection stage is fulfilled through the formal channels prescribed in the Act for defined role and responsibilities such as district and local disaster management plans. As localities work through these responsibilities, relationships are constructed tentatively and the need to consult with others in the planning stages of our work emerges. Cooperation is a deliberate decision borne out of collaboration. Benefits of pooling resources are recognised. Both need co-design by participants in order to be successful.

Coordination recognises interdependencies — that goals cannot be achieved without all parts of the system engaged. Resources and knowledge are sourced from across the stakeholder groups to optimise outcomes. Once parties understand that if they collectively contribute to goals, the joint efforts develop into a more daily practice of consultation, contribution and learning between parties and they have reached an improved state of collaboration. This stage means that parties realise they will achieve better outcomes together. Work does not proceed without this vital element, and it is the point where legislation and formal channels fade and locally-led unique solutions emerge.

Importantly, collaboration is a cycle. There is no start and finish. Groups will journey through various phases in a non-linear manner, revisit and repeat. This is an essential part of acceptance of resilience as a system. Each time the cycle is travelled, the depth of knowledge is enhanced, continuous learning occurs and greater resilience achieved.

Figure 4: The Collaboration Cycle

Champions
People empowered with energy and passion

Connection
Clarity between stakeholders on roles and responsibilities

Collaboration
Commitment across stakeholder leadership, resources and knowledge. Partners learn together and contribute openly to achieving shared goals

Co-operation
Stakeholders sharing and recognising mutual benefits – knowledge and skills

Co-ownership
Embedded commitment to continuous improvement and embedding collaboration at all levels towards a common vision

Coordination
Stakeholders planning together for improved sharing of resources and service delivery, and accepting the need to be flexible to improve overall outcomes

Image: Mackay Finch Hatton bushfires.
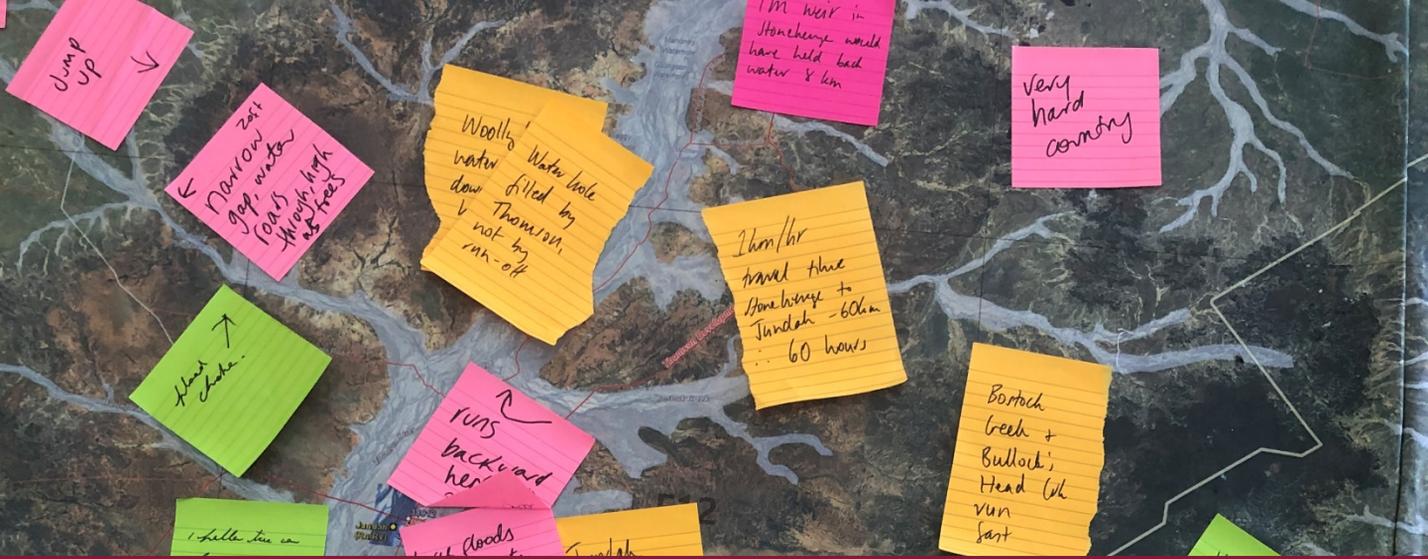
The importance of structure

This guide recognises that there are existing channels of communication, lines of authority and management structures in emergency management, local government and other organisations. These links and structures are vitally important for the proper flow of authority, responsibility, funds, information and operational matters in the cycle of the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements, the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, and day to day business.

Governance structures and process set down by legislation and regulatory provision (discussed in theory as Figures 2 and 3 above) are not compromised but rather, the collaboration cycle seeks to support and strengthen the structured communication in the emergency management cycle by binding this with unstructured knowledge and relationships to weave a stronger fabric at ultimately greater resilience. The structure governance cycle weaves in one way while the collaboration cycle weaves transversely to create a sturdy framework.

"Inclusive processes emphasise the need for broad consultation and 'many seats at the table' to create a sense of shared ownership or a joint vision to build city resilience.

For example, early warning that reaches everyone at risk will enable people to protect themselves and minimise loss of life and property."

100 Resilient Cities,
The Rockefeller Foundation

Traditional governance structures, combined with collaborative relationships builds stronger communities.

Case study in co-design: Walking the big map

'Walking the talk' and discovering how to implement Resilient Queensland stemmed from a co-design process for the QRA resilience team. The team started with the premise that the people who lived in any catchment — long-time residents, engineers, emergency responders or business owners, had much greater knowledge than anything a policy document could produce.

The issue: How to capture local knowledge to create a fit-for-purpose resilience strategy?

Visiting a catchment and asking what the strategy should look like was not going to work. The team settled on the "Big Map" methodology, which allowed participants to walk their country and share intimate knowledge of the catchment characteristics and experiences from natural events. Sticky notes were written for places of interest. The team recorded every comment and a profile of experiences in natural disasters was built. Commentary was captured using the five pillars of resilience: social and people; roads and transport; economy; environment; and infrastructure.

The result was the basis for a resilience strategy which was effectively designed by the participants, their stories, shared knowledge and experiences. Knowledge and learning travelled both ways during these workshops, with participants gaining an appreciation of event characteristics in other parts of their catchment and the interplay between areas of expertise. The workshops were informal, often unstructured and allowed participants to speak freely about impacts and effects without steering conversation. This gave rise to maximum participation.

> Knowledge travelled both ways at these workshops.

Using this technique, a strategy can be devised that is recognisable as truly local. A locally-led and state-facilitated, co-designed strategy can be co-delivered in a mutually agreed way as a shared responsibility.

Socks for sharing

Walking the catchment on a grand scale is a technique used for community engagement throughout the Resilience Strategy Pilot Projects. Although not purposely designed this way, we found that the act of removing shoes and discussing the catchment in socks had a tangible effect in increasing the level of comfort for people to actively participate and contribute!

Local governments as resilience champions

Local government is at the coal face of disaster management and communities look to them during and after events, not only as leaders in recovery, but in reconciling loss or understanding event characteristics and risk. Local government sentiment indicates levels of community resilience are reducing, with increased expectations driven by a more mobile society, which reduces local risk awareness, increasing intensity and scale of events, greater reliance on urban services and reduced self-sufficiency. Arguably local government does not have the means to provide and protect to a perceived 'accepted level of service' for mitigation and resilience expected by community members.

Proactive, resilience-based governance and collaboration currently relies on personal relationships rather than formal arrangements. Where responsibility for disasters is driven by one or two individuals, there is often limited corporate knowledge, a narrow or non-existent description of responsibilities which likely only encompass activities during a disaster, rather than on-going collaboration and capacity building, which places long term improvement at risk. This has the potential to produce a reactive and ad-hoc approach to collaboration.

Primary challenges for collaboration from a local government perspective include trust at various levels of government, internal organisational resilience and systems extent of community engagement and awareness, and improving community resilience and personal responsibility. Despite limited skills and resources, local government views community engagement as a critical element of resilience to be delivered in both quality and quantity. Local government is best placed to know and understand their system of community networks for exchange and collaboration.

Image: Mary River community members.

Local strengths

Local strengths can be in the form of a focus on internal up-skilling, putting resilience on the agenda as a core function of local government business, or working to establish and maintain strong working relationships with adjoining authorities. Each of these strengths remain positive behaviours, which can and should be leveraged in order to facilitate and support the ongoing development of collaboration and innovation. Activities suited to local government collaborative efforts to build community resilience and ownership of risk include:
- continual promotion and support of any projects that enhance understanding and awareness of flood risk
- facilitating and supporting conversations, events and relationships which facilitate continued learning and improved resilience thinking
- exploring, sharing or creating technology, data gathering and tools for local government or community that contribute to natural hazard management on a local level.

The lessons learned to date are that natural disasters are better managed through a resilient society, which is achieved through:
- changing the conversation – natural disasters are part of our lives
- understanding the way the system (place and community) works
- enhancing awareness and understanding in a language people understand
- talking about risks and not just hazards
- connecting and collaborating across a broad scope of groups.

The need to refocus on societal resilience and government implementation capacity, as opposed to just infrastructure restoration and betterment, is universally accepted.

Part 2: Practical collaboration

Designing your collaboration

So you want to collaborate. How is it done? Here are some practical tips to get any group underway, but first a really important point, in fact it's Rule 1: People will not collaborate unless they feel comfortable.

The act of collaboration is willing co-operation. It is voluntary and personal. The degree to which people participate and contribute will have a link to how comfortable they feel. Reaching out to others who are unfamiliar will make some feel exposed, vulnerable, uneasy or they may simply lack the skills and confidence to do so in the first instance.

The foundation of successful collaboration is a culture that conveys respect for every view, puts each participant on equal footing, is absent of a central figure and creates an atmosphere of trust. The following design principles help to build the foundation activities and are valid for collaboration on any scale:
- Recognise and accept the need for partnership.
- Accept that the collaboration is an open forum to share, learn and innovate.
- Accept everyone in the group as equal with valuable information to share.

> How to get started…
> Rule 1: People will not collaborate unless they feel comfortable.

The first task of any group is defining its purpose through true co-design.

A collective goal is essential to steer and ensure productive time together. We already know why we collaborate—to share learn and innovate towards a more resilient community, but why do we collaborate with this particular group or network? What is the common issue, area of interest or platform where collaboration opportunities have emerged?

> Yes, but why collaborate with *you*?

The first tasks of any group will be to:
- develop a basic charter or a few dots points about the purpose of the group
- set some ground rules (like equality) if necessary
- ensure commitment and ownership
- develop and maintain respect and trust
- decide how to monitor and measure success
- embed a philosophy of community-led solutions and activities.

The underlying purpose of the collaboration is to achieve the flat communication model and to share, learn and innovate. In some cases the purpose may not be very clear or detailed and the simple act of listening to group members will reveal relationships and opportunities not previously evident. Building networks and relationships is a perfectly acceptable purpose.

Figure 5. The collaboration purpose
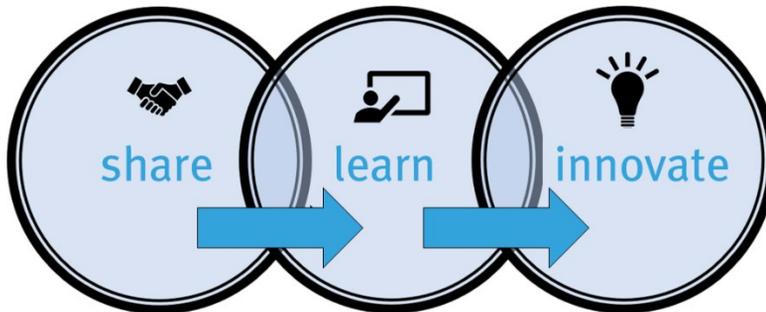
Collaboration purpose

- ❑ build awareness in our neighbourhood/street/creek/club
- ❑ understand our risk and exposure to various natural hazards
- ❑ improve river health
- ❑ find out how our organization can contribute more
- ❑ pool resources to gain funding and protect community assets
- ❑ understand funding opportunities
- ❑ develop better responses for our aged community
- ❑ ensure our businesses can operate as soon as possible
- ❑ understand, build and strengthen community networks
- ❑ build better communication channels during disaster events
- ❑ explore opportunities for adaptation

Image: Rediplan workshop following Monsoon Trough, 2019.

Once the ground rules are established, really tailoring the group for local characteristics will illuminate opportunities for collaboration. This process should be done together in a co-design style ensuring all stakeholders are able to express their objectives and achieve greater understanding of the group's charter (see case study on page 15).

Once the principles of collaboration are understood, partners with common goals are identified and knowledge gaps found, a clearer picture of purpose, as well as short and long-term specific activities will emerge:

- What are the roles, resources and actions of each stakeholder?
- Are there tasks we are all doing, not doing, want to be doing?
- What tasks or actions operate really smoothly in our area? Can we share this capability?
- What tasks or actions operated at less than optimal? Do we know why?
- Who else has very similar characteristics: climate, catchment, population, area, vegetation— are there things we can learn or share?
- Is there opportunity to become a leader in a certain aspect of resilience or recovery?
- How can we build on natural strengths and seeking help where needed

There is no set recipe for solutions to unique local issues. Groups should engage with professionals if they lack the skills to find solutions to identified local issues. They should try to identify pathways to achieve the common purpose and aim for some quick wins and some longer-term solutions.

Inter-organisational working is about making sure that people are regularly talking about their work, understanding each other's roles and sharing with other agencies and service users. It is about working together towards commonly agreed aims and objectives.

Why is our collaboration not working?

Barriers to collaboration include poor culture or a culture of individualism, territorialism or the view that existing isolation and 'knowledge hoarding' is protecting your patch. Sometimes it is as simple as uncertainty in how to progress.

Remember, members may not feel comfortable, so even though the group is functioning, the information may not be flowing. Ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute and be heard.

Communication is often difficult across industries or professions due to terminology, geography, or different agendas. Proceedings should be as informal as possible and in a format suitable to all attendees. The focus on the common purpose is essential. Avoid any individual purpose that may lead groups off track.

Lack of participation from decision-makers is a challenge, especially in larger organisations where stakeholders integrating at operational level may not have any decision making or reform powers. Target those with some authority to ensure the common agenda is agreed on, as continuous demonstration of successes will assist with commitment.

Change fatigue, not understanding how collaboration can help and a lack of known information channels can contribute to the challenges of implementing true collaborative efforts.

In many cases it will require the commitment and dedication of a few to convince the many. Some collaborative efforts need local champions to energise broader participants.
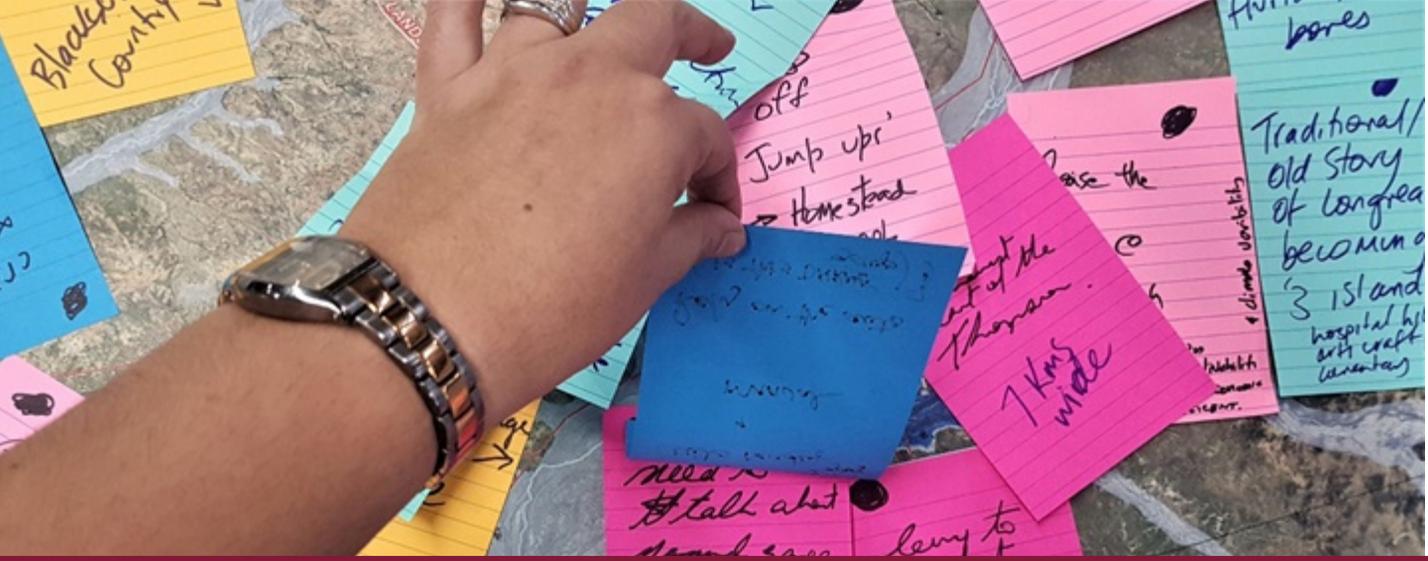
Collaboration toolkit

Collaboration culture: Thinking

The practice of collaboration is a cultural shift. In Part 1 of this guide, traditional structures were discussed. The essence of collaboration is to set aside structure and ensure that communication is open and relational. This means that in a collaborative environment, every community member should feel comfortable conversing, discussing, expressing concerns and explaining local issues to CEOs, elected officials or experts in a particular field.

Local volunteer historians concerned with preservation of local collections should feel comfortable asking a stormwater engineer from a capital city to explain why their museum has flooded, and work on practical solutions. To reap success in collaborative conversations, views and ideas are respected, explored, recorded and ideas are exchanged at all levels without regard for a pecking order of any description.

The most important aspect of collaboration is maintaining focus on the common goal. Embed collaboration for the purposes of sharing, learning and innovating in disaster resilience as part of everyday work—pick up the phone, keep the communication channels open and conversations going.

Collaboration culture: Doing

Not all activities need to be structured and formal. A key point of collaboration is the ability for people to get to know each other better, feel welcome and comfortable, explore ideas, gain a deeper understanding and appreciation—this is often not achieved in a formal setting.

Informal and formal activities could include plans to:
- communicate regularly via phone, email or in person
- create the forums for exchange initially, or regular opportunities to meet such as: set meeting events; breakfasts; professional forums; social events; or conferences
- ensure meeting opportunities are useful and have purpose and outcomes so that the group does not get stuck in 'coBLABoration'
- have an agenda with new items each time
- include a purpose, outcomes and actions
- create a list of your groups' stakeholders, organisations or associations that would be useful and actively target them through invitations or e-news
- invite guest speakers: local, state and federal members; infrastructure owners; local establishments that may have their own disaster management plans or issues such as aged care or animal shelters
- brief on new funding opportunities
- volunteer to speak at other events
- identify any barriers and discuss actions to counter these.

This is not an exhaustive list and the collaboration charter will expose many more. Groups should prioritise their knowledge wish-list to ensure movements towards primary and shared outcomes.

Some collaborative activities will not require any form of regular communication, they may also be event or project based.

Collaboration activities

Collaboration activities

The following are suggestions for some of the subject matter that community organisations and stakeholders may wish to pursue. Focus on sharing knowledge, learning for understanding and using the learning to create innovative local solutions. Here are some suggestions for activities suitable across the share, learn and innovate platform. Learning and sharing can be across a range of topics or design your own.

> What are we collaborating about?

Ideas for collaboration activities include:

- ❑ resilience strategy and policy
- ❑ disaster management legislation roles and responsibilities
- ❑ natural hazard risk, likelihood and consequence
- ❑ share the road to recovery through the disaster management framework
- ❑ mitigation methods
- ❑ mitigation opportunities locally and how to resource these
- ❑ building local asset or resource audits
- ❑ share local threats and exposure levels
- ❑ innovative responses to local triggers and pressure points through detailed local knowledge
- ❑ innovate and share local responses and solutions through partnerships, grants and local programs
- ❑ train the trainer network
- ❑ joint funding applications
- ❑ development of catchment wide solutions for collaborative delivery.

Share, learn and innovate: The resilience activities guide

share

- regular communication
- formal and informal gatherings
- formal and informal conversations
- expert presenters on general current research and initiatives
- briefings on stakeholder projects from other locations or disciplines
- post-disaster and recovery forums to hear stories
- identify stakeholders and invite them to share their views on a specific matter or their work generally
- involve local, state and federal members and agencies
- relay the local voice at external forums

learn

- expert presenters on practical ways to enhance resilience and recovery or specific projects which are relevant to the local area
- expert presenters on local risks
- field trips
- opportunities for grant funding and resilience projects
- visions and purpose of stakeholder groups
- recovery stories – gap analysis – what worked and what didn't
- targeted training on aspects of disaster management and resilience from legislative commitments to operational procedures
- formal and informal conversations

innovate

- identify stakeholder strengths and resource gaps
- identify ways to improve resilience and recovery
- identify local fit-for-purpose ways to implement resilience activities
- analyse local risk area for local-led responses
- collaborate and pool resources to respond efficiently
- collaborate and pool resources for funding applications
- recognise opportunities to further share and continuously improve resilience

Image: Central West Regional Resilience, collaboration, Winton.

Who collaborates?

Anyone can collaborate. Experience in disaster management tells us that the best defence against adverse impacts of natural disasters is a strong and connected community. The greatest benefits of community strength fall directly back to the community and the people who are most affected by any natural disaster.

Local government and local disaster management groups

At a local government level it's important to share, learn and innovate in both directions: up to district and state level and into the community more broadly:

- adjacent and other local governments especially in shared catchments and with shared risk
- local disaster management groups
- broadcasters
- information sources - local weather stations
- expert associations such as Engineers Australia for access to knowledge
- Indigenous land councils and elder groups
- schools, hospitals and local defence forces and cadets

**Who to collaborate with?
What to collaborate on?**

Local government is encouraged to create multi-disciplinary collaborative resilience working groups that go beyond the formal Local Disaster Management Group. This will keep disaster resilience front-of-mind. There is no suggested structure for this approach however, one way is to combine recovery arrangements with an ongoing resilience focus following disaster events.

Collaboration ideas for local government

❏ think on a catchment or district basis for opportunities for shared resources, funding, and asset management for community awareness programs for 'their' basin or river
❏ shared management of catchment flood warning networks
❏ support NGOs with funding applications or in-kind assistance to address resourcing issues which serve multiple purposes including resilience

Image: Central West Regional Resilience, collaboration, Bedourie.

Non-government charitable and assistance organisations

Their role in resilience and disaster management will vary from place to place. This will be dependent on their resources, local strength and network, volunteer and skill base. These organisations may also be owners of evacuation and recovery assets such as halls and community centres.

Organisations can include:
- Australian Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- St Vincent de Paul
- Lifeline
- RSPCA
- Church associated volunteer groups (e.g. Anglicare)
- allied health providers (mental health, disability etc.)
- Surf Lifesaving Queensland
- universities
- volunteer organisations like Orange Sky Laundry and Meals on Wheels.

Collaboration with, and between, these groups can make a huge difference in recovery through effective coordination of services during disaster events. It also cements a communication channel for understanding what the community needs are, before launching into recovery activities.

Environmental, social or special interest groups and service clubs

These groups will have specialist knowledge, agendas, resources and skills. It is important to understand these to align strengths and collaboration for common benefit. There will also be very good common goals in terms of community benefit where collective funding efforts may result in maximising normally very limited funding opportunities.

Groups can include:

- local Landcare, riverine or water quality groups
- regional catchment associations
- specialist local groups – beach-based or river-based
- scouts and guides
- senior citizens
- historical societies
- sports associations and clubs
- progress associations
- service clubs (Quota, Rotary. Apex etc).

Image: Charleville Levee 2019.

Private sector

Partnerships in the private sector are essential as the economy is a pillar of resilience in Queensland. From a recovery perspective, more prepared and resilient businesses will have the community back to work faster. Activities in the resilience-building space can include research, learning events, equipment or resources sponsorships.

Community funding opportunities, such as grants, are often available from larger private enterprise such as gaming bodies and mining companies. There are also many privately owned assets that have a role in disaster management or resilience.

Some collaborators may include:
- development, land and property associations
- chambers of commerce or city business associations
- infrastructure owners (air/sea ports, rail, etc.)
- infrastructure owners for evacuation and disaster management (evacuation centres, private helicopters etc.)
- landowners of significant and critical land either at risk or for mitigation
- expert groups and associations, professional groups (e.g. The Planning Institute of Australia, Engineers Australia, The Real Estate Institute, Young Professionals Network)
- child or aged care facility owners
- industry groups relevant for the locality—tourism bodies, mining and resource bodies, farmers groups
- universities and TAFE colleges.

Collaboration ideas for the private sector

❑ understand risk and exposure and the economic flow-on effects in the community

❑ identify adaptation or mitigation activities to combat economic interruption

❑ think about your supply chain partners on a catchment basis for opportunities for shared resources, funding, and asset management

❑ support community awareness programs for 'their' basin or river which includes information about potential supply chain issues and solutions

❑ support organisations who assist employees or businesses in preparedness and recovery – including these in emergency plans

❑ support NGOs with funding applications or in-kind assistance to address resourcing issues which serve multiple purposes including resilience

Image: Mary Regional Resilience, collaboration, Gympie.

Public sector

Partnerships in the public sector are essential as resilience and disaster management is state-facilitated. Many government departments have staff with expert and deep knowledge in specialist fields. Activities in the resilience building space can include assistance with research access to specialist knowledge and materials (maps, studies, reports etc.). The public sector are asset owners and operators and may be a primary source of funding if needed.

Collaborators may include:

- Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Department of Environment and Science
- Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy
- Queensland Health

- Education Queensland
- representatives from the disaster management sector and Emergency Services in Queensland Police, Fire and Emergency Services, local disaster management coordinators, Queensland Ambulance Service etc.
- infrastructure owners for evacuation and disaster management (evacuation centres, school principals etc.)
- local councillors
- local state and federal members
- universities and TAFE colleges.

These lists are not exhaustive and are intended to provide a starting point.

Collaboration ideas for the public sector

- ❑ build rapport with organisations with similar interests (e.g. DTMR and trucking companies; DES and Catchment groups)
- ❑ support community awareness programs for 'their' basin or river which includes information about the public sector role
- ❑ support organisations with knowledge about risk and exposure
- ❑ support organisations with additional guidance and knowledge in preparedness and recovery
- ❑ share detailed knowledge in areas of expertise
- ❑ support collective approaches to resilience problems
- ❑ support NGOs with advice and funding applications or in-kind assistance to address resourcing issues which serve multiple purposes including resilience

Image: Mary Regional Resilience, collaboration, Hervey Bay.

Getting the community invested

Maintaining momentum and commitment in voluntary organisations is never simple. It's even harder when goals are long-term. Where a locality has the benefit of a resilience or sustainability strategy, the action plan can provide the foundation for the collective identification of projects/activities with common intent and purpose, and ultimately affords the opportunity for different stakeholders to combine their technical and administrative capabilities to submit a single, collective application for funding for a project of common interest.

This creates efficiencies in funding distribution, increases the likelihood of funding success (as these separate entities are not competing with each other), demonstrates a broader commitment to collaboration, and arguably provides simpler service provision to those the funding is intended to serve/support.

In addition, disaster resilience initiatives work when individuals and households are invested in their own resilience, and those of their communities. The Community Empowerment Activity Cycle (CEAC) is an initiative put forward by Bundaberg Regional Council as a means to drive true community participation and ownership in resilience building.

The CEAC (Figure 7) involves cycles of facilitated grassroots involvement of the community in analysis, planning, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It provides the means to include the community in disaster resilience building initiatives, but also provides the opportunity to create meaningful long-term community-based investment in resilience initiatives – both in very local terms (i.e. in small groups or localities through the catchment), and in larger groups (such as farming groups, social groups, larger towns, etc.).

How do we sustain interest?

*Image: Central West Regional Resilience, collaboration, Boulia.*

Community Empowerment Activity Cycle

Figure 7 (below) shows the CEAC, which could be applied at multiple scales, but likely works best in localised places such as small towns or suburbs, and within community organisations or clubs. One approach is to build upon existing 'trust circles' that exist within the various locales and communities, and formalise facilitated meetings of these people through the lens of disaster resilience.

Simple 'risk dashboards' could be developed for each community group to self-assess their resilience levels as they move through the CEAC cycles over time, thus providing a meaningful mechanism to chart the community's progress towards a more resilient state.

Ultimately, the CEAC can act as a managed and deliberate community-level resilience implementation mechanism. This focuses on improving the 'general' level of resilience in a community by helping to upskill community members in resilience awareness and empower them to act to improve. This cycle of community empowerment could be a useful and innovative tool in other facets of community-based planning, such as for informing planning scheme development, coastal hazard adaptation, social planning, and corporate planning by local governments.

Reducing activity as community capability increases
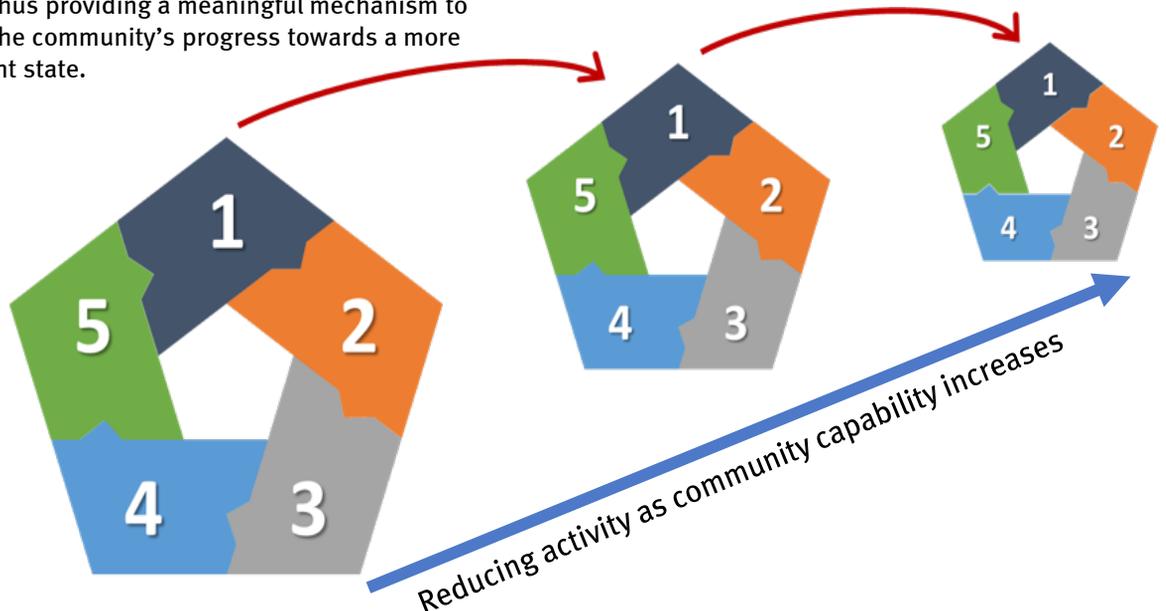
Step 1. Social preparation and participatory situational awareness

Step 2. Community planning and project development

Step 3. Community managed implementation and community based organisation

Step 4. Community monitoring and evaluation

Step 5. Transition

Figure 7: Community Empowerment Activity Cycle courtesy of Dwayne Honor (2015 Churchill Fellowship).
Image: (top) Mary Regional Resilience Strategy, collaboration, Gympie.

Case study: Cooloola Coast community

The Cooloola Coast community actively collaborates to improve disaster resilience. Stewarded by Gympie Regional Council, local groups come together to discuss resilience issues periodically. These groups include:

* Cooloola Coast Dragon Boat Club
* GIVIT
* the local craft club
* Cooloola Coast Community Centre
* Cooloola Coast Men's Shed
* The Church of Jehovah's Witness
* Model Flying Club
* Tin Can Bay Fishing Club
* Standown Caravan Park (for veterans), Goomboorian
* Cooloola Coast Rural Fire Service
* Tin Can Bay Coastguard.

At a recent meeting, each group spoke about their role in the community in relation to disaster preparedness. This covered membership profiles, assets and any existing processes and knowledge. The culture of collaboration was tangible in the room and each group spoke with a willingness to be involved and a high level of concern for their community.

The almost complete Men's Shed offered the facility as a whole of community resource. The building is planned to be self-sufficient with solar power, water tanks and a generator. They have a well-circulated and up-to-date list of contacts, members and committee positions. The group discovered resources on the day through the discussion such as drones and pilots who are registered with CASA at the model flying club.

In addition, a local worship group of approximately 100 people has divided itself into groups of 10. Each group has a leader and it is the leader's responsibility to ensure the people in the group are safe. They have an emergency action plan and update this annually.

> The collective purpose for these groups is simple – they want their communities to be safe.

The exercise in disaster management for the day was working through a scenario 'What if your building was badly damaged in an event? What are the consequences, impacts and what are your five priority actions?' Most of the groups returned comments on ensuring their members were safe and maintaining communications. None raised the issues of building safety, insurance or an understanding of their risk exposure.

Observations and learnings
This community has a tangible culture of cooperation between groups and their connectedness will ensure future activities are achievable.

* Many of the attendees belonged to multiple groups and the groups were not spatially based, but rather by interest so the fishing club and the Men's shed has common members.
* The obvious difference was a collective sense of purpose rather than individuals coming together—they simply wanted their community to be safe.
* Given the level of interest and collaboration in the area, the groups would benefit from and would likely appreciate more detailed advice about the use, definition and identification of assets, resources and risk .

Image: Flooding, Cooloola Coast.

- Running through some practical scenarios would provide greater benefit for the groups to enhance understanding of natural hazard behaviours and ability during an event to support in the desired way. For example, what is the fuel need for the Men's Shed generator and where would that fuel come from during a disaster event?
- The next step for the community may be identifying of funding opportunities that can have multiple group and resilience benefits.
- Extending the learnings to their homes and families to ensure community members can participate in an emergency would be beneficial.
- Extending the culture of collaboration to other similar coastal communities in the area in an ongoing way across the area would be beneficial for the region.

In summary, the community has an excellent multi-dimensional framework to build on to create an exemplar region for collaboration leading to resilience.

Extending this model to other communities would have regional benefits as a locally-led response.

Image: Lightning over Tin Cay Bay Rainbow Beach looking east from Gympie.