



Organizing your community: who is here and what are they doing?

Folder with resources here: [0. Organizing your community](#)

The first step of organizing your community is thinking about who is in it, and the place where you live. You can do this activity alone, but best to do it with a few other people—friends, colleagues, neighbors.

Mapping your community

Write down three important things about your place/what life is like here.	1: 2: 3:
What are the biggest challenges in your place?	
What are the biggest assets in your place?	
Describe thriving conditions for your place. Use your imagination!	

Who is in your community/place?

Role	Name(s)
Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG) (<i>groups established to support individuals after flooding</i>)	
Fire chief	
Road crew	
Emergency Management Director	
Town clerk	
Selectboard members	
Mutual aid/neighbor to neighbor network leaders	



Leaders/vocal people in your community	
School principal	
General store owner	
State Senator*	
State Representative(s)*	

*Find your legislators at legislature.vermont.gov/people/.

What other dynamics are present in your place?

Who do people listen to?	
Which voices are loudest?	
Who is always showing up to help?	
Who has been in your place the longest?	
Who is the newest in your place?	
Who is struggling the most?	
Who is benefiting from how your place is right now?	
Who in your community might have different needs than most other people? What are those needs?	

Stuff and systems in your community

What emergency supplies are stored in your place, and where?	
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What infrastructure is important to your place? Is it maintained?	
Are there places to gather? What places do people go to most often?	
Which systems in your place work well? Which work poorly?	
What/who are the active community groups, organizations, and town committees?	
How do people receive and share information (local news, social media, gathering places)?	
What essential services are available, and which are missing?	

Knowing your ecosystem

Check out the ANR atlas: <https://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/anra5/> for information on the hydrogeology, flood risk, and more in your Vermont community. Click on 'Layers' on the bottom left of the window, and turn on these layers by checking the boxes next to them:

- *FEMA flood layers* show where the edges of floods have gone
- *Soil hydrologic groups* show soil types, and help you imagine which locations will remain wet after flooding, because different types of soil drain more quickly than others.
- *Wetland delineations* show where the land is always also water

What rivers and streams run through your place?	
Where does it get wet first?	
What else do you know about the ecosystem in your place?	



Bringing people together

You can spend any amount of time organizing your community and building resilience. It will probably take 5-10 hours of conversations to get a group of about 10 people ready to organize with you. Meeting once a week can help build momentum, but you can also meet every other week or once a month.

Here are some things to consider when starting to organize your community:

- What work is already happening to build resilience?
- Of the people you mapped, how many do you know? Where can you go to know them better or introduce yourself? Who is missing?
- Why are you excited about building resilience? Can you get comfortable talking about why you care about this to people you don't know well (yet)?
- What problems are most discussed, or most important, to people in the place where you live? How can building resilience help address some of these problems?
- Where can you start talking about building community resilience, and meet people who are interested in working on this with you?

Once you have a few people - it can just be four or ten people! - you can meet. You'll need:

- A place to meet - preferably somewhere centrally located, comfortable, and accessible
- Food and/or beverages - maybe a local restaurant can donate a meal, or you can have people bring things potluck-style
- A way to take notes
- Printed copies of the toolkit: download pdfs online at resiliencetoolkit.org/downloads.
- An agenda
 - Introduce yourself and share about why you feel it is important to build resilience to climate disaster and other disruptions in your community.
 - Invite everyone else to introduce themselves.
 - Talk about what you heard as a group: where are there shared priorities and interests? What kind of work are the people in this room interested in doing?
 - Share printed copies of the toolkit. Invite people to read the introduction and look through the sections. If you like, have people take turns reading parts of the introduction aloud.
- Do one or more of the activities in the toolkit:
 - Organizing your community activities (pages 9-11)
 - Get to know the toolkit interactive activity (facilitation guide below)
- Reconvene and discuss one or more of these questions:
 - Who is doing related work already in your community? Are they in this conversation?
 - Who is missing from this group? Are they people you know, or need to meet for the first time?
 - Is there more information you need before continuing your organizing? How can you get it?
- Determine if the group is interested in meeting again, and set a meeting time.
 - Make a plan for who will find the space to meet, if someone is able to bring food, who will invite the new people you've identified to your group, and any other planning.
 - Consider posting about your next meeting publicly on local social media, and/or putting up flyers at the grocery store or school.
 - It makes sense to start with a small group of people, but the more buy-in you have in your community about this project, the more possible it will be.
- Plan to conduct the community needs assessment activity (facilitation guide below) at your next meeting!





Facilitation guides

Get to know the toolkit: interactive activity 45 minutes to 1 hour

This activity will help orient you to some of the sections of the toolkit, and practice using it to solve problems about resilience.

1. Print out the interactive toolkit activity [page of prompts](#), or edit the prompts to best fit the non-flooding disaster you want people to think about. Cut the prompts up along the dotted line.
2. Set the scene: talk about a scenario, either a real one that has happened in your community or an imagined one, that would benefit from increased community resilience. Warn people that it might be a bit stressful to think about these situations, but that planning and working together make them less scary when they're happening. Some ideas:
 - a. Heavy rains drench your town, and the river rises more than it has in the past. Homes along the river are damaged, and many are flooded. Town water is compromised.
 - b. An ice storm comes through and takes out power, cell service, internet.
 - c. Imagine something else realistic!
3. Split your group into smaller groups of 2-5 people each, and give each group a prompt. As you'll see, some questions are about before the disaster; others are about the disaster itself; and the rest are about aftermath. You can also read all the prompts aloud, and if people want to reorganize themselves to work with prompts that interest them more, they can do so.
4. Instruct groups to spend about 20 minutes discussing the prompt and using the toolkit to respond to it.
5. Reconvene as a group and hear from people about what they learned, what questions this activity brought up, and what they found useful in the toolkit.

Conduct a Community Needs Assessment

Every community is different! Use this activity to help identify some of your community's strengths and priorities for further resilience work. It can be helpful to do this activity after going through the Mapping Your Community exercises that begins on page 9.

You can do this activity in a meeting of people interested in building community resilience, or drop off copies of the assessment at local schools, the town office, and the library—or in another setting!

1. Print out copies of the [Community Needs Assessment](#) for everyone in your group.
2. Give people 15-20 minutes to complete the assessment.
3. Break into small groups or pairs to discuss the results once people are finished, then share as a whole group.
4. Make some notes about which questions, issues, and opportunities came up over and over again.
 - a. Was there consensus on a priority issue, or areas in which more information is needed?
 - b. Is there someone who holds relevant information who wasn't in the room?
5. Make a plan to connect with people who can help with the 'three big things' or 'three easy things' you identified in the assessment.
6. Make a plan to share results of the assessment with people who were not present. Consider posting on local social media, putting up flyers at schools, grocery stores, clinics, town offices. The more people you engage in this process, the better your work will reflect the diverse needs and skills of your community.





We started organizing. How do we know it's working, and when to ask for more help?

It can be hard to tell if you're making progress. Here are some signs your work is effective:

- More than four people attended your first meeting
- Someone you haven't explicitly invited to participate heard about your work, and is excited to participate in the future
- You received an email or a call from a town official asking what you're working on
- You and one, two, or more people are energized and excited to keep working with this toolkit and talking to people in your community about it.

Here are some signs you might be ready to ask for more help and move ahead with plans to launch a resilience hub.

- Have you met two or more times?
- Do you have a group of 2-5 people excited about launching a resilience hub?
- Have you talked to 10+ neighbors to see if they think this is a good idea?
- Have you used the community needs assessment (above) and begun to identify what your priorities are as a community?
- Can you identify three sections of the toolkit where you would like support?

Here are some different kinds of assistance to seek out:

- Fiscal sponsorship: access to nonprofit status so you can raise funds and pay stipends without creating a new organization
- Fundraising to support your work
- Technical assistance using the toolkit
 - Help facilitating group meetings
 - Visioning for how to best use the toolkit in your community
 - Subject matter expertise on sections you want to work on
- Relationships with existing institutions like libraries and schools, places of worship, food pantries, community spaces to see if they are interested in participating in your work to launch a resilience hub.
- Connection with elected officials or local committees to advocate for and share about your work

Think about if you can get this kind of help in your community, from people you already know. If not, **reach out to Community Resilience Organizations (CROs)**—info@gocros.org—and we'll do our best to connect you with people and organizations who can assist.





Going deeper: finding the community work you want to do

There are so many ways to support community resilience, and each person has a unique set of skills and interests to contribute. It can feel and be isolating to find yourself in a moment of disaster, not knowing who to turn to or how to help. The activities below can guide some of your personal preparedness for difficult times. Respond to the reflection questions below to spur your thinking. [Check out this zine for more ideas.](#)

What special skills do you have? What skills would you like to learn?	
What activities/work do you find rewarding? Think about things you do that other people find difficult, but that you enjoy.	
Do you enjoy collaborating with people or working on projects alone?	
Do you like to spend time inside/outside? Working through a list of tasks, or imagining a new project? Do you enjoy words, numbers, visual art, or another medium?	
What problems are you most excited about solving?	
Who in your community inspires you? What do you find inspiring about them?	

Look at this (incomplete!) list of roles to play in a community, and check out the corresponding toolkit sections to see if any of this work appeals to you. [Check out this list](#) for more ideas.

Roles in a community	Toolkit section
Working with children	1.8
Helping people with health and wellbeing	1.3, 1.7, 2.1
Maintaining infrastructure (roads, buildings, water systems)	1.4, 1.5, 1.9, 1.11, 2.2, 2.3
Managing finances and administration	1.10, 1.13, 2.3
Mediating conflict and facilitating decision-making; Connecting people with each other and information; managing people and projects	Knowing your community, 1.9, 1.10, 1.12, 2.3
Growing food/medicine, Preparing meals	1.2, 1.5, 1.8, 1.10, 1.12, 2.1, 2.3



Building culture through art, spirituality, group activities; creating plans and visions for your community	1.9, 1.12, 2.3
Specialized technical skills (construction, fixing machinery, plumbing, electrical work)	1.6, 1.9, 1.11, 2.2, 2.3
Providing individual help to people (picking up groceries, offering rides, 1:1 emotional support)	1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.12, 2.1
Stewarding ecosystems (river corridors, tree maintenance)	Knowing your community, 1.9, 2.1, 2.3
Teaching skills/leading workshops	Knowing your community, 1.10, 1.11, 2.2, 2.3
Organizing events	Knowing your community, 1.10, 2.1, 2.3

Pod mapping

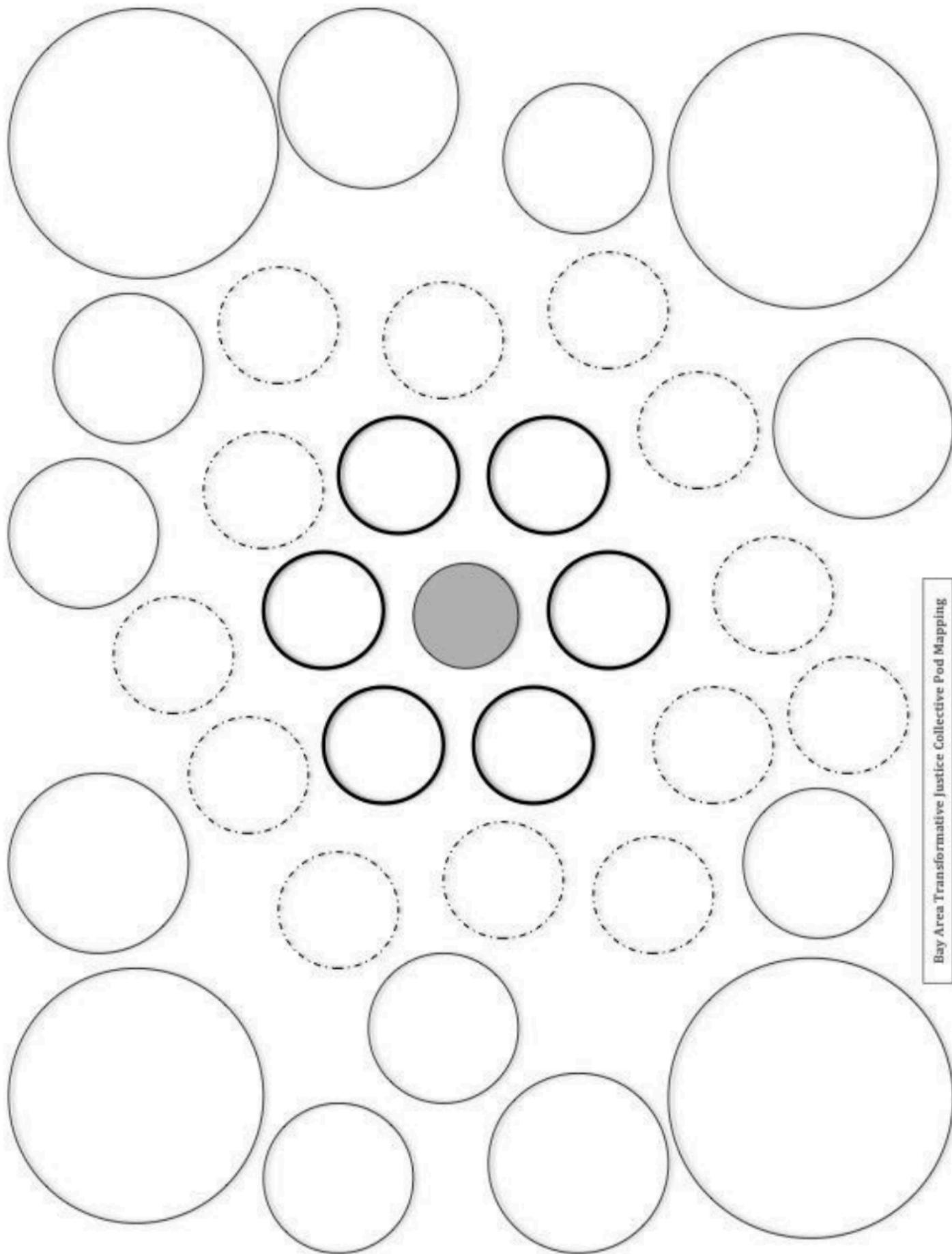
This activity, developed by the [Bay Area Transformative Justice Center](#), can help identify your “pod” - *who* you can count on for support and connection in the everyday and during disaster. Interpersonal relationships help us move through stress or adrenaline; loved ones help us make sure we are taking care of ourselves, even while showing up to help others.

Use the diagram on the next page to do this activity. To start, write your name in the middle grey circle. The surrounding bold-outlined circles are your pod. Write the names of the people who are in your pod. We encourage people to write the names of actual individuals, instead of things such as “my church group” or “my neighbors.”

The dotted lines surrounding your pod are people who are “movable.” They are people that could be moved into your pod, but need a little more work. For example, you might need to build stronger relationships or trust with them.

The largest circles are community resources. For example: a local food shelf or sexual violence prevention org or a park with your favorite tree that you like to go sit with to take some deep breaths. Or really anyone or anything else you think of as a resource.





Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective Pod Mapping



Use the toolkit online at resiliencetoolkit.org