



2.3 Community Building

Folder with resources and templates: [2.3 Community building](#)

Many of the activities in the Emergency Response and Preparedness section get people talking to their neighbors, creating systems of connectedness, and building the relationships that undergird resilience. Here are some additional ways to build community.

Local and regional governance and coordination

Practicing and developing coordination and connection between local groups, towns/municipalities, regional and county resources strengthens communities. Coordination helps prepare for emergency response by creating clear lines of communication and expectations.

On a regional scale, identify people and groups to cultivate relationships with and connect to one another:

- Community institutions (libraries, schools, universities) that have infrastructure, staffing and systems for community use, working to get those institutions to agree to share those resources and systems with the community in general, minimally during emergencies.
- Community institutions, municipal staff and volunteers, organizations holding the work of emergency response
- Regional and county resources, like [Regional Planning Commissions](#), community development agencies, and [natural resource conservation districts](#)
- Mutual aid groups and neighborhood groups that do work on an ongoing basis, not just in response to emergencies

Some strategies and ideas on building these connections:

- Connect Resilience Hubs and Mutual Aid groups across multiple neighboring towns
- Host shared events between identified groups
- Share resources like tools/supplies
- Strengthen regional governance through events and celebrations

Institutional allies

People associated with institutions—town/municipal leaders, schools, colleges, nonprofits, and foundations—can and should be invested in healthy, resilient communities.

- Build relationships with institutional allies
- Identify roles for different types of entities and how they could interface with mutual aid efforts
- [Create a directory](#) of these contacts

Business directory

- Connect with local businesses to learn about what services they offer, and how they can help people in your community. [Create a directory](#) of this information.
- Develop a list of opportunities for private commercial support (storage, heavy equipment, freezer/fridge space, food production, etc.)

Tradesfolk directory

- [Create a directory](#) of trusted local (or almost local) contractors, electricians, plumbers, land movers, haulers, structural engineers, etc. that could be called any day or during disasters.
- To help create this tool, put an ask out on Front Porch Forum in your community.
- Consider hiring folks for on-going projects to support their business in good times and in disaster.





Community spokespeople

A community's stories are always better told by the people living them.

- [Create a directory](#) of local people trained and willing to speak about their experience with disaster or otherwise with media, elected officials, funders, etc. Representing community needs accurately has real, positive impacts on material conditions.
- [Develop a media list](#) of local reporters and outlets, and keep it updated. Reach out to reporters to build relationships and establish local spokespeople as trusted sources.
- Hold practice sessions for people to share and hone their stories about disaster
 - Resources for giving effective testimony: [Rural VT Activist Toolkit](#) and [Vermont League of Cities and Towns](#)

De-escalators and conflict facilitators

In crises, it's important to have folks who are trained to de-escalate conflict and spread the calm.

- Hold skills training to teach people broadly [how to intervene in escalating situations](#).
- Reach out to local mutual aid organizations and ask about setting up de-escalation and/or conflict transformation workshops.
- Consider creating a team of local people who can attend events where escalated conflict might occur.
- Hold recurring gatherings for people to come discuss ongoing conflict, support each other, and [practice conflict management and transformation](#).
- Consider creating a team of local people who can mediate interpersonal or community conflict.

Third spaces

- Create a directory of businesses, [libraries](#), community centers, public commons, health clinics, [grange halls](#) that can host community events, meetings and gatherings. These third spaces can help hold on-going efforts to build resilience and be prepared to offer space for supplies or disaster response coordination.
- If your community does not have a place to gather, host meals, or hold events, consider working together to create that place or use existing spaces for community building activities to develop an unexpected third space together.

Skill building workshops

Skill building is a great way to practice working together, learning new things and equipping our community to handle difficult experiences from disaster to grief. Some skill-shares may be certifications that 1-2 people gain and can share informally with other group members, while some may be less formal workshops.

- Gather a list of skills people in your group are interested in learning.
- Identify group members who have skills they can teach and reach out to community members who have these skills.
- Create a rotating series of skill-building workshops that people can sign up for free or low-cost.

Potential skills to build (links are to sample training materials)

Flood and disaster response <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Flood Preparation<input type="checkbox"/> General First Aid and Basic Life Support<input type="checkbox"/> Basic Rescue	Recovery and Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Safe Gut & Mucking - cleaning out households. Examples from Mutual Aid Disaster Relief<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Food Prep
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Wilderness First Aid and Wilderness First Responder<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Train NEK<input type="checkbox"/> NOLS courses<input type="checkbox"/> Stop the bleed<input type="checkbox"/> Narcan<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health first aid<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Radical Mental Health First Aide (RMHFA) Action Plan: “A non-linear, intuitive step-by-step action plan to use when providing support in mental health crisis situations.”<input type="checkbox"/> Herbal First Aid training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Mapping - local resources and updating road hazards<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Using tools like Open Street Maps<input type="checkbox"/> FEMA, state and insurance form completion - a Long-term Recovery Group in your area might be able to provide this<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer coordination<input type="checkbox"/> Mutual aid spreadsheet management<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting and Process Facilitation
<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Canning and food preservation<input type="checkbox"/> Chainsaw skills<input type="checkbox"/> Welding<input type="checkbox"/> Herbal remedies<input type="checkbox"/> Gardening<input type="checkbox"/> Media relations<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict de-escalation<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict management<input type="checkbox"/> Grief circles	

Fun activities that build community

Gather regularly to be joyful and have fun with your community. This is how we build the relationships that are the foundation for communication, mutual aid and rapid response in times of crisis. Many local institutions like schools, libraries and business may already be primed to host these events, but usually they need people to make it happen.

As a practice of baseline resilience, host regular community meetings on a recurring day of the month (e.g. third Thursdays) in a consistent location. Provide food if you are able, or make it a potluck. If you are hosting a public assembly in which decisions are getting made about local governance, check out [how to host a public assembly](#), pages 11, 18-25. Ideas for fun community building activities:

- Town dances
- Music jams or karaoke
- Community yoga
- Bingo nights
- Community meals
- Public art creation and craft nights
- Community talent shows
- Spelling bees

Look to local organizations like the [Civic Standard](#), [NEK Organizing](#), and [Hartland Community Breakfasts](#) for more inspiration.

