Of course. Based on the extensive sources you have provided, I have synthesized a complete and comprehensive evaluation report on the Community Adaptation Program (CAP). This report integrates quantitative data, qualitative insights from over 150 interviews, and strategic analysis to provide a holistic view of the program's value, challenges, and future potential for American Red Cross leadership.

### ****Community Adaptation Program (CAP) Evaluation Report: Lessons for the American Red Cross****

**Prepared for American Red Cross Leadership** **August 30, 2025**

#### **I. Executive Summary**

The Community Adaptation Program (CAP) is a vital initiative designed to strengthen the American Red Cross (ARC) by expanding disaster capacity and building long-term community resilience. Since its inception in 2022, CAP has demonstrably added value across four critical areas: quality of service, cost containment, speed of aid delivery, and scalability potential. This comprehensive evaluation, incorporating both quantitative data and extensive qualitative insights from over 150 key informant interviews, aims to provide senior leadership with a clear, impactful, and actionable understanding of CAP's operational and strategic worth to inform decisions beyond FY27.

**Key Findings:**

* **Quality of Service:** CAP partners have demonstrably improved the quality of Red Cross disaster services by expanding access to rural and underserved "invisible populations," ensuring cultural appropriateness, and accelerating aid delivery. Through trusted local messengers and culturally sensitive resources like local menus and bilingual support, partners reached migrant workers, elderly caregivers, and Hispanic residents who might otherwise have been missed. In rural communities with low connectivity, partners personalized assistance for residents who struggled with QR code sign-ups. These tailored approaches have led to measurably higher client uptake and faster assistance. For example, in Terrebonne Parish during Hurricane Francine (DR 207-25), CAP's involvement led to a **93% Immediate Assistance (IA) completion rate**, significantly higher than the 67% rate for selected communities in that disaster.
* **Cost Containment & ROI:** CAP partners contribute substantial in-kind donations and services, defraying ARC operational costs. Across multiple DROs, CAP has generated **$1,406,305 in cost containment**, representing a **27.74% ROI** on partner enhancements. During Hurricane Francine, partners accounted for nearly **$250,000 in tracked savings**, and in the Tennessee Tornados (DR 540-25), leadership estimated partners offset **$80,000 to $100,000** in immediate costs. These figures are likely conservative, as interviewees acknowledged "reporting shortfalls," suggesting actual savings could be higher.
* **Speed of Delivery:** A consistent and powerful finding is CAP's ability to accelerate service delivery. Partners are often the "first on the ground," delivering services **1 to 4 days faster** than centralized Red Cross efforts in several DROs. This speed is attributed to pre-existing "blue-sky" relationships and local readiness, which creates a **"transference of trust"** that enables partners to mobilize within hours or the next day. One DRO leader noted, "It was almost like they went in with us together. There was no call up—we just went".
* **Steady-State "Halo Effect":** Beyond disaster response, CAP enhances the Red Cross's steady-state programs. "Homes Made Safer" initiatives in CAP jurisdictions increased by **+66.24%**, substantially outpacing the national average increase of +14.02%. Similarly, youth preparedness outreach saw a **+101.23%** increase in CAP jurisdictions, compared to the national average of +39.13%.
* **Averting Brand Risk:** An often unseen but critical impact is CAP’s role in mitigating brand risk. In FY25, CAP partners were instrumental in resolving or preventing **12 service delivery failures** on Level 3+ DROs, helping avert negative public perception.
* **Partner Capacity:** An overwhelming **97% of partners report that CAP improved their ability to serve** those impacted by a disaster.

**Overall Recommendation:** CAP should be continued and strategically adapted as a force multiplier for disaster operations and community mobilization, emphasizing partner trust, demonstrated ROI, and network effects. Future efforts should focus on integrating CAP's successful tactics into the wider Red Cross structure to maximize impact across the country.

#### **II. Introduction**

The American Red Cross operates within an increasingly complex environment, facing a rise in the frequency and intensity of disasters alongside constrained resources. To address these challenges, the organization launched the Community Adaptation Program (CAP) in 2022, a strategic initiative designed to leverage hyper-local partnerships to expand access to health care, nutritious food, and safe housing in disaster-prone communities—before, during, and after disasters.

This report serves as a critical evaluation of CAP's performance, mandated by senior leadership to inform decisions regarding the program's future beyond FY27. The findings will identify valuable principles and tactics that can be applied across all Red Cross regions and disaster relief operations. The goal is to measure the operational and strategic value of CAP in advancing the ARC mission through improved community readiness and response.

This evaluation focuses on four critical areas: **Quality, Cost Containment, Speed, and Scalability**. This report is structured to present a clear, data-driven narrative, incorporating compelling stories and direct quotations from stakeholders to provide a holistic view of CAP's successes, challenges, and transformative potential.

#### **III. Evaluation Approach and Methodology**

This evaluation employs a robust mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of CAP's impact. The methodology is designed to deliver maximum clarity to Red Cross leadership.

**A. Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis:** Quantitative data from CAP reports, DRO Service Delivery Data (e.g., 5266 forms, IA data), and Steady-State Program Data (e.g., volunteer numbers, "Homes Made Safer") were systematically analyzed. Analysis involves time-series trends and geographic comparisons between CAP and non-CAP jurisdictions. Cost containment is calculated by monetizing partner in-kind contributions, excluding CAP staff salaries to focus on value-added from partners.

**B. Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis:** The evaluation draws on over 150 semi-structured interviews with key informants, including CAP liaisons, community partners, and Red Cross staff. Interviews are transcribed and analyzed for themes using software like Atlas.ti. Note-takers are tasked with extracting important quotations that highlight key themes.

**C. Transparency and Hypotheses Validation:** The evaluation emphasizes transparency, sharing both positive and negative findings. It aims to validate specific hypotheses, such as whether CAP jurisdictions see higher IA pick-up rates or volunteer recruitment. This mixed-methods approach, while acknowledging limitations like potential selection bias and incomplete cost reporting, strengthens the validity of the conclusions.

#### **IV. Key Findings: Disaster Relief Operations (DROs)**

**A. Quality of Service Delivery** CAP partners demonstrably improve the quality of Red Cross services by expanding access to underserved populations and ensuring aid is culturally appropriate.

* **Reaching "Invisible Populations"**: Partners’ deep community roots and trusted status enable them to reach groups that Red Cross operations might otherwise miss, such as migrant workers, elderly caregivers, and those in rural areas. One interviewee noted, "Hispanic population is…the invisible population. CAP partners know how to reach them".
  + During the **Tennessee Tornados (DR 540-25)**, partners personalized assistance for elderly and low-literacy residents who struggled with QR code sign-ups.
  + During **Hurricane Debby (DR 159-25)**, a CAP partner was critical in reaching the Hispanic and undocumented communities, who were unwilling to call the 1-800 number due to fear. This outreach enabled assessments for approximately 40 households that would have been missed.
* **Culturally Appropriate Aid**: Partners enhance service quality by providing culturally relevant resources that improve dignity and client uptake.
  + In the **South Texas Floods (DR 503-25)**, partners adapted menus to include rice and beans for Latino communities and provided bilingual members for translation, as the Red Cross had no Spanish speakers available.
  + For DR 540-25, partners identified the need for laundry facilities and portable bathrooms to meet cultural needs.
* **Measurable Impacts on IA Uptake**: CAP's tailored outreach translates into higher completion rates for Immediate Assistance.
  + During **Hurricane Francine (DR 207-25)**, CAP's involvement in Terrebonne Parish led to a **93% IA completion rate**, significantly higher than the 67% rate for selected communities.
  + IA pick-up rates in CAP jurisdictions generally outperformed DR totals, such as in McNairy County, TN (80.7% vs. 75.3% DR-wide) and Warren County, KY (53.8% vs. 34.3% DR-wide).

**B. Cost Containment and Return on Investment (ROI)** CAP partners contribute substantial in-kind donations and services, effectively defraying operational costs and demonstrating a clear ROI.

* **Monetized Partner Contributions**: The CAP team meticulously tracks partner contributions such as feeding, supplies, volunteers, and facilities, using methodologies like the 5266 form. In DR 540-25, one staff member reported, **"I did not pay a dime for feeding,"** as local partners covered all costs.
* **Documented Cost Savings**:
  + Across multiple DROs, CAP has generated **$1,406,305 in cost containment**, with a **27.74% ROI** on partner enhancements totaling $5,069,272.
  + During **Hurricane Francine (DR 207-25)**, partners accounted for nearly **$250,000** in tracked cost containment, including $131,937 in direct services and $111,300 from 53 local volunteers.
  + In the **Tennessee Tornados (DR 540-25)**, leadership estimated **$80,000 to $100,000** in immediate costs were offset by partners.
  + ROI varies by hazard type (Hurricane: 37.30%, Tornado: 9.77%) and partner type (Resilience Hubs: 33.48%).
* **Challenges in Reporting**: The actual cost containment may be even higher, as interviewees admitted to **"reporting shortfalls"** and that **"100% not everything got reported"** due to the dynamic nature of disaster response.

**C. Speed of Response** A consistent and powerful finding is CAP's ability to accelerate service delivery, often allowing partners to respond more quickly than centralized Red Cross operations.

* **Same-Day/Next-Day Mobilization**: Partners are frequently the "first on the ground", activating within hours or the next day after impact. During Hurricane Francine, two partners provided hot meals by dinner on the day the storm ended.
* **Faster DES Delivery**: Data shows CAP partners delivered first DES services **1 to 4 days faster** than Red Cross efforts in top-damaged counties during several DROs.
  + DR 539-25 (KY Floods): Partners were **four days faster**.
  + DR 540-25 (TN Tornados): Partners were **three days faster**.
* **Impact of Pre-disaster Relationships**: The **"transference of trust"** built during "blue-sky" periods enables partners to act swiftly. A DRO staff member noted, **"It was almost like they went in with us together. There was no call up—we just went"**.

#### **V. Key Findings: Steady State Impacts ("Halo Effect")**

Beyond immediate disaster response, CAP demonstrates a significant "Halo Effect," contributing to broader community resilience and enhancing the Red Cross's mission in non-disaster ("steady-state") periods.

**A. Coalition Building and Community Trust** CAP's foundational work in building relationships provides substantial, often intangible, value by establishing a trusted local presence for the Red Cross before disasters strike. This "blue-sky" work is crucial for engagement in rural areas and helps make the ARC a "hub for information" for local communities. One interviewee stated, "We’ve built a tremendous amount of new partnerships and there is a credibility for the Red Cross because of CAP".

**B. Impact on Red Cross Steady-State Programs** CAP activities in communities lead to positive spillover effects on various Red Cross daily operations.

* **Volunteer Engagement**: While not an initial goal, CAP jurisdictions show positive trends in volunteer recruitment.
  + **Quantitative Data**: CAP Jurisdictions experienced a **+35.92% increase** in average annual total volunteers (FY23-FY25 vs. FY20-FY22), significantly higher than the national average increase of +16.05%.
* **Home Fire Responses and "Homes Made Safer"**: CAP's localized presence contributes to improved home fire safety initiatives.
  + **Quantitative Data**: "Homes Made Safer" increased by **+66.24%** in CAP Jurisdictions, far surpassing the national increase of +14.02%. Specific examples of dramatic increases include Cameron County (+1366.67%) and Butte County (+828.57%). CAP jurisdictions also saw a +10.51% increase in home fire responses compared to a national decrease of -2.41%.
* **Youth Preparedness**: CAP’s work helps extend preparedness education to youth.
  + **Quantitative Data**: CAP Jurisdictions demonstrated a **+101.23% increase** in average annual youth reached (FY23-FY25 vs. FY20-FY22), significantly higher than the national average of +39.13%.
* **Blood Drive Support**: Some CAP teams assist in incorporating partners into blood drives.
  + **Quantitative Data**: While national blood units collected increased slightly (+0.03%), CAP Jurisdictions saw a small decrease (-2.26%), an area that may require further investigation.

**C. Averting Red Cross Brand Risk** An often-unseen but critical impact of CAP is its role in mitigating potential negative perceptions and service delivery failures. In FY25, **CAP Partners contributed to resolving or preventing 12 service delivery failures** on Level 3+ DROs, helping to avert broader negative media coverage. This local, responsive nature of CAP can act as a buffer against brand risk.

#### **VI. Challenges, Limitations, and Areas for Improvement**

While CAP demonstrates significant value, the evaluation also candidly identifies areas needing improvement, potential risks, and limitations. These aspects are crucial for leadership to consider when planning CAP's future.

* **Integration Gaps and Perception of Separateness**: CAP is often perceived as a separate entity from Disaster Services, leading to "confusion and occasional resentment" among Red Cross staff. One DRO staff member noted that differences in pay scales and travel budgets can be "harmful" and that CAP "needs to be a part of Disaster Services—not be an exclusive group". Community stakeholders also reported confusion when CAP held separate meetings from other coalitions like COADs.
* **Uneven Partner Engagement and Geographic Limits**: The hyper-local focus can lead to "uneven partner engagement," leaving some counties underserved. Partners were sometimes "limited to serve in the county," even when the need was greater elsewhere on the DRO.
* **Reporting Shortfalls and Expectation Management**: The evaluation acknowledges inconsistent documentation of cost-savings and activities. Interviewees admitted that **"100% not everything got reported"**. Additionally, communities sometimes "expected more financial assistance than could be delivered," leading to disappointment.
* **Scalability Concerns**: The current model of dedicated three-person CAP teams is explicitly recognized as **"not sustainable or scalable"** nationwide due to resource limitations. Furthermore, the personalized, grassroots approaches that make CAP successful locally "may not translate to large-scale Level 5–7 disasters".
* **Evaluation Methodological Limitations**: The evaluation acknowledges several limitations, including potential **selection bias**, **confounding factors** from other aid groups, **measurement error** in cost capture, and a **lack of direct counterfactuals**.

#### **VII. Scalability and Adaptation: Lessons for the Future**

The core question for leadership is what can be taken from CAP to "scale it and adapt and integrate more broadly across Red Cross operations, chapters, regions, disasters" without dedicated CAP resources everywhere.

* **Focus on Core Strengths**: The evaluation consistently highlights relationship-building, partner readiness, and leveraging local networks as CAP's most impactful contributions.
* **Resilience Hubs and Key Sectors**: Food and health-focused partners are generally "easier to support" and show more consistent impact for immediate needs. Housing initiatives, while critical, are more challenging to scale through partners.

**Actionable Recommendations for Red Cross Leadership:**

1. **Invest in "Blue-Sky" Relationships**: Build trust and networks before disasters to accelerate response. Pre-disaster relationships are the foundation for speed and quality.
2. **Leverage Local Credibility & Reduce Duplication**: Use local nonprofits as trusted messengers and plug into existing coalitions (like COADs) rather than recreating them.
3. **Prioritize Cultural and Language Access**: Partner with groups who already deliver culturally competent services to ensure dignity and expand reach.
4. **Shift from Service Provider to Network Builder**: Focus on enabling local resilience, not just delivering aid.
5. **Clarify Roles, Manage Expectations, and Train Staff**:
   * **Recommendation**: Define clear responsibilities with nonprofits to avoid confusion and resentment. Set expectations pre-disaster about what partners can and should do.
   * **Recommendation**: Train Red Cross staff, especially CAP Liaisons, in partnership management and deploy them early to leadership tables.
6. **Document and Demonstrate Cost Savings**:
   * **Recommendation**: Implement mandatory nightly cost capture for in-kind offsets and establish low-friction reporting channels to accurately track contributions.
7. **Plan for Continuity Beyond Red Cross**:
   * **Recommendation**: Design exit strategies that leave nonprofits able to continue recovery efforts and sustain impact.
8. **Expand Modest Community Grants**:
   * **Recommendation**: Increase investment in "modest community grants" and equipment enhancements (e.g., refrigerated trucks, forklifts) to "unlock throughput" for partners.

#### **VIII. Conclusion**

The Community Adaptation Program (CAP) evaluation reveals a compelling narrative: CAP is a well-loved and widely valued program that delivers measurable operational and strategic benefits to the American Red Cross. Through its model of trusted hyperlocal partnerships, modest pre-event investments, and embedded liaison integration, CAP has demonstrably achieved its core objectives.

The program significantly accelerates aid delivery, with partners often being the first on the ground. It has proven highly effective in improving service quality by expanding reach to "invisible populations" and ensuring culturally appropriate aid, leading to higher client uptake and dignity. Critically, CAP generates meaningful cost containment by leveraging partner resources, evidenced by a 27.74% ROI on enhancements.

Beyond immediate disaster response, CAP's "Halo Effect" fosters coalition-building, builds crucial rural trust, and enhances the Red Cross's steady-state program outcomes, including significant increases in volunteer engagement and "Homes Made Safer" initiatives. Furthermore, it plays a vital role in averting brand risk by resolving localized service delivery issues.

While the evaluation transparently highlights challenges—such as integration gaps and the non-scalability of the dedicated three-person team model—it also clearly delineates actionable lessons and replicable tactics. These lessons emphasize the enduring value of investing in blue-sky relationships, leveraging local credibility, and strategically embedding partnership management within the Red Cross's existing chapter and regional structures.

#### **IX. Appendices (Reference Only)**

* **Appendix A: Data Tables**
  + Detailed DRO ROI and Cost Containment calculations by DRO and service type.
  + Steady-state program comparisons (CAP vs. national/regional/chapter averages).
  + Individual Assistance Pick-up Rates.
  + DES Speed comparison table.
* **Appendix B: Case Vignettes**
  + In-depth stories from Terrebonne Parish (Hurricane Francine), Madison County tornadoes, and Warren County Resilience Coalition (KY floods).
* **Appendix C: Stakeholder Voices (De-identified)**
  + Full quotations organized by theme (Quality, Cost, Speed, Scalability).
  + Sentiment Analysis findings.
* **Appendix D: Evaluation Framework & Methods**
  + Detailed explanation of the mixed-methods approach, interview process, and analysis tools (Atlas.ti).
  + Assumptions and limitations of the evaluation.
* **Appendix E: Timeline & Deliverables**
  + Project timeline for interim (September 2025) and final reports (December 2025/January 2026).