

A photograph of a misty, rocky landscape. In the foreground, there are large, grey, moss-covered rocks. Two evergreen trees, one larger and one smaller, stand prominently in the center-left. A dirt path winds through the rocks towards the right. The background is filled with more trees and a thick mist or fog, creating a serene and somewhat somber atmosphere.

Interactive Workshop: **Stewarding Resilience Building in Your Community**

Maine Volunteer Conference – July 6, 2025

Workshop Instructor

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Resilience Session

Learning Objectives



You will receive:

- Expandable worksheet for future use
- 'Toolkit' of links to resilience resources
- Take-home self-assessment tool to reflect on your individual resilience

By the end of this session, you will:

- Understand the concept of community resilience
- Be able to identify some resilience assets and vulnerabilities in-community
- Know about some important tools that you can learn to use to help build community resilience
- **Using the lens of resilience building:**

Unpack a
Headline News Event



Explore
Assets/Vulnerabilities



Apply Learning in a
Scenario Exercise



What is Resilience?

Resilience is defined as **the ability to bounce back from adversity, disruption, or crisis to thrive into the future.**

The concept of “thriving” refers to a person’s **ability to go beyond his or her original level of functioning and to grow and function despite repeated exposure to stressful experiences** (O’Leary, 1998).



Communities respond in different ways when confronted by a challenge

They may:

- Survive the incident
- Recover from the incident
- **Thrive** as a result of enduring/overcoming the hardship



Are they able to pivot?

Resilience is Needed to Thrive in Times of Change

Not just natural disasters

Disruptions occur at different scales

Some refer to it as “being ready for anything and no specific thing”

Does **not** mean that bad things won’t happen or that you can prevent damages or guarantee outcomes

Natural

Human-made

Technological

Economic/Financial

Public Health

Personnel

Political

An aerial photograph showing a residential neighborhood in a state of complete devastation. The houses are reduced to rubble, with only foundations and scattered debris visible. Trees are mostly bare or charred. A central road runs vertically through the middle of the frame, with a few cars visible. The overall scene is one of total destruction.

Individual Organizational Community

Headline News:

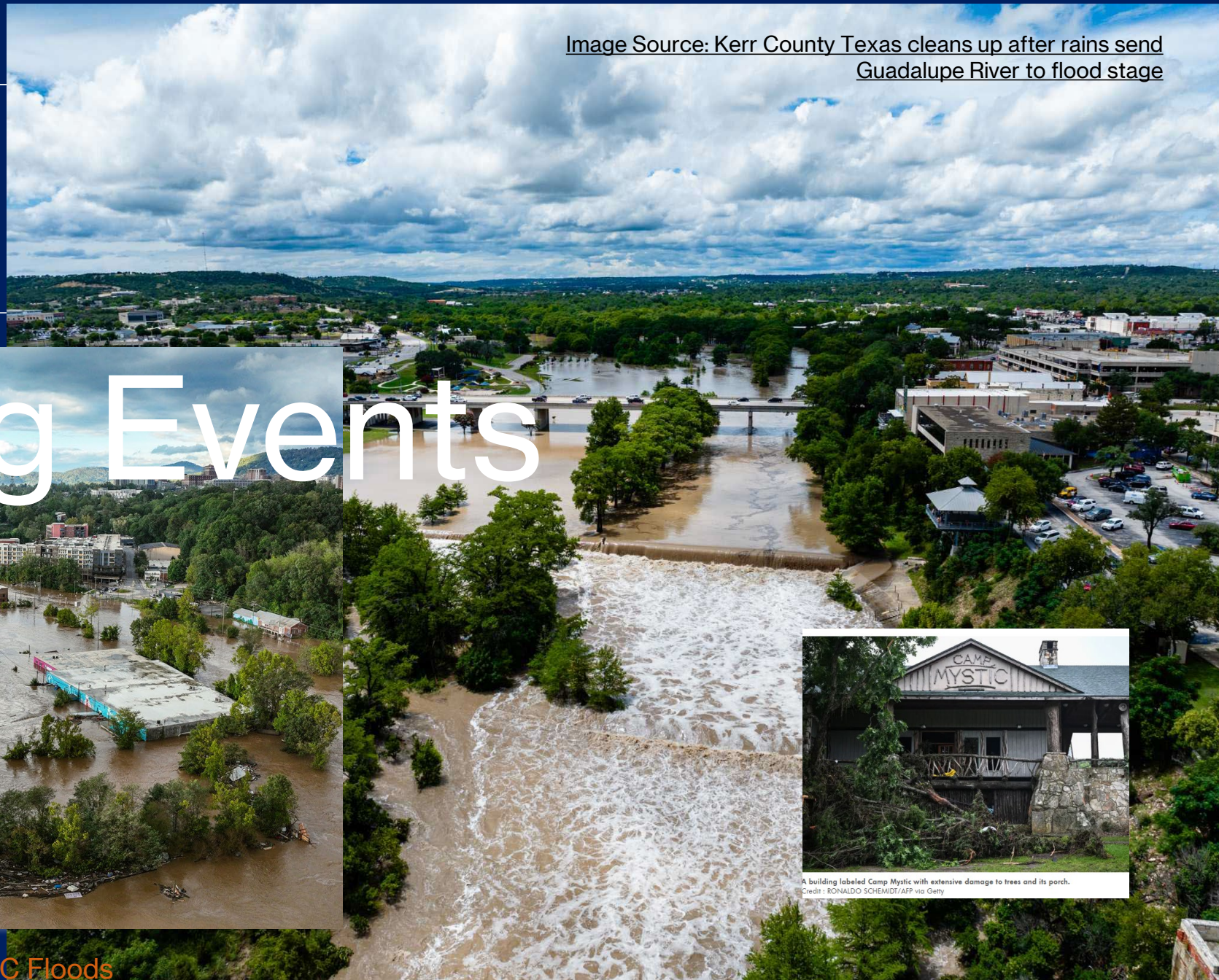
- Asheville, NC Flood Event (Sept 2024)
- Kerr County, TX Flood Event (July 2025)

Image Source: Kerr County Texas cleans up after rains send
Guadalupe River to flood stage

Flooding Events



Image Source: Rolling Stone - Asheville NC Floods



A building labeled Camp Mystic with extensive damage to trees and its porch.
Credit: RONALDO SCHEIDT/AFP via Getty

Camp Mystic Buildings Were Removed from Flood Zone After Appeal to FEMA

Resilience Building Often Requires Rewiring Common Ways of Thinking

- Exploring root causes of problems (looking to make changes beyond band-aids)
- Changing your relationship with “problems”
- Learning methods for decision-making and taking action within uncertain contexts
- Learning how to “fail forward”



Resilience: The Art of Failing Forward
Sasha Shillcutt, MD, MS, FASE (12:52)

City of Kerrville

Guadalupe River, TX July 4th Flood Event

What were the causes of/contributors to the disaster?

Image source

Guadalupe River, TX July 4th Flood Event

- Major rain event - Flood waters rose middle of the night
- Extremely dry conditions preceding (couldn't soak in)
- Fourth of July weekend
- Many children in harms way due to camper season; Camps and camping seen as low-risk, healthy activities
- No community river corridor alarm system for rising waters due to high cost (taxpayers rejected)
- Limited cell service to communicate risk; Delayed warnings
- Potential for dam breach (forced a release of water)
- "Hundred-year event," "Couldn't have been predicted,"
- Camp buildings located within the flood zone (petitioned to have designation removed)
- "It had never happened before"



**But
What
were
the Root
Causes?**

Backdrop of Mis/Disinformation

- Were there weather warnings?
- Federal dollars withheld?
- Cloud seeding?
- Climate change?
- Developers going to take property?
- Death count?
- Fault of Libs/Qs?



Illustrates that to understand vulnerabilities and assets, decision-makers must take into consideration place-based and context-specific conditions





Elements of Place and Historical Background

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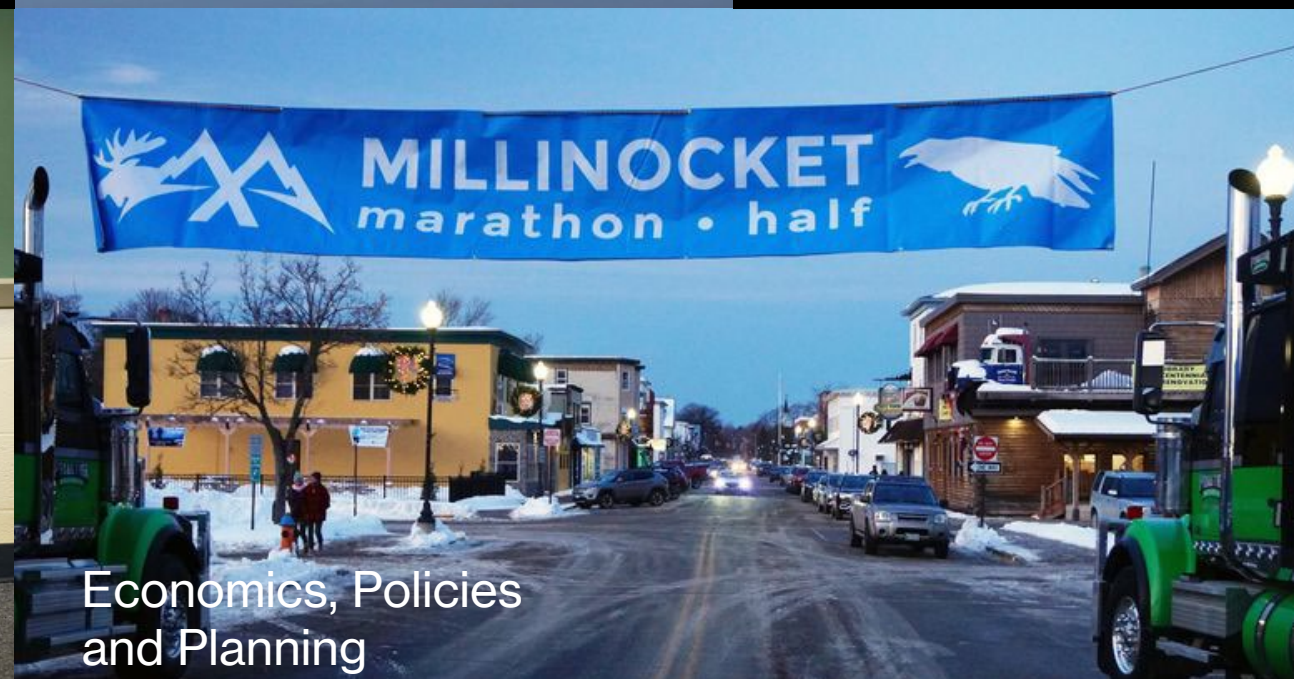
Infrastructure and Natural Resources

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Vulnerable Populations and Social Context

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Economics, Policies and Planning

Resilience Assessment and Planning

Include those
impacted by
the changes
and outcomes



Identify and understand vulnerabilities and assets



Determine indicators, quality sources of information, scan, and identify trends for use in planning



Capitalize on strengths and relationships



Increase flexibility/adaptability in systems, structures, plans, and patterns of thinking



Prepare, practice, and adapt

Photo credit: Paul Hilchey-Chandler

What are Some
Potential Community
Vulnerabilities?




An aerial photograph of a town situated along a river. A large dam is visible in the upper center, with a bridge crossing the river just downstream. The town is densely packed with houses and buildings, surrounded by trees with autumn foliage. The river flows from the top left towards the bottom right.

Photo credit: Paul Hilchey-Chandler

What are some
potential Community
Assets?

Cascading and Compounding Effects

Cascading Effects



Compounding Effects





Who gets affected most?

Complicating Factors

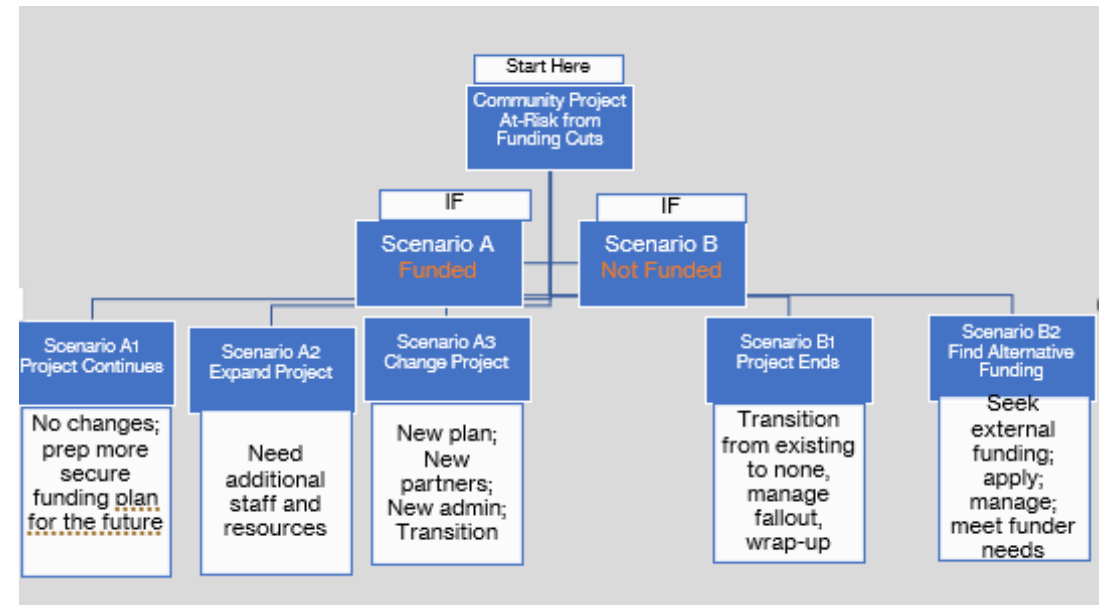
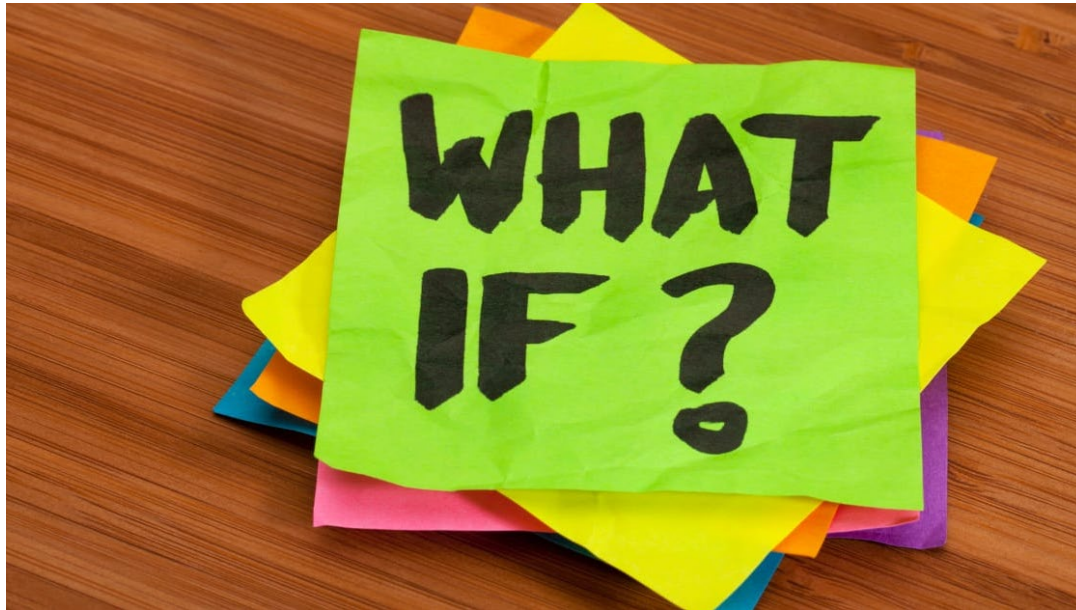
(aka Confounding Variables)

- Concerns (or lack of concern) about safety from prior experience
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Medical conditions (e.g.. Bedridden)
- Poverty (individual or intergenerational)
 - Everything they own or know is located in a specific place
 - No insurance on home or property
 - No transportation or ability to pay for temporary accommodations
- Mental limitations or cannot understand the complexity of a situation
- A poor relationship with authority figures and systems
- Dependents – children, wards, elders, pets, livestock

Creating Scenarios

Challenging Assumptions

Training for Uncertainty





Eight Miles Downstream



Volunteer Leadership Scenario:

You are a volunteer leader and have been asked to plan an overnight volunteer event at a municipally-owned campground eight miles downriver. You will be bringing volunteers aged 18-72 for this late April project, before the site opens to guests Labor Day weekend. One volunteer requires a translator, another has mobility issues, and a third wants to participate but has let you know he has anxiety. You will be using private vehicles to get to the site and meeting the campground director onsite, who will guide their work building a wheelchair-accessible path for guests to the restrooms.

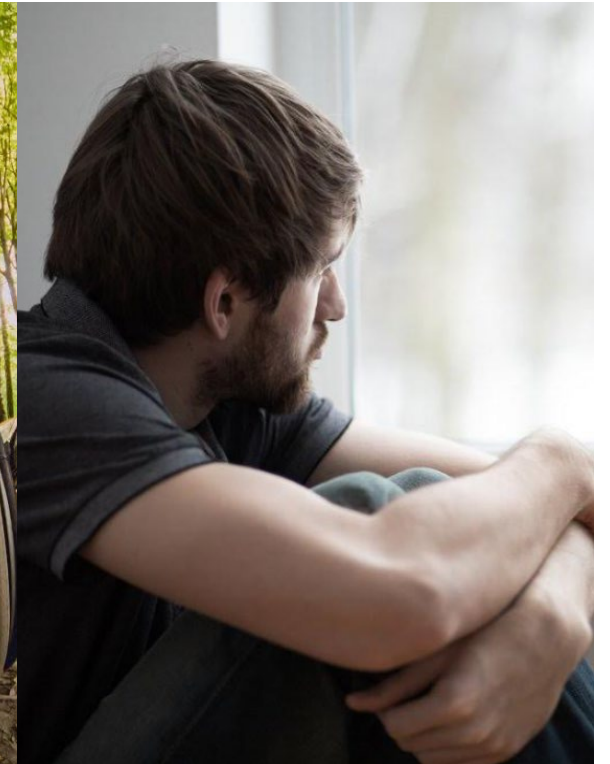
What would you want to consider? What scenarios could you explore? What advance plans might you want to make?

Eight Miles Downstream

Playing Out Scenario Options

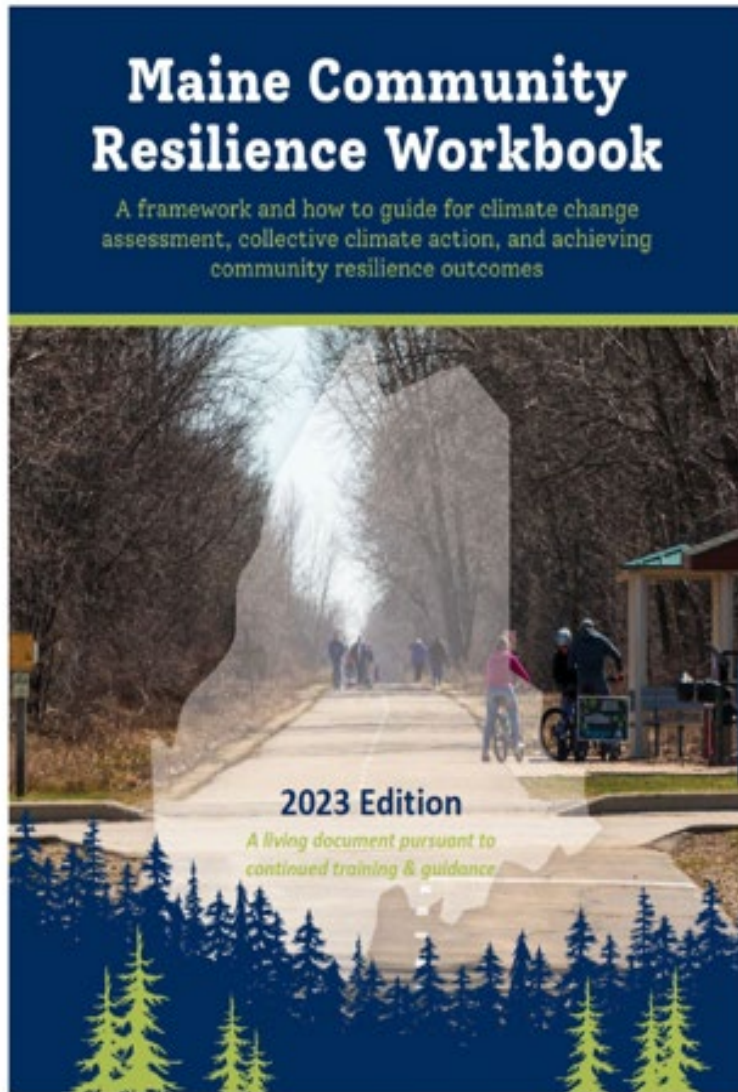


How do potential challenges or opportunities affect outcomes and decisions?

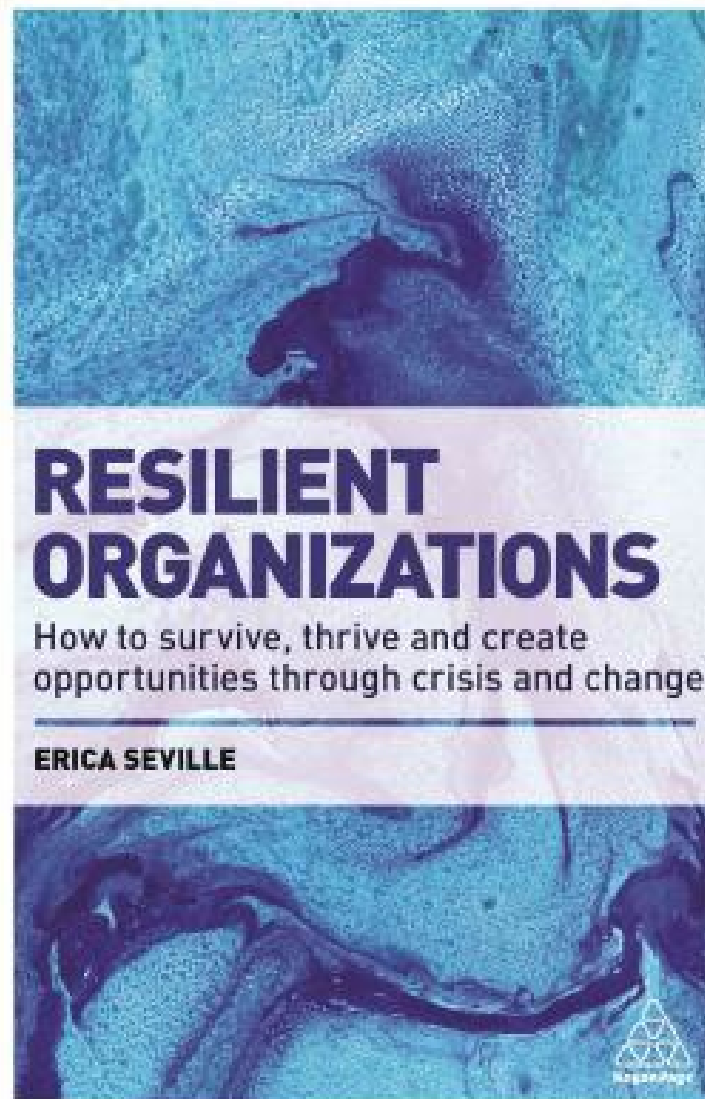


Using Scenarios for Decision-making

	GO	CAUTION	WON'T GO	RESILIENCE PLANNING
Accessibility	ADA Compliant	Not ADA compliant but mobility-friendly	Highly unstable terrain; unavoidable muddy paths	Advance site inspection or discussion with the site director Decision process to determine if will continue the activity if it cannot accommodate a planned participant
Natural Hazards	Clear Weather	Rain event Low temperatures	Flooding Snowstorm Windstorm Lightning	Monitoring of conditions throughout the event; safety and evacuation plans Planned alternative event or “rain date”
Transportation	Matching # pre-approved vehicles, drivers and parking spaces at campsite to accommodate all participants	Possibility of one or more vehicles to not showing up Parking not guaranteed	Unapproved or underage drivers Number of volunteers exceeds rider space No or inadequate organizational insurance	Understand # available parking spaces at the campground Pre-approve vehicles and drivers or rent vans instead Prepare maps; don't rely on GPS



[Maine Community Resilience Workbook - Maine Climate Change Adaptation Providers Network - University of Maine Cooperative Extension](#)



[Resilient Organizations: How to Survive, Thrive and Create Opportunities Through Crisis and Change: Seville, Erica: 9780749478551:](#)

Tools to Build Resilience:

- Knowns/unknowns grids
- Vulnerabilities assessment
- Risk assessment matrices
- Asset inventories
- Scenario-based exercises
- Community resilience plans
- Communication planning

To Learn More:
Resilient Roots, LLC
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Questions To Ask

What vulnerabilities and risks are present?

What do I know/
not know?
How do I get the
information I need?

Who is being affected
and how?
Are some affected more
than others? How?

What criteria will I use to
help prioritize?
How do circumstances
affect priorities?

What input do
I need?
Who needs to be at the
table and how can I
involve essential parties?

What assets already
exist that can be utilized?

What resources
do I need?
How can we
fill the gaps?

What
adaptation/flexibility is
needed?
What can be changed to
become more flexible?

What tools do we **already have** that
could help us be better prepared?
What can we **do in advance** to be better
equipped?

How do we communicate this information
and planning to those who need to know?

Using what communication tools
and networks?

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Want to Try on Your Own?

Who is impacted in each situation?

What might you do to address the problem?

1. You are a youth leader at a community emergency shelter. A community member is agitated and speaking very loudly to everyone demanding they be quiet. Others in the shelter are asking you to make the loud community member leave.
2. You have a non-English speaker who is trying to take part in your program, but you do not have a translator for their language.
3. You have been asked to develop a social media outreach plan to let the whole community know about a new emergency evacuation route.
4. Everyone agrees that there is only a small likelihood that the funding will not be approved for your critical project.
5. Your community plan assumed that the people where you are doing your project wanted the help you are about to provide. You learn that they have not approved your work and do not want the services you are contractually obligated to provide.

Rethinking Guadalupe River, TX Flood Planning

- Incorporate extreme weather events into planning and forecasting (rethink possible but infrequent events)
- Track conditions and note dry conditions (non-absorbent)
- Require camps to have a formal internal system to monitor weather overnight (incl. holidays). Set up alternative alert system if phones don't work
- Remove buildings from/do not build in flood hazard zones
- Educate camps and campers of the risks from flash flooding and practice evacuation
- Work with community to address planning that honors private property rights and government non-interference while still addressing community safety and planning
- Invest in a community river corridor alarm system for rising waters (work to gain taxpayer support)
- Identify ways any ways to potentially minimize need for major release of water from dams
- Communicate that “it can happen again” as can another type of disaster or disruption

**Work with trusted
community voices
and impacted
communities to
discuss and address
mis/disinformation**





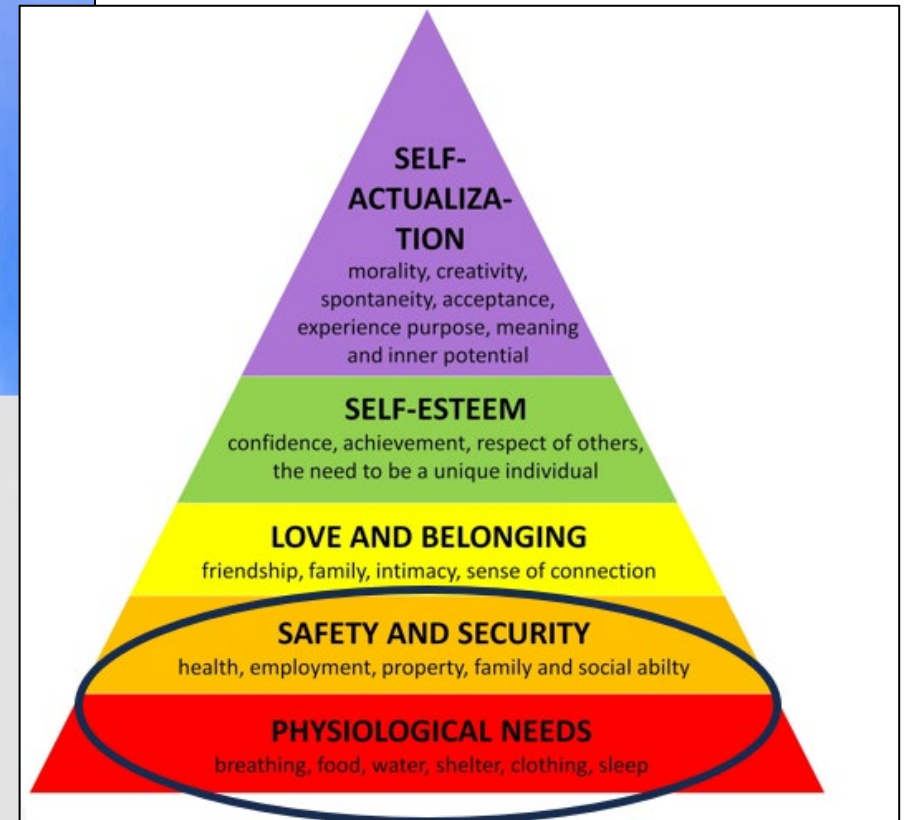
Eight Miles Downstream

- Is the campground in a flood hazard zone (any parts or access roads)?
- What are expected conditions?
- How does weather impact the site (mud, roads, sites, access, etc.)
- What about in extreme conditions?
- Does the site topography lead to an potential concerns?
- Are there upstream hazards?
- Is there access to weather warnings?
- What communications are set-up?
- What is the evacuation plan? Who knows the details of the plan?
- How could EMS/LifeFlight reach site?
- Is the campsite in compliance with rules and regulations? What ADA requirements need to be met?
- Are there controls for fire suppression?
- What about invasive wood insects?
- What if a child becomes lost?
- Does the campground have records of who is onsite? How available are those?

What is rational thinking when faced with unwanted change?



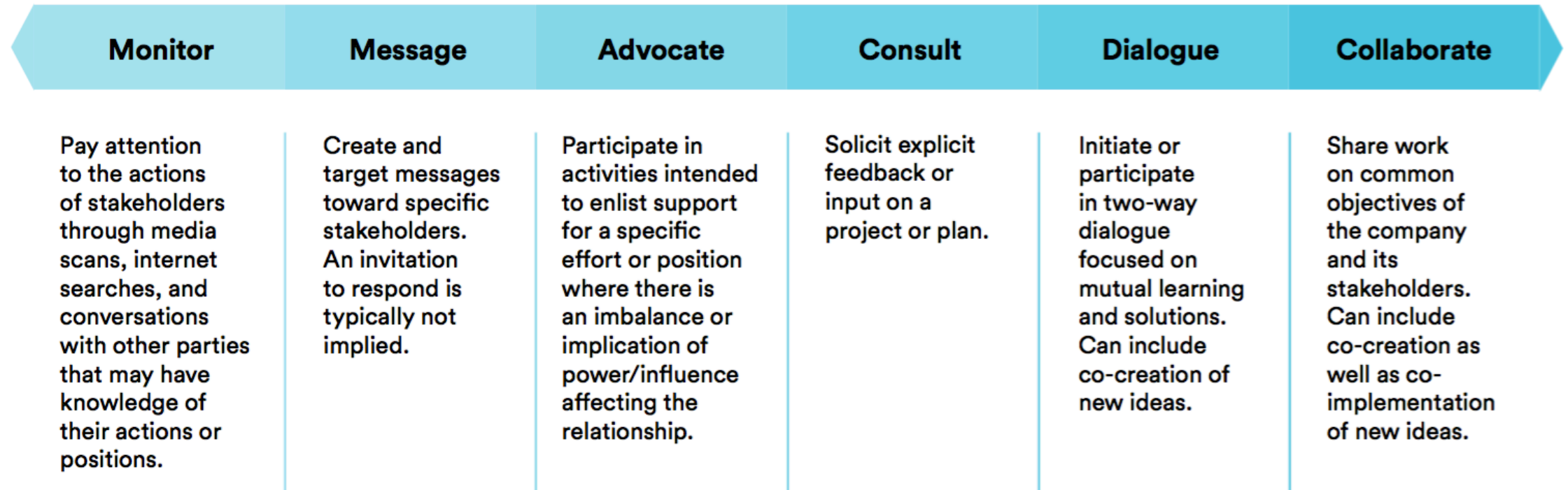
**How do we
manage change
and it's associated
uncertainty?**



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

There is a continuum of stakeholder relations. A successful stakeholder engagement strategy connects the appropriate engagement format to the right stakeholder group.

Stakeholder Engagement Continuum



Resilience Building Often Requires Rewiring Common Ways of Thinking

Exploring root causes of problems (looking to make changes beyond band-aids)

Changing your relationship with “problems”

→ Creating a culture of hearing the hard stuff

→ Building in a contrarian view to lesson the impact of ‘group think’

Learning methods for decision-making and taking action within uncertain contexts

Learning how to “fail forward”



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