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The Empowered Communities Program: An Overview

Background

In 2007, San Francisco City Administrator (now Mayor) Edwin M. Lee led a delegation to New Orleans' devastated Broadmoor neighborhood as part of a Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) to support the neighborhood's recovery following Hurricane Katrina. The devastation was horrible, but perhaps even more heartbreaking was how much of the suffering and loss was preventable.

Analysis by CGI partner Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Acting in Time Initiative clearly showed that a total breakdown in the working relationship between residents and their government encumbered the government's ability to move vulnerable residents out of harm's way. Prior to the disaster, this breakdown had also prevented the government from making smart, obvious investments that would have mitigated the storm's impact in the first place.

Armed with this analysis, then-Administrator Lee ultimately concluded that while an earthquake is a very different type of stressor than a hurricane, the outcome of a seismic event for San Francisco's neighborhoods could be identical to what the communities of New Orleans suffered. Upon his return, then-Administrator Lee entered into a formal partnership with the Acting in Time Initiative to capture every possible lesson from Katrina for a resilience development strategy in San Francisco.

A key Harvard recommendation was to invest heavily in the leadership capacities of local residents to:

- Drive rapid, substantive action
- Focus on inclusiveness
- Embrace self-reliance
- Pursue and interface successfully with outside sources of help (government, foundations, universities, corporations, nonprofits)
- Evolve and adapt as challenges arise by developing new skills and capacities

In response, the City and County of San Francisco advanced the creation of one of the largest and most ambitious resident capacity building initiatives in its history. At the center of this initiative is the Neighborhood Empowerment Network (NEN), whose members include city agencies, nonprofits, academic institutions, foundations, faith-based and neighborhood organizations, and the private sector.



“Disaster resilience is an important priority in Diamond Heights. After we partnered with the NEN and gained access to its resources and members’ expertise our community saw real progress in achieving our goals.”

– Betsy Eddy,
Resilient Diamond Heights

The Empowered Communities Program: Building Capacity for Resilience

The NEN works side by side with communities as they advance their self-identified resilience goals by fusing classic community development models with a collective impact approach. This method is now encapsulated in the Empowered Communities Program (ECP). As a result of creating the ECP, the NEN has been able to move ownership of community resilience down to the neighborhood level, where it rightfully belongs.

Specifically, the ECP offers communities a bottom-up planning and implementation process that puts community leadership in charge of creating their resilience strategy from the very beginning; as a result, it increases the likelihood of sustained participation by key local stakeholders at the neighborhood level.

Rooted in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s "Whole Community Approach" to emergency management, the ECP guides communities as they work together to make informed decisions about how to invest in their neighborhood's physical and social infrastructure so that during times of stress, stakeholders can actively contribute to successful response and recovery.

By engaging in this kind of planning/investment approach, community members build trust not only in one another, but in the city agencies and first responder organizations critical to achieving their crisis management goals. This elevated trust, also known as "social capital," is an essential ingredient for ensuring the highest level of cooperation across all sectors at the times when neighborhoods need it most.

Since its initial 2009 deployment in San Francisco's Oceanview/Merced/Ingleside Terrace neighborhood, the ECP has been successfully implemented in the Outer Sunset, Bayview, Diamond Heights, Miraloma Park, Merced Extension Triangle, Brotherhood Way, and Cayuga neighborhoods. Throughout those deployments, NEN partnered with organizations such as FEMA, San Francisco State University's Institute for Civic and Community Engagement (ICCE), the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention, MIT's Urban Risk Lab, Neighborland, the City of Wellington, New Zealand, and many more, to identify proven tools and strategies for building communities' resilience capacities.

The 2016 ECP Toolkit

In 2014 Team Rubicon, a nonprofit that unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams, learned about the ECP and recognized its potential to help their organization broaden its impact beyond disaster response and into disaster mitigation.

Team Rubicon pursued a partnership with the City and County of San Francisco and, with a gracious grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, empowered ICCE to work with NEN on developing the 2016 ECP Toolkit. ICCE employed faculty and students from San Francisco State University's Master of Public Administration program to systematically document the strategies delineated in the Toolkit, outline step-by-step procedures for implementing those strategies, and develop the tools necessary for implementation.

This latest Toolkit, which updates an earlier 2013 version, documents the most promising strategies and tools we have identified for supporting communities' efforts to enhance their resilience capacities.

Opportunity Statement

Over the last quarter century, communities here in the United States and across the globe have come under a great deal of stress. Severe weather events exacerbated by climate change, acts of war and terrorism, unstable economic conditions, earthquakes, and tsunamis have all exerted tremendous pressure on communities to thrive in the face of a constant cycle of response and recovery.

Such catastrophes have thrust particular communities into the spotlight: New Orleans' Ninth Ward, New York's Rockaways, Syria's City of Homs, and, most recently, Michigan's City of Flint. These places are forever etched into our collective psyche not for their long histories of providing residents with safe harbor, but for their unfortunate experiences in times of severe stress.

While we can't undo these tragedies, we can certainly learn from them by making the right investments in

our communities today to avoid similar fates tomorrow. Specifically, our world's instability affords us the chance to better understand not only how communities negotiate times of stress, but how we can empower them to prepare for these inevitable stressors and to protect their most vulnerable residents. In other words, bold and transformative actions are required to ensure that these populations are not overwhelmed or blotted out from the societal landscape.

The Neighborhood Empowerment Network has analyzed the body of knowledge on community resilience—generated by academia, government, and survivors of community stressors—and has crafted an opportunity statement based on the unique scenario that San Francisco and other large urban centers are facing.

The Challenge: Our Communities are Vulnerable

- In addition to more “traditional” disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, manmade, etc.), the onset of climate change will only increase the frequency and severity of stressors to strike communities over the coming decades.
- These stressors will generate a myriad of hazardous outcomes at the neighborhood level, including sustained lifeline and social service delivery disruption. As a result, vulnerable populations will be confronted with more life-threatening scenarios.
- People are living longer and remaining in their primary residences, often while coping with chronic conditions.
- In San Francisco and elsewhere, rapid gentrification has led to population turnover and eroded community support networks.
- Community organizations, which have traditionally been essential vehicles for advancing preparedness and post-event social services, are under stress due to increasing demand, limited budgets, and aging leadership; in some cases they have disintegrated entirely.
- Neighborhoods are inconsistent partners to disaster services organizations in meeting the needs of residents impacted by smaller stress events, such as residential fires.
- Seismic events offer little or no warning, which means that first responders and related service organizations are challenged in their ability to deploy immediately across an entire region. Consequently, Bay Area communities will need to support themselves for at least 72 hours following a large seismic event—perhaps much longer.
- The socioeconomic, geologic, climatic, and infrastructural diversity of neighborhoods makes it difficult to apply standardized, citywide approaches to preparedness, response, and recovery.

The Solution: Local Leadership, Local Networks

Achieving true community resilience requires investing in the capacity of neighborhood-level leadership to create and nurture local networks rich in trust and reciprocity. Such networks will have the ability to collectively serve the needs of vulnerable residents before, during, and after times of stress.

The Rationale: Why Focus on the Neighborhood Level?

- Neighborhood networks can be effective partners to crisis management organizations in meeting the needs of vulnerable populations and essential neighborhood institutions.
- Residents and organizations are more likely to adopt smart resilience behaviors if they are introduced via peer-to-peer engagement.
- Social networks, regardless of size and mission, offer the best platform for peer-to-peer engagement.
- Essential stakeholders will join and contribute to those networks which they trust and which they believe address their individual and organizational goals.
- Capacity building organizations can leverage community networks to engage key local stakeholder organizations as champions for resilience by providing them with streamlined access to training and resources that will increase their capacity to meet residents' needs during times of stress.
- Over time, local organizations' efforts to advance resilience will generate higher capacity at the individual, organizational, and community levels.

What is the Empowered Communities Program?

The Empowered Communities Program (ECP) is a place-based capacity building initiative that supports neighborhood leaders as they craft and implement culturally competent resilience planning that strengthens their community's ability to successfully negotiate and recover from times of stress.

At its core, the ECP is a leadership development program that leverages an “experiential learning” model. By streamlining leaders' access to tools, resources, and technical support for achieving self-identified disaster resilience goals, the ECP increases local leaders' capacity to successfully meet a wide range of challenges, including public safety, health, economic and transportation concerns.

The ECP Vision

Every resident lives in a healthy, resilient community supported by local networks rich in trust and reciprocity.

The ECP Mission

The ECP Program Management Team is committed to developing tools, resources, training, and methods that empower Partner Communities with the capacity to successfully negotiate times of severe stress and ensure that all residents, especially the most vulnerable, will recover to a healthy condition and remain in the community.

How does the ECP Work?

The ECP is an iterative design process that integrates classic program development with human-centered design. A team of professionals from invested Partner Agencies—organizations with a stake in the community's well-being—support community leaders and residents in identifying and advancing their specific resilient condition. By encouraging communities to build both a “soft” culture of reciprocity and a “hard” list of goals and objectives, the ECP blends a social movement for resilience with professional program management.

In essence, the ECP presents each community with a blank slate that community members slowly populate with data generated as a result of working together.

This data—a robust blend of local knowledge and professional input—takes the form of a **Resilience Action Plan** (RAP) that advances goals at the community, organizational, and individual levels. The RAP also outlines objectives for achieving these goals in the functional areas of increased connections, capacity building, and resource acquisition.

Lastly, the RAP outlines the investments a community needs to make in order to succeed in all phases of a disaster (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery) and uses the Incident Command System model to organize all planning activity.

By taking this layered and systemic approach to advancing resilience, the community is more likely to withstand times of stress and, along the way, to acquire meaningful skills for addressing a wide range of challenges and opportunities.

What are the benefits of the ECP?

The ECP offers a wide range of benefits to all participants. As a result of implementing the ECP:

Partner Communities will...

- Build their capacity to successfully negotiate times of stress and protect their vulnerable populations
- Be better organized and connected, armed with a database of key stakeholders and resources both within and outside their community
- Set up a flexible governance infrastructure that allows them to address problems collectively on short notice
- Collect resources and tools for achieving their capacity building and crisis management goals
- Join a network of other communities that are addressing similar challenges in order to share ideas and collaborate on securing resources
- Gain streamlined access to organizations with political, technical, programmatic, and financial assets
- Develop a culturally competent Resilience Action Plan to guide their individual and collective resilience investments for years to come

Partner Agencies will...

- Gain access to well-organized communities that are actively advancing their own resilience
- Reach an informed audience of community stakeholders who can be valuable resources in the

- development and piloting of new programs and initiatives
- Increase interoperability with other Partner Agencies to address residents' needs during and after times of stress
- Benefit from local stakeholders' ever-increasing operational roles in addressing the short- and long-term needs of vulnerable residents in their neighborhoods

Residents will...

- Live in a more connected and supportive community
- Gain access to a safety net that can meet their essential needs during times of stress

Who Supports the ECP?

The ECP requires the organization and coordination of many individuals and groups throughout deployment. The nature of these relationships will change over time as a function of the program's design and in response to the needs of the community.

The following five groups play leadership roles at various points throughout ECP deployment. They are organized in a bottom-up power structure.

- The Program Manager is a designated staff member from a public and/or philanthropic agency who provides administrative and technical support for the duration of the ECP's deployment. The Program Manager heads the Program Management Team and oversees ECP initiatives in multiple communities simultaneously.
- The Program Management Team is a robust collection of representatives from Partner Agencies in the public and philanthropic sectors who provide resources to ECP communities to help them advance their resilience goals.
- The Community Cohort is composed of individuals who live, work, and/or volunteer in a particular neighborhood and who participate in the development of their community's Resilience Action Plan. This group is open and fluid; any stakeholder located within the geographic bounds of that neighborhood can participate in ECP implementation as a member of the Community Cohort.

- The Community Steering Committee is composed of local stakeholders from multiple sectors within a particular community. They are charged with stewarding the creation and implementation of that community's Resilience Action Plan. The Community Steering Committee is a subgroup of the Community Cohort as a whole.
- The Working Groups are subgroups within the Community who implement focused projects to support their community's Resilience Action Plan.

When a community decides to implement the ECP by creating a Community Steering Committee, the group as a whole is now known as a Partner Community or ECP Community. This means that they are actively engaged in the process of creating a Resilience Action Plan.

NOTE: You will see that some implementation activities require a "facilitator" or a "scribe." The facilitator is typically the Program Manager but could be another member of the Program Management Team. The scribe is the person who takes notes during discussions; the facilitator might do double duty as scribe, or they might choose to designate another individual (could be anybody) to assist them with this function.



NEN Director Daniel Homsey presenting on asset mapping and community stakeholders to members of Resilient OMI, Cayuga, MET, & Brotherhood Way.

ECP leadership models in action

To be successful, the ECP requires skilled leaders at all levels. As participants engage in the ECP, they learn a suite of leadership principles and practices that put the interests of the whole community ahead of the individuals who comprise it. Each of the five groups outlined above should follow one or more models of effective leadership.

The Program Manager and the Program Management Team practice servant leadership.

Servant leadership is a caring and nurturing form of leadership that prioritizes serving others over the leader's self-interest. Servant leaders pay attention to the personal traits and potential of their followers, helping them develop, grow, and perform their best. Servant leadership builds trusting relationships and fulfills people's needs.

Servant leadership is critical to the ECP's success. The Program Management Team affords the

Community Steering Committee the ultimate say in its resilience planning process. The Program Management Team stewards the ECP's specified four-phase deployment process, but once a community has completed those four phases, decisions regarding priority areas of investment and the order in which such decisions are made belong fully to the Community. Servant leadership ensures the highest level of ownership by the Community and increases the likelihood of community members' sustained participation after the Program Management Team winds down its technical support.

The Community, the Community Steering Committee, and the Working Groups practice facilitative and distributed leadership.

Facilitative leadership emphasizes the importance of using facilitation skills such as effective communication, active listening, and questioning techniques to help make decisions and move the

team forward. Clear communication of team goals is a defining feature of facilitative leadership. Facilitative leadership also builds trust by promoting openness, fairness, and inclusiveness in leadership processes to bring out the best in people.

Distributed leadership spreads authority and responsibility horizontally (rather than vertically, as in a traditional hierarchy). It enables individuals to take interdependent and collective action to accomplish shared goals. Instead of concentrating on one leader who makes key decisions and energizes the team, this type of leadership champions the contributions each participant makes and the influence they exert toward successful short-term outcomes. Distributed leadership empowers people to participate, collaborate, and learn from each other.

When all five groups work closely together to conduct assessments, identify issues, and develop solutions, they practice shared leadership.

Shared leadership is dispersed across peer groups or organizations to address common issues or challenges. It emphasizes mutual learning, transparency, trust, and the importance of reciprocal contributions, especially across sectors.

A word about the Program Manager

Although every person involved in an ECP Community contributes to the program's success, the Program Manager plays an enormous part in setting the tone for the ECP's deployment; it is crucial that this individual's skillset and personality are right for the job.

The Program Manager has an incredibly broad set of responsibilities that require them to quickly shift from executing the logistics of event setup to engaging potential Partner Agencies. The Program Manager's success hinges on their ability to stay organized and to steward critical relationship-building activities at every level of the initiative.

The following are some of the essential roles that an effective Program Manager needs to play:

- “The Organizer”: Over the last decade, the ability to act as “organizer” has become a valuable professional quality. Bringing together people from a wide variety of sectors to craft and implement a unified vision is, at the most basic level, the Program Manager’s job.
- “The Truth Broker”: The ECP is about developing a realistic understanding of exactly which supports and resources communities can count on during times of stress. The Program Manager must be forthright at all times about these realities: not to infer that government is abdicating responsibility, but to encourage communities to look at recent disasters and see that under some circumstances, government response is inadequate to the needs of vulnerable populations.
- “The Cheerleader”: The work of designing and implementing a Resilience Action Plan can be relatively long and arduous. When early enthusiasm wears off, key stakeholders can sometimes lose momentum and need an emotional or spiritual boost. The Program Manager knows when to inject enthusiasm, at either the individual or group level, to keep the process moving.
- “The Coach”: The ECP is a capacity building initiative: the goal is to strengthen the skills of local leaders so that they can effectively build and manage relationships that benefit their community. The Program Manager should engage leaders individually—and collectively—in an ongoing advisory role about the subtle behaviors that cumulatively improve their likelihood of success. For example, there may be a need for coaching on how and when to reach out to elected officials, or how to engage community members who are not contributing to the ECP in a positive way.

Community Resilience: The Goal of the ECP

Community resilience refers to a community's ability to recover quickly and function well in the wake of a severe disturbance. It goes beyond the two traditional elements of disaster resilience—preparedness and response—to include mitigation and recovery.

The underlying logic behind the goal of community resilience is that if a community invests in connections, capacity, and resources at the individual, organizational, and community levels on a sustained basis, its overall resilience will increase.

The Resilience Action Plan

A key challenge in this work is creating a single resilience strategy for all neighborhood stakeholders; to address this challenge, the ECP provides communities with technical support to convene a broad set of stakeholders and guide them through a resilience planning process.

The principal output for communities that undertake the ECP is called the Resilience Action Plan (RAP). The RAP is a master document customized to address the community's unique socioeconomic conditions and vulnerabilities; it comprises all of the outputs generated during ECP meetings. The resulting strategy is encapsulated in a single, user-friendly roadmap for achieving the ECP Community's ideal resilient condition.

The process for creating a RAP is a highly efficient series of activities that generate various outputs. When synthesized, these outputs will guide the community's resilience investments for years to come. By following the ECP protocol, the community can draft a RAP in a relatively short amount of time and transition into implementation immediately.

While some ECP activity outputs make it directly into the master RAP—such as vision, mission, goals, and objectives—other activities provide underlying supports that bolster RAP development without being part of the RAP document per se. These include communications planning, stakeholder databases, and community mapping exercises.

The RAP contains the following information:

- A unifying vision and mission for the ECP Community's ideal resilient condition
- A set of goals and objectives for achieving the vision and mission at the community, organizational, and individual levels; these are updated every year to accommodate changing socioeconomic conditions and evolving risks
- A risk/hazard assessment which fuses local knowledge regarding a neighborhood's risks with institutional data to paint a full picture of the community's infrastructure
- A governance framework that provides local leadership with a flexible platform to make decisions in a uniform and expedited manner before, during, and after times of stress

The RAP is not a static document. Each year the ECP Community should implement the annual planning module in order to assess their progress toward resilience, updating the RAP accordingly to reflect goals and objectives for the coming year. It is important to archive all data generated throughout the planning process, because it can be used to inform future planning processes.

Three audiences and three functional areas of resilience

As Figure 2 (below) demonstrates, the RAP breaks down the four dimensions of resilience capacity to address individual-, organizational-, and community-level audiences. A community can advance these capacities in order to impact resilience in three functional areas: connections, capacity, and resources. Therefore, if the ECP Community reaches all its resilience goals, each audience level will have the relationships (connections), skill sets (capacities), and physical assets (resources) they require to handle times of stress.

Figure 2: RAP Framework





Members of Resilient Cayuga asset mapping their community

RAP benefits for Partner Agencies

The RAP benefits Partner Agencies on the Program Management Team that are committed to working with a Partner Community because:

- The Partner Community has a transparent public document that clearly articulates its priorities, what kind of support it needs, and when it needs that support
- The Partner Community is better connected and has a greater capacity to distribute information to key stakeholders and residents
- The Partner Community is well-versed in strategic planning and problem solving and is a more effective partner in program design and implementation

RAP roles and responsibilities

The Program Manager...

- Implements the community engagement plan crafted by the Program Management Team
- Convenes community stakeholders into a Community Steering Committee
- Manages the logistics and facilitation of meetings
- Synthesizes exercise outputs into RAP elements
- Oversees the RAP ratification process from approval to release

The Program Management Team...

- Supports the Program Manager with any technical support needed to advance the community engagement plan
- Supports the Partner Community's request for data or resources needed to generate an informed RAP

The Community Steering Committee...

- Provides oversight of the RAP development

- process
- Crafts a community engagement plan to ensure adequate participation from key stakeholders and organizations
- Actively participates in ECP planning exercises and reviews outputs
- Ratifies the final version of the RAP

The Working Groups...

- Carry out tasks to achieve goals and objectives identified in the RAP

Convening approaches

The Partner Community has some flexibility in how it chooses to develop its RAP. The following are a few different planning models to consider:

- **Stay small:** In this model, the Community Steering Committee members are the sole participants in the RAP development process. The committee determines the number of meetings it would like to convene; the process can be compressed into an all-day summit or stretched across three or four meetings.
- **Go “big tent”:** The Community Steering Committee can draw in a virtually unlimited number of community stakeholders to set goals and objectives. This approach requires the committee to craft a convening strategy for a summit that would offer attendees an ECP briefing and the neighborhood’s risk/hazard assessment. The agenda would conclude with the “Map Your Resilientville” Exercise that would generate enough data for attendees to set goals and objectives based on the ECP boilerplate goals. After the summit, the committee would regroup and synthesize these outputs into the RAP.
- **Get to work:** The fastest version of RAP development actually fuses the RAP planning process with the Hub Activation process. In this model, the Community Steering Committee identifies the location of its first Hub and convenes the stakeholders in that geographical area to attend a goals and objectives setting workshop.

At the workshop, participants do the “Map Your Resilientville” Exercise, which not only helps set goals and objectives for the RAP but also advances the Hub Activation process. This accelerated approach is best applied to a neighborhood that plans on having just a single Hub.

Foundational Principles and Practices of the ECP

Based on our review of relevant scholarly literature as well as our field experience with actual ECP deployments, we consider the following concepts essential for programmatic success.

Assessment involves the use of data to improve programs by understanding how they are functioning or performing. Assessment entails collecting data from diverse but relevant sources and using it to develop a deep understanding of the problem; this information allows the community to identify better solutions. Individual or group performance can also be assessed using tools that encourage self-reflection and appraisal.

Asset-based organizing refers to organizing people on the basis of their strengths and skills. Each community is unique; therefore, each of its stakeholders brings unique assets to the table. By identifying a community's collective resources, asset-based organizing allows the Program Management Team to offer political, programmatic, financial, and technical resources to the Partner Community.

Capacity building is an intentional effort to increase an entity's ability to achieve a goal or standard. This can be done in a variety of ways, from providing a community with proper policy and legal frameworks to increasing an individual's skills in handling crisis situations. The ECP proposes that capacity building increases a community's ability to collaborate in the event of a disaster; in other words, building capacity builds resilience.

Collective impact is the notion that a complex social problem can be solved by a group of cross-sector partners working toward a clearly defined common goal. A collective impact approach assumes that no single organization, program, or stakeholder can achieve lasting social change; rather, for collective impact to occur, it is important for all collaborating organizations to view the problem in the same way and take a single approach to solving it. The process of coming to that shared understanding fosters the development of unified values.

Cross-sector collaboration exists when different entities in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors work together, embracing and leveraging cultural differences. It is rooted in the premise that leaders from different sectors will benefit from one another's strengths and overcome individual weaknesses to more effectively reach shared goals. Drawing on the theory of collective impact, these partnerships demand a shared understanding of the problem in order to establish a common approach. A cross-sector collaboration could mean a government agency providing funds to a nonprofit to deliver certain services, a partnership between a nonprofit and the private sector, or a joint effort across all three sectors (to name just a few examples).

Cultural competency refers to the ability to function effectively across different cultures; it

is crucial to the ECP, especially with regard to developing a culturally competent communications strategy for engaging diverse stakeholders. Culture comprises patterns of human behavior, including but not limited to communication style, customs, beliefs, and values. Cultural competency requires a set of values and behaviors that reflect an appreciation of diversity, a consciousness of cultural dynamics, and a willingness to adapt one's approach to various cultures.

Evaluation refers to a systematic process of analyzing an ongoing or completed program or policy and measuring its ability to meet its stated goals. Evaluation may be used to measure program effectiveness (whether the program is producing the expected outcomes) or to measure program process (the degree to which the program is being implemented as it was originally designed). Communities can use evaluation results to identify effective programs that merit replication or to identify program weaknesses and inform improvements to future design or implementation.

Evidence-based decision-making uses data and relevant research to guide decisions. It empowers decision makers with awareness of the possible outcomes (negative or positive) associated with a range of options. Using evidence—rather than opinions or political preferences—to inform decisions can help diverse, cross-sector groups identify common goals and strategies for achieving them.

Experiential learning: Community residents may want to assume leadership roles in their neighborhoods, but they lack experience and don't have time to participate in traditional training programs. The ECP's approach is to offer these emerging leaders a skills development model that allows them to advance their neighborhood's resilience, while at the same time absorbing methods that will increase their ability to lead over time. This approach is called experiential learning, and it offers all involved in the ECP an opportunity to grow individually as well as collectively.

Human-centered design uses input from people to investigate and solve social problems. It is rooted in the premise that the best way to identify a solution to a given problem is to listen to those most affected by that problem. Using methods like interviewing and observing, human-centered design aims to provide solutions that are technologically feasible and economically viable. Its most innovative aspect is that it provides people who aren't trained designers with creative tools to solve their own challenges. The ECP champions this approach to building community resilience, because nobody knows a neighborhood better than its residents.

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient incident management. ICS is used for both short- and long term-goals in small and large emergencies, such as natural disasters and acts of terrorism. The ECP adapts the ICS with a slight twist, in that it conceptualizes command within a communications framework.

Performance-based planning: Performance-based planning puts goals at the center of a planning process. It leverages existing conditions and community strengths to advance those goals and assesses the degree to which planning helped to achieve them. The ECP supports communities as they establish their own specific goals for how they would like to see their community perform during times of stress (e.g., power will be restored to businesses within 72 hours). Communities should set performance objectives before implementing plans so that the expected results are clear and can be assessed later on.

Permission-based deployment: The ECP is a community-driven process supported by professionals at city agencies or nonprofit organizations. When externally initiated, the ECP should be presented to the community as an opportunity and deployed only with the community's permission. This permission should be formalized—typically a signed memorandum of understanding between the party initiating the project and the party benefiting from it, clearly stating the terms of the agreement so there is no ambiguity in the future.



Place-based deployment: Given the diversity of resident populations and their socio-economic drivers, each neighborhood presents community development professionals with a unique challenge. These demographic factors, bundled with geological, climatic, and infrastructural features, require resilience planners to develop customized strategies for each community. A place-based approach may put additional demands on planning teams, but crafting such an individualized plan will make an enormous difference when it comes time for the community to negotiate times of stress.

A corollary concept is place-based organizing, which entails organizing people in a geographically-bounded area to identify and advocate for initiatives tailored to that community's specific needs. It motivates participation by highlighting the unique elements of each locality.

“Whole Community” approach: The ECP builds cross-sector partnerships at the community (e.g., neighborhood watch), citywide (e.g., the Department of Public Health), and regional (e.g., the Red Cross) levels in order to develop capacities that will be essential in times of stress. FEMA’s “Whole Community” approach to emergency management was a major influence on the ECP.



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