



## Community Resilience Roundtable Meeting Summary

December 1, 2009

Hosted by the  
Community and Regional Resilience Institute

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## Introduction

The Community and Regional Resilience Institute (CARRI) conducted its third Community Resilience Roundtable in Arlington, Virginia, on December 1, 2009. The objective of this Roundtable (and the previous two) was to assemble a diverse group of resilience stakeholders, inform them of CARRI's work, acquire their feedback and solicit their advice. More than thirty participants attended from government (federal, state and local), the research community, academia, and the private sector. A complete listing of the Roundtable attendees is provided in Appendix A. A formal agenda was issued for the Roundtable and can be found in Appendix B. Several presentations were provided and are included in Appendix C.

## Discussion Summaries

### *CARRI – Where We Are Today*

Warren Edwards (Director, CARRI) provided a status briefing of CARRI's work to date and reiterated the institute's commitment to continue to work at the community level. This is the level where people work, raise families and are involved in community events. He added that communities are the building blocks in the construction of a resilient nation. Aspects of resilience are many and varied: natural and environmental hazards, economic and social concerns, emergency response, public health and the crucial component of community knowledge and experience. By combining efforts from a cadre of distinguished researchers with invaluable community experience CARRI has brought to life an exceptional collaborative process. Participants and contributors in CARRI's efforts include representatives from academia, government (local, state, federal), private sector, non-governmental and faith-based organizations. The breadth of CARRI's efforts is extensive. Edwards noted that teamwork is a vital part of CARRI's success. He further emphasized the presence of many who had been instrumental in the successes to date.

CARRI has advanced to a place where a national conversation is imperative. CARRI is ready to begin this conversation with a document that has been developed to be a starting point for building a common framework for resilience. CARRI believes communities must have a vision and it should be based on input gleaned from engaging the "full fabric of the community." Communities must work together and discover

vulnerabilities and identify interdependencies. The value of a framework is that it addresses the four requirements that communities have identified: a need to understand what community resilience means in a way that can be readily understood by non-experts; a way to measure where the community stands on a scale of resilience; tools and processes that help the community reach a more resilient state; and a way to be rewarded for their efforts. CARRI uses the terms “common framework” carefully and after much consideration. Framework acknowledges the diversity of communities across the nation and that resilience descriptions and measurements must be flexible enough to support this diversity. And yet, the process must have sufficient commonality to allow it to be useful to a national audience.

### *America’s Resilience Landscape*

(Roundtable participants were asked to share thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about the resilience landscape around our nation. Below is a compilation of what was shared.)

Resilience is a concept that has taken root in the President’s vocabulary. It is important to him in everything from our economy to national security. In September 2009 the President issued a proclamation which focuses on preparedness. [For the reader’s convenience, below is an excerpt from that Proclamation on National Preparedness Month:]

Preparedness is an essential element of a resilient and secure Nation. My Administration has made preparedness a top priority, and we are working every day to ensure our country stands ready to respond to any disaster or emergency -- from wildfires and hurricanes, to terrorist attacks and pandemic disease. Our goal is to ensure a more resilient Nation – one in which individuals, communities, and our economy can adapt to changing conditions as well as withstand and rapidly recover from disruption due to emergencies.

One Roundtable participant provided the following statement which the group found very humbling and heartfelt: “It really is the case that an extraordinary attribute of this country is resilience. We (as a nation) possess a significant sense of confidence and optimism, it builds our

character and as communities it reminds us why we come together as communities.” A recommendation was made that time dedicated to resilience, studying problems and developing plans of action is very important. It was acknowledged that focus can’t be lost of the idea that good things come out of handling scary things – this is where our national sense of optimism comes from (this was a second reference to our national sense of optimism). This participant further noted that “we’ve met things head on to overcome them, I’m hopeful this is the birth of that process as we go forward.”

Numerous comments emerged concerning the economic component and its importance to resilience. It was noted that when considering resilience it’s not all about “how you respond” to an emergency but also how economic challenges are addressed and what is happening with the business community. Impacts within the business world can magnify devastation, especially with the small business owner. One participant offered that “bouncing back” is complex, noting that spend rates can be slow. Business plans are critical and often times a small business owner doesn’t have an opportunity, or the resources, to develop and sustain continuity of business planning. Without a plan of action a small business owner might not be able to return to “business as usual.” A suggestion surfaced concerning the Institute of Business and Home Safety (IBHS); they are heavily involved in facilitating approaches and mechanism to foster resiliency and could possibly serve as a resource for CARRI activities (IBHS is a collaborator in CARRI’s Resilient Home Program).

The widespread concern about climate change surfaced with the notion it will add numerous dimensions to resilience that cannot be ignored. Higher than normal storm surges, flooding and more frequent disasters are predicted. Related to these environmental effects, water

shortages may occur in several areas. From an international perspective we have much to learn. There are particularly indigenous communities that rely on the climate they have adapted to and in doing so, they have developed strategies. Strategies that are practical and ones we can learn from. The environmental piece can't be forgotten.

### *Proposed Common Framework for Community Resilience*

Dr. John Plodinec (Savannah River National Laboratory) presented information describing the development process for the Common Framework for Community Resilience (hereafter referred to as Common Framework). He affirmed earlier comments made by Warren Edwards that the Common Framework is a starting point. It is a practical and straightforward method for a community to fairly, transparently and accurately assess its ability to return to an acceptable state of function after a disaster. According to Dr. Plodinec, a community should do something about what it learns in such assessment "before" a crisis occurs. He continued further and offered an explanation of why a framework is needed: risks are understood; expectations are managed; resources for recovery are secured; and being prepared to use resources more effectively will be beneficial. The focus is on anticipating and acting before a crisis so recovery is more rapid and more certain. Interdependencies exist and disruption will lead to cascading consequences; impacts will be many and will occur across communities. It is terribly important to understand the risks and define expectations; planners at every level must be involved.

The Common Framework will be used by the community and not just a group of experts, and it will be used to define and prioritize actions. It must be scalable as it will be applicable across the nation. CARRI envisions something that can be used by a small town in Kansas who just

wants to be better for its citizens and community at large. Or, perhaps it will be used by communities like Charleston and/or Gulfport who want to attract the next Boeing facility – they realize they have vulnerabilities and want to resolve them. CARRI believes the Common Framework should be developed and implemented sooner rather than later. If one community is done at a time it will take a very long time. CARRI believes one thousand communities can participate at the same time. It seems complex and it is. How can this complexity be modified (and simplified?) to enable multiple communities to participate at the same time?

All communities carry out the same functions; CARRI has identified a set of community functions where every community will find itself:

#### Infrastructure

- ✓ Public safety
- ✓ Health care
- ✓ Energy
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Community records
- ✓ Water / waste water
- ✓ Solid waste
- ✓ Natural environment
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Food

#### Economic

- ✓ Robust economy
- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Wages
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ People with challenges

#### Social

- ✓ Education and training
- ✓ Special skills
- ✓ Sense of community / place
- ✓ Sense of community ownership

CARRI envisions the Common Framework being used by the entire community. In some cases energy may be provided through the local community or through a larger statewide community. The economic focus is important; the community won't come back if the economy doesn't come back. In addition, the social factor is an extremely important part of bringing the community back, disaster will strike at the very hearts of those who comprise a community. In developing the Common Framework CARRI has tried to use these functions and look at the interdependencies. Communities will become more resilient through 1) a better understanding of the community itself, 2) better pairing and/or matching of planning and expectations, and 3) through more effective investments.

*Proposed Collaborative Development Process for the Common Framework*

Ms. Ann Farrar (Associate Director, CARRI) and Dr. Robin White (Senior Fellow, Meridian Institute) presented a potential path forward in developing the Common Framework process. A steering committee will be organized and will be situated at the uppermost station in the process. The steering committee will be responsible for monitoring and guiding the process; they are the ones who will provide the terms of reference and ensure integration exists throughout the working groups. A technical group will be heavily involved with the content of the Common Framework itself; assuring correct functions are in consideration; identifying what tools are needed. Finally, the technical group helps guide where further research and development is needed.

A community leaders group will be organized; this is where the rubber might meet the road! This is the group that will validate the principles and ensure they are practical and usable at the community level.

They will look at and say, “Yes, this is something we will use and it makes sense.”

A third working group planned is an incentives and rewards group. This group could be broken into two sub-groups: one group will focus on policies, grants, etc., and a second group will focus on funding, finance, and industry. These groups will help us look at what is emerging from the user group and help identify what it is that we actually have to measure. In addition, they will evaluate and put together a model that will yield tangible incentives for communities to engage and improve their resilience.

Final notes about how the process will work:

- ✓ The steering committee will guide the overall process and help integrate the working groups.
- ✓ CARRI wants to make sure the right questions are being asked; they want to ensure the right aperture exists.
- ✓ It is extremely important the dialogue be as efficient as possible but equally important that the right questions are asked.
- ✓ CARRI will support the process. The goal of this is to cause us (as a nation) with varied viewpoints and ideas to yield effectively to resilience.

CARRI suggests that community resilience is a bottoms-up process; it is a local activity with roles for everyone. CARRI realizes there is much happening in a real time fashion – they ask how to find the right balance to be respectful of current happenings yet begin the education within the communities.

#### *Discussion Following Collaborative Development Process*

Responses to the *Proposed Collaborative Development Process* were varied and overall very encouraging. One participant identified the

Common Framework as a spiral development systems integration model and recommended the scope of work be separated further. It was noted this type of model can be cost ineffective if time lapses, tools will have to be identified and they do exist. A recommendation to not “re-create the wheel,” was made. Inclusion of those who “operate day-to-day” was suggested, they will bring real benefits to the process.

The Common Framework model was viewed as quantifying resilience in a way that does not exist today. It was suggested that if this is achieved a huge step would have been accomplished. Further comments cited businesses such as Wal-Mart and FedEx who spring back within regulations because they don’t have a choice. They have a business imperative for rebounding.

The incentive group generated a fair amount of discussion; it was found to be refreshing and viewed quite favorably. Establishing such a process would definitely move to a “private-public” approach and not “public-private.” Comments were offered that behavior is often driven by funding agencies. A question was rendered that asked if the funding agencies deserve a “special” piece (or group) in this process. There is a true challenge in our communities with incentives – if there are no incentives people won’t participate.

Related to the incentives group is the topic of grant guidelines where decline is typical at the community level (e.g., police, fire, and emergency departments), it’s fewer people doing the work and what they see is a fragmented approach. They have to pick which program goes. An early question they will ask is “what is different about this and does it apply to grant guidelines?” Marketing and selling are important; people have to be helped to align with resiliency and they won’t do it if the grant

guidelines don't evolve. It seems the low-hanging fruit is going in terms of the federal role – looking at those groups with relative ease and simply add a component in that – a component of resiliency – it doesn't get to the comprehensive view but it gets the agency toward a step in the right direction.

A suggestion was offered to not forget the faith-based organizations (FBOs), they are generally the first ones on the scene following a disaster, and they don't always feel a part of planning and development activities. They arrive without a charge to anyone. They bring not only food, clothing, and medical supplies but spiritual support to those in need. They are very important.

Massive communication and outreach will be necessary; a very broad audience must be imagined. CARRI should identify three words to send the message. What plans does CARRI have around implementing a pilot process? Has CARRI considered industry and/or the private sector? Diversity of communities must be a primary factor.

### *Wrap-up Discussion*

CARRI has learned over the course of time that there is a need to create a national culture of resilience and that one of the critical elements in this effort is creation of a culture of community resilience. To do this, communities need an intellectual construct around which to organize their efforts and processes and tools to facilitate the journey toward resilience. The effort must engage the full fabric of the community and be scalable sufficiently to be widely used across the nation. CARRI believes that these needs can be met best with a common framework.

CARRI asked those present if they were willing to participate in the national collaboration and not only if they were willing but were they aware of others to bring “to the table.” CARRI wants the conversation to be as wide and cross-representative as possible. CARRI suggested not to worry yet about when or how the pilots or “test communities” would start but encouraged a focus on starting the conversation. The fact is if anything was achieved in the meeting today by people raising their hand and saying, “I’m interested and want to participate and not only do I want to play but I know three or four other people that I will invite to the table,” it becomes a greater success. When this is over the intention is not for this to be a CARRI product – but a product that communities across the nation can use to get better – to change the whole culture.