

FINDINGS FROM INTERGOVERNMENTAL ROUNDTABLE ON

DISASTER RESILIENCE

FEBRUARY 10, 2023 / WASHINGTON, D.C.

DEFINING AND BUILDING CAPACITY FOR DISASTER MITIGATION

Hosted by the National Association of Counties with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts



INTRODUCTION

Intergovernmental Challenges to Disaster Resilience

In February 2022, the National Association of Counties (NACo) and The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew) convened federal, state and county officials for a roundtable discussion to identify and deliberate top challenges in intergovernmental coordination and collaboration in disaster resilience. Comprised of county elected officials and emergency management directors, state emergency management directors from across the country and federal partners from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Defense (DOD) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the group generated several key takeaways and priority challenges for the intergovernmental system to address.

- **Capacity:** While local governments must lead in disaster response, there are disparities in local resources and capacity to meet response and recovery goals and obligations.
- **Costs:** Disasters are increasing in frequency and severity, resulting in increased expense associated with disaster recovery. Tracking past expenses is a hallmark of effective budget practice but is made complex by the episodic and variable (and sometimes consecutive) nature of disaster events as well as spending that is spread across multiple levels of governments, the private sector and residents.

- **Federal Support:** Federal agencies can provide needed resources to state and local governments to manage recovery expenses, but often grant administration processes present high barriers to entry, leaving underserved communities behind. Even successful federal grant applications result in long lead times to award – in some cases, four years after a disaster event – during which time the locality has experienced additional disaster events and incurred debt to support recovery efforts.
- **Disproportionate Emphasis on Recovery:** There has been disproportionate intergovernmental and cross-sectoral focus on recovery to the detriment of effective preparedness and mitigation.

Intergovernmental Solutions for Disaster Resilience

NACo and Pew collaborated to host a second roundtable with a focus on generating solutions. In February 2023, county elected officials and chief resilience officers and state resilience officers and agency heads from the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, joined by NOAA leadership and staff, deliberated on the concentration of disaster declarations in their region and self-assessed their jurisdictions' capacity for disaster mitigation. The findings of this roundtable discussion offer a roadmap for how to define, improve and sustain local capacity for disaster resilience and the roles intergovernmental partners can play in ensuring every community can be resilient in the face of disaster.

Defining Resilience

In response to a [2011 Presidential Directive](#), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) developed and maintains a [National Preparedness Goal](#):

“A secure and resilient nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.”

Resilience includes the full range of the disaster experience, from preparedness and mitigation to recovering and rebuilding. As discussed at this roundtable resilience refers to the ability of organizations, communities and systems to withstand, adapt to and recover from emergencies or disasters and can include activities such as building infrastructure to withstand natural disasters, developing community networks and support systems and investing in education and training to improve livelihoods and increase adaptive capacity.

Intergovernmental Roles in Resilience

Disaster events directly affect individuals and families in their homes and local communities. To support residents in response and recovery, there are distinct roles across levels of government that leverage strengths and resources. The **federal government**, through the Stafford Act managed by FEMA, may provide financial aid and national response to states and localities in the form of debris removal, emergency protective measures, restoring public infrastructure and hazard mitigation measures. FEMA program grants are supplemental and are only available following application, qualification, eligibility determination, inspection, approval and application of a variable cost share. FEMA distributes these grant programs to the states through different mechanisms, such as formula-based allocations, competitive applications or reimbursement requests. **States** are responsible for managing the grants and ensuring compliance with federal requirements and may also subgrant some of the funds to eligible local governments or other entities. States coordinate cross-jurisdiction response and – in many instances – establish and incentivize the state’s disaster plan and priorities. **County and other local governments** lead in immediate response and recovery, regardless of internal infrastructure and resources available.

Detailed roles of individual government positions are outlined in FEMA’s [National Response Framework](#).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

During the 2023 roundtable, local capacity emerged as a top challenge for disaster resilience. While counties have similar responsibilities in the event of a natural disaster, they are not equally resourced across the nation. Funding for local services (including emergency management) is driven by local revenue, which varies and is largely based on land valuation. [See NACo's [County Governance Project](#) for a comprehensive guide to county governance structure, authority, services and finances.] Disparities in local revenue result in disparities in capacity to fund positions and local restoration and recovery projects, as well as providing

a credible fiduciary mechanism often required for the non-federal share (or match) of federal disaster grant programs. Intergovernmental partners have a vested interest in building and supporting local capacity as it reduces needed support from state and federal partners and can improve outcomes for individuals and families.

Intergovernmental partners agree that to improve local capacity, it must be defined and measured. Roundtable participants identified six key elements of capacity for disaster resilience and offered solutions for how to build and sustain local capacity.

Defining Capacity for Disaster Resilience



Funding for mitigation planning and project implementation



Staffing and, in some instances, dedicated agencies



Authority to enact policy and practice that support mitigation efforts



Effective strategic partnerships



Ability to collect, analyze and interpret data for decision making



Education and improved perception of risk.



FUNDING

Roundtable participants identified funding, both for project planning and project implementation, as the top indicator of capacity for disaster mitigation. State and local mitigation projects are largely funded through federal grant programs, and through state and local reserves to a lesser extent. For example, **Georgia** employs the use of a special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST) that allows counties to collect a 1 percent sales tax to fund specific improvement projects, including disaster mitigation. More often, local governments use local reserves for cost sharing for matching grant funds for federal opportunities.

State and local reliance on federal funding for disaster resilience is significant, but *capacity to seek federal funds varies*. While participants agree the federal funding opportunities are plentiful and welcomed, excitement is often tempered by the perception that some of those grant programs – like FEMA’s Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program – require complex applications, may have long delays in awards and require considerable staff time and expense to complete. Some grant programs designate the state as responsible for prioritizing and submitting the grant request. Many local communities decide they may not be able to commit resources to apply or to pursue coordination with the designated primary applicant.

Roundtable participants generalized that a small county has little chance of fulfilling federal grant application submission and fiduciary management requirements; better resourced counties face challenges of their own. Mid-sized and even large counties often seek out grant writing specialists or consultants who formerly solicited or scored federal grant applications to add to local capacity. Several counties noted that they could only secure a grant specialist to write the application with the commitment that specialist would manage the

funded project. Even then, as Parish President Chaisson (Lafourche Parish, La.) noted, there are times that the federal agency approving a grant application denies the request to use the consultant specialist as project manager after conditionally approving that manager under the request for quote (RFQ) process, creating implementation challenges for the locality. Even high-capacity counties note challenges in winning grant resources due to the complexity of the benefit-cost analysis requirements and frequent changes to the scoring process. Some jurisdictions face barriers to scoring sufficiently high on applications that award points for elements outside the jurisdiction’s control. For example, one BRIC scoring section requires having the latest hazard resistant building codes in place. That authority may be controlled by a state legislature, department or individual official outside the authority of the applicant.

States provide innovative solutions to support local funding capacity

Some states provide a match for federal grants, as is the case in **Texas**, which provides technical assistance and support on federal grant applications. **Florida** lawmakers are building local capacity to design and fund mitigation efforts through its Resilient Florida Program, which leverages state and federal funds to support local assessment. Touted as the “largest investment in Florida’s history to prepare communities for the impacts of climate change,” the [Resilient Florida Program](#) offers a selection of grants to support localities in analyzing and planning for vulnerabilities, “as well as implement projects for adaptation and mitigation.” To ensure eligible applicants have the capacity to develop and submit applications, Resilient Florida uses a streamlined application process that Roundtable participants indicate is “nowhere near as complicated

as the federal processes.” A relatively new program, participants noted some questions on how application scoring works, as well as accountability measures the state will use to monitor the performance of individual awards; but overall, the state appears committed to the relatively low barrier to entry to support local jurisdictions in their assessment of vulnerability to disaster.

Louisiana established the Louisiana Infrastructure Technical Assistance Corporation (LITACorp) to meet local infrastructure needs. The non profit coordinates and implements matching funds appropriated by the Louisiana state legislature. These matching funds are used to assist parishes and municipalities (i.e., political subdivisions) to successfully apply and receive Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) grants. LITACorp is endowed by the Executive Branch with the authority and responsibility for qualifying and managing the professional consulting staff who will assist in the acquisition and administration of grants payable to political subdivisions.

“ In Palm Beach County (Fla.), the Office of Resilience has appreciated how streamlined and easily accessible the Resilient Florida Program application process is for vulnerability assessment planning grants. This helps ensure that local governments throughout Florida can all participate in this critically important, 100% funded planning opportunity. ”

[Megan Houston, Palm Beach County Office of Resilience]

Solution: Build Funding Capacity through Better Training on Federal Grant Programs

State and local leaders recognize a need for more education on the funding streams available not just for current policymakers, but also for our future emergency managers and resilience officers. Formal education and certification programs can be institutionalized to strengthen local capacity to navigate federal processes and systems.

For federal grantmaking organizations, participants recommend targeted training programs beyond the traditional notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) webinar that reiterates the information provided in the grant announcement. Participants gave high marks to NOAA’s former grants training and recommended other agencies follow suit. Ideally, federal agencies could work together to develop a streamlined grantmaking application and scoring process to ensure consistency across agencies and divisions.

Solution: Build Funding Capacity by Maximizing Resources Across Regions and Levels of Government

Palm Beach County (Fla.) is currently completing a climate change vulnerability assessment and resilience action plan (VARAP). The VARAP will help the county proactively prepare county and community assets for natural hazards that include flooding and extreme heat conditions. The county funded the \$1.8 million project by combining Florida Department of Economic Opportunity CDBG-MIT funding (\$800,000), Florida Resilient Florida funding (\$500,000) and Palm Beach County supplemental funding from its local general fund (\$500,000).

In **Broward County (Fla.)** the Florida Department of Transportation and a municipal Community Redevelopment Agency combined funds and secured state grants to support a resilience project to address sea level rise and rainfall induced flooding. The project includes various stormwater pumps and seawall improvements and will be augmented by shoreline improvements within a Broward County park and day use facilities to address tidal flooding contributing to roadway flooding. Each of these projects has been awarded Resilient Florida grant funding which allows for multi-year construction.

In **Florida**, the four counties of **Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe** have partnered to provide shared support for administration of the [Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact](#), which provides a framework for coordination adaptation planning. Within the Compact planning area, several county and municipal water utilities collectively committed funds to support development of a \$161 million in-ground reservoir for capture of stormwater

runoff and reuse to augment water supplies. The project aids drought management, flood mitigation and alternative water supply development. It represents a public-private partnership facilitated by the Compact and benefited from a \$30 million legislative appropriation.

Solution: Building Funding Capacity by Pursuing Local Bonds

Broward County, approved several bond initiatives to support stormwater management and seawall improvements to address sea level rise induced flooding. Projects have been approved in the City of Hollywood, City of Fort Lauderdale and the City of Pompano Beach.





STAFFING

Roundtable participants identified dedicated staffing as the second most important indicator of capacity for disaster mitigation. States and counties differed on the importance of dedicated personnel versus jurisdiction-specific dedicated agencies for mitigation activities, with counties indicating dedicated local agencies as more important than their state counterparts. State and local mitigation staff are largely funded by general fund resources; however, most local participants indicated they leverage available grant resources to fund the planning activities required to demonstrate the local need to the officers of general fund.

Dedicated offices of resilience

Dedicated offices of resilience at the state and local level are relatively new. Resilience offices that are charged with building systems, communities and critical infrastructure that reduces a jurisdiction's vulnerability to disaster events are best suited for planning and directing mitigation activities under its own leadership and staffing structure. Participants agreed that emergency management offices, while typically charged with directing, managing and coordinating emergency operations across a variety of incidents, are not adequately equipped to champion mitigation or resilience efforts; however, emergency management can and should be a strong partner in mitigation and resilience efforts. Participants agreed that every state needs a dedicated resilience office, but not all 3,069 counties in the U.S. require such an office. Additional research should be conducted to identify the threshold at which a local jurisdiction could maximize a dedicated office of resilience. Such indicators could include number and/or extent of recent or projected hazards, population density, geography or results of a vulnerability assessment.

When establishing a resilience office, consideration should also be given to staffing and the expertise needed to address disaster mitigation and recovery activities, including:

- Grant writer and/or strategist
- Data analyst with GIS skills
- Urban planner with skills in land use, environmental, transportation, etc.
- Engineering expertise
- Energy expertise (including renewables)
- Environmental science and natural resources expertise
- Partnerships and strategic outreach; and
- Community engagement.

Additional roles needed for adequate capacity would likely shift depending on the needs of the jurisdiction, including specific hazard vulnerabilities.

Consultants

Apart from dedicated staffing, short-term consultant partnerships can support local capacity building. The **City of Jacksonville/Duval County (Fla.)** under the direction of the Chief Resilience Officer, relies heavily on short-term consultants to support mitigation planning and preparation for future projects. Time-limited consultant work can help local jurisdictions jump start projects, provide outside perspective on long-held policies and procedures and facilitate planning efforts by positioning their role as a neutral party focused on outcomes. These short-term, high-value applications can lay the groundwork for long-term capacity if local leadership can incorporate lessons learned into local policy and procedure.

Solution: Build Staffing Capacity with Examples and Guidance on How to Create and Staff Effective Resilience Activities

County leaders indicate that they lack a playbook for county resilience efforts and best or promising practices on building and maintaining capacity for resilience and mitigation activities. While it is unlikely that a model resilience office can or should be replicated across all local jurisdictions, additional research and case examples are needed on different models or pathways to support resilience at the local

level. Such a resource could include a landscape assessment of local offices of resilience and their mission or charge, themes in staffing and funding, themes in using external consultants for key roles while incorporating learned outcomes and lessons into the fabric of the jurisdiction's resilience plan, and best practices on working with (and incentivizing resilience efforts used by) private industry, local stakeholders and across agencies and interjurisdictional lines for best outcomes.



AUTHORITY

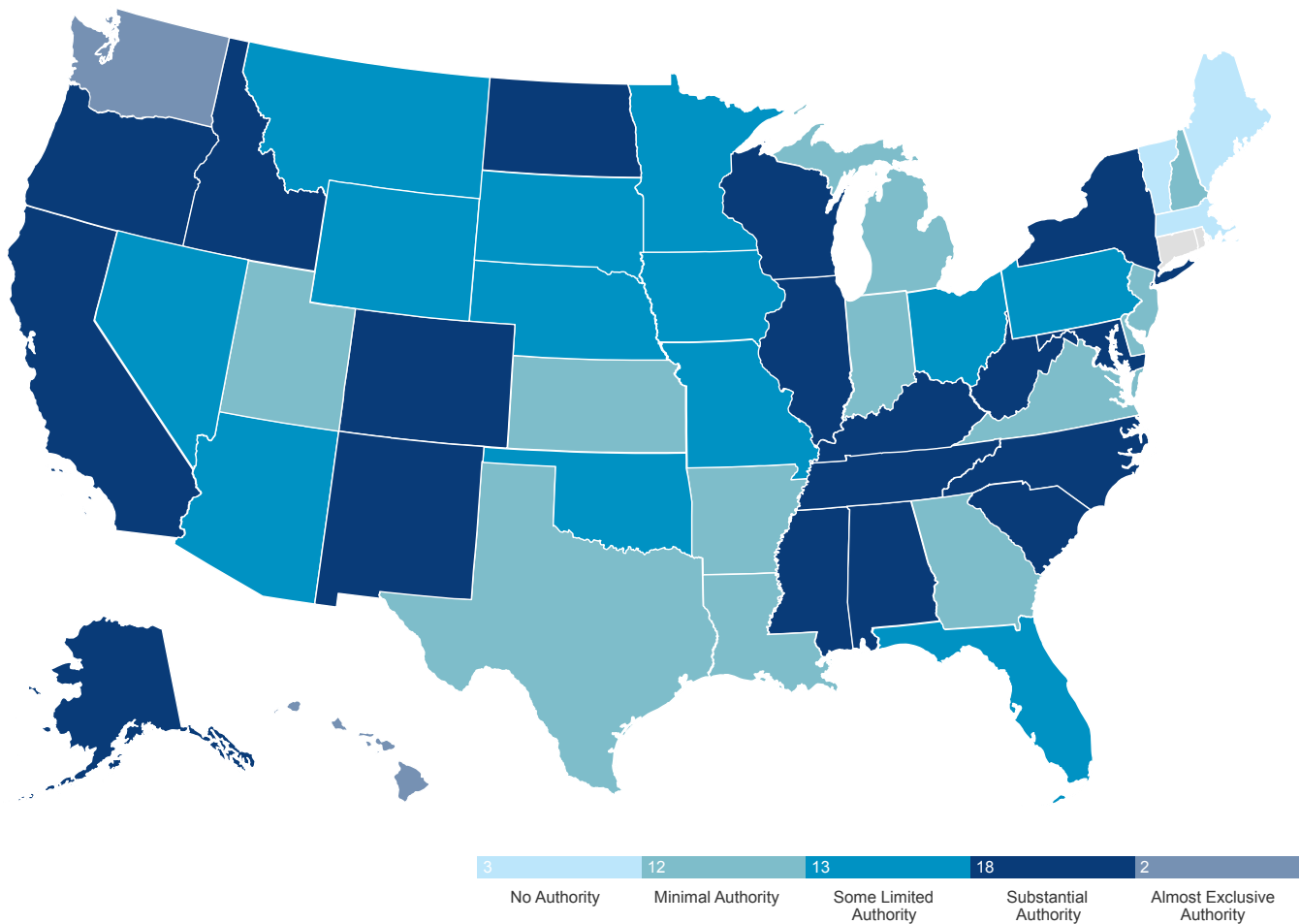
Beyond direct costs associated with mitigation staff and projects, state and local capacity to mitigate hazard events and be resilient in the face of disaster requires the authority to make and execute policy and procedure that affects outcomes. While there are several key policy levers related to disaster resilience, roundtable participants focused on *political will* and ability to *incentivize resilience activities through zoning and planning authority* as a key indicator of capacity.

Local authority is granted to counties, cities and special districts through the state constitution and related

code. County authority to govern zoning, land use and planning varies by state, and sometimes within states. Fewer than half of states (20) grant counties almost exclusive (2, Hawaii and Washington) or substantial (18) authority over zoning and planning. Exactly half of states (25) grant counties some limited or minimal authority and three states (Maine, Massachusetts and Vermont) grant counties no authority over zoning and planning.

When counties cannot use policy or practice to incentivize resilience-minded development practices,

COUNTY AUTHORITY OVER PLANNING AND ZONING



their capacity is limited in a number of ways. For example, **Texas** counties have minimal authority over zoning and planning – these counties may not require the latest hazard-resistant building codes for local development as that authority lies solely with the governor. Because Texas has not adopted the latest (2021) hazard-resistant building codes, the state and its political subdivisions cannot score maximum points for select grant applications that include building codes in its scoring rubric (e.g., BRIC). This reduces capacity to raise federal resources at all levels of government.

In **Florida**, cities have the primary authority for zoning while counties manage zoning for unincorporated

areas and bear responsibility and authority for land use planning authority and regulations. Florida counties can use planning authority to curb or incentivize development aligned with their resilience goals.

Another policy lever for mitigation is the authority (and resources) to offer *land purchasing programs* in affected areas. **Texas** and **Louisiana** have led such programs to preserve land and prevent further development in disaster prone areas, though officials note these programs require community buy-in on relocation to be successful.



PARTNERSHIPS

Relationships and partnerships are building blocks of local capacity. Partnerships across agencies in a jurisdiction, among neighboring jurisdictions and across sectors and levels of government maximize the available capacity of a local jurisdiction in a number of ways, including shared expertise, responsibility and resources.

Regional partnerships recognize that risk doesn't stop and start at jurisdictional boundaries.

For over a decade, four counties in Florida (**Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe and Palm Beach**) have worked together to build climate resilience within their own communities and across their region through the [Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact](#). Its partners have built joint sea level rise projections, engaged in cross-jurisdictional planning and maximized local capacity by sharing expertise across the region and avoiding duplicate positions in each county. Compact participants note that the formal regional collaboration has elevated their work on the ground and also its profile among state and congressional leaders. In this case, collaboration has increased buy-in and reduced potential in-fighting for resources and attention.

Regional associations of local political subdivisions can also increase capacity for local governments, as in the case of the [North Central Texas Council of Governments](#) (NCTCOG), which is a voluntary association of local governments that supports regional planning. NCTCOG's purpose "is to strengthen both the individual and collective power of local governments and to help them recognize regional opportunities, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and make joint decisions."

Chatham County, Ga.

By working with the Georgia Institute of Technology and with the City of Savannah, Chatham County has developed "Smart Sea Level Sensors," a project that aims to install a network of internet-enabled water level sensors across their flood-vulnerable geography. The data collection will be complemented by a suite of modeling tools to inform flood risk and vulnerability. A first for the southeastern region, this project will provide real-time data that over time will help inform policies on infrastructure design and retrofiting. It will also further expand the county's ability to forecast extreme rainfall and storm surge events at a neighborhood level. "We could not do this cutting-edge work without the help of our universities," says Jackie Jackson, Chatham County Resilience Program Administrator.

Partnerships With Local Universities

Partnerships with local universities can enhance state and local capacity by supporting planning and conducting data analysis needed for grant applications and fulfillment of deliverables. The **Louisiana** Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management has a longstanding partnership with state universities to support local, state and regional planning, data gathering and training. **Harris County (Texas)** officials also note they work with local universities often and **Chatham County (Ga.)** is working closely with Georgia Institute of Technology to collect and analyze sea level data to inform infrastructure decisions.

Private Industry Leaders

Private industry leaders, including business leaders, economic development professionals and insurance companies, can be strong advocates for resilience planning and project implementation. Private sector involvement seems to be the norm among Florida counties. In the northeast corner of the state, **Jacksonville/Duval County** leaders indicate their resilience efforts were originally driven by the private sector and the local chamber of commerce. **Broward County** leaders note that their private industry partners heavily advocated for local and regional flood mitigation efforts that would ensure continuation of services and commerce during a flooding event. Across the **southeast Florida region**, partners worked together to develop the [Business Case for Climate Resilience](#), highlighting the importance of getting ahead of disaster and economic impacts of inaction.

Insurance is a critical element of recovery and strong partnerships and incentives are needed in

vulnerable communities to ensure best outcomes for residents, insurance providers and government actors. Policymakers in **Louisiana** indicate this is a pressing need across the Gulf states, counties and parishes. Hazards in the region have led to insurance providers' failure to fulfill needed claims and closing their doors due to low profitability, to the detriment of residents and the industry. In March 2023, Louisiana Insurance Commissioner Jim Donelon announced the nine insurance companies selected to participate in the [Insure Louisiana Incentive Program](#), a state program that offers matching grants to incentivize new and existing insurance companies to hold residential and commercial policies in coastal areas. Participating companies, once approved by the Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget, will enter into cooperative agreements with the Louisiana Department of Insurance and begin writing policies in 2023.

States and local governments can also form meaningful partnerships with local military installations and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) national offices that support community engagement and the federal government's vested interest in community and environmental resilience. The [DOD Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation](#) (OLDCC) and the [Office of the Secretary of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration](#) (REPI) Program partner with states and local governments on climate resilience initiatives, often supporting cost-sharing agreements between these jurisdictions and other federal agencies. **Jacksonville/Duval County** works closely with Naval Station Mayport on infrastructure projects. **South Carolina**, through its Resilience Office, is engaged with Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island on sea level rise projections that affect the state.

DATA & DATA ANALYTICS

The collection, interpretation and use of historical and cutting-edge data enables local communities to make important decisions that affect the health and safety of their residents and local assets. The ability to monitor, analyze and assess changes in key indicators of resilience and resistance to weather events is an important element of capacity for disaster mitigation. Jackie Jackson, Resilience Program Administrator for **Chatham County (Ga.)**, recognized her county's efforts to study its fluctuating sea level trend from 1935 – 2021 (using a tide gauge at Fort Pulaski) as a key element to understanding flood risk to inform countywide resilience efforts. The data collected and analyzed was used to help convey the need for resilience planning and build support with community and elected officials. At the other end of the spectrum, some counties at the roundtable noted the use of outdated flood maps, some from the 1980s. While local capacity to collect and analyze relevant data is varied, federal support is available in the form of data, analytics and technical assistance.

NOAA's data, products and information supports decision makers on the national, state and local levels. In February 2022, NOAA released its [Interagency Sea Level Rise Technical Report](#) featuring regional sets of tide gauge observations from the last 50 years (1970-2020) to project sea level rise out to 2050. Its companion [Application Guide](#), released in June 2022, acts as a bridge between the updated science and practitioner needs. The agency also updates [Coastal County Profiles](#) that assess economic and flood indicators in

the 850+ coastal counties in the U.S. These profiles use county-level data to produce data visualizations that help county leaders understand their resilience needs and articulate community resilience messages. As NOAA leadership explained, these (and other departmental) resources are meant to bolster local analytical capacity – to equip local leaders as they make economic, health and safety decisions for their communities.

While states and local governments have different responsibilities in mitigation planning and execution, stakeholders agree capacity to advance resilience goals requires funding, staffing or personnel, authority to enact and enforce policy, meaningful partnerships and the ability to analyze and interpret the best available data to inform decision making. To sustain capacity and ensure long-term community buy-in, states and localities need to promote a reasonable perception of risk to help communities understand and prepare for the hazards and vulnerabilities that they are exposed to.

EDUCATION AND IMPROVED PERCEPTION OF RISK

Reasonable perception of risk, among policymakers and residents, can turn short-term capacity for mitigation to long-term community preparedness and resilience. Policymakers play a key role in driving local mitigation planning. Mitigation efforts championed by one or a group of policymakers may lose favor during leadership turnover, especially if a jurisdiction's time between disaster events is outpaced by election cycles. Local leaders can keep the memory of landmark disaster events and community resilience alive in a community to ensure future preparedness. For policymakers concerned about adverse effects on tourism or local industry and economic development, roundtable participants suggested that there is a valuable selling point to a prepared community, to targeted local investments in resilience required to live, work and play in beautiful places. Participants

also noted the need to increase educational efforts to state and local budget authorities to ensure they understand the value of investing in vulnerability assessments, mitigation planning and then funding the projects that will build resilient communities and avoid costly recovery projects.

Policymakers can play an important role in improving the perception of risk in the public, including residents and visitors. **Reasonable perception of risk can lead residents to build resilience into their lives and individual factors they control**; for example, making decisions about where to live, carrying hazard-specific insurance policies and developing individual and family plans on actions to take before, during and after a disaster event. Understanding risk can also support compliance with new policy or adjustments in building

Martin County, Fla.

Martin County leaders note that they have incorporated resilience work into business-as-usual. A southeastern coastal community just north of Palm Beach, Martin County is vulnerable to hurricane and flooding events. During the roundtable discussion on maintaining capacity and long-term 'stickiness' of mitigation policies and procedures, Martin County leaders noted that resilience is "part of the mentality of elected officials," because their county staff have consistently shown beneficial results from previous mitigation planning and hardened infrastructure projects. One large-scale disaster event in the 1930s is credited with shifting perspectives on how future structures should be built.

codes. As new residents enter hazard-prone areas, local leaders and community liaisons have a responsibility to educate their new neighbors on resilience history and resultant plans and policies that keep the community safe. With support from FEMA, **Harris County (Texas)** has deployed an innovative Modeling, Assessment and Awareness Project ([MAAPnext](#)) that incorporates a variety of local and federal data sources to support the next generation of flood mapping. This community-facing and interactive website articulates the local flood risk challenges, the county's strategies to mitigate risk to residents and provides detailed mapping tools and plain language recommendations so that the public, local communities and emergency managers "can make informed decisions to protect life and property."

Solution: Build Local Capacity by Improving Perception of Risk

Policymakers, budget authorities and residents need targeted outreach and education on their community's historical and forecasted disaster vulnerabilities. To support local efforts, NOAA offers a [self-guided module on risk communication](#) available through its Office for Coastal Management.

Palm Beach County, Fla.

Palm Beach County received a \$20,000 grant from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network to conduct community workshops on resilience planning. County leaders shared its approach to conducting a vulnerability assessment and resilience action plan and asked residents about their perspectives on what natural disasters they were already experiencing, what community assets the residents are concerned with protecting and what the county should do to mitigate risk. The county is including these resident perspectives in its resiliency planning to ensure equitable processes and outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Disaster resilience is a team sport. It takes strong individual players – states and local governments properly equipped to assess and mitigate risk and respond in recovery – and teamwork across industries, jurisdictional boundaries and levels of government. While the federal government, states and counties have specific roles and authorities, the direct resident touchpoint counties maintain underlines the need for improved local capacity to adequately prepare for and mitigate disaster events, triage and respond on the ground and rebuild and restore communities after an event in a timely manner. There are important ways states and the federal government can build and help maintain local capacity. As the intergovernmental

partners work together to resolve challenges in disaster resilience, roundtable participants agree that coordination should be the ultimate objective. Taking a comprehensive approach to resilience planning from the start, including the private sector and institutions of higher learning, will improve outcomes to a greater extent than disparate efforts firewalled along jurisdictional and intergovernmental lines. As local jurisdictions consider building and staffing dedicated resilience offices, they take on the mission of connecting the dots across planning, economic development and climate predictive analytics to develop policy recommendations toward a comprehensive approach for a resilient community.

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