



Rural Resilience Index

Overview and Instructions

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About the Rural Resilience Index

The Rural Resilience Index (RRI) is a tool to help you assess your community's disaster resilience in order to provide information on areas of resilience that can be enhanced. We recommend that you involve as many community members as possible. The benefits of having multiple people involved include the richness of bringing multiple perspectives to bear in the assessment process and the value of encouraging more widespread discussions about the community's disaster readiness and resilience. These discussions are an important part of the assessment process.

Disaster resilience is associated with a wide range of factors including characteristic of a community that at first glance may not be obviously connected to disasters and emergency management. When a community is stronger, closer, more creative and adaptable in their day-to-day functioning, they are also more likely to be resilient in the face of a disaster or other large scale emergency. An index measuring disaster resilience therefore needs to include a wide range of community characteristics that have to do directly and indirectly with disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

The RRI presents two categories of resilience: Community Resources and Disaster Management which are detailed in the next section.



Section 1: Community Resources

The first section of the RRI, Community Resources, outlines community characteristics associated with the quality and strength of residents' connections to each other, and the self-reliance, self-determination and self-sufficiency of the community. It also includes other characteristics of community functioning such as the presence of effective leadership, inclusive decision-making processes, and open, clear, and transparent communication channels also influence resilience. The indicators (checkbox statements) in this section of the RRI help create a complex and comprehensive picture of how well a community functions, how they are likely to adapt to disruption or the loss of important services (e.g., food transportation, electricity), how effectively they can communicate and make decisions in a crisis, and the diversity and accessibility of resources, services, skills, expertise, and equipment that can be called on to prepare for, respond to, or recover from a disaster.

Section 2: Disaster Management

The second section of the RRI is the Disaster Management section. As the name might suggest, this section focuses attention on factors associated with disaster preparedness and disaster management. This includes things such as awareness or risks and threats and what individual households, businesses and the community as a whole have put in place to reduce those threats and prepare for them should they occur. Many small communities do not have disaster plans and may worry that this section is therefore not relevant to them, but many of the indicators (check boxes) in this section have to do with things that don't rely on formal disaster planning. Whether or not your community has a formal disaster plan or not, there are many things that individuals, households, businesses and organizations can do to reduce risks and to increase resilience for potential threats and disasters. These things include increasing awareness through education and public safety campaigns, ensuring that common safety precautions (e.g., smoke detectors) are in place, knowing who has special skills and equipment that might be helpful in an emergency or disaster, and knowing what to do and when should an emergency or disaster occur.

Working with the RRI and the HRI

The RRI can be used in conjunction with the Hazard Resilience Index (HRI), to generate a dynamic portrait of a community's disaster resilience. When using either of these tools, but in particular the RRI, remember that a significant benefit of the process of assessing resilience arises from the discussions that it generates and the increased awareness of disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction, and disaster resilience this can create in the community. Remember as well that it is sometimes as important to know what you do not have in place, what is not a strength for your community as it is to know what is a strength as this can guide your community's future goals, planning and actions.

Instructions: How to use the RRI

Both sections of the RRI contain a number of dimensions of community resilience, presented as statements such as **“Our community is close knit and involved”** and **“Our community has a comprehensive disaster plan”**.

Under each of these dimensions of resilience are a number of statements that describe characteristics of that dimension (indicators of resilience). For example, one characteristic of the dimension **“Our community is close knit and involved”** is **“Residents work together to accomplish shared goals”**.

Here are four steps to assist you to complete the Rural Resilience Index:

1. Select an indicator for each characteristic:

- Rate your community against each characteristic using the following scale:
 - Yes
 - No
 - Need More info
 - Not Applicable
- Place a check in the “yes” box next to each characteristics you believe is “strong” in your community.
- If you believe the characteristic is either not present or present only in a in a minor way, check “no”.
- There may be some characteristics you think do not apply to your community or need more information. In this case, check “not applicable”, “needs more information” or cross that indicator out so that it does not count in your assessment of that dimension.
- Before crossing anything off, be careful to consider whether it is something that you may not have in the community at this time but that would be important to develop in which you would not cross off that dimension.
- If you are working in a group we suggest that you go through each factor and discuss your assessment before deciding which box to check.

2. Highlight characteristics that are important to your community:

- If you feel that any characteristic is particularly important to your community, and you want to make sure to identify it as something you want to focus on in your plan, check the “important to my community” box.

3. Rate your community’s resilience level:

- Once you have finished all the boxes for a single dimension, review your checks and rate your community’s resilience on that dimension using the following scale:
 - High Risk
 - Low Risk
 - Need more info
 - Not applicable
- In some cases, there may be dimensions for which you need more information to be able to assess them. In this case you may want to check “more info” and see whether others in the community have information that could help you more fully assess this dimension.

4. Complete the Risk Assessment Profile Template:

- Once you have completed both the *Rural Resilience Index* and the *Hazard Resilience Index*, turn to the *Integrated Resilience Profile Template* to learn how to record and analyze your responses. This Profile will be the basis for building your community's *Resilience Plan*.