

Section 8: Examples of Success

Learning Objectives: Learn to identify characteristics of successful projects as well as potential obstacles to success and ways to overcome them.

Section 8.A: Examples of Successful CBO/FBO Integration in Local Pre-disaster Mitigation

The following are examples of successful local pre-disaster mitigation projects. Note how integration of CBOs/FBOs was achieved in each case.

Brainstorm to identify elements in the success stories that are relatively simple to emulate as ways to involve CBOs/FBOs in potential mitigation projects.



Evansville, IN

In Evansville, IN, a project to help residents of two neighborhoods strap down their hot water heaters was done by the Disaster Resistant Community Corp. (DRC) along with CBOs/FBOs and the neighborhood's Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). The local building inspector helped organize the event and train volunteers.

Materials for strapping down the hot water heaters were provided to residents in these two neighborhoods free of charge. Installation help was provided by the CERT and CBO/FBO members to residents who needed someone to do the actual work. There was no charge for this service.

Strapping down hot water heaters keeps them from falling over and causing gas leaks and possible fires, as well as providing 30 gallons of fresh water if water lines are damaged in an earthquake. In all, almost 40 water heaters were strapped down by volunteers, and kits for strapping down water heaters were distributed to another 30 households.

Polk County, MO

In Polk County, MO, a team formed to complete what became known as the "Bare Ditch Project." Various organizations, civic groups, and schools came together at 24 locations across the county to clear the drainages of debris and other obstructing items. The goal was to provide preventative maintenance by removing debris that collects and stops proper water drainage through drainage ditches, which can lead to flooding. In all, 47 community groups and 252 volunteers came out and worked 829 hours to accomplish the drainage clearing.

Ouachita Parish, LA

The Ouachita Multi-Purpose Community Action Program (OMCAP) and its community partners worked together to rehabilitate structures in a lower-income area of Monroe, LA. The Group Work Camp project consisted of a hurricane preparedness drill, the rehabilitation of 50 homes, cutting weeds and vegetation management, and the development of mitigation strategies for an encephalitis outbreak (clearing standing water). The project mitigated a number of natural and technological hazards in addition to improving the quality of life for participating families:

- Debris removal
- Weatherizing homes
- Roof repairs
- Minor structural repairs
- Disseminating educational materials

Partners included the City of Monroe (police, fire), City of West Monroe American Red Cross, United Way, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Fair Park Baptist Church Men's Group, and Ouachita Parish Civil Defense, among others.

Brattleboro, VT

In Brattleboro, VT, a group of volunteers from local agencies and CBOs worked together to retrofit local childcare centers against earthquake damage. The group contacted the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) for advice on how to assess the needs of these facilities to increase the safety for the children. Once the assessments were completed, it was decided that the needs included anchoring bookcases, bracketing shelves, and velcroing pictures and knick-knacks to keep them from falling.

Section 8.B: Mitigation Challenges

Discuss how best to overcome the following challenges to initiating or completing mitigation projects with emergency managers and CBO/FBO participants.

Scenario 1 - Personal Agenda City

In Personal Agenda City, community members are somewhat enthusiastic but also cautious about involvement in a disaster mitigation project. The reasons:

- Fragmentation and disagreements among local government leaders
- Imminent closure of a local disaster recovery organization due to lack of funding
- Personal agenda, presented by one of the local CBO leaders, that presents a barrier to the inclusivity needed for successful completion of the project

Scenario 2 - Lack of Leadershipville

In Lack of Leadershipville, interest in mitigation efforts is high. However, local CBOs/FBOs are confused regarding the difference between disaster mitigation and preparedness. Additionally, the local emergency manager has resigned and left a void in leadership.

Scenario 3 - Lack of Funding, USA

In the multi-ethnic city of Lack of Funding, community members initially display high levels of enthusiasm about mitigation initiatives. However, because of lack of funding and a high level of government and outsider distrust, no project moves forward.

Section 8.C: Best Practices

The following are practices and processes that have been found to be effective in integrating FBOs and CBOs into disaster mitigation programs across the country. These concepts and approaches are employed in communities that have successfully integrated CBOs and FBOs in grassroots disaster mitigation activities. Discuss how these apply in your community.

1. Help individuals and CBO/FBO groups understand what role they might play in creating their own disaster-resistant environment, as well as how they can work with others to build a disaster-resistant community. Individuals appear to be more motivated and enthusiastic when the focus is on empowering them to take charge of their own safety and reduce their disaster risk.
2. Identify and recruit at least one champion or “cheerleader” for the process of enrolling the FBOs and CBOs in working together to create disaster-resistant communities. These are people with “fire in the belly,” whose enthusiasm is contagious, and who are able to rally excitement – both within and among groups.
3. Educate groups and individuals on the importance of disaster mitigation and the benefits they and the community will see from working to reduce disaster risk. Clearly define and communicate how these benefits relate to each group’s mission, purpose, and goals.
4. Find simple ways to educate people about the main mission of the mitigation program, and develop a common understanding of vision and goals. Help them recognize the community’s risks and opportunities to work together to mitigate risk. A shared vision helps individuals and groups overcome potential and actual differences.
5. Involve the organizations in the mitigation planning process from the beginning, if possible, so they can be invested in the program and feel a sense of ownership in it.
6. Take advantage of partnerships that naturally arise after a disaster. Nurture and build momentum after the urgency of the recovery effort is past.
7. Take advantage of, and actively encourage the process of “satellite networking.” Contact ambassadors from different groups, and obtain their support and involvement. Ask them to carry the excitement to their groups, and encourage their group members to carry it further, within the individual group, and within groups with which each person is involved.
8. Work collaboratively and inclusively. Share ideas. Give everyone a chance to contribute and “buy in” to the overall goal. Invite everyone appropriate to the table.
9. Be flexible in all ways possible – in thinking, planning, approach, and action.
10. Be persistent, and keep a positive, “can-do” attitude. Brainstorm ways to overcome obstacles. If a project doesn’t work out the way it was initially envisioned, find another way to make it work or to capture value from the work that was done.
11. Keep information and approaches simple; get rid of “government-ese” and complicated language. Simplify, simplify, simplify.

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12. Maintain an ongoing list of projects and activities to sustain momentum and keep excitement alive. Make sure all groups and individuals are aware of this list, and how they could be supporting the various projects in which they are not already involved.
13. Be generous in recognizing volunteers and donors.
14. Adopt project ideas from other groups, agencies, and communities; most of them are glad to share what they have learned and what has worked for them. Keep a good idea going by replicating projects in different parts of the community and from group to group.
15. Publicize successes to increase awareness and create a bandwagon effect. Use local media, neighborhood gatherings, and meetings of clubs, civic groups, and professional associations to create and maintain interest. Also, favorable publicity for groups and/or individuals can bolster their motivation to continue with the process.
16. Recruit intermediary groups and/or individuals to network with potential partners reluctant to interface with official authorities.
17. Create a structure that allows for autonomy so that individual FBO/CBO partners can conduct independent mitigation projects aimed at achieving the overall common goal. The goal is to centralize communication, rather than governance or control.
18. Teach new skills that would be valuable in mitigation projects (e.g., amateur radio and emergency communication, safety retrofit skills, power tool use, etc.)
19. Engage the entire community in mitigation through intergenerational and multidimensional projects that incorporate diverse groups, such as children, the elderly, the disabled, and groups that supply diversity in socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and faith backgrounds.
20. Demonstrate respect and sensitivity for each group's knowledge, perspective, cultural background, and internal governance structure (either formal or informal).
21. Recognize and address language diversity.
22. Identify a central point of contact for information exchange and referral.
23. Be assertive in asking for support and resources; think "outside the box" regarding potential partners, volunteers, financial sources, and in-kind donors.
24. Strive to cultivate input and buy-in from the bottom up.
25. Emphasize public outreach, education, and other interaction so participants understand why and how they can be involved.
26. Be able to articulate success of the program to the entire community.
27. Foster work groups that will produce tangible results – not just studies or recommendations.
28. Look at ways to obtain additional funding and keep the momentum going under the umbrella of mitigation.

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29. Couple educational outreach with hands-on projects.
30. A monitoring program or annual plan update can help keep the project on the front burner.

Resource Guide: For more information tips on implementing community-based pre-disaster mitigation programs, refer to the Resource Guide.



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