



Community Resilience and Capacity Building Program

Program Goal:

Increase neighborhood resilience by building capacity and connectedness.

Strategy:

Work with residents in five communities (Jamestown, Lyons, Boulder, Longmont, and unincorporated Boulder County) who are committed to developing their leadership skills and taking action to promote the well being of their neighborhood or community.

Defining Community/Neighborhood Resilience:

Resilient neighborhoods and communities are safer, healthier and more prosperous. They are able to withstand community stressors and take action to improve them.

What is a community stressor?

A community stressor can be an ongoing (long-term) problem or a specific (one-time) event that negatively impacts a community physically, emotionally, and/or economically. Stressors will differ by community. Some examples of long-term stressors include: poor communication within and outside of the community, a lack of affordable housing, gun violence, aging infrastructure, and an economic downturn. Some examples of specific events are: natural disaster (flood, fire, blizzard), terrorist attack, or dam failure. Existing ongoing problems can lead to a larger disastrous event, for example: a poor job market and a lack of affordable housing could lead to an economic downturn at a community-wide or local level. Single large-scale events are also likely to worsen ongoing problems, for example: a flood causes damage that reduces the amount of affordable housing.

Why does resilience matter?

A key learning in Boulder County from the economic downturn in 2008, the 2010 Fourmile Fire, and the 2013 Flood was that neighborhoods, communities and businesses with connected people and connections to nonprofits and local government responded more effectively and recovered faster. By building resilience as individuals, neighborhoods, and communities we are better able to take care of our neighbors, ourselves, and create a healthy community.

As mentioned above, every neighborhood/community has different stressors. We want to be able to:

- **Know what your community's stressors are.** Identifying community stressors is the first step to developing smart solutions. Not every stressor is an event that begins and ends; sometimes stressors need long-term interventions.¹
- **Determine how to utilize your community's assets and resources wisely.** Building community resilience is about working together and working with what you have. Your community is resourceful, no matter its condition or whether it has a lot of resources.²
- **Prevent ongoing problems from turning into disastrous events.** Some community stressors need support from folks outside of the community to address them. In these situations, communities may need to draw from advocacy, development, and other practices to effectively engage external support.³
- **Bounce back quickly when a disastrous event occurs while taking the opportunity to strengthen existing community services.** Learn from past community disasters and ongoing stressors so that your community can be better prepared for the next challenge.⁴
- **Thrive as a community.** Building resilience is about actions steps that you can take to create a healthy and prosperous community.

¹²³⁴ Portions of the language was adopted (and modified) from the RAND Corporation Community Resilience Toolkit: www.rand.org.