

Lesson Plan 6: Neighborhood Resiliency: “Don’t Panic, Organize!”

Goals (What curriculum goals will you address in this lesson?)

- Learners will use community organizing to develop social networks that strengthen bonds within each neighborhood.
- Learners will lead their neighborhoods in the creation of an emergency communication protocol.
- Learners will know the working principles of RISE NYC: Digital Stewards and create methods in which they can be practiced throughout their projects.
- Learners will create sustainability and resilience plans that utilize their community wireless network.

Desired Understandings

- Learners will understand the concepts of resilience and sustainability, and how to implement these to facilitate the design of community protocols.
- Learners will understand the power of effective communication and how communication networks help promote strong bonds and unity, especially during disasters.
- Learners will understand what resilience and sustainability looks like in their communities and go on to facilitate the development of protocols that put resilience and sustainability into practice.
- Learners will understand how surveying community needs ties to network design and function.

Essential Questions (What questions will guide learners’ investigations?)

Overarching Questions:

- What role can community wireless networks play in building sustainable, resilient neighborhoods, especially during disasters?
- What role do small businesses and neighborhood anchor institution play in a neighborhoods resilience and sustainability?

Supporting Questions:

- What is community resiliency?
- How does one strengthen bonds within the community?
- What are resilient and sustainable protocols?
- How do you map community assets?

Knowledge/Content (information, facts, history, principles, terminology)

- Learners will know what resilience and sustainability is in the context of their neighborhood
- Learners will know what resilience and sustainability means in their neighborhoods.
- Learners will know what effective emergency protocols help in a disaster.

Skills (what learners will be able to do—processes, strategies)

- Learners will be able to facilitate a conversation on resiliency and sustainability with their neighbors.
- Learners will be able to describe the definition of resiliency, and sustainability in their neighborhoods.
- Learners will know how to create a community organizing strategy.

Learning Sequence

Total time: 2 ½ hours (150 minutes)

Introduction [20 minutes]

The workshop leader should take a few minutes to describe the goal of the activity: it is designed to introduce how to organize, plan, and work together to prepare. It is best done by a group of people from the same community! Learners will role play as residents of the neighborhood, with resources to offer and needs to meet. Learners should finish this activity with some skills and practical approaches to make your neighborhood more prepared and resilient.

Free Write [15 minutes] - Learners should take 5 minutes to think about their personal needs during a disaster. They should write down everything that comes to mind about the following questions:

- What are your personal or family needs during a disaster?
- Are there people that may rely on you or need additional help?
- What are the ways you can prepare now?

The workshop leader should take the remaining 5 to 10 minutes and ask learners to share what they wrote, if they are comfortable. Be sure to let folks know that if any parts of that are personal, they do not need to share them, and learners will keep the pages. They can popcorn anecdotes from their experience, or react to an experience that someone else described.

Provide Preparedness Guidelines [20 minutes]

The workshop leader should hand out the [Neighborhood Resilience Guidelines](#) document. As a group, read through the guidelines - have learners go around and read a short paragraph each. Have learners discuss a specific scenario or example of how the guidelines work in the real world.

Set up the Activity [5 minutes]

First, break all of the participants into groups of two to three people, though the size can vary depending on how many participants you have. The workshop leader should try to create at least four groups, though five or six is ideal.

Next, the learners should imagine that a major storm is bearing down on their city, and that storm will hit in 15 minutes! Using the maps they made of hubs and vulnerabilities in their focus neighborhoods (from Lesson Plan 5) they should think about how to move resources around in the neighborhood based on the locations of resources and vulnerabilities. Each small group takes responsibility for one of the major hub sites identified on the map. They review the situation as explained on the scenario cards.

Organize in your Group [20 minutes]

Residents have the next 20 minutes until the storm hits to look through their packet of information (in the envelopes) and prepare for the storm. They should ask themselves these questions:

- What resources does their site have?
- What needs does it have? What needs might come up after the storm?
- What do they know about other sites in the neighborhood -- those that will need help or have resources?
- Do people need to evacuate? How & where to?
- Where are people with mobility or other challenges?
- Who will they go to to help or seek help in the neighborhood?

There should be a small envelope that says "Challenge - do not open yet!" on it, and the groups should leave it for later. Groups should do their planning with each other, but not talk to other groups hub sites just yet!

At the end of 20 minutes, the storm hits! The workshop leader can flicker or dim the lights, then announce that the storm is over but flood waters have risen and most phone lines are out.

Collaborate with Other Groups [20 minutes]

[5 minutes] The workshop leader should make an announcement that each group can now organize with the other residents of their neighborhood at other sites. This is where the first challenge comes up: most communications are out! The workshop leader should present one of two options, depending on if there is a way to use the Etherpad application or not:

1. If you have prepared a local wireless network with an application server, or have an Internet connection available so learners can load the public Etherpad, they can use that to communicate. Introduce it at this point, and explain how to connect to the access point and log on to the app. If it is a chat app or collaborative document, briefly explain how it works. Each group should designate one or two people to connect with their smartphones or laptops and communicate with the other groups.
2. If you do not have a local server or access to a public Etherpad, you can assume residents of the neighborhood can still send text messages. In many extreme weather or disaster scenarios, voice communications are often knocked out, but SMS messages can make it through. Participants can simulate this by “passing notes” - you can give each group a stack of post-it notes, and they can use these to communicate with other groups. You can make it more interesting by limiting the number of characters on the notes, or by only giving each group a very limited number of notes!

[15 minutes] Groups should now take time to communicate with neighboring sites using the communications tool to find and share resources. Learners can **not** travel between sites, they will need to use the platform to locate what they need, and offer what they have to their neighbors.

Groups should now look at the “Challenge” card that was part of their packet. If this introduces new problems, they will need to plan and find a way to deal with the issues. At this point, groups need to work with their neighboring sites using the server or with SMS “notes” to find what they need, and supply what they have. Each group should develop a plan for who they will talk to, what they will ask for, and if they can find a way to reach other sites.

Exchange with Neighbors [20 minutes]

At this point, the workshop leader should announce that the flood waters have receded, and people can travel between sites. Groups should pick one or two people to go and act upon the plan they made during the flood. They can transport supplies to sites that need them, and pick up the supplies they need. Each group should now collect the resources cards it needs from the other tables.

As an option, the workshop leader can challenge the groups further by having “outsiders” interfering in their planning and organizing. Often, well-meaning volunteers, the media, and outside aid agencies can be a drain on resources. If there are one or more people organizing or supervising this activity, this could be a good role for them to play at this stage. They should be encouraged to ask questions, do interviews, or try and organize the efforts themselves, and see how the local residents react.

Conclusion [20 minutes]

At the end of the resource exchange, when groups have successfully organized and assisted each other, the workshop leader should gather all the groups back together to discuss the activity. Participants should ask themselves these questions:

- What worked well during the initial planning stage? What didn't work well?
- What worked well during the later organizing stages? What didn't work?

- Were there any issues with the communication tools? Was SMS or the local server essential, or just a “nice to have”?
- What other tools or resources would have made this process easier?
- What kinds of roles emerged for representatives at different hubs?

Participants should take 20 minutes and discuss these questions, and how this process applies to their real neighborhood. Could they start organizing and communicating around some of these issues now? Do they know any individuals or groups of people in their communities that may be vulnerable to storm or disaster scenarios such as this one? Make a draft list of people to reach out to if possible.

If time allows, learners can gather back into their groups and look at their initial disaster plans, knowing now what other groups did, and what their challenges were. They should modify that plan so things would have gone more smoothly. Learners can share out to the rest of the group what their particular site changed about their plan. They should offer constructive suggestions on each other group’s plan as well.

Materials (Include hyperlinks to worksheets, sites, etc.)

Materials:

- Download and print enough copies of the [Neighborhood Resilience Guidelines](#) for everyone in the workshop.
- Download and print six to eight copies of the [Don't Panic Map](#), or small (11x17”) printouts of the Google maps of your neighborhood with the neighborhood hubs and vulnerable sites on it.
- Download and print the [Resource Cards](#) document, and cut up the cards, separate them by community anchor, and put them in envelopes. There will be a “Challenge” card for each group as well - put that card in a separate envelope and write something like “Challenge - don’t open yet!” on it.
- Pens and scratch paper for notes.

Preparation:

- Set up a local server on a Raspberry Pi or other desktop computer, with a collaborative document application such as Etherpad. If you cannot set up the local server, create a named pad at the [Mozilla Etherpad](#) installation, and save that link.
- If you have a local server, setup an Access Point (such as a UniFi or other AP), and set the name to “Don’t Panic” or something similar. If you have access to the network router, set a static lease for your local server and set a hostname such as “microserver”.