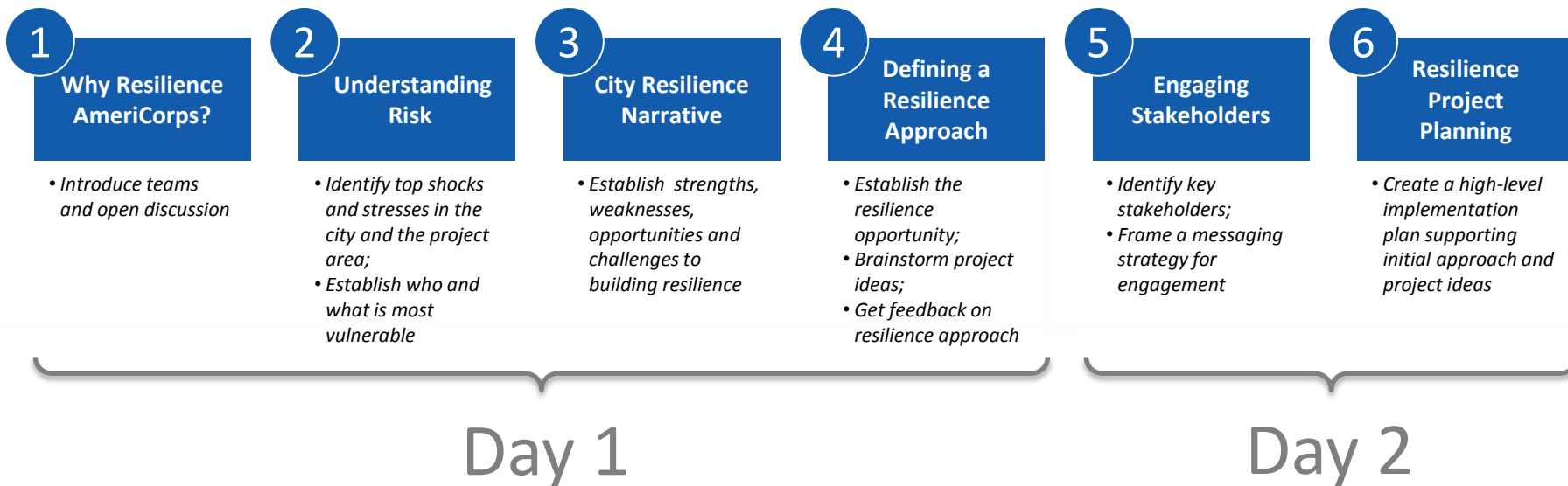# RESILIENCE AMERICORPS ACADEMY

EXERCISE GUIDE

EXERCISE GUIDE OVERVIEW
KEY PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

Resilience AmeriCorps Academy exercises are structured to support team building and help participants develop Resilience AmeriCorps VISTA projects. City teams will work through a series of structured group exercises throughout the two days that establish the inputs to develop a Resilience Impact Volunteering Project Implementation Plan. The Academy and exercises aim to:

- Introduce and apply **key resilience concepts;**

- **Dedicate facilitated working time** with team members, experts and designers to evaluate and expand each team's project ideas and approach;

- Provide opportunity for city-leads and VISTA members to **equally exchange ideas, knowledge, and perceptions** to establish both a common understanding of the city context and the scale relevant to the VISTA;

- **Expose teams to subject matter experts (SMEs) and Federal agency representatives** to provide different perspectives and technical support;

- **Emphasize engagement of residents and other potential volunteers** as a means of implementing resilience projects or initiatives and building social cohesion;

- Facilitate a clear connection between the **VISTA's role and their potential project with the broader priorities of the city and the Mayor**;

- **Surface open issues and questions**, some of which can be addressed in the Academy, others following the Academy;

- Develop a **preliminary plan of action** for teams to support the first stages of the VISTAs term of service and initiation of project implementation.

1 Why Resilience AmeriCorps?
- *Introduce teams and open discussion*

2 Understanding Risk
- *Identify top shocks and stresses in the city and the project area;*
- *Establish who and what is most vulnerable*

3 City Resilience Narrative
- *Establish strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges to building resilience*

4 Defining a Resilience Approach
- *Establish the resilience opportunity;*
- *Brainstorm project ideas;*
- *Get feedback on resilience approach*

5 Engaging Stakeholders
- *Identify key stakeholders;*
- *Frame a messaging strategy for engagement*

6 Resilience Project Planning
- *Create a high-level implementation plan supporting initial approach and project ideas*

Day 1

Day 2

Why Resilience AmeriCorps?

Purpose
This opening discussion will allow individuals to share their reasons for participating in the Resilience AmeriCorps program and begin to build the cohort network by learning about other cities in the program.

Instructions

1. Seated at a table with other cities, each person will introduce themselves and share their investment in the program;

2. Given time, each city-lead will speak in more detail about their city's resilience narrative and priorities.
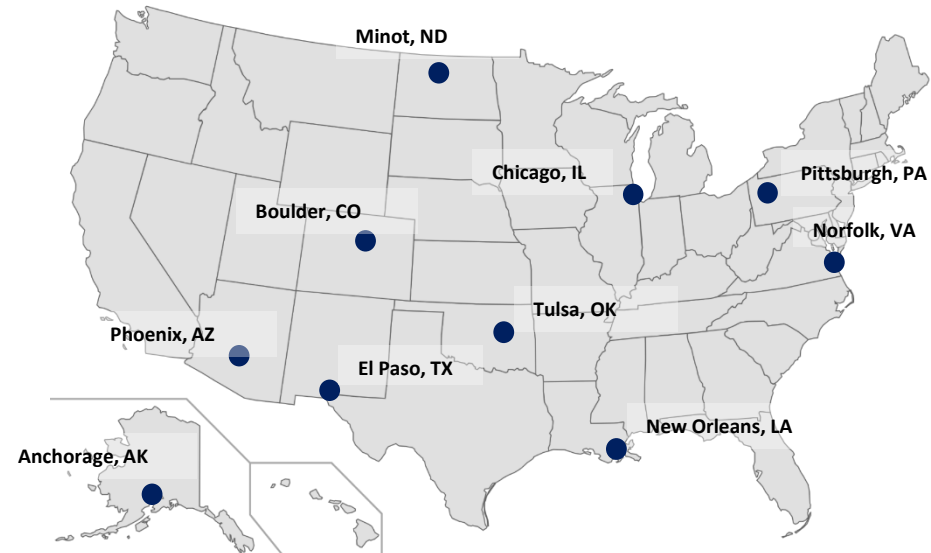
Discussion Guide
VISTAs
- What compelled you to participate in the Resilience AmeriCorps program?
- What does building resilience mean to you?

City-leads
- Why did the city apply for Resilience AmeriCorps?
- What are the key resilience priorities in your city?
- How does this initiative contribute to the city's broader resilience goals?
- What are your near- and long-term visions for engaging residents and other community volunteers?

Inputs
1. City-Lead Academy Pre-Work Materials (*optional*)

Minot, ND
Chicago, IL
Pittsburgh, PA
Boulder, CO
Norfolk, VA
Tulsa, OK
Phoenix, AZ
El Paso, TX
New Orleans, LA
Anchorage, AK

Assess Shocks and Stresses

Develop a Risk Approach

Purpose
Risks include both potential or existing hazards (shocks and stresses) and the severity of potential consequence. This exercise will establish a common understanding of each city's risks as a whole and specific to the potential project area, and begin a conversation about who and what is most vulnerable.

Instructions

1. **Determine Approach and Scale**
   Option 1: If the city-lead has not previously done this, follow the exercise at the city-wide scale first. Then complete it for a potential project area in which the VISTA(s) will work. Use the map to locate the area(s).

   Option 2: If the city-lead has previously completed this as part of 100RC or the NDRC, spend 10-15 minutes discussing the city's top shocks and stresses together and then complete the exercise for a potential project area in which the VISTA(s) will work. Use the map to locate the area(s).

2. **Review shocks or stresses cards**
   Select the cards that pose the greatest risk to the city or specific project area, both now and in the future.

3. **Place cards on the table poster in the quadrant that indicates their relative consequence and likelihood.**
   Identify and discuss the relationships between shocks and stresses as a way to help expand your team's understanding of risk.

Discussion Guide
VISTAS
- Did this exercise reveal anything you didn't know about the city or project area?
- What connection or differences do you observe between the city's risk and the project area's risk?

City-leads
- How are the city's and project area's risk profile used to inform the city's broader resilience goals?
- Are there Federal (or other) tools that may be helpful in better understanding the risks facing the city or certain communities?
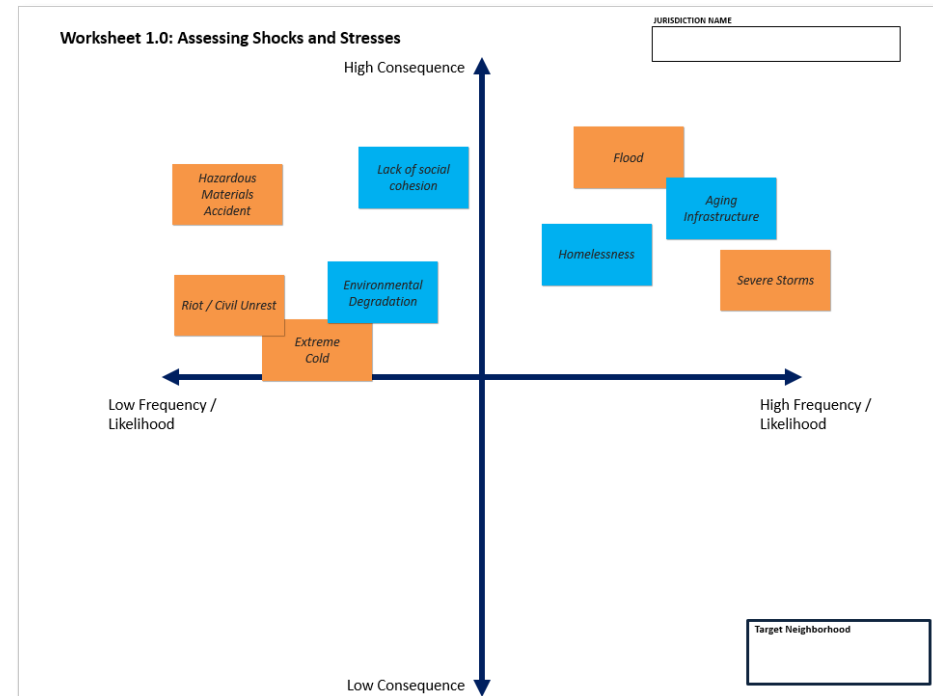
Inputs
1. City-Lead Academy Pre-Work Materials
2. City Map

Sample Output
Worksheet 1.0 Assessing Shocks and Stresses

Worksheet 1.0: Assessing Shocks and Stresses

Assess Shocks and Stresses

Purpose

A risk narrative is a way of synthesizing what you discussed as a part of the Shocks and Stresses exercise. This exercise will guide your team to prioritize the risks in the city and the project area and establish the interdependency between risk, vulnerable populations, and the broader resilience goals of the place.

Instructions

1. **Prioritize shocks and stresses**
   List the top three shocks and stresses in the project area. Discuss why you chose them.

2. **Identify vulnerable populations**
   Identify groups who are most impacted by risk. You might consider:
   • Who are the most vulnerable to shocks and stresses? How do you distinguish the different vulnerable populations?
   • How are they more vulnerable to risk than other groups in the city? In the neighborhood?

3. **Write a risk narrative**
   Develop your approach to mitigate risk in order to inform your resilience strategy and project design. You might consider:
   • What shocks and stresses could be prioritized in your approach?
   • How does the project area risk differ from those faced by the city as a whole?
   • Who and what are most affected by these risks?
   • What are the interdependencies between these risks that make it challenging to achieve resilience goals?
   • What activities can you pursue to help mitigate risks in this community?

Discussion Guide

VISTAs
• How has your perspective about risk changed through this exercise?
• How can mitigating risk contribute to a stronger community?
• What ideas do you have about mitigating risk in these communities?

City-leads
• How does the risk of the city as a whole relate to the risk of the project area?
• How does mitigating risk in the project area contribute to resilience for the whole city?

Develop a Risk Approach

Inputs

1. City-lead Academy Pre-work Materials
2. Worksheet 1.0 "Assessing Shocks and Stresses"

Sample Output

Worksheet 1.1 Developing a Risk Approach

Worksheet 1.1: Developing a Risk Approach

JURISDICTION NAME

Top Shocks City
• Severe storms
• Flooding
• Sea level rise

Top Stresses City
• Aging infrastructure
• Poverty
• Unemployment

Top Shocks Target Area
• Severe storms
• Flooding

Top Stresses Target Area
• Homelessness
• Lack of social cohesion
• Unemployment

Vulnerable populations in the City
• Homelessness
• Seniors
• Low-income coastal communities

Vulnerable populations in the Target Area
• Disabled and isolated seniors
• Low income residents
• Disconnected youth

Risk Narrative for the City

The city faces increasing intensity and frequency of severe storm events including hurricanes and winter storms. This risk adds stress to the city's aging infrastructure, in particular the combined-sewer system and storm drainage and wastewater system. The impact of severe storm events are compounded by rising sea levels on the coast and flooding that hinder evacuation routes, transportation, and emergency services and cause environmental contamination in coastal communities.

Further, renters are mostly low-income residents unable to afford temporary shelter. There are also two major hospitals located in the floodplain, and their patients are vulnerable during large storm events Recurrent flood events may impact residents' ability to access jobs, put added stress on already high unemployment.

Risk Narrative for the Target Area

The large senior population and low-income residents in affordable housing units in the Park Place neighborhood are at greater risk due to social isolation and higher rates of poverty.

Seniors and renters (especially those in affordable housing units) located in the floodplain are most affected by flooding and severe storm events. Lack of community social cohesion and disconnected youth makes it difficult to track needs during disasters, coordinate emergency responses, and strains trust between local authorities and the residents.

4

City Resilience Narrative

Purpose

Building off the Risk Approach, this exercise will enable a conversation about the factors that drive resilience and deepen your understanding of how events trigger reactions across systems in the city. When system functions are integrated, the resilience of a place is expanded. You'll assess how well the city is integrating across systems, thus building resilience by maintaining or creating a livable, prosperous, safe, healthy, and engaged city.

Instructions

1. **Determine Approach**

   Option 1: If the city-lead has not previously assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the city using the CRF, follow the exercise below.

   Option 2: If the city-lead has previously completed this assessment as part of 100RC or the NDRC, spend 10-15 minutes summarizing the city's strengths and weaknesses per the CRF and explain how the city's current resilience strategy is connected to those. Use the discussion questions below to facilitate a dialogue about the city's resilience narrative.

2. **Review the definitions of the City Resilience Framework (CRF) drivers.**

3. **Review or establish your city's resilience strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges**

   Use red and green sticky dots on worksheet 2.0 to mark where the city is strong and weak. Identify opportunities to build resilience by both leveraging the strengths and improving the weaknesses.

Discussion Guide

VISTAs
- Based on the discussion, could you summarize the city's resilience narrative?
- For the areas that are identified as weaknesses, how might your role as a VISTA be an opportunity to improve coordination among systems?

City-leads
- What are your city's and Mayor's current priorities? How do they support resilience?
- What are the current strategy documents, plans or initiatives already underway to support resilience in the city? What are the key goals and initiatives in them?
- How does the city view volunteer initiatives as part of its resilience-building strategy?

Inputs

1. City-lead Academy Pre-work Materials
2. City Resilience Framework

Sample Output

Worksheet 2.0 City Resilience Narrative
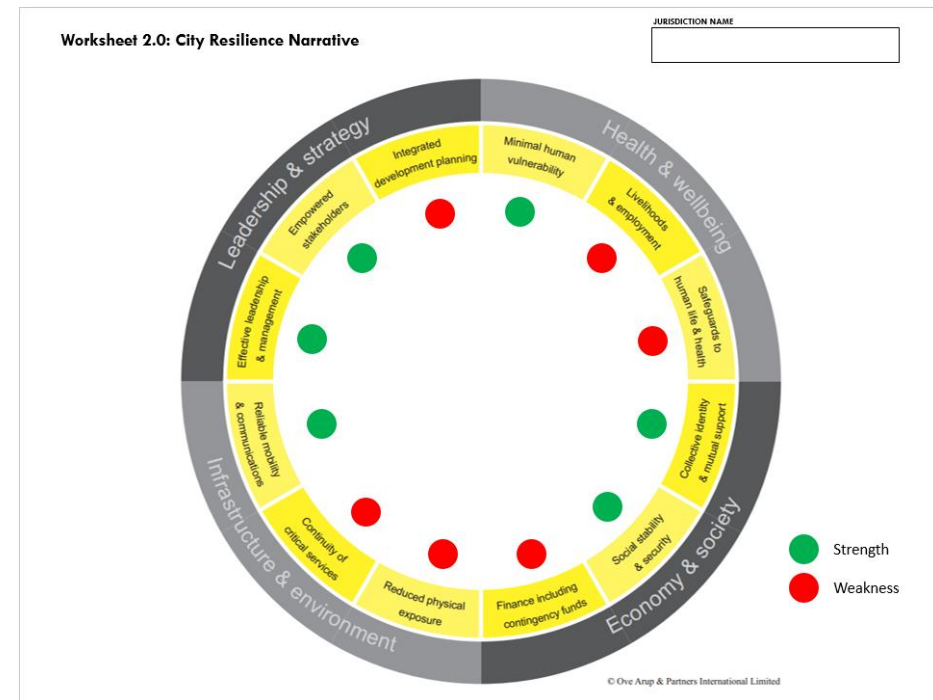
Worksheet 2.0: City Resilience Narrative

| 1 | Why Resilience AmeriCorps? | 2 | Understanding Risk | 3 | City Resilience Narrative | 4 | Defining a Resilience Approach | 5 | Engaging Stakeholders | 6 | Resilience Project Planning |

Ideate Approach and Project Ideas | **Draft Approach and Project Ideas** | **Resilience Approach and Project Critiques**

Purpose

Based on the risks and resilience narrative, brainstorm ideas for VISTA resilience projects. The purpose of this exercise is to generate ideas and approaches to maximize resilience value and define innovative projects.

Instructions

1. **Brainstorm ideas to address the resilience opportunity and innovative solutions to mitigate risk and build resilience**
   Explore different methods and strategies to design your resilience projects. Refer to exercise outputs and pre-work materials to collaboratively brainstorm ideas for Resilience AmeriCorps project(s).
   Refer to and draw on the map to make connections and articulate ideas.
   Refer to the CRF indicators to help ground ideas in what the city aims to achieve.

2. **Write a Resilience Opportunity Statement**
   In a sentence, define the resilience opportunity related to this AmeriCorps initiative. Use the following prompts to draft the sentence:
   - Description – what is the project idea?
   - Objective – to deliver
   - Context – as part of
   - Timing – when

Discussion Guide

Group Discussion
- What are different ways you could approach resilience challenges in the various communities?
- What is the scale of impact of your ideas (neighborhood, city-wide)?
- How do various communities relate to each other and is there an opportunity to connect or collaborate across communities?
- Are there particular assets you can leverage?
- How can you maximize the resilience value of these approach ideas? (e.g. co-benefits, vulnerable populations, diverse stakeholder engagement)
- How will you consider vulnerable populations?
- What do you hope to achieve with this initiative?

Inputs

1. Worksheet 1.2 Defining a Risk Approach
2. Worksheet 2.0 City Resilience Narrative
3. City-lead Academy Pre-work Materials
4. City Resilience Framework and Indicators
5. City Maps

Sample Output

Worksheet 3.1 Ideate Approach and Project Ideas

Worksheet 3.1: Ideas Approach and Project Ideas

JURISDICTION NAME

Resilience Opportunity Statement

In the next 10 years, the city has an opportunity to build resilience by addressing risk posed by severe storms and flood events and support community assets and social networks. The city has an opportunity to better coordinate how it serves vulnerable populations in emergency and support systems and programs that can build social cohesion regardless of an emergency.

What ideas do you have to address your Resilience opportunity? How can you innovate?

- *Provide co-benefits such as ecosystem services and increased public green spaces that support storm water mitigation*
- *Create an opportunity to build emergency response education to support emergency coordination and community networks*
- *Opportunity to engage disconnected youth in a long-term volunteer project, giving them a unique role in creating and maintaining a community space and coordinating emergency responses, particularly in aiding the needs of seniors and low-income residents*
- *Solution will take one-year to start, but will be maintained over several years by the community. At first, the solution may pilot an approach to community green spaces which can be replicated in other neighborhoods.*
- *New assets may include a new public green space and community gathering space*
- *Impact of a pilot will be felt in the immediate neighborhood of Park Place, but partnerships will be built that will be city-wide and will provide a model for other neighborhoods to follow.*

1 Why Resilience AmeriCorps?	2 Understanding Risk	3 City Resilience Narrative	4 Defining a Resilience Approach	5 Engaging Stakeholders	6 Resilience Project Planning

Ideate Approach and Project Ideas	Draft Approach and Project Ideas	Resilience Approach and Project Critiques

Purpose

Based on the Resilience Opportunity Statement, begin to draft the key elements for your VISTA project(s). In the exercise, you will narrow and focus you brainstormed ideas to begin to scope the approach and design of the project(s).

Instructions

1. **Select and describe your approach**
   Based on your brainstorm, identify a key approach that meets the various identified needs, is creative and engaging, and will maximally build resilience in your community. Describe what the project is and what it will achieve.

   Note: You may want to define more than one project. Repeat this exercise for each project idea.

2. **Define the key elements of the project**
   - What are the major categories of scope for the project?
   - What are the key steps or activities of the project?

3. **Outline the goals and scope of the approach and potential project idea**
   - What are your project goals?
   - What do you hope to achieve in the near- and long-term?
   - What geographic area do you plan to focus on?
   - What vulnerable populations do you plan to engage and serve?
   - What impact do you aim to create?

3. **Design your project concept and approach**
   Sketch diagrams that demonstrate how your project will work. Consider:
   - Can you use a map to demonstrate where the project will take place and who it will impact?
   - Is there a process you could diagram to show how the project could work?
   - What tools and resources are required and/or available and how could they fit into the approach?
   - Who is doing what?

Inputs

1. Worksheet 3.1 Defining and Approach, Ideate Approach Ideas and Concepts
2. Worksheet 1.1 Defining a Risk Approach
3. Worksheet 2.0 City Resilience Narrative
4. City-lead Academy Pre-work Materials
5. City Resilience Framework and Indicators
6. City Maps

Sample Output

Worksheet 3.2 Draft Approach and Project Ideas

Worksheet 3.2: Draft Approach and Project Ideas

JURISDICTION NAME

Description

Support flood protection strategies in vulnerable areas to protect transportation networks from disruption, protect aging infrastructure and building stock, and incentivize community cohesion.

Project Concepts and Diagrams

Project Elements
- Bio-swales
- Tree plantings
- Community gardens in 2 low-income neighborhoods
- Education program

Project Goals

In the long-term, this initiative should support community cohesion in the Park Place neighborhood and support the resilience goals of the city to build strong neighborhood networks.

In the near-term this initiative should generate a new public space for low-income residents in the Park Place neighborhood and support storm water mitigation priorities of the city.

1	Why Resilience AmeriCorps?	2	Understanding Risk	3	City Resilience Narrative	4	Defining a Resilience Approach	5	Engaging Stakeholders	6	Resilience Project Planning

Ideate Approach and Project Ideas   **Draft Approach and Project Ideas**   **Resilience Approach and Project Critiques**

Purpose

Each critique session will feature team presentations in the breakout rooms. The city team should lead a brief presentation of what they've learned about their city's risk, summarize the resilience opportunity and approach, and describe project ideas. The VISTAs are required to co-present with the city leads or on their own.

Instructions

1. **Provide a brief overview of the city and focus areas risks, the resilience opportunity, overall approach, and potential project ideas.** *[10 minutes]* Use the exercise outputs to support the presentation.

2. **Discussion and feedback** *[20 minutes]*
   After each team presents, Subject Matter Experts and the other city teams in the room will service as a critique panel to provide feedback on the project idea. Panelists will focus on helping teams to formulate a compelling story about their community's resilience challenges and how their project approach addresses them.

Discussion Guide

Group Discussion

- What are the key elements of the approach and potential project? Are there different approaches the team could consider to build resilience?
- How does this approach help your city achieve the goals highlighted in the resilience opportunity statement?
- How does the approach and project mitigate against future risk for the city and for the project area?
- How does your approach address the needs of vulnerable populations and build social resilience?
- How does this approach engage / leverage residents and volunteers?
- What are some key challenges you anticipate in building on this approach?
- Are there key tools or resources that could inform or support this project?

Inputs

1. Worksheet 1.1 Risk Approach
2. Worksheet 2.0 City Resilience Narrative
3. Worksheet 3.1 Ideas Approach and Project Ideas
4. Worksheet 3.2 Draft Approach and Project Ideas
5. City Maps

Example Presentation Materials

Worksheet 1.1: Developing a Risk Approach

Worksheet 2.0: City Resilience Narrative

Worksheet 3.1: Ideas Approach and Project Ideas

Worksheet 3.2: Draft Approach and Project Ideas

Description
Support flood protection strategies in vulnerable areas to protect transportation networks from disruption, protect aging infrastructure and building stock, and incentivize community cohesion.

Project Concepts and Diagrams

Project Elements
- *Bio-swales*
- *Tree plantings*
- *Community gardens in 2 low-income neighborhoods*
- *Education program*

Project Goals
In the long-term, this initiative should support community cohesion in the Park Place neighborhood and support the resilience goals of the city to build strong neighborhood networks.

In the near-term this initiative should generate a new public space for low-income residents in the Park Place neighborhood and support storm water mitigation priorities of the city.

Identifying Stakeholders

Purpose
This exercise will identify key stakeholders and begin a conversation about who to engaged both for the success of the project and to build resilience more broadly.

Instructions
1. **Identify key stakeholders**
   Use **post-its** to brainstorm stakeholders in the city as a whole and in the project area. Teams should consider stakeholders during each phase of the project to maximize value and ensure success. Stakeholders might include but are not limited to:
   • Residents and community members
   • Community and faith-based organizations or other non-profits
   • Vulnerable groups such as seniors, the homeless, or disengaged youth
   • Small business owners
   • City agencies and/or political leaders

2. **Map stakeholders**
   Decide the scale at which you think this exercise is most useful (e.g. neighborhood or the city-wide). Then, place **post-its** on the matrix relative to each stakeholder's influence and interest in the project.

3. **Evaluate stakeholders**
   Use **sticky dots** to mark which stakeholders are those who you plan to prioritize.

Discussion Guide
Group Discussion:
• How are we meaningfully including key stakeholders, particularly those who typically do not engage?
• Which stakeholders should help design and implement the project and/or ensure its success?
• Which stakeholders have influence to stop the project? Does their interest reflect their risk or impact?
• Who is in the low-interest category that should be in the high-interest category?
• Who is positively and negatively impacted by this project?
• How can we prioritize critical stakeholders for whom the project has direct impact?
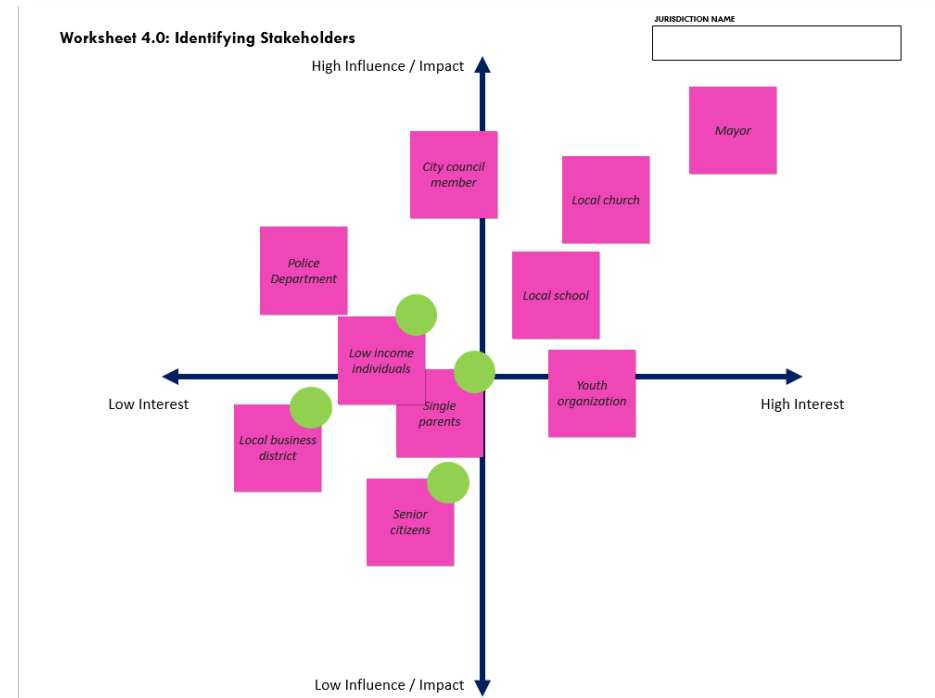• What are the barriers to engagement?

Drafting a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Inputs
1. City-Lead Academy Pre-Work Materials

Sample Output
Worksheet 4.0 Identifying Stakeholders

Worksheet 4.0: Identifying Stakeholders

Identifying Stakeholders

Drafting a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Purpose

This exercise will generate an engagement and messaging strategy to support your resilience goals and project, and will provide an opportunity for VISTAs to practice delivering the message to their peers, as well as receive feedback.

Inputs

1. Worksheet 4.0 Identifying Stakeholders

Instructions

1. **Outline your engagement strategy**
   Using the stakeholders you flagged on Worksheet 4.0, identify how best to approach a key stakeholder.

   Consider how you might communicate with the stakeholder and how they're influential to your project:
   • What does this stakeholder care about?
   • How does this project work to their benefit?
   • What influence do they have over the project?
   • When do you need them to engage to increase the value of your project?
   • What's the best way of connecting with the stakeholder?
   • How will you incorporate their feedback into the project?

2. **Practice communicating your message**
   With another team in your breakout room, VISTAs will practice a 2- minute elevator pitch of your resilience message. Then, spend 10 minutes discussing ideas on how to best communicate to a given target audience.

Discussion Guide

VISTAs
• What is your elevator pitch to communicate resilience?
• What worked well in your message? Where do you think you could improve?
• Imagine yourself as the stakeholder you're engaging with: what's compelling about your pitch?

City-leads
• How can you best support the VISTA in an engagement strategy and message?
• Brainstorm your role in the VISTAs stakeholder engagement strategy. How will you help make meaningful connections to progress the project?
• How does stakeholder engagement in the context of VISTA support the city's broader resilience goals?

Sample Output

Worksheet 4.1 Drafting a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Worksheet 4.1: Drafting a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

JURISDICTION NAME

Stakeholder Group: *Low-income individuals*

What do they care about? What is their mission?
• *Health and safety*
• *Housing security*
• *Food accessibility*

Outreach Plan
• *Host a public meeting in a low-income community as a common, accessible space*
• *Make the meetings interactive in order to maximize input of attendees*

What is their interest and influence over the project?
• *High interest, but have little direct engagement*
• *The project area has many low-income families, and we want to maximize benefits to these individuals by gathering input*

Message (*What are your common goals, how are you communicating the stake that they have in the project or your resilience goals?*)
• *Articulate benefits – green space, revitalized community spaces*
• *Share preliminary design ideas*
• *Provide contact within government agency and community partner so residents can follow up with questions*

At what stage are they critical to your project?
• *Design– we should approach them in March to get feedback that informs how we think about the design of the project*
• *Implementation – residents will play a key role in building the project*

How are you receiving feedback and how will your project respond?
• *Create materials that are interactive for the public meetings*
• *Start a social media campaign to solicit feedback, and advertise campaign in libraries and schools in low-income neighborhoods*

10

Refining the Approach, Resilience Project Implementation Plan

Purpose

This exercise will frame a high-level roadmap for project implementation and will help to ground the team's goals, with actionable steps to achieve them. This exercise is not meant to be a detailed work plan, rather an opportunity to shape the broad elements of implementing a project.

Instructions

1. **Brainstorm components of your project implementation strategy**
   At a high level, consider the key elements of your project plan. While you may not have yet fully defined your project, this is an opportunity to think through key steps that you and your team will need to take over the next 3-12 months.

Discussion Guide

VISTAs and City-leads should consider the following when drafting a project plan:

Milestones
- What are the actions required to implement and operate?
- When do you anticipate having a clear definition of your project?
- What is your time frame for implementation?
- What are the key dates and milestones of your project over the next year?

Roles
- Who are the members of your team and how will they work together over the next year?
- What is the VISTA responsible for?
- Do you have any gaps or needs?

Engagement
- Which stakeholders need to be engaged in the planning and/or implementation of your initiative?
- How do you plan to engage them?
- How are you thinking about engaging networks of potential volunteers?

Outcomes and Success
- What are the intended outcomes of the initiative?   How do they map back to the CRF indicators and the city's resilience goals?
- How can you measure success? (e.g. trees planted, storm water mitigated, partnerships built, volunteers engaged?)
- How can you evaluate the resilience value of your project?

Inputs

1. City-Lead Academy Pre-Work Materials
2. Worksheet 4.1 Drafting a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy
3. The City Resilience Framework and Indicators

Sample Output

Worksheet 5.0 Refining the Approach, Resilience Project Implementation Plan

Worksheet 5.0 : Refining the Approach, Resilience Project Implementation Plan

JURISDICTION NAME

Engagement
- Use federal social vulnerability took to identify vulnerable populations in the city and narrow down a project area
- Reach out to target area community-based organizations to discuss project ideas
- Hold public engagement meetings to get feedback on design principles and incorporate into project design

Outcomes and defining success
- Inter-agency collaboration
- Community based organizations mobilized
- Long-term and sustainable volunteer engagement
- Mitigated storm water
- New community asset / green public space
- Increased awareness of risk and community cohesion

Milestones
- Community engagement – *3 months*
- Establish a clear project idea and plan – *3 to 6 months*
- Procure project funding to support implementation – *3 to 9 months*
- Engage volunteers in implementation – *6 to 9 months*
- Pilot long-term volunteer engagement maintenance strategy- *9 to 12 months*

Roles
- *Chief Resilience Officer*
  Project Director, vision setting, communication with Mayor, ensure project alignment with city's resilience priorities
- *Deputy*
  Project Manager, VISTA supervisor, will support in outreach activities and task management
- *VISTA*
  Lead on implementation strategy, research and engagement activities, main contact for volunteers

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