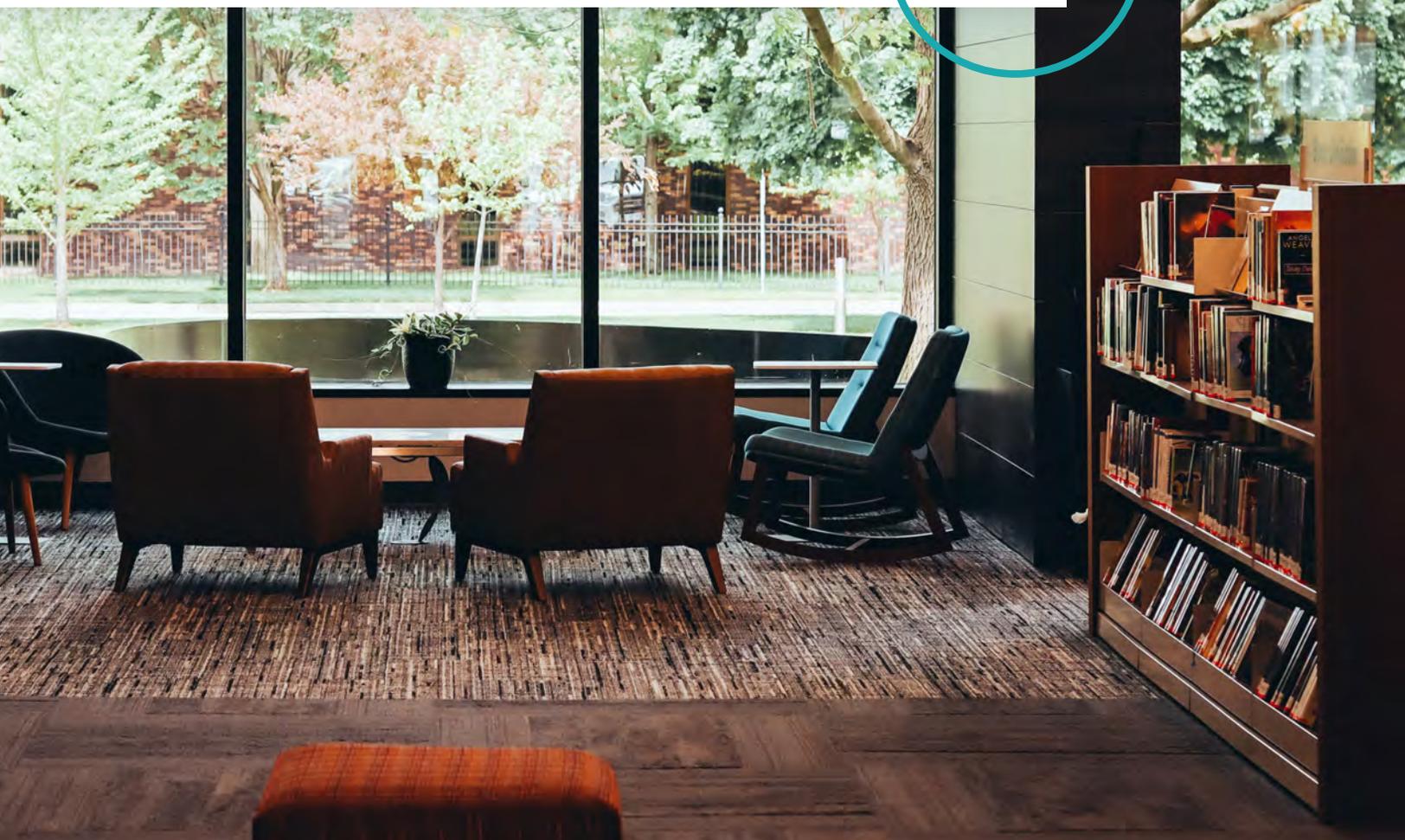


Librarians as Conveners to Build Community Resiliency in Rural Texas

*A Pilot Project Translating the COPEWELL
Framework Through Community Collaboration*



Authors

Elizabeth K. Eger, Ph.D. (she/her)

Principal Investigator and Faculty Fellow, Translational Health Research Center
Associate Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Texas State University

Rex Long, M.A. (he/him)

Co-Investigator and Doctoral Research Assistant, Translational Health Research Center
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Anthropology, Texas State University

Anca Tonciu, B.A. (she/her)

M.A. Student, Department of Communication Studies, Texas State University

Melinda Villagran, Ph.D. (she/her)

Executive Director, Translational Health Research Center, Texas State University

Jessica Schneider, M.A. (she/her)

Director Resilience Research Programs, Translational Health Research Center, Texas State University

Britney Treviño, M.A. (she/her)

M.A. Research Assistant, Translational Health Research Center, Texas State University

Release Date: November 3, 2023

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to the many individuals and organizations who helped inform this report. We thank our pilot project participants from Gladewater and Pottsboro, Texas; Dianne Connery and the Pottsboro Library; Brandy Winn and the Lee-Bardwell Public Library; Maria Freed and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission; Allister McNally and Johnny Vasallo for their report copyedits; Shelby Snead and Dusty Vaught for report design; and the COPEWELL team, including Dr. Jon Links, Dr. Monica Schoch-Spana, and Dr. Tara Kirk Sell.

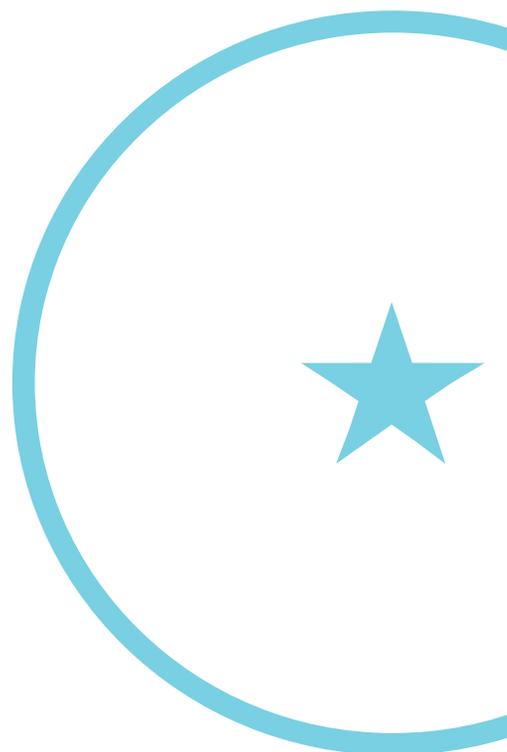
This pilot project was designed, conducted, and analyzed by Dr. Elizabeth K. Eger (Primary Investigator) and Rex Long (Co-Investigator) and approved by Texas State University's IRB on March 14, 2023 (Study #8744). We would like to thank Dr. Eger's COMM 5303 Spring 2023 Master's students from the Department of Communication Studies for their partner fieldnotes on Focus Group 1 of the Gladewater and Pottsboro pilot sites, including: Mikayla Amason, Victoria Diaz, Rowan Lampert, Miracle Leveston, Hector Manriquez, Allister McNally, Gavin Thomson, Anca Tonciu, Cassidy Trim, and Johnny Vasallo. Please reach out to us with questions and discussions at eger@txstate.edu.

Suggested Citation: Eger, E.K., Long, R., Tonciu, A., Villagran, M., Schneider, J., & Treviño, B. (2023). *Libraries as conveners to build community resiliency in rural Texas: A pilot project translating the COPEWELL framework through community collaboration*. Translational Health Research Center, Texas State University. <https://bit.ly/TXResiliency>

© 2023 Translational Health Research Center, Texas State University. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4	REFERENCES	44
INTRODUCTION	6	APPENDICES	46
BACKGROUND	7	Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Collaboration.....	46
METHODS & APPROACH	10	Appendix B: Focus Group 1 Interview Guide.....	48
Site Identification & Library Director’s Roles	10	Appendix C: Pre-Survey Invitation Email.....	52
COPEWELL Self-Assessment Rubrics.....	13	Appendix D: Pre-Survey Protocol.....	53
Research Design.....	14	Appendix E: Focus Group Interview Guide 2.....	57
CASE EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY COLLABORATION UTILIZING COPEWELL... 18		Appendix F: COPEWELL Self-Assessment Rubrics.....	62
Lee-Bardwell Public Library in Gladewater, TX.....	18		
Pottsboro Library in Pottsboro, TX	22		
REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED 25			
Our COPEWELL Adaptation.....	26		
Reflections from Pilot Library Directors	29		
Tips for Future Community Collaboration and COPEWELL Implementation	34		
A Roadmap for a Librarian-Led COPEWELL Implementation	39		





LIBRARIANS AS CONVENERS

Executive Summary

This report presents a pilot project on librarians as future conveners for their community's resiliency planning needs in rural Texas areas.

As researchers from the Translational Health Research Center (THRC) at Texas State University, we envision libraries as spaces for librarians to convene community leaders and members to address local needs, prepare for future challenges and emergencies, build networks, and harness resiliency.

This project examined rural librarians and libraries in the state of Texas, though our vision for librarians hosting community collaborations for resiliency planning has potential across the United States and beyond.

This project resulted in three significant outcomes:

1. Adapting the COPEWELL (Composite of Post-Event Well-Being) framework to address resiliency planning in rural Texas communities through community collaboration.
2. Positioning librarians as community conveners for

resiliency planning and implementing a community collaboration approach through a pilot project with two rural libraries resulting in actionable recommendations for local communities.

3. Developing best practices and lessons learned to help other librarians in Texas, especially those in rural communities, replicate these efforts and initiate community collaborations for resiliency planning in their areas.

Our report objectives are to:

- ▶ Editorialize our pilot project design, process, and experiences as researchers for future use by librarians, community leaders, and/or researchers interested in adapting COPEWELL to address community functioning in their locality.
- ▶ Contribute to ongoing efforts by the Translational Health Research Center at Texas State University to enhance resiliency research and implementation in the state of Texas, including translating COPEWELL through writing and disseminating this process report and upcoming pilot site reports.
- ▶ Modify the COPEWELL self-assessment rubrics utilizing communication and collaboration frameworks and to accommodate a smaller group of stakeholders with tight timelines.
- ▶ Visualize how a community collaboration convened by librarians on resiliency, public health, or other pressing community needs could benefit readers' own communities.
- ▶ Generate a clear plan with robust resources for libraries and librarians to utilize our process, including lessons learned, future recommendations, and tips.
- ▶ Develop relationships with our community partner—the Texas State Library and Archives Commission—to create a future resiliency collaboration pathway for Texas libraries to undertake this process utilizing this report.

This report details the background of our applied research process, our methods and approach, an overview of the two pilot sites, and best practices and lessons learned for future resiliency planning led by librarians in rural Texas communities. We will also release concurrent reports on Gladewater and Pottsboro for richer case studies of both sites for their communities and broader readership.

Our two pilot sites in Gladewater and Pottsboro share some similarities as rural communities in northeast Texas experiencing or expecting to experience population growth, and both communities are situated near a lake. They also face some similar challenges common to rural communities, such as a lack of substantial healthcare facilities, childcare, and eldercare; limited options for healthy eating; and a need to expand their business corridor to increase their city's tax base. Participants in Gladewater identified communication challenges and a need for better organized and engaged community involvement in emergency response. As a result, the Gladewater site selected the Emergency Management COPEWELL self-assessment rubric for this project. Participants in Pottsboro focused on aging infrastructure, water quality, transportation, and childcare and eldercare as pressing needs, and therefore selected the Social Capital and Cohesion COPEWELL self-assessment rubric.

In exit interviews, we asked participants for recommendations and helpful tips for other librarians and conveners interested in implementing COPEWELL through community collaborations. We connected their responses with our researcher takeaways and offer the following **key recommendations:**

- ▶ Dedicate time and energy to scheduling processes.
- ▶ Aim for a smaller participant group.
- ▶ Establish confidentiality and data use plans before beginning.
- ▶ Consider hosting three (or more) focus group sessions.
- ▶ Be cautious of jumping to quick solutions.
- ▶ Recruit a diverse, broad cross-section of the community.
- ▶ Embrace diverse meeting formats.
- ▶ Engage all participants as facilitators.
- ▶ Encourage and cultivate connections and networking potentials.
- ▶ Participate in the process with honesty and willingness to listen.
- ▶ Remember that disagreement can be generative.
- ▶ Welcome critiques of the COPEWELL framework and the community collaboration process.

Introduction



This report shares the results of a pilot research project that examined whether librarians could serve as community conveners for evidence-based resiliency planning in rural Texas communities. At least **71 rural Texas communities do not have a hospital** and, therefore, lack a physical location to serve as a hub for local emergencies (Falconnier & Hecht, 2022). As a result, the ability to plan for public health emergencies and natural disasters in these communities is especially urgent and challenging. This project grew from a vision of librarians as community leaders who possess the information, resources, and expertise needed to build capacity for community resiliency, and libraries to serve as hubs for community collaborations for resiliency planning and action.

To explore the role that librarians could play in community resiliency planning, we designed a pilot project that combined a Communication Studies framework for community collaboration with COPEWELL (Composite of Post-Event Well-Being).

COPEWELL is an evidence-based model for resiliency planning that was developed by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. The pilot project positioned librarians as local leaders to help identify and convene community members for two focus groups and subsequent exit interviews that would initiate resiliency planning in rural areas of Texas. The project resulted in three significant

outcomes, including adapting the COPEWELL framework in a rural Texas context through community collaboration, creating two descriptive case studies of librarians as community conveners, and developing best practices and tips for future librarians to create community collaborations implementing COPEWELL in their areas.

Background

To design this pilot project, we utilized three main frameworks: (1) the role of libraries and librarians in their communities, (2) COPEWELL, and (3) community collaboration.

First, **libraries have long served as critical public spaces**, often operating in social, cultural, and educational roles in their communities. In this capacity, libraries provide access to resources, encourage social inclusion and civic engagement, and promote the health and economic vitality of communities (Scott, 2011). By removing barriers to assistance, libraries are a valuable resource for youth, disabled people, older adults, and low-income populations (see Aabø & Audunson, 2012). Libraries also play a role in making public health information available to the public (Backus & Lacroix, 2022) and creating public health outreach programs (Whitney et al., 2017). Libraries can serve a crucial role in supporting emergency response efforts, including serving as an information hub, command center for aid organizations, or as a historical repository documenting and addressing scars left by crises (Alajmi, 2016; Bishop & Veil, 2013; Brobst et al., 2012).

While libraries are critical public spaces, librarians serve as the heart of the libraries in their communities.

Librarians may curate intellectual access as a primary function of their role (Burke, 2002), though proper training and preparation can prime them to serve in an abundance of roles to support their communities (Bin Hashim & Mokhtar, 2012). It is the librarian who seeks constant feedback and observes what their community might need in the future as they continuously adapt and design new services to meet day-to-day needs or in response to disaster events (Omeiza & Lanre, 2019). Emerging research by Mardis, Strover, and Jones (2020) recently examined how coastal Florida and Texas librarians in small and rural areas navigate disasters and support resiliency in digital environments. Their interviews with librarians and library site observations focused on librarians' disasters responses, information communication technology (ICT) usage during and post disaster, and institutional practices for libraries' resiliency after disasters.

Second, the **research team used the COPEWELL (Composite of Post-Event Well-Being) framework**, both to provide structure to project activities and as a mechanism to assess community perceptions of current resiliency. COPEWELL was developed by a team from the University of Delaware and Johns Hopkins University funded by the CDC to help communities identify and shore up gaps in community resiliency across the lifespan of a hazard or disaster event (COPEWELL, 2022a). The process of COPEWELL implementation was designed to function at all levels of involvement: from local to federal and from community member to policymaker.

The COPEWELL website presents users with the ability to examine the framework, its computational model and data, self-assessment rubrics, and compiled resources for change. The framework is a visualization of the structure of resiliency that "incorporates a broad view of the societal elements that influence resilience" and helps communities "to create a shared understanding and drive conversations related to the elements and factors that influence community functioning and resilience" (COPEWELL, 2022b).

COPEWELL users can approach resiliency planning through a variety of mechanisms. The computational data is built on a system dynamics model, which compiles census data at the county level to provide normalized scores for each aspect of the framework (COPEWELL, 2022c). A user could, for example, select Hays County in Texas to learn the overall score for the county's Emergency Management domain. If a user were to start with the computational model, they could identify the domain(s) that are scored quantitatively lowest to establish a priority action plan. The qualitative self-assessment rubrics allow a convener to gather community stakeholders and facilitate an open-ended discussion of community resiliency with the goal of developing relevant next steps to address gaps in community functioning (COPEWELL 2022d).

The resources for change include a list of compiled resources that are meant to help communities enact changes they wish to see in their communities (COPEWELL, 2022e). COPEWELL's resources include links to communication toolkits, business emergency response planning, training for community emergency response teams, water resilience guides, and more.

COPEWELL users may use any or all of the model based on local needs and priorities.

CONCEPTUALIZING RESILIENCY

The term 'resiliency' is used across several academic disciplines, including the physical sciences, Anthropology, Psychology, and Communication Studies. As such, the term has a fluid definition depending on fields and approaches. The COPEWELL framework defines resiliency quite simply as, "the ability to withstand ('resist') and recover from a disaster event" (COPEWELL, 2022g). The American Psychological Association has a slightly more robust definition (APA,2022): "Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands."

Regardless of how simple or complicated the definition is, the resiliency of a community is affected by several social, institutional, and/or governmental conditions of a location. If there is strong resiliency, a disaster event will have less severe impacts, and recovery from the event may be faster. If there is weak resiliency, a disaster event might have enormous impacts accompanied by a slow or ineffective recovery. Communities, depending on resiliency, might recover to pre-event, below pre-event, or even above pre-event levels of community functioning.



Third, to design our pilot project, we utilized **Communication Studies research on collaboration** to center creating spaces of shared knowledge, community, diversity, and participatory decision-making (Deetz & Simpson, 2004; Heath, 2007; Heath & Isbell, 2021). Collaboration focuses on how group interactions utilize “stakeholder differences to come up with creative and innovative ideas and solutions” (Heath & Isbell, 2017, p. 20). This approach not only impacted the stakeholders the Library Directors invited “to the table” in this pilot project but also our facilitator communication as researchers to encourage active listening, dialogue with attention to understanding others, and brainstorming challenges and possibilities rather than jumping ahead to narrow solutions.

Community collaborations “focus on issues at the local level and problems that usually demand long-term social change” (Heath & Frey, 2004, p. 182), contrasting with to short-term, for-profit collaborations.

In choosing a community collaboration design, we focused on how the group’s interactions shaped collective knowledge about resiliency challenges, strengths, and future possibilities. This sought to encourage divergent perspectives and open discussion to address robust, diverse needs rather than quick consensus or jumping to fast, flat solutions.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION LEVELS

Heath and Frey (2004, pp. 187-188) explain that **community collaborations have four levels** to consider when planning:

1. **Individual Representatives:** Stakeholders who join the group process, who are willing to participate and focus on open communication, and who ideally experience outcomes such as increased community knowledge and partnerships, self-efficacy, and identification with their group and community.
2. **Collaborative Group:** The group coming together for collective decision-making focused on dialogue, egalitarian approaches, and can ideally increase their creativity, political power and connections, and group goals.
3. **Stakeholder Organizations:** The organizations that the stakeholders represent can share information, connect to their communities, and ideally build interorganizational linkages, collaboration competence, and participatory decision-making for future local challenges.
4. **Collaborating Community:** The overall community where the collaboration is embedded, which cultivates shared information across stakeholders and their organizations, creates flexibility with boundaries to share responsibility, and ideally facilitates new leadership, institutions, and community outcomes.





LIBRARIANS AS CONVENERS

Methods & Approach

In this section, we share how the research team identified site locations and participants before presenting the self-assessment tools and broader COPEWELL framework. We then introduce our pilot project design for librarians or other community leaders who seek to implement our approach and/or utilize some of these methods for resiliency planning in their local communities.

SITE IDENTIFICATION & LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S ROLES

In Fall 2022, the Translational Health Research Center (THRC) partnered with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security to co-sponsor a webinar series introducing the COPEWELL framework for resiliency planning to a Texas audience. These webinars sought to educate healthcare and emergency management personnel, council of governments representatives, city officials, county officials, and nonprofit organizations about COPEWELL (see Schneider, Long, Treviño, & Repasky, 2023, for full report). THRC shared a post-webinar survey following the webinars to gauge interest among attendees to partner with THRC on a pilot project using the COPEWELL framework. The survey results connected THRC and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission

(TSLAC) and led to a beginning partnership for the resulting pilot project.

Our partnership with TSLAC allowed us to work together to identify two sites that would be ideal for the pilot project. Maria Freed of TSLAC shared an open, informal survey that asked TSLAC-affiliated Texas librarians about their interest in being considered as a pilot location for the project. Across three weeks, **34 libraries expressed interest** in participating as a pilot location.



We focused on libraries in rural areas in Texas, as rurality may generate unique needs including resource challenges, further driving distances from hospitals and/or medical care, and other unique challenges in the face of disasters and recovery.

After meeting with each semi-finalist librarian(s), we selected two libraries—the Pottsboro Library in Pottsboro, TX, with Library Director Dianne Connery and the Lee-Bardwell Public Library in Gladewater, TX, with Library Director Brandy Winn. Both sites wanted to be identified and named in our research reports to provide visibility for their library and town from this applied work. As such, while participant names in this report and subsequent reports are pseudonyms, we did not create pseudonyms for the towns or libraries.

After selecting the two communities to implement COPEWELL for the pilot project, we worked with their Library Directors to brainstorm potential community

participants, and shared background readings on collaboration and COPEWELL to prepare the Library Directors to support community resiliency planning activities. These readings were intended to guide participant selection and ensure a diversity of perspectives at the table. Library Directors received the following information to supplement their readings and help guide their stakeholder selection. Both Library Directors used the Eger (2017) reading and email prompt to develop an initial list of participants. We then discussed the list, asked follow-up questions, and helped narrow which participants to invite to the community collaboration.

INVITING STAKEHOLDERS USING REQUISITE DIVERSITY

To prepare for the collaboration, we asked both pilot Library Directors to read a section of the book *Interorganizational Collaboration: Complexity, Ethics, and Communication* by Renee Heath and Matt Isbell (2017), including an applied example written by Dr. Eger (2017). We focused on the **principle of requisite diversity**, which invites multiple voices, positions, and differences to be present in group interactions. Heath and Isbell suggest that this helps, “in determining who should be participating in problem solving...[and] on how unique perspectives influence the quality of decisions” (2017, p. 104). We emailed the Library Directors the instructions below with the readings:

Eger’s (2017) short example comes from her teaching a course on collaboration, and it presents a brief exercise with her students about choosing stakeholders to have a “seat at the table.” While it was a mock collaboration, the exercise is helpful to think about whose voices are represented in [your community’s] focus group, not only in terms of visible community leaders like those in elected positions but also other community leaders or locals with diverse perspectives, experiences, and identities.

We would also ask you to brainstorm up to 12 potential stakeholders that we could discuss together and think about the different “hats” they wear in [your town], different life experiences and identities they could bring to our conversations, and divergent viewpoints they might offer to enrich the conversation. We can then narrow and focus the list together in our planning meetings. Because the focus of our project is on resiliency and preparedness for future natural disasters or public health emergencies, thinking about stakeholders who might need or want to be involved in future resiliency planning will be important, too.

Following this prompt, we recommend librarians use Heath and Isbell’s (2017) book as an introductory primer to collaboration and share Eger’s (2017) short sample to help with requisite diversity.

A major goal of this pilot project was to establish a process where Library Directors and/or librarians could convene their own community collaborations and repeat COPEWELL implementation without the research team's facilitation in the future.

As such, we took the lead in facilitating the pilot's focus group sessions, inviting both Library Directors to engage in the process akin to hybrid participants. **As hybrid participants, Library Directors supported the project by:**

- ▶ **Identifying an initial list of stakeholders**, based on collaboration recommendations from the research team. The research team met with each Library Director multiple times to review potential participants and leaned on their knowledge to revise the list and select possible backup participants.
- ▶ **Acting as first contact with participants.** After the participant list was settled for each site, Library Directors sent the initial invite that established further communication so that we could obtain informed consent for research participation.

- ▶ **Joining focus group sessions as both a stakeholder and convener.** Library Directors at each site participated in each focus group, offering responses to questions and building off of others' responses. Because each Library Director has specialized knowledge of the local environment, they were also asked to support facilitators by asking probing questions of the other participants and thereby furthering discussion around local challenges or eliciting more detailed examples of participant experiences.
- ▶ **Encouraging participation and checking in.** Library Directors from both pilot sites checked in with participants between sessions informally and following the conclusion of the pilot project to maintain local connections and prepare for continued collaborations following the pilot project. Both also continue to sustain these partnerships with stakeholders and support the momentum that the pilot project started for sustainable resiliency planning without the research team.

While this report details the entirety of the pilot project process, our final section, "A Roadmap for a Librarian-Led to COPEWELL Implementation" provides a concise roadmap of what steps a reader can expect to take to convene and host a community collaboration COPEWELL session themselves.



COPEWELL SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

As aforementioned, we applied the COPEWELL framework to initiate resiliency planning in two rural Texas communities. Our project used only the qualitative self-assessment rubrics. COPEWELL includes an ideal implementation guide (Appendix F) to carry out self-assessment(s), although these self-assessments can be modified to suit local needs.

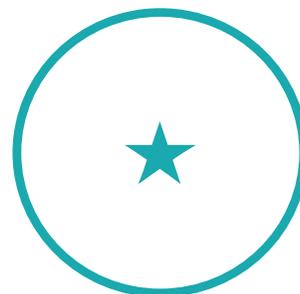
Each self-assessment rubric covers one of five domains, and each domain is intended to address a facet of pre-event functioning, resistance, or recovery:

- ▶ **Community Functioning** addresses the delivery of goods and services to community residents;
- ▶ **Prevention and Mitigation** looks at pre- and post-disaster measures that seek to alter the chance for and consequences of future events;
- ▶ **Population Vulnerability, Inequality, and Deprivation** explores the social, political, and economic conditions that impact the ability of community residents to detect or recover from an event;
- ▶ **Social Capital and Cohesion** examines the factors that help society function effectively; and
- ▶ **Emergency Management** evaluates the processes by which risks and vulnerabilities are assessed, reduced, prepared for, responded to, and recovered from.

COPEWELL'S IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE IDEAL FORMAT

In COPEWELL's ideal format, adhering to the implementation guide for one rubric could take as long as 4 hours (not including breaks) to a full-day session, and groups are encouraged to complete all five self-assessments across a potential five-day period. In this process, a group –small or large – would be introduced to one another and then to COPEWELL. The following activities, pulled from the Community Functioning implementation guide (COPEWELL, 2022d), serve as an exemplar for a full session:

- ▶ Individually score a sub-factor based on its definition, subcomponents, questions, low/optimal capacity descriptions, and rating scale/rationale capturing (e.g., where areas are ranked on their resiliency preparedness and support from 1-10).
- ▶ Gather in small groups, one for each domain item, to share scores and rationale. The group then converges on a unified score, with top-level rationale for the collective scoring.
- ▶ Return to the larger group, with a designated speaker from each small group providing a report of what was decided and why. Then, the larger group comes to a unified score for each domain item.
- ▶ The process for the two above bullet points repeats, but with a focus on generating priority action lists, including designating champions and assigning meaningful tasks.
- ▶ Engage in full group debrief and discussion of post-workshop next steps.



As the above “COPEWELL’s Implementation Guide Ideal Format” box describes, the COPEWELL self-assessments are a worthwhile, but an intense endeavor; it is not suggested to implement more than one self-assessment workshop in a day. Therefore, communities interested in pursuing all self-assessment rubrics need to set aside five days to complete the assessments—a tough ask for many people’s schedules, especially community leaders.

Assessments also lead to just initial discussions and planning possibilities on each rubric without sustained communication about one specific rubric’s needs. As such, COPEWELL supports modification and deviation from the guide, so long as fidelity to the framework’s intentionality remains intact. Examples of such adaption are available from other COPEWELL users, from transforming the rubrics into survey questionnaires (McClure, Oths, Agomo, et al., 2022), or developing a crosswalk to assess how COPEWELL concepts compare to FEMA’s THIRA process (COPEWELL, 2022f).

Our final section below will further describe and compare our COPEWELL adaptation to their ideal format, including the overview of the THRC COPEWELL Adaptation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To translate the COPEWELL framework for implementation in two rural Texas communities, we worked with local Library Directors to convene and conduct focus groups with community leaders and members.

The Gladewater site had seven participants (including the Library Director), and the Pottsboro site had eight participants (including the Library Director). We modified the COPEWELL process with reference to McClure et al.’s (2022) adjustments of the self-assessments, which simplified the language, presentation, and instructions of the rubrics.

Participants at each site were invited to convene twice for two 90-minute focus groups via Zoom. Stakeholders in the first focus group discussed community challenges and features, and the group selected a single rubric to work through together. The second session used a pre-survey and scaled-down version of a COPEWELL-inspired workshop that allowed the research team to ask probing questions about participants’ scores and thoughts on starting places for action items to address raised concerns. Participants ended the project with an individual and confidential exit interview.



RESEARCHERS' NOTE ON MULTIPLE NOTETAKERS AND DATA TYPES

To participate in this collaborative process, Dr. Eger and Rex completed verbal consent with each participant (in accordance with Texas State IRB protocol) to select a pseudonym, or with participant approval, randomly derived a pseudonym from named U.S. hurricanes. We used Zoom to video record both focus groups, and we used Zoom to audio record exit interviews to produce transcripts (which are verbatim typed notes) and deidentify participants. We took scratch notes (which are short-hand notes taken during a meeting) and converted them into fieldnotes (which are notes with thick, rich descriptions that capture vivid verbal and nonverbal communication details of the group's interaction). The entire research team took fieldnotes for each focus group, including Dr. Eger's COMM 5303 students who practiced writing fieldnotes on one-half of FG1. Our collective notes produced detailed and varied documentation from different researchers of verbal and nonverbal communication, including body language and facial expressions, along with verbatim transcripts to support analysis.

★ **TIP:** We recommend librarians, other conveners, and/or researchers take both fieldnotes and recordings to turn into transcripts of focus group communication for richer, varied interpretations of the community collaboration. We recommend multiple notetakers in focus groups, as having robust notes will help document the process when moving into implementation of COPEWELL and action steps.

Focus group 1 (FG1) brought together stakeholders for the first time, which allowed for introductions (in such cases where participants were unfamiliar with others) and for the research team to gain insight into perceptions around community features and challenges (see Appendix B). We established a community collaboration approach and acted as co-facilitators to invite and encourage quieter voices into the conversation. For example, in FG1, each participant shared their background, roles in the community, and perspectives on the community. By asking open questions such as, "How would you describe your community to someone who has never visited before?" and "When you think of your community's [pilot library], what images or experiences come to mind?" the research team helped to facilitate the conversation and encouraged all individuals to consider and share their perspectives.

By asking open questions, the research team helped to facilitate the conversation and encouraged all individuals to consider and share their perspectives.

We then transitioned the group into questions on resiliency and community history, including examples such as: "How does being in a rural area in Texas impact your community's needs?" and "What health or resiliency disturbances or extreme events has your community faced in the last five years?" After a robust, open, and generative discussion for over an hour that encouraged divergent viewpoints from all stakeholders, we placed participants into a Zoom waiting room for a five-minute break so we could identify and propose two suitable COPEWELL self-assessment rubrics that connected best to the local, community-stated challenges.

Participants were then brought back from the waiting room and given a short presentation of the COPEWELL model, the selected rubrics, and the rationale for selecting them. We asked the stakeholders to then share their perspectives on both rubrics and discuss which rubric they would like to focus on for the next focus group session. Rubric selection was unanimous in both cases, which we share below.

Before arriving to the focus group 2 (FG2), we asked participants to **complete a pre-survey component to allow for individual reflection and scoring**. To do so, we translated the COPEWELL rubric into an online Qualtrics survey (see Appendix D) and invited participants via email to complete the survey with their chosen rubric attached (see Appendix C). Using the Emergency Management rubric as an example, participants were given the definition of all the subdomains (Hazard and Vulnerability Analysis, Whole Community, Readiness and Response, and Recovery Planning and Operations) along with an idea of what a low or optimal score would be for each (e.g., a participant might score whole community as low if individuals and families have not made preparations for an emergency). Space was provided for each subdomain so that participants could explain the reasoning behind their score. We asked participants to complete this step before the start of FG2. We used this information to create a slide deck that provided anonymized graphs for participants' scores as well as anonymized and thematized summaries of the qualitative rationales to share.

While FG1 focused on open-ended, collaborative discussions about their community, library, and resiliency challenges, FG2 focused on our interview questions about the COPEWELL self-assessment each group selected.

For further reference, see Appendix E, which included discussing ranking following the COPEWELL approach. We chose to implement COPEWELL in a community collaboration session to explore how it could be translated to future librarian-led groups of leaders and community members. For FG2 we walked through each of the four subdomains for the chosen self-assessment rubrics, and we screenshared the slides with the overall graph scores and our thematized review of their rationale.

Next, we asked each participant to share their individual scoring and one key community feature that impacted their scoring.

Participants then voted using the Zoom polling feature on the most pressing area of need for future planning. For example, after each participant in Pottsville shared their scores on Health and Wellbeing, they voted on our themes of lack of healthcare options, lack of childcare options, and divergent opinions on social environment; the group voted to develop plans around lack of healthcare options. Participants used the final 30 minutes of the focus groups **to generate ideal action items** to begin the first steps to address the concerns and challenges raised in the first part of the session.

Finally, we invited participants to take part in **individual exit interviews**. These interviews served two purposes: (1) to evaluate participant experiences with the process of partaking in the community collaboration and using COPEWELL, and (2) to provide space for participants to share information that they were not comfortable or able to share during the focus group sessions. We then analyzed fieldnotes, scratch notes from exit interviews, and formal transcripts to create the overviews of each pilot site shared below and generally inform the results detailed in this report (see Researchers' Note on Analysis and Creating Themes for more tips).

RESEARCHERS' NOTE ON ANALYSIS AND CREATING THEMES

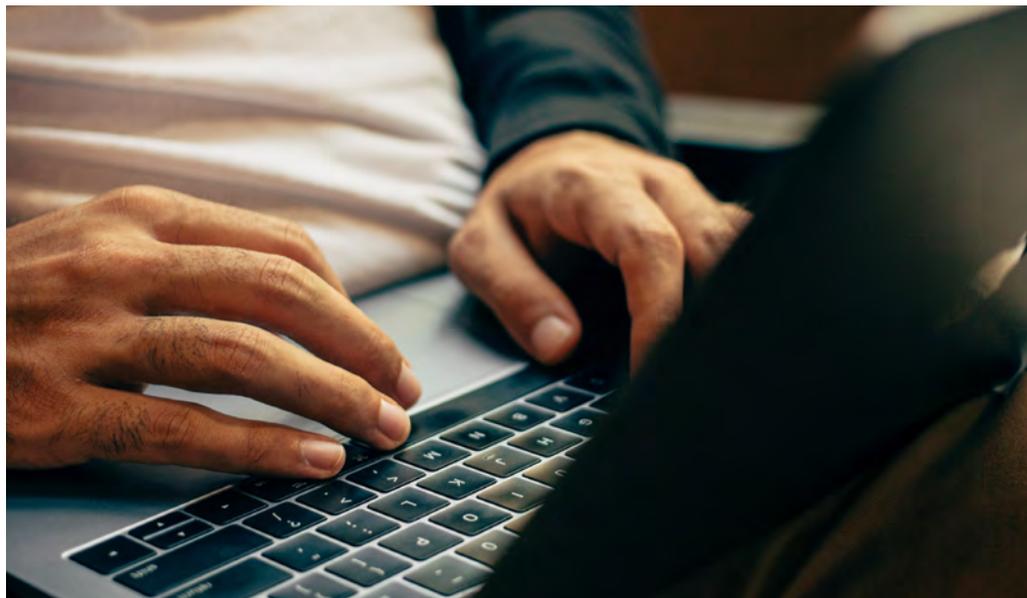
Gathering important information from community collaborations is vital for understanding the next stages of resiliency planning. In our pilot project, we organized fieldnotes taken by the research team and Dr. Eger's COMM 5303 students to first understand the diverse voices present in the focus groups. Having **multiple notetakers and a verbatim transcript** allows the conveners to review these notes to understand any common trends, unique departures, and important connections.

We also reviewed the focus group and exit interview transcripts to thematize prominent points raised in each focus group and to understand participants' unique experiences. While there are different approaches to analysis, we conducted two forms of analysis here.

- ▶ First, we thematized the fieldnotes and exit interview notes by carefully re-reading them, which provided an opportunity to identify and aggregate commonly expressed beliefs, challenges, and features from participants.
- ▶ We reviewed exit interview transcripts to select exemplar quotes to provide for the report.
- ▶ The summary slides we developed from the pre-survey before FG2 allowed us to include multiple voices with both overlapping and unique resiliency concerns.
- ▶ Second, we also completed coding, which is a form of qualitative data analysis that sorts data in to buckets to understand participants' experience.

TIP: Librarians could also use either general thematizing or formal coding from their own potential research training. Connecting key insights from different stakeholders and documents across time in the collaboration will allow the group to continue to make progress in each session, understand action items, and review future points of concern.

We now turn to two process overviews of both of our pilot sites: (1) the Lee-Bardwell Public Library in Gladewater, TX, and (2) the Pottsboro Library in Pottsboro, TX. We invite readers to read our forthcoming, detailed reports on each of these pilot sites for further information and pilot case studies.



LIBRARIANS AS CONVENERS

Case Examples of Community Collaboration Utilizing COPEWELL



LEE-BARDWELL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN GLADEWATER, TX

Gladewater, a rural city in east Texas with a population of over 6,400 people, is spread across Gregg, Upshur, and Smith counties. The city is located just south of Lake Gladewater. The town is host to several family-friendly events, and Gladewater residents refer to their growing community as “the best kept secret” and “the Antique Capital of East Texas.”

While the city is described by its charms, a participant who is also a life-long resident refers to Gladewater as “pretty resilient, because we went through a time where there wasn’t anything downtown anymore. Everything had been shut up ... [We] went from boom to bust, and we’re coming back out of it now.” As the city has started a new cycle of growth, some participants admitted that, while they still do not have some amenities such as theaters or bowling alleys to meet residents’ entertainment needs, there are enough new shops and restaurants to outnumber the antique shops.

Stakeholders repeatedly described the people of Gladewater as “working together” to help their neighbors in times of need.

In fact, that the Lee-Bardwell Public Library is operating today is a particularly poignant example of community connectedness and resiliency. The library closed during Winter Storm Uri in 2021 after experiencing substantial property damage resulting from frozen and burst water pipes.

One participant shared how city officials for the financially struggling locale questioned the use of “putting money [towards] something that nobody uses.” The community, however, was spearheaded to invest and reopen the library due to the advocacy work of the late Suzanne Bardwell (for whom the library was renamed), which a participant described as “totally turn[ing] that conversation around. In a very short time, I saw it go from ‘why are we doing this, it should be shutdown,’ to ‘no, this is very important to our community.’ And the short time it’s been open, I see it already starting to become that center point of the community.”

The Lee-Bardwell Public Library pilot stakeholders represented organizations and interests from local government, business, emergency response, community members, and education sectors. There were seven participants in this pilot process, including the Library Director. Participants described their community as one characterized by a deep sense of pride and a desire for volunteering. In addition to community advocacy around re-opening the library, all participants shared **how Winter Storm Uri brought the community together in a declaration of “Gladewater Strong.”** One participant also shared how meaningful a sense of ownership is for a community experiencing population growth:

“Ownership is going to be the best bet ... when you have ownership and agency, that is how you are going to get more pride in the community, and that is how you are going to get growth.”

During the FG1 session, the local government and emergency response stakeholders shared their concerns about prepping the community for disaster and hazard events; other stakeholders agreed this was a concern, particularly those that expressed a lack of awareness of current emergency response protocols. Participants discussed community again during their collaboration, sharing that resources for communal gathering and participation are lacking. One participant described the library as a logical place to develop such a space, should the library expand or move into a new building. They described the library as it currently exists as a place where everybody could be themselves, including one person who shared:

“The [library is the] one place in town where everyone can go. It’s free, you don’t have to be a certain person. You don’t have to be a certain income. It is a wonderful community gathering place.”

Based on participants’ descriptions of community features and challenges, the research team selected the Emergency Management and Social Capital and

Cohesion self-assessment rubrics to present to the group. Either rubric would provide the group with the opportunity to identify gaps in community understanding around emergency response or in ideating how to more holistically bring together an enthusiastic – if disorganized – desire for community members to lend a hand in times of crisis.

Aside from one minorly hesitant participant, the group was unanimous in their selection of the Emergency Management rubric during their discussion.

The group reasoned that having a better understanding of the gaps in emergency response was a more pressing need, and that they would likely address some community cohesion issues in one of the Emergency Management domain items (COPEWELL, 2022h). As one participant said, “emergency management ... overlapped with the social capital and also covered planning.”



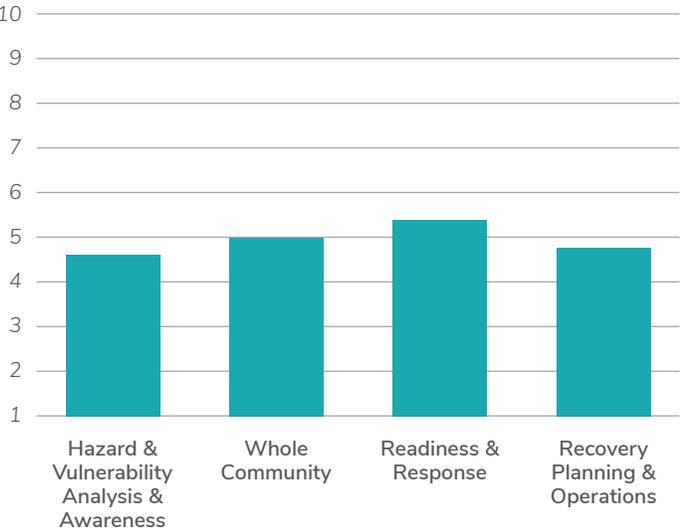
Ahead of the second focus group session, we asked participants to complete individual assessment rubrics where they scored Emergency Management in their community. Rubric domain items include hazard and vulnerability analysis and awareness, whole community, readiness and response, and recovery planning and operations. Participants scored each of these domain items on a scale of 1 (low capacity) to 10 (high capacity).

FIGURE 1.1

Gladewater Domain Item Scores, Emergency Management Rubric

Average Gladewater Domain Item Scores, Emergency Management

Source: Aggregated scores from pre-survey participants, 2023.



On the whole, participants rated their community’s Emergency Management capacity at the mid-level with an average of 4.9, with little variance across domain items (see Figure 1.1).

Participants provided some insight into their scoring process during FG2 and exit interviews. Some indicated that while they were unaware of the city’s emergency response plans or procedures, they were confident that local officials were aware of them. Others shared that while there was room for improvement, they had seen or were otherwise aware of progress regarding emergency response and so rated domain items higher than others.



Credit: D Christian Allen

During FG2, stakeholders discussed the pre-survey themes of lacking emergency response communication to the Gladewater community and a need to better engage community members in meaningful emergency response participation.

Participants offered a few examples to support these themes, ranging from a general lack of understanding around emergencies to an unwillingness to consider the impact of future disasters. One participant shared:

“And there’s a clear gap between what I see and what needs to be done, and the citizens understanding all of that. And trying to communicate that, it’s challenging without being an alarmist. ... We had disasters that have been warning signs that exposed us and showed we had deficiencies. But as soon as we get past the disaster, nobody really wants to go back and talk about what could’ve happened or how to prepare and prevent that from happening in the future.”

Participants, in discussing scores and rationales, also concentrated on **the lack of engagement from their community regarding disaster preparation and awareness of specific recovery/operations plans.** Stakeholders shared that many in the community, including business owners, harbored an “it can’t happen here” or “don’t fix it if it’s not broken” attitudes that prevented intentional thinking or discussion around possible future disaster events. A participant that represented community interests shared that the Lake Board had held its first emergency management focused meeting about the dam at Lake Gladewater in between the two focus group sessions. They shared during FG2, “I might change my [rubric] score after

last night. ... I don’t know the emergency plans. Part of that may be me not seeking it out, I don’t know. But I know a lot of citizens are not aware of [plans].”

As a result of the discussion, the emergency response participants also realized **how few of the stakeholders knew about disaster plans or recovery operations**, spurring a stated desire to discuss future enhanced communication strategies (including with the local newspaper) while also fostering more care around disaster processes within the community. One participant shared that they had difficulty scoring the rubric because, “I’m not aware of what’s going on and what our city plans are ...I’ve seen evidence that we have some plans, but I really, honestly, have no idea what they are or how they’ll be updated.” Another participant shared in FG2 their struggle to find emergency or other strategic plans around disasters from the city:

“I went looking for the disaster plan and couldn’t find it anywhere. I went looking for anything that would give me information on an emergency management plan, on a long-range plan, on anything that could give me any information. I couldn’t find anything ... if I can’t find it, I know nobody else can find it.”

Other pertinent comments regarded the acknowledgment that the response to past disaster events appeared to be more community led than city led, and that economic conditions in the area contributed to changes in personnel that made it difficult to keep various emergency planning documents adequately updated.

While participants highlighted the challenges around communication and engagement regarding emergency response, there was a continued acknowledgment that the community was “Gladewater Strong” and of the deep desire to help one another during and after crises, along with strong support for a library that had been rebuilt to better meet the needs of Gladewater. **For richer details, please read more in our Gladewater Case Study Report (Long, Eger, & Tonciu, 2023).**



POTTSBORO LIBRARY IN POTTSBORO, TX

Pottsboro, Texas, is a rural town in northeast Texas that sits just south of Lake Texoma and the Texas-Oklahoma border. A unique feature of Pottsboro is its proximity to the lake, which influences the overall community. One impact of having “a huge lakeside community” is, as a participant described, “the amount of people that come through Pottsboro in the summer months is ten times what” the town receives the rest of the year.

The distinction between what is city limits in Pottsboro and the larger unincorporated area shapes the resources, access, and voting voices that community members have if they live in the city limits or the unincorporated areas, including “on the peninsula.”

Furthermore, community members have distinct needs, including being a “certified retirement community,” “historically lower income” in city limits, and lake house owners. These different areas of the community also create increasing complex needs

for **water quality, water access, and emergency response support**. In counting the city limits via the census according to one participant, it “shows us sitting at about 2,500. But like...some of the others have mentioned, there’s over 10,000 of us that are unincorporated areas.”

For our pilot project, eight community members and leaders participated, including the Library Director. Through the support of the Pottsboro Library in partnership with our team, stakeholders were selected for the community collaboration to include a higher city official, nonprofit leader, community center authority, fire and emergency services provider, internet and public policy provider, youth program coordinator and community member, and regional governmental official.

While not all stakeholders were born in Pottsboro, most of the stakeholders in FG1 mentioned how it had become more of a home than any other place has ever felt to them. Pottsboro was described as having “a very relaxing, almost vacation-like atmosphere... [and] has that small town allure to it and southern hospitality is definitely alive and well, there in Pottsboro.” Another participant elaborated, sharing that Pottsboro is “relaxed, rural, nature-friendly, but on the precipice of growth...I’m concerned that rather than the town planning for growth, it will be a bystander to the changes that will occur.”

Despite the group's consensus on Pottsgboro's charm and relaxing vibes, much of our community collaboration centered on areas of need for Pottsgboro's planning in response to its growth and aging infrastructure.

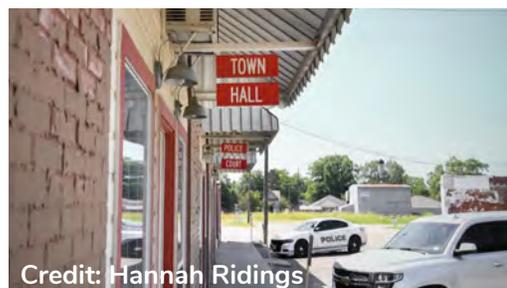
Importantly, stakeholders **viewed their library as an asset to the community** and credited the Pottsgboro Library's innovative programming and planning as "kind of like what a community center...you know, what a library really should be." In FG1, we asked participants about resiliency, disaster experiences, and related needs. Some already saw the possibility of a library as a convener for resiliency and health planning in part because of the vital leadership and outreach the library already provided by the Library Director, including being **the first library in the nation to have a telehealth room** to virtually connect community members to needed healthcare appointments and resources. Rural communities like Pottsgboro may treat emergencies more personally because of their care for the collective, and the library is the epicenter of this care. A participant explained:

“The first time I had been able to really go to the library was doing that community emergency response team training, and then being able to count on that when things happen as a hub and doers and a place to congregate when things important things are happening in the community. So, I think the diversity of education and services, I've never seen anything like it anywhere I've lived. I would say it's very progressive and cutting edge.”

Creating the library as a resiliency response hub was described as an important need moving into the future given the varied and complex resiliency needs in Pottsgboro. A substantive portion of our conversation in FG1 focused on severe winter weather, including freezes and related property, water, and health impacts. A participant reflected on how Winter Storm Uri resulted in water loss, sharing, "When that Big Freeze happened, [the neighboring city's] system froze up, which means our system froze up. Because we are 100% currently, 100% reliable on another city maintaining you know, being able to operate in extreme weather emergency."

Furthermore, there was immense concern with infrastructure that was outdated, in disrepair, and vulnerable. Water quality was a continued anxiety during disasters and in daily life. Other topics included train derailments, electricity loss due to storms and current systems, tornadoes, wind damage, and limited internet access. Because of the aforementioned tensions with city versus unincorporated areas, there were overextended and limited emergency response possibilities for freezes, fire, and other potential emergencies. One participant cautioned, "An extreme event might be a landline telecommunications interruption" that would prevent emergency responders from being able to communicate with those in need or vice versa.

Throughout our own and our co-researchers' fieldnotes, participants commonly communicated that **care for the community** and constant assurances of supporting one another throughout disasters especially. For example, one stakeholder shared how a local nonprofit that focused on supporting the needs of youth facing food insecurity quickly pivoted to an "expedient as well as contactless" food distribution process during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, a participant explained that in past disasters, "one of the things that we learned is that we don't have the capacity, or [the] city doesn't have the capacity, to respond in all the ways that may be needed in an emergency, and there was a real sense of people wanting to help people."



Based on the stakeholders' description of community features and challenges, the research team selected COPEWELL's Community Functioning self-assessment rubric and the Population, Vulnerability, Inequality, and Deprivation (PVID) self-assessment rubric to present to the group. After presenting the two possibilities to the group, **Community Functioning quickly emerged as the clear favorite**, which mirrored what we noticed in our own thematizing of the group's discussions. As one stakeholder put it, "We've spent an hour and a half on how valuable and how many needs we have, whether our community grows and grows or not."

Another built on this response, sharing, "So I think you have to have that foundation and that solid infrastructure to build from and then you can look at deprivation and vulnerability, and those other things, but if you don't have an infrastructure, you're kind of dead in the water."

They further pointed out that if the group had selected the PVID rubric, it would not work as well because Pottsboro is still developing and growing as a community.

Ahead of the second focus group session, we asked participants to **complete individual pre-surveys using the COPEWELL self-assessment rubric** selected by the group, where they scored their community's Community Functioning (COPEWELL, 2022i). Rubric domain items include governance and economy, life necessities, health and wellbeing, and critical infrastructure. Participants scored each of these domain items on a scale of 1 (low capacity) to 10 (high capacity).

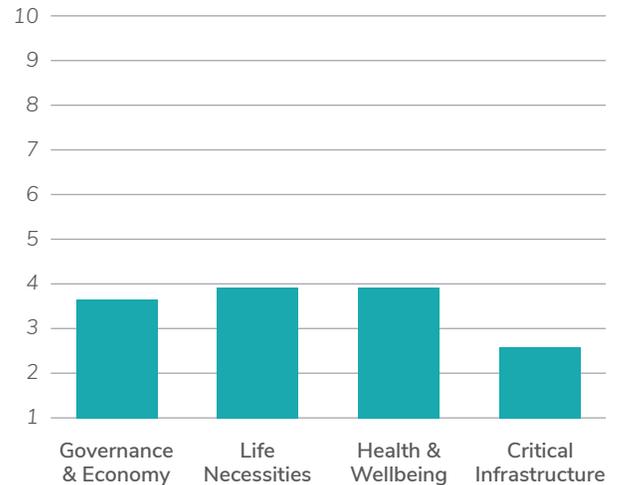
On the whole, participants rated their community's Community Functioning capacity with a low level of a 3.5 average.

FIGURE 1.2

Pottsboro Domain Item Scores, Community Functioning Rubric

Average Pottsboro Domain Item Scores, Community Functioning

Source: Aggregated scores from pre-survey participants, 2023.



Critical infrastructure was noted as the highest need (Figure 1.2), which mirrored the chaining comments during FG1 about resiliency need areas.

In FG2, stakeholders shared their scoring processes and concerns for community functioning needs. Three prominent themes that the collaboration surfaced were the **lack of healthcare options, childcare, and transportation, including their interconnections**. One participant shared, "Healthcare was my interest combined with transportation. For people who need to get to [nearby larger city], if they don't have a car, don't have public transportation, that's a real issue."

The stakeholders also discussed **communication needs between the government and community members**, such as the note that there was a "lack of information coming down from our elected officials, opportunities for forums to speak." Furthermore, **lack of businesses**, which are an important tax base to improve critical infrastructure and create

opportunities for the town, were discussed with a need to be “bringing in new companies and things that can actually build the economy.” **Limited childcare** also impacted the workforce, with one stakeholder explaining, “**And if [the] parent cannot have childcare, they can’t work.**”

The group began considering the possibility of next steps and potential solutions, such as grants to support transportation, with one stakeholder sharing that, “There’s a lot of grant funding, I know, that’s out there for rural communities that are specifically not in city limits. That’s something that people just may

not know about.” Others noted the possibilities of continued healthcare access at the Pottsboro Library and innovative programs like a mobile healthcare unit, which was described as being “about [healthcare providers] getting to where they are.”

Stakeholders in the pilot community collaboration at Pottsboro repeatedly focused on thinking “outside of the box” for community-generated solutions and how the library had been a leader in such thinking, and how the library could continue to do so into the future. **For richer details, please read more in our Pottsboro Case Study Report (Eger, Long, & Tonciu, 2023).**



In our final section, we summarize our adaptation of the COPEWELL self-assessment implementation process, present personalized Library Director experiences with the project, and share some collective lessons learned from our pilot project for conveners, including helpful tips our participants shared with us in their exit interviews about the community collaboration process and the COPEWELL framework.

Our goal in analyzing and presenting these findings is to identify and disseminate best practices that will inform future community collaborations aimed at fostering community health and resiliency in Texas communities and beyond.

We also hope the following section will help other **TSLAC-affiliated Library Directors and librarians convene their own community collaboration across the state of Texas** and adapt COPEWELL to their local needs. Such community collaborations have the potential to not only kickstart a sustained effort around building resiliency, but also to imagine other areas in which TSLAC and Library Directors can meaningfully engage in evaluating or improving facets of TSLAC services and supports.

OUR COPEWELL ADAPTATION

Though the COPEWELL framework is designed as a choose-your-own-adventure experience, the “full” version of implementation differs from our process for the pilot project. Our adaptation focused on utilizing a **Communication Studies community collaboration framework** to structure the pilot process. While the COPEWELL framework has some implicit features of general group interaction (e.g., a facilitator’s guide with ground rules), it does not fully prepare conveners for the complexities of community collaborations, such as complex processes of selecting stakeholders and collaboration facilitation. Our design utilized **all four levels of community collaboration**: (1) individual representatives, (2) collaborative group,

(3) stakeholder organizations, and (4) collaborating community (Heath & Frey, 2004). The Library Directors helped create thoughtful collaboration groups from robust lists of individual representatives using requisite diversity (Eger, 2017; Heath & Isbell, 2017) who represented stakeholder organizations across their cities to advocate for complex resiliency issues throughout the collaborating community.

Rather than beginning with COPEWELL in the first session, we instead started with local experiences and needs to then help connect the stakeholders to choosing their own COPEWELL rubric.

We also focused **on smaller, intentional group interactions** and selecting only one rubric for the initial community collaboration to address the most pressing local resiliency area first. The “THRC COPEWELL Adaption” infographic below summarizes the key differences between our adaptation and the full COPEWELL process.



Credit: Andrea Piacquadio

THRC COPEWELL Adaptation

FULL COPEWELL PROCESS

Invite a large group of stakeholders from diverse private and professional sectors. As described, the COPEWELL process benefits from the ability to establish **multiple small groups from assembled stakeholders**, ideally creating heterogeneous groups so that several experiences are represented in each group.

Complete all five self-assessment rubrics.

Each rubric requires at least half a day (or more) to complete, as the process involves individual scoring, small-group discussion of said scoring, and then a return to the large group for consensus scoring for each subdomain of the rubric. At the end of this process, participants should expect a more robust set of action-items that **delineate required actors, expected outcomes, and anticipated timelines for completion**. Completing all self-assessment rubrics requires several days to a week, which might be difficult for stakeholders to commit to.

THRC PILOT PROJECT PROCESS

Convene a small group of participants. We had a small research team and a strict timeline designed to coincide with a single semester, which meant that large groups were not feasible. We opted for focus groups comprised of six to eight participants; with more participants than this, meetings may become difficult to facilitate, not all participants are included meaningfully, and there are increased odds that any insights provided will be shallow.

Transform the focus to community collaboration. Utilizing a Communication Studies framework, we asked participants to **begin with open, generative brainstorming about community features and points of pride, resiliency strengths and challenges**, the role of the library in their community, and recent disaster experiences. The open exchange of ideas allowed participants to share their own experiences and understand their fellow group members to build a foundation for future collaborations. This communication approach also shifts the focus away from quick consensus to instead understanding **meaningful divergent perspectives**.

Establish more than one focus group session to cover different aspects of community concern. A typical COPEWELL session would cover everything related to a self-assessment session in a single, lengthy session. Based on experience, we established two separate, shorter sessions to ensure participant interest and to avoid attrition between sessions. This process also gave the research team the opportunity to **focus the session on more general community experiences** before using the second session to focus on a self-assessment rubric.

Select a single self-assessment rubric. Our approach allowed participants to select the most relevant rubric to their current needs, rather than assuming all the rubrics should be examined in tandem. Instead, we helped participants select a single rubric that seemed most consistent with community-stated needs driven from their collaboration. The **single-rubric approach** cuts down on the time required to run through a COPEWELL session and allows for more singular focus on one need area with beginning action-item generation for future implementation.

THRC COPEWELL Adaptation *(continued)*

FULL COPEWELL PROCESS

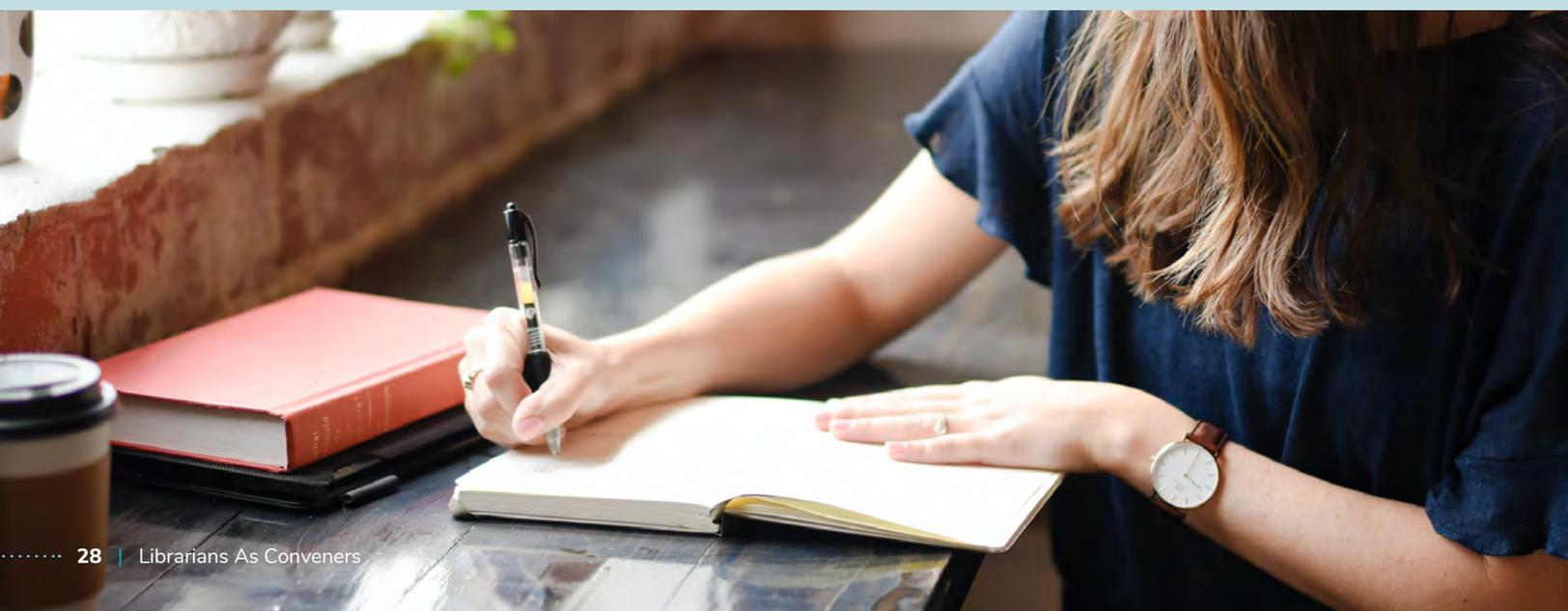
Consult the computational model. For a more robust COPEWELL experience, users can turn to the computational model, built from county-level census data, to see where they quantitatively score on the self-assessment domains. This cross-referencing is beneficial because it can illustrate any differences between data-driven scores and participant perceptions of their locality. Further, quantitative data can help to set priorities (e.g., tackling action items for the lowest scoring domain). One potential drawback here is that county-level data may generate a picture that is not as accurate for city-level stakeholders.

Make use of resources for change. The COPEWELL framework includes an aggregated list of resources for users. Specific to the domains of **Pre-Event Functioning, Resistance, and Recovery**, these resources are designed to bolster user capacity in communication, education, resource allocation, public health, and more. This step of the process can be pursued first if users already have a clear understanding of existing gaps in community functioning.

THRC PILOT PROJECT PROCESS

Modify self-scoring process. In a more typical COPEWELL environment, participants self-score rubrics during a session, just before small-group discussion of scores to come to consensus around a unified score. This process takes time, so instead the research team translated the **self-score process to a Qualtrics survey** (Appendix D) that participants were asked to complete between the two focus group sessions. While scores and rationale were discussed during the second focus group, the research team did not engage in consensus building for scores and instead encouraged potential dissensus and unique perspectives.

Less defined action items post-session. While each site discussed the starting point of several action items, the time provided did not allow for a more robust discussion of action items to include specific steps, anticipated parties to implementation, nor nascent timelines for completion of said steps. The research team, with expertise in qualitative analysis, will instead review comments across all data collection activities to provide each site with a preliminary accounting of action item starting points, with suggestions for more discrete steps and the types of partners who should be involved in implementation. This method also follows community collaboration approaches that caution jumping into quick solutions that may not work for a full community's complex and diverse needs.



REFLECTIONS FROM PILOT LIBRARY DIRECTORS

After examining our specific COPEWELL adaptation, we now turn to **reflections from both of our pilot conveners**, the Library Directors from Gladewater and Pottsboro, to share some highlights

of their community collaboration experiences and tips for other librarians and conveners. We then end with our tips for implementation.

Reflections from Library Director Brandy Winn of the Lee-Bardwell Public Library

The experience shared by the Gladewater participants in the THRC pilot program introducing the COPEWELL framework provided positive interaction between multiple departments and brought awareness of the role that **the Lee-Bardwell Public Library could play as a convener for resiliency** in our community. Participants were able to express their thoughts and experiences, and provide multiple insights into areas that they believed the COPEWELL process would benefit the community most.

When I first saw the TSLAC invitation to complete a survey for participation in the pilot program a few months after I started working as the Library Director, I was very excited. I had little to no current knowledge about the Gladewater

community, although I had grown up in the area and had worked for the city for a short time in the early 2000s. I saw this as a way to not only learn more about Gladewater,

but to also assist the community that welcomed me very warmly as the new director. The snowstorm Uri in February 2021 caused the library to shut down when the building flooded due to burst water pipes. There was community and city opposition to spending the money to renovate and reopen; however, due to the indomitable spirit of Mrs. Suzanne Bardwell (who passed away before the library reopened), the city received grant monies and donations to complete the work by November 7, 2022. Since we have opened, our patronage has grown by over 150 new patrons, and many more previous patrons have renewed their relationship with the library.

One of the issues that presented itself to me when I became director was the assertion that there would be people in the community who would want the library to remain the library of old. Change was not wanted, and all the things that the library had before were things that the library should have now. That did not seem to fit the spirit of what was currently happening within Gladewater. In the first few months as Library Director, I had witnessed **city and community leaders coming together** to try to repair infrastructure and promote growth. I also sensed an interest in finding new and improved ideas for inclusion that would give agency to community members, something that was completely at odds to the “old ways of doing things,” and something that I was told not to expect. Before we were chosen to participate in the pilot project, I put out feelers to different city and community leaders who I knew personally about being a part of the project. My process was to obtain as many names as possible. After we were selected, and I had a little more information on what the project entailed, I went back through my list and created a second list of finalists to participate following the researcher team’s collaboration stakeholder guidelines.



Brandy Winn

I created another list of new programs being discussed in the community that would benefit from the COPEWELL framework and cross-referenced them. I wanted to include several people who would be open to communication, even if they were not necessarily originally supportive of the library's reopening. The stakeholders needed to be those people who knew of needs in the community, as well as city leadership who could incorporate those needs into programs (and have those needs brought to their attention if they did not already have that knowledge).

As Library Director, I continuously spoke to the stakeholders to maintain excitement about the pilot and reiterated the need for them to participate before the project began and while the project was ongoing. I saw my role as convener and observer, but not the person to direct the conversation since Dr. Eger and Rex were facilitators.

One impression that I learned from this experience is that the more people in leadership talk to each other and the community about what needs there are, it is easier to bring about ideas on how to meet those needs.

Of course, those leaders and community members should also be like-minded in wanting to meet the needs in the community.

Since the pilot project ended in May 2023, there was a major disaster in our area. A large storm system moved through and decimated the power grid, causing widespread power outages, in some places, for over a week. The library's power was out for only one day, and even though we were without power in our homes, we opened the library extra hours and on normal closed days for the community. We were unable to be an official cooling center, but we did have the information for those that had access to medical personnel and food supplies. We opened for those in our community who needed a place to be during the day; we were able to feed them a meal with the help of other city personnel and through donations, and people were able to charge their devices. **I would not have had much of this information or assistance if it had not been for the relationships and knowledge gained during this pilot project.**

In the future, we will be using the COPEWELL process set out by the research team, with our own tweaks, to convene on a more regular basis. At this time, I am looking at quarterly information sessions so that we can discuss next steps and to see if there are other areas of resiliency that would benefit from this type of community collaboration. I view this as an ongoing process and understand that my role going forward will be a little different as both convener and facilitator. I have continued the relationships between the participants, directly and indirectly, and have found other ways to include the project participants so that the library is considered a facilitation space as needed.

My advice to other librarians who wish to conduct a COPEWELL collaboration from start to finish is to gather all the research possible and instigate relationships between the library and area leadership.

It has been my understanding that I am in a unique position where I already had the support and a few friendships among community leaders in Gladewater when I was asked to be Director. However, I have also developed professional and personal relationships outside of those. I am also involved in service clubs and volunteerism in Gladewater and outlying areas. I make sure that I am out in the community as well as in the library. For me, this collaboration is all about relationships and the library being the first place that leaders and community members think of when they need information and assistance for everything. **A library is the one place that can almost be everything to everybody.**

Some basic questions that librarians may want to consider when deciding to conduct a collaboration utilizing COPEWELL:

- What are the main needs in my community?
- Who are the people in need, and who are their leaders?
- Who in my community has the most political and local insights?
- Who is already working on meeting those needs, and what are they doing?
- How would others, working on different needs, benefit from collaborating on a specific need that does not align with theirs?
- How much information does my library already have regarding those needs?

The answers to these questions will provide the librarian the ability to identify those who would be beneficial to the collaboration and provide an argument for why the community collaboration is needed.



Credit: D Christian Allen

Reflections from Library Director Dianne Connery of the Pottsville Library

The THRC COPEWELL pilot study fit well with the kind of work done at the Pottsville Library. Our role in the community is to connect people to the information they need. Sometimes this is through connecting with other people, and other times it is through connecting with needed resources. Because we are the crossroads of the community, it is only natural that library staff serves as conveners.

One of the most important things I have learned as a rural library director is the value of building relationships.



Dianne Connery

Being understaffed and under resourced, as I suspect many small libraries are, we lack the capacity to do everything we would like to do on our own. **We must collaborate with others if we want to increase our impact.**

Selecting stakeholders for this project following the collaboration guidelines from the research team made me think about the diversity of expertise that would be needed in emergency planning and disaster response. As a result, I reached out to some individuals and organizations who I had only limited interaction with previously. Many of them had never met one another. When thinking about community resiliency, it is important to consider the breadth of issues that would be involved. This opened the door to participants beyond the “usual suspects” who almost always engage with community issues.

Because I was a hybrid member of this group (serving as both convener and participant), I was careful to allow the other stakeholders to provide input before adding my own comments in both focus groups. If I were conducting a collaboration without outside assistance, I would facilitate the conversation without adding my opinions. Through follow-up questions, such as “Could you say more about _____,” the convener can drill down for deeper responses and draw out conversation around specific topics of interest.

During the pilot project, I communicated by email with several individuals in the group about related library programs. Having participated in the focus groups created shared interests for discussion. One of the stakeholders connected me to an economic development official, and the three of us are meeting currently after the pilot project ended to discuss a federal grant proposal. I also learned that the participants developed relationships with each other, including one asking another to join their organization’s Board of Directors.

Convening influential stakeholders around significant issues establishes the library as a **community catalyst**. Building relationships with local power brokers (especially beyond expected issues) amplifies our work.

Because Library Directors and librarians often have to overcome public perception of what we do, we must create opportunities to inform people with the power to influence decisions. Librarians need to be considered a necessary part of community decision-making. **Let's insist on a seat at the table.** Elevating awareness of the essential service we provide will result in increased funding. Libraries are the ideal institution to strengthen civic engagement and respond to emerging challenges.

Our library is planning a new building, and I reached out to the THRC research team and the Pottsboro collaboration participants to ask for their input about including an emergency operations center. This sort of interaction serves two purposes: 1. Benefiting from their diverse expertise as stake holders for the current project, and 2. Strengthening our relationships, which can have long-term implications. I have found that cross-sector coalitions lead to future opportunities. Networking with stakeholders opens up new funding sources and strengthens the library's role in the community.

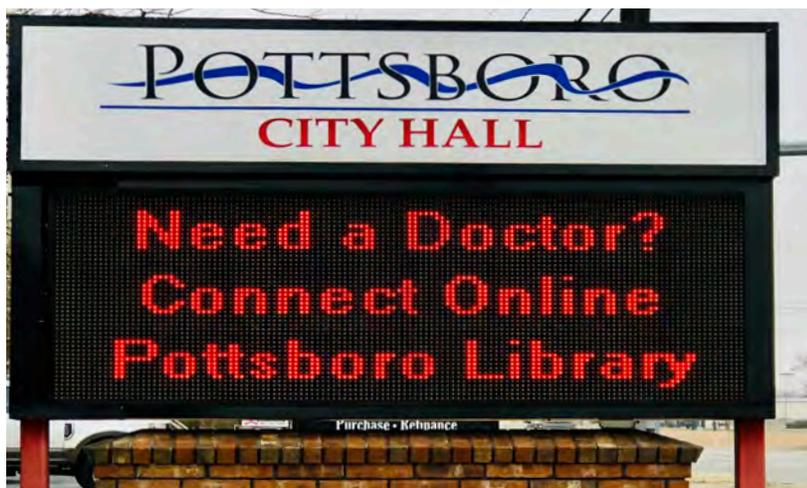
For library staff considering a community collaboration and COPEWELL convening, I would recommend exploring the Conversation Café resources available through the American Library Association. Toolkits, free on-line training, and a facilitation skills guide are available at no cost. Not only will it prepare you for this project, but also you may feel empowered to host regular community conversations on a variety of topics.

Through convening stakeholders, librarians help the community create knowledge. As Lankes notes in *The Atlas of New Librarianship* (2016, p. 31), the mission of librarians is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities, and knowledge is created through conversation.

Dianne's References

American Library Association. (2017, December 28). Conversation Café. <http://www.ala.org/tools/librarianstransform/libraries-transforming-communities/conversation-caf%C3%A9> Document ID: 151deecf-2603-4a01-a65e-a899b3f8a142

Lankes, R. D. (2016). *The atlas of new librarianship*. MIT Press.



TIPS FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AND COPEWELL IMPLEMENTATION

In closing, we organized **central tips for future librarian and other community conveners** to host their own community collaborations and adaptations of COPEWELL for their specific resiliency planning needs. We begin with some general recruitment

and retention reflections from this research (see “Researchers’ Recruitment and Retention Reflection”) and primarily focus on tips readers can apply in their own community collaborations utilizing the COPEWELL framework.

RESEARCHERS’ RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION REFLECTION

Conducting applied projects with busy community leaders and members requires a great deal of flexibility. Conveners never know when a stakeholder’s availability will change, if a site will become unavailable, or if new information might completely alter a research objective. Libraries or communities seeking to organize community collaboration meetings and implement COPEWELL as part of their resiliency building activities may face scheduling and other logistical challenges.

During recruitment, we encountered individuals who were designated as ideal candidates who did not have interest or, more often, no current availability to join the project. The research team and Library Directors planned for this possibility by identifying more participants than were strictly needed for the focus groups; in the end, each site was able to secure between seven and eight participants who were interested and available for collaborating.

Despite including a solid number of participants, the research team also expected that participants might fall out of research activities (e.g., unable to complete all parts of the project). This fallout did occur during the project; scheduling several individuals, all with demanding schedules, meant that one to two participants per site missed one or the other focus group (including for personal emergencies), and one participant was unavailable to participate in an exit interview. The research team contacted those who could not attend a focus group with summaries and encouraged their participation in the exit interviews. This way, we were able to modify the exit interview protocol to capture participant feedback related to the missed session.

Moreover, participant responses to the pre-survey caused the research team to modify the protocol for the second focus group session. With only 90 minutes available for the session, collective rescoring (as originally planned) was much less feasible, and we feared it would push the conversation into consensus without space for divergent views. Instead, we focused more heavily on stakeholders’ individual rationales for subdomains to drive discussion. Taking this route allowed for more qualitative feedback that will inform the team’s recommendations for action items in the individual site reports.

★ **TIP:** When planning participants and activities, **embrace flexibility as conveners.** Prepare for sometimes hearing “no” to invitations to the community collaboration and fallout throughout the process will help prepare the group to move forward in their conversations and planning.

In the exit interviews, we asked participants to identify the advice they would provide to other stakeholders or librarians interested in participating in a community collaboration around resiliency or other local needs.

We **thematized their tips alongside our researcher observations** to help future librarian conveners and/or researchers design community collaborations that involve implementing and translating COPEWELL to their unique context.

The tips that emerged from this pilot project include:

- ▶ **Dedicate Time and Energy to Scheduling Processes.** Conveners should plan ahead for working around participants' time-consuming schedules, especially when involving community leaders and higher-level regional or statewide stakeholders. One participant suggested that a member of the convening organization should be exclusively dedicated to scheduling sessions. Because a few participants could not attend both sessions, others wished the full group were present in both sessions. Ideally, all stakeholders should be present for the sessions, as the process may be limited when different participants are absent for each focus group. However, as we note above, flexibility and contingent planning is needed when scheduling challenges will most likely arise.
- ▶ **Aim for a Smaller Participant Group.** We recommend that librarians or other conveners aim **for six to eight stakeholders** per focus group session. Smaller groups are easier to facilitate and provide more space for participants to engage with the group. Larger groups of stakeholders require the coordination of multiple breakout groups per focus group session. For communities who desire larger groups convening simultaneously, we suggest that facilitators see the COPEWELL implementation guide(s) (see Appendix F).
- ▶ **Establish Confidentiality and Data Use Plans Before Beginning.** Conveners should discuss confidentiality with potential participants before

starting collaboration activities. The research team's informed consent process (Appendix A) followed a strict, formal Institutional Review Board protocol that will not apply to non-researchers. Non-researchers can decide to obtain informal verbal consent that the information coming out of collaborative sessions will remain internal, and that participants will not be identified in any reports. They may also choose to publicly identify all participants. **Offering confidentiality can give participants room to more authentically share their experiences;** if stakeholders are named, some may be reluctant to share anything that they perceive to be critical of the community.

- ▶ **Consider Hosting Three (or More) Focus Group Sessions.** Our pilot participants largely wished for more time to plan initial next steps for community resiliency planning. Many noted FG2 felt more rushed and had less space for action-planning than FG1. In fact, when we designed the project, we initially hoped to host three focus groups. However we recognize that our project timeline and our participants' busy schedules that a commitment of two focus groups and one exit interview was still a big ask.

We thus recommend a three-part focus group process to better serve a community collaboration (and even more sessions should a group be willing to continue to convene): (1) open conversation on community needs and features, (2) one COPEWELL self-assessment rubric discussion and needs-based communication, and (3) brainstorming first steps, future formations of the group, opening steps, and future use of COPEWELL to work through more open/generative brainstorming.

Conveners should weigh the decision of a third (or more) sessions with time commitments for participants. One participant shared that they would likely not have participated if the individual sessions had lasted more than 90 minutes, which is much shorter than an ideal COPEWELL workshop in their implementation guides. Another shared that they would be willing to sustain meeting more regularly, such as once a quarter, to continue resiliency planning in shorter sessions. We thus believe our focus group approach can generate broader and sustained participation than the longer, ideal COPEWELL workshops.

- ▶ **Be Cautious of Jumping to Quick Solutions.** As researchers, we noticed a tension that was different in the two focus groups. One group wanted more concrete final action steps (not really discussing many initial steps), and the other wanted to jump quickly to one or two solutions and branding the outreach. Principles of collaboration remind us that **jumping to a solution can foreclose first understanding the connected tensions, needs, conflicting views, and diverse perspectives.** Solutions also must include possibilities for all community members and become a potential stepping-stone to invite more voices to the table rather than fixated on only one solution. We recommend conveners balance the tension between a lack of next steps with too rapid answers. An example of this challenge was noted in a Gladewater exit interview, where a stakeholder noted that choosing a COPEWELL rubric felt rushed and quickly pushed to Emergency Management because of the formal emergency leaders in the room without much space for discussion, something we also noticed as researchers.
- ▶ **Recruit a Diverse, Broad Cross-Section of the Community.** While the group for each site was comprised of stakeholders from different expertise areas and backgrounds that we helped the Library Directors select, there were nonetheless segments of the community that were underrepresented or not represented, including because of who was able to say yes to participate with their life and work needs. A participant from the Lee-Bardwell group shared:



We kind of know, you know, that there are those people in our community. But without having somebody who's really talked to them and knows them, it almost kind of dehumanizes [them] [The focus groups were] very enlightening because it made... it more personal. So, I want to try and try harder to do better for our community.

A participant from Pottsville also complimented our project design as gathering a varying group of people “from all different walks of life.” She recommended that future conveners should make sure all participants understand the rule that this is a collaboration and “not a select few” who make decisions. She even planned to use our focus group approach in the future as a city leader to gather voices together to make change.

- ▶ **Embrace Diverse Meeting Formats.** While participants indicated an in-person meeting would be fine, bringing people together via Zoom allows for some flexibility. People can join from home or during a break at work, and they can pop in and out without distraction as needed based on their circumstances. If meetings happen during off hours, people can join without worrying about their commute or childcare or eldercare needs. While some participants appreciated the Zoom format, others longed for in-person connections. To make the case for in-person meetings, a Pottsville group member shared: “I think I’m really burned out from COVID, and I like meeting in person again. Which is hilarious, because before COVID I was so exhausted from in-person meetings and driving... It’s just more like, even I kind of miss people, and I’m a total introvert.” Another participant suggested beginning on Zoom first and having a future in-person session would work best. We recommend that conveners brainstorm accessible and diverse meeting formats with their specific group.

▶ **Engage All Participants as Facilitators.**

Stakeholders from both pilot sites noted that our work as facilitators helped propel the conversation and welcome differing perspectives. At the same time, a tip a few interviewees shared is ensuring quieter participants are fully included. We had a rule about this (see Appendix B), but some participants were quieter, more observing, and others were more vocal, even potentially taking up extra space. A Gladewater member noticed that participants in formal roles and also with more commanding personalities spoke “too much,” including himself. He noted the role of communication styles and personalities as shaping the conversation where quieter participants (especially with women due to gendering and those not in formal roles) spoke less versus male leaders and louder personalities steered the conversation even with our facilitation asking for multiple voices.

▶ **Encourage and Cultivate Connections and Networking Potentials.**

A parallel goal of community collaborations is to bring people together to enhance or generate connections. We recommend that conveners provide ample space for people to engage with one another’s ideas and thoughts, as the collaborative process may be the first time some will have met. A Pottsboro participant recommended even more time to build relationships, including icebreakers and more space for “getting to know” each other first. Many stakeholders shared that they would participate in a future community collaboration because of the potential to connect with new community members. For example, another Pottsboro participant lauded the process of networking and meeting new folks that she was now connected to “outside of the study.” Many stakeholders shared communication they had with other stakeholders outside of our project, including working together on grants, new planning initiatives, cross-sectional partnerships, and even debriefing conflict in decision-making together. As researchers, we have already continued to collaborate with members of the project on their applied goals and our translational health work as a result of this project. As one Pottsboro participant shared in FG1:

“This was the first time in a very long time, I felt like I was at a meeting that wasn’t wasting my time. And that we were actually productive... It’s rare when you have this focused, kind of concise, wanting to move forward together. ... I didn’t even know we had a new [city leader] ... so, I emailed her right after the first session when [the Library Director] made that connection. We went to lunch for about two hours and then, yesterday, we just voted her to join my Board of Directors. So, that all happened because of this project ... I loved hearing some of the things that she said in these focus groups, that I was able to then take back to my board and be like, “Wow! We have someone who wants to get stuff done for this small community.”

▶ **Participate in the Process with Honesty and Willingness to Listen.**

Many participants felt they had the chance to authentically reflect on their community and share with others across both focus groups. This spirit of participation is critical to unearthing genuine community needs and ideating realistic next steps. As a Gladewater participant said:

“Those are the people that I’m trying to protect, right, and being able to have a situation where they’re free to say what they’re thinking, to have an intelligent conversation without it being emotional or political ... this really brought a good, tempered approach to, “We’re going to hear everybody and tell us truly what your experience is.”

- ▶ **Remember that Disagreement can be Generative.** Jumping to quick consensus can actually silence possibilities and cause groups to miss key need areas, as we argued above. A Pottsboro stakeholder cautioned that the interactions of the group could be so “polite” that there may be other differing perspectives that can be left out. Having contrasting perspectives and working through conflict to understand one another’s views is a central tenet of collaboration (see Deetz & Simpson, 2004).
- ▶ **Welcome Critiques of COPEWELL and the Community Collaboration Process.** While our research design sought to translate COPEWELL to rural Texas communities with libraries as conveners, some participants were more readily able to see the connections and possibilities of COPEWELL and libraries than others. For example, some stakeholders **felt that COPEWELL provided a clear structure** for generating open, authentic communication. A Gladewater member shared that the process helped him see that, “we had the spectrum from ‘it’s not bad but we gotta get better’ to ‘we think it’s pretty good.’ And, to me, that helped facilitate some very interesting discussions.” He went on to say that this discussion led to promising identification of next steps, sharing, “And then everybody kind of brought ideas to the table ... you know, if we kind of take bits and pieces of them all and kind of put them together, I think we are on the way to solving the [communication] gap that’s there.” He further shared that the library made logical sense as the hub of emergency response information; such a hub is not only informative for the community but provides a neutral space for those involved in emergency communication to ensure that they are communicating the same information. In contrast, some participants noted that **the COPEWELL focus group felt much less generative**, open, and impactful than the first group, as it felt more restrictive, less helpful to spend so much time on rankings, and also rushed in time overall. A Pottsboro member bluntly shared, “The second meeting didn’t feel as impactful,” worrying the conversation would “go nowhere” after the group ended like other community plans.

Others **struggled to understand how libraries and/or community members could connect to resiliency planning and COPEWELL**. A participant from Gladewater repeatedly shared how libraries could be community leaders and conveners, but he questioned the appropriateness of librarians for leading COPEWELL. He felt, in particular, with the Emergency Management rubric that there was a significant disconnect with why libraries would be involved in COPEWELL planning. One important tip we noticed is to consider how and when to introduce COPEWELL so that participants are open to their own informal conversation before COPEWELL became the dominant frame. Some participants, like another member in Pottsboro, felt “very lost” and did not “understand the system” of COPEWELL or why it was being introduced in FG2.

Because COPEWELL is a formulaic, scripted process (despite welcoming adaptations like our own in this project and process), it can give both direction and clear pathways while simultaneously being restrictive and formal. Thus, we encourage conveners to be open to critiques, feedback, and pivoting the process as needed based on the collective.

In closing, while our approach in this pilot adapted COPEWELL as a framework, readers and library conveners could also choose to use our community collaboration approach to build other open collaborations on community resiliency, public health, local challenges, and more without a prescriptive model like COPEWELL.

We firmly believe that community collaborations and having diverse voices and perspectives involved in participatory decision-making can generate hopeful, inclusive futures for communities across our state of Texas and beyond.

We look forward to learning with other librarians and conveners as they adapt their own collaboration processes for community resiliency planning and responses. We close with a Roadmap for COPEWELL Implementation.

A ROADMAP FOR A LIBRARIAN-LED COPEWELL IMPLEMENTATION

There is no wrong way to implement COPEWELL thanks to the framework's modular set up. The research team, however, recognizes that COPEWELL can appear overwhelming at first glance, so we compiled a condensed version of our approach presented in this report that incorporates a third focus group session. **We hope that this roadmap enables other librarians, communities, and/or researchers to successfully design a community collaboration that uses the COPEWELL framework and to adapt it for their specific needs.** For researchers, or those working with partner(s) affiliated with a research institution, remember to review any applicable IRB requirements and processes before beginning implementation activities to ensure adherence with institutional guidelines.



Session Setup

- **Select an approach to the COPEWELL self-assessment(s).** We suggest prioritizing a **single self-assessment rubric**, which allows for a targeted assessment and prolonged discussion. **Two possible approaches include:**
 - **Use COPEWELL computational model data** to identify the priority self-assessment to pursue in sessions from COPEWELL's website. If this approach is taken, include COPEWELL overview information in the stakeholder invitations.
 - Plan the initial focus group **around open dialogue with stakeholders** that discusses their community and its resiliency strengths and challenges. Use participatory decision-making to collectively decide upon the self-assessment. If this approach is used, clearly explain open communication and diverging views as a goal and part of participant expectations in the stakeholder invitations.
- **Identify stakeholders.** Whether you are recruiting participants or working with a community partner to do so, it is important to think through the voices being brought to the table. Aim to recruit a mix of community, local business, education, healthcare, local government, and county government experiences. Many potential participants, particularly at the local and rural community level, wear more than one hat; recruit participants that can speak to multiple experiences to keep focus group numbers manageable.
 - As mentioned above, conveners should aim to recruit **six to eight participants** for COPEWELL sessions.
 - **If a larger participant pool is desired**, increase the number of facilitators accordingly for any additional groups in the session and plan time for sharing out to larger groups. COPEWELL's implementation guides of simultaneous session instructions are helpful here for those seeking to use a larger scale approach.
 - Include **an overview of COPEWELL** so that participants have a good understanding of the framework ahead of the FG1 (or FG2). If the conveners are using COPEWELL computational data to begin, they should include an overview of COPEWELL so that participants have a

good understanding of the framework ahead of FG1. If they are using an open collaboration approach, they should explain the focus will be on resiliency planning and wait to introduce COPEWELL until after FG1.

- **Dedicated scheduling.** We recommend that a team member set aside a portion of their time specifically for coordinating the schedules of both the convener team and stakeholders. It can be difficult to wrangle the calendars of even a small group, especially when multiple sessions are required to complete implementation activities.
 - **Expect stakeholders to have busy schedules;** the scheduler might have to check in with individuals multiple times (via email or phone) to complete scheduling.
 - Anticipate last-minute cancellations or emergencies to arise and create a back-up plan to support the participation of stakeholders who miss a session (e.g., individual meetings, catch-up emails).



Credit: Anete Lusina

Focus Group 1 (FG1)

- ❑ **State implementation goals and expectations.** At the top of the session, take time to review community collaboration goals and expectations, expectations of participants, and establish ground rules for participation (e.g., there is room for disagreement, but hostility will result in removal from the group).
- ❑ **Get to know one another and perceptions of the community.** In a small or rural location, participants might already know one another. It is still important, however, to **provide space for stakeholders to introduce themselves** and provide the group with the background or experience they represent. This helps participants authentically engage with one another and will inform their subsequent comments regarding community resiliency strengths and challenges.
- ❑ **Open conversations about the community.** Create a space for collaboration about the community's strengths, its current challenges, and its experiences with disasters and major events. **Be sure to include all voices at the table in this conversation** and welcome in quieter stakeholders so that unique, divergent views are shared. Also solicit other perspectives that may be missing from "the table" about resiliency needs.
- ❑ **Introduce COPEWELL.** Regardless of whether the self-assessment rubric was selected ahead of FG1, or is meant to be selected during FG1, the conveners should provide a more detailed review of the COPEWELL framework. This should include providing a walk through of a self-assessment rubric so that stakeholders understand what they will be expected to do to prepare for following sessions.
- ❑ **Clearly communicate next steps.** At the end of the session, provide detailed information about expectations and timelines for upcoming activities and sessions.

Pre-Survey

We elected to modify the COPEWELL Emergency Management and Social Capital and Cohesion rubrics into a survey format (see Appendix D) so that participants could complete individual assessments between sessions, freeing up more time for discussion. Be sure to send a PDF version of the full self-assessment rubric to participants following the first session for their personal reference/use. Using our example:

- ❑ **Develop a survey** that encompasses the chosen rubric's individual assessment components. Clearly communicate that action planning will occur in a future session and is not a concern for the survey. Ask participants to keep their personal copy, and to bring it to the second session.
- ❑ **Summarize and thematize survey responses.** The implementation team can use the individual survey responses to aggregate domain item scores, and develop themes based on the open-ended rationale. Compile these into an easily shareable format (such as PowerPoint slides) to be used to prompt discussion in FG2.
 - If conveners do not want to do a pre-survey option, they could also ask stakeholders to email their rubrics ahead of time and organize the responses more informally.



Credit: Mikael Blomkvist

Focus Group 2 (FG2)

- **Reestablish goals and ground rules.** Some time will have passed between the FG1 and this one; remind participants of the process goals, FG2's goals, and the ground rules.
- **Use summarized and thematized survey responses to generate conversation.** These examples can be used to expand on the rationale behind the individual assessments, identify primary concerns, and check in with the group about the validity of identified themes. Facilitators will also use this opportunity to develop shared understandings of diverse scores for each domain item. This process should **open new lines of questioning** and provide participants an opportunity to engage with one another about raised issues.
- **Encourage divergent responses and even conflict about each rubric item.** Rather than focus only on consensus, **encourage dissensus and addressing diverging viewpoints in this session.** Stakeholders may be quick to jump to solutions, but keep the focus on understanding the complex problems from diverse viewpoints in the community. Discussing the complexities of the problems may even take two sessions (requiring a fourth session before solution talk is possible). Jumping to solutions too quickly silences diverse perspectives and fails to fully understand the complexity of the resiliency challenges. Conflict should not be silenced but instead discussed openly via the facilitator.
- **Prime participants for collective decision-making.** The second session should get participants ready to identify key initial action items to begin to address or improve the concerns raised. Ask participants to think of two to three initial action items per primary concerns of interest, and to be ready to discuss them during the final session.

Focus Group 3 (FG3)

- **Reestablish goals and ground rules.** Once again, orient participants around the team's expectations for the session and remind them of the ground rules for the session.
- **Integrate collaborative decision-making.** FG3 should be used to continue to understand the complex problems, consider who else needs to be a stakeholder in next steps, and generate action items for first steps toward problem solving. Facilitators will primarily be asking open and probing questions here, leaving the bulk of discussion to participants. They should especially ask stakeholders about **suggested parties to be involved in action items**, expected roles or responsibilities, and a reasonable timeline for completion.
- **Remind stakeholders that this is just the first step.** Community collaborations are not short-term processes and can take months and even years to move toward specific, multi-layered outcomes. These sessions are **identifying and planning first steps**, which will require continued commitments as individual representatives to connect to their own organizations and areas to sustain work together for communal resiliency planning.
- **Plan broader connections.** While the conveners took great care to create groups with diverse stakeholders, other community leaders and members will be crucial to next steps and action together. **Plan who else needs to be invited "to the table"** as next steps are planned and welcome their feedback, perspectives, and critiques of the process thus far.

Community collaboration solutions are focused on addressing the needs of the collective, which will continue to evolve and change.

Exit Interviews (Optional)

- **Exit interviews are designed to be evaluative of the implementation process.** The goal is to understand how participants felt about their participation, including what worked well, where challenges arose, whether they understood the goals of COPEWELL, whether they see value in continued participation in the community collaboration, and to gauge sustainability of implementation efforts. As researchers, these interviews were crucial for our adaptation of COPEWELL. Librarians may or may not find exit interviews helpful. They may also consider shorter, more informal spaces of feedback like tip boxes, brief exit surveys with 2-3 open-ended questions, or open office hours at the library to discuss the collaboration.

Reporting

- **At the end of all sessions, the conveners and potentially fellow stakeholders should produce a report of activities.** This report will summarize activities, identify key challenges, and collate expected action items. This report will both document session outcomes and serve as record to evaluate as action items are addressed for the community.

Reporting about the process and next steps from the collaboration also allows conveners to build broader community support and understand limitations of proposed action items earlier from broader voices.





LIBRARIANS AS CONVENERS

References

- Aabo, S., & Audunson, R. (2012). Use of library space and the library as place. *Library & Information Science Research*, 34(2), 138-49.
- Alajmi, B. (2016). When the nation is in crisis: Libraries respond. *Library Management*, 37 (8/9), 465-81.
- American Psychological Association (APA). (2022, May). Resilience. <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience/>
- Backus, J. E. B., & Lacroix, E.-M. (2022). Providing health information for patients, families and the public. *Information Services & Use*, 42(2), 171-180. <https://doi.org/10.3233/ISU-220149>
- Bin Hashim, L., & Mokhtar, W. N. H. W. (2012). Preparing new era librarians and information professionals: Trends and issues. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(7), 151-155.
- Bishop, B.W., & Veil, S.R. (2013). Public libraries as post-crisis information hubs. *Public Library Quarterly*, 32 (1): 33-45.
- Brobst, J. L., Mandel, L.H., & McClure, C.R. (2012). Public libraries and crisis management: Roles of public libraries in hurricane/disaster preparedness and response. In C. Hager (Ed.), *Crisis Information Management* (pp. 155-73). Chandos Publishing.
- Burke, L. (2002). The future role of librarians in the Virtual Library Environment. *The Australian Library Journal*, 51(1), 31-45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049670.2002.10755975>
- CHERR. (2022). COPEWELL. <https://www.cherr.txst.edu/current-research/copewell.html>
- COPEWELL. (2022a). About COPEWELL. <https://copewellmodel.org/about-copewell-0>
- COPEWELL. (2022b). COPEWELL framework. <https://copewellmodel.org/copewell-framework-0>
- COPEWELL. (2022c). Computational model & data. <https://copewellmodel.org/computational-model-data-0>
- COPEWELL. (2022d). Self-assessment tools. <https://copewellmodel.org/self-assessment-tools-0>
- COPEWELL. (2022e). Resources for change. <https://copewellmodel.org/resources-for-change>
- COPEWELL. (2022f). COPEWELL in practice. <https://copewellmodel.org/copewell-in-practice>
- COPEWELL (2022g). COPEWELL FAQs. <https://copewellmodel.org/about/copewell-faqs>
- COPEWELL (2022h). Emergency management self-assessment. <https://copewellmodel.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/copewell-emergencymanagement-rubric.pdf>
- COPEWELL (2022i). Community functioning self-assessment. <https://copewellmodel.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/copewell-communityfunctioning-rubric.pdf>
- Deetz, S., & Simpson, J. (2004). Critical organizational dialogue: Open formation and the demand of "otherness." In R. Anderson, L. Baxter & K. Cissna (Eds.), *Dialogue: Theorizing difference in communication studies*. Sage Books.

Eger, E.K. (2017). Brainstorming and creating requisitediversity. Scholar Spotlight essay in *Interorganizational collaboration: Ethics and skills for diverse groups and communities* (Eds. Heath, R.G., & Isbell, M.G.) (pp. 106-108). Waveland Press, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.waveland.com/browse.php?t=707>

Eger, E.K., Long, R., & Tonciu, A. (2023). The Pottsboro Library community collaboration process: A case study on community resiliency and COPEWELL implementation in Pottsboro, Texas. Translational Health Research Center, Texas State University. <https://bit.ly/Pottsboro>

Falconnier, J., & Hecht, M. (2022, October). Rural counties face hospital closures. Rural Counties Face Hospital Closures. <https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/fiscal-notes/2022/oct/hospitals.php>

Omeiza, M.E., & Larne, F. A. (2019). The evolving roles of libraries and librarians in the 21st century. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal). 2867. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/2867>

Heath, R. G. (2007). Rethinking community collaboration through a dialogic lens: Creativity, democracy, and diversity in community organizing. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 21(2), 145-171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318907306032>

Heath, R. G., & Frey, L. R. (2004). Ideal collaboration: A conceptual framework of community collaboration. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 28(1), 189-231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2004.11679036>

Heath, R.G. & Isbell, M.G. (2017). *Interorganizational collaboration: Ethics and skills for diverse groups and communities*. Waveland Press, Inc.

Heath, R. G., & Isbell, M. G. (2021). Theorizing principled collaboration. *Communication Theory*, 31(4), 654-674. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtz039>

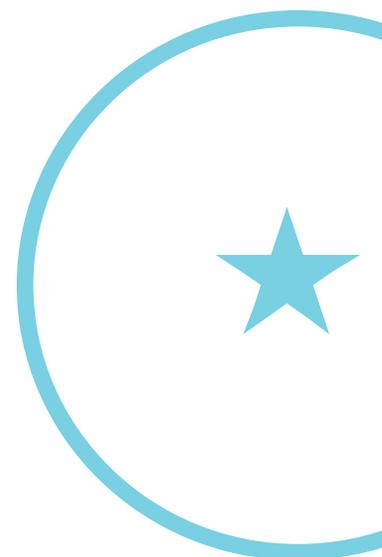
Long, R., Eger, E.K., & Tonciu, A. (2023). The Lee-Bardwell Public Library community collaboration process: A case study adapting COPEWELL for community resiliency in Gladewater, Texas. Translational Health Research Center, Texas State University. <https://bit.ly/Gladewater>

Mardis, M., Strover, S., & Jones, F. (2020). Co-constructing disaster response: Researchers and practitioners collaborating for resilience in small and rural libraries. ALA Midwinter meeting. Retrieved from: <https://texasdpi.org/ala-midwinter-meeting-2020/>

McClure S., Oths K., Agomo C., et al. (2022). *Building a ground game: How to conduct a community needs assessment and launch a CHW workforce development coalition*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. <https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/2022117-communihealth-local-al.pdf>

Schneider, J., Long, R., Treviño, B., & Repasky, E. (2023). *Leveraging the COPEWELL framework to foster community resilience and research networks*. Translational Health Research Center, Texas State University. <https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/16533>

Whitney, W., Keselman, A., & Humphreys, B. (2017). Libraries and librarians: Key partners for progress in health literacy research and practice. *Information Services & Use*, 37(1), 85-100. <https://doi.org/10.3233/ISU-170821>





LIBRARIANS AS CONVENERS

Appendices

To support engaged community research, we **share research materials designed by the Primary Investigator Dr. Elizabeth K. Eger with the support of Co-Investigator Rex Long for future researchers** to use and modify these steps of the research. These materials are also prepared for librarians and other community leaders who want to use them to convene their own COPEWELL community collaborations to support our partnership with TSLAC.

We appreciate McClure et al. (2022) for modeling sharing tangible resources in their applied report on CommuniVax in Alabama and their implementation of COPEWELL in their specific setting. These tools were developed as an engaged communication research project sponsored by Texas State University's Translational Health Research Center with community partners; please modify any of these tools to best fit your local needs.

We ask readers using this report to cite our report in your conference papers, publications, and/or community resources and news so we can follow the impact of this applied research.

We would also love to hear from you how you are using the report in your community by contacting us at eger@txstate.edu.

APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN COLLABORATION

The following recruitment and invitation email can be used by a researcher, librarian convener, and/or community leader to recruit community members to participate in the community resiliency collaboration.

Hello, [Community Leader/or Member]!

My name is [Librarian Convener or Researcher], and I'm reaching out to invite you to join a pilot study regarding Texas libraries and their potential to be the conveners for their communities, including for local resiliency and health needs, connecting community members and leaders to address local needs and reimagine the future of libraries. Our Library [Library Name] is participating in this pilot study, and we hope our participation will showcase how this work might be scaled up for use in libraries across the state. [Introduce library, research, and sponsored partners as relevant.] We selected you because of your roles in [industry/organization/local government] and feel that you are an ideal representative to speak to our community's needs. If you take part in this study, we will ask you to take part in two 90-minute focus groups (including the second focus group with a 15-30 minute rubric and pre-test survey) consisting of 5-8 participants each, and one individual exit interview (60-75 minutes). All participation will take place via Zoom.

Per the research team, participation in this study is voluntary, and can be stopped at any time, for any reason, without penalty. They will not use the names of individuals in our reporting of findings, though our library's and our town's name will be listed in the report per our request to be named. While participant identities will be kept confidential, naming the library site may lead to the discovery of the librarian's identity. Further, other focus group participants will know each other's identity, though the research team asks that all participants refrain from sharing any information from the focus groups to protect confidentiality, including the identities of other participants.

If phone:

I am sending you the research team's verbal consent document now. Please take a moment to review this, as it provides more information regarding study goals as well as potential risks, benefits, and available compensation for participation. If you would like to participate in this study, let me know, and I will organize a meeting with you and the research team; they will confirm your consent to participate, answer any questions you might have, and cover next steps for participation.

If email: Please review the attached consent document, which further outlines the goal of the study along with potential risks and benefits. I have CC'ed the research team on this email - do not hesitate to reach out to them if you have any questions! If you would like to join the study, please respond and indicate whether you read and understood the consent document, and that you would like to work with the research team. After they receive your response, they will be in touch to confirm your consent to participate, answer questions, and cover next steps.

To participate in this research or ask questions about this research, please contact the principal investigator, [at X contact info].

Best,

[Librarian Convener or Researcher]



APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

For our focus group 1 (FG1) interview guide design, we decided to wait to introduce COPEWELL until after an open community collaboration and to help the group select a self-assessment rubric based on their open conversation. See more about this above in our report. This FG1 interview guide is focused on community resiliency and the role of the library and introduces COPEWELL. It could be modified to other important local topics and needs that a librarian may want to convene, such as workforce development, public health needs, and more.

Welcome and Process Overview

Today's focus group will be the first session to get to know your community, each of you as leaders, the role the library plays in your community, and your community resiliency needs.

A few house rules:

- ▶ Please try to avoid talking over one another. We know this can be difficult given our Zoom format, but this will help make sure our transcripts are as clear as possible. We will ask you to use the "raise hand" feature on Zoom, as it will help us know who wants to speak next.
- ▶ This is meant to be more of a conversation than an interview. Please share your thoughts and engage with the comments of others!
- ▶ Because we have a group contributing together, not every person will answer every question. Keep in mind we want to hear from everyone in this focus group, so we will ask you to create space for others to speak.
- ▶ As facilitators, we may have to cut off a response or not go onto all raised hands to move to the next question. Please know that we will only do this in order to ensure we cover all topics in the time allotted.
- ▶ There is room for disagreement. We ask that you treat everyone's comments with respect. We will ask participants to leave if they become too disrespectful.

Introduction and Community and Library Overview Questions

1. To begin, we would love to get to know each person. We know many of you may know one another, or some of you may be meeting for the first time like us. Please take about 1-2 minutes to tell us your name, and a bit about your background, your leadership role in the community, and what pronouns we should use to refer to you.
 - a. First, we will ask our librarian to start off the introductions.
 - b. Each participant will introduce themselves to one another and the research team.
2. Now that we know a bit about each of you, we want to hear about your perspectives on your city and local communities. How would you describe your community to someone who has never visited it before?
 - a. What makes your city and community unique in the state of Texas? [Probe]
 - b. What is it like to live in your community? [Probe]
3. What stories do you like to share when you tell others about your community?
 - a. What are you most proud of in your community? [Probe]

Library Questions

1. When you think of your community's library [the pilot library name], what images or experiences come to mind?
2. How does your library serve the local community?
 - a. What examples of programs or services stand out to you that best support the community? [Probe]
 - b. What groups and demographics of community members are most served currently in the library? [Probe]

- c. What groups or demographics do you think the library could help serve more in the future? [Probe]
3. (How) do you connect to the library currently in your leadership and/or organizational role?
- a. If participant does not connect to the library currently: How do you envision you could connect to the library in the future? [Probe]

Resiliency and Community History Questions

Our remaining questions concern resiliency and your community's experiences and histories.

1. What are the biggest challenges and needs currently facing your community?
2. Do you consider your community to be in a rural area?
 - a. **Researcher Note:** The librarians said they do consider the communities to be rural, but it will be important to ask the larger group.
 - b. If so, how does being in a rural area in Texas impact your community's needs?
 - c. If not, how would you describe your area/ community? How does your area's size/location impact the community's needs?
3. What health or resiliency disturbances or extreme events has your community faced in the last five years?
 - a. Can you share some examples of how [extreme event/disturbance] has impacted your community? Is your community still impacted by [extreme event/disturbance], and, if so, in what ways? [Probe]
 - b. Are there other historic disturbances that have impacted your community that you see as stills haping the community or have shaped its historical responses? [Probe]
4. What are the biggest hurdles your community faces in preparing all community members to plan for future health events and/or disasters?
 - a. What are the biggest barriers you have noticed

to city planning around disaster or emergency management in the past? [Probe]

- b. What are the biggest health challenges your community faces? [Probe]
 - c. Which of these do you imagine would be more difficult to address in an emergency or disaster? In what way? [Probe]
5. Whose voices and experiences are often included when addressing community challenges?
 6. Whose voices and experiences may have been left out in the past when addressing community challenges?
 7. Given the challenges we have discussed, what role might you play as a leader and/or your organization might play in potentially addressing these challenges in the future?
 8. Given the challenges we have discussed, what role do you see the library potentially playing in addressing these challenges in the future?

Break (5 minutes)

Thank you for sharing your collective experiences in your community and with your library. We will now take about a 5-minute break for [research team/library team] to convene to present you with 2-3 options for the second focus group based on the COPEWELL framework. We will move you into an individual breakout room for the break to momentarily to discuss the best self-assessment tool for preparing for our FG2.

During the break (Researcher note): The team should briefly compare their notes and choose the 2-3 COPEWELL rubric slides from the COPEWELL rubrics we provided to IRB to help the group see the themes we are seeing in their responses. To aid in selection, the team will connect the needs expressed in the first hour of the focus group to the COPEWELL framework to suggest two possible areas of focus.

Introducing COPEWELL

Welcome back from the quick break! Based on your amazing responses in the first part of the focus group, we noticed 2-3 key themes we can explore in the second focus group, and we want to make that choice together.

Team member provides a two-minute overview of the COPEWELL framework and why we are using it in this project (they could choose to share slides from COPEWELL images as we did or another approach).

- ▶ COPEWELL, or the composite of post-event wellbeing, was developed by a team from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Delaware, and it is comprised of a suite of evidence-based tools that leverage county-level data to help communities identify gaps and improve community functioning before, during, and after disasters (COPEWELL, 2023). Communities that implement COPEWELL have an opportunity to bring together community, county, state, or federal level partners to improve community resilience. Here is a visualization of the COPEWELL framework: <https://www.copewellmodel.org/framework.html>
- ▶ Lead facilitator explains: We will be choosing a self-assessment tool from the COPEWELL framework together today. While there are 5 self-assessment tools, I noticed these 2 (or 3) self-assessment tools coming up as themes in your responses.

Researcher note: We had quick slides prepared on all 5 self-assessment tools from the COPEWELL page: <https://www.copewellmodel.org/self-assessment-tools.html>. During the break, we moved the tools that were less relevant into Extra Slides and just showed the 2-3 tools that best correspond with their initial responses. Here are the COPEWELL descriptions of each tool:

- ▶ Self-Assessment Tool 1: Community Functioning: “The ability of a community to deliver goods and services to its residents,” which includes: (1) governance and economy, (2) life necessities, (3) health and wellbeing, and (4) critical infrastructure.
- ▶ Self-Assessment Tool 2: Prevention/Mitigation: “Pre- and post-disaster measures—including those taken by government, private industry, non-governmental groups, and private citizens—

that eliminate or minimize the chances for, and consequences of a future extreme event,” which includes: (1) rules, regulations, and norms, (2) engineered systems, (3) natural systems, (4) and countermeasures.

- ▶ Self-Assessment Tool 3: Population Vulnerability, Inequality, & Deprivation (PVID): “The panoply of social, political and economic conditions that reduce a population’s ability to detect risk, to mitigate risk or to recover from the effects of a hazard event,” which includes: (1) vulnerability, (2) inequality, and (3) deprivation.
- ▶ Self-Assessment Tool 4: Emergency Management: “The deliberate and institutionalized processes through which the entire community—i.e., residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials—works to assess and reduce risks and vulnerabilities, and to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters,” which includes: (1) hazard and vulnerability analysis and awareness, (2) whole community involvement, (3) readiness and response, and (4) recovery planning and operations.
- ▶ Self-Assessment Tool 5: Social Capital and Cohesion, “Factors that help society function effectively, including social networks between individuals, neighbors, organizations, and governments, and the degree of connection and sense of belongingness among residents,” which includes: (1) connectedness and (2) community involvement.

From the group’s expressed examples, we will choose a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 3 tools to introduce. We will share a 2-minute overview of the COPEWELL self-assessment tool on the slide, and then ask the following questions:

1. From the first COPEWELL self-assessment tool, how does the first tool potentially help your resiliency planning in your community?
 - a. What limitations do you see in the first tool we mentioned?
2. From the second COPEWELL self-assessment tool, how does the second tool potentially help your resiliency planning in your community?
 - a. What limitations do you see in the second tool we mentioned?

3. **IF NEEDED:** From the third COPEWELL self-assessment tool, how does the third tool potentially help your resiliency planning in your community?
 - a. What limitations do you see in the third tool we mentioned?
4. Based on our discussion, which COPEWELL tool would you like to start with in our second focus group?
 - a. Which one seems most pressing for your community resiliency needs we identified earlier? [Probe]
 - b. Which tool are you most excited to discuss as leaders for future planning? [Probe]
 - c. **Researcher Note:** Based on this conversation, the facilitator(s) will note which one is emerging as the preference/most pressing. If neither is emerging, we can consider choosing a few of the metrics from each to combine for FG2.

Closing

Thank you so much for this first conversation. Before our second focus group, we will have you complete the COPEWELL self-assessment tool ranking and rationale that we selected today and enter your response in an online Qualtrics pre-survey. In our second focus group, we will discuss your individual rankings, the collective rankings, and begin making future resiliency plans.

We will follow up with an email in the next 24 hours with your directions for that step. As a reminder, our second focus group is scheduled for [TBD date/time], and we will see you then! Take care.

Credit: Karolina Grabowska



APPENDIX C: PRE-SURVEY INVITATION EMAIL

We sent participants an email after the first focus group to invite them to complete the pre-survey we created in Qualtrics using their chosen COPEWELL rubric (see Appendix D).

Email Invite:

Hello, [Name]!

Thank you so much for participating in our first focus group session. We really valued your contribution and the insights you provided. As we mentioned at the end of that session, I am sending you a digital version of the [selected] COPEWELL self-assessment rubric (attached).

[Researcher note: See the pdf of the COPEWELL Rubrics: They will only receive the rubric(s) they selected in FG1.]

Between now and [X deadline], please spend about 15-30 minutes considering how you would score your community on the items from this rubric, as well as your reasons for assigning those scores. At this stage, DO NOT worry about the next steps portion, as we'll discuss possible next steps as a group.

We ask you to record your scores and rationale in our Qualtrics pre-survey available here: [link]. This process will help ensure that you have an opportunity to fully express your thoughts and allows the research team to most accurately represent our findings. A couple of reminders: no individuals will be named in our reporting (we will either use your chosen pseudonym or deidentify entirely), and your continued participation is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty [Include any information about research incentives here].

If you have any questions, either generally or about this stage of the study, don't hesitate to reach out to our team at [names/emails].



APPENDIX D: PRE-SURVEY PROTOCOL

The pre-survey, programmed in Qualtrics, asked participants to record their individual scores and rationale for each of the self-assessment components. We asked an additional question about recent disasters following up from FG1 and left space for participants to share anything they thought we should know ahead of the second focus group session.

Please note that this example uses the Community Functioning rubric; this general format can be used for any of the other rubrics (including modified versions).

The wording below under each scoring comes verbatim from the COPEWELL self-assessment guide for Community Functioning (2022i).

As we discussed at the end of **FG1**, we are asking you to submit your preliminary scores and rationales for the **Community Functioning COPEWELL self-assessment rubric** that was selected by the group. We sent everyone a digital copy of the rubric, but please reach out to [team name(s) and contact information] if you did not receive it.

As a reminder, your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty. [Include any information about participation incentives here]. Below we provide instructions for completing the questionnaire, but do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions!

Instructions

As we mentioned in a prior email, we ask you to take 15-30 minutes to review the Community Functioning self-assessment rubric and consider your response to the items. After completing your scoring and rationale, please use this questionnaire to record your score for each item (ranked from 1 to 10, with 1 being very low capacity and 10 being optimal capacity), along with your reasons for selecting that score.

Please refer to your copy of the rubric for example questions (pp. 7-8) to consider as you decide upon your rating. At this stage, **DO NOT** worry about the next steps portion, as we'll discuss possible next steps as a group.

We expect that recording your scores and thoughts will take approximately 5-10 minutes. We are asking you to complete this step so that we have a clear and accurate understanding of each participant's thoughts before we begin a discussion to come to a group consensus regarding these items. Please come to FG2 prepared to briefly share the information you recorded here. **We recommend bringing the rubric worksheet with your scores and rationale handy.**

If you have any questions about these instructions, or issues completing the survey, please reach out to [team name(s)] for assistance.

1. Please provide your Study ID (your first, middle, and last initials followed by your year of birth -e.g., RAL1986). This will allow the research team to accurately track survey responses.
2. Please share the pronouns you use (e.g., she/her, he/him, they/them, ze/zir, or no pronouns). This will allow the research team to accurately describe participants in our reporting of findings.
3. In the first session, the group identified several disasters/disruptions that the community has experienced or has a chance to experience. Please review these, and add any others we didn't get to talk about (along with how they have or might impact the community): [List examples from FG1]
4. Your group selected the **Community Functioning self-assessment rubric**. COPEWELL considers Community Functioning to include "the ability of a community to deliver goods and services to its residents." Below, please indicate your score and rationale for each Community Functioning item.

Item 1: Governance and Economy

This item involves a community's capacity to engage its residents fully and equitably in a thriving and diversified economy and in an efficient governance system that enables prudent policy-making, preserves the rule of law, and balances present and future needs.

LOW Capacity might look like:

Governance — Laws, rules and regulations are unfairly enforced and inadequate to deal with existing issues. Government communication is often unintelligible and inaccessible. Residents see the government as out of touch and the costs of public services as not worth the benefits they provide. Agencies make decisions arbitrarily, disregarding public opinion and stakeholder input. Government is not accountable; officials often run unopposed. The composition of the governmental workforce does not reflect community demographics.

Economy — Local unemployment is high, most jobs do not pay well, and the economy depends on only a few businesses/sectors. Economic and social mobility is stagnant. Individuals, businesses, and government employees are highly skeptical about the future. There is unequal access to public goods, services and infrastructure. Economic and social wealth is declining over time.

OPTIMAL Capacity might look like:

Governance — Legal frameworks are impartially applied, for stakeholders' full protection. People affected by public policies have direct access to agency information on the matter. Governing systems are responsive to resident/stakeholder input and designed in their best interests. Public resources are used efficiently to deliver useful services. Residents, including those with few social and economic advantages, are active in governance through voting, staying informed, and attending public meetings.

Economy — People readily participate in markets as workers, consumers and business

owners. There is equal access to public goods, services and infrastructure. Good jobs, work opportunities, and incomes are expanding across the board. Individuals, households, communities and enterprises are secure enough to invest in their future. The economy is increasingly resilient to shocks and stresses, especially those that can hurt persons living in poverty the most. Prospects for economic and social wealth are increasing, evenly available, and sustained over generations.

Using the sliding scale below, please provide your ranking of this item from 1 (low capacity) to 10 (optimal capacity). **There are no wrong answers - we're interested in your honest opinion based on your existing knowledge/experiences.**



Using the text box below, please share your reasoning behind your score selection for **Governance and Economy**.

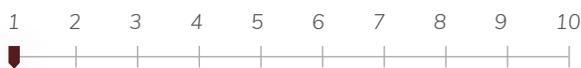
Item 2: Life Necessities

This item involves community's capacity to provide and maintain systems and infrastructure that enable sustained access to goods and services that are indispensable for life, including food, water, housing, and education.

LOW capacity might look like: Few grocery stores provide affordable, fresh, and healthy food options. Water treatment plants and sewage systems do not routinely and equitably supply clean drinking water. Affordable and safe housing are in short supply; many units are not up to code or adequately insured. Students and teachers do not experience schools as safe and supportive environments, residents worry about school quality, and parents and community residents are uninvolved in school-related activities.

OPTIMAL capacity might look like: Residents of all income levels can regularly access affordable, fresh, and healthy food options. A strong and sustainable water treatment and sewage system exists, providing drinking water that meets state/national standards. Most people believe that they live in safe and affordable housing and that housing discrimination or neighborhood segregation is not a major issue. Residents see local schools as safe and of adequate quality, and many parents and other residents are involved in school-related events.

Using the sliding scale below, please provide your ranking of this item from 1 (low capacity) to 10 (optimal capacity). **There are no wrong answers - we're interested in your honest opinion based on your existing knowledge/experiences.**



Using the text box below, please share your reasoning behind your score selection for **Life Necessities**.

Item 3: Health and Wellbeing

This item involves a community's capacity to promote, nurture, and protect the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health of all people wherever they live, learn, work, worship, and play: Places where people can readily connect with each other and nature; arts, culture and the opportunity for creative expression; safety nets for elderly, children, the homebound, and others in need; quality, accessible health care and adequate public health services.

LOW capacity might look like: Widely dissatisfied with their lives, residents feel little sense of purpose and emotionally and socially cut off from others. People see themselves as unable to influence their future. Places where people play, work, learn, live, and worship are not conducive to physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual health. Music and the arts play little

role in people's lives; there is little pride in or celebration of the community's diverse cultures. High rates of disease, injury, and illness occur and are seen as inevitable. Health disparities are high. People with functional and access needs are pushed out of a full and active community life. Quality child care and eldercare are poorly available and/or mostly unaffordable. People hesitate to seek out mental health support and can't find options when they do.

OPTIMAL capacity might look like: Most individuals and families perceive their lives are going well: they feel that they have healthy relationships, positive emotions, the chance for creative self-expression, and an ability to realize their potential. Rates of disease, illness and injury are low. People, including those with functional and access needs, are able to be productive at work and contribute to their community. Public and institutional policies, environments, and attitudes reflect a high value on community, family, and individual health. Residents have wide access to the arts, culture, and the outdoors. Quality health care services are accessible to all; few health disparities exist across subpopulations. There is ready access to quality and affordable child care, adult care, and systems to support aging in place.

Using the sliding scale below, please provide your ranking of this item from 1 (low capacity) to 10 (optimal capacity). **There are no wrong answers - we're interested in your honest opinion based on your existing knowledge/experiences.**



Using the text box below, please share your reasoning behind your score selection for **Health and Wellbeing**.

Item 4: Critical Infrastructure

This item involves a community's capacity—embodied in physical capital, organizations, personnel, and procedure—to move people, goods, and/or electronic information safely, efficiently, and reliably, within, into or out of the area, affording economic and social opportunities to residents on an equitable basis.

LOW capacity might look like: Physical parts of transportation (e.g., bridges, buses) and tele-communications systems (e.g., phone lines, cellular towers) show deferred repairs, lax security, and potential safety hazards. Users do not expect affordable, quality services: e.g., buses are infrequent and late; road repairs are poorly done and ill-timed; broadband internet and cellular service are unreliable; fees are weighted toward operators' financial interests. Transportation routes and mass transit schedules make getting to work, schools, grocery stores, and the doctor difficult, especially for people of limited means. Heavy use of personal vehicles contributes to poor air quality and physical activity. Cellular coverage favors certain neighborhoods; local libraries struggle to meet public demand for broadband access.

OPTIMAL capacity might look like: Physical elements of the transportation and tele-communications feature the latest technology

and engineering standards: e.g., the last structurally deficient bridge is fully funded for repairs, and the plan to divert traffic during its upgrade is minimally disruptive. Internet access via fiber optics is a community wide opportunity. Local subway and/or bus lines are bustling, and they rely on sustainable energy sources. Given desirable routes and affordable fares, people turn more toward mass transit to save money and reduce environmental impacts. Broadband access is fast, affordable, and evenly distributed across the community; cable programming reflects the diversity of the local community and informs residents in ways that advance civil discourse, public education, and cross-cultural learning.

Using the sliding scale below, please provide your ranking of this item from 1 (low capacity) to 10 (optimal capacity). **There are no wrong answers - we're interested in your honest opinion based on your existing knowledge/experiences.**



Using the text box below, please share your reasoning behind your score selection for **Critical Infrastructure**.

Do you have any questions or comments for us going in to Focus Group 2?



APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE 2

We used pre-survey responses to develop a PowerPoint slide deck that contained anonymous scoring information for each domain item, as well as anonymized and thematized summaries of qualitative entries from the rationale of each domain item. We designed the FG2 interview guide to provide time for participants to reflect and comment on the scores/summary for each item, and then vote as a group on which theme seemed to be highest priority. After reviewing all slides, we opened discussion among the group to identify salient, actionable starting points to resolve or otherwise address primary concerns.

Welcome and Process Overview

Thank you for returning for our FG2 and for taking the time to submit your individual scores and rationale before today's session on Qualtrics! Our focus group today will focus on sharing your self-assessments and discussing together your opening perceptions and creating a collective assessment together on your community's resiliency. We have prepared slides for us based on everyone's individual scores from the [selected] COPEWELL Rubric.

Our goal today is to identify top-level community concerns or needs, the rationale behind the importance of those concerns or needs, and what you all think are the most actionable next steps to address them as a community and what role the library could play in helping to convene these steps.

Because we have four items in the COPEWELL rubric you selected, we will only be able to spend **12-13 minutes** on each item, so we ask that you keep your **remarks concise. We will then open it up to a broader discussion on next steps, so please save next steps brainstorming until the end of our focus group today.**

A reminder of our few house rules from FG1:

- ▶ Please try to avoid talking over one another. We know this can be difficult given our format, but this will help make sure our transcripts are as clear as possible. We will ask you to use the "raise hand" feature on Zoom, as it will help us know who wants to speak next.

- ▶ When we open for discussion, we invite you to engage with or build upon others' comments as it makes sense for you.
- ▶ Because we have a group contributing together, not every person will answer every question. Keep in mind we want to hear from everyone in this focus group, so we will ask you to create space for others to speak.
- ▶ As facilitators, we may have to cut off a response or not go onto all raised hands to move to the next question. Please know that we will only do this in order to ensure we cover all topics in the time allotted. We ask this time to keep answers more concise so we can begin some planning.
- ▶ There is room for disagreement. We ask that you treat everyone's comments with respect. We will ask participants to leave if they become too disrespectful.

Questions

1. As we begin, we all know one another from the first session, but this will help with transcript clarity.
 - a. **Researcher Note:** Call on participant, ask to share name and org/community they represent, and their connection to community.
 - b. **Optional if there are new participants:** We also have [X number] of new participants this time.
 - c. **Optional if there are missing participants:** [X number of] participants could not be here today but will be sharing their scores in the exit interviews and look forward to staying involved in next steps, so our librarian will keep them connected to the next steps.
2. Thank you all for sharing! Based on our first focus group session, the group agreed that the [selected] Self-Assessment would be the most beneficial rubric to talk through community concerns and next steps. We will go through each of the items, so we ask you have your rubric scores and comments handy. We will be sharing some slides on each item and asking some follow-up questions.

3. **Item 1: [Item Name] (12-13 Minutes Max: Set Timer)**

- a. Facilitator screenshares and takes max of 3 minutes on quantitative and qualitative summary comments. Stops screenshare.
 - i. Research team member: Pastes themes into chat.
- b. We will now ask each participant to share their overall score for this item and the **most pressing concern** that influenced your scoring for this rubric. Please keep this concise to **1 minute** so we have time for brainstorming next steps. Let's start with participant X: X, what was your score for this item, and the most pressing concern (or impactful reason) for your ranking?
 - i. Go to each participant: If another participant already shared your most pressing concern, you can say so too when we call on you.
 1. IF TIME (unlikely): As a group, what similarities did you notice in this item across our answers? What meaningful differences emerged in the group? [Probes]
 - ii. IF TIME: Would anyone wish to change their ranking after this discussion? If so, to what number and why?
- c. From the themes we identified in your pre-survey responses, which theme is the **priority starting point** (i.e., next steps) for your community? We will now open a poll for your response. Please choose the priority starting point.
 - i. **Facilitator** opens the poll for 30 seconds.
 - ii. IF NEEDED: As a group, what could we consider the most pressing? What is important, but maybe a lower priority? [Probe]
- d. **We will come back to discuss next steps after we discuss all 4 measures.**

4. **Item 2: [Item Name] (12-13 Minutes Max: Set Timer)**

- a. Facilitator screenshares and takes max of 3 minutes on quantitative and qualitative summary comments. Stops screenshare.
 - i. Research team member: Pastes themes into chat.
- b. We will now ask each participant to share

their overall score for this item and the **most pressing concern** that influenced your scoring for this rubric. Please keep this concise to **1 minute** so we have time for brainstorming next steps. Let's start with participant X: X, what was your score for this item, and the most pressing concern (or impactful reason) for your ranking?

- i. Go to each participant: If another participant already shared your most pressing concern, you can say so too when we call on you.
 1. IF TIME (unlikely): As a group, what similarities did you notice in this item across our answers? What meaningful differences emerged in the group? [Probes]
 - ii. IF TIME: Would anyone wish to change their ranking after this discussion? If so, to what number and why?
- c. From the themes we identified in your pre-survey responses, which theme is the **priority starting point** (i.e., next steps) for your community? We will now open a poll for your response. Please choose the priority starting point.
 - i. **Facilitator** opens the poll for 30 seconds.
 - ii. IF NEEDED: As a group, what could we consider the most pressing? What is important, but maybe a lower priority? [Probe]
 - ci. We will come back to discuss next steps after we discuss all 4 measures.

5. **Item 3: [Item Name] (12-13 Minutes Max: Set Timer)**

- a. **Facilitator** screenshares and takes max of 3 minutes on quant and qual summary comments. Stops screenshare.
 - i. **Research team member:** Pastes themes into chat.
- b. We will now ask each participant to share their overall score for this item and the **most pressing concern** that influenced your scoring for this rubric. Please keep this concise to 1 minute so we have time for brainstorming next steps. Let's start with participant X: X, what was your score for this item, and the most pressing concern (or impactful reason) for your ranking?

- i. Go to each participant: If another participant already shared your most pressing concern, you can say so too when we call on you.
 - 1. IF TIME (unlikely): As a group, what similarities did you notice in this item across our answers? What meaningful differences emerged in the group? [Probes]
 - ii. IF TIME: Would anyone wish to change their ranking after this discussion? If so, to what number and why?
 - c. From the themes we identified in your pre-survey responses, which theme is the **priority starting point** (i.e., next steps) for your community? We will now open a **poll** for your response. Please choose the priority starting point.
 - i. **Facilitator** opens the poll for 30 seconds.
 - ii. IF NEEDED: As a group, what could we consider the most pressing? What is important, but maybe a lower priority? [Probe]
7. **NEXT Steps** (One facilitator takes lead while the other assists with probes)
- a. Based on the polls, X are the priority starting points (Y is second: if they are very close or tied) across all 4 measures. We now want to discuss: Where do we go from here with **this starting point**?
 - i. Tell me more about how [next step(s)] could be implemented to begin to address X. [Probe]
 - ii. How feasible do you think it would be to carry out X? [Probe]
 - iii. What would you need to successfully implement X? [Probe]
 - iv. We noticed **two main themes** overall: (1) [Theme 1] and (2) [Theme 2] Let's begin with Theme 1: What challenges have you noticed here? What are potential first steps to change?
 - v. Let's discuss Theme 2: What challenges have you noticed here? What are potential first steps to change?
 - vi. Other probes from **Facilitators**
8. **IF TIME** : (5 minutes likely): As you all know, one of the primary reasons we are conducting this pilot study is to explore the role of libraries as partners in addressing community resiliency needs. Now that we have identified concerns and potential starting points:
- a. What kind of support does the library need to be able to assist with the priority next steps?
6. **Item 4: [Item Name] (12-13 Minutes Max: Set Timer)**
- a. **Facilitator** screenshares and takes max of 3 minutes on quantitative and qualitative summary comments. Stops screenshare.
 - i. **Research team member**: Pastes themes into chat.
 - b. We will now ask each participant to share their overall score for this item and the **most pressing concern** that influenced your scoring for this rubric. Please keep this concise to **1 minute** so we have time for brainstorming next steps. Let's start with participant X: X, what was your score for this item, and the most pressing concern (or impactful reason) for your ranking?
 - i. Go to each participant: If another participant already shared your most pressing concern, you can say so too when we call on you.
 - 1. IF TIME (unlikely): As a group, what similarities did you notice in this item across our answers? What meaningful differences emerged in the group? [Probes]

- i. How feasible do you think it is for the library to receive said support – what are the barriers and facilitators? [Probe]
- b. What could your organization, you as a leader/community member, or others in the community that you know of in the community do to help support the library as a convener and leader in this resiliency effort?

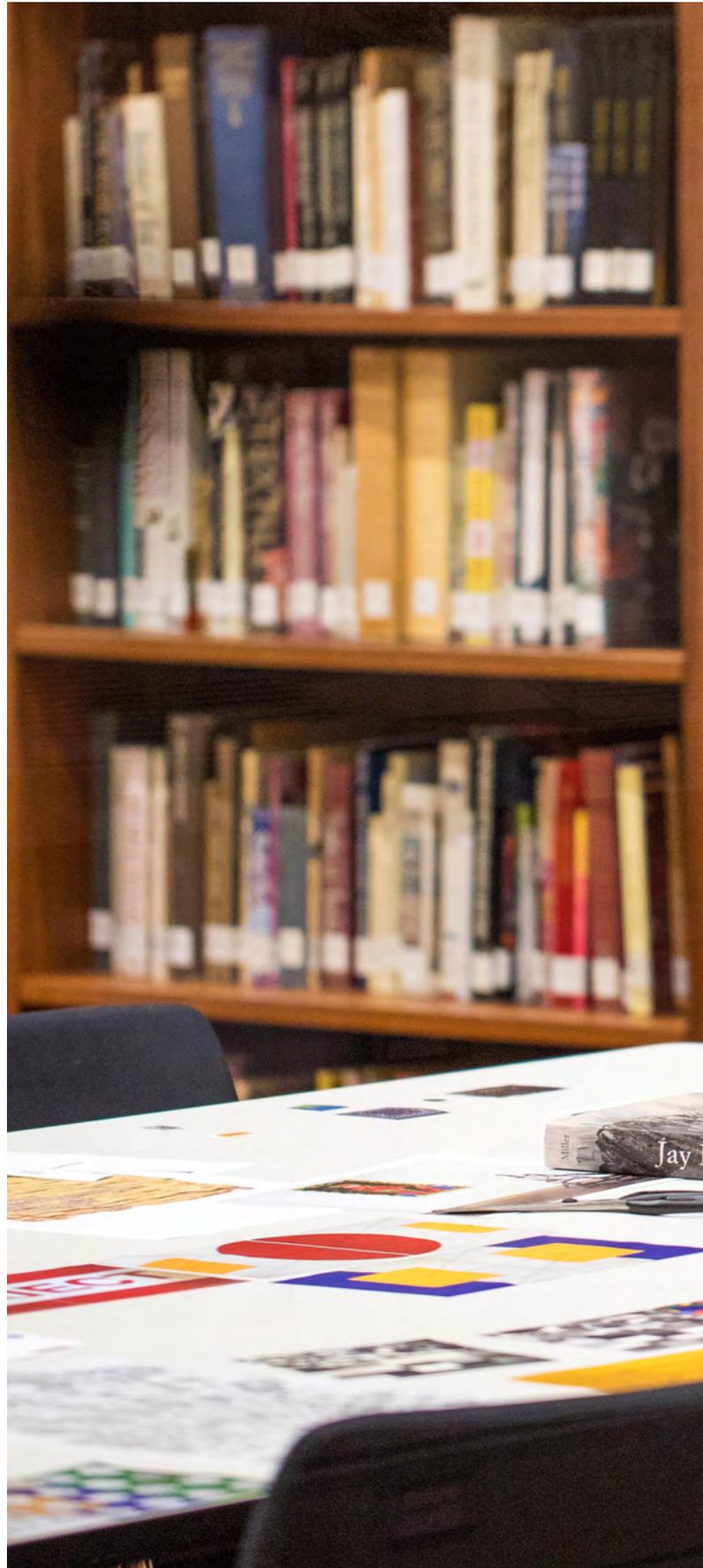
9. *IF TIME:* We've talked about a lot today, and I wanted to thank you for your time and for providing us with so much insight. Is there anything that you all think we should discuss that was not covered by the self-assessment rubric?

Thank you again for participating! We are so grateful for your time.

This brings us to the end of this session, but we will be in touch shortly to schedule individual exit interviews with each of you. You will receive an email and/or phone call for exit interview scheduling from [facilitators/research team]. We would like to complete these interviews in the next few weeks while the focus groups are fresh in your mind.

As a reminder, these interviews will ask more about how you feel about participating in this process, as well as any other feedback you would like to provide that you did not have a chance to offer in our two focus group sessions.

Have a wonderful day!



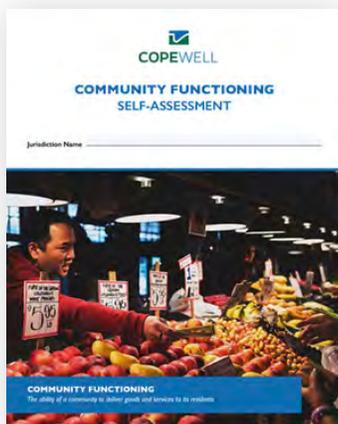


APPENDIX F: COPEWELL SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

COPEWELL offers five different self-assessment rubrics (COPEWELL, 2022d), each covering a major domain of the model. Our pilot sites, respectively, selected the Emergency Management and the Community Functioning rubric. Each rubric is accompanied by an ideal implementation guide. The rubrics and the implementation guides are meant to serve as a starting place for those new to facilitating collaborative groups, as well as an inspiration for making locally relevant changes to a collaborative process. Below we share an image of the title page of each rubric along with links to the PDF versions of the rubric and implementation guide.

All of this language comes verbatim from COPEWELL self-assessment tools. Please cite COPEWELL for these resources.

Pre-Event



Community Functioning

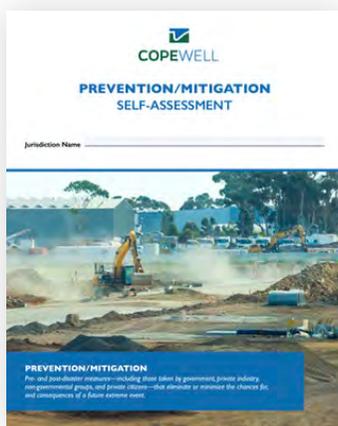
Per COPEWELL, community functioning is “the ability of a community to deliver goods and services to its residents. COPEWELL measures pre-event community functioning in a number of domains, and it predicts functioning after a disaster using the computational dynamics model” (see COPEWELL, 2022i).

[Community Functioning Rubric \(PDF download\)](#)

[Community Functioning Implementation Guide \(PDF download\)](#)

Resistance

The COPEWELL model considers resistance to represent the change in community functioning that occurs because of a hazard or disaster event.

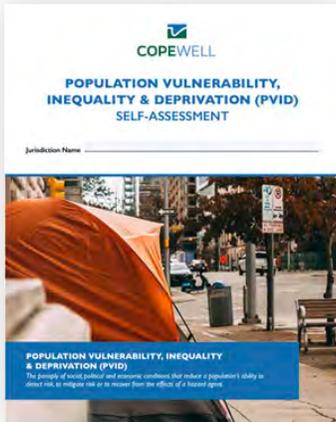


Prevention/Mitigation

COPEWELL considers prevention and mitigation to include “pre- and post-disaster measures—including those taken by government, private industry, non-governmental groups, and private citizens—that eliminate or minimize the chances for, and consequences of, a future extreme event.”

[Prevention/Mitigation Rubric \(PDF download\)](#)

[Prevention/Mitigation Implementation Guide \(PDF download\)](#)



Population Vulnerability, Inequality, & Deprivation (PVID)

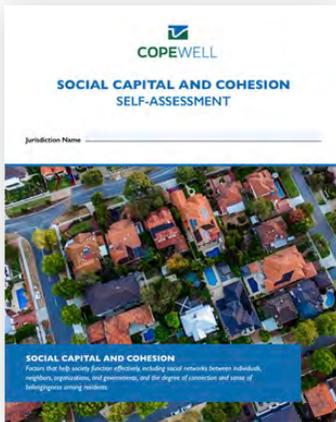
COPEWELL considers this domain to include “the panoply of social, political, and economic conditions that reduce a population’s ability to detect risk, to mitigate risk, or to recover from the effects of a hazard agent.”

[PVID Rubric \(PDF download\)](#)

[PVID Implementation Guide \(PDF download\)](#)

Recovery

COPEWELL sees recovery as “the trajectory back to a community’s usual ability to provide goods and services to its residents. Recovery happens over time, and timing varies among communities and by type of event. Some communities may recover to their pre-event community functioning level, while others may never recover to that same level, and others still may recover to a level of community functioning that is greater than the pre-event level. Social capital and cohesion within the community, preparedness and response activities by the community, and external resources from other partners can improve the recovery trajectory” (COPEWELL, 2022b).

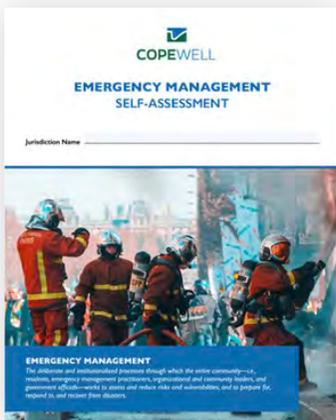


Social Capital and Cohesion

COPEWELL considers this domain to include “factors that help society function effectively, including social networks between individuals, neighbors, organizations, and governments, and the degree of connection and sense of belongingness among residents.”

[Social Capital and Cohesion Rubric \(PDF download\)](#)

[Social Capital and Cohesion Implementation Guide \(PDF download\)](#)



Emergency Management

COPEWELL considers this domain to include “the deliberate and institutionalized process through which the entire community—i.e., residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials—works to assess and reduce risks and vulnerabilities, and to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters” (see COPEWELL, 2022h).

[Emergency Management Rubric \(PDF download\)](#)

[Emergency Management Implementation Guide \(PDF download\)](#)



TEXAS  STATE[®]
TRANSLATIONAL HEALTH
RESEARCH CENTER