Santa Barbara County Regional Climate Collaborative

Resilience Hubs Pilot Program
Final Report

April 2024

implemented by

one COUNTY | one FUTURE
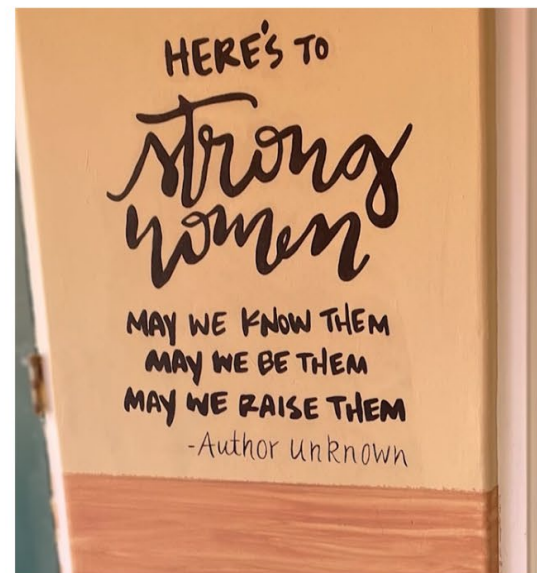
Community Environmental Council

ARUP

DISABILITY — ADVOCACY
ILRC
ACTION — EQUALITY
INDEPENDENT LIVING RESOURCE CENTER

funded by

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CALIFORNIA RESILIENCE CHALLENGE

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Executive Summary

In late 2022, the County of Santa Barbara, on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Regional Climate Collaborative launched the Resilience Hubs pilot program. Three sites across the region were selected to participate in a cohort-style program to receive technical assistance and to develop plans to increase capacity to respond to local emergencies and build community resilience.

In the end, the program yielded tangible outcomes such as reports and recommendations to improve energy resilience, draft documents for inclusive decision-making, emergency planning & response and several grant applications for advancing projects. Other outcomes such as increased awareness and coordination between agencies and nonprofits are continuing to yield benefits as stakeholders continue to find ways to work together, share resources and build local and regional capacity to plan, prepare and respond to the climate crises.

Background

In 2019, Community Environmental Council (CEC), in partnership with the County of Santa Barbara, hosted a series of Climate Resilience Roundtables inviting stakeholders to identify and prioritize solutions to the region's climate challenges.

The concept of Resilience Hubs emerged as one of the priority actions after crowdsourcing ideas from over 700 participants. Resilience Hubs was featured as a strategy in CEC's Resilience Community Action Plan.

The Resilience Hubs Pilot Program was developed by the County of Santa Barbara Sustainability Division, in partnership with the Community Environmental Council (CEC), with funding from the $200,000 grant from the California Resilience Challenge and a $25,000 grant from PG&E's Resilience Hub grant program.

The County sought to identify and develop three sites across the region to become Resilience Hubs. The County developed an application and criteria to select applicants who would receive technical assistance and $15,000 as an incentive.
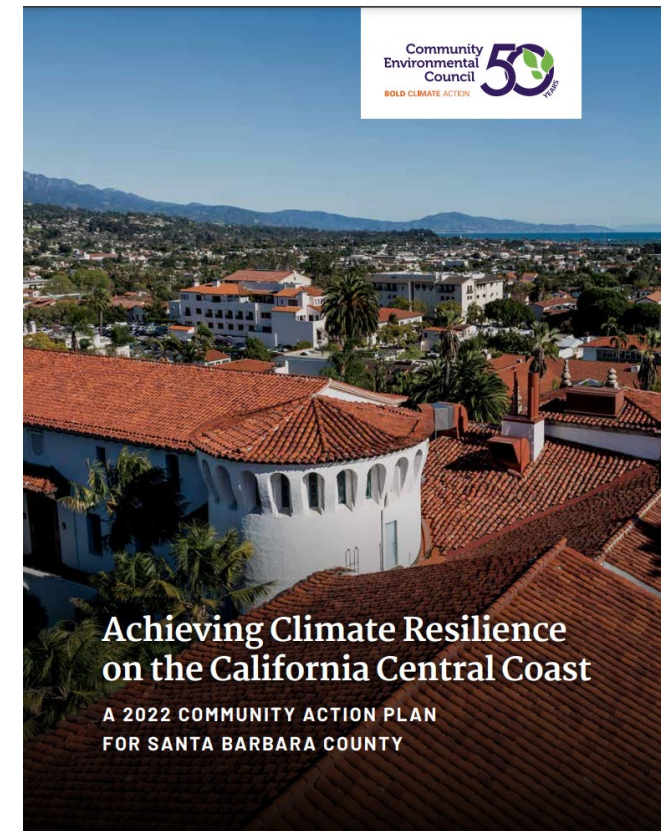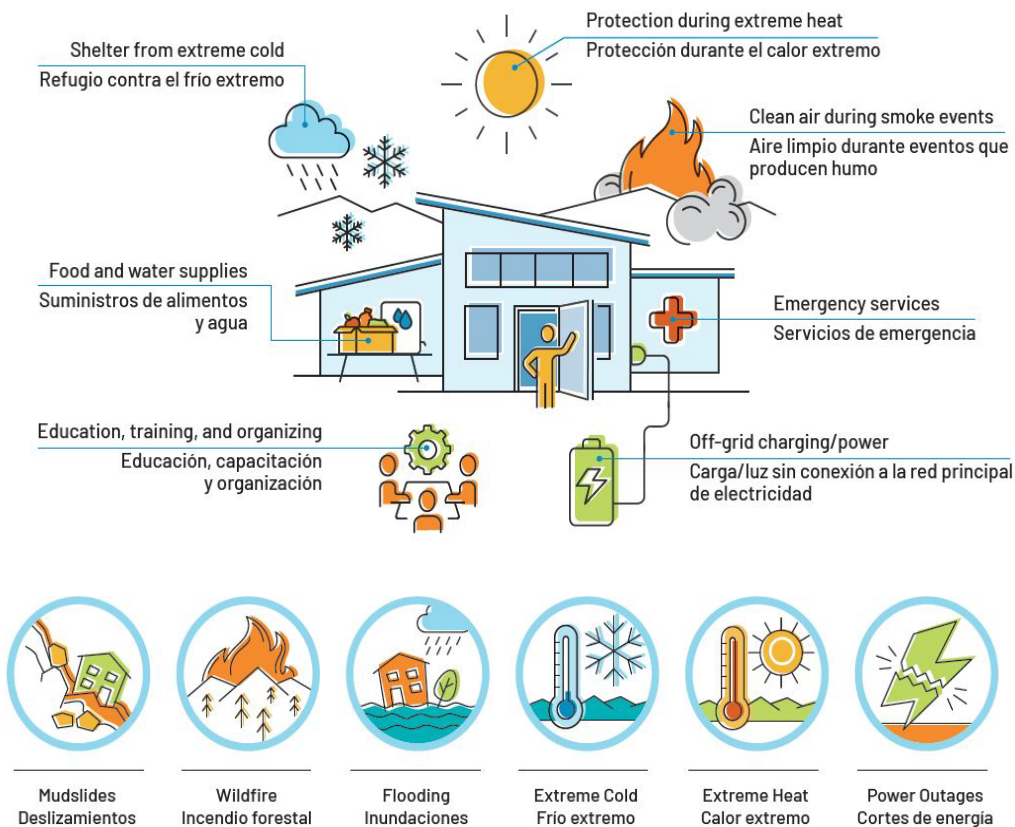
Resilience Hub Concept
designed by Community Environmental Council

What is a Resilience Hub?

Resilience Hubs create a way to plan ahead so that, when disasters occur, there is a plan in place that was designed for the community, by the community. This way, communities can not only survive disasters, but can recover, adapt, and continue to thrive.

Resilience Hubs are designed and operated by the communities they serve, with one lead organization as a coordinator. Communities work together to decide which services should be offered at the Resilience Hub, and make a plan for how to operate during a climate disaster.

"What's attractive about resilience hubs is not the building they are in – it's the location of the facility in a vulnerable, underserved or lower income community with programming already embedded within that community."

Site Hosts

The following sites and organizations were selected to participate. All sites have worked closely with residents and stakeholders to provide information, resources and services during COVID and climate-related events such as flooding and wildfires.

**Blue Sky Center,
New Cuyama**

**Girls Inc.,
City of Carpinteria**

**Eastside Library and Franklin Neighborhood Center,
City of Santa Barbara**

Blue Sky Center is an economic development, community-serving organization that owns and occupies a large post-industrial property consisting of over 25,000 SF in seven buildings and an airstrip across 267 acres.

Blue Sky's campus includes office spaces, large shop buildings, overnight accommodations (dorm rooms and huts), and the only public airstrip in the Cuyama Valley, essential for emergency services as well as used for farming services and recreation.

Girls Inc. is primarily an out of school program that inspires young girls to be strong, smart and bold, by offering different STEM-related courses

Girls Inc.'s campus includes classrooms, a STEM lab, library, conference room, gymnasium, kitchen, multiple office spaces, a playground, two gardens, two covered patio areas, and a courtyard and currently runs on partial solar power.

The Eastside Library houses multi-purpose meeting space, digital access, and literacy and education support resources for all ages. The library has an existing solar system meeting approximately 60% of the facility load and has several EV chargers in the planning phase. The Franklin Neighborhood Center houses a leased space for a medical clinic, commercial kitchen, multi-purpose meeting room and teen programs. The campus is located in a historically underserved community and already operated as a community resource for the neighboring communities.

Program Design

The County developed three tracks of focus and envisioned guiding the three site hosts through a series of workshops, training, on-site assessments and strategic discussions as they also led and facilitated their own community engagement and governance establishment.

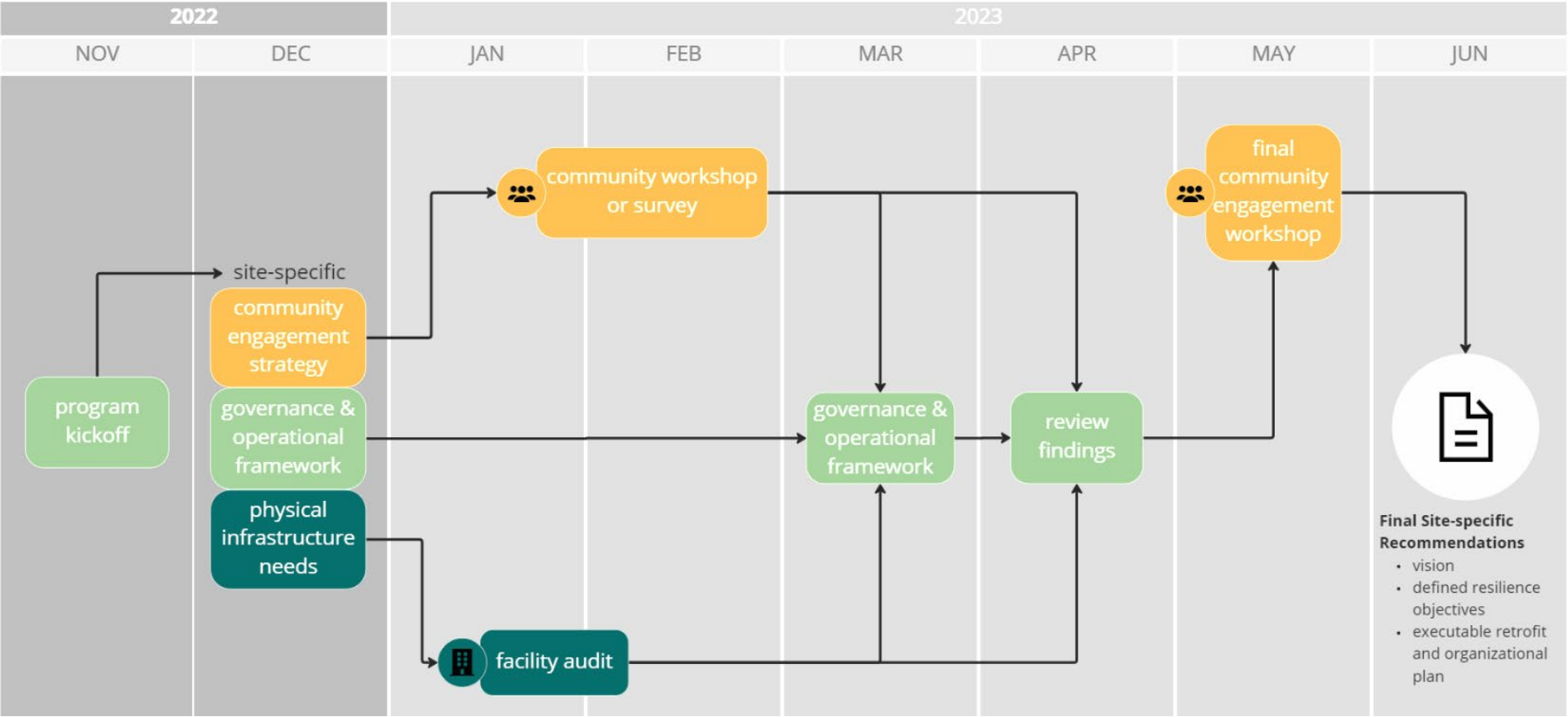| Community Engagement	Facility Assessment	Governance
The purpose of the community engagement track was to provide the community opportunities to learn about resilience hubs as a concept, share their experiences with climate disasters, and provide input and feedback on resilience hub facilities, resources and services. Community Environmental Council led the development of the community engagement plans, in consultation with the site hosts.	The purpose of the facility assessment track was to conduct an audit of the facilities that could support the Resilience Hub operations and provide recommendations for retrofits that would enhance the facilities' energy efficiency, energy resilience and ability to provide conditioned and filtered air. Arup, the County's consultant, provided the technical services for the audits.	The purpose of the governance track was to facilitate a process for the site hosts to identify stakeholders and develop inclusive advisory and decision-making structures to guide the creation and operation of a Resilience Hub. The County educated the site hosts on what governance is and how to think about convening stakeholders.

The **County Sustainability Division** managed the project team and administration and coordinated the overall cohort program. The Sustainability Division was also serving as the subject matter expert on governance framework development.

Community Environmental Council (CEC) served as the primary technical consultant for community outreach and engagement. CEC designed and implemented community outreach strategies and materials based on existing events and channels.

Arup provided site audits and technical studies, also known as Energy Assurance Services, to assess the existing energy systems and recommend retrofits and new energy systems to enhance heating, cooling and filtration capabilities, and to increase energy resilience.

Independent Living Resource Center (ILRC) provided recommendations to sites to improve their capacity to serve populations with access and functional needs.

Initial Program Concept & General Timeline

2022		2023					
NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN

program kickoff

site-specific community engagement strategy

community workshop or survey

governance & operational framework

physical infrastructure needs

facility audit

governance & operational framework

review findings

final community engagement workshop

Final Site-specific Recommendations
- vision
- defined resilience objectives
- executable retrofit and organizational plan

Resilience Hub partners and participants discuss priorities at Girls Inc. in Carpinteria

Program Implementation

Resilience Hubs are a new concept. Not everyone knows what a "Resilience Hub" means and every stakeholder and community defines them differently. Communities, organizations and facilities all start at different places on their journey to becoming a Resilience Hub and have different opinions and ideas about what to focus on or prioritize.

The pilot program was implemented in an iterative way that actually lasted for nearly a year (instead of 6-9 months). After the first few cohort sessions, questions around emergency shelters and activation procedures arose. County Sustainability staff then embarked on a process of learning and connecting with the County Office of Emergency Management, County Department of Social Services and

Red Cross. These three entities were briefed on the Resilience Hubs pilot program and provided an initial overview presentation of emergency planning, preparedness and response for the site hosts.

During this time, site hosts were engaged by CEC to develop and refine their community engagement plans as well as build out funding plans for each site through mapping and prioritization exercises. CEC and the site hosts co-developed community engagement plans (CEPs) that were customized based on their existing communications and engagement capacity and infrastructure, and future opportunities to leverage community events and programs for outreach.

The overall goal of the community engagement plans was to inform the community of the Resilience Hubs, solicit ideas and feedback and to invite community members to participate further (such as, participating as an outreach ambassador, participating in a committee meeting or attending a workshop). Activities to implement a collaborative and equitable community engagement plan included focus groups, community workshops and facilitating working groups to share feedback and participate in visioning activities, and surveys to engage broader input into prioritizing the services offered by the Resilience Hub. In tandem, CEC templatized community engagement activities to serve as tools for future communities interested in activating Resilience Hubs.

CEC dedicated more time to engage the Cuyama Valley community due to the capacity needs of Blue Sky Center and also due to the fact that the County began the process of preparing multiple grant applications focused on the region. Developing outreach leaders to implement robust community engagement in the City of Santa Barbara and

Carpinteria proved more difficult. Girl's Inc decided to prioritize critical stakeholder relationship building to enhance their site efficacy as a Shelter site. Establishing a collaborative governance model in the City of Santa Barbara was not as effective and efficient for the pilot site's needs. Community engagement became more focused on completing a Resilience Hubs service prioritization survey.

When Arup was conducting facility audits, they found that questions about future emergency functions and capacities of the facilities could not be answered due to lack of direction, guidance or input. Additional and new HVAC and energy systems have significant implications when designing solar and battery systems to be islanded or self-sufficient from the utility grid. Confirming appropriate scopes for engineering designs took more time and cost than anticipated.

The County and CEC then initiated the process to develop several grant applications for the Regional Resilience Planning Grant (for all three sites) and the Community Resilience Centers (CRC) Grant for Blue Sky Center and Girls Inc, which diverted time and resources away from the City of Santa Barbara. These grants forced the site hosts and project partners to focus on estimating design and construction costs for HVAC systems and microgrids and preparing governance documents and draft emergency plans per CRC guidelines.

Focused efforts on the grants produced deliverables that might not otherwise have been achieved. The CRC grant provided extensive detail on the considerations and criteria for what a Resilience Hub ought to be and templates for planning and coordination.

Actual Program Timeline

Date	Location	Content and Objectives
Nov 7, 2022	Zoom	● Introduction to the Sites; Program Overview
Dec 20, 2022	Zoom	● Community Engagement Needs Assessment; Governance Framework Development; Facility Audit/Request for Information
Jan 19, 2023	Girls Inc	● Resilience Hub Visioning; Community Resilience Center Grant overview; Community Engagement Planning; Governance Framework
Apr 14, 2023	Eastside Library	● Introduction to Emergency Management (Office of Emergency Management, Department of Social Services, Red Cross); Community Engagement Plans
Jun 8, 2023	Blue Sky Center	● Governance Framework; Grant Coordination
Jun 29, 2023	Cuyama High School Gym	● Cuyama Resilience Forum, including Focus Groups on Resilience Hub priorities
May-Sep 2023	Zoom	● Cuyama & Carpinteria community engagement; Facility audits and recommendations; Funding and implementation
Aug-Sep 2023	Cuyama Resilience Survey	● Resilience Survey Development and Execution
July 2023	Individual meetings	● Community engagement results and next steps; Facility audits and recommendations; Funding and implementation
Sept 18, 2023		● Community Resilience Center grant applications submitted for Girls Inc and Blue Sky Center
Dec-Feb 2024	Santa Barbara Resilience Survey Execution	● Resilience Survey Development and Execution
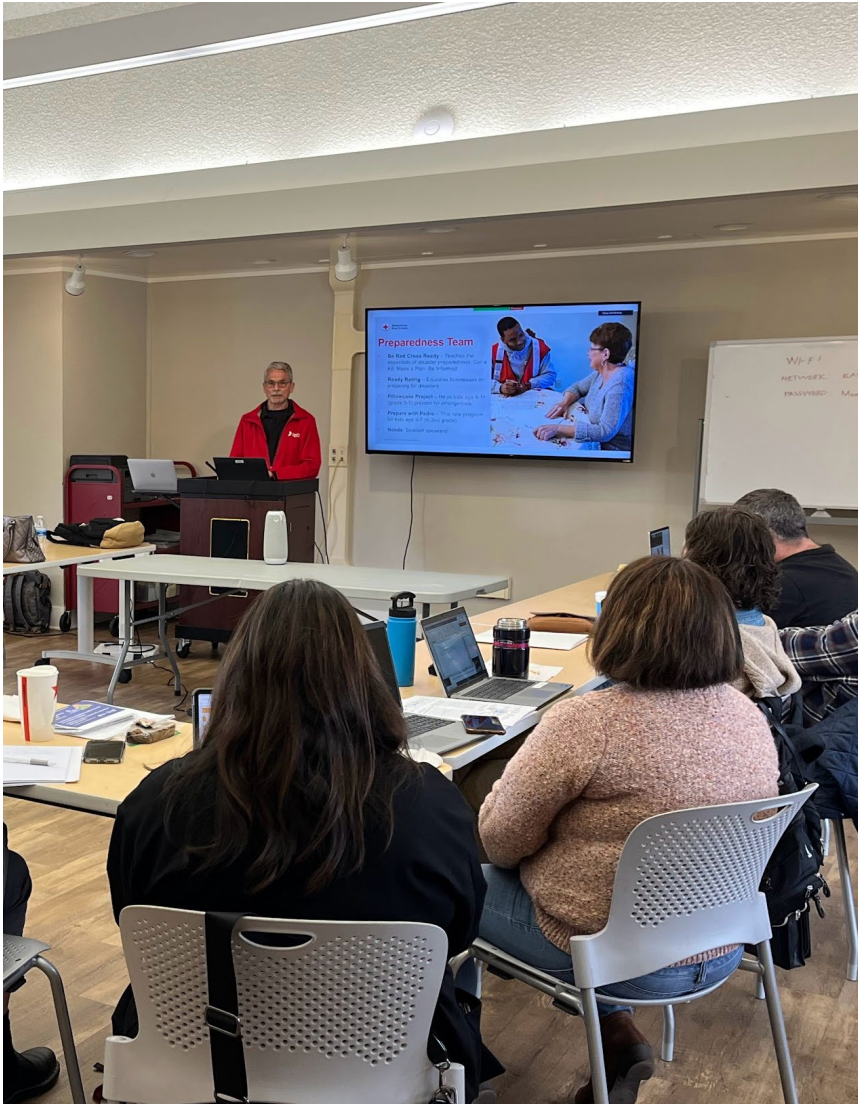
Resilience Hub partners and participants receive a presentation from the Red Cross at Eastside Library in Santa Barbara

Outcomes

All participants received Community Engagement Plans and Energy Assurance Services Reports with recommendations and estimates for the design and construction of microgrids and HVAC systems.

For the CRC grant applications, Blue Sky Center and Girls Inc each prepared draft Partnership Agreements, draft Community Resilience Center Emergency Plans, draft Year-Round Community Resilience Plans, and scopes of work and budgets for project development and emergency planning & coordination.

The pilot program introduced the idea of Resilience Hubs and increased the awareness, understanding of and capacity of local organizations to engage in resilience and emergency preparedness.

Improved working relationships have already yielded positive results. Following the grant submission, Girls Inc established a working group, consisting of board members, City of Carpinteria and County staff, and facility managers from a nearby boarding school. Girls Inc participated in an emergency shelter training with City staff provided by Red Cross, and is establishing facility use agreements with the County, City and Red Cross. Girls Inc also received grants from SCE to implement STEM activities to teach youth about climate change and community resilience, and to train staff in emergency preparedness and response.

Blue Sky Center also convened a working group with stakeholders and community members to discuss community resilience needs. Additionally, as a result of participating in the program, County Office of Emergency Management procured supplies for a local cache to be distributed by BSC during emergencies.

Lessons Learned

Interviews of the site hosts were conducted at the end of the pilot program to get feedback on their cohort experience and the quality of services provided throughout the pilot phase. Participants were asked about their goals and expectations, program management and communication, deliverables and services provided, benefits of participation, and readiness for taking on the next phase of Resilience Hub development.

All participants had positive examples of learning, relationship building and new opportunities for funding, and saw benefit in a cohort learning model. However, with each participant coming into the program with different goals and expectations from very different types of facilities, governance structures, and geographic locations, most felt the mixed cohort approach did not add much value.

> *"It would be valuable to have different resilience hub models and case studies to see what success looks like and what standards we should be reaching for."*

A critical element for participants in their planning for a Resilience Hub is having a clear understanding of what is required to be a Resilience Hub and what the programmatic, financial and capacity expectations are, particularly if their facility is activated during an emergency. Lacking a clear definition of Resilience Hubs and the implications of becoming one could be a barrier to expanding hub locations in the future.
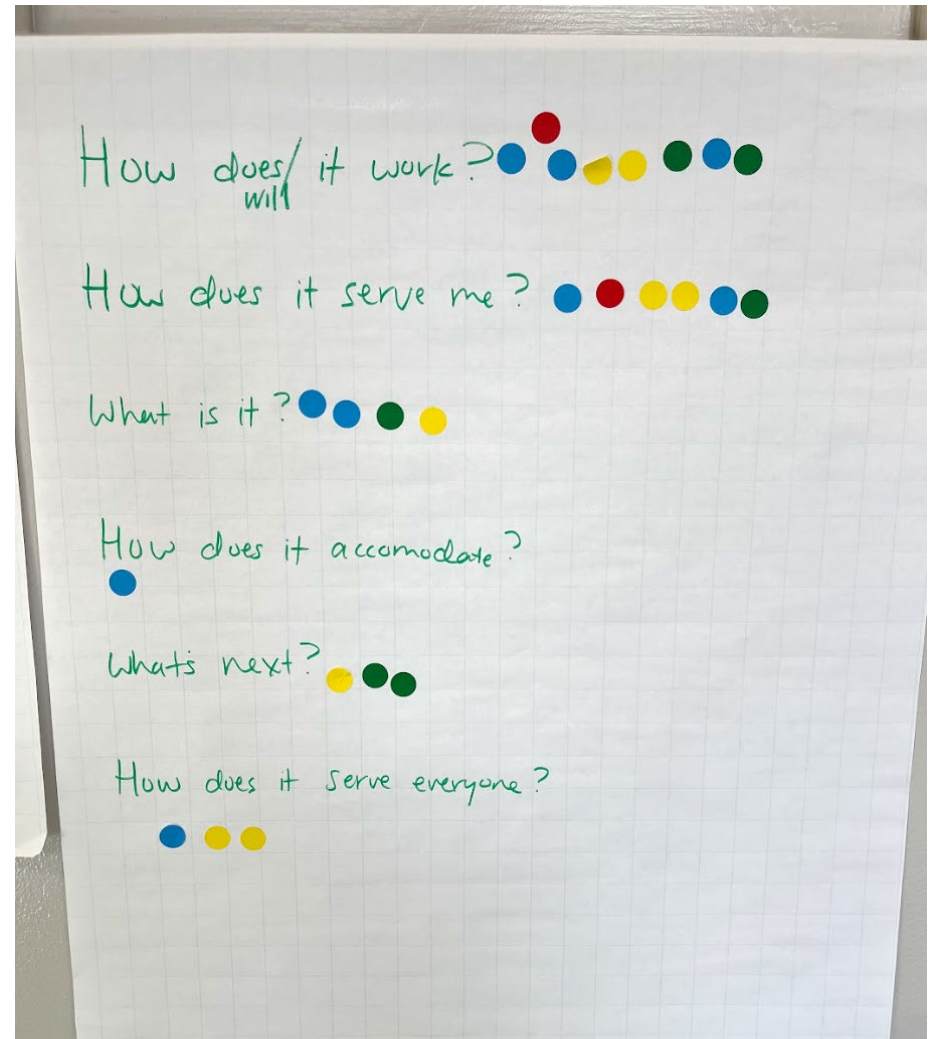
Partners and participants consider questions that the public may have about Resilience Hubs

"It would have been helpful to get to 30% plans with a built-in escalator for costs if implementation doesn't happen right away, or perhaps doing the energy audit later in the process."

One of the primary deliverables of the pilot program was the Energy Assurance Services report providing recommendations to improve efficiency and resilience of each hub. Participants found the report valuable to varying degrees and plan on drawing from its recommendations in the future. It is important for participants to have a clear understanding of the utility of these reports and to implement them as soon as possible to avoid the reports becoming outdated.

"It is important to discuss who is responsible for ongoing operations of Resilience Hubs before, during and after disaster and to bring the facility managers into the conversation earlier in the planning process."

Resilience Hubs are envisioned to serve the communities where they are located before, during and after disasters. However, there are many trusted neighborhood facilities and programs that could provide some level of support without being a full-fledged emergency shelter, as defined by OEM and Red Cross. Facilities not suited for overnight sheltering, for example, could serve as community engagement centers or relief stations, offering food distribution, phone charging or respite from extreme weather.

"It would be useful if there were training modules, plug-and-play programming, and education fact sheets that the County or a collaboration could provide."

Most small public agencies and nonprofits do not have the capacity to develop and implement additional programming beyond their core mission or to construct and maintain specific Resilience Hub assets, like solar and battery systems. Providing resources, tools, training, as well as climate resilience and disaster related programming would alleviate some of the burden for these hubs initially so that, over time, they could grow their capacity to expand the programming and personalize it for their community.

"There are important roles the County could take on to expand resilience hub development, like defining what resilience hubs are and how they operate, clarifying expectations of hubs, offering trainings and programming, and providing resource mapping."

All participants indicated that they would need some level of continued guidance and support from the County to continue development and operations of their sites. Suggestions include providing education, training and programming, or coordination with the Office of Emergency Management and other County services. With the nonprofit participants, support is also needed for grant development for continued planning and implementation, and capacity support for coordination of partner meetings and networks.

Recommendations

After evaluation of feedback from the participants, a number of recommendations emerged for advancing the program under different grant funded scenarios for the County and its partners.

	Immediate and Do-Able with Existing Resources	Further Out, Limited Funding Available	Further Out, External Funding Secured
Supporting Pilot Participants	• Facilitate monthly resilience committee meetings (i.e. Carpinteria); topics and initiatives are generated by participants	• Continue to identify and apply for funding to implement capital projects, build staff capacity	• Execute and implement CRC Partnership Agreements
Developing Resources	• Identify and map out clear roles and responsibilities for County departments, Community Environmental Council and other organizations, such as Red Cross • Make accessible the criteria, requirements and expectations of Resilience Hubs (such as County Disaster Care and Shelter Plan and Red Cross Emergency Shelter Checklist)	• Develop case studies of the pilot sites; consider including video production • Publish, promote and share Resilience Hub Toolkit • Identify and apply for funding to develop and implement programming and capital projects for Resilience Hubs	• Develop a larger Climate Resilience Toolkit, which includes Resilience Hubs as a module • Develop and implement training and educational programming for sites and community members
Expanding Resilience Hubs	• Research funding sources for sustaining Resilience Hub network and programming • Network and integrate existing coalitions and organizations, such as warming centers and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster	• Create a strategic framework for siting, developing and supporting existing and new Resilience Hubs • Recruit cohort participants that are similar in operation or organization type (libraries, nonprofits, senior centers, etc.), and are within the same region	• Run cohort program based off Resilience Hub toolkit modules • Establish a network by establishing shared communication channels, convening periodically virtually and in-person, developing regional programming (as mentioned above)

Mapping priorities against urgency and feasibility at Blue Sky Center in New Cuyama

Conclusion

The County envisions a network of Resilience Hubs around the region. Each hub would be unique in their assets and strengths, serving community needs and building local capacity for emergency preparedness and response, with support from regional anchors like the County's various departments, Community Environmental Council and the Red Cross.

The Resilience Hub pilot program offered a unique experience and opportunity to organize communities and agencies around ideas of neighborhood-scale resilience, sustainability and social cohesion with trusted institutions as the focal point. The experience gained and lessons learned have built capacity for both regional entities, like the County Sustainability Division and CEC, and local institutions, like Blue Sky Center and Girls Inc. Working relationships continue to bear fruit and build deeper trust.

The County and its partners will continue to seek out funding opportunities to support existing sites with capital improvements and community programming, and to organize more communities to develop their own Resilience Hub sites.

countyofsb.org/collaborative