

Handbook for “Operational” Community-led Resilience Networks

A guide for CRNs to implement and continually improve their
strategies and operations

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Purpose of Handbook

This handbook describes how “Operational” Community-led Resilience Networks (CRNs) can continually improve their strategies and bolster their operations to build population-level (universal) mental wellness and transformational resilience for the climate-ecosystem-biodiversity (C-E-B) crisis.

By “Operational” we mean the CRN has:

- Formed a broad and diverse steering committee and possibly a number of “resilience innovation teams” to work with different populations and sectors in their community.
- Members of the steering committee and resilience innovation teams have learned what a public health approach to population-level mental wellness and resilience involves.
- The steering committee and resilience innovation teams have used this knowledge to develop strategies that help all residents strengthen and sustain their capacity to prevent and heal mental health and psychosocial problems and engage in actions that help reduce the C-E-B crisis to manageable levels and enhance local conditions.
- The CRN is now ready to begin active implementation of its strategies.

This handbook offers information to help CRN’s execute its strategy and strengthen its operations. It begins by describing a number of important steps a CRN should complete before it begins implementing its strategy. It then describes how CRNs can continually monitor and evaluate the success of their strategies and use the information to improve them. The handbook also provides information about how to fortify the CRN’s operational functions by engaging additional people, raising funds, and other methods.

A number of web links are included in the Handbook to resources that might be beneficial to CRNs. We could not, however, include links to resources related every issue discussed. We therefore urge CRN members to get on the internet, talk with local residents and professionals, and in other ways do their own research to identify helpful resources that resonate with your neighborhood and community.

Much like the three other Handbooks provided to help guide CRNs, this one includes a good deal of information that might be new to many people. We therefore encourage CRN members to read one section at a time, discuss the content with others participants, and make sure that everyone grasps the principles and practices it describes. When CRN members have a good understanding of the information, they can move to the next section and repeat the process. No matter how it is done, everyone involved with a CRN should read all of the content described in this handbook.

I. Begin Implementing Strategies

The CRN steering committee (task force, board, or whatever term it uses for this group) has now reached the point where it is ready to begin implementing its strategy to build population-level (or universal) mental wellness and resilience for the C-E-B crisis. All of the hard work the CRN has done is now ready to be put into practice.

The strategy has a significant chance of activating positive individual and collective change. To aid this effort, this information provided below offers suggestions on how to proceed.

As the CRN strives to implement its strategies, one of the most important things participants can do is to recognize that they are *living documents*. Members of the steering committee and resilience innovation teams should be both realistic and aspirational. The C-E-B crisis is almost certain to activate continual and often unexpected changes, and CRN members should be constantly flexible in how to move forward with implementation.

In addition to guiding its work, the strategy implementation process should be considered an opportunity for CRN members to continually learn, grow, and innovate. Implementation allows the CRN to continually test, refine, and learn what aspects of its strategy work and what elements do not work and need improvement.

Approached correctly, the strategy implementation process can also help CRN members develop better relationships with each other, and gain a deeper understanding of and connections with members of the neighborhood or community they are engaged with.

Most important, though all of this, the strategy implementation process can activate the transformational changes in assumptions, beliefs, and practices in the community needed to motivate individuals, families, groups, and organizations to create the healthy, safe, just and equitable, zero-emission, climate-resilient regenerative conditions needed for the C-E-B crisis.

1. Prepare for Implementation

a. Identify Potential Blockages

Even if the CRN has actively engaged residents in the development of its strategies, there are will always be numerous factors that can cause them to have limited effect, or fail. Before implementation begins, the CRN should therefore speak with community members and brainstorm to identify all of the blockages that might be possible. After they are identified, they should be assessed to determine how they might affect the strategies—and the CRNs operations as a whole. The steering committee and/or resilience innovation teams should then take time to identify methods to respond to and reduce the blockages if they appear.

Understanding the potential blockages of its strategies, and how they can be mitigated, is certain to be critical to the CRN's long-term success.

b. *Plan for Tensions*

Many difficult choices will undoubtedly need to be made as the CRNs strategies are implemented. Making those choices often won't be easy, as they will frequently have different effects on different populations and sectors. For example, some residents or organizations might want to actively learn how to become trauma and resilience-informed (which is one of the 5 foundational protective factors). Others, however, might not want to engage-- but need the information and skills more than others because their practices appear to traumatize some residents. For this reason, CRNs need to get prepared before it begins implementing its strategy to handle tensions that arise when it is executed.

Key aspects of managing tensions involve:

- *Connect with core beliefs:* Taking the time to understand the assumptions and beliefs held by residents, groups, and organizations that disagree, and identifying how to communicate with them to connect the benefits of the CRNs strategies with what they care about.
- *Establish boundaries:* Being clear with CRN members about what type of communications and behaviors are positive and which are forbidden when tensions arise.
- *Center on mission, values, and goals:* When tensions arise the CRNs will need to make decisions and choose a path forward based on the mission, core values, and goals identified by the steering committee. Keeping these guideposts front and center at all time will be vital for success.

c. *Determine Responsibilities*

No matter how well-formulated the CRNs strategy is, it will not succeed without people assigned to implement it. There are typically numerous tasks that need to be completed and roles that need to be filled to implement a strategy. Before implementation begins, the CRN steering committee will therefore need to identify people with appropriate skills and capacity to fill those roles.

Before implementation begins, the CRN can therefore ask questions such as:

- What communications and interpersonal skills are needed to implement the various dimensions of the strategy?
- Who can fill these roles?
- How much support will they need and how much can be provided to help them succeed?

- How can those roles be addressed, or how can we adjust the strategy if we cannot find people to fill the roles?

The answers to these questions will help the CRN identify and engage people in implementing its strategy.

d. *Ensure Buy-In*

Following from the above, it will be important for CRNs to make sure members of the steering committee and/or resilience innovation teams buy into the strategy. It will usually be possible to generate support by continually highlighting the CRNs mission and values. This will help people see how their interests align with those of the CRN, and generate a sense of pride to participate in the strategy implementation process. Communicating the CRNs mission and core values will also capture the attention of and motivate local residents and organizations to support and engage in its work.

2. After Implementation Begins, Regularly Evaluate Progress and Improve the Strategy

After the CRNs strategy has begun to be implemented it will be imperative to regularly evaluate progress and learn what works and what does not. The CRN should use this information to adjust the assumptions, beliefs, and thinking that shaped its logic model, and continually improve its goals, strategies, and action plans. Regular evaluation will also help local residents, groups, and organizations understand what the CRN is doing, what has been accomplished, what the outcomes are, and how they came about. This will help increase the support and engagement of community members.

In addition, after a few years of implementing and evaluating its strategies, the CRN should begin to plan for the long-term. This involves establishing methods to ensure the CRN can continue to learn, innovate, and improve its efforts to strengthen and sustain the entire population's capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience during ongoing climate adversities.

Both of these focuses are described below. It is not intended to be an all-inclusive description of either issue. The purpose is to provide enough basic information to help an CRN understand how it can move forward and craft its own approach.

The Importance of Ongoing Tracking and Evaluation

The purpose of tracking and evaluating an CRN's activities and progress is to improve its effectiveness and inform future planning and implementation.¹

The process involves four overall steps:

1. The CRN develops its logic model and strategies.

2. After the strategies have been implemented for a year or two, information about the process and results is gathered.

3. The data is analyzed and interpreted.

4. The findings and conclusions are published in a report.

The four steps should be done in a collaborative way that involves CRN members, as well as other residents, groups, and organizations from across the community. When done well, the process will tell the story of the CRN's approach and strategies to everyone involved and those who are observing from the outside.

Taking the time to develop a well-planned and executed evaluation process will provide many more benefits for the CRN, and the community, than an assessment completed in haste or as an afterthought. CRN members might think they lack the time, resources, and expertise to complete this type of evaluation. However, taking the effort to learn about and carefully plan evaluations will help everyone understand what has gone well, and what has not, which will enable network members to continually improve their strategies. In addition, a good evaluation will allow funders to see evidence that the CRN's approach is working, which can lead to continued and possibly additional funding.

The Evaluation Process

One way an CRN can evaluate the progress of its activities is to monitor changes seen in the indicators it selected as part of its logic model. In the Handbook for "Emerging" CRNs the need to use indicators that are good proxies for measuring mental wellness and transformational resilience in a community was discussed. For example, one indicator of the degree to which residents have good Bonding and Bridging social connections might be the number of individuals who say they now have people they can count on for emotional support and practical assistance during an emergency. Another might be how frequently a resident contacts their friends or neighbors either face-to-face, electronically, or by phone.

CRN members can track changes in these indicators every six to twelve months to see what, if any, shifts are occurring. Or, if they can raise funds, they can hire a consultant or work with a university to complete the monitoring.

Evaluation Thinking

CRNs will often benefit by more in-depth evaluations that involve what is called "evaluative thinking."² This approach focuses on much more than just determining if the CRN's activities performed as expected. Evaluative thinking involves constant discussion, reflection, learning, and improvement. It involves surfacing and openly discussing the underlying assumptions and beliefs CRN members hold about the nature of the populations and sectors they are engaged with, and the challenges they face. It also involves asking thought-provoking questions about the changes that should be expected when the CRN engages in its work. The entire process should always be carried out in a culturally

accountable manner to ensure the assessment process is not shaped by beliefs or assumptions that are prejudiced or in any other way will lead to limited or biased conclusions.

In short, evaluative thinking involves constant learning, growth, and improvement. The process should become embedded within the culture of the CRN and shape all its activities.

Developing an Evaluation Plan

The first step in developing an evaluation plan involves determining what type of evaluation is needed. The type of assessment should be determined by the stage the CRN's activities are in. Different types of evaluations are more helpful during the early stage of an initiative, compared to those used three to five years down the road.

There are three overall types of assessment processes. Each serves a specific function and answers different questions:

- *Process (or implementation) evaluation* seeks to determine if the CRN's strategies are being implemented as planned and according to schedule. It also assesses if the strategy is producing the intended outcomes, and identifies its strengths and weaknesses. A CRN should employ this type of assessment early on in its operations to determine what, if any changes, are needed in its strategies and action plans.
- *Outcome (or summative) evaluation* seeks to determine if the CRN's strategy achieved the desired outcomes and what made it effective or ineffective. It also determines if the approach is sustainable and replicable. An CRN should consider this type of evaluation after it completes one to two years of implementing its strategies and action plans to determine the outcomes.
- *Impact evaluation* determines any broad long-term changes that have occurred as a result of the CRN's activities. The impacts constitute the net effects for individuals, families, a neighborhood, groups (such as informal clubs), organizations (such as schools), and the community as a whole. This type of evaluation is likely to make the most sense three to five years after the CRN starts its work.

After the CRN has determined the specific type or combination of assessment methods it wants to use, the next step is to determine the approach to evaluation it will employ. Four approaches can be considered:

- *Culturally responsive evaluation* recognizes that cultural beliefs, values, and context lie at the core of any evaluation process. It ensures that people who have been historically excluded are fully integrated into the design, planning, and implementation of the assessment process.
- *Developmental evaluation* supports innovation. It recognizes that innovative initiatives like an CRN is engaged in will be continually adapting to new information and

challenges. It therefore emphasizes using information to continually learn and innovate in the face of change.

- *Empowerment evaluation* can provide an CRN with tools and knowledge that helps participants improve their efforts through constant self-reflection and evaluation. CRN members are involved in facilitated discussions, often led by the evaluators, to clarify priorities for the assessment process to determine the evidence necessary to determine success.
- *Systems-based evaluation* views the CRN's activities as part of social-ecological systems that are affected by the many interlocking cultural, economic, ecological, and political systems in which it operates. It emphasizes boundary conditions, relationships, and feedbacks within and across the systems of the community in which the CRN operates.

After the evaluation approach is chosen, the methodology that will be used to gather information and assess progress should be determined. This can include:

- *Case studies* that assess, in-depth, one specific CRN activity, or elements of an activity, with the goal of generalizing the findings to other programs. Cross-case studies can also be used to compare patterns found in a variety of case studies.
- *Experimental and quasi-experimental design (or randomized control) studies* that assess the effects seen by comparing a group involved with the CRN's activities with a group that was not involved.
- *Outcome mapping* that assesses how an CRN's strategy affected the individuals, groups, and organizations it was designed to influence or interact with. The outcomes can include changes in social connections, activities, behaviors, actions of individuals and groups, and other characteristics.

An Example

Let's say, for example, that the CRN has implemented a strategy to build social connections across boundaries in the community and now wants to evaluate it. It secures funding from a local donor and hires an external consultant or works with a university to complete the assessment. The CRN decides to only hire evaluator(s) who are skilled in culturally-responsive evaluation because the CRN's activities take place within a racially and culturally diverse community.

Through discussions with the evaluator(s), the CRN might decide the first step will be to conduct a process and outcome evaluation to help the CRN understand the extent to which its strategy was implemented as planned, and achieved its intended outcomes.

Following this, discussions with the evaluator(s) might lead the CRN to determine that it will benefit from the combination of a case study and quasi-experimental design

methodology. This could, for instance, compare the changes in social connections found in four different neighborhoods, with an in-depth case study of one or two neighborhoods to understand in greater detail what, if any, changes occurred and how they came about. Combining the two methodologies will generate different types of information that help the CRN understand what happened and tell its story in greater depth. However, this approach will also require more funding and other resources, and the evaluation team will need expertise in both methodologies.

The evaluator(s) would then work with the CRN to craft an easy-to-read report, complete with simple graphics, that describes the extent to which the CRN did what it intended to do, and the changes that have been observed as a result. The information should then be widely shared with residents, groups, and organizations community-wide. It should also be used by CRN members, including people involved with the Resilience Innovation Teams, to learn what worked and what did not, reassess the assumptions and beliefs that shaped their logic model, and improve their strategies.

To enhance and sustain universal capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience during the long C-E-B crisis, CRNs should continually develop an evaluation strategy, collect information, analyze and interpret the data, report the findings, and learn and improve its offerings. The process should be repeated every year or so.

Continual Evaluation Helps Troubleshoot Problems

By continually evaluating its work, a CRN will have greater capacity to understand why certain things succeed as intended and others fail. Some of the common troubles a CRN might experience include:

- Lack of suitable spaces to hold meetings and events;
- Inability of key groups and organizations to engage due to lack of time, transportation, or financial resources;
- Reluctance of certain populations to participate due to fears about their safety, stigmatization, lack of cultural relevance, or inequities and injustices;
- Insufficient funding or other key resources;
- Lack of skilled staff or sufficient staff time to support the CRNs activities;
- Insufficient number of volunteers to assist with events;
- Burnout by CRN members due to having too much on their plate;
- Tensions or conflicts over approaches to enhance mental wellness and transformational resilience;
- Minimal age and culturally accountable resilience-building activities;
- Participants sporadically attending meetings and events, or leaving early.
- Continual disruptions due to persistent climate impacts.

These are common troubles every new CRN is likely to face. Continual evaluation will help an CRN spot these problems early on. Network members can then engage in candid discussions about what might be causing them and how they can be addressed.

CRNs Should Become Learning Communities

A traditional way a CRN's activities can be evaluated has just been described. However, there is another closely related way to regularly evaluate progress: become a true learning community.

After the CRN engages in dialogues and activities with residents, it should have learned quite a lot about the community. Members should have discovered, for example, what people see as deeply valuable, what they see as the community's core strengths, resources, and protective factors, and what they believe will help strengthen and sustain their capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience and engage in activities that can reduce the C-E-B crisis to manageable levels. CRN members should also have a good sense of how residents describe these issues, which will be in their own unique way, using terms that some CRN members might not be familiar with.

If the CRN commits itself to being a true learning community, network members will engage in ongoing discussions about these issues to reflect on their meaning and significance. For example, members can determine who really names the community's concerns and how these issues are framed. They can also discern how decisions about priorities are actually made in the community, how resources are allocated, what really gets done, and who benefits. Network members can also identify the groups and organizations residents trust and respect, where they are all located, and what they do, and those that are not well valued or seen as untrustworthy (are not assets). Further, CRN members can determine how different neighborhoods, populations, and the community as a whole overcame major adversities in the past and how they remain resilient today. And, they can understand what factors undermine their capacity for wellness and resilience.

Answers to these questions should lead the CRN steering committee to candid discussions to determine if they truly understand their community. Network members can, for example, determine if they have accurately defined the challenges facing different populations and sectors? Have they correctly captured what is most important to them? Do they have a good understanding of the frictions that exist between different groups or neighborhoods, and does the CRN see a satisfactory pathway through them?

Equally important will be candid discussions to determine if the CRN has actually identified and tapped into all of their community's social connections, skills, strengths, capabilities, resources, and other protective factors? Have they thoroughly assessed how those assets can be mobilized to enhance everyone's capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience as the C-E-B crisis intensifies, or are they missing key ingredients?

Continually posing and openly discussing these questions will enable the CRN to become a true learning community. As the CRN implements its strategy, and network members continue to engage with the community, they are likely to notice shifts in how people see and define issues, who they connect with, and how they respond to adversities. This information can be used to regularly refine and improve the strategies and action plans developed by the different CRN Resilience Innovation Teams. This type of evaluation will frequently be as or more valuable than the more formal evaluations.

CRNs Must Also Plan for the Long-Term

After the CRN has engaged in its activities for one to three years, it will behoove the network to take steps to ensure that it can continue to function over time as the C-E-B crisis accelerates.

Currently, most voluntary, civic, non-profit, private, and public organizations are operating with limited understanding about the type, scale, and consequences of the wicked distresses and traumas that will emerge during the long C-E-B crisis. Consequently, very few are prepared for the magnitude of what is speeding their way.

CRNs will need to motivate community members to deepen their understanding and adopt new and expanded approaches to prevent and heal the wicked multifaceted mental health and psychosocial problems generated during the long C-E-B crisis. At the same time, CRNs will need to develop internal organizational plans to ensure their efforts can be sustained over the long-term.

Embed Mental Wellness and Resilience in Local Organizational Practices and Policies

To ensure that everyone in the community can enhance and sustain their capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience over the long-term, organizations of all types will need to incorporate the practices and policies into their operations. This can be accomplished by asking the organizations that are involved with the CRN to issue public declarations and/or sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) describing their commitment to implement principles and practices that foster and sustain mental wellness and transformational resilience among the people involved in their enterprise.³

It will often take time for groups and organizations to decide to engage in this way because it may require examining and altering their existing goals, norms, and practices. But it can be a very important step forward. When CRN member organizations make this commitment, they should be publicly congratulated and widely publicized it in local newspapers, social media, and other communication mediums.

Peace4Tarpon in Tarpon Springs, Florida, in the U.S. has used this approach very successfully. Members sign an MOU pledging to attend monthly meetings, serve on at least one workgroup or committee, complete ACE and resilience questionnaires, and practice trauma-sensitivity among friends, family and co-workers.⁴ “Our slogan is ‘Offer the Peace/Piece You Can,’” said co-founder Robin Saenger. “We ask people to commit to this work at a very personal level.”

The Community Resilience Initiative in Walla Walla, Washington, in the U.S. also uses this approach. They ask all type of local organizations to sign an MOU describing the actions they will take to embed trauma-informed resilience principles and practices into their staff training and program operations.

The New Hanover County Resilience Task Force (RTF) in North Carolina in the U.S. uses a variation of this approach. They ask local organizations to sign a "Belief Statement" developed by the RTF that includes a set of principles they agree with, beliefs they embrace, and list of actions they will commit to as a member of the RTF.⁵

CRNs should shine the light on the public proclamations or MOUs signed by organizations to encourage even more groups and organizations to take the same steps. Over time the number of organizations and institutions that have publicly committed to incorporating mental wellness and resilience-building principles and practices into their operations will grow to the point that it shifts the culture of the community.

Develop Long-Term Operational Plans

In addition to embedding mental wellness and transformational resilience protocols in local organizational operations, after a few years of operation, an CRN should develop plans to sustain its operations for a long period of time.⁶

Although they are related, a strategic plan differs from an operational plan. An operational plan involves planning day-to-day work to execute a current strategy. In contrast, a strategic plan clarifies where the CRN wants to be at some point in the future, and how it is going to get there. The strategic aspect of the planning process also relates to looking into the future to identify what is likely coming down the pike and determining how the CRN can prepare for it.

Ideally, a CRN should develop a strategic plan for three to five years out into the future. The plan can address issues such as:

- Three- to five-year income projections and options for raising funds;
- Methods to expand who is involved with the network to include more populations and sectors;
- How to facilitate transitions of CRN members and (if they exist) staff;
- How to continue delivering its services in the midst of emergencies and disasters;
- Other locally-relevant big-picture issues.

The CRN should review the strategic plans on a regular basis to track progress and make needed adjustments. CRNs can think of their long-term strategic plans as a GPS system. Members can use the plan to steer the network's operations from one year to the next, determine the best course of action as challenges arise (as they certainly will), and use it to navigate major shifts that occur in the neighborhood or community in which they work.

Having this type of strategic plan demonstrates that the CRN is committed to sticking around for the long term. When members know where they want to be in three to five years, they can make better decisions about short-term actions. A long-term plan also gives members something to aim for as well as a way to measure and review progress.

CRNs can develop a long-term strategic plan by following these steps: ⁷

- Complete an "environmental scan" that involves a deep and wide look around at what's going on outside and within the community, including issues such as the C-E-B crisis and how they might affect the CRN's activities;
- Identify opportunities the CRN might be able to capitalize on, as well as threats to its operations (including but not limited to those posed by the C-E-B crisis);
- Examine the CRN's internal resources and strengths as well as its limitations (perhaps using a SWOT analysis);
- Establish the internal organizational goals the CRN wants to accomplish during the coming three to five years based on what it perceives to be occurring within and around the community and its strengths and limitations (which might include issues such as funding, staffing, and program expansion);
- Identify how those goals will be reached, highlighting strategies, objectives, responsibilities, and timelines.

Completing this process is likely to influence some of the CRN's core functions such as:

- The strategies and specific activities the CRN engages in and how they are designed;
- The organizational structure used by the CRN;
- The staffing the CRN needs to operate effectively;
- How the CRN can organize and implement fundraising efforts;
- How the CRN can respond when emergencies and disasters occur.

Each of these issues are important. However, three are discussed in more detail here that are particularly important: devising strategic plans for transitions of CRN members and staff, developing a long-term funding plan, and preparing for disasters and emergencies.

CRN Member and Staff Transitions

Over time, some steering committee and resilience team members will transition out of the CRN and new people will become engaged. Similarly, staff will leave and new ones will need to be hired. Transitions like these can be challenging for any network. They will often require existing members to shift their responsibilities or add new ones, or for some activities to be put on temporary (or possibly permanent) hold. It will therefore be helpful for the CRN to develop transition plans before these changes occur. This type of plan can be thought of as involving six basic steps.⁸

1. *Nominate a CRN member transition coordinator and one for staff transitions* (they can be two different people, or the same person can handle both roles).

2. *Ask for assistance by the person who is leaving.* For example, the individual leaving the CRN can be asked to contact an individual or organization that is engaged with the same population or sector they have worked with to request a replacement. Similarly, a staff member who is transitioning out can be asked for suggestions on who the CRN can contact about replacing them.

3. *Determine what individuals, populations, and sectors should be informed about the transition.* No one should be surprised to hear of a change. People should be informed before a transition occurs. This includes all CRN members and participants, including those involved with the different Resilience Innovation Teams, as well as other key neighborhood and community leaders.

4. *Identify temporary replacements.* Clarifying ahead of time who within the CRN will temporarily assume the roles that will be vacated will prevent significant disruptions.

5. *Hold exit interviews and feedbacks.* Getting feedback from the person who is leaving about how they perceive the CRN, and their role in the network, will help in many ways.

6. *Ensure that people leave on a positive note.* Doing whatever is possible to ensure the network member or staff who is transitioning out does so on a positive note will enhance everyone's morale.

Develop a Long-Term Funding Plan

Establishing long-term financial sustainability can be challenging for NGOs, civil society organization, and multi-sectoral networks. Creating a strategic long-term funding plan can help a CRN address the challenges. It typically involves these steps:⁹

1. *Organize a fundraising planning team:* After a year or so of operations, the CRN should form a team to help the network think through the options and decide on a long-term fundraising plan. The team can be composed of steering committee members, resilience innovation team members, and others in the community, such as people from different organizations, private companies, or academic institutions.

2. *Examine existing activities, and project the amount of funding that will be needed to engage all residents.* After a year or two of work, the CRN should assess how many people and sectors the network has been able to engage given the funds it has raised, and then project the total finances that will be needed to engage the entire population in the future. This should lead to a long-term fundraising goal.

3. *Assess past and current fundraising efforts.* Determine the amount of money the CRN has raised in the past from all sources, including residents, members, large donors, foundations, businesses, and governments. Knowing where most funds are coming from and how the different funding sources have varied can provide a picture of year-to-year fluctuations.

4. *Analyze the successes and failures of your funding strategies.* Examine the past and current fundraising efforts and determine: what has worked well and what has not; which areas can be modified to become more effective; which aspects should be abandoned; which sources of funds are most reliable; and which sources seem to have the greatest potential for expansion.

5. *Examine a variety of funding strategies:* Look around to see if there are fundraising options the CRN has not yet considered using to raise long-term funds. Think big and imagine entirely different and creative ways to raise funds from local residents, private donors, businesses, philanthropic foundations, national and international funding institutions, and government agencies.

6. *Craft a long-term fundraising plan:* After thinking through the best approach with the fundraising team, a long-term plan should be developed that includes specific financial goals, activities, and an evaluation process.

7. *Get buy-in from the CRN steering committee and resilience innovation teams:* This is essential. The CRN's steering committee and members of the resilience innovation teams should all be kept informed about the long-term fundraising plan and formally approve it.

This process can lead to new and exciting approaches to raise funds at the local, regional, and national levels.

Continuing Its Operations During Emergencies and Disasters

As the C-E-B crisis accelerates, communities everywhere are certain to experience more frequent, extreme, or prolonged disasters or other types of emergencies. The calamities will sometimes make it impossible for an CRN to hold regular meetings or in other ways prevent it from continuing its activities. Looking ahead to prepare for these events should be another important focus of the CRN's long-term strategic plan.

To get prepared before disasters strike, CRN members should learn about the six phases commonly seen in disasters and emergencies. With this information in mind, a plan should

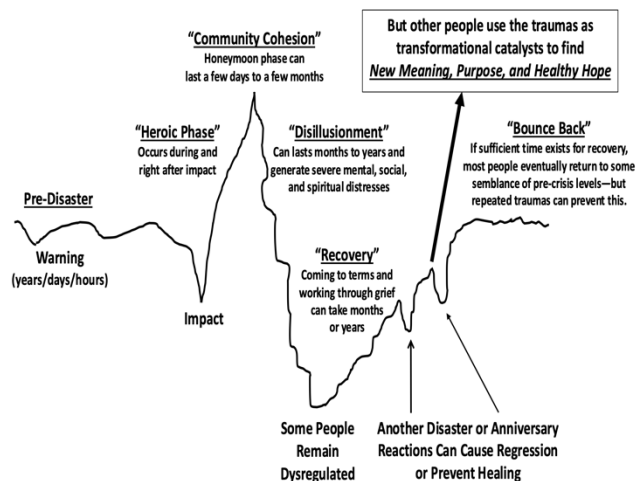
be crafted that spells out what network members will do in each of the phases.¹⁰ The six common phases of disasters, and the role CRN members can play, include:

- *The Pre-Disaster Phase.* As a reminder, this often includes years or days of warnings about potential emergencies and disasters. During this phase---meaning *now* regarding the C-E-B crisis--each CRN member should develop a household disaster preparedness plan. It should include emergency evacuation procedures, evacuation routes, how to mitigate risk for family members and facilities, directions for emergency communications (with names and contact information), and more. Each CRN member should also create an emergency supply kit that includes spare clothing, sleeping bags and mats, several days of food and water, manual can openers, sanitation products, needed medications, first-aid kits, flashlights, a hand- cranked or battery-operated radio, pet transportation crates and food, whistles, dust masks, and local maps.¹¹ In addition, the CRN should help *all residents* create evacuation procedures and emergency kits. If people do not have sufficient materials, or for other reasons are unable to create a kit, the CRN can partner with local agencies to provide them with needed materials, and also assist them to develop their procedures and kits.

In addition, the CRN's pre-disaster plan should identify all the key functions network members will play during the impact phase, and in all phases that follow. One key function should be to organize a team of CRN members who will provide emotional support and practical assistance to other network members through all phases. This can help people self-heal and enable CRN members to continue to support other community members.

Another key function should be to organize teams that will support the different Bonding, Bridging, and Linking social support networks, and Neighborhood Resilience Hubs the ITRC has helped organize. This can include in-person, phone, email, or other types of assistance, connecting members to others in their community who can provide practical assistance, or linking them with organizations that can provide food, water, shelter, and other basic needs. In addition, the CRN might install solar panels and batteries in key locations with charging stations that members can use to power their cell phones and computers to enable them to continually communicate with each other.

Six Phases Commonly Seen in Disasters



All CRN members should also have a list of the teams that will perform different functions, with their names, titles, phones, emails, street addresses, ages, and any

special services they can offer. This will enable the CRN to facilitate ongoing communications and coordination during emergencies.

- *The Impact Phase:* This is the period during and immediately after a major disaster or emergency occurs. During this phase, the first priority of CRN members should be to work with emergency responders to save lives. Again, this may include helping residents find water, food, or shelter, organizing or participating in rescue efforts, providing medical services to those in need, and creating access to other services. The second priority should be to protect property, pets, other animals, and the natural environment.

Still another important function CRN teams can fulfill during and immediately after the impact phase is to offer disaster resilience services. This can include psychological first aid to help stabilize people.¹² Even more importantly, they can help people use simple Presenting resilience skills to calm their body, mind, and emotions, which can include somatic, breath, movement/shaking, cognitive, and other practices. This should all be approached using the same methods CRN teams have utilized from the start: respectfully acknowledging and reinforcing of the skills, strengths, and capabilities residents have to respond constructively to the adversity, while recognizing and being sensitive to the historic and current traumas they have experienced. At times more will be required, such as hand-holding and other forms of emotional support or engaging seriously traumatized people with group-focused trauma healing gatherings.

- *Community Cohesion Phase:* This phase occurs after the impacts of a disaster have moderated or ended, and strangers come together to provide each other with practical assistance, emotional support, and other types of help. CRNs should have a plan for this phase that supports any Neighborhood Resilience Hubs that might exist in the community, and in other ways help people connect with the Bonding and Bridging and Linking social support networks. The plan should also include engaging residents in simple Presenting and Purposing skills, and having trained peers facilitate healing circles and other types of therapeutic gatherings. In addition, CRN members should know how to connect severely traumatized residents with trauma healing services.
- *The Disillusionment Phase:* Again, this period can last for months or years and is when most mental health and psychosocial problems appear. The CRN's plan for this phase should be to continually offer age and culturally accountable gatherings that enable healing and resilience. CRNs should also bring residents together for community rituals and memorial events so they do not feel alone or become isolated and allow collective efficacy to emerge. Residents should also be engaged in rebuilding efforts, and the CRN should continue to engage them in the other foundational areas involved with building mental wellness and transformational resilience. The ultimate goal should be to help the entire community rekindle its spirit and build on its social connections and supports, skills, strengths, resources, and other protective factors in order to use the emergency as a transformational catalyst to help everyone find positive new sources of

meaning, purpose, and healthy hope. The CRN should also plan for the likelihood that some people are likely to remain traumatized for a long period of time.

- *The Recovery Phase:* During this phase people slowly rebuild their lives and recover their capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience. The plan a CRN develops for this phase should include intensifying their efforts to engage residents in each of the five foundational protective factors involved with building their capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience. Special attention and resources should be allocated to help prevent regression on the anniversary date of previous disaster(s) or when new emergencies appear, and help people continue to recover.
- *The Bounce Back and Transformational Resilience Phases:* If people do not experience another major disaster, most will eventually return to some semblance of their pre-crisis condition. But returning to previous states is often not a safe or healthy place for many people, nor is it what people need to meaningfully engage in solutions to the C-E-B crisis that often contributed to the disaster. CRNs should have a plan in place for the recovery stage to teach everyone how to turn toward and use the adversity as a catalyst to learn, grow, envision, and move toward a new and more positive future. When this occurs, people throughout the community can experience transformational resilience and find new meaning, purpose, and healthy hope, which should be the CRN's ultimate goal.

The checklist offered at the end of this chapter can be used by an CRN to determine the extent to which it has addressed the many aspects involved with continually tracking progress, learning, improving, and planning for the long-term.

The global C-E-B crisis will continue for decades. It is therefore essential for CRNs to be established in communities and rural areas throughout higher, middle, and lower income nations worldwide. This will require transformational leadership, the formation of learning communities and communities of practice, and the enactment of policies and funding streams to support efforts to enhance and sustain the entire population's capacity to prevent and heal climate distresses and traumas. The next section of the handbook addresses these issues.

Checklist

Has the CRN developed means to track progress, continually improve, and plan for the long-term?

	Yes	No	Comments
Did the CRN develop a strategy to track and evaluate its progress in building universal capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience?			
Did the CRN use "evaluation thinking" throughout the entire process?			
Has the CRN become a true "learning community?"			
Has the CRN developed ways to get local organizations to commit to incorporating mental wellness and resilience principles and practices into their operations?			
Has the CRN developed a long-term strategic plan to address member and staff transitions?			
Has the CRN developed a long-term strategic funding plan?			
Has the CRN developed a long-term strategic plan to prepare network members to respond effectively during each of the six common phases of a disaster?			

II. Building and Sustaining Momentum

Take a moment to imagine what things will be like in your neighborhood and community 2030. Even if global greenhouse gas emissions have been significantly reduced, average global surface temperatures may still have risen close to 2C (3.6 F) above pre-industrial levels. All of humanity—and most people in your community--will experience significant distresses and traumas due to the mixture of cascading disruptions to the ecological, social, and economic systems they rely on for food, water, shelter, jobs, incomes, health, and other basic needs, and more frequent, extreme, and prolonged wind/rain/or snow storms, wildfires, floods, heat waves, droughts, sea level rise and storm surges, or other emergencies and disasters.

What steps can you personally envision taking now to prepare for these challenges?

For example, are there members of your Bonding, Bridging, and Linking social support networks and mutual aid groups that you can begin to discuss the issues with? As you do so, can you identify other individuals, groups, and organizations that could be engaged in the dialogues? Who has the trust of different populations and sectors? Is there an organization or network of groups that can take the lead in addressing the issues, or is a new network needed? How can you help organize and participate in these efforts?

As the CRN Handbooks have continually emphasized, no single organization, profession, or program can prevent or heal the distresses and traumas generated by the C-E-B crisis. Prevention and healing will be needed at every level of society because the personal, family, social, economic, and ecological problems we face are all interconnected. This will require that many long-standing orthodoxies be jettisoned. We must think and act through a population and holistic lens, not an individualized siloed and fragmented one.

Accordingly, entire communities must be engaged in preventing and healing distresses and traumas and in solutions to the C-E-B crisis, and the best way to do this is to form a CRN.

The CRN will need to coordinate numerous semi-independent initiatives that continually engage different populations and sectors of their community in the five foundational protective factors discussed in the CRN Handbook about them. The impacts of the C-E-B crisis will continue for decades, so the work of the CRNs must be ongoing.

Again, only a few of the community-led initiatives discussed in the CRN Handbooks have yet to specifically focus on the C-E-B crisis. And none address all five of the foundational protective factors that will be essential to enhance universal capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience during the C-E-B crisis. Most emphasize just one or two of the core foundational areas in ways that make sense given the issues they were organized to address in their community, be it violence, adverse childhood experiences, or disaster preparedness.

But to enable local residents to remain mentally well and resilient during the decades or longer C-E-B crisis and reduce their community's contribution to the emergency, the

existing initiatives will need to expand their focus, and thousands of new comprehensive holistic ones will need to be organized in communities worldwide.

Indeed, organizing culturally accountable CRNs must become a top international priority and a global movement is needed to establish these initiatives. Here are some important actions that can help grow the movement.

Galvanize Transformation Leadership

Effective leadership is required for any positive change to occur. The C-E-B crisis requires leaders who can motivate people to make deep-seated changes faster, and with more acumen, than ever before.

It is a common misperception to think of leaders as people at the top with authority such as a CEO or elected official. In reality, pressure for change usually comes from the middle and grass-roots levels of communities and those at the top merely announce and implement what others advocate for or demand. Equally importantly, the belief that leadership comes from the top allows people without formal authority to disregard their responsibility to drive positive change.

The wicked problems generated by the C-E-B crisis require that people at all levels of society--especially those without formal authority--respond to its complex challenges in ways that stimulate deep-seated transformational changes. This can only occur when people are equipped with the mindset and competencies called "Transformational Leadership." This is a leadership approach that stimulates positive fundamental change in individuals, groups, and social systems. It can be defined as the ability to respond to rapid disruptive changes with personal integrity, insight, vision, agility, and commitment that inspires others to use their best qualities to build a new positive future for all.¹³

Transformational leadership has four primary characteristics.

- First is the degree to which the leader seeks out and listens to the concerns of others and attends to their needs, not their own.
- Second is the degree to which the leader challenges long-held assumptions and beliefs and encourages people to think differently and identify safer, healthier, more just, zero-emission, climate-resilient and ecologically regenerative ways to respond to challenges.
- The third characteristic is the degree to which a leader articulates to others a coherent and inspiring vision of what is possible. This involves communicating both realism and optimism, and providing meaning and a strong sense of purpose in the actions required to bring about positive change toward ambitious goals.

- The fourth characteristic of transformational leaders is their ability to serve as a role model by exhibiting high ethical and moral standards that generate trust and respect from others.¹⁴

Researchers in the field have described Martin Luther King Jr. in the U.S. and Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and others in other nations as transformational leaders. People who worked with them said they constantly inspired everyone to challenge their assumptions and beliefs and think in new and bigger ways to produce outcomes they never thought were possible.¹⁵

None one is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes. But the more people understand the characteristics transformational leaders embody, the greater the number that will seek to embrace the qualities and mobilize their communities to build universal capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience and engage in actions that significantly enhance local conditions. Transformational leaders can be found at all levels of society and it will be vital to inspire all of them to lead efforts to respond to the C-E-B crisis.

Establish Transformational Leadership Learning Exchanges

One action that will help expand the number of people who embody the characteristics of a transformational leader is to establish "learning exchanges" around the world.¹⁶ A number of non-profit organizations and universities offer transformational leadership webinars, courses, and certificate programs that teach participants what transformational leadership involves, and how they can embody the core characteristics.¹⁷ However, much more is needed for the C-E-B crisis.

Learning exchanges are needed to help people from all walks of life learn the core principles and practices of transformational leadership and enhance the skills they need to mobilize their fellow residents to organize and operate community-led initiatives to address the wicked nature of the individual, family, community, and societal challenges speeding our way.

In addition to examining their personal assumptions and enhancing their skills, an important focus of the learning exchanges should be to inform participants about the change process. Big changes don't happen in a smooth linear way. They typically occur through chaotic, confusing, and even contradictory processes that include a mix of large and small setbacks and successes. If people remain focused and persistent, however, things can eventually come together and change can occur. Participants need to understand this so they know how to handle and lead the chaotic process of change with confidence and resolve.

Related to this is the need for participants to learn that big social changes come about only when people work together to pursue it. Not many people are willing to spend time trying to do something that will have minimal effects. Humans become motivated when they feel they are engage in something really important that is larger than themselves. Participants

should learn about the change process and how to bring people together to work toward big fundamental changes.

People involved with learning exchanges often become actively engaged in the issues they learn about. This means that establishing Transformational Leadership Learning Exchanges throughout the world will help grow a movement of people committed to leading transformative change in their community.

Grow the Movement by Organizing Interconnected “Communities of Practice”

Communities of Practice (CoPs) will also be needed to help people in different parts of the world that are not involved with a CRN learn how to organize and operate one. CoPs will also be important to assist those who are engaged in community-led wellness and resilience building initiatives enhance their understanding and skills. This requires continual learning, reflection, and improvement.¹⁸

People who are not committed to constant learning, growth, and advancement can easily abandon their work when they experience a significant setback. Failure causes them to give up. In contrast, people who are committed to continual learning and improvement don't stop when they experience a setback. They see failures as challenges that offer the opportunity to learn, adapt, and develop better ways to address issues.

To foster this type of mindset, CoPs should be organized in different regions and nations worldwide. A mental wellness and transformational resilience CoP will be a group of people who share the common goal of helping their community come together to continually learn, improve, and develop effective strategies to build universal capacity to prevent and heal distresses and traumas as they engage in solutions to the C-E-B crisis. Guest speakers can be invited to offer different perspectives, share research, and teach practices and skills.

The goal of a CoP should be to engage participants in deep-seated dialogue and reflection to examine their core assumptions and beliefs, and think big to develop new insights, knowledge, and innovative ideas to advance their work.

The Need for New Policies

New policies are also needed to grow a global movement to build universal capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience.

One type of policy needed is the "Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act" (CMWRA). It was developed by the International Transformational Resilience Network (ITRC) and introduced in the U.S. Congress in 2023.

The CMWRA would, for the first time ever, make the prevention of mental health and psychosocial problems through community-led initiatives a U.S. priority. It would accomplish this by establishing a new federal grant program to fund community-led, age

and culturally accountable initiatives that enhance universal capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience. The grants would provide three to five years of funding because it takes most community-led initiatives that long to mature to the point where they can raise sufficient funds on their own. Information about the CMWRA can be found on the [ITRC website](#).

The information, skills, and methods involved with building population-level capacity for psychological, emotional, and spiritual wellness and resilience were developed for non-climate related traumas. This means the CMWRA will help prevent and heal individual, community, and societal traumas resulting from many types of human-caused and ecologically generated emergencies, disasters, and toxic stresses.

Similar policies are needed at the state and local levels in the U.S. Other nations, provinces, and cities will benefit by enacting their own version of the CMWRA. The ITRC developed a "model" CNWRA policy that other nations, states/provinces, and municipalities can use to design their own policy. It can also be found on the [ITRC website](#).

Another piece of legislation that can be used was developed in Brazil: "The National Climate Mental Health Policy." [Bill No 6151/2025](#) "Establishes the National Climate Mental Health Policy, provides for the organization of psychosocial care in disaster contexts, creates the National Climate Mental Health System and the Centers for Resilience, Healing, and Community Reconstruction (CRCRC) and provides other measures.

Still another piece of legislation that should be considered can be called "Resilience in All Policies" (RiAP). This is an adaptation of the [Health in all Policies](#) (HiAP) policy promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other organizations. They describe it as "an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and equity."¹⁹

Resilience in All Policies would expand the WHO's proposal to emphasize that all policies and actions adopted by governments should examine their impact on, and ensure that they enhance, and do not undermine, individual and collective mental wellness and resilience.

Many other new policies are needed as well. The list is too long to include here, so just a few high-level examples are offered here:

- The most important policies will result from a global mobilization similar to the Manhattan Project to conserve and regenerate the earth's climate, ecological systems, and biodiversity. The goal should be to enact policies that enable a swift transition to safe, healthy, just and equitable, zero-emission, climate-resilient societies. Among other changes, the mobilization would mandate:

- The swift and complete phase out of fossil fuels in all sectors of the economy.
- The rapid scale-up of clean renewable energy, including the subsidized provision of solar power on the rooftops of every family without electricity.
- The protection and regeneration of vast swaths of ecological systems and biodiversity worldwide.
- A massive cleanup of the planet involving billions of volunteers as well as paid staff.
- The creation of a global council composed of civil society, art, religious/spirituality, science, mental health, physical health, business, government, and other leaders with the mission to identify:
 - New forms of capitalism needed to reduce the C-E-B crisis to manageable levels and allow people to live healthy, fulfilling, and resilient lives.
 - How to restructure the internet and social media to uplift truth and positive connections and restrict misinformation and other negative effects on safety, health, and wellbeing.
 - How to develop ongoing communications, problem solving, and conflict resolution mechanisms among nation states to prevent wars and other conflicts that threaten people and the planet.

In addition to these and many other new international policies, each nation, region, state/province and municipality will need to develop policies pertinent to their area to enable a swift transition to safe, healthy, just and equitable, zero-emission, climate-resilient society.

III. Closing Thoughts

We live in challenging times. Millions of people worldwide are struggling with insufficient food, water, and shelter, poverty, racism, and other systemic oppressions, or are threatened by interpersonal aggression and violence. Millions more are dealing with severe anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, complicated grief, substance abuse, and other mental health and psychosocial problems.

These problems make it hard to think about or deal with issues such as the C-E-B crisis. But it is essential to not let these important daily challenges distract us from the far greater threats posed to every individual, family, community, and civilization as a whole, now and in the future, by the accelerating climate-ecosystem-biodiversity crisis.

No matter how quickly greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, the long global C-E-B crisis will change the course of human history. Life will not end. But every person alive today, located in every part of the world, and all future generations, will be impacted in ways that generate significant distresses and traumas. The consequences will close the door to many of the ways society functions today. Yet, we should never forget that the crisis will also open the door to new pathways.

It will not be easy. But we *can* address these challenges. By returning the responsibility for preventing and healing distresses and traumas to neighborhoods and communities where it naturally belongs, everyone can enhance their capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience. In doing so, people will be inspired to create innovative solutions to the C-E-B crisis and many other challenges.

Organizing community-led resilience networks across the globe won't solve all our problems. But it will mitigate many of them, and spur new thinking, approaches, and policies that can put humanity on a safer, healthier, more just and equitable regenerative path.

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- ³ See, for example, the MOUs used by Peace4Tarpon in Tarpon Springs, Florida (<https://www.peace4tarpon.org/>), and The Community Resilience Initiative in Walla Walla, Washington (<https://criresilient.org/>).
- ⁴ Peace4Tarpon's MOU can be obtained at: <https://www.peace4tarpon.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/MOU-March2015.pdf>
- ⁵ Hanover County Resilience Task Force: <https://www.nhcouncesback.org/systems-change>
- ⁶ The information provided here is adapted from *Strategic Planning for Non-Profits* by the National Council of Non-Profits. Obtained at: <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/strategic-planning-nonprofits>
- ⁷ Ibid
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- ¹³ This definition is based on my own experience leading organizations and movements, and is an adaptation of the definition provided by: Bass, B. M. & Riggio, R.E. (2008). *Transformational Leadership*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.; and Choi SL. et al. (2016). Transformational leadership, empowerment, and job satisfaction: the mediating role of employee empowerment. *Human Resources Health*.
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- ¹⁵ See for example: *Transformational Change Leadership: Stories of Building a Just Future*. Center for Transformational Change. Obtained at: <https://tcleadership.org/introduction/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CTransformational%20change%20leadership>; and Fontein D. (Feb. 17 2022). Your Guide to Transformational Leadership in Education. *ThoughtExchange*. Obtained at: <https://thoughtexchange.com/blog/transformational-leadership-in-education/>
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