

Facilitation Tool: Break-out Group Discussion Linking Adaptation Actions to Outcomes



Photo credit: Susi Moser

Purpose of Break-out Group Discussion

The purpose of this break-out group discussion is for participants to think about the link between adaptation actions and outcomes, recognize that causality is sometimes difficult to establish, and thus gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of adaptation.

Target Audience

All audiences

When to Use

- Relatively early in a workshop to
 - Hear from everyone what they are doing on hazard mitigation and adaptation.
 - Get people thinking about the relationship between adaptation actions and outcomes.
 - Prior to a discussion on indicators and metrics.

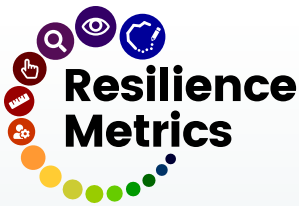
Directions

- **Materials Needed**
 - Flipcharts and easels or a notetaker willing to take notes on a laptop
 - Enough space in the workshop room to have a sufficient number of break-out group takes (4-6 people/table)



This facilitation tool was created to serve as a reference for individuals interested in indicators and metrics to help communities define and track progress on their climate adaptation goals. Additional background and resources are available on the website: www.ResilienceMetrics.org.

This website was developed in partnership with the National Estuarine Research Reserve System with funding from NOAA.



➤ **Step-by-step delivery of exercise**

- If people don't already sit in small groups, ask them to quickly form groups of 4-6 people (depending on workshop size).
- If it is desirable to break people up, so that people less familiar with each other talk to each other, divisions into break-out groups can be done by counting off (e.g., goal of 7 groups, count off 1-7).
- Ask for one note taker/rapporteur in each group.
- Provide guiding questions (see example questions below) either on a hand-out or a slide; provide questions one at a time.
- Remind people to ensure everyone gets to speak, participate equally (especially important if there are a few dominant voices in the group).
- Lead facilitator keeps time and helps groups switch from one question to the next.
- After break-out group discussion closes, elicit brief reports (highlights, additional insights) from each group.
- Lead facilitates a whole group discussion on particularly interesting insights, contradictions, surprises. Focus on bringing out the causal links between actions and outcomes.

➤ **Things to consider for event planners and the facilitator**

- Is the room big enough to have comfortable break-out groups?
- Are there particularly dominant voices? If yes, consider having a break-out group facilitator (in addition to the note taker).
- Can you meet with break-out group facilitators/note takers ahead of time (by phone or in person) to ensure they understand the intended goals of the exercise and can help direct discussions if necessary?

Example Use and Outcomes

A break-out group discussion exercise was used in the following way at the Successful Adaptation Indicators and Metrics workshop at the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve (JCNERR) in New Jersey:

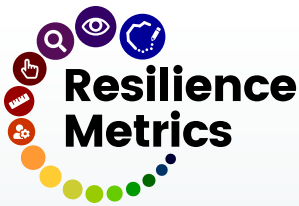
Exercise Title: Are We More Resilient Post-Sandy?

Break-out groups: 6 people per table

Whole group sharing and discussion: After the break-out group discussion, rapporteurs were asked to share highlights with the whole group. Facilitated whole group discussion followed to deepen on novel, particularly interesting, contradictory or shared insights.

Discussion questions:

1. **Actions:** What have you/your organization/others done to build greater resilience post-Sandy?
2. **Causal link between action and outcome:** How exactly has this made you more resilient?
3. **Experience & reality:** How do you know?



Lead facilitator: Susi Moser

Time allowed for break-out group discussion: 45 minutes, 15 whole group discussion

Intended outcomes

- Participants share and learn about actions taken in different communities to increase resilience.
- Participants explore the link between actions taken and resilience outcomes, and how difficult it can be to make causal inference.
- Participants critically (self-)assess what of all that they do actually contributes to resilience.

Insights Gained from Break-out Group Discussion

- Participants found it to be a useful exercise to a) realize they didn't really know if they were more resilient now than before Sandy; and b) even where actions were taken, they didn't track them as part of a resilience indicator process.
- Participants recognized that focusing only on actions would not be enough to answer the question of adaptation success.
- Participants acknowledged that the hurricane a) made many things happen that would not have happened otherwise and/or b) spurred on actions that might have happened regardless of the disaster, but that were implemented at an accelerated rate because of the perceived urgency and resources that became available post-event.
- Considerable efforts after Sandy focused on educating the public about the importance of flood mitigation and resilience building. It's unclear, however, whether this has made people safer.
- Participants discussed the importance of having another extreme event to show people that the efforts made paid off. Where projects (such as wetland restoration) were in place already prior to Sandy, the reduced impact on people in those places illustrated the benefit of those projects.