

Case study: Resolving conflict

Collaboration with diverse team members and stakeholders can sometimes result in disagreements or contention, as was the experience of the *New England Climate Adaptation Project*, a regional initiative involving the four New England reserves.

NEW ENGLAND CLIMATE ADAPTATION PROJECT

The project's goal was to design and test role-play simulations for four New England communities that faced a specific climate risk. Originally, the team assumed that the role-play simulation for the community of Barnstable, Massachusetts, should focus on wastewater. However, the team learned from local partners that the issue was so politically fraught that making it the foundation of the simulation would detract from the goal, which was to prepare communities to take action on climate change adaptation.

Project team's approach

Instead of focusing on climate adaptation, the team incorporated wastewater as a secondary issue, which allowed the community to have productive discussions through the role-play simulation, while minimizing conflict.

During some of the simulation workshops, the team also encountered climate change skeptics. Some workshop participants who were strongly opposed to climate change action left the workshops before they were over. While this made the experience more challenging and required more active facilitation, it helped demonstrate to other participants some of the challenges and tensions that communities are likely to face when moving forward with climate change adaptation and risk management.

Key advice

Managing and resolving conflict is challenging, but it can be achieved through effective facilitation, conflict resolution techniques, and identification of stakeholders' assumptions, perceptions and values. In the early stage of your project, consider using SWOT analysis and stakeholder mapping to identify possible sources of conflict and develop strategies to mitigate them.

To learn more about this project that was initiated in 2012, visit their [Project Page](#).

To access other case studies and resources for conducting collaborative science projects, visit: [A Guide to Collaborative Science](#).

This case study was developed in 2015 by the NERRS Science Collaborative team when the program was hosted by the University of New Hampshire. This case study was originally featured as part of the Collaborative Project Toolkit.

