



COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER LEARNING REVIEWS

A PRACTICE GUIDE

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Disclaimer

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and Owners of the lands on which we work and live across Australia.

This report was created by people living on Ngunnawal/Ngambri, Boonwurrung/Bunurong and Wurundjeri Countries. It draws on the experience of our Fire to Flourish program, that operates on Bidwell, Brinja-Yuin, Bundjalung, Djiringanj, Gumbaynggirr, Gunaikurnai, Kamilaroi, Monero, Walbunja and Yaegl Country.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and acknowledge the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. We are committed to collaboration that furthers self-determination and creates a better future for all.



Photo: A resilience-building community event in Tenterfield, NSW

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1. INTRODUCTION

Disaster after-action reviews have typically focused on the operations of emergency responders. While these are important, there is significant opportunity for community-based reviews to support ongoing resilience strengthening. After a disaster, a window opens in which communities are motivated to act based on their insights about what did and didn't work well before, during and after the recent disaster.

The Community-Based Disaster Learning Review

is a powerful methodology that is achievable, tested and impactful. It takes a 'no-blame' mindset and a trauma-informed approach to learning lessons for community-led action on disaster resilience. It does not examine emergency services operations.

This Practice Guide sets out the central principles and a suggested process for conducting such a review so that it is community-owned and genuinely contributes to strengthening community disaster resilience.

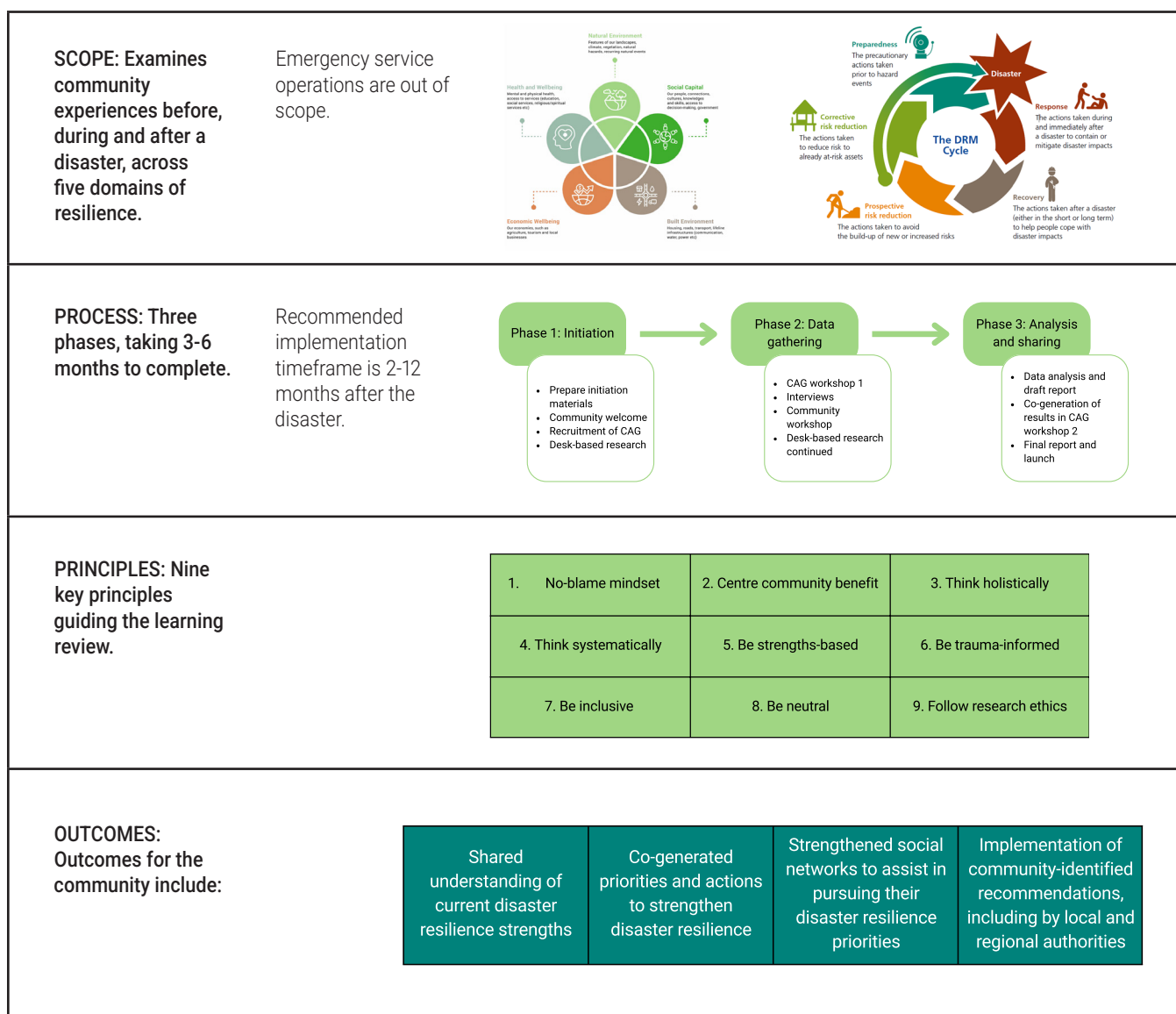


Figure 1: Overview of the Community-Based Disaster Learning Review approach

2. WHAT IS A COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER LEARNING REVIEW?

The Community-Based Disaster Learning Review (CBDLR) methodology is an opportunity for community members and local stakeholders to come together to reflect on what did, and did not, work well before, during and after a recent disaster, in order to inform action. It is a review of community-based actions, not emergency services operations.

A CBDLR is ideally undertaken between two and 12 months following a disaster event, when a window opens up where communities are motivated to act and have more access to funds for initiatives that support recovery and ongoing resilience building.

It involves engaging community members who have been directly and indirectly affected by the disaster, community leaders and organisations who were involved before, during and/or after the disaster, and other locally involved stakeholders such as emergency services, local government and other service providers. This engagement takes the form of workshops and interviews, supplemented by desk-based research of publicly available information such as reports, risk maps and traditional and social media about the disaster.

The practice of reflecting on an event to identify what worked well, and what did not, is essential for continuous improvement and is an integral aspect of emergency management. The emergency services sector has a strong culture of lessons management (see Box 1), which often takes the form of after-action reviews. These reviews are usually focused on the actions taken within emergency management agencies, government departments or municipal governments. Similarly, inquiries into disaster events that look across organisations typically focus on formal response operations, such as fire suppression or flood rescues. Learning review processes focused on organisational performance during a disaster event – which identify lessons and translate them into lessons learned – are critically important, not only for the organisation in question but ultimately for communities.

Communities are not typically included in lessons management processes, and yet they are central to disaster resilience. They are the first to respond before emergency services arrive, and are still there when outside support has gone home. They have significant

responsibilities before, during and after disasters. Communities that have strong social capital and are actively engaged in risk reduction, preparedness and recovery fare far better than communities that do not.

With disasters becoming more frequent, severe, compounding and complex, involving communities in lessons management is a powerful way to increase their agency and mobilise local efforts in effective action for resilience building.

Dufty² identifies five types of post-event evaluations in the emergency management sector:

1. Government inquiries, reviews and formal investigations into significant events, with findings publicly released.
2. After-action reviews and operational debriefs, undertaken by organisations into their own

Box 1: What is lessons management?

Lessons management is a crucial part of ensuring that Australia's emergency sector aims for continuous improvement in the way that it prepares for, and responds to, extreme events such as bushfires. Its part in Australia's policy framework was established by the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2011).

Lessons management is a term that refers to collecting, analysing, disseminating and applying learning experiences from events, exercises, programs and reviews. It is important that these learning experiences include those that worked well and should be sustained, and those that need to improve.

The lessons management framework differentiates between:

A 'lesson identified', which is when the learnings from particular experiences are captured and a course of action recommended.

A 'lesson learned', which is when that course of action has been implemented, and there has been a definite change as a result.

Further information about this approach in the emergency sector can be found in the Lessons Management Handbook¹.

performance, not usually publicly released.

3. Community meetings/debriefs, often held in an ad hoc manner and with concerns about volatility.
4. Community surveys and other social research, conducted to understand the performance of a system such as early warnings or to explore a particular theme, typically publicly released.
5. Independent evaluations, often commissioned by emergency services organisations and not usually released publicly.

The CBDLR is somewhat akin to an after-action review, but instead of exploring the performance of an organisation, it explores the performance of the community at large. It is in some ways related to social research post-event evaluation.

Another way to understand the CBDLR is as a form of disaster forensics; the detailed, systemic exploration of a disaster event in order to identify root causes of the risk and resulting damages, and inform future disaster risk management actions³⁻⁵.

The CBDLR methodology has been significantly informed by the Post-Event Review Capability (PERC) methodology, developed by the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance⁶. The PERC methodology offers a process and framework for the systematic analysis of a disaster event. PERC studies take a systems-based, holistic and resilience-oriented approach to analyse how a specific hazard became a disaster and to identify actionable recommendations. Other post-event learning reviews using this methodology can be found at <https://zcralliance.org/perc/>.

The CBDLR draws a number of elements from the PERC and extends the methodology to explicitly centre community members as the primary owners and audience of the learning review. It provides a strengths-based and trauma-informed process for conducting the review.

Types of disasters

While the PERC methodology has been used for flood, storm, hurricane and wildfire, the CBDLR methodology is adaptable for virtually all rapid-onset, natural hazard-induced disaster events. In theory, the CBDLR would also be applicable, with some adaptation, for other types of disasters, such as human-made disasters and slower onset events such as drought.

What is 'community'?

The CBDLR uses the term 'community', but community is not a straightforward concept. Communities can be geographic or place-based, social or identity-based, and/or functional or interest-based. In the context of

community disaster resilience and the CBDLR, the primary understanding of 'community' is geographic or place-based, because the types of disasters reviewed by the CBDLR have a geographic footprint (e.g. a flooded area). Because of this, a community is understood as a group of people living in the same physical location (e.g. a town, suburb or neighbourhood affected by the disaster).

Communities are not homogenous, often comprising sub-community groups based on shared identity⁷. These groups often have links to others outside the geographical community, based on their shared identity. For instance, Indigenous communities, farmers, LGBTQIA+ people. Referring to 'the community' in a way that ignores the differences within it can mask internal divisions, ignore marginalisation and risk missing critical perspectives⁸. Facilitators of a CBDLR must be careful to not impose definitions of community and guard against powerful groups dominating the process (See Principle 7 'Be inclusive' in Section 3).

The audience

Community members are the primary audience of a CBDLR, with local Governments, agencies and other stakeholders an important secondary audience. CBDLR studies have salience for other at-risk communities wanting to learn from the experience, as well as wider emergency management authorities and stakeholders. The major output of a CBDLR is a findings and recommendations report, accompanied by various break-out products and/or events determined to be beneficial for the affected community and key stakeholders.

Intended outcomes

The CBDLR methodology aims to generate the following outcomes:

- Community members and local stakeholders develop a shared understanding of their current disaster resilience strengths.
- Community members and local stakeholders co-generate priorities for strengthening community disaster resilience.
- Community members and local stakeholders strengthen social capital, networks and relationships, which are leveraged into action in pursuit of the priorities and recommendations.
- Local and regional authorities and Governments implement the community-identified recommendations.

Facilitators and resourcing

The CBDLR is focused on the collective community experience across groups and stakeholders, yet needs to be initiated and facilitated by a person or organisation. The facilitators working with the community could be, for example, a local community-based NGO or organisation, a local or municipal Government, a local emergency services organisation, or university researchers.

Facilitators take on a range of following responsibilities and the facilitation team should be suitably skilled and experienced:

- Project management of the review process.
- Trauma-informed engagement with community members and stakeholders.
- Facilitation of inclusive, strengths-based dialogue in community.
- Analysis of data to identify key themes, issues and opportunities.
- Distillation of findings and recommendations.
- Communication of findings in verbal and written forms.

Whoever facilitates the study must adhere to the nine principles of the CBDLR. In particular, they must feel confident that they can approach the data collection and analysis in an inclusive and neutral way. Facilitators must be willing to be led by the community in regard to the findings and recommendations of the study, rather than in pursuit of their own agenda. For these reasons, it can be valuable for the facilitator to be someone who does not live or work in the community, helping avoid bias in the facilitation.

The resources used to conduct a CBDLR vary considerably depending on the extent of existing relationships and contacts, the resourcing available, the size and complexity of the community, and the size and complexity of the disaster event.

The CBDLR described in this Practice Guide is estimated to take approximately three months, including desk-based research, three community workshops, 10-20 interviews, analysis and write-up. This is a guide only and the methodology can be adapted to suit the context.

3. HOW TO CONDUCT A COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER LEARNING REVIEW

This first section sets out the nine key principles that need to be followed to successfully conduct a Community-Based Disaster Learning Review (CBDLR). Each of these principles help ensure that the community at the centre of the learning review is able to co-generate useful and meaningful priorities that strengthen their disaster resilience into the future.

This section explains why each of these principles is important to the CBDLR, and what implementing that principle looks like in practice.

No-blame mindset

Why it's important: The primary focus of the CBDLR is learning; it is not a judicial process, nor is it designed to apportion blame. A focus on blame or finger-pointing often shuts down the potential for learning and is thus counterproductive for several key reasons. Chief among them is that it creates a culture of fear: when individuals or groups fear being blamed, they are less likely to report mistakes or identify systemic issues

Box 2: Key principles of a Community-Based Disaster Learning Review

The CBDLR has nine key principles that are integral to this methodology's success. Following these principles will mean that the community is much more likely to be able to co-generate useful and meaningful priorities that will strengthen their disaster resilience into the future.

Principle	Why it's important	What it looks like
1. No-blame mindset	A focus on blame or finger-pointing often shuts down the potential for learning.	Strongly emphasise the focus on learning rather than blame at all stages of the CBDLR process.
2. Centre community benefit	The CBDLR is first and foremost for the community, rather than external stakeholders.	Respect and uplift community knowledge throughout the CBDLR process.
3. Think holistically	Thinking holistically about the community's experience of the disaster avoids oversimplifying resilience.	Consider the community's experience through the lenses of health and wellbeing, social capital, natural environment, built environment and economic wellbeing.
4. Think systemically	Disaster risk, disaster response and disaster impacts are all the outcome of complex interactions between multiple social and natural systems.	Encourage the community to look beyond isolated causes and instead see how disasters emerge from systemic conditions and interactions.
5. Be strengths-based	Effective learning is not just about changing in response to what went wrong; it's equally about supporting and strengthening what worked well.	Ensure that, at all stages of the CBDLR process, equal focus is put on what worked well as what did not.
6. Be trauma-informed	When people feel emotionally and psychologically safe, they are more able to engage in open reflections, which supports learning.	Conduct the CBDLR process in accordance with principles outlined for trauma-informed care.
7. Be inclusive	Disasters affect people unequally. Including only some community risks reinforcing inequalities and also producing incomplete and inaccurate findings.	All groups within the community are identified and engaged in respectful, culturally safe ways that enable their genuine contribution to the CBDLR process.
8. Be neutral	A neutral facilitator can help keep the focus on learning rather than blame.	Follow CBDLR process techniques for neutral interviewing and workshop facilitation.
9. Follow research ethics	The steps outlined in this guide outline a form of research involving human participants.	Follow CBDLR principles and be transparent with, and accountable to, the community.

that they may be part of. Valuable data and insights that are crucial for learning are then lost⁹. Ironically, blame reduces genuine accountability. As it promotes defensiveness, people may distort facts to protect themselves and focus on self-preservation rather than improvement¹⁰. In order to learn, people need to feel safe to speak up, which is sometimes called ‘psychological safety’¹¹ (see Principle 6 ‘Be trauma-informed’).

Furthermore, a stance of blame or finger-pointing can often oversimplify complex issues. Disasters are the result of complex interactions between human and natural systems over many years. Blame focuses on the ‘who’ instead of the ‘what and why’ and inhibits systems thinking (see Principle 4 ‘Think systemically’).

Finally, practices that are accusatory can exacerbate trauma from the event (see Principle 6 ‘Be trauma-informed’).

What it looks like in practice: The fact that the CBDLR is intended for learning rather than blame should be repeatedly emphasised to all participants at all stages of the process. During data collection, a no-blame mindset helps to frame questions neutrally (see Principle 8 ‘Be neutral’) and to focus on systems, processes and enablers/barriers, rather than the perceived failures of specific individuals (see Principle 4 ‘Think systemically’). When co-designing priorities and recommendations with the community, a no-blame mindset helps focus on what worked well (see Principle 5 ‘Be strengths-based’) and helps to develop actionable recommendations that address root causes, rather than being reactive to symptoms.

Centre community benefit

Why it’s important: Disaster-affected communities have often been subjected to external people – in particular researchers and consultants conducting inquiries – with an extractive mindset who ask for their story but do not provide anything in return. A key feature of the CBDLR is that it is for the primary benefit of the community. This means that community benefit must be the driving force behind all CBDLR activities. The CBDLR is first and foremost for the community – other stakeholders, including organisations that the facilitators might be affiliated with, are secondary.

What it looks like in practice: Centring community benefit looks like respecting and uplifting community knowledge (see Principles 5 ‘Be strengths-based’ and 7 ‘Be inclusive’), building trust and capacity, and ensuring that the priorities and recommendations that come out of the process are relevant, inclusive and actionable by the community. The CBDLR must be broadly welcomed

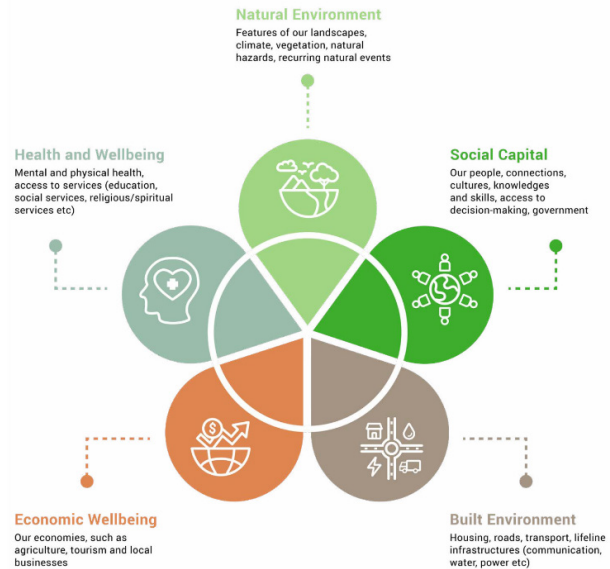


Figure 2: Five domains of resilience used in Fire to Flourish to define holistic resilience

by the community (for more details see ‘Phase 1: Initiation’), based on the understanding that it is intended to be of benefit for the community. The Community Advisory Group is established to enable facilitators and the community to co-design the CBDLR, including the goals, details about the process, and how findings will be used. Of particular importance is the framing of the priorities and recommendations, which should be actionable by the community or local stakeholders, for the benefit of the community. In Phase 3, findings are shared back with the community, and particular care should be taken to ensure that these are shared widely and in multiple, accessible formats.

Think holistically

Why it’s important: The CBDLR methodology is designed to support community disaster resilience. Resilience is understood as more than just ‘bouncing back’, it’s about the capacity of a community to “resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner.”¹² This capacity comes from complex, contextual interactions between multiple dimensions across the social-ecological system. Thinking holistically about the community’s experience of the disaster avoids oversimplifying resilience and supports thinking systemically about root causes (see Principle 4 ‘Think systemically’).

What it looks like in practice: There are several frameworks that define the multiple dimensions of resilience. The PERC methodology⁵ follows the ‘5C’

Table 1: Domains of resilience with examples

Resilience domain	Example strength	Example issue
Health and Wellbeing	Many people in the community have up-to-date first aid certification.	There is no doctor in the community, meaning people do not have ready access to healthcare. During the disaster, the road was cut off so people could not access essential medications.
Social Capital	There are strong social ties within the community. Most people know each other and feel they can rely on each other. During the disaster, people actively checked on elderly neighbours.	An aging population means declining volunteering, which was an issue during the evacuation. Some newer members of the community do not yet feel welcome.
Natural Environment	Visually stunning national parks make the community a wonderful place to live, and support sustainable tourism.	The river that runs through town has been poorly managed and its degradation is contributing to the flood risk.
Built Environment	Long-standing building regulations have resulted in many elevated buildings, minimising flood damage.	The community is reliant on a single road and bridge to enter and exit the community, which frequently gets cut off during floods.
Economic Wellbeing	Local vineyards are diversifying into bed and breakfasts, supporting local tourism.	The timber industry that the town has relied on is declining. The flood came during peak tourist season, wiping out most of a year's worth of income for many community members.

model which holistically looks at human, social, natural, physical and financial capitals. The Fire to Flourish program defines five domains of resilience as:

1. Health and Wellbeing: mental and physical health, access to services such as education, social services, religious/spiritual services etc
2. Social Capital: people, connection, cultures, knowledges and skills, as well as access to decision-making government
3. Natural Environment: features of the landscapes, climate, vegetation, natural hazards, recurring natural events
4. Built Environment: housing roads, transport, lifeline infrastructures such as communication, water, power etc
5. Economic Wellbeing: economies important to the communities, such as agriculture, tourism and local businesses.

In a CBDLR, it is extremely useful to consider what the strengths and issues are across each of these domains. These strengths and issues will pertain to both the everyday condition of the community, as well as how these dimensions played out in the disaster event. Table 1 provides some examples that might apply to a rural, flood-affected community.

Another way to look holistically at the disaster event and the disaster resilience that is central to the CBDLR is to explore what happened before, during and after the disaster, or across the phases of disaster management^{5,13}.

- Before the disaster: this is when the community and other stakeholders can take action to minimise risk and prepare for the disaster. It is helpful

to further breakdown the before phase into:

- prospective risk reduction: actions taken to avoid the build-up of more risk, such as land-use regulations that prevent building in high-risk areas and building regulations to protect assets.
- corrective risk reduction: actions taken to reduce existing risk, such as restoration of mangroves to reduce flood risk or fuel management to reduce bushfire risk.
- preparedness: actions taken to prepare for the disaster and the disaster response in order to minimise impacts, such as warning systems, evacuation planning and preparing properties.
- During the disaster: this is the response phase, when the community and other stakeholders take action during and immediately after the disaster to protect lives and valuable assets such as homes, critical infrastructure, ecosystems and sites of cultural value, as well as acting to contain impacts that have occurred. It includes provision of information about the evolving disaster situation, search and rescue, the running of evacuation centres and the distribution of emergency relief.
- After the disaster: this is the recovery phase when actions are taken to support people to cope with or recover from the impacts of the disaster. This includes mental health support, reconstructing damaged built environment such as roads and homes, restoring critical infrastructure systems such as communications, and restoring the provision of essential services.

The term ‘build back better’, while contentious, is used to highlight the opportunity that comes in the recovery phase to avoid building the same risk back into the system.

Think systemically

Why it’s important: Disaster risk, disaster response and disaster impacts are all the outcome of complex interactions between multiple social and natural systems¹⁴. Systems thinking is a way of understanding complex, interconnected systems by focusing on relationships, patterns, and feedback loops¹⁵. When conducting a CBDLR to support disaster resilience, thinking systemically supports both facilitators and communities to move beyond individual blame (see Principle 1 ‘No-blame mindset’) or isolated causes and instead see how events emerge from systemic conditions and interactions.

Systems thinking is particularly important for understanding how the disaster event may have triggered cascading effects across multiple interdependent systems, either amplifying or buffering impacts. By bringing community experiences and insights together systemically, a CBDLR can then identify leverage points – small, strategic changes – that can have a big impact^{10,16}. It is these leverage points that often become the focus of community-identified priorities and/or recommendations.

A further benefit of taking a systems-based approach is that it encourages the inclusion of multiple perspectives and experiences¹⁷, which is particularly important for ensuring the CBDLR encompasses the experiences of diverse groups across the community (see Principle 7 ‘Be inclusive’).

What it looks like in practice: Facilitators should think systemically and enable community participants to think systemically about their recent disaster experience, as well as their disaster risk landscape, community values and long-term sustainability and wellbeing. In practice, this means ensuring both desk-based and community-based data collection looks across multiple domains (see Principle 3 ‘Think holistically’) and how these interact. It involves tracking how strengths and issues before/during the event interacted with the disaster over time to generate outcomes during/after the event.

It also means exploring unintended consequences and blockages to desired outcomes. Generating the disaster timeline is an important step in exploring the sequence of events that led to outcomes. During the analysis phase and second Community Advisory Group workshop, facilitators can use the iceberg model¹⁸ – a

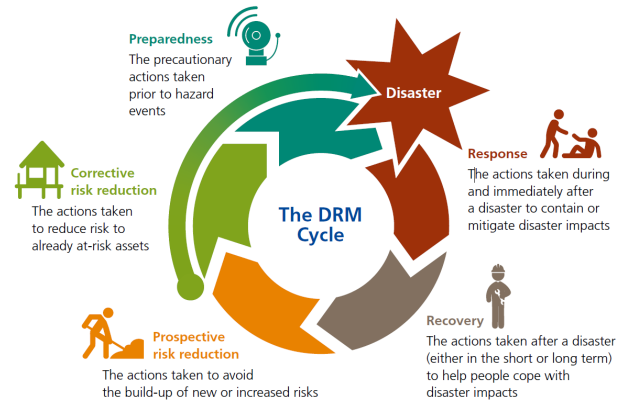


Figure 3: Disaster risk management cycle. Source: Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance.

systems thinking tool that can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the drivers of outcomes and priorities for action (see Phase 3: Data analysis – Step 4 for application of the iceberg model).

Be strengths-based

Why it’s important: Every community has inherent strengths and resilience. Effective learning is not just about changing in response to what went wrong; it’s equally about supporting and strengthening what worked well. Taking a strengths-based approach is now recognised as critical in the disaster resilience, and wider community development fields. Being strengths-based means focusing on identifying, highlighting and increasing existing community resilience capacities, resources and insights, rather than focusing only on gaps, needs or deficits. This does not mean that the CBDLR ignores what went wrong during the disaster event. Instead, it balances critiques with recognition of what went well and how strengths can be nurtured.

Taking a strengths-based approach is critical because it fosters agency and dignity, affirming that the affected community are not just victims, but also survivors and experts in their own experience¹⁹. When affected community members are seen for the strengths that they bring to their community, not simply what they lack, they are more likely to contribute their perspectives and engage constructively in the CBDLR process²⁰ (see Principle 6 ‘Be trauma-informed’). Finally, being strengths-based can lead to recommendations for more durable solutions, because they are based on amplifying existing strengths rather than imposing external fixes²¹.

What it looks like in practice: In desk-based research, interviews and workshops, it is essential that as much

focus is put on what worked well as what did not. It can be useful to start with discussion of what worked well and what community members would like to carry forward for next time. Facilitators can explore what systems underpin the existing community strengths by asking what made each positive story possible (see Principle 4 'Think systemically'). Collective visioning on what a more positive disaster experience might look like is another valuable way to be strengths based in a CBDLR.

Be trauma-informed

Why it's important: Many sectors, including healthcare and emergency services, are increasingly recognising the importance of engaging with people in a way that is trauma-informed. Being trauma-informed means centring the emotional and psychological safety of people involved. This is particularly important when conducting a CBDLR because many people involved may have experienced psychological trauma during and after the disaster event, or in previous disaster events. Being trauma-informed is critical so that the process of being involved with the review avoids re-traumatisation as much as possible²². Furthermore, being trauma-informed supports learning because when people feel emotionally and psychologically safe, they are more able to engage in open and honest reflections^{23,24}.

When CBDLRs are conducted in a trauma-informed way, they have the potential to actively support recovery. This is because they involve collective sharing and validating of people's experiences, as well as involving them in the learning process, which can be empowering⁹ (see Principle 5 'Be strengths-based'). Trauma-informed processes can also contribute to trust building within the community, and between community and stakeholders such as emergency services and governments, which directly contributes to resilience strengthening²⁵.

What it looks like in practice: The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration²⁶ identifies six principles of trauma-informed care. Notes are added on how these apply to the CBDLR:

1. Safety: ensure physical and emotional safety for all participants, with comfortable environments and voluntary participation.
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency: provide clear information about how the review will be conducted, how information will be used, and who will see it (see Principle 9 'Follow research ethics').
3. Peer Support: involve trusted people in the process and ensure support networks are available

to help people process their experience.

4. Collaboration and Mutuality: all participants, but especially community members who were directly impacted by the event, should be treated as equal partners in the CBDLR, not subjects or subordinates. Recognise that everyone has important insights and expertise, both lived or professional, that is critical for the CBDLR (see Principle 5 'Be strengths-based').
5. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice: allow participants to choose how and what they contribute. Emphasise strengths and what worked well, not just failures.
6. Cultural, Historical and Gender Sensitivity: disasters are experienced differently by different groups based intersecting identities and experiences of marginalisation. It is essential that facilitators of the CBDLR recognise and are sensitive to the fact that trauma can be compounded by systemic inequalities, this is particularly true for Indigenous communities.

Be inclusive

Why it's important: Disasters affect people unequally and a CBDLR has the potential to either reinforce inequalities, or to actively work for more just and cohesive communities. A CBDLR that includes only some community voices – for example, those of authorities or dominant community groups – not only risks reinforcing inequalities but also risks producing incomplete and inaccurate findings. One of the ways in which an inclusive process strengthens insights is by enabling systems thinking and including multiple perspectives and knowledges²⁷ (see Principle 4 'Think systemically'). Another way is by ensuring priorities and recommendations are locally appropriate and draw on the full suite of community strengths (see Principle 5 'Be strengths-based'). Finally, being inclusive builds trust, legitimacy and ownership of the recommendations.

What it looks like in practice: Being inclusive means more than an 'open invitation' to participate. All groups across the community, but particularly those groups who have been historically marginalised, should be identified and engaged in respectful, culturally safe ways that enable their genuine contribution to the CBDLR process. In practice, the first step is often a community group and stakeholder map, where different groups within the community and relevant organisations are identified. Ideally, respected leaders from these groups are proactively included and enabled to be part of the Community Advisory Group,

which should be trauma-informed and culturally safe (see Principle 6 ‘Be trauma-informed’). Finally, facilitators must be neutral at all stages of the process, and intentionally break down dominant power dynamics and biases through their facilitation techniques (see Principle 8 ‘Be neutral’).

Be neutral

Why it’s important: Neutral or impartial facilitation of the CBDLR process is critical at all stages. It is essential in the initiation phase to ensure that all affected groups have the opportunity to be involved (see Principle 7 ‘Be inclusive’).

During the analysis phase, CBDLR facilitators must approach the data they have collected with an intention to elevate the community’s insights, rather than their own narrative (see Principle 2 ‘Centre community benefit’). It is during the data collection phase, when the facilitators are conducting interviews and facilitating community workshops, that neutrality must be particularly actively engaged.

Neutrality in data collection serves several important purposes. Firstly, it is required in order to build trust and credibility, because community members are more likely to engage honestly if they believe the facilitator is not biased toward a particular group, organisation, or outcome¹⁰. Community members are more likely to trust and feel ownership of the findings of the analysis if they feel the process has been facilitated fairly.

Furthermore, neutral interviewing techniques and workshop facilitation is essential for encouraging diverse voices (see Principle 7 ‘Be inclusive’). Marginalised groups in particular can feel silenced or tokenised in processes such as a CBDLR, and neutrality helps counter this²⁸.

Finally, discussions about disaster events can easily become emotionally charged or conflictual. A neutral facilitator can help de-escalate and keep the focus on learning rather than blame¹² (see Principle 1 ‘No-blame mindset’).

What it looks like in practice: Here are some techniques for neutral interviewing and workshop facilitation^{9,10,12,13,29}:

- Establish ground rules collaboratively: start workshops with a discussion to co-develop group agreements about how the group will interact with each other, for example, respectful listening, Chatham House Rule³⁰
- Use open-ended, non-leading questions: avoid questions with closed answers or that imply judgement. For example, instead of “Why didn’t Council warn people?” ask, “What was your

experience of the warnings?”

- Reflect, reframe and summarise neutrally: use neutral language to reflect what was said back to the group, ensuring people feel heard without adding bias. Reframe emotionally charged or polarising language into constructive terms.
- Manage power dynamics: use structured turn-taking, small group breakouts, or anonymous feedback options to ensure no single voice dominates (see Principle 7 ‘Be inclusive’). Actively invite quieter participants or underrepresented groups to share.
- Use visual and participatory tools: tools like anonymous post-it notes, visual mapping, or dot voting can help level the playing field and depersonalise disagreement.
- Self-check bias regularly: CBDLR facilitators should actively reflect on their own biases or emotional responses during workshops and interviews, as well as throughout the analysis phase. Journaling, co-facilitation, or debriefing with a peer can help with this process.

Follow research ethics

Why it’s important: Regardless of who is conducting a CBDLR, it is in many ways a form of research. The steps included in this Practice Guide outline a research methodology involving human participants. Therefore, the principles of research ethics should be followed, even if the facilitator’s organisation does not require them to obtain official ethics clearance from a research ethics board. Research ethics principles have evolved over many years to protect participants from harm and exploitation.

This is particularly important when working with disaster-affected community members who may be experiencing trauma from the disaster event itself, loss of livelihoods, family breakdown and/or may be part of marginalised groups (see Principle 6 ‘Be trauma-informed’). Following the principles of research ethics also supports the validity and credibility of the findings of the CBDLR, as well as increasing confidence amongst the community.

What it looks like in practice: By following the principles of centring community benefit (Principle 2), being trauma-informed (Principle 6) and being neutral (Principle 8), many of the underlying principles of ethical research are established. Further themes and practices in research ethics when conducting a CBDLR are:

- informed consent: all participants in the Community Advisory Group and community workshops, as well as all interviewees, must freely agree to

participate in the CBDLR. They must understand the purpose, risks, benefits and their rights, and that they can withdraw their consent at any time. Information must be provided in plain language, and verbal consent should be considered for accessibility³¹.

- non-maleficence: also known as ‘do no harm’, facilitators must take care not to retraumatise participants (see Principle 6 ‘Be trauma-informed’). Participants should be provided with local, accessible psychosocial support in the event that the CBDLR causes them distress³².
- confidentiality and privacy: over the course of a CBDLR, community members and local stakeholders may reveal information to the facilitators that could be sensitive or risky to share publicly. All interviews should be conducted confidentially,

and quotes or insights should not be attributed, including via inference, without the explicit permission of the individual. Permission must also be obtained to take and use photographs and recordings³³.

- accountability and transparency: facilitators must be transparent about who they are, how findings will be used and what the likely outcomes of the CBDLR will be. They must set realistic expectations and avoid overpromising²⁵.



4. THE COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER LEARNING REVIEW PROCESS

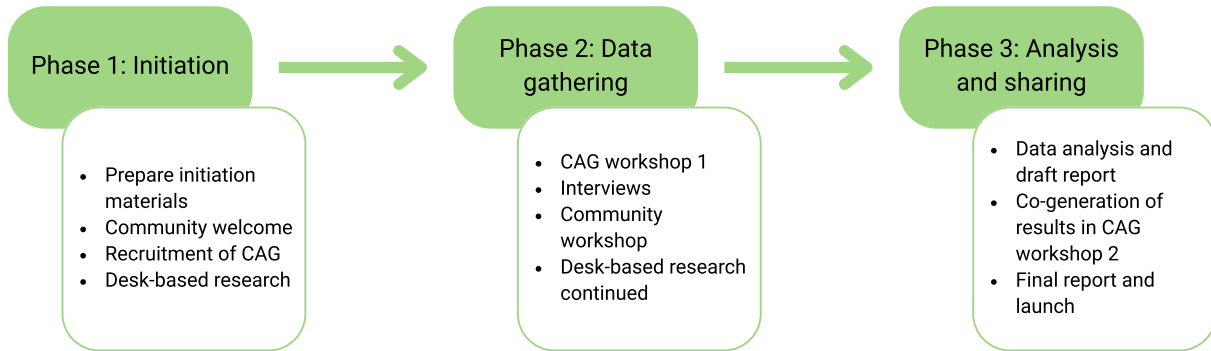


Figure 4: Community-Based Disaster Learning Review process. CAG = Community Advisory Group

The Community-Based Disaster Learning Review (CBDLR) is conducted over three phases, as outlined in Figure 4. The process outlined here is a recommendation, not a prescription. A CBDLR must first and foremost be responsive to the needs and preferences of community. Facilitation teams are free to adapt the process.

have forgotten details and moved on to other priorities. When this ideal time occurs depends on a number of factors, in particular the severity of the disaster event. Typical timing would be for initiation to occur between two and six months after the disaster. A CBDLR study is expected to take three to six months to complete.

Phase 1: Initiation

Prepare initiation materials

When to start: After a disaster occurs, a ‘window of opportunity’ opens up in which community members, as well as local and regional stakeholders, are often motivated to enact change. This is the time when a CBDLR will be most impactful. It is important to time the start of the process so that it is not too soon after the disaster – while people are still dealing with immediate recovery needs – but not too long after the disaster that people

In order to begin the next steps of ensuring the CBDLR project is welcomed in the community, and recruiting the Community Advisory Group (CAG), facilitators must prepare initiation materials to share with the community. These do not need to be long or complex – in fact, they should be very accessible. Exactly what materials will be prepared will vary, but some important elements include:

- a one or two-page project overview in plain

PHASE 1 OVERVIEW		
Suggested timing: 1 month		
<p>Key people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead organisation (e.g. NGO, local government, university) • Project facilitation team 	<p>Key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare project overview material. • Start desk-based research • Prepare explanation and consent materials. Obtain research ethics approval if applicable • Work with local networks to identify and recruit key members of the community to be part of the Community Advisory Group 	<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Community Advisory Group is recruited, providing confirmation that community members and organisations are on board with the review • Facilitation team start developing a greater understanding of the community's experience of the disaster, and some of the factors that impacted the community's experience of it

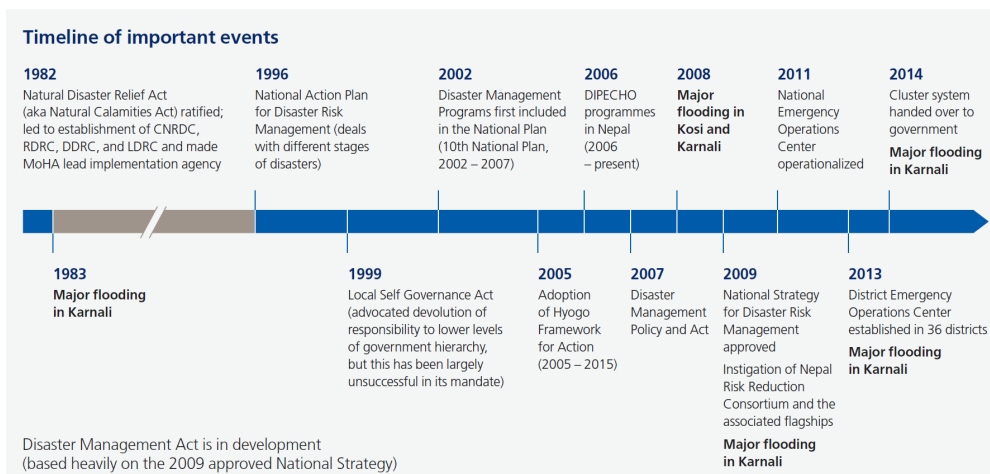


Figure 5: Example timeline of past floods and major disaster-related institutional events in Nepal. Source: PERC Manual⁵

language, including why the project is being conducted, who is facilitating it, what it will cover, how it will be conducted and the expected outcomes

- a short 'how to get involved' statement, with an open invitation for interested community members to contact facilitators with questions or offers of engagement
- CAG and interview consent forms, to be provided as appropriate.

Community welcome

From the outset of the initiation phase, CBDLR facilitators should ensure that they and the CBDLR is welcomed by some people and groups in the community and at least tolerated by the majority. Communities are not homogenous, and differences of opinion are to be expected. However, it is not appropriate to attempt to conduct a CBDLR in a community where it is broadly unwelcome. If the outcomes of the CBDLR are to be achieved, there must be community members and groups willing to take part and utilise the findings. Positioning the study so that it is welcomed by the community involves reaching out to key local community groups, organisations and stakeholders and exploring with them whether they see value in a CBDLR. Supportive community members will often be invited to be part of the CAG (see below).

Recruitment of the Community Advisory Group

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) is an essential feature of the CBDLR. It consists of approximately eight to 12 people who are community members with strong social networks and positions of leadership (either formal or informal), who were directly impacted by the disaster event, or directly involved with some aspect of

the preparedness, response or recovery.

The CAG assists the facilitators in identifying the main issues to be examined in the CBDLR and supports the formation of findings. CAG members should be provided with an information pack, including information about the study, the facilitators and consent.

Recruiting the CAG is an interactive process, often using 'snowball' recruitment. This is where initial contacts or CAG members help identify other potential CAG members. If facilitators have existing contacts within the community, particularly those who were in some way involved with the disaster event, initial conversations with these people are an ideal place to start. Thorough desk-based research (see below) on the disaster event is also useful in identifying potential CAG members. CAG members should be recruited from across the community system and the disaster cycle.

Potential members might include:

- local community service organisations
- community volunteer groups, particularly if they were in some way involved in the disaster
- community representatives from Indigenous, cultural and religious organisations
- local environmental conservation or sustainability groups
- municipal emergency managers
- land managers
- disaster response agencies
- other community figures who have been in some way involved in the community disaster response.

Phase 2: Data gathering

Desk-based research

One of the first steps for the facilitators of a CBDLR is to 'do your homework'. This means reviewing

information that is already publicly available about the community, its disaster risk and the disaster event. This will include content and reports from local authorities and community organisations, demographic and socioeconomic information, government policies and strategies, newspaper articles and social media posts. The objective of the desk-based research is to create a comprehensive picture of the community and the issues it is facing, disaster history and disaster risk context, and the disaster event itself.

The five domains of resilience (Figure 2) can be useful for structuring desk-based research. Facilitators can explore each domain, as suggested in Table 2 in Appendix: Data Collection Guides.

While the CBDLR is not focused on emergency services operations, it is essential for facilitators to have a good understanding of how the disaster event played out. This research can be used to draft a timeline of important events (see Figure 5) as well as a timeline of the disaster event itself. This step also helps identify key community groups and stakeholders that will be important participants in the process.

Desk-based research will continue throughout the entire CBDLR process. In particular, workshops and interviews will highlight issues that will need to be followed-up with further desk-based research.

Community Advisory Group workshop 1

Once the CAG has been recruited, facilitators should organise the first workshop. This workshop sets the scene for the CBDLR in the community. The objectives of this first workshop are:

- to clarify the principles of how the CBDLR will run and provide CAG members with the opportunity to discuss the project
- to build positive and trusting working relationships between facilitators and CAG members
- for CAG members to share their goals for the CBDLR
- to create a shared sense of ownership of the

CBDLR and bring the CAG together as a group working to a shared purpose

- conduct a first-pass identification of what worked well and what didn't in the disaster event
- conduct a first-pass identification of key issues to be explored by the CBDLR
- identify further community members/groups and key stakeholders to be engaged via interview and/or community workshop
- set the stage/terms for next steps.

Table 3 in Appendix: Data Collection Guides provides some elements for facilitators to consider including in the first CAG workshop.

Interviews

Interviews are a key aspect of CBDLR data collection. They are usually conducted individually but can also be conducted with small groups, such as adult members of a household or small group of colleagues.

CBDLR interviews are best conducted in a 'semi-structured' way. A semi-structured interview is a way of collecting data or insights where the facilitator follows a flexible guide of topics and open-ended questions but allows the conversation to flow naturally based on the interviewee's responses. Unlike a structured interview, which rigidly follows a fixed set of predetermined questions with little to no deviation, a semi-structured approach encourages deeper exploration of the issues the interviewee raises and the focus of the CBDLR. This method strikes a balance between maintaining consistency across interviews – by covering the same broad topics – and providing enough flexibility to adapt to each interviewee's unique experiences and insights.

Interviews are best conducted in-person. When this is not possible, conducting them via video or telephone has been shown to be effective. As with workshops, consent should be established before the interview starts. Facilitators should discuss how they will record the interview (i.e. via note-taking or recording) with the interviewee at the beginning and obtain their consent.

PHASE 2 OVERVIEW		
Suggested timing: 1–2 months (recommend at least one full week in the community for interviews and workshop)		
<p>Key people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project facilitation team • Community Advisory Group • Community members to be interviewed and to take part in the community workshop 	<p>Key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Advisory Group workshop 1 • Community member interviews • Community future visioning workshop • Further desk-based research determined by issues identified by community 	<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shared sense of community ownership and purpose of the review • Key issues first identified (by the CAG), and then explored in greater detail through community member interviews, workshop, and desk-based research • Rich community data, ready to be analysed and shared back with that community • Positive visions from the community of what future disasters could look like

It is important to interview a wide selection of community members and stakeholder representatives. The key issues identified by the CAG workshop will help identify interviewees. Potential interviewees could include:

- CAG members
- community members and stakeholders identified in the CAG workshop
- community members directly affected by disaster
- representatives of community groups such as Indigenous people and young people
- local religious organisations and sports clubs
- local business owners, Chamber of Commerce or development society groups
- local government and authorities, including emergency services
- local land managers
- local environmental groups
- local community services and NGOs
- school principals and childcare providers
- health services including aged care
- critical infrastructure managers.

When approaching somebody for an interview – particularly community members who were directly affected by the disaster and people who were directly involved with response – it is critical to follow the CBDLR principles of being trauma-informed, neutral and following research ethics. See Box 3 for tips on how to do this.

Before conducting interviews, facilitators should prepare a list of open-ended questions that focus on what worked well and what didn't before, during and after the event. The specific questions asked will depend on the interviewee, for example, an affected community member or a stakeholder representative.

Table 4 in Appendix: Data Collection Guides provides some example questions that can be useful in preparing for a CBDLR interview. Further questions will be guided by the key issues identified by the CAG. It is important to note that many interviewees will fall into both categories of being community member directly or indirectly affected by the disaster, and a stakeholder representative.

Community future visioning workshop

During the time that they are conducting community interviews, facilitators should organise a community future visioning workshop. The objectives of this workshop are to:

- hear directly from a range of community members about the changes they would like to see to strengthen community disaster resilience
- create a sense of hope amongst community members that positive change is possible
- create a sense of community ownership of the

CBDLR, and to begin to shape the recommendations that are ultimately made in the final report.

The activities in the community future visioning workshop can be based on 'The Tomorrow Party'³⁴ format. This creative activity invites participants to 'time travel' five years into the future. They are given a scenario where their community has been impacted by another, similar, disaster event. However, this time their community's experience is much more positive.

Drawing on their personal and professional experiences, workshop attendees create and articulate what this looks and feels like, how it was achieved, and work out how they will know they have reached it. This creative approach is a powerful way to hear people's concerns and hopes about the future, but to also make their imagined future seem achievable.

The purpose of the workshop – to come together to co-generate a positive vision for the future – should be clearly and repeatedly communicated to potential attendees. This is important to reassure community members that the workshop will not be about rehashing the pain of the disaster event, and also to set the scene for the workshop to be positive and productive.

It is important to engage a wide selection of community members and stakeholder representatives in this workshop.

The content developed will help shape the recommendations made in the final report. Similar to community interviewees, potential participants will have been identified during the previous CAG workshop and interviews, and could include:

- CAG members
- community stakeholders identified in CAG workshop
- community members directly affected by disaster
- representatives of community groups such as Indigenous people and young people
- local religious organisations and sports clubs
- local business owners, Chamber of Commerce or development society groups
- local government and authorities, including emergency services
- local land managers
- local environmental groups
- local community services and NGOs
- school principals and childcare providers
- health services including aged care
- critical infrastructure managers.

Table 5 in Appendix: Data Collection Guides outlines some elements for facilitators to consider including in the community future visioning workshop.

Follow-up desk-based research

At this stage, the project facilitation team will have some very rich data from the community. However, the interviews and workshops may bring to light topics and issues which are very important to the community, and which will need a bit more desk-based research. Doing this will make the evidence presented in the final report more substantial and persuasive.

Data analysis

Phase 3 of the CBDLR begins with analysis of the data that has been gathered. This is a process that will take time, and sometimes the richness of the data will feel overwhelming. We suggest that these steps are

followed to draw out meaningful findings that can be shared back with the community.

Phase 3: Analysis and sharing

Step 1: Prepare, organise and become familiar with the data

There will now be data gathered from the first CAG workshop, all interviews with community members, and the community future visioning workshop.

Organise it for analysis and become familiar with everything that has been gathered. This might include getting recorded interviews transcribed, or digitising post-it notes. And then make sure that this data is read and reviewed, to help start to get a sense of overall themes and patterns.

Box 3: Tips for how to conduct an ethical, neutral and trauma-informed CBDLR interview

Prioritise interviewee safety and comfort:

- Begin by clearly explaining the purpose of the interview and that participation is completely voluntary.
- Let the interviewee know they can pause, skip questions, or end the interview at any time.

Use open-ended, non-leading questions:

- Frame questions to invite narrative, not to imply expectations.
- Example: instead of "Were you scared when the flood came?" ask, "Can you tell me about what you experienced when the flood happened?"

Avoid assumptions:

- Do not assume the emotional impact, decisions made, or feelings they experienced.
- Example: instead of "How did you cope?" (which assumes they coped), ask, "What happened for you after the event?"

Start broad, then narrow gently:

- Begin with broader, less sensitive questions and only move to more specific or potentially distressing areas if the interviewee appears comfortable.
- Example: start with "Can you tell me about your community before the event?" before asking about the disaster itself.

Use neutral language:

- Avoid emotionally loaded words like "devastating", "horrific", or "traumatising" unless the interviewee uses them first.
- Stick to factual terms like "event", "experience", or "situation".

Give the interviewee control:

- Offer choices where possible.
- Example: "Would you like to start by talking about the lead-up to the event or what happened after?"
- Let them guide the depth and pace of the conversation.

Validate autonomy, not experience:

- Acknowledge their choice to share without affirming or dismissing their emotions.
- Example: say, "Thank you for sharing that," rather than "That must have been terrible," unless they describe it that way themselves.

Be mindful of re-traumatisation:

- Avoid asking them to relive graphic or highly emotional details.
- Focus questions on what they learned, what supported them, or what changes they would like to see, rather than on the specifics of harm.

Frame questions toward future-focused learning:

- Where appropriate, guide the interview towards constructive insights rather than dwelling on painful experiences.
- Example: "From your experience, what changes would you suggest to better support people in your community in the future?"

Respect silence and emotional responses:

- If the interviewee needs time to think or becomes emotional, allow pauses without rushing to fill them.
- A simple, calm presence is often more supportive than trying to 'fix' emotions in the moment.

Step 2. Identify the strengths and issues

Ask the following questions of the data:

1. Can the rich stories be grouped together by theme?
2. Can the themes that emerge be grouped into the six categories in Figure 6 below – what worked well and what needs improvement before, during and after the event?
3. Can the themes that emerged be grouped against the five resilience domains: health and wellbeing, social capital, natural environment, built environment, and economic wellbeing? (Colour-coding these might be useful – just be aware that these domains do overlap.)
4. Can important patterns be seen, for instance, where strengths and issues before the event clearly impacted what occurred during and after?

Step 3: Map the potential actions and solutions

Ask yourself the following questions of the data

1. What solutions did people suggest throughout the data collection phase, and especially in the future visioning workshop?
2. Can those solutions be roughly grouped against the five resilience domains: health and wellbeing, social capital, natural environment, built environment, and economic livelihoods?
3. How do these solutions compare with the patterns that appeared from the data analysis in Step 1?
4. Are there alignments, differences or gaps? The next step will help further this process.

Step 4: Draft iceberg mapping – the present and the envisioned future

The systems thinking iceberg model³⁵ is a useful tool to contextualise all of the data gathered as part of a

system – and to think about recommendations that can be both actionable and effective in bringing about positive changes.

People may have reported events they witnessed during the disaster, but these events are underpinned by patterns of behaviour, by the structure of the systems we all operate within, and in turn are shaped by mental models – societal and organisational values and assumptions. Recommended changes are going to have more leverage, and be more effective, the deeper down the iceberg they feature.

In this final step of analysis, ask these questions of the data:

- Can the identified themes be mapped to create an iceberg model of the community’s recent experience of a hazard event?
- Can the identified themes then be mapped to create a second iceberg model of the community’s envisioned future experience of a hazard event?
- Can the changes and solutions suggested by the community be mapped to the events, patterns, systems or mental models level of the iceberg?

Community Advisory Group workshop 2

When the analysis of all the collected data has been completed, a second Community Advisory Group workshop should be organised. The objectives of this workshop are to:

- provide the group with a summary and update of the process
- confirm what was heard from community about what did or didn’t go well during the disaster
- hear about the community’s vision and what people would like see in place
- identify and recommend paths forward, so that the community has improved capacities to cope when disasters occur.

PHASE 3 OVERVIEW		
Suggested timing: 1–2 months		
<p>Key people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project facilitation team • Community Advisory Group • Lead organisation (e.g. NGO, local Government, university) 	<p>Key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis • Community Advisory Group workshop 2 • Launch of report 	<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis that gives a clear picture of what researchers heard from the community: their strengths, the issues, and their visions for the future • Co-generated priorities and recommendations from the Community Advisory Group • A written report that captures the community context of the event, what happened, the key insights, and the path forward • Other breakout products as required to communicate learnings

What worked well?	What needs improvement?
<p>Before the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many households and businesses have taken action to prepare their properties as best they can for the fire. (HEALTH AND WELLBEING) Strong social ties within the community. Most people know each other and feel they can rely on each other. (SOCIAL CAPITAL) Installation of water storage tanks, placed strategically around the community. (BUILT ENVIRONMENT) 	<p>Before the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key transport infrastructure (roads, bridges) had not been adequately repaired following a flood 18 months ago. (BUILT ENVIRONMENT) While some evacuation planning was in place, there was no engagement with key community groups, including First Nations. (SOCIAL CAPITAL) While fuel management (wildfire risk reduction) has been ongoing, it is not coordinated between land managers. (NATURAL ENVIRONMENT)
<p>During the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members pulled together during the event, checking on elderly neighbours and sharing resources. (SOCIAL CAPITAL) The pony club set up an animal evacuation centre protect animals from local hobby farms and rescued native wildlife. (NATURAL ENVIRONMENT) Local social workers, counsellors and mental health professionals volunteered to provide immediate support to community members at places where they gathered. (HEALTH AND WELLBEING) 	<p>During the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some local businesses were unable to stop work in order to prepare their properties for the fire. (ECONOMIC WELLBEING) Due to damaged and closed roads, the community was largely cut-off and isolated for approximately 3 days. (BUILT ENVIRONMENT) The evacuation was inaccessible and culturally unsafe for many First Nations people in the community. (SOCIAL CAPITAL)
<p>After the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local organisations coordinated their recovery efforts to ensure efficiency and that nobody was missed. (SOCIAL CAPITAL) Land holders and managers in one area of the community came together to plan for coordinated fuel management in the future. (NATURAL ENVIRONMENT) Community members are enthusiastically taking part in the learning opportunity of the CBDLR. (SOCIAL CAPITAL) 	<p>After the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing psychosocial support is lacking, particularly for community members (such as male farmers) who are uncomfortable accessing traditional counselling. (HEALTH AND WELLBEING) Most businesses had no or inadequate insurance. Financial assistance available to local businesses is limited to capped, low-interest loans. Several businesses have folded due to the costs and disruption of the disaster. (ECONOMIC WELLBEING) There has been no systemic, accurate data collection on the impacts of the disaster, which makes it difficult for the community to advocate for their needs. (SOCIAL CAPITAL)

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SOCIAL CAPITAL BUILT ENVIRONMENT NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ECONOMIC WELLBEING

Figure 6: Example of categorically sorted themed that emerged from workshops and resources.

Table 6 in Appendix: Data Collection Guides outline some elements for facilitators to consider including in the second Community Advisory Group Workshop.

Final report and sharing

The report is the document that presents all the CBDLR findings and recommendations in a clear and concise manner. While it will examine some of the technical aspects of the disaster, it is more important to focus on the human and social elements, centring community voices and experiences.

If written well, the report can serve several interconnected purposes:

- 1. Community resilience building:** by identifying what worked well and what could be improved, and by outlining a path forward, the report can be used to strengthen the community’s capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from future disasters.
- 2. Participatory engagement:** the inclusion of community visions and priorities means that the report serves as a vehicle for community voice and ownership in disaster resilience strengthening, rather than trying to impose external solutions.
- 3. Documentation and analysis:** the report will thoroughly document the disaster in the community, examining the conditions and events leading up to it, during, and afterwards. This creates an

important historical record of a significant event for the community.

- 4. Knowledge sharing:** the report will share insights about effective community disaster management practices across different phases (before, during, after), potentially benefiting other communities facing similar challenges.

Box 4 provides a template report structure that showcases, and builds on, each phase that facilitators have followed during the CBDLR process.

The launch of the report should be strategically designed to ensure the report reaches its key audiences, and to have maximum impact. There are different things to consider that might help achieve this:

- 1. A communications plan:** this will help ensure the lessons and recommendations from the CBDLR reach its target audiences. It should consider who those audiences are; the messages that they should take from the report; and the channels that can be used to reach those audiences.
- 2. Breakout products:** the full CBDLR report could end up being a very long document. It may be that, to have more impact, shorter breakout products might be needed, that present findings and recommendations in different formats, for example, a summary report or media release.

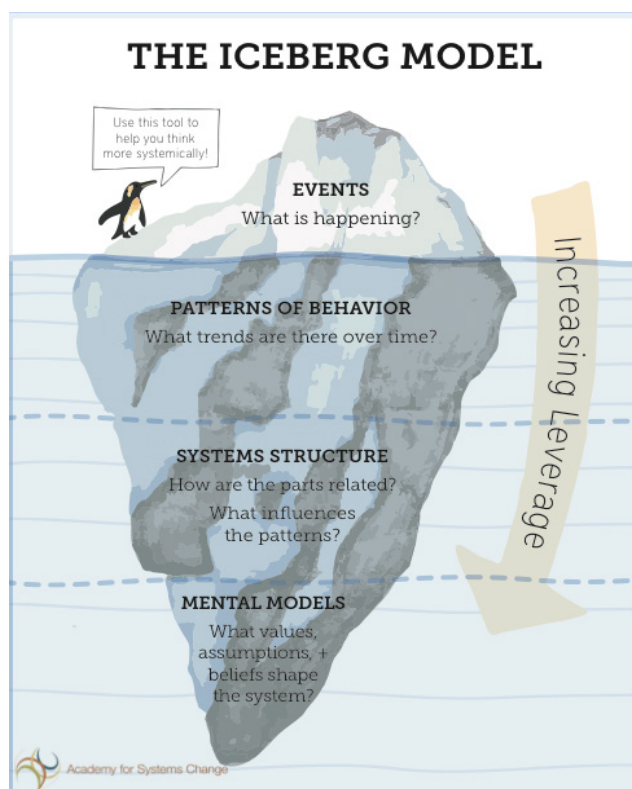


Figure 7: The systems thinking iceberg model. Source: Academy for Systems Change.

Box 4: CBDLR template report structure

Executive summary

Introduction

- Background to why the CBDLR occurred, and the approach taken to conduct it.

Section I: Context – of the community and the disaster

- The community's demographics, strengths and assets
- Background of disasters in the locality/region
- Background of community's experience and planning for the disaster

Section II: What happened in the disaster

- Landscape and climate conditions leading up to the disaster
- Description of the disaster behaviour (ie bushfires, flood)
- Emergency management response during and after
- Community safety and wellbeing response, particularly focusing on community strengths

Section III: Key insights – what worked well and what could be improved?

- Before the disaster
- During the disaster
- After the disaster

Section IV: The path forward – recommendations

- The community visions and priorities for future disaster resilience
- Recommendations

Conclusion

5. CONCLUSION

The CBDLR offers a methodology that facilitates the process of communities formally identifying lessons from their experiences, with the intent of learning from them by taking action and thereby strengthening their disaster resilience. It is an opportunity for community members and local stakeholders to come together to reflect on what did, and did not, work well before, during and after the recent disaster, in order to inform action.

The three-stage process described here is a suggestion that can be adapted to the local context by appropriately skilled and experienced facilitators. At the heart of this CBLDR methodology is the nine principles: these are what make it different from other after-action reviews and also what makes the process valuable for communities. By applying these principles at every step of the process, those facilitating the review maximise the potential of the review to genuinely contribute to community disaster resilience.



6. APPENDIX: DATA COLLECTION GUIDES

Table 2: Desk-based research guide

Resilience domain	Example desk-based research questions
<p><i>Health and wellbeing</i> Mental and physical health, access to services such as education, social services, religious/spiritual services etc</p>	<p>What is the population and the boundaries of the 'community'?</p> <p>What are the demographics of the community? Remember to include marginalised groups.</p> <p>How do community members' compare to national averages for education levels, literacy and quality of life?</p> <p>What were the direct impacts of the disaster on community members' health, i.e. loss of life and injuries?</p> <p>What were the indirect impacts of the disaster on community members' health, i.e. disease outbreaks, mental health?</p> <p>If people had to evacuate during the disaster, how accessible and functional was the evacuation?</p> <p>What is health access like in the community, including general medical, pharmaceutical, specialist and mental health services access? Does it vary between groups? How did the disaster impact these services?</p> <p>What social services are available (or unavailable but needed) in the community? How did the disaster impact these?</p>
<p><i>Social capital</i> People, connection, cultures, knowledges and skills, as well access to decision-making government</p>	<p>What are the social dynamics like in the community, both in terms of strengths and issues?</p> <p>Are there any groups in the community that are particularly marginalised and/or isolated?</p> <p>In what ways do people in the community come together, such as sporting clubs, religious groups or local markets?</p> <p>What volunteer groups are in the community, particularly in relation to the disaster?</p> <p>How was this social capital activated in relation to this disaster event? Are there examples of community members formally or informally taking care of each other?</p> <p>What are the formal governance arrangements in place (at local and/or regional level) for disaster risk reduction (including prospective and corrective risk reduction), disaster preparedness, disaster response and disaster recovery?</p> <p>How aware of, and what role do local residents/businesses/organisations have with, these formal arrangements?</p> <p>What role did community-based groups play in disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery?</p>
<p><i>Natural environment</i> Features of the landscapes, climate, vegetation, natural hazards, recurring natural events</p>	<p>Describe the local natural environment.</p> <p>What are the key local environmental concerns?</p> <p>What is the relationship between the local environment and the hazard that caused the disaster?</p> <p>What is the relationship between the natural environment and disaster risk reduction efforts?</p> <p>What was the impact of the disaster on the state of the local natural environment?</p> <p>What was the impact of the disaster on native wildlife?</p> <p>Are there local environmental conservation or restoration initiatives?</p> <p>What role did these play before, during and after the disaster?</p>
<p><i>Built environment</i> Housing, roads, transport, lifeline infrastructures such as communication, water, power etc</p>	<p>What is the status of local housing? Is housing quality and/or insecurity a key concern for the community?</p> <p>How adapted to the hazard is local housing and other buildings?</p> <p>What land-use planning and/or building regulations are in place; how are these impacting on disaster risk?</p> <p>What was the impact of the disaster on the built environment of the community, i.e. how many buildings were damaged and to what extent?</p> <p>What is the status of critical infrastructure systems such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transportation systems: roads, railways, aviation and shipping - Communications: internet, telephone, and broadcast systems - Energy: fuel, electricity, natural gas and solar - Water and wastewater systems: drinking water and sewage treatment <p>How were these critical infrastructure systems impacted by the disaster?</p> <p>How is the rebuilding / recovery of the built environment progressing?</p> <p>Are there initiatives to 'build back better'?</p>
<p><i>Economic wellbeing</i> Economies important to the communities, such as agriculture, tourism and local businesses</p>	<p>What are the main economic activities / industries in the community?</p> <p>What are the overall economic conditions of the community, as compared to national averages, e.g. poverty rates, wealth inequality?</p> <p>What is the community's access to financial services? Do they have readily accessible banking/access to credit?</p> <p>What were the impacts of the disaster on local businesses and the local economy?</p> <p>What is the status of insurance in the community, for both households and businesses? Is underinsurance an issue? Are insurance payments coming through to the community?</p> <p>Was any financial support available to the community during and after the disaster? What kind of financial support? Was it equitable?</p> <p>In response to the disaster, have households or businesses needed to resort to 'erosive' coping strategies, where they sell productive assets or engage in risky activities to cover disaster damage?</p>

Table 3: Community Advisory Group workshop guide (continued on next page)

What?	How?	Why?
Choose an appropriate workshop space and time	Host the workshop at a time and space that is accessible and comfortable for CAG members. Consider issues such as work schedules, caring responsibilities and cultural safety.	Choosing a comfortable, accessible and culturally safe space is essential for helping CAG members to feel that they can share openly and have everything they need in order to attend.
Obtain consent	Welcome each attendee and provide them with either a written consent form or a verbal discussion of consent as they arrive.	The principles of research ethics show that consent must be given before taking part in an event where data will be collected.
Acknowledgements and cultural protocols	Follow local cultural protocols.	Following local cultural protocols sets a respectful tone for the workshop and the CBDLR. For example, in Australia, this might include Acknowledgement of Country.
Introductions	Facilitators, as those who have brought the group together, might start the introductions. They can set an inclusive tone by mentioning any personal connections to the work and minimising a sense of authority.	It is important that everyone is welcomed into the workshop and given the opportunity to introduce themselves.
Why we're here	Start by discussing the motivation for the review. Discuss the principles, in particular the no-blame mindset, centring community benefit, thinking holistically and systemically, and being strengths-based. If available, provide examples from other CBDLR processes that have been undertaken.	Even if materials have been provided beforehand, it is critical that facilitators discuss the purpose of the CBDLR. By discussing the principles, the facilitators can maximise the chances that CAG members engage with it in productive ways.
How we would like to work together	Facilitators should discuss the principles of being trauma-informed, inclusive and neutral, and following research ethics. They can elaborate on what this means for this workshop and the CBDLR process. Invite CAG members to share how they would like to work together.	This is an opportunity to further set a collaborative tone for the workshop and the process. By discussing the principles of how the CBDLR will be conducted, expectations about the process and appropriate behaviour are clarified.
Why are you here?	CAG members can take turns sharing why they decided to come to the workshop and what they hope will come of the process. Note that, at this point, key issues relating to the disaster event will start to surface and should be captured through workshop notetaking.	Ample time should be provided for this step, which is essential for creating a shared sense of purpose and a commitment to the process.
What worked well and what didn't?	Create three spaces around the room: before, during and after. Each space should be divided into two columns: what worked well, what didn't work well. Give CAG members post-it notes and ask them to start writing their thoughts and sticking them in the appropriate space. Collate the post-it notes into groups of similar thoughts in each column, then have a group discussion about what came out.	This exercise enables CAG members to start organising their thoughts and coming to a shared understanding of strengths and gaps.
What are the key issues?	Facilitate a group discussion about which of the issues identified in the previous exercise are the most important.	Many issues may have been identified in the previous exercise, but now is the opportunity for the CAG members to direct the focus of the CBDLR. It is essential that the key issues, or 'first lines of inquiry' have support from the CAG members rather than being directed by the facilitators.

Table 3 (continued): Community Advisory Group workshop guide

What?	How?	Why?
Who will we need to speak to?	This stakeholder mapping exercise – mapping who was involved, and who was impacted – can be done with post-it notes, on butcher’s paper or into an electronic board projected onto a screen. To map who was involved , ask CAG members to brainstorm and list all individuals, groups and organisations involved before (in risk reduction and preparedness), during (in response and community safety) and after (in recovery) the disaster. The groups identified might be formal (such as a local sporting club) or informal (such as a group of neighbours). Along with the name of the individual, group or organisation, make a note about the role they played. To map who was impacted , ask CAG members to brainstorm and list who was impacted by the disaster and in what way. Remember to include people and groups who were both directly and indirectly impacted. Finally, ask CAG members to identify which of these groups (both involved and impacted) are important to include in the CBDLR. Then ask them to identify contact people for each of these groups.	This is where the CAG members can reflect on whose perspective might be important for exploring the key issues, in particular those perspectives that are not already in the room. It is critical that the CBDLR has a comprehensive picture of who was involved – formally and informally – before, during and after the disaster, as well as a good sense of who in the community was impacted and in what ways.
Next steps	Share the project timeline and next steps, including interviews, the community workshop and the planned second CAG workshop.	CAG members must leave the workshop with a clear understanding of what the next steps in the CBDLR will be.
Data collection	The data collected at this workshop could include a recording of the workshop, pictures of people engaged in workshop activities, all post-it notes, discussion notes written down during the workshop, photos of the post-it notes grouped into their final themes and the stakeholder map.	It is critical to keep a record of the discussions and decisions that people made at this workshop. These will be invaluable in informing how the review progresses.
Food and breaks	Feed people and provide them with lots of breaks.	Providing refreshments is an important show of respect for the contributions being made at the workshop, and helps everyone stay focused/calm during the process.

Table 4: Interview guide

Community member	Stakeholder representative ⁵
Can you please tell me about your community – what do you like most about it and what would you like to see for the future?	What was the situation in the community before the event in terms of the social, economic or environmental conditions?
Can you please give me an overview of your experience in the disaster?	What is your role in the community and what was your role in relation to the event – what organisation or group are you part of and what is that group's role in regard to the disaster?
What risk reduction activities were happening in your community before the event? (Provide context-appropriate examples such as reforestation and levees for flood, fuel management for bushfires.) In your opinion, how well were these working?	What risk reduction activities were in place before the event? (Provide context-appropriate examples such as reforestation and levees for flood, fuel management for bushfires.) In your opinion, how well were these working?
Were you involved in or do you know about any disaster preparedness activities happening in the community before the event?	What disaster preparedness activities were in place before the event?
In your experience or from what you've heard, was this disaster different from past disasters in the community? Why?	What happened during the event? Was this different from past disasters of this type? Why?
Which groups in your community were most affected by the disaster?	What was the extent of losses and damage? What groups were most affected?
What worked well in relation to this disaster? What made it work well?	What did you/your organisation do before/during/after the event (depending on their role)? What worked well and what was it that helped it to work well?
What didn't work well in relation to this disaster? Why didn't it work well?	What didn't work well and what were the limitations/obstacles?
What have you learned from the event? What would you like to see in the future before, during and after disaster events?	What have you/your organisation learned from the event? What would you like to see in the future before, during and after disaster events?

Table 5: Community future visioning workshop guide (continued on next page)

What?	How?	Why?
Choose an appropriate workshop space and time	Host the workshop at a time and space that is accessible and comfortable for CAG members. Consider issues such as work schedules, caring responsibilities and cultural safety.	Choosing a comfortable, accessible and culturally safe space is essential for helping CAG members to feel that they can share openly and have everything they need in order to attend.
Obtain consent	Welcome each attendee and provide them with either a written consent form or a verbal discussion of consent as they arrive.	The principles of research ethics show that consent must be given before taking part in an event where data will be collected.
Acknowledgements and cultural protocols	Follow local cultural protocols.	Following local cultural protocols shows respect for the community and sets a respectful tone for the workshop and the CBDLR process. For example in Australia, this might include an Acknowledgement of Country.
Introductions and why you are here	Attendees take turns introducing themselves and sharing why they decided to come today, and what they hope will come of the process. Facilitators, as those who have brought the group together, might start the introductions. They can set an inclusive tone by mentioning any personal connections to the work and minimising a sense of authority. They should reinforce that today's workshop is about a positive vision for the future. Note that, at this point, issues relating to the disaster event will be mentioned and should be noted down. It is important to respectfully acknowledge these while moving the conversation on because this workshop is about future visioning not reliving the disaster event.	It is important that everyone is welcomed into the workshop and given the opportunity to introduce themselves and share why they have come along.
CBDLR overview	Start by discussing the motivation for the review. Discuss the principles, in particular the no-blame mindset, centring community benefit, thinking holistically and systemically and being strengths-based. If available, provide examples from other CBDLR processes that have been undertaken. Describe the purpose of this workshop: to come together to discuss visions or goals for the future of the community when disasters occur.	Even if materials have been provided beforehand, it is critical that facilitators discuss the purpose of the CBDLR. By discussing the principles of the CBDLR, the facilitators can maximise the chances that community members engage with it in productive ways.
How we would like to work together	Facilitators should discuss the principles of being trauma-informed, inclusive and neutral, and following research ethics. They can elaborate on what this means for this workshop and the CBDLR process. Invite attendees to share how they would like to work together.	This is an opportunity to further set a collaborative tone for the workshop and the process. By discussing the principles of how the CBDLR will be conducted, expectations about the process and appropriate behaviour are clarified.
What we've heard so far	Facilitators can provide an overview of the key issues that they have heard raised so far, from both the first CAG workshop and the community interviews that have been conducted. This should be done in a way that emphasises the strengths of the community. Facilitators should be extremely careful to ensure that they do not stoke community divisions, engage in finger-pointing or unintentionally break the confidentiality of interviewees by sharing revealing information.	Sharing initial findings serves two key purposes. Firstly, it lets interviewees know that they have been heard. When they hear their perspective reflected back by the facilitators, they feel that they have already meaningfully contributed, which builds trust with the facilitators and the process. Secondly, this sharing lets attendees hear their fellow community members' perspectives. They deepen their understanding of their whole community's experience and start making connections between the themes that are emerging (systems thinking).

Table 5 (continued): Community future visioning workshop guide

What?	How?	Why?
<p>Visioning exercise:</p> <p>Scenario: 'Another disaster occurs in five years' time. This time, things go much better.'</p> <p>Question 1: What does the next disaster in five years' time look like, feel like, what happens?</p>	<p>Facilitators encourage attendees to work in small groups in this exercise. Give attendees post-it notes and ask them to start writing their thoughts and sticking them in the appropriate space. Expect, and encourage, very different responses.</p>	<p>This format gives people the opportunity to consider and voice their concerns and hopes. The visioning format can feel a bit forced at first, and working in small groups is less confronting, giving people the opportunity to explore and engage with each others' ideas.</p>
<p>Visioning exercise:</p> <p>Question 2: What was needed within the community to ensure that this was a much better experience for people?</p>	<p>Attendees should stay in the same groups. Give attendees post-it notes and ask them to write up their thoughts and stick them in the appropriate space. It's a good idea for the facilitators to gather the post-it notes during the exercise, and to start grouping ideas into similar themes.</p>	<p>This question starts people digging a bit deeper into the 'why' and 'how' of their scenarios, and encourages them to think systematically about their creative visioning.</p>
<p>Visioning exercise:</p> <p>Question 3: What changes are needed now to implement these positive differences?</p>	<p>Attendees should stay in the same groups. Give attendees post-it notes and ask them to write up their thoughts and stick them in the appropriate space. Facilitators should continue to group the ideas into similar themes.</p>	<p>This final question encourages even deeper thinking, and starts attendees suggesting the practical steps needed to make their creative visioning into reality.</p>
<p>Reflections</p>	<p>Facilitators will need to cover the main themes that have emerged in all of the discussions, and encourage a group discussion to reflect on the session, and on the ideas that emerged. Facilitators should take lots of pictures of the post-it notes, as a good record of the ideas.</p>	<p>This brings the group back together, and showcases all of the similar and different themes and ideas. This gives people an opportunity to engage with other ideas that are new to them, and to give facilitators a sense of the most important themes.</p>
<p>Next steps</p>	<p>Share the project timeline and next steps with the second CAG workshop.</p>	<p>Workshop attendees will leave with the knowledge that they have contributed usefully to the CBDLR.</p>
<p>Data collection</p>	<p>The data collected at this workshop could include:</p>	<p>It is critical to keep a record of the discussions and decisions that people made at this workshop. These will be invaluable in informing how the review progresses.</p>
<p>Food and breaks</p>	<p>Feed people and provide them with lots of breaks.</p>	<p>Providing people with refreshments or a meal is an important way to show respect for the contribution they are making by being at the workshop. It also helps them stay focused and calm during the process. Breaks are particularly important because of associated trauma of the disaster event that the discussions may be raising. Sharing food and breaks helps bring the CAG members together as a group.</p>

Table 6: Community Advisory Group workshop 2 guide (continued on next page)

What?	How?	Why?
Choose an appropriate workshop space and time	Host the workshop at a time and space that is accessible and comfortable for CAG members. Consider issues such as work schedules, caring responsibilities and cultural safety.	Choosing a comfortable, accessible and culturally safe space is essential for helping CAG members to feel that they can share openly and have everything they need in order to attend.
Obtain consent	Welcome each attendee and provide them with either a written consent form or a verbal discussion of consent as they arrive.	The principles of research ethics show that consent must be given before taking part in an event where data will be collected.
Acknowledgements and cultural protocols	Follow local cultural protocols.	Following local cultural protocols sets a respectful tone for the workshop and the CBDLR. For example, in Australia, this might include Acknowledgement of Country.
Introductions and thank yous	Attendees take turns introducing themselves. Facilitators, as those who have brought the group together, might start the introductions. Facilitators should also thank the attendees for their commitment to the process.	It is important that everyone is welcomed into the workshop and given the opportunity to introduce themselves. It is also really important that people are recognised for their commitment in assisting in the review. For some of the attendees, this could be their third workshop, and they may have been interviewed as well.
CBDLR overview	Start by discussing the motivation for the review. Discuss the principles, in particular the no-blame mindset, centring community benefit, thinking holistically and systemically and being strengths-based. If available, provide examples from other CBDLR processes that have been undertaken.	Even if materials have been provided beforehand, it is critical that facilitators discuss the purpose of the CBDLR. By discussing the principles, the facilitators can maximise the chances that CAG members engage with it in productive ways.
How we would like to work together	Facilitators should remind attendees of the principles of being trauma-informed, inclusive and neutral, and following research ethics. They can elaborate on what this means for this workshop and the CBDLR process. Invite attendees to share how they would like to work together.	This is an opportunity to further set a collaborative tone for the workshop and the process. By discussing the principles of how the CBDLR will be conducted, expectations about the process and appropriate behaviour are clarified.
What we've heard from the community	Facilitators should provide an overview of the analysis of the data that they've collected. Diagrams created from steps 2 and 4 of the data analysis will be very useful for this communication. It should be done in a way that emphasises that the information and ideas are about, and from, their own community. Use language such as "We heard that...", and "People told us that...". Strengths of the community should be emphasised. Facilitators should be extremely careful to ensure that they do not stoke community divisions, engage in finger-pointing or break the confidentiality of interviewees. This section should also allow time for questions and reflections from all attendees.	This sharing lets attendees hear their fellow community members' perspectives. They deepen their understanding of their whole community's experience and start making connections between the themes that are emerging (systems thinking). It should also get them starting to think about how to introduce effective changes.
Identify and recommend paths forward – a systems thinking iceberg mapping exercise	Facilitators should invite the attendees to work in small groups to use the iceberg model to envision the changes they want, and what is systemically needed to achieve those changes. The draft iceberg maps created during the data analysis step can be used to explain the iceberg model.	The CAG will be the first group to see all the community data analysed. This will give them – as community members themselves – a unique and valuable perspective on possible paths forward. The mapping exercise will also give them ownership of the recommendations made in the final report, and of the report itself.
Reflection	Each group presents their iceberg mapping, to go through their thinking and ideas. Facilitators should encourage a group discussion to reflect on the session, and on the ideas that emerged. Facilitators should take lots of photos of the post-it notes, as a record of the ideas.	This brings the group back together, and showcases all of the similar and different themes and ideas. This gives people an opportunity to engage with other ideas that are, and to also give facilitators a sense of the most important paths and changes that have been identified.
How should the CBDLR be used?	Facilitate a discussion with the CAG about the main output of the process (report) and invite their direction on the look and feel of the report, as well as other potential 'products' that could be produced, i.e. a summary report, media release, social media content such as short videos, etc. Furthermore, invite the CAG members to support in the sharing of the report by promoting it with their local contacts.	By now the CAG should have a good sense of the recommendations that are going to emerge in the final report. It is important now to get their input into how the CBDLR should be shared and used.

Table 6 (continued): Community Advisory Group workshop 2 guide

What?	How?	Why?
Next steps	Share the project timeline and next steps with the drafting and launch of the report.	Workshop attendees will leave with the knowledge that they have contributed usefully to the CBDLR.
Data collection	The data collected at this workshop could include a recording of the workshop, discussion notes documented during the workshop, photos of people engaged in workshop activities, the iceberg models people have created.	It is critical to keep a record of the discussions and the decisions that people made at this workshop. These will be invaluable in informing the final recommendations in the report.
Food and breaks	Feed people and provide them with lots of breaks.	Providing people with refreshments or a meal is an important way to show respect for the contribution they are making by being at the workshop. It also helps them stay focused and calm during the process. Breaks are particularly important because of associated trauma of the disaster event that the discussions may be raising. Sharing food and breaks helps bring the CAG members together as a group.

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FIRE to FLOURISH



Fire to Flourish is a pioneering five year program, working in partnership with communities affected by the 2019/20 Australian bushfire season to trial innovations in community-led disaster resilience.

Pathways for scaling the insights, models and tools developed through the program are being created through partnerships with Government, philanthropic, not-for-profit and private sector organisations.

Fire to Flourish is led by Monash University and supported by cornerstone philanthropic partners, the Paul Ramsay Foundation and Metal Manufactures Pty Ltd. Additional philanthropic support is provided by the Lowy Foundation.

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