

NSF R2I2: Identifying Community Need Based Adaptation and Resilience Priorities in the U.S. Northeast

Municipal and State Agency (MAP) Workshop Summary

July 15, 2026
10:00 am – 1:00 pm
UConn, Avery Point

Participants:

Nicole Govert, CIRCA	Zach Smith, CT DEMHS	Sarah Watson, CT DEEP
John Truscinski, CIRCA	Megan Granato, CT DEEP	Rebecca French, CT DEEP
Yaprak Onat, CIRCA	Chadwick Schroeder, City of Bridgeport	Jenny Scofield, SHPO
Mary Buchanan, CIRCA	Don Bell, Town of East Hartford	Dylan Steer, Town of Mansfield
Louanne Cooley, CIRCA	Dennis Unites, Town of Stonington	Lisa Noriega, Town of Groton
Joe MacDougald, CIRCA	George Bradner, CT Insurance Dept.	George Bradner, CT Insurance Dept.
Lauren Yaworsky, CIRCA	Alexis Cherichetti, City of Norwalk	Janice Plaziak, Town of Guilford
Azad Alauddin, CIRCA	Michelle Andrzejewski, City of Norwalk	David Prescott, Town of Groton
Sarah Strauss, WPI		

Introduction:

The R2I2 municipal and agency (MAP) working group convened representatives from municipalities and state agencies to discuss climate resilience priorities across the Northeast. Participants provided feedback on research themes and barriers and identified opportunities to improve how climate science is translated into tools.

Theme 1: Flood Hazard Mapping

Participants emphasized making flood information accessible to end users including residents, businesses, and property owners through parcel-scale mapping and clear visualizations.

Potential Projects

- Parcel-Scale Flood Visualization Tool – Property-level flood maps.
- Public Flood Communication Resources – Educational materials to interpret flood risk.

Theme 2: Flood Modeling & Decision Support

Discussion focused on interactive modeling and incorporating community observations into flood models as well as leveraging the tools and information out there without reinventing the wheel and picking up additional costs. Participants emphasized that there are many tools which can feel

overwhelming and that there is a strong disconnect between the regulatory/planning sphere and the boots-on-the-ground usage by individual property owners.

Potential Projects

- Community Flood Data Collection Program – Standardized way to gather local flood observations from residents or business owners to inform and ground truth models.
- Interactive Flood Scenario Modeling Tool which allows municipalities to test adaptation strategies.
- Develop a guidance document that identifies which flood risk maps and datasets are most appropriate for specific resilience strategies, bridging the gap between technical hazard information and property-level decision-making.
- Real Time validation of existing tools especially where FEMA maps are absent in CT.
- Building Impact Visualizations – Show expected flood depths on buildings and vehicles

Theme 3: Flood Forecasting & Alerts

Improve communication of flood forecasts so they are actionable for communities. See potential projects related to this theme above.

Theme 4: Nature-Based Solutions

Participants discussed challenges associated with advancing nature-based solutions, including the need for greater training and capacity among permitting staff to write permits and municipalities to evaluate these solutions against local codes and regulations. They also highlighted political and funding barriers, noting that limited long-term performance data and uncertainty around return on investment can make it more difficult to secure support and FEMA funding.

Potential Projects

- Permitting and Municipal Training Program
- Performance Evaluation Framework for NBS

Grant Theme 5: Energy & Wind Resilience

Participants emphasized that energy resilience efforts should extend beyond microgrids to include broader grid resilience strategies, incorporate new utility requirements, and grid enhancement technologies. There should also be stronger coordination among utilities, municipalities, and developers. They also noted challenges related to emerging climate impacts such as increased utility pole deterioration from changing conditions.

Grant Theme 6: Heat & Public Health

Participants emphasized that heat and health risks should be addressed as a year-round challenge since people are becoming desensitized to colder winters and therefore are taking it less seriously. Participants also emphasized compound risks such as extreme heat, poor air quality, power outages. They highlighted the need for improved public education, municipal coordination, and community-driven approaches to ensure mitigation strategies and emergency response efforts effectively reach vulnerable populations.

Potential Projects

- Develop design standards and a public outreach campaign on low-cost heat mitigation strategies.
- Hold community focus groups to better understand the needs of populations most at risk from heat and extreme weather, and to inform the design of programs such as cooling center locations, hours, and services.

Policy Discussion

Participants discussed challenges connecting climate science, policy, and implementation, noting the need for clearer guidance on how climate data can inform decisions. The discussion stressed the need to better understand and strengthen resilience capacity across the state through improved coordination, staffing, funding, governance structures, and integration of resilience into municipal planning.

Potential Projects

- Develop a guidance document explaining how different climate modeling outputs, units of measurement, and scales can be used to inform specific decisions.
- Evaluate how policies such as 18-82 are being implemented and establish a baseline for understanding whether they are influencing planning decisions.
- Review climate governance structures across states, including who is involved in policy development, state staffing levels, reliance on consultants, and the presence of resilience offices.
- Re-establish regional communication and coordination among states and organizations following the loss of federal regional coordination.
- Map where resilience capacity exists across Connecticut, including funding sources, staff positions, regional technical support, and gaps in implementation capacity.
- Review municipal statutes and governance structures to understand who is responsible for resilience-related work and where gaps exist. Develop guidance for municipalities on resilience-related responsibilities, existing authorities, and how to incorporate resilience into planning processes such as POCDs.

- Spread awareness to municipalities on examples of successful resilience efforts, such as the Blue Hills neighborhood flood response, to demonstrate how community action can lead to investment and policy change.
- Provide support for municipalities interested in implementing tools such as stormwater authorities and resilience districts.

Additional Barriers

- The connection between resilience and historic preservation is not well defined right now and is often viewed as an either/or decision rather than an opportunity to balance both priorities.
- Connecticut's housing crisis presents a real challenge. Communities need to support new housing development while also ensuring that new residents are not placed in areas with unacceptable levels of risk.
- A major barrier is the culture around disaster planning. Natural hazard response is often viewed as reactive rather than proactive, and resilience can compete with other priorities such as economic development. There is an opportunity to better communicate that hazard mitigation, and resilience planning can support economic goals by protecting investments and reducing future costs.
 - At the local level, communities would benefit from having dedicated staff capacity focused on resilience and hazard mitigation
- The state has an important role to play in addressing some of the broader challenges facing communities, such as education, housing, and infrastructure needs. Investing in these areas could help reduce some of the pressures on municipalities and create more capacity for local governments to focus on resilience.