**Lincoln County Social Resilience Project Final Report**



Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission Executive Director Emily Rabbe and her children enjoying themselves at *Neighbors Helping Neighbors: Sharing Stories, Preparing for Winter Storms* community dinner on November 14, 2024, in Waldoboro.

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**Project Team:**

Kristen Grant, Maine Sea Grant and University of Maine Extension

Elizabeth Hertz, Blue Sky Planning Solutions

Eileen Sylvan Johnson, Bowdoin College

Gabe McPhail, Resilient Communities

Emily Rabbe, Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission

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# Lincoln County Social Resilience Project Executive Summary

## Overview

* The Social Resilience Project focuses on understanding the resilience and capacity of five sectors (business, conservation, emergency management, municipal, and social services) to help community members experiencing heightened social vulnerability[[1]](#footnote-1) prepare for, respond to, and recover from extreme storm events in Lincoln County.
* This project builds on an earlier [Social Resilience Project](https://wellsreserve.org/project/social-resilience-project) (SRP) in eight communities in Southern Midcoast Maine –Harpswell, Brunswick, West Bath, Bath, Phippsburg, Georgetown, Arrowsic, and Woolwich. In this earlier project, the SRP Project Team held focus groups with representatives from the conservation, emergency management, municipal, and social services sectors. The project culminated in a scenario planning exercise to facilitate cross-sector discussions on preparing for, responding to and recovering from extreme storm events. The final report for the Southern Midcoast Social Resilience Project and general information about the Social Resilience Project is available through [Maine Sea Grant](https://seagrant.umaine.edu/focus-areas/resilient-communities-and-economies/the-social-resilience-project/).
* Both the Lincoln County Social Resilience Project and the Southern Midcoast Social Resilience Project focus on supporting the needs of community members who experience heightened social vulnerability to the impact of extreme storm events.
* The Lincoln County SRP Project Team conducted **five focus groups and seven interviews** between May and June, 2024, engaging a total of 37 participants across the business, conservation, emergency management, municipal, and social services sectors, to ensure that perspectives from each sector were well represented. The goal of the focus groups was to develop a baseline understanding of how each sector had prepared for and/or responded to the storms during the winter of 2023-2024.
* In August 2024, the SRP Project Team conducted **14 community member interviews at two events**—one focused on older adults and the other on families with children—to explore the impact of storms on these groups. Both of these groups are identified as experiencing heightened social vulnerability through the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) and in the [Maine Social Vulnerability Index Dashboard.](https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/7f91e2c287294b35acdeebbd4da9046d)
* In November 2024, in collaboration with the Lincoln County SRP Advisory Committee, the Project Team hosted a **community dinner,** *Neighbors Helping Neighbors: Sharing Stories. Preparing for Winter Storms,* to engage directly with residents. The event included 67 participants: 25 community members, representatives from 10 service provider organizations, and 13 individual service providers. Eleven of Lincoln County’s 19 communities were represented at the dinner. Following the community dinner, the Project Team summarized the key topics that were heard in the focus groups, interviews and at the community dinner and shared these with community leaders in advance of a workshop for community leaders.
* In December 2024, in collaboration with the Lincoln County SRP Advisory Committee, the Project Team hosted a **workshop for community leaders,** *Learning from last year’s storms: Coordinating actions we can take to prepare,* to convene community leaders across the five sectors. The event included 42 participants: 8 representing emergency management; 2 representing business; 8 representing municipalities; 7 representing natural resources/conservation; 9 representing social services; and 1 representing youth. To launch the community leaders’ workshop, the summary of key topics from the focus groups, interviews and at the community dinner was reviewed. Next the participants engaged in table conversations with representatives of each sector at each table to identify priorities and next steps to address selected priorities. More details on this process are described below, under *What we learned from the Community Leaders Workshop*.

### What we learned from Focus Groups, Interviews, and Community Dinner Conversations

Below is a list of critical concerns, opportunities and challenges shared in the focus groups, interviews and at the community dinner. This summary highlights the perspectives of community members who experience heightened vulnerability to the impacts of storms. Detailed responses to specific questions are provided in the full Lincoln County Social Resilience Project report (available at [Maine Sea Grant](https://seagrant.umaine.edu/focus-areas/communities-and-economies/the-social-resilience-project/lincoln-county-social-resilience-project/)).

* Power outages are a critical challenge.
* Extended power outages disrupt essential functions like heating, cooking, water access, and medical device use, particularly for older residents and those with health issues.
* Backup systems such as generators and wood stoves are vital but not available to many households and/or don’t provide sufficient power/heat to meet household needs.
* Food insecurity can be exacerbated by extreme storm events.
* Frequent outages result in food spoilage, with low-income and fixed-income households struggling to replace perishable items.
* Limited transportation and blocked roads further hinder access to food pantries and grocery stores.
* Stigma associated with accessing food pantries contributes to community members’ reluctance to use these resources, either after a storm event or when experiencing food insecurity more broadly.
* Communication gaps can limit the ability to prepare for and recover from storms.
* Power and internet outages hinder information access, leaving vulnerable community members reliant on neighbors and landlines.
* Lack of centralized communication systems results in inconsistent dissemination of storm-related updates[[2]](#footnote-2).
* Community members face challenges accessing support resources.
* Inaccessible roads limit access to food, supplies, and warming shelters.
* Community members frequently report receiving needed support from neighbors and social service agencies.
* Volunteer capacity exists but is not utilized effectively because community members could use more guidance on how to connect with volunteer organizations, and sector representatives described the need for coordinating volunteer efforts.
* Concerns about leaving pets behind influence residents’ willingness to use warming shelters.
* Extreme storms impact physical and mental health and safety.
* Power outages and blocked roads prevent access to needed emergency services and information, threatening community members’ physical and mental health and safety in the short and long term.
* Economic and educational disruptions have short and long-term impacts.
* The occurrence of multiple storm events over a short time resulted in the vulnerability of community members who have not generally been at risk in the past.
* School and business closures affect family income, childcare options, food security, and children’s education.
* Damage to physical infrastructure and power loss have compounding impacts on businesses and residents.
* Physical infrastructure damage requires long-term economic recovery.
* Significant damage to roads and working waterfront infrastructure prompted efforts to access disaster recovery programs, which are often limited in scope and not always timely.
* Efforts to restore infrastructure before the start of tourist and fishing seasons required shorter-term fixes than would otherwise have been implemented.
* Isolation of community members heightens vulnerabilities.
* Blocked roads and limited access to warming shelters isolated residents, particularly those with mobility challenges, increasing their risk levels.
* Lack of familiarity with local resources specifically and Maine’s climate generally, may have resulted in seasonal residents and New Mainers experiencing isolation and increased impacts of storms.
* Community support networks and cross-sector collaborations are essential.
* Neighbors play a crucial role in sharing resources, food, and providing welfare checks, demonstrating the importance of strong local connections.
* Proactive planning, better access to resources, and enhanced cross-sector collaboration are vital for addressing the multifaceted impacts of storms.

### What we learned from the Community Leaders’ Workshop

##### Prioritizing Impacts

The Community Leaders’ Workshop engaged representatives from each of the five sectors in table discussions. Building upon what we had learned from the focus groups, interviews and community dinner conversations, leaders were asked to prioritize the key impacts of the winter 2023–2024 storm events. We have included the list of all the impacts identified by focus groups, interviews and at the community dinner in [Appendix A](#_Appendix_A_-) on pages 32 – 35.

After facilitated discussion at each table, participants prioritized the key impacts by ranking from 9 (most critical) to 1 (least critical). Next the votes from all of the tables were tallied. The list below identifies the prioritization of these impacts, as ranked by the entire group of participating leaders (the overall numeric rankings are included in parentheses). Participants noted that many of the impacts were connected.

* (244) - Power Outages
* (239) - Communication Gaps
* (187) - Physical and Mental Health and Safety
* (183) - Challenges with Accessing Resources
* (173) - Food Insecurity
* (169) - Community Support Networks and Cross-Sector Collaborations
* (158) - Isolated Community Members
* (124) - Physical Infrastructure Damage/ Long-Term Economic Recovery
* (88) - Economic and Educational Disruptions

##### Identifying Strategies to Address Impacts

In the second half of the workshop, each table was assigned a specific impact (i.e. power outages) to discuss and develop strategies and actions that addressed this impact. These strategies and actions include things like improving communication networks, education and outreach on storm preparedness, developing volunteer networks, for example. A full summary of the developed action items is available in the full Lincoln County Social Resilience Project report (available at [Maine Sea Grant](https://seagrant.umaine.edu/focus-areas/communities-and-economies/the-social-resilience-project/lincoln-county-social-resilience-project/)).

##### Identifying Next Steps

In a follow-up survey, participants in the Community Leaders’ Workshop were asked to determine if the identified strategies and actions should be taken in the short or long term. Several action items were identified as key to take in both the short term and long term.

##### **Actions identified by community leaders to take in both the short and long term**

* **Diversify Communications**. Develop a communication system that includes a diverse range of tools and approaches.
* **Storm Preparedness Education**. Increase education on storm preparedness to community members during non-emergencies highlighting existing resources and provide storm preparation guides in advance of storms as needed.
* **Volunteer Networks**. Develop and expand volunteer networks and training resources for storm preparedness and immediate recovery.

##### **Actions to take in the short term**

* **Neighbor-to-Neighbor Programs**. Expand neighbor-to-neighbor/support networks and local/neighborhood emergency planning.
* **Wellness Checks**. Know and support our communities by identifying vulnerable community members and expanding opt-in for wellness checks.

##### **Actions to take in the long term**

* **Long term recovery planning**. Develop strategies for longer term recovery needs such identifying grant opportunities or expanding the pool of local contractors.
* **Regional Resources Inventory**. Inventory local support resources available at different stages (preparation, response, recovery) and make this inventory readily available to residents and organizations.
* **Storm Preparedness Education**. Increase education on storm preparedness to community members during non-emergencies highlighting existing resources and provide storm preparation guides in advance of storms as needed
* **Volunteer Networks**. Develop and expand volunteer networks and training resources for storm preparedness and immediate recovery.

##### **Other Findings from the Follow Up Survey**

The community leaders’ responses to the follow up survey also provided other important findings that may be helpful in moving Lincoln County toward increased social resilience.

Increased Perception of Involvement in Addressing Emergencies

After participating in the workshop, there was a significant (15 percentage points) increase in the number of community leaders who indicated that their organization could be very involved in preparing for, responding to, or recovering from emergencies. This suggests that engaging with leaders from other sectors helped participants to clarify how services provided by their organizations could be valuable during emergencies.

Increased Perception of Involvement in Addressing Social Impacts Associated with Storm Events.

While there was very little change in how community leaders viewed their organization’s involvement in addressing physical damage from storms, their views on involvement with social impacts changed dramatically. Before the workshop, 19% of leaders indicated that their organizations could be involved to very involved with addressing social impacts, and after the workshop that number increased to 41%. This suggests that engaging with leaders from other sectors helped leaders to increase their understanding of the social impacts that result from emergencies, and also to clarify how the services provided by their organizations could help to address these impacts.

Leaders Identification of the Groups Most Vulnerable to Storm Events

The groups below were ranked as most vulnerable by community leaders in the follow up survey.

* Low-income households
* Individuals 65 or over and living alone
* Individuals experiencing housing insecurity
* Individuals experiencing food insecurity
* Individuals 65 or over
* Households below poverty
* Households without a vehicle
* Individuals who are uninsured/underinsured
* Households with one or more members with a disability

Leaders Identification of New Partnerships

In the follow up survey, the organizations below were most commonly identified as new partners by community leaders. This suggests that community leaders are receptive to collaboration generally and with these organizations in particular.

* Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency (EMA)
* Central Lincoln County YMCA
* Maine Coastal Program
* Central Maine Power (CMP)
* Healthy Lincoln County
* Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)/American Red Cross
* Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC)

Key Takeaways from the Community Leaders’ Workshop

At the conclusion of the follow up survey, leaders were asked to identify a key takeaway they gained from participating in the workshop. Participants emphasized the importance of **continued collaboration across sectors** and across scales (from local to state) in order to craft approaches to meet the needs of the region’s most vulnerable residents. Leaders also identified the importance of **communication and learning about other resources** and the need for **planning and preparedness**. Below are several quotes from leaders on these themes:

##### Collaboration, Networks, Partnerships

“ There are so many aspects of social resilience in place that I didn’t know about, and collaboration is key!!”

##### Communication, Awareness of Resources

“ Gathering groups together and making people aware of who and what is out there   
makes a huge impact.”

##### Planning, Preparedness

“ Work should occur outside of storm events so we’re better prepared/coordinated when a storm or other event occurs.”

## Detailed Summary of Focus Groups, Interviews, and Community Dinner Conversations

The following pages provide a more detailed summary of the findings from the focus groups, interviews, and community dinner conversations.

The following general questions were asked of the participants in the focus groups, interviews and at the community dinner:

* What were the most critical impacts of last year’s storms?
* Who was most impacted?
* What resources were important to assist those individuals at greatest risk?
* What were challenges in either providing or receiving resources?
* What are opportunities for enhanced community resilience towards storm events?

Questions were framed slightly differently for service providers and for residents. The main themes raised by service providers and community members in response to these questions are summarized below and shown in callout boxes for ease of reference.

#### What were the most critical impacts of last winter’s storms?

Although impacts were widespread and varied across communities, several key impacts were mentioned most frequently by residents. These impacts affect residents’ health, safety, and livelihoods.

Although impacts were widespread and varied across communities, several key impacts were mentioned most frequently by residents. These impacts affect residents’ health, safety, and livelihoods.

* **Loss of power** was identified as the most prevalent theme that had a compounding impact on residents, affecting heating, cooking, and the ability to keep food. An additional impact was **loss of access to water** when pumps could not run during extended power outages. Residents experienced **health challenges from the power outages.** For older residents and those with compromised health, power outages impacted medical devices, including failed alert systems, limited ability to refrigerate medications, and challenges for individuals reliant on other medical equipment. Although residents identified strategies for storm preparation, the back-to-back nature of the storms and extended power outages resulted in challenges. **Having a functional generator** that could be used by the homeowner made the biggest difference for residents. An important dimension of this challenge was the need for **enhanced support for home weatherization**, particularly for older adults
* **Food insecurity** was a second key theme, with many individuals highlighting the compounded impact of back-to-back storms on their ability to store and replace food due to spoilage. This issue was especially challenging for residents on low or fixed incomes, as inaccessible roads further limited their ability to replace spoiled food.
* **Closures of schools and businesses** required residents to take leave or in some instances completely miss out on income generating work, which contributed to gaps in earnings. This placed some otherwise stable households in precarious financial positions. **Residents also cited loss of income as an impact** that was connected to **closure of schools** as they were forced to take time off from work to stay home with their children. **School closures further impacted children**, who lost access to food (school breakfast and/or lunch), experienced a loss of continuity in their education, and lost connection to community. Business closures further limited residents’ ability to purchase replacement groceries, medications, or fuel for backup energy and heating systems. Natural resource livelihoods were impacted by extended power outages and impacts to working waterfront infrastructure.
* **Physical damage** to roads, driveways, and homes as well as **debris and flooding that blocked access to roads** proved challenging. Blocked roads and driveways restricted residents’ ability to travel to stores and hindered access for emergency responders. **Catastrophic** **impacts to working waterfronts** affected not only fishing industry members and their families, but also businesses associated with providing services to this sector.
* **Mental and emotional stress** were experienced both by residents due to the nature of the back-to-back storms and by service providers responding to the storms. **Parents of young children described the stress caused by school and daycare closures**, as they had to balance work responsibilities with caring for their children during extended power outages**.**

#### Who was most impacted by last winter’s storms?

Isolated residents, those facing financial hardship, families with young children, and essential workers and service providers were identified as most impacted.

* **Isolated residents** reported being impacted by storms in various ways. Isolation can occur in multiple forms. **Older residents living alone** were particularly vulnerable. **Those at the end of private roads or in remote areas** faced challenges with loss of access and prolonged power outages. **Seasonal residents with limited community connections** struggled to access information and resources. **Older residents with mobility challenges** experienced heightened vulnerability due to limited transportation options. Additionally, several residents expressed concerns that **New Mainers** might face unique challenges, including limited knowledge of available services, lack of experience with extreme storms, and language barriers.
* **Residents facing financial hardship** described the impact of back-to-back storms, including income gaps, the stress of caring for children or older family members, and the financial burden of replacing food after multiple power outages. Residents expressed concerns about the impacts on **unhoused individuals**, who may lack resources or awareness of upcoming storms. Several residents reported heightened financial stress, with the storms creating **new vulnerabilities they had not experienced before**. However, many felt they did not qualify for assistance due to their current income levels. Residents described neighbors or family members who were reluctant to access services due to **stigma or concerns that they would not qualify for programs**. Some residents described challenges associated with **paperwork needed to request services** and need for assistance to complete forms.
* **Families with young children**, particularly those families with **limited income** but who may also be ineligible for certain programs, struggled to recover from repeated storms. **Single parents** faced challenges balancing work and providing for their children when schools are closed.
* **Essential workers and service providers** described the dual challenges of managing the personal impacts of storms while also providing resources and supporting their communities. Specific issues included disruptions from school closures, difficulties navigating roads, and coping with extended power outages at home. Impacts on **community members experiencing substance use disorder**, who could face interruptions in essential services during repeated storm events.

#### What resources were most important to assist those individuals at greatest risk during last winter’s storms?

Support received from neighbors and family, Central Maine Power, and community-based organizations such as food pantries were noted as important resources for those at greatest risk.

* **Food Pantries**. Food pantries were an essential resource for residents who had lost food from power outages, experienced economic impacts from gaps in earnings, or were unable to cook food during extended power outages.
* **Neighbors helping neighbors**. Residents described the key role that neighbors provided as a source of information and resources. Residents described relying on neighbors for food, help with accessing and operating generators, and assistance in removing debris. Residents also described their experiences reaching out to neighbors to share food from food pantries or to assist with sharing generators. Some of the examples provided were the importance of checking in with neighbors; providing food when needed; and farmers helping other farmers during extended power outages. Residents also noted the importance of having family members nearby to assist. Several residents expressed concerns that political differences between community members were contributing to a weakening of connections among residents.
* **Mutual Aid Agreements**. At the community level, mutual aid agreements between towns played a crucial role in accessing regional resources for plowing roads and removing debris. Several service providers highlighted the value of receiving timely information from emergency management staff before, during, and after storms. **Backup heat and power sources, including wood stoves and generators**, were described by many residents as making a difference in their ability to shelter in place.
* **Central Maine Power**. CMP was mentioned frequently by residents as key to finding out updates on power restoration, as well as actively removing trees affecting power, and restoring power. Many residents noted that CMP was a key source of information, although a few residents were unaware that CMP provides power updates. CMP is also working to educate residents, towns, and organizations about the process for restoring service and implementing infrastructure upgrades.
* **Communication Systems**. There are a range of communication systems in place, including community Facebook pages and D4H –an emergency response communication software that is used by the emergency management sector for updating community impacts and Code Red, an opt-in program for community members to learn about upcoming and current storm impacts. The emergency management sector responded to the storms by enhancing communication systems among first responders through backup radio systems and communication systems and provided more access to D4H.

#### What were the challenges in either providing or receiving resources during last winter’s storms?

**CHALLENGE:** This winter’s storms highlighted gaps in ability to access food and transportation, as well as the need for backup heating and power systems.

* **Limited access to backup power and heating systems**. Residents described limited access to generators or, if they had them, difficulties in operating, repairing, or replacing them due to frequent storms and prolonged use. Some residents inquired about programs that could assist with installing backup heat systems, such as wood stoves. Older residents described difficulties in maintaining older homes and the limitations of powering appliances and heating systems with the restricted capacity of generators.
* **Inconsistent access to food pantries**. While many residents emphasized the importance of local food pantries, several community members reported challenges in accessing them due to limited transportation options, restricted hours, or stigma associated with their use.
* **Limited access to transportation** emerged as a key theme for residents needing to purchase supplies before a storm, access food pantries, or travel to a warming shelter during the storm. **Residents living on private roads** faced unique challenges, including lack of plowing services during extreme weather and extended power outages due to their remote locations.
* **Warming shelters** provided relief for residents. Some service providers noted that warming shelters were underutilized and that power outages impacted provision of warming shelters. Residents noted that they had concerns about **supporting** **medical devices** and about **traveling safely to warming shelters**. A recurring theme was the **reluctance to leave homes if they had pets** that needed care. Some residents described not being aware of warming shelters or where they were located.

**CHALLENGE:** Gaps in communication systems and inconsistent strategies to provide support services were identified as problematic.

* **Power outages disrupt the most commonly used communication systems.** Residents described using radios, televisions, computers/internet, and cell phones, which were all disrupted during extended power outages.
* A key gap noted was that residents and service providers identified **differences in the communication sources** they use.These differences **contributed to challenges** residents faced in receiving advance information about storm impacts, accessing support during storms, and finding resources for recovery. **The primary source of information most cited by residents was neighbors, family members, local news, and community Facebook sites**. Some residents noted they received information about warming shelters and updates on power outages from local officials and fire departments.
* **The lack of cell/smart phone, type of phone, and/or phone service** that residents have was key to accessing communication channels. Residents described the importance of landlines in having continuous information as well as challenges in receiving information when a resident had no cell phone or had a non-internet enabled phone. Residents in more rural areas described impacts of extended **power outages** and **limited internet access,** as well as **limited cell coverage** that contributed to challenges in receiving updated information. In particular, interruptions in communication systems impact community members experiencing social vulnerability if those interruptions result in a gap in service provision.
* **Communication gaps existing among service providers** hamper the ability to respond to storm impacts and provide resources.
* Information on resources for recovery was often limited or changed frequently. Many **service provid­ers noted the use of social media to gather and provide information** on storm impacts. Service pro­viders described the **need for increased information in advance of storms** toprovide information about resources that community members may need. Service providers and residents also noted the need for **a centralized communication system**. Community members and service providers noted that not all residents use social media, and that multiple, diverse approaches to disseminating information is needed.

**CHALLENGE:** Raising awareness of and engaging residents in hazard mitigation planning.

* There is a need for **understanding and engaging with community hazard mitigation planning**. Several residents talked about the need for hazard planning and were not aware of ongoing planning initiatives at the town and county level. At the same time, service providers have been collaborating across sectors to strengthen regional mitigation efforts. Emergency management agencies have connected with social service organizations to share information with their clients; however, residents may be unaware of these regional planning processes.

**CHALLENGE:** Longer term recovery is hampered by lack of insurance, limited information on federal programs, differences in capacity between towns, and the need for more contractors to address repairs.

* In the wake of the storms, many residents described **challenges in finding contractors to repair damage** and expressed the need for enhanced training in skilled trades and investment in programs to expand current repair services.
* **Residents expressed frustration with insurance coverage** that failed to cover storm-related damages or prolonged recovery processes. This was particularly challenging for those reliant on natural resource-based livelihoods, who faced losses from power outages and damage to working waterfronts. These insurance gaps hindered their ability to recover from storm impacts.
* Residents highlighted **differences in capacity between towns**, emphasizing the importance of mutual aid systems. They also noted opportunities for other sectors, (such as conservation organizations assisting with grant writing or social service agencies providing support) to help smaller communities enhance local resilience. Municipalities also expressed challenges around funding limitations, capacity to write grants, and the need for flexibility to fund repairs in a timely manner.

#### What are opportunities for improving community resilience before, during, and after storm events?

**OPPORTUNITY:** Providing backup power and heating systems is important.

* **Providing backup power and heating systems** can contribute to storm preparedness. Residents described accessing neighbors’ generators as an important resilience strategy. One community program provides a ***loaner* generator**, but during a storm, there are difficulties in identifying who needs this resource and getting the equipment to a household in need. Residents also described reliance on **backup systems like woodstoves** and the value of providing funding options to help with purchasing wood stoves and wood sources. To **address the lack of water**, residents mentioned South Bristol fire department that made water available for residents during the storm.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Addressing the unique challenges of food availability during storms is critical.

* **Building upon the strengths of services that address food insecurity** was a key theme raised in all interviews and meetings. Residents praised the role of local food pantries. Given the challenges of accessing and replenishing food, resources such as community refrigerators, Health Lincoln Counties’ sharing tables, and Maine Health’s program of providing food pantry locations at doctors’ offices are essential. These resources address both easy access before, during, and after storm events, and help address the stigma some residents may feel in accessing food pantries. Residents also described the **value of holding community meetings to discuss ways to donate food to address food insecurity challenges** associated with storm impacts. For the longer term, suggestions were made to enhance local food production as was experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Developing a diversified communication system that meets the needs of residents.

* **A diversified and centralized communication system was described by both residents and service providers as key to storm preparedness and recovery.** Several different effective communication systems were described. To help connect residents with information on storm updates, one town developed an email distribution list for residents to receive emergency alerts. In another example, CMP **engages with residents and communities** outside of emergency situations to inform communities about grid upgrades, , the prioritization for power restoration, and ways to access information about power outages. Opportunities may exist to collaborate with CMP in communicating with area communities and organizations.
* Currently there are **limited options to identify and provide information to residents who have special needs** (older, medical concerns, financial challenges, unhoused, physical disabilities) and may be impacted to a greater extent. There are examples of approaches for developing a communications plan that can be based upon **marketing communications or *marcom*** used currently by the business sector. **Local organizations such as the Wiscasset Senior Center** were described as a source of information.
* One resident described a program in another state where residents would receive **calls from local pharmacies to pick up prescriptions** in advance of storms.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Proactive storm preparedness builds upon community members’ capacities.

* **Residents’ prior experience with storms helped prepare them for the storms experienced last year.** Many residents and service providers described innovative ways they were prepared for storms based upon past experiences. However, the back-to-back nature of the storms challenged the effectiveness of sheltering in place. Some residents and service providers noted concerns about some residents’ limited knowledge of storm preparedness strategies. Providing proactive information about storm preparedness, such as **step by step guides for storm preparedness** was one strategy residents –particularly older residents– identified to help better prepare for the impacts of back-to-back storms. **Having real-time information sources,** such as tide gauges and emergency alerts, and **consistent ways to communicate information** about flooding, power restoration, and resource availability were described as helpful for residents in preparing for emergencies and sheltering in place.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Expand and enhance current resources to improve community resilience.

* **Living situations** such as senior housing can provide support and communication for residents during storm events, but can also provide challenges if not equipped with a generator or if residents cannot access back up power or heating systems.
* Community members described **resource sharing programs,** such as programs for lending tools, phones, and lithium batteries, and facilitating networks for sharing generators as ways to provide residents with the resources needed for storm preparedness and to manage during a storm event.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Community building is key.

* **Strengthening local networks and connections** for sharing resources and information was described as an important way to help residents be ready for storm impacts and address impacts and recover from impacts. Creation of **neighbor check-in or buddy systems** were ideas suggested by community members. A **community check-in program** was described as one approach to assist with ensuring isolated residents were prepared in advance of and during storms. Local communities expressed the need for developing **public support for investments** in resilient infrastructure.
* **Strengthening collaborations among and within sectors** (i.e. emergency management and town government or between social service agencies) is important for strengthening community networks, sharing information, and reducing duplication.
* Residents mentioned **libraries and churches** as important sources of information and resources that could be expanded to help build connections among residents. Residents described how churches provided an opportunity to both give and receive assistance and how area churches have **helped residents with accessing and filling out forms** for support programs available to them.
* **Develop a volunteer network to assist with storm preparedness, response and recovery.** One strategy is to facilitate partnerships between organizations with needs and organizations with volunteers able to address that need, such as volunteers trained to use chainsaws to help with debris removal. Volunteer networks can also be mobilized for wellness checks and assistance with daily needs. Service providers described existing strategies for training and mobilizing volunteers but need to have guidance in deploying volunteers. VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) could be a model/source of volunteers.
* **Teaching skills such as carpentry** could empower communities to recover more independently by expanding the number of skilled trades people in the region.

## Detailed Summary of Community Leaders’ Workshop

### Learning from Last Winter’s Storms: Coordinating Actions We Can Take to Prepare

Community leaders representing each of the sectors ((business, conservation, emergency management, municipal, social services, and youth) at local, regional and state levels were invited to participate in a workshop: *Learning from Last Winter’s Storms: Coordinating Actions We Can Take to Prepare*. In advance of the December 10th workshop, a detailed summary of focus groups, interviews and community dinner was shared with participants and participants were asked to fill out a pre-workshop survey.

In total 42 participants attended: 8 representing emergency management; 2 representing business; 8 representing municipalities; 7 representing conservation; 9 representing social services; 1 representing youth; plus 6 volunteers who supported the event by facilitating and notetaking during table discussions Eleven of Lincoln County’s 19 communities were represented in addition to 22 participants representing regional or statewide organizations.

The Project Team organized participants by table, assigning representatives from each sector at each table to allow cross-sector discussion. The project team provided an overview of the project findings and identified actions. During the first half of the workshop, participants at each table introduced themselves and then engaged in a facilitated discussion, referencing the chart provided in [Appendix A](#_Appendix_A:_Impacts) *A Summary of Impacts, Themes, Gaps, Resources, and Opportunities***.** Following the discussion, participants prioritized the impacts through a voting process. The voting results for each table were tabulated to develop a workshop-wide prioritization of the impacts (see Table 1 below). Each table was then assigned a specific impact for discussion during the second half of the workshop.

During the second half of the workshop, participants identified actions to address the particular impact assigned to their table. These actions were recorded by participants on sticky notes and also by note takers. The results of these discussions are summarized on pages 19–22 below.

See Appendix A: Impacts Table for the chart used by participants at the Community Leaders’ Workshop, *A Summary of Impacts, Themes, Gaps, Resources, and Opportunities.*

### Results: Prioritization of impacts

The list below notes the impacts that were identified as priorities by participants in the Community Leaders’ workshop. Participants were instructed to give their highest priority the highest number (9) and their lowest priority the lowest number (1). For example, *Power Outages* received a total of 244 points in participant voting, making this the most highly prioritized impact by participants.

* (244) - Power Outages
* (239) - Communication Gaps
* (187) - Physical and Mental Health and Safety
* (183) - Challenges with Accessing Resources
* (173) - Food Insecurity
* (169) - Community Support Networks and Cross-Sector Collaborations
* (158) - Isolated Community Members
* (124) - Physical Infrastructure Damage/ Long-Term Economic Recovery
* (88) - Economic and Educational Disruptions

**Table 1: Summary of votes by discussion table**

Table 1 below notes the total number of points allocated to each of the impacts, based on the cumulative number of points tallied from the votes of all participants at each discussion table.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Impacts | 1  (244)  Power Outages | 2  (239)  Communi-cation Gaps | 3  (187)  Health & Safety | 4  (183)  Access Resources | 5  (173)  Food Insecurity | 6  (169)  Networks & Collabora-tion | 7  (158)  Isolation | 8  (124)  Infrastruc-ture | 9  (88)  Economy & Education |
| Table 1 | 46 | 41 | 37 | 25 | 28 | 22 | 24 | 31 | 16 |
| Table 2 | 37 | 29 | 22 | 35 | 21 | 26 | 24 | 13 | 18 |
| Table 3 | 25 | 32 | 22 | 18 | 23 | 20 | 13 | 14 | 13 |
| Table 4 | 50 | 49 | 36 | 40 | 34 | 37 | 31 | 24 | 14 |
| Table 5 | 27 | 20 | 14 | 12 | 21 | 6 | 17 | 15 | 3 |
| Table 6 | 24 | 40 | 28 | 23 | 27 | 35 | 20 | 5 | 18 |
| Table 7 | 35 | 28 | 28 | 30 | 19 | 23 | 29 | 22 | 11 |

### Key Actions Identified at the Community Leaders’ Workshop

The following is a list of key actions identified by participants across all table discussions.

* **Volunteer Networks.** Develop and expand volunteer networks and training resources for storm preparedness and immediate recovery.
* Train volunteers in mitigation, preparedness, and planning, providing CEUs.
* Establish roles and responsibilities for volunteers in advance of emergencies
* Mobilize volunteer trail crews from conservation organizations to clear fallen debris.
* Create a local volunteer list and provide volunteer management training.
* Use CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams) models to structure volunteer engagement.
* **Diversify Communications.** Create a central, regularly updated communication hub using multiple modes such as social media, signage, call trees, and broadcasts.
* Share communication channels in reliable locations like community centers and churches.
* Partner with public radio to disseminate real-time updates about resources.
* Use door-to-door delivery of messages via tags or in-person visits for areas without internet access.
* Leverage existing networks such as bulletin boards and “one-stop shopping” communication spots.

* **Wellness Checks**. Know and support our communities by identifying vulnerable community members and expanding opt-in for wellness checks.
* Map community blocks to identify vulnerable residents and create an inventory for wellness checks.
* Use morning call-in systems through police departments for high-risk residents.
* Promote the use of Red/Green window indicators for emergency status during storms.
* Empower community members with training on using technology for emergency communication, especially for older adults and New Mainers.
* Expand existing programs like “Are You OK?” daily call programs through the Sheriff’s Office and local police departments.
* **Storm Preparedness Education**. Increase education on storm preparedness to community members during non-emergencies highlighting existing resources and provide storm preparation guides in advance of storms as needed
* Teach children storm preparedness through schools.
* Conduct public training on safe generator use, wood stove maintenance, and backup power systems.
* Provide preparedness information through local newspapers and TV.
* Educate the public on generator testing and maintenance to ensure readiness before storms.
* Distribute preparedness guides as part of registration forms or welcome packages for new residents.
* **Generator and Backup Heat Programs**. Expand backup generator and/or battery lending programs and encourage backup heat systems such as wood stoves.
* Expand battery lending programs (using the Town of Alna’s as a model) for food-vulnerable residents, providing backup power for refrigerators or essential appliances. Install battery storage matched with solar installations in community centers for warming/cooling facilities. Advocate for legislative mandates requiring generators for critical facilities such as cell towers and grocery stores.
* Provide education and support for installing wood stoves and other backup heat sources.
* Work with residents to test backup power equipment, ensuring readiness.

* **Warming Shelters**. Promote, expand and enhance warming shelters and other community centers that can provide spaces for charging phones, or taking showers.
* Identify opportunities for strategically located warming shelters in Lincoln County (e.g., near three-phase power locations).
* Advertise YMCA facilities that already offer workstations, showers, and food for all residents, not just members.
* Collaborate with Central Maine Power (CMP) to locate shelters away from the end of circuits for better resilience during outages.
* Ensure that shelters and community centers are stocked and ready for immediate use in emergencies.
* Expand facilities with generators and backup power to serve as reliable community hubs.
* **Neighbor-to-Neighbor Programs**. Expand neighbor-to-neighbor/support networks and local/neighborhood emergency planning
* Develop “Know Your Neighbors” campaigns to build networks and identify vulnerable individuals.
* Activate neighborhood-level emergency planning through Home Owners’ Associations (HOAs) and local organizations. Encourage civic and community groups to partner with municipalities to create localized response plans.
* Use Neighbor-to-Neighbor phone trees to disseminate emergency updates.
* Provide resources and training to support informal community networks that assist during crises.
* **Long term recovery planning**. Develop strategies for longer term recovery needs such identifying grant opportunities or expanding the pool of local contractors.
* Create a list of contractors willing to sign MOUs to assist with storm recovery (e.g., road clearing).
* Investigate long-term grant opportunities for recovery projects and infrastructure improvements.
* Establish local emergency funds to address recovery needs while waiting for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or state support.
* House external contractors at community centers or summer camps to ensure workforce availability. Collaborate with regional planning agencies like Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC) to address economic recovery needs.
* **Regional Resources Inventory**. Inventory local support resources available at different stages (preparation, response, recovery) make this inventory available to residents and organizations.
* Develop community alert systems that inform residents about available local resources.
* Build capacity for Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency (LCEMA) to centralize resource tracking and dissemination before and during storms.
* Use locally available assets like tractors, chainsaws, and generators for community response.
* Compile a list of local programs (e.g., wood splitting for older residents) and ensure this information is accessible.
* Partner with civic organizations to identify and expand local resources for emergency response.
* **Food Sharing Programs**. Expand food sharing tables and community refrigerators and provide backup power for these sites
* Expand community refrigerators and food sharing tables, building on programs like Veggies to Table. Fund programs like YMCA’s Help Yourself Shelf, which provides emergency food resources.
* Equip food storage locations with battery backup systems to ensure food remains viable during outages.
* Engage food security organizations such as Good Shepherd Food Bank and Meals on Wheels to enhance community food access.
* Use grants like the Community Action Grant to assess and address vulnerable areas affecting food distribution access.

### Actions by Sectoral Role

NOTE: Because representation of the Business sector at the Learning from Last Winter’s Storms Community Leaders’ Workshop was lower than the other sectors, potential actions for the Business sector below have been added from the Business focus group and interviews.

This information is also presented in chart form as [Appendix B](#AppB) on page 36.

Develop and Expand Volunteer Network and Training Resources

Emergency Management:

* Train volunteers in mitigation, preparedness, and planning, providing CEUs.
* Establish emergency roles and responsibilities for volunteers in advance.

Social Services:

* Mobilize and coordinate volunteers for tasks like food distribution, outreach, and storm response.

Conservation:

* Activate volunteer trail crews for clearing debris from roads and driveways.

Businesses: From Focus Group

* Designate volunteers who could serve as on-the-ground condition spotters who pass along observations to service providers.
* Need for increased availability and participation in training programs for the trades to increase the regional network of tradespeople.

Municipalities:

* Partner with contractors through service agreements to ensure transportation and road clearance solutions are available.

Develop a Diversified, Centralized Communication System

Emergency Management:

* Build and manage a centralized, multimodal communication system for emergency updates.
* Use public radio for disseminating information on resources at specific times during emergencies.

Social Services:

* Distribute communication materials and updates to underserved populations through their networks.

Businesses: From Focus Group

* Chamber role in communications and info sharing with business - newsletter, social media topic pages for storm response and relief
* Businesses indicated that Central Maine Power is very good about keeping information up to date and they work hard to respond.
* Chambers of Commerce could help to get information out about recovery successes to reassure visitors and keep visitors coming back to Maine

Municipalities:

* Create or activate local alert systems, such as call trees and neighbor-to-neighbor phone networks.

Know and Support Vulnerable Community Members

Emergency Management:

* Map community blocks and create an inventory of at-risk individuals for wellness checks.
* Collaborate with local fire departments and Central Maine Power to support individuals dependent on medical devices during outages.
* Provide information as part of first response.

Social Services:

* Connect vulnerable residents to emergency food resources, shelters, and essential supplies.

Businesses: From Focus Group

* Note the unique needs of natural resource industry businesses, their employees and families—fishing and working waterfront-dependent businesses in particular.

Municipalities:

* Use police and town departments’ morning call-in lists to check on vulnerable residents.
* Promote and distribute Red/Green window display cards for easy emergency status identification.

Education on Storm Preparedness During Non-Emergencies

Emergency Management:

* Partner with schools to teach children about preparing their homes for power outages.
* Provide public education on safety and maintenance of alternative heat sources like wood stoves.

Social Services:

* Host educational workshops on emergency preparedness and distribute storm preparation materials.

Municipalities**:**

* Develop questionnaires at town offices to gather information about household preparedness (e.g., backup heat sources, power prioritization needs).

Expand Backup Generator and Battery Lending Programs

Emergency Management:

* Support pilot programs like Alna’s LifePO4 battery lending initiative for food-vulnerable residents.

Social Services:

* Act as distribution hubs for backup batteries and generators to residents in need.

Conservation:

* Install battery storage paired with solar installations at facilities like Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust to provide community resources.

Municipalities**:**

* Create and maintain lists of households with backup generators.

Promote, Expand, and Enhance Warming Shelters

Social Services:

* Promote existing facilities as warming shelters and provide food and other support during emergencies.

Conservation**:**

* Use facilities like those managed by conservation trusts as shelters for phone recharging, warming, or cooling.

Municipalities:

* Work in conjunction with social services agencies and with Central Maine Power to identify optimal shelter locations near three-phase power and away from the ends of circuits.

Expand Neighbor-to-Neighbor Support Networks

Emergency Management:

* Promote campaigns like *Know Your Neighbors* to strengthen local networks.

Social Services:

* Facilitate neighbor-to-neighbor support by encouraging community collaboration through their programs.

Municipalities:

* Develop local neighborhood-level emergency plans through Home Owners’ Associations or by street.

Develop Strategies for Long-Term Recovery

Social Services:

* Provide ongoing food and material support to residents recovering from storm impacts.

Businesses: From Focus Group

* Need to increase the network of tradespeople in the region to work in recovery and rebuilding.

****Municipalities**:**

* Secure long-term grants for recovery projects in collaboration with Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission.
* Advocate for local emergency funds to address time-sensitive recovery needs.
* House external contractors in local community centers or summer camps during recovery periods.

Identify and Expand Local Resources

****Emergency Management:****

* Centralize information about local assets, including tractors, chainsaws, and generators.

****Social Services:****

* Act as hubs for resource distribution, ensuring community members have access to food and essential supplies.

Municipalities:

* Partner with civic groups to identify and track local resources, like food pantries   
  and emergency shelters.

Expand Food Sharing Tables and Community Refrigerators

****Emergency Management:****

* Facilitate the expansion of community refrigerators and food-sharing tables.

Social Services:

* Provide and manage food-sharing programs, including refrigerators and emergency food boxes.

****Conservation:****

* Support initiatives like Veggies to Table, which supply fresh produce to community food-sharing programs.

****Municipalities:****

* Use community grants to expand food-sharing tables and refrigerators in areas prone to flooding or food insecurity.

## Results of the Pre and Post Surveys from the Community Leaders’ Workshop

Participants in the Community Leaders’ Workshop were asked to complete a pre-workshop and a post-workshop survey. The survey results provide some common themes related to the effect of bringing leaders from different sectors together to discuss the impact of extreme storms.

### Perception of the importance of cross-sector collaboration

***When asked in the post-workshop survey about the importance of establishing cross-sector partnerships in order to meet the needs of residents experiencing heightened social vulnerability,   
81% of respondents said that establishing partnerships was very important.***

In the post-workshop survey, participants were asked to **identify organizations with whom they intended to establish new partnerships** when planning for, responding to, and recovering from storm events. The organizations below were most commonly identified as new partners by community leaders. This suggests that community leaders are receptive to collaboration generally and with these organizations in particular.

* Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency (EMA)
* Central Lincoln County YMCA
* Maine Coastal Program
* Central Maine Power (CMP)
* Healthy Lincoln County
* Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)/American Red Cross
* Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC)

### Prioritization of actions

Community Leaders’ workshop participants identified the following actions to address impacts.

* **Volunteer Networks**. Develop and expand volunteer networks and training resources for storm preparedness and immediate recovery.
* **Diversify Communications.** Create a central, regularly updated communication hub using multiple modes such as social media, signage, call trees, and broadcasts.
* **Wellness Checks**. Know and support our communities by identifying vulnerable community members and expanding opt-in for wellness checks.
* **Storm Preparedness Education**. Increase education on storm preparedness to community members during non-emergencies highlighting existing resources and provide storm preparation guides in advance of storms as needed
* **Generator and Backup Heat Programs**. Expand backup generator and/or battery lending programs and encourage backup heat systems such as wood stoves.
* **Warming Shelters**. Promote, expand and enhance warming shelters and other community centers that can provide spaces for charging phones, or taking showers.
* **Neighbor-to-Neighbor Programs**. Expand neighbor-to-neighbor/support networks and local/neighborhood emergency planning.
* **Long term recovery planning**. Develop strategies for longer term recovery needs such identifying grant opportunities or expanding pool of local contractors.
* **Regional Resources Inventory**. Inventory local support resources available at different stages (preparation, response, recovery); make this inventory available to residents and organizations.
* **Food Sharing Programs**. Expand food sharing tables and community refrigerators; provide backup power for these sites.

**Prioritization of action items to address shorter term impacts**. The top 5 action items participants prioritized to address shorter term storm impacts (within 6 months of a storm event) include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action Item** | **Percent of respondents** |
| Diversify Communications. Create a central, regularly updated communication hub using multiple modes such as social media, signage, call trees, and broadcasts. | 70.37% |
| Neighbor-to-Neighbor Programs. Expand neighbor-to-neighbor/support networks and local/neighborhood emergency planning. | 59.26% |
| Wellness Checks. Know and support our communities by identifying vulnerable community members and expanding opt-in for wellness checks. | 55.56% |
| Volunteer Networks. Develop and expand volunteer networks and training resources for storm preparedness and immediate recovery. | 51.85% |
| Storm Preparedness Education. Increase education on storm preparedness to community members during non-emergencies highlighting existing resources and provide storm preparation guides in advance of storms as needed | 48.15% |

**Prioritization of action items to address longer term impacts**. The top 5 action items participants identified to address longer term storm impacts (greater than 6 months after a storm event) include the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action Item** | **Percent of respondents** |
| Long term recovery planning. Develop strategies for longer term recovery needs such identifying grant opportunities or expanding pool of local contractors. | 77.78% |
| Regional Resources Inventory. Inventory local support resources available at different stages (preparation, response, recovery) and make this inventory available to residents and organizations. | 77.78% |
| Storm Preparedness Education. Increase education on storm preparedness to community members during non-emergencies highlighting existing resources and provide storm preparation guides in advance of storms as needed | 66.67% |
| Volunteer Networks. Develop and expand volunteer networks and training resources for storm preparedness and immediate recovery. | 55.56% |
| Diversity Communications. Create a central, regularly updated communication hub using multiple modes such as social media, signage, call trees, and broadcasts. | 55.56% |

Although prioritization of impacts vary based upon whether an action is addressing short- or long-term impacts, three action items were identified by participants as important in both the short and long term, including: Diversify communications; Developing and expanding volunteer networks and training; and Increasing education on storm preparedness.

### New approaches to building resilience in the region

* In the post-workshop survey, participants were asked to share thoughts on approaches to build resilience to the impacts of storm events. Key themes that emerged from the responses include:
* Community involvement and collaborations across organizations and at different scales
* Connecting residents with existing resources
* Increasing knowledge of existing resources for both community members and service providers to raise awareness and avoid duplication of effort
* Creating Neighbor-to-Neighbor programs
* Employing varied approaches to strengthen partnerships including informal planning and formal mechanisms such as memorandums of understanding.
* Ongoing development and improvement of communication systems

### Changes in perception of organization’s involvement

Questions in the pre and post survey asked participants to identify the level of involvement they imagined their organization could play in preparing for, responding to and recovering from storm events at the scale the region experienced during the 2023-2024 storms. Key highlights are summarized below:

##### **Increased perception of involvement in addressing emergencies**

After participating in the workshop, there was a significant (15 percentage points) increase in the number of community leaders who indicated that their organization could be very involved in preparing for, responding to, or recovering from emergencies. This suggests that engaging with leaders from other sectors helped participants to clarify how services provided by their organizations could be valuable during emergencies.

##### Increased perception of involvement in addressing social impacts associated with storm events

While there was very little change in how community leaders viewed their organization’s involvement in addressing physical damage from storms, their views on involvement with social impacts changed dramatically. Before the workshop, 19% of leaders indicated that their organizations could be either involved to very involved with addressing social impacts, and after the workshop that number increased to 41%. This suggests that engaging with leaders from other sectors helped leaders to increase their understanding of the social impacts that result from emergencies, and also to clarify how the services provided by their organizations could help to address these impacts.

### Understanding the needs of community members experiencing heightened social vulnerability to the impacts of storms

In the post-workshop survey, respondents identified (in the list below) which residents might experience the impacts of storm events to a greater extent. In considering implementation of action items, community leaders may want to consider how to engage specifically with residents who might fall within one or more of these groups.

* Low-income households
* Individuals 65 or over and living alone
* Individuals experiencing housing insecurity
* Individuals experiencing food insecurity
* Individuals 65 or over
* Households below poverty
* Households without a vehicle
* Individuals who are uninsured/under insured
* Households with one or more members with a disability

### Key Takeaways from the Community Leaders’ Workshop

At the conclusion of the post-workshop survey, leaders were asked to identify a key takeaway they gained from participating in the workshop. Participants emphasized the importance of **continued collaboration across sectors** and across scales (from local to state) in order to craft approaches to meet the needs of the region’s most vulnerable residents. Leaders also identified the importance of **communication and learning about other resources** and the need for **planning and preparedness**. Below are several quotes from leaders on these themes.

##### Collaboration, Networks, Partnerships

“There are so many aspects of social resilience in place that I didn’t know   
about, and collaboration is key!!”

##### Communication, Awareness of Resources

“Gathering groups together and making people aware of who and what   
is out there makes a huge impact.”

##### Planning, Preparedness

“Work should occur outside of storm events so we’re better prepared/coordinated when a storm or other event occurs.”

## Conclusion

The Social Resilience Project seeks to strengthen the connections between community members and partners in key sectors involved in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. Building on the earlier Social Resilience Project in Southern MidCoast Maine, the Lincoln County Social Resilience Project engaged service providers and community members to learn how they were impacted by the winter storms of 2023–2024 and to identify the challenges and opportunities presented by these storms.

Engagement requires meeting community residents and service providers where they are and the project seeks to learn directly from them. Improving understanding of local experiences provides a place-based guide to future actions to mitigate the impacts of extreme storm events on community residents experiencing heightened social vulnerability.

In the Lincoln County Social Resilience Project, we used focus groups, interviews, and community outreach events to hear directly from service providers and the community members they serve. Meeting the needs of community members requires understanding the place-based challenges that extreme storm events present. By providing opportunities for local partners to identify opportunities for cross-sector collaborations, communities can build upon the existing strengths in the region to identify actions for addressing the impacts of extreme storm events. This report summarizes i[mpacts, themes, gaps, resources, opportunities, and actions that emerged from](#_heading=h.30j0zll) Lincoln County Social Resilience Project.

### Next Steps

Lincoln County Social Resilience Project has been guided by the leadership of local partners who served as project team members, advisory committee members, and participants in the project. As such, the project itself does not need to continue in order for the work to continue. In early months following the December 2024 Community Leaders’ Meeting, these local partners have taken next steps to apply the learnings from the project across the region. These next steps include:

**Support of legislation to increase storm preparedness:** Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission testified before the Joint Committee on Housing and Economic Development in February 2025 to support LD 1, *An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine’s Communities, Homes, and Infrastructure*. Testimony included a summary of the key takeaways from Lincoln County Social Resilience Project, to emphasize that storm preparedness, response, and recovery actions by the State of Maine must include social infrastructure not just physical infrastructure. The Bill includes creating new initiatives to improve emergency planning and communications; preparing communities and infrastructure for severe weather; reducing long-term storm-related risks and costs; and seeking federal funds and existing fee-based funding to implement natural hazards planning projects.

**Convening of Service Providers to Discuss Home Heating Assistance**: Given the frigid temperatures of this past winter and the increase in need for home heating assistance, Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission facilitated a conversation with service providers to discuss needs, impacts, and coordination amongst agencies. These conversations are expected to continue in order to prepare for the future.

**Lincoln County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**: Lincoln County has begun work on updating its County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Staff from Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency and Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission are working together on this update process. The County is supportive of incorporating key takeaways and proposed action items from the Lincoln County Social Resilience Project into the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**Public Outreach and Engagement**: With the release of the Lincoln County Social Resilience Project final report, Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission will work on outreach and engagement around the key takeaways and action items for municipalities, residents, service providers, etc. to continue to gain support for implementation. This likely includes presentations to the County Commissioners, Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission Board, outreach to towns and service providers, updates in Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission newsletters, and outreach to local Emergency Management Agencies.

**Community Resilience Partnership Regional Coordinator**: With funding from the State’s multi-million dollar NOAA Coastal Resilience Regional Challenge award, Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission will continue to serve as a Regional Coordinator in the State’s Community Resilience Partnership through 2029. Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission staff plan to incorporate Lincoln County Social Resilience Project implementation as part of their Regional Coordinator work. This includes bringing in an intern for the summer of 2025 to help staff plan and prioritize proposed action items.

**About the Social Resilience Project**

The Social Resilience Project works to strengthen Lincoln County by helping to build stronger connections between community members and decision-makers in key sectors involved in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. Led by the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission, Maine Sea Grant, Bowdoin College, Blue Sky Planning Solutions, and Resilient Communities, the project collaborates with service providers from across Lincoln County, including: Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency, Lincoln County Sheriff’s Office, Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association, Midcoast Community Action, Midcoast Conservancy, Town of Newcastle, Waldoboro Business Association, and Central Lincoln County YMCA Community Navigation Program.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Impacts Table

##### **Summary of Impacts, Themes, Gaps, Resources, and Opportunities**

The table below summarizes what we learned from the focus groups, interviews, and community dinner conversations conducted as part of the Lincoln County Social Resilience Project. The table was shared with community leaders in advance of the *Learning from last year’s storms: Coordinating actions we can take to prepare* workshop.

**IMPACT**: Primary impacts of the 2023 - 2024 winter storms as reported by community members and community service providers.

**KEY THEME**: Specific ways community members were affected by the identified impacts, with a focus on those at heightened risk.

**IDENTIFIED GAPS**: Areas where community members and service providers noted the absence of resources needed to address the identified impacts.

**EXISTING RESOURCES:** Resources identified by community members and service providers as available and potentially useful in addressing the identified impacts.

**POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES**: Actions suggested by community members and service providers to address the identified impacts.

| **IMPACT** | **KEY THEME** | **IDENTIFIED GAPS** | | **EXISTING RESOURCES** | | | **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Power Outages | Extended power outages disrupt essential functions like heating, cooking, water access, and medical device use, particularly for older residents and those with health issues. | Limited access to functioning generators  Difficulties repairing/replacing backup systems  Limited heating options for older homes | | Generators  Wood stoves  Neighbors assisting with backup systems | | | Expand generator lending programs  Enhance funding for wood stove installation and maintenance |
| 1. Food Insecurity | Frequent outages result in food spoilage, with low-income and fixed-income households struggling to replace perishable items. | Difficulty replacing spoiled food  Limited access to food pantries during storms  Stigma in accessing food resources | | Food pantries; Community refrigerators  Sharing tables (e.g., Healthy Lincoln County) | | | Increase community food-sharing programs  Support local food production to reduce dependency on supply chains |
| 1. Communication Gaps | Power and internet outages hinder information access, leaving vulnerable community members reliant on neighbors and landlines. | | Inconsistent information sharing due to lack of centralized communication system  Power outages disrupt communication  Residents without cell phones or internet face challenges accessing updates | | Local Facebook pages  Code Red opt-in alerts  CMP updates  Local/family networks | Create centralized communication systems  Develop opt-in communication systems for updates and preparedness  Improve outreach about existing communication pathways  Provide real-time updates on storm impacts and resources  Create neighborhood-based support teams | |
| 1. Challenges  with Accessing Resources | Inaccessible roads limit access to food, supplies and warming shelters. | | Inaccessible private roads due to flood/wood debris  Limited transportation to food, supplies, and warming shelters | | Mutual aid agreements for clearing roads  Neighbors helping neighbors  Warming shelters  Services provided by social service agencies | Develop emergency transportation solutions  Extend plowing services to private roads  Develop volunteer network to help with road and driveway clearing | |
| 1. Physical and Mental Health  and Safety | Power outages and blocked roads prevent access to needed emergency services and information, threatening community members’ physical and mental health and safety in the short and long term. | | Low shelter utilization due to pets and safety concerns  Lack of support for medical devices during power outages  Mental health impacts caused by traumatic events | | Emergency shelters  Assistance from neighbors  Regional mental health services | Offer pet-friendly shelters  Provide proactive prescription and medical device support  Develop town-based lists of residents using medical devices that require power | |
| 1. Economic and Educational Disruptions | Occurrence of multiple storm events in short time periods resulted in the vulnerability of community members who have not generally been at risk in the past. | | Loss of income and childcare due to work and school closures  Food insecurity and education disruptions for children  Impacts to communities and businesses due to prolonged infrastructure damage and power loss | | Regional aid for road clearing | Restructure, simplify access to disaster aid  Develop localized financial assistance initiatives | |
| 1. Physical Infrastructure Damage/ Long-Term Economic Recovery | Significant damage to roads and working waterfront infrastructure prompted efforts to access disaster recovery programs, which are often limited in scope and not always timely | | Insufficient skilled workers for storm recovery  Delays in repairs due to labor shortages  Limited access to disaster recovery programs | | Local contractors and repair services  Networks and resources that towns can mobilize to repair damage  Private businesses that are able to assist residents in the short term | Expand trade skill education (e.g., carpentry)  Increase availability of contractors | |
| 1. Isolated Community Members | Blocked roads and limited access to warming shelters isolated residents, particularly those with mobility challenges, increasing their risk levels. | | Lack of organized volunteer networks  Reduced connections due to political differences  Lack of familiarity and connections for seasonal residents and New Mainers | | Neighbors sharing food and resources  Volunteer efforts | Establish formal volunteer programs for wellness checks and recovery  Facilitate resource-sharing systems | |
| 1. Community Support Networks and Cross-Sector Collaborations | Neighbors play a crucial role in sharing resources, food, and providing welfare checks, demonstrating the importance of strong local connections.  Proactive planning, better access to resources, and enhanced cross-sector collaboration are vital for addressing the multifaceted impacts of storms. | | Coordination challenges between municipalities  Differences in town capacities for storm response | | Mutual aid agreements  Cross-sector collaboration (e.g., emergency management and social services) | Foster partnerships for resource sharing (e.g., grant writing)  Build resilient infrastructure  Expand and enhance volunteer networks for storm recovery and response | |

### Appendix B: Actions by Sectoral Role chart

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| **STRATEGY 1: Develop and Expand Volunteer Network and Training Resources** |  |
| **ACTION ITEM** | SECTOR LEAD |
| **1A.** Train volunteers in mitigation, preparedness, and planning, providing CEUs. | Emergency Management |
| **1B.** Establish emergency roles and responsibilities for volunteers in advance. | Emergency Management |
| **1C.** Mobilize and coordinate volunteers for tasks like food distribution, outreach, and storm response. | Social Services |
| **1D.** Activate volunteer trail crews for clearing debris from roads and driveways. | Conservation |
| **1E.** Designate volunteers to serve as on the ground condition spotters who pass along observations to service providers. | Business |
| **1F.** Need for increased availability and participation in training programs for the trades to increase the regional network of tradespeople. | Business |
| **1G.** Partner with contractors through service agreements to ensure transportation and road clearance  solutions are available. | Municipalities |
| **STRATEGY 2: Develop a Diversified, Centralized Communication System** |  |
| **ACTION ITEM** | SECTOR LEAD |
| **2A.** Build and manage a centralized, multimodal communication system for emergency updates. | Emergency Management |
| **2B.** Use public radio for disseminating information on resources at specific times during emergencies. | Emergency Management |
| **2C.** Distribute communication materials and updates to underserved populations through their networks. | Social Services |
| **2D.** Chamber role in communications and info sharing with businesses – newsletter, social media topic pages for storm response and relief. | Business |
| **2E.** Businesses indicated that Central Maine Power is very good at keeping information up to date and they work hard to respond. | Business |
| **2F.** Chambers of Commerce could help to get information out about recovery successes to reassure visitors and keep visitors coming back to Maine. | Business |
| **2G.** Create or activate local alert systems, such as call trees and neighbor-to-neighbor phone networks. | Municipalities |

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| **STRATEGY 3: Know and Support Vulnerable Community Members** |  |
| **ACTION ITEM** | SECTOR LEAD |
| **3A.** Map community blocks and create an inventory of at-risk individuals for wellness checks. | Emergency Management |
| **3B.** Collaborate with local fire departments and Central Maine Power to support individuals dependent on medical devices during outages. | Emergency Management |
| **3C.** Provide information as part of first response. | Emergency Management |
| **3D.** Connect vulnerable residents to emergency food resources, shelters, and essential supplies. | Social Services |
| **3E.** Note the unique needs of natural resource industry businesses, their employees and families – fishing and working waterfront-dependent businesses in particular. | Business |
| **3F.** Use police and town departments’ morning call-in lists to check on vulnerable residents. | Municipalities |
| **3G.** Promote and redistribute Red/Green window display cards for easy emergency status identification. | Municipalities |
| **STRATEGY 4: Education on Storm Preparedness During Non-Emergencies** |  |
| **ACTION ITEM** | SECTOR LEAD |
| **4A.** Partners with schools to teach children about preparing their homes for power outages. | Emergency Management |
| **4B.** Provide public education on safety and maintenance of alternative heat sources like wood stoves. | Emergency Management |
| **4C.** Host educational workshops on emergency preparedness and distribute storm preparation materials. | Social Services |
| **4D.** Develop questionnaires at town offices to gather information about household preparedness (e.g., backup heat sources, power prioritization needs). | Municipalities |
| **STRATEGY 5: Expand Backup Generator and Battery Lending Programs** |  |
| **ACTION ITEM** | SECTOR LEAD |
| **5A.** Support pilot programs like Alna’s LifePO4 battery lending initiative for food-vulnerable residents. | Emergency Management |
| **5B.** Act as distribution hubs for backup batteries and generators to residents in need. | Social Services |
| **5C.** Install battery storage paired with solar installations at facilities like Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust to provide community resources. | Conservation |
| **5D.** Create and maintain lists of households with backup generators. | Municipalities |

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| **STRATEGY 6: Promote, Expand, and Embrace Warming Shelters** |  |
| **ACTION ITEM** | SECTOR LEAD |
| **6A.** Promote existing facilities as warming shelters and provide food and other support during emergencies. | Social Services |
| **6B.** Use facilities like those managed by conservation trusts as shelters for phone recharging, warming, or cooling. | Conservation |
| **6C.** Work in conjunction with social services agencies and with Central Maine Power to identify optimal shelter locations near three-phase power and away from the ends of circuits. | Municipalities |
| **STRATEGY 7: Expand Neighbor-to-Neighbor Support Networks** |  |
| **ACTION ITEM** | SECTOR LEAD |
| **7A.** Promote campaigns like *Know Your Neighbors* to strengthen local networks. | Emergency Management |
| **7B.** Facilitate neighbor-to-neighbor support by encouraging community collaboration through their programs. | Social Services |
| **7C.** Develop local neighborhood-level emergency plans through Homeowners Associations’ or by street. | Municipalities |
| **STRATEGY 8: Develop Strategies for Long-Term Recovery** |  |
| **ACTION ITEM** | SECTOR LEAD |
| **8A.** Provide ongoing food and material support to residents recovering from storm impacts. | Social Services |
| **8B.** Need to increase the network of tradespeople in the region to work in recovery and rebuilding. | Business |
| **8C.** Secure long-term grants for recovery projects in collaboration with Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission. | Municipalities |
| **8D.** Advocate for local emergency funds to address time-sensitive recovery needs. | Municipalities |
| **8E.** House external contractors in local community centers or summer camps during recovery periods. | Municipalities |
| **STRATEGY 9: Identify and Expand Local Resources** |  |
| ACTION ITEM | SECTOR LEAD |
| **9A.** Centralize information about local assets, including tractors, chainsaws, and generators. | Emergency Management |
| **9B.** Act as hubs for resource distribution, ensuring community members have access to food and essential supplies. | Social Services |
| **9C.** Partner with civic groups to identify and track local resources, like food pantries and emergency shelters. | Municipalities |

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| **STRATEGY 10: Expand Food Sharing Tables and Community Refrigerators** |  |
| ACTION ITEM | SECTOR LEAD |
| **10A.** Facilitate the expansion of community refrigerators and food sharing tables. | Emergency Management |
| **10B.** Provide and manage food-sharing programs, including refrigerators and emergency food boxes. | Social Services |
| **10C.** Support initiatives like Veggies to Table, which supply fresh produce to community food-sharing programs. | Conservation |
| **10D.** Access community grants to expand food-sharing tables and refrigerators in areas prone to flooding or food insecurity. | Municipalities |

### Appendix C: Post-Survey Question Responses

**In response to the post-survey question *How can we build resilience in the region?*  
participants provided the following responses:**

“Making a central regional resource will be difficult,   
and addressing how to reach the individual year-round   
residents should be a focus for these strategies.”

“It does not have to be so complicated and sometimes there   
seems to be many duplicate services/providers.”

“Community involvement. Need town leadership to be more involved with planning.   
Having people know what is out there for support and how they can help.”

“Education about how to hunker down during and immediately after storms is crucial.”

“Building or ensuring strong neighborhood networks to   
make sure all are heard and all are informed.”

“Gathering groups together and making   
people aware of who and what is out there makes a huge impact.”

“There are so many aspects of social   
resilience in place that I didn’t know about, and collaboration is key!”

“Many communities are thinking similarly.   
I believe work at this level is important, but we also   
need to work together across counties and throughout the state.”

“That this kind of thinking is happening   
before the event begins and that communities are trying to find ways to   
get through a period without just pointing a finger.”

“There are already strong ties and informal connections.   
Sometimes something works well because it IS informal (thinking about the   
legal hoops folks have to jump through to establish   
formal warming centers etc.). But these may be good starting points to build off   
of for better organization and inclusivity.”

“The key takeaway I had was that our neighbor-to-neighbor   
communities appear to be the most important resource in   
responding to immediate needs during events.”

“We need to learn from one another, both what worked and what didn’t.”

“Systems level support and planning is needed on both the short- and long-term scales.”

“This was a great experience!”

“Partnerships and planning.”

“We don’t implement what we don’t have knowledge about.   
More networking is key.   
Collaboration and not duplicating services has been key even without Storm threats.”

“One key take away is the robust interest   
in and focus on collaborative efforts and networked approaches to support   
communication and on the ground needs.”

“My key takeaway is that action on climate resiliency really needs to ramp up.   
Many communities & services seem to wait for climate disasters to happen before they act to adapt—  
this isn’t to be critical of towns/service providers, but to highlight barriers to action.   
Towns & services need to be provided with more resources to foster resilience planning AND, most importantly, resiliency actions.”

“My key takeaway was the need for greater communication plans.   
Everything gets lost once we lose power, so how do we   
continue communicating without computers or cell phones? How can   
we take measures to protect the most vulnerable in our towns once power is lost?   
Those are the questions that stuck with me.”

“The need for formal planning including communications and MOUs.”

“Work should occur outside of storm events so we’re better   
prepared/coordinated when a storm or other event occurs.”

“The biggest takeaway is that many organizations don’t rationally   
prioritize the issues affecting their communities during and after large storms.”

“Prepare, Prepare, and Prepare. It is not if, but when!”

“Communication is key and understanding what all the different   
agencies and organizations are providing.”

“Many don’t know the resources available to them.”

1. **Social Vulnerability** relates to the circumstances of a person or community that affect their capacity to anticipate, confront, repair, and recover from the effects of a disaster. [Learn more here.](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N_CvrQPNlz7ysUm_jhdXCwDWZURLp9w2/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=104019552046121071100&rtpof=true&sd=true) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Storm related updates” can mean communications when preparing for a storm event, during the storm, and/or recovery resources post-storm. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)